

DIANE BUTTERWORTH
SIZE 7.5

Audio Producer: Rob Eagle

I am an early riser, so I get up, get myself ready. And I always prepare my uniform the night before, which is our red shirt, black trousers, black shoes, and always make sure that I know where those are - shoes polished, and, you know, my security pass is handy. I'll get the shuttle-bus into Central, once I'm walking through the corridor, head held high, shirt on display with the logo 'Here to help', I'll walk down to the volunteers' office, sign in and then go to my dedicated ward.

My name is Diane Butterworth, I am 58 years old and I am retired from working for 39 years one month. We are at Manchester Royal Infirmary on Oxford Road, Manchester. My feet are absolutely throbbing, and I'm up and down the stairs, and it definitely gets my heart rate up. In fact, I think I'll take you up a couple of flights of stairs, and you can hear me huffing and puffing, I'm ashamed to say! I'm like, what I call myself a Ward Volunteer - I go around the wards befriending our patients that have had, in some instances, serious surgery, and are in for a long time. In a nutshell, I would say it's to help rehabilitation. Once they're feeling a little bit better, I can, like, talk to them, play games with them and make them extra drinks and just generally keep them company.

And it's a befriending thing, because they are in for such a long time, you get to know the patient, you do get to know their families, and it is really lovely when they get to know your name and they know that they will see you again next Tuesday or Thursday or whatever. So you do build relationships, you do have your favourites and they are in your heart. If you know that a particular person likes a particular magazine, like my husband, he buys car magazines, and I've met gentleman patients that enjoy car magazines, and I'll pass the car magazines on to them. You do go away with them in your heart, because at the end of the day, I am only human.

I took early retirement from the bank, I've got a wonderful husband that lets me get away with everything. Obviously, if he didn't, then I wouldn't be able to volunteer. We've got a dog that we adore, we've got no children. We love travel, we love socialising, but that is why I love my volunteering, because it reins in the frivolous side of life, because life can be too frivolous and I have to have something that I feel not religious but spiritual about. It makes me feel spiritual if that makes sense and, yeah, I know I have a good life, a good husband, a good life, but it can be too good and can make you not care, and I'm not like that type of person - the volunteering reins me in.

My mum had a stroke and I found out what hospitals were all about, because prior to that, I thought 'Ooh hospitals, hmm, no, not for me thank you.' But once my mum had had a stroke and I found out what hospitals were about, and then sadly she passed away, and I had a void, and I knew that I could give something back. It was a learning curve I went through with my mother.

As volunteers, we bring normality back to the sick people. Like, when somebody's, like, they want to know what's going on the outside, like ladies might like watching rubbish on television like soap operas. I love soap operas! I can sit for hours bringing patients up to date and they love me for that. It is something so simple, but on a more serious note, there's people who do like talking about travel, they do like talking about politics. You know, news headlines. And I do try and engage in more serious issues. You know, news headlines and things like that, and let them know what day it is, what the headlines are, and we can discuss things like that as well, it's not all just frivolous soaps, because at the end of the day, as a volunteer, you are a listening body as well. You know,

like a patient will tell you something because they trust you and they feel they can talk to you. It may only be something really simple, like having less milk in their cup of tea or more sugar or something as simple as that. But because you've listened, you can see the patient relaxing. When somebody dies, when you hear of somebody passing away, you want to wave a magic wand and you can't. You want people you know... people are missing home, they're missing their families and missing their pets. You want to wave that magic wand but you just can't. That, it's tough. At the end of the day, it's a hospital, isn't it, unfortunately people do pass away. You know, things happen, don't they? You've got to learn to appreciate that, haven't you?

This is the multi-faith centre of the MRI. I come on a quarterly basis and volunteer at the adult memorial service. It's a sign for the families to remember their loved ones, and to light a candle for them and to write something in the book of remembrance, and in some instances I myself have known the patients as well. So I personally like to think about them and remember them and with the families.

And for my own personal needs as well, you know I just think it's a lovely thing to be part of. You just give it 110% because you're there because you want to be there. I enjoy helping, you know, serve extra drinks and serving the food and it's really, really nice when I arrive on the ward and the patients are like 'Oh, here she is, the tea lady, oh she'll bring us extra brews.' I like how it humbles you, like you don't have to, like, have your power suit on. You don't have fancy nails, you don't wear your fancy rings, you don't wear your best watch, you just wear your plain uniform and it humbles you, and you help people.