

### **PETER CLARKE AWARD FOR PROMOTING EXCELLENCE IN SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

All too often their dedication goes without the recognition it deserves. Yet, day in day out, thousands of workers across the care sector provide invaluable service to young and old alike.

Now one of the unsung heroines has been awarded a prestigious Wales Care Award.

Gillian John thought at the time she would be providing just “temporary” cover for a worker on maternity leave. But, 30 years later, she is still at Ysgol Ty Coch.

Gill won the Peter Clarke Award for Promoting Excellence in Services for Children and Young People at the Wales Care Awards at City Hall, Cardiff, on Friday, October 30. As usual, they are organised by Care Forum Wales, the main representative body of the care sector in Wales.

The late Peter Clarke was children’s commissioner for Wales – Britain’s first children’s champion. Colleagues have praised her enthusiasm and dedication to making a difference to the quality of life for pupils. Visitors have commented on the commitment and genuine care shown by staff at the school, run by Rhondda Cynon Taf county borough council.

There were 30 children at the school when Gillian, who was formerly a mental health hospital nurse, first arrived three decades ago. Now there are only three, so staff can devote more time to their individual needs and provide more activities including sports.

Gillian said :”It’s quality care, children learn far quicker when they are having fun. Both the school and attitudes among the wider community have changed over the years. In the early days some people living in the neighbourhood were anxious about the school. But now it’s a valued part of the area and locals raise funds to help with its important work.”

Gillian said:”It’s a three-bedroom house in the community, well decorated and friendly. Half of the staff team has been here almost as long as me. It’s very rewarding work. Residents learn life skills. We strive to make the children as independent as possible and prepared for adult life.”

Headteacher Heather Hodges, said:”Gillian’s hard work has kept families together. Four nights a week the children are with us but they are also still in the community. They have an individual plan. Independence skills are a mainstay so when they leave us they can lead fulfilling and independent lives. Staff work really hard to make a difference to a young person’s life. Gillian promotes the CSSIW (Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales) standards ensuring our facilities continue to be better than minimum standards and is an excellent mentor in her role as child care manager. She has excellent relationships with parents, professionals and the children.”

Mario Kreft, the Honorary Chief Executive of Care Forum Wales, said the Wales Care Awards had gone from strength to strength since being established seven years ago. He said: “The aim is to recognise the unstinting and often remarkable dedication of the unsung heroes and heroines working in the care sector. “The Wales Care Awards has filled a gap – I think most people know the care sector but it’s taken an annual event for people to see it as it really is. “The care sector is full of wonderful people because it’s not just a job it’s a vocation – the people working in the care sector are just as vocational as any other profession, including the nursing profession. “If you don’t recognise the people who do the caring you will never provide the standards that people need and never recognise the value of the people who need the care in society. “We need to do all we can to raise the profile of the care sector workforce. This is their moment in the sun – and they deserve to be lauded and applauded.

So Gill, we applaud and thank you 😊