



# ETHAN MACKEY

AGE: 17 years old FROM: England

TOP FIVE CHARACTER VALUES: COMMUNICATION | LEADERSHIP | EMPATHY | COMPASSION | COURAGE

*"It is so rewarding knowing I enhance the lives of the elderly patients on the hospital ward I volunteer on, and they have taught me all sorts of things too, from what it's like to live in Canada to how to win dominoes!"*

I volunteer every week on an elderly care ward at Northumbria Hospital, talking to patients, their families and visitors, helping the ward staff with tasks and I help to organise tea parties and play cards and dominoes with the patients. I help the staff to make the environment feel more like a community than a hospital.

I was extremely nervous when I started volunteering and lacked confidence as having a speech impairment when I was younger made me anxious about socialising, but through taking part in social action on the ward I have grown a lot more confident and talk to lots of different people. I also now lead a team of eight volunteers. It has given me a great insight into hospital life and what it would be like to work for the NHS – this is something I am seriously considering for my future career as I am hooked on my volunteering role.

I know that I make a positive difference to the patients' lives

and I find this very rewarding. I also learn things from them. I once spoke to a patient from Canada who told me all about living there and how it differs from the UK. On another occasion I was with a patient who seemed confused and struggled to communicate, but we bonded over a few games of dominoes and the patient taught me more about playing dominoes as they won 3-0!

Participating in social action takes a lot of commitment which I know might put people off, but it is worth every minute and I strongly encourage all young people to get involved!

