# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **The Appointment of the Chair to the Interim Youth Work Board and this year’s winners of the Youth Work Excellence Awards** |
| **DATE**  | **02 July 2018** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan, Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning** |

On 21 March 2018 I set out proposals for securing the strategic direction of youth work in Wales, so that our young people are able to benefit from vital services that continue to support their personal, social and emotional development.  These efforts, taken forward in partnership with young people and the voluntary and statutory youth work sectors, will culminate in the development of a new Youth Work Strategy.

As part of these plans, I announced my intention to establish an Interim Youth Work Board, made up of expert representatives from the field of youth work that would help us stay true to our vision as we develop and deliver our strategy. At the same time I published an advertisement for the role of Chair to this Board; the appointment process has concluded and I am now able to update you on progress made against this commitment.

We received a number of applications from high quality candidates for the role which, collectively, evidenced vast knowledge and expertise of the youth work sector in Wales. Having considered the much strengths in these individual applications, I am delighted to confirm that I have appointed Keith Towler as Chair of the Interim Youth Work Board.

Keith brings with him a passion for youth work and a wealth of experience. Some of you will already be aware of Keith through his previous role as Children’s Commissioner for Wales, and as a current Member of the Youth Justice Board.

I was pleased to be able to meet with Keith last week and emphasised that, while this is a challenging agenda, the Board presents an opportunity to think outside the box. As Chair, he will be required to engage with, and capitalise on, the skills and experiences of young people and the sector in delivering a long term strategy for Wales. I have charged Keith with working alongside my officials to appoint members to the Board, ensuring it represents the diverse nature of our youth work sector.

As many of you will be aware, last week was Youth Work Week, with activities taking place across Wales that celebrated the best of youth work in Wales and publicised what is available to young people in their locality. As part of these celebrations I attended the Youth Work Showcase event in the Pierhead building on 26 June, where a range of dynamic young people and youth work organisations highlighted the fantastic, and often innovative, work taking place across Wales.

Youth Work Week culminated with the Youth Work Excellence Awards at Cardiff’s Principality Stadium on 29 June. It was a fantastic night that recognised the impact and quality of youth work services in Wales. I was delighted to be able to congratulate both the winners and finalists of these Awards, and confirm the appointment of Keith Towler as Chair of the Board. I have attached a list of this year’s winners at the end of this statement and invite you to join me in congratulating their success. Between them they show the range of services and sectors in which youth work operates, highlighting the impact and role youth work has to play in delivering many of our wider policies and priority areas.

Finally, the development of the Youth Work Strategy is well underway. The Youth Work Reference Group are taking an active role in its development and will continue to consult with stakeholders and young people as part of this process. I will be considering how this important group continues to fulfil its role while supporting, and complementing, the work of the Board when it is fully established.

**Youth Work Excellence Awards – Winners**

**Promoting Health Well Being and Active Lifestyle**. The winning project was Mind Matters, a youth led project aimed to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people living in Torfaen, working with CAMHS, Primary Mental Health and Public Health Wales.

**Promoting Heritage and Cultures in Wales and Beyond**. Urdd Gobaith Cymru won this category for the project Patagonia, where young people travel to Patagonia and host workshops, give talks and put on concerts to promote Welsh language and culture.

**Engagement with formal education, employment and training**. Cardiff Youth Service won with the project Early Interventions and Preventions. This considered the barriers young people who were at risk of becoming disengaged with education, employment or training faced, and helped them to overcome these barriers.

**Promoting the Arts, Media and Digital Skills**. This category was won by Media Academy Cardiff for their innovative work with young people to make a film `Labels’ showing how people involved with the criminal justice system can be stigmatised. This gave young people opportunities to use digital media to inform policy, develop their skills and confidence.

**Promoting Young People’s Rights**. This winning project demonstrated the impact Neath Port Talbot Youth Council has on decisions affecting the lives of the council members, as well as their communities. The project showed they can influence decision makers in the area and take ownership of dealing with issues affecting them.

**Promoting Equality and Diversity**. The winning project in this category was Clwb Ieuenctid Derwen. This project seeks to ensure young people with disabilities have the same opportunities as other young people and it empowers them to build their confidence to engage with a wider range of groups.

**Outstanding Youth Worker**. The winner of this individual award was Louise Coombs. Her nomination described her enthusiasm for her work, the respect and trust she has gained from the young people, and her dedication to her role for example in keeping in contact with young people who may be held in custody so they know they have a friendly person to speak to on release.

**Outstanding Volunteer in a Youth Work Setting**. Tony Humphries won this award for the hard work and dedication he puts in at the YMCA Swansea in supporting young people in an LGBTQ+ group to be able to express themselves in an accepting environment. He has delivered workshops on a range of issues which are engaging, fun and well planned.

**Making a Difference**. This award is judged by a panel of young people and they chose Rachel Wright who has been working with a group of hard to reach young people involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour. Her intensive work with these young people has helped them better understand how to address their behaviours and stay out of trouble.