



# **Women of Colour in NHS Digital Health and Technology**

**Achievements 2020/2021**

**Prepared by the Shuri Network Steering Group**

**June 2021**

## Introduction and achievements

[The Shuri Network](#) was launched in 2019 to support women of colour in NHS digital health develop the skills and confidence to progress into senior leadership positions and help NHS leadership teams more closely represent the diversity of their workforce. In the last year we have:

- grown our membership to over 1200 members and allies
- raised the importance of diversity and inclusion at events with organisations including NHSX, HEE, the BBC, Digital Health, AHSNs, the Health Foundation, the NHS Confederation and NHS Providers
- Awarded bursaries to 25 women to join Faculty of Clinical Informatics
- Highlighted BAME role models in health and technology
- Appointed a Student Ambassador who led the first survey to explore the views of BME female students in digital health
- Collaborated with organisations including NHS Digital, HEE, NHSX, IBM and student groups to promote careers in digital health
- Launched the first virtual shadowing programme in the NHS in April 2021 which has 65 offers for our members
- Won the national [TechWomen100 Network of the Year](#) award in December 2020

Our network champions **diversity, innovation and safety** across the health and care workforce, engaging with national bodies, research / policy institutes and senior leaders to ensure this is built into policy and systems. We are the only network specifically for women of colour in digital health and care.



Figure 1: Our first birthday celebration at the Digital Health Summer School, July 2020.

Our Network promotes equity and inclusion and is supported by NHSX, NHS England and Health Education England. It has had a significant impact on raising awareness at a national level, acting as a catalyst for change and offering a platform for BME women to share their stories and experiences and demystifying careers in digital health.

We champion and campaign for:

- A more inclusive digital health leadership community that reflects the NHS workforce
- Collaboration with the private tech sector and other public sector organisations to create opportunities to learn and identify inspirational role models
- Digital innovation by spreading best practice and learning from exemplars
- Development of a more diverse stock and pipeline of digital health leaders

We work with allies including Digital Health, Tech UK, the BMA, RCN, fellow BAME networks and the NHS Race and Health Observatory to challenge the NHS to reduce discrimination and increase BAME representation across senior levels.

Our team overcame the challenges of the last year including not being able to hold any face-to-face events for our members and allies by redesigning our approach to maximise the use of technology. We organised online events, delivered our virtual shadowing programme with Hexitime and increased the pace of delivery of our objectives as the pandemic highlighted the health and social inequalities, racism and discrimination in the NHS and in our society.



**Figure 2: Our Shuri Fellows, 25 amazing members who were awarded bursaries to support their career progression in November 2020.**

### Our unique approach has been to:

- Identify women of colour who indicate an interest or role in digital health.
- Explore the support needed by women at different career stages and during the Covid crisis.
- Provide practical support and opportunities for to connect with each other and with allies to build relationships, visibility and confidence
- Lead meetings and podcasts to provide practical career advice, highlight role models and current advances in digital health.
- Share resources, courses and opportunities such as the Topol Fellowships and the Digital Academy via social media, [our website](#) and our newsletters.
- Offer a Fellowship bursary scheme to support professional and personal development.
- Challenge and support organisations to do better on diversity and inclusion

Our members can access support and expertise through the network, participate in an active learning community and in turn act as champions and pioneers in informatics and digital health to inspire the next generation.

NHS organisations will benefit by having a more diverse and inclusive digital leadership body that reflects the NHS workforce and supports better staff engagement. This will improve safety and quality, improve recruitment and retention and speed up the spread of innovation.



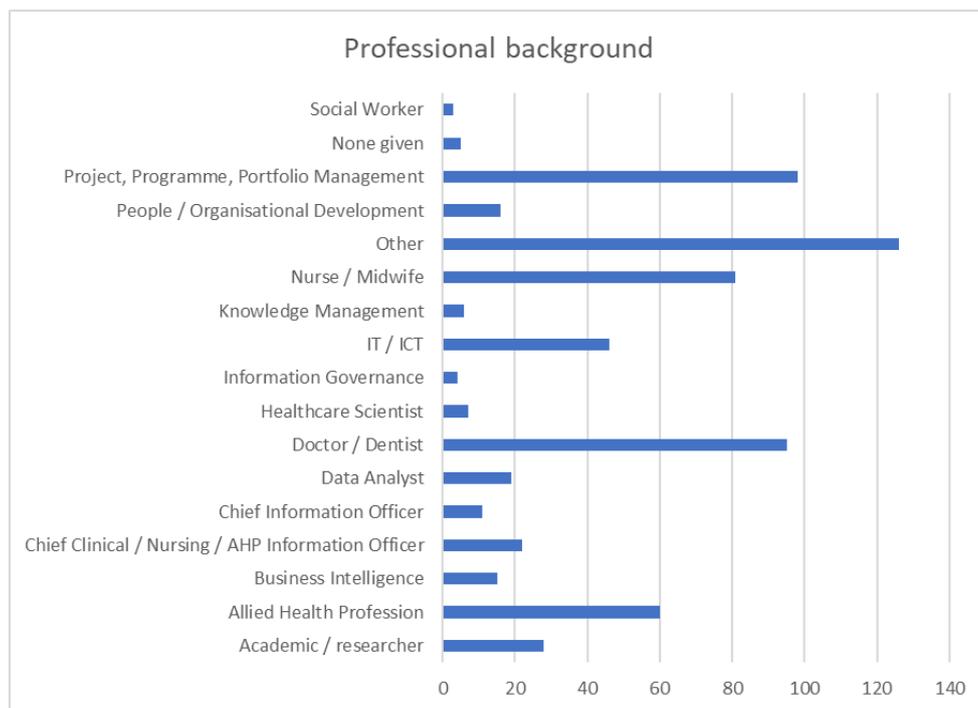
Figure 3: Our Network of the Year award from Tech100 Women, December 2020

