

Better Places

Case study 6: Get Hooked on Fishing
Midlands – Bournville



changing
young
people's
lives

Where?

Bournville, South Birmingham.

What?

Get Hooked on Fishing (GHOF) Bournville run weekly fishing days for young people at Rowheath Park's newly restored lake in Bournville. Many have conditions such as dyslexia, autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Social services or the police may refer others because they are at risk of committing crime or antisocial behaviour.

Benefits

In the past two years the scheme's success rate of non-reoffending is 98 per cent, while 68 per cent of the kids we spoke to said that GHOF has given them more confidence. Eight out of 10 reported that their concentration had improved thanks to the scheme, and a third said their behaviour had improved. The lake's recent makeover has also helped make the park more popular with local people.

changing young people's lives



“There’s less crime and anti social behaviour. Kids are going back into school rather than hanging around on the streets. Their activity time is constructive rather than destructive. And if they’re spending money in the local tackle shop it’s got to be good for the local economy.”

Andy Walker
Manager of GHOF Bournville

Rowheath Park is owned by the Bournville Village Trust. George and Richard Cadbury founded the Trust in 1900 when their chocolate empire took off. They purchased land in the countryside near Birmingham and built a new factory in what was to become Bournville.

Bournville Village Trust is now a housing association that administers and develops the village and its surroundings. The Bournville estate covers 1,000 acres, is home to 25,000 people and includes an exceptionally wide range of housing provision. Rowheath Park is situated next to a sports pavilion and behind it an avenue of trees stretches down a lawned area to the lake’s edge.

Although the area is quite affluent compared to some parts of Birmingham, there are pockets of deprivation in Bournville. Some schools in these deprived wards receive funding for participating in schemes such as Get Hooked on Fishing (GHOF).

Since GHOF Bournville was founded in 2002, over 1,500 youngsters have been welcomed through its doors. The social benefits the scheme has given the local area are tremendous. And the work carried out on the lake has made the park an even more attractive place to visit.

Despite the great rewards fishing in parks bring for urban populations like Bournville nearly a quarter of a million of these lakes have disappeared under new housing developments and shopping centres in recent years.

In autumn 2006 we carried out research in Bournville to find out about the full range of benefits for local young people. For the full report see <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/epages/eapublications.storefront>.



“I try more new foods because I’m aware that there are more kinds of fish in the world. I’ve tried mackerel, trout, salmon, prawns, scallops and pollack.”

William Bryant



What did we do?

A recent increase in rod license sales meant we had money to invest in schemes like this. So we began supporting GHOF Bournville and around 20 others like it across the country.

We were able to offer advice and funding for improvements to the lake, which also recently received a £50,000 makeover courtesy of the People’s Millions lottery fund. New fishing platforms have been installed at the water’s edge to allow disabled access; they also make the water’s edge safer.

The lake has been de-silted and aerators fitted underwater in the middle of the lake to pump in some much-needed oxygen and improve the water quality for plant and fish life. A dipping pond has also been created that is ideal for schools and families with children who visit the park.

Who did we work with?

Many organisations came together to set up GHOF Bournville including Birmingham City Council and Cadbury, who own the park along with the Bournville Village Trust, who founded the scheme and now manage it on a daily basis. Other partners included Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, British Waterways, West Midlands Police, the Youth Offending Service, Birmingham’s Education Department and the Birmingham Angling Association.

What’s it like now?

GHOF Bournville has brought tremendous benefits for everyone involved. Most of the kids who’ve taken part think that they’ve learnt more about the environment and 79 per cent say that it’s improved their concentration. Local teachers also report that after participating in the scheme kids’ concentration, attendance and behaviour have improved. And only one of the 23 kids referred to GHOF by

the Youth Inclusion Support Panel in the past two years has reoffended. The lake has become a real focal point for the park, which becomes increasingly popular as more people discover it. Each summer people go there to relax in the sunshine, take in the beautiful surroundings, enjoy a picnic or take a quick stroll around the lake.

The water quality in the lake has improved and the fish population is teeming with carp, tench, bream, roach, rudd, perch and a few eels. Canadian geese and ducks are plentiful here. And of, course, the fishing continues each week all year round.



“I’ve been fishing for 22 years and Andy asked me if I’d like to help. I got a certificate through the police. It’s ideal for kids. It gets them off the streets and gives them real confidence.”

