# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Youth Mental Health Day** |
| **DATE** | **07 September 2021** |
| **BY** | **Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language** |

Today is **Youth** **Mental** **Health** **Day** and I am pleased to announce an additional £2.5 million for youth work services to ensure that young people in Wales get the support they need. The emotional mental health and wellbeing of our children and young people is an absolute priority for me and youth workers have a vital role to play to help children and young people recover from the pandemic.

We know that young people often experience emotional and mental health issues in silence, and alone. This year, this has been compounded by the pandemic which has exacerbated existing inequalities and enforced periods of isolation. This additional funding, which will be available for the remainder of this financial year, will enable youth workers to help break the silence, to reach out and provide support where it is needed, urgently.

We will work with local authorities and their voluntary sector partners to fund youth work programmes that are tailored to meet the needs of the young people most affected by the pandemic. We know that the pandemic has hit vulnerable and disadvantaged young people the hardest.

This additional funding will make a significant difference to improve the resources and youth work services available to young people in these challenging times, and help them access the help they need, where and when they need it. It builds on the additional funding we’ve made available to youth work in recent years, almost quadrupling our investment in the Youth Support Grant compared to 2018 levels

Youth work is well placed to meet these needs, taking a person-centred approach and promoting and protecting children’s rights.  Sometimes, a skilled youth worker can be the only trusted relationship that young people have with an adult outside of school, social services or other mandated contact. The early preventative nature of youth work can make a substantial difference, reducing the number of young people having to be referred to higher level mental health services at a later stage. We understand that getting the right support at the right time, in many cases, can prevent longer-term adverse effects, and that’s why we’re making access to support a priority too.

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to youth workers up and down the country for supporting young people through the pandemic. Staff have worked tirelessly to restructure delivery online through live digital sessions as well as providing advice and information 24/7. This has helped to support young people experiencing emotional and mental health issues. As we head towards a new era for youth work in Wales, and the publication of the Interim Youth Work Board’s final report very shortly, we look to make positive changes that make differences to young people in Wales today; this is just a small step in starting that journey.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.