## Membership

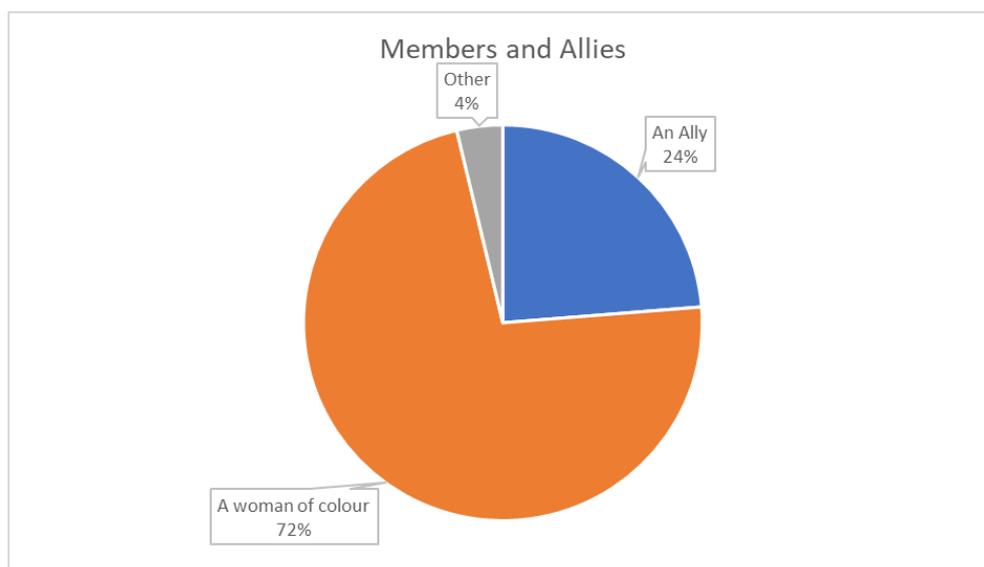
Our membership has grown to over 1200 members and allies from across the UK. Membership is free and open to women of colour who are currently in or interested in digital health and informatics roles as well as everyone who supports our aims.

### Analysis of Membership: 2020/2021 data:

#### Professional background:



#### Members and allies:



## Shadowing programme:

Our ground-breaking virtual shadowing programme launched on the 1st of April this year ! We have 65 fantastic host offers on our [Hexitime site](#) including CIOs, tech startup founders, CCIOs, analysts, AI experts and directors from NHSX, NHS Digital, HEE and international companies waiting to share their expertise and help our members progress in your career. Around 34 of the offers have been taken up so far and we continue to see activity increase.

Latest campaign activities



Figure 4: Host offers on our shadowing platform

## The Shuri Fellowships

We awarded bursaries to 25 women to join the Faculty of Clinical Informatics in 2020. Our Fellows come from a range of clinical and informatics backgrounds including pharmacy, nursing, product development, dentistry, information governance and medicine. We have also created opportunities for several of our Fellows to speak at international digital events.



Figure 3: Our steering group members Rafiah Badat and Dr Ayesha Rahim, and Yinka Makinde and Dr Jonathan Kay from the FCI promoting our Shuri Fellowship bursaries, September 2020.

## Student Ambassador and Survey

Our first Student Ambassador, Ghazel Mukhtar, joined our team in November 2020 to help us grow our student membership, explore what BAME women in training want from a career in health tech and how NHS organisations can build a more diverse informatics workforce. Ghazel is a medical student at Imperial College London. She organized the first national student-led conference on medical technology and she also worked on the deployment of a COVID-19 contact tracing application.