Tom Higgins
Coach



“I’ve been coming here for two years and I’m hooked,” says Jasjeet. “I’ve learnt how to care for ponds and fish, how to tie knots and set up fishing tackle. My behaviour has improved and I’m concentrating at home and school and getting good reports. My parents are really proud of me.”

What do local people think?

Heather Foulkes’s son Alec is one of the scheme’s great success stories. “Coming here has changed his life,” she says. “Alec is severely dyslexic and he’s had lots of problems. When he started angling his reading age was eight years and three months. But in one year it leapt to age 11. And in that year he had just devoured fishing magazines. It was absolutely amazing.”

Alec Foulkes has recently become a peer coach. “It gets me out of the house and active. It’s taught me to stand up for myself a bit more when I’m being bullied. I was shy, but now I can speak to people. I’ve just applied to Rodbaston Agricultural College to do a fishing degree so that I can go on to work in fishery management.”

Jo Wilby’s son Ricky is a keen young angler. “I told my son Ricky about the children he would meet here so that he would understand that not everybody’s the same. He’s learnt about children with different needs coming here. It was really smelly and horrible before. But it’s lovely now.”

Parnjit Singh has no end of praise for the scheme. “My son Jasjeet has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and coming here has helped us as a family because we can engage with him and talk,” he says. “With ADHD this can be extremely challenging. When he comes fishing he’s up, showered, his bed’s done and he’s keen to get out of the house. The facilities here have improved. It’s a lot safer for the children now. I come here regularly and the number of people about is increasing.”

What happens next?

Two family fun days were held here as part of National Fishing Week. And on both days half of the youngsters that came were female. As a result the scheme has set itself new targets to get more girls into fishing. Before this can happen Rowheath Park, like lots of other fisheries across the country, will have to look at the issue of providing toilets for all participants.



“Kids learn so much more about wildlife and the environment here in a way that they can’t on a computer. We’re not creating eco-warriors overnight but we are helping some kids onto the first rung of greater awareness. And if they’re more aware and value their environment more, maybe they’ll fight to protect it in later life.”

Richard Wightman
Angling Development Manager,
Environment Agency



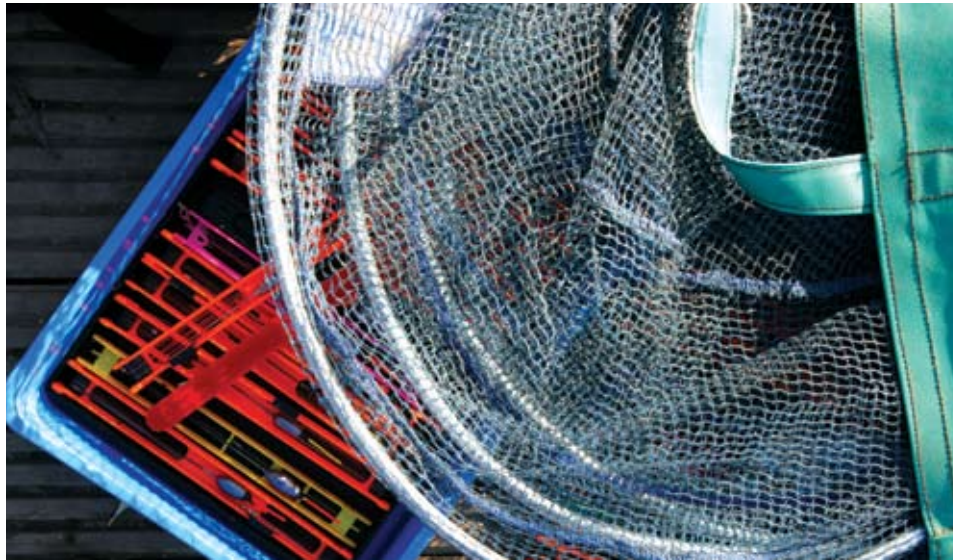
“Two years ago I’d broken my leg and I couldn’t really do anything. My friend said, ‘do you want to go fishing?’ and he brought me here and I’ve loved it ever since. I think it’s better because before we didn’t have the fishing platform and I’d lose my equipment more.”

James Bryant
Young angler

Better places tells the story of how we work with others to improve deprived communities and what this work means for local people.

For more information about **Get Hooked on Fishing** contact, **Richard Wightman** 01454 624082
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