



■ Biggleswade's Joanne Todd has been awarded the British Empire Medal.

Picture: CLAIRE HUNTER

Royal recognition for our Joanne after work supporting youngsters

A woman from Biggleswade has received the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

Joanne Todd, 47, works for Herts Fire and Rescue as the Prince's Trust team programme manager and has supported more than 660 young people since 2013.

Having started as a fire control operator, she decided to take a new challenge and joined the youth engagement team, heading up the programme.

Joanne told the Comet: "The programme is aimed at 16-to-25-year-olds who are not in education or employment or training, and lasts 12 weeks.

"The aim is to develop their skills through work experience, team building activities and community projects so that they can move into positive outcomes once the programme is finished.

DAN MOUNTNEY

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"I'm really pleased that I have witnessed hundreds of our learners move on into paid work or further education on completion of the course – some of them even work for us at Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue now, which is so fantastic."

Having known about her award since May, Joanne admitted it has been a struggle to keep the news to herself.

"I arrived home from holiday to a letter from the Cabinet Office on the doorstep," she said.

"At first I thought it was someone having a joke with me. I was in disbelief, I didn't even know my line manager had nominated me for it."

Joanne – who was also invited to a garden party at

Buckingham Palace for Prince Charles' 70th birthday – expressed her delight at being honoured but was keen to thank her colleagues for their support.

"I was so surprised, humbled and honoured that I had been chosen," she admitted.

"I'm so proud of the achievement but I couldn't have done any of it without my fantastic team behind me and the support of Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Hertfordshire County Council."

Chief fire officer Darryl Keen congratulated Joanne, saying: "This award is thoroughly deserved and reflects well on Jo, her colleagues and Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. Congratulations Jo!"

To find out more about the Prince's Trust programme, see princes-trust.org.uk.