Figure 4: Our student ambassador, Ghazel Mukhtar

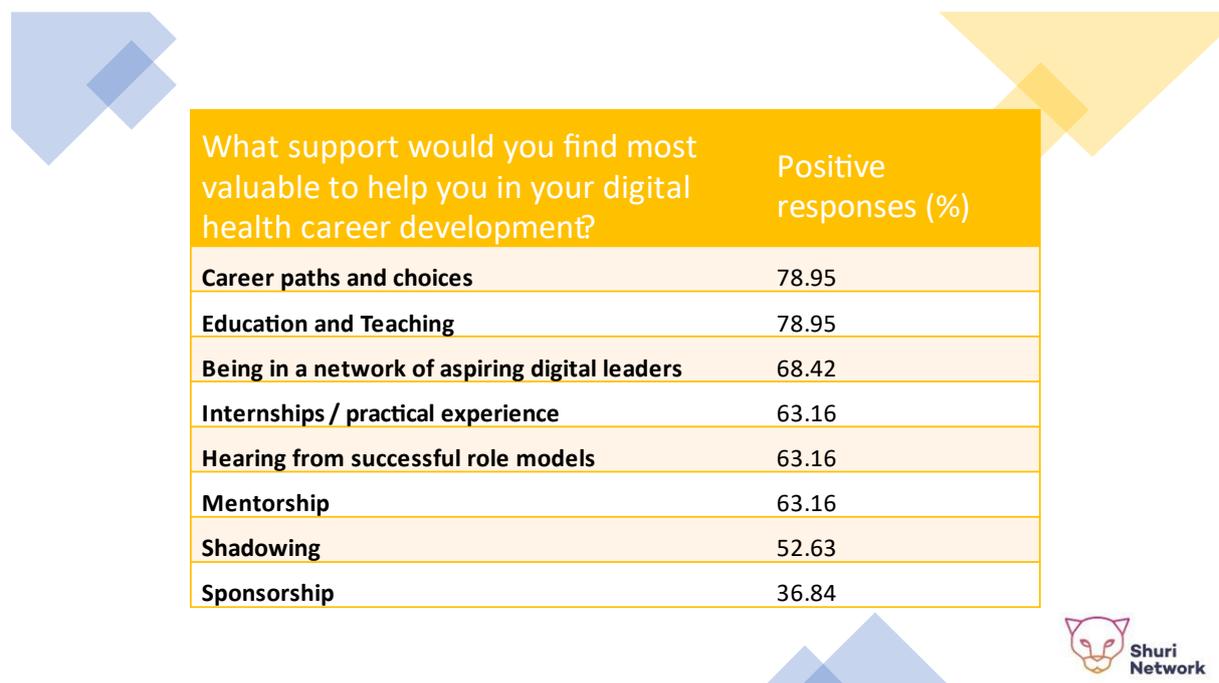


Figure 5: Results from the students' survey

Ghazel presented the results of our student survey at the international Digital Health Rewired conference on the 16th of March 2021 and is using the data to develop new opportunities to support our student members.

## Feedback

Feedback from our members and allies has been tremendously positive, with comments including:

“What an amazing group!” Navina Evans, Chief Executive, Health Education England.

“A real pleasure to be amongst inspiring BAME women and to celebrate the remarkable success of the [Shuri Network](#) a year on!” Sonia Patel, CIO, NHSX.

“What a wonderful initiative. Love the logo, love the name, love the spirit. Go Shuri !”

“Inclusion and equality of opportunity in recruitment to digital roles is going to be central, and senior leaders will need to act on this and also engage with opportunities like the Shuri Network Fellowships.” Dr Gareth Thomas, National Clinical Director NHSX.

“The Shuri Network shadowing programme has provided an uncommon and unique opportunity that may otherwise have eluded most! The right opportunity may just be the catalyst that someone needs to get their foot in the door.” Mary Hopkins, Shuri member.

“Happy birthday to Shuri! A brilliant network.” Prerana Issar, Chief People Officer, NHS England.

“You know those events that stay with you for life, the ones where you replay sound bites over and over in your head? Today’s Shuri Network talk with Navina Evans was one of those. Become an ally. Join the network.” Keiko Toma, Shuri member.

## Future Plans

We are developing an exciting programme of support for our members for 2021/2022 which will include the following:

- Continuing to build strategic partnerships to support the Network
- Collaborating with NHS England on an innovative Shuri Nursing Fellowship programme
- Offering more bursaries to our members to join the FCI in late 2021
- Developing and expanding the shadowing programme
- Strengthening our communications and engagement with members
- Developing student internships in response to feedback from BAME students
- Delivering events and podcasts on careers, opportunities and digital developments

## Conclusion

The pandemic has highlighted how technology plays a critical role in providing safe services and has highlighted the value of digital solutions in connecting patients and clinical teams in extraordinary circumstances. The pace of digital transformation we have seen in the NHS is likely to be sustained, and we must therefore develop a digitally confident and diverse workforce with the skills and leadership to transform how we use data and technology.

We know from the HEE report published in February 2021 that the NHS is likely to need more than 31500 additional staff with digital skills and expertise by 2023. Without this we are unlikely to deliver or implement the digital innovation our patients and colleagues deserve. The Shuri Network is helping the NHS develop a digital workforce that truly represents our population and the wider workforce, diverse talents and views are valued and used to transform how we care for patients and reduce health inequalities.



**Figure 6 : Members of the Shuri Steering group (Rafiah Badat and Eddie Olla are not in the photo)**