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A true Christmas angel

CHRIS MURPHY
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A 12-year-old girl is leading the way when it comes to collecting festive presents for children stuck in hospital over Christmas.

Lisa Kirby said it makes her sad thinking about those who can't be home over the holidays.

So with her mother Helen, the pupil at Darrick Wood School, Bromley is supporting Nigel Flanagan, a London paramedic, who five years ago started a project asking friends, family and colleagues to donate presents to children who were in hospital at Christmas time.

Since then, his pet project has grown dramatically. It now supports over 15 hospitals, plus women's refuges and hospices, including Princess Royal Hospital, Mayday UCH and Great

Ormond Street.

Its own Santas deliver presents on Christmas morning.

This year Lisa took her efforts further and pledged to fill two Santa sacks from friends, family and neighbours. The result was sensational.

"I wanted to do something to try to help make Christmas better for the children in hospital," Lisa said.

"I can't imagine being in hospital, let alone at this time of year which should be fun for children."

To kickstart her appeal Lisa emailed friends and family and created a poster to put through neighbours' doors.

She asked for donations of wrapped toys but also said that for those not keen on going shopping she would buy presents using their donated money, and then wrap them.

Her mother said support for Lisa has been overwhelming and she flew past that original two



■ Lisa Kirby, 12, has collected more than £400 in donations to buy toys for children in hospital.

Picture: HELEN KIRBY

sacks.

Donations of more than £400 in cash also meant shopping trips and online orders using sales to maximise the number of presents.

Helen said: "To be honest, we have been all rather overwhelmed by the donations, both of presents and money."

Lisa handed over 170 presents to Nigel at Bromley Ambulance

Station.

He said: "I'm still amazed at how many presents she collected. I thank Lisa, there will definitely be a lot more children smiling this Christmas."