

Praise and pride as Serena, 21, gets British Empire Medal

A YOUNG Bristol woman who is playing a national role in making sure the voices of young people are heard by policymakers has been honoured by the King.

Serena Wiebe, 21, was given a British Empire Medal (BEM) in the New Year's Honours List for her outstanding work.

Serena, who grew up in East Bristol, is an anti-knife crime campaigner, boxing coach and mentor with the charity Empire Fighting Chance, where she also works as a Youth Voice Ambassador. Through her work, Serena helps young people build confidence, find their voice and create positive change in their communities.

She has also played an influential role in national youth policy, including contributing to the development of the Government's National Youth Strategy and speaking up for

young people at events such as the Youth Opportunity Summit at St James's Palace, where she sat alongside King Charles and Sir Keir Starmer to share young people's perspectives. She also attended the first annual Knife Crime Summit at 10 Downing Street.

Speaking about her award, Serena said it was an "incredible honour" to represent Empire Fighting Chance and the Bristol community, and she was proud to speak up for young people whose voices are often unheard.

Empire Fighting Chance said: "Serena's journey with Empire is a powerful example of lived experience driving real change, from coming through our programmes herself to now mentoring and inspiring young people every day.

"This BEM is a brilliant recognition of Serena's

leadership, her voice for young people, and the impact she continues to make both locally and nationally. Please join us in congratulating Serena on this well-deserved honour, we are so proud."

Serena originally joined Empire Fighting Chance after her brother took his own life. After losing friends to knife crime, she decided to work with other young people to bring about change. She is a former pupil of Fairfield High School.

Asked about school experiences, Serena said: "While my journey wasn't always easy, there were some teachers at Fairfield who really believed in me when I needed it most. They offered encouragement, reassurance, and provided me with a space where I could feel comfortable during tough times. I'm very grateful to those



Serena Wiebe

individuals, as their belief in me stayed with me and helped shape my confidence moving forward."

Edel Cronin, the school's principal, said: "Serena is an inspiring young woman who has faced considerable challenges and used her experiences to help and empower others. We are proud that she has been recognised in this remarkable way and that she spent her formative years at Fairfield. Her story will continue to inspire our students for years to come."