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Worcestershire Volunteer Honoured by The Queen

Local volunteer, Penny Webb from Worcestershire, has been honoured in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List for 2016.

Penny has been awarded British Empire Medal (BEM) following a nomination from the Professional Association of Childcare and Early Years (PACEY), in recognition of her charity and volunteer work.

Recently retired as a registered Childminder after a total of 26 years, Penny took on her first volunteer role as a teenager in the Girl Guides, and didn’t look back. Since then she has been a parent helper at playgroup, school and Brownies, and now Penny volunteers for a large number of early years organisations, encouraging partnership working across all types of early years settings.

Penny was instrumental in setting up two Worcestershire peer support groups for local childminders; first Wyre Forest Childminding Group, for whom she secured funding to set up a toy library, and later Bright Stars Childminding Group, where she is now an honorary life member.

Over the years Penny has delivered free training to new and experienced childminders, first in partnership with social services and then through childminding groups. She still volunteers to speak at events, and shares information about national conferences she attends via her blog.

As a Children Come First childminder network coordinator in Worcestershire, a role she held for seven years in between her two periods of registration as a childminder, she provided additional voluntary out of hours telephone support for local childminders.

In 2010, when she returned to childminding, Penny became chair of NCMA West Midlands Regional Committee, and produced a voluntary newsletter which she shared with her peers.

Penny set up the first ‘ratio petition’, against Government’s proposed changes to childcare ratios in 2013, which brought together many early years organisations, early years practitioners, leading people in the early years field and parents. The petition was a success and Government’s plans were scrapped as a result.

Putting in countless hours every month to help share information across the early years sector, Penny was nominated for a Nursery World Award in 2014, receiving many supporting statements reflecting the high regard in which she is held within the sector.

Commenting on being recognised in the Queen’s Birthday Honours, Penny said: “Receiving a British Empire Medal is an incredible honour. Not least because I consider myself a normal everyday person, but also because it is in recognition of my volunteering – something which comes naturally to me and that I have always loved doing. Throughout my career I have remained passionate about childcare and strived to get early years professionals the recognition they deserve, this is quite simply the most amazing reward.”

Liz Bayram, Chief Executive of PACEY, said: “We are delighted that Penny has been honoured in this way. The support that she has provided to both peers and to the early years sector as a whole is second to none. PACEY works tirelessly to champion the role of childcare professionals and it is great to see a childminder receiving such esteemed recognition. Penny has played a fantastic role in building bright futures of the many children she has cared for over the years.”

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