**Press Release**

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**Local YMCA hero celebrates win at
national youth charity awards**

An inspiring YMCA Chief Executive from Somerset has been awarded the special Red Triangle Award at YMCA’s National Youth Awards on Friday 2 November for Outstanding Commitment to YMCA Mendip.

Karen Deverell was presented with the award after being exclusively chosen by judges for her outstanding support and commitment to her community at the 2018 Youth Matters awards ceremony, which was held at the high-class central London venue, 8 Northumberland Avenue and hosted by TV presenter Miquita Oliver.

The Red Triangle Award is a special award which is submitted without the nominee’s knowledge and the winner is announced as a special surprise at the awards ceremony.

It’s one of two distinctive awards where winners are solely chosen by judges and is not part of the public vote like the remaining 11 award categories which are up for grabs each year.

Karen Deverell was praised by judges for working tirelessly to build a sustainable organisation, but never losing focus on the importance of young people.

On receiving the award Karen said “I was really touched to be chosen for this award. It has been an immense privilege to work for the YMCA. I was motivated to work with young people 24 years ago and they are still the reason I enjoy my work today. Watching young people who have come to us often in chaos, feeling lost and with no sense of purpose; then start to engage, grow and achieve, has given me tremendous job satisfaction.

I have though achieved nothing without fantastic colleagues, trustees and volunteers alongside me, everything we have developed in Somerset has been as a team.

The YMCA has given me so much more than I have given it”.

Youth Matters is YMCA’s national awards programme that has been an integral part of the charity’s calendar since 2009. It celebrates the outstanding skills and achievements of young people from across the country and also recognises the vital work that YMCAs deliver every day.

Michelle Payne, Marketing & Fundraising Manager said “It is so important people get the recognition they deserve; and we were thrilled that Karen received the YMCA Red Triangle Award.

But as Karen said in her speech, it’s all about teamwork; and that quite rightly also includes the support we receive from outside of the organisation.

It’s vital to us as a charity that our community gains a better understanding of what YMCA Mendip does and why. Changing people’s perceptions on the issues surrounding homelessness and why people need supporting is fundamental. Although part of the world’s oldest and largest youth charity, we are in fact local and autonomous; we provide for our own community and receive no funding from the YMCA movement.

Karen Deverell has been an integral part of YMCA Mendip for just over 24 years; with 17 of those years being CEO. Karen, along with many other dedicated staff and trustees have helped the charity to be responsive to the ever changing needs of local people and ensure that the organisation continues to provide the vital services it does to some of the most vulnerable within our community”.

YMCA Mendip has over 100 accommodation units and provides homeless support services and youth and community work across Mendip and South Somerset.

Please learn more about YMCA Mendip by visiting [www.mendipymca.org.uk/](http://www.mendipymca.org.uk/)

For more information on how you could support YMCA Mendip please contact Michelle Payne on mpayne@mendipymca.org.uk