

## Celebrating the Women of MTW

### Tanisha Okoli – how a varied career across continents led her to MTW

Tanisha has spent a lot of her life between the UK, US, and Caribbean on a fascinating journey. Tanisha's Mum was living in America and came to the UK to spend time with her Grandmother and had Tanisha here – she returned to the States with Tanisha when she was 6 weeks old. Her first birthday was spent in Trinidad, her second and third in Washington DC and her fourth in Guyana where she lived until she was 14. She had just finished high school when her Mum moved to Jamaica to teach and Tanisha completed her high school there. When she finished school, she decided she wanted to return to London which she did. She got a job in Accounts then went to college and studied travel and tourism whilst working part time.



But Tanisha started to feel out of place due to not have any historical connections and went back to Jamaica where she got a job in accounting and stayed for a few years. She worked in an accounting firm, accounts department at a mental health hospital and had her own accountancy business for a year or two which she loved.

She then spent a few years travelling back and forth between London and Jamaica including buying her 1<sup>st</sup> house and working for an international company as an IT network manager! Tanisha had always been interested in computers and self studied to become Microsoft Certified Professional then landed herself the network manager's job for an international company with offices all over the world. She went to France and Spain with work and even managed a week in Italy on a team building event! The company was bought out and things changed. Tanisha decided to sell the house and return to Jamaica for a year.

- Travel and Tourism qualification
- Experienced accountant
- IT Network engineer
- Midwife
- Patient Safety Manager

She then returned to London and things changed again for Tanisha. Fascinated with Obstetrics in high school, she knew she didn't want to be a doctor. Tanisha found out about midwifery and applied for the training. Accepted into Kings College, she qualified and became a caseloading midwife for 3 years. She left to work as an independent midwife then she was introduced on Valentine's Day to her future husband who was living in Scotland at the time. They clicked and she got a community midwifery job in Edinburgh and they married in October.

Due to lack of progression in Scotland, Tanisha moved back to London to set up a homebirth team and discovered she was pregnant. During her pregnancy, the first swine flu epidemic broke and the Hospital took all pregnant women away from front line work. Tanisha worked with the midwifery risk manager and really enjoyed it before taking 6 months off after having her son. She then had several roles including breastfeeding lead midwife, risk management midwife (when she home delivered her daughter) then back to caseloading midwifery. With two small children, she decided to self fund and study for a Risk Management Post Graduate Diploma in Health and Social care!

Then she took up a role as compliance midwife which she loved, being on the management side of the fence and able to influence women getting better care. She was also loved by the midwives because she could argue on their behalf using research and evidence. Then came a restructure within the Department

and Tanisha's background meant that she could apply for the Patient Safety Manager job which she got and which she kept for the longest of all her roles.

Time for another change! Tanisha's children were getting bigger, London was becoming more crowded and she wanted to move to the suburbs. The Patient Safety Manager role came up at MTW and the rest, as they say, is history.

Tanisha's biggest achievement is being able to go from moving around so much and having so many fragmented experiences to being a manager in the NHS with a settled life. She feels that it just shows that no matter what your past is like or the different pathways people take, a goal is always achievable. She believes that life experiences make people more open minded and says "Be open to opportunities, even if it doesn't look as though it is going straight to your goal, you don't know what you might learn from going a different way". She says that she wouldn't change a thing as hers has been a rich and fulfilling journey.