



ROTARACT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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1. What is Rotaract and how does it work?

1.1. What is Rotaract?

Rotaract is an opportunity to be part of a fun, dynamic and unique international organisation for people aged 18–30, offering a wide range of activities that enables members to try something new, whilst having a great time and meeting others.

Rotaract offers a wide choice of social activities, actively supports the local community, raises money for charity and gives members the opportunity to develop personal skills and gain new life experiences in the UK and Ireland, and abroad.

Rotaract was founded in 1968 in the US and came to the UK and Ireland in the early 1970s. There are just over 100 clubs in the Great Britain and Ireