



The best thing I've done

I've always been inspired by people who give back, who use their success to make the world a better place.

I run my own business, and I planned to make sure I too would give something back when the time came. A mini mid-life crisis recently made me realise that I shouldn't wait until retirement give back when I could start something now. A friend of mine works at Chelsea and Westminster hospital and it was through her I became aware of the volunteering opportunity. She knows I love working with kids, being a big kid myself, and I signed up as a volunteer in the Children's ward, and it really has been the best thing I've done.

For four hours a week I get out of my office, and I get to play games and help out. It is the highlight of my week. I have a new-found respect for staff in the NHS. They do so much for each patient, working with the families, understanding the patient's individual needs, and they remain so calm in often very difficult circumstances. I'm a complete convert to the idea

behind Helpforce, bringing many more volunteers to hospitals to do a whole range of different roles. When I'm volunteering I sit and play with the children and the staff value the extra time this gives them to fulfil their duties seeing other patients. If I'm there at staff changeover it saves them time and reduces their workload. With more volunteers' things can run much smoother. Recently I helped out with a little boy who was frightened of having his blood pressure taken. I distracted him by making a pretend wrap for him to check his teddy bear's blood pressure. He was so involved in the game he hardly noticed his own blood pressure being taken.

Volunteering is humbling, it brings you back down to earth, and it has definitely taught me the value of patience, something I see from the staff in everything they do. I'm now always encouraging my mates to give a few hours a week to their local hospital too.

Lauren is hoping to become a doctor one day.

"This project is a great opportunity to spend time in a hospital setting and gain an insight into the types of things I could be doing as a doctor in the future – there's no other project like it. I like helping other people and there aren't any other professions the public put their trust in quite like doctors. I will be honoured for people to put their trust in me. It's going to be inspiring to meet the patients and staff."