



Rotherham Blackburn Club for Young People

Background

'All young people have good in them' says Jean Gilling- and she should know: Jean has been involved in running The Rotherham Blackburn Club for Young People for 30 years, and her husband John has helped lead the club for 29 years. In that time, they have provided activities, trips, friendship, advice, stability and support to three generations of Blackburn's young people.

The couple's motivation for their decades of youth work is a love of young people, and their realisation of the need for positive role models to affirm the good in Rotherham's youth and show them that they are valued. Young people get too much bad press, which is not only misrepresentative of their generation as a whole, but is also detrimental for them to hear. John says: **'Young people need to know that they are valued members of the community in whom people are willing to invest- then they too can give something back.'**

Responding to a need

This need for affirmation and investment is one that John and Jean try to meet for the twenty five young people who are currently part of the club, a number of whom do not have a stable or supportive home life.

'Kids aren't bad, they just need guidance', says John. Both his and Jean's aim is be role models whom the young people can trust and come to if they need advice or support.

The club house is open one night a week, offering a wide range of sports led by trained sports leaders- as well as arts and crafts and a safe environment to just hang out in. It is important to John and Jean that the young people they work with have ownership of the club.



PROFILE IN BRIEF

Rotherham Blackburn Club for Young People

Services offered:

- Weekly youth club offering sports, crafts, friendship and advice.

Who do you work with?

- Young people from the Blackburn area of Rotherham

Contact details:

- John and Jean: **01709 556995**
Email: **rbccyp@aol.com**

Giving the young people ownership of their projects is one of the keys to the success of the club. It was central to the huge success of their youth shelter project. Throughout the shelter's design and production, the young people made all the decisions. Eleven years on, it has not been damaged by vandalism and is still a well used part of the local park. It is one of only a few successful youth shelters in the country.

Engaging with the community

By the mid 1990s, the original clubhouse had deteriorated substantially. For 11 years John and Jean sought funding to renovate the building but no money surfaced and in 2007, the clubhouse was shut for safety reasons.

With nowhere else to meet, the club itself had to stop running. **'As soon as the club closed, it seemed like something changed'** says Jean. One local business offered to fix the roof free of charge and suddenly a flood of offers came in from the local community – businesses, council groups and individuals donated time, money, expertise and materials.

In June 2008 they were able to open the doors of the clubhouse once again. Jean said the project to refurbish the clubhouse really brought the community together; **'It gives you hope that community spirit still exists. There are a lot of good people out there.'**



Looking Ahead

Since reopening, John and Jean have noticed a more positive attitude amongst their young people. **'They've come back with a new frame of mind. They are more active and more involved in the running of the club.'**

John and Jean would love to open the club twice a week but they need more funding to cover maintenance costs, and additional volunteers who will invest in the youth over a long period of time. One of their current volunteers is an former member of the club and another former member is now a councillor who credits John's support and consistency in his life as the thing that prevented him from following his peers down the wrong path. John concludes, **'Consistency and longevity are so important in youth work, yet volunteering for the club only takes a few hours a week, and it is so rewarding.'**

After running the club for so long, John and Jean are now taking a back seat and under their watchful gaze, the club is being run by a new team of volunteers who hope to see similar success stories repeated in the lives of many more young people in Rotherham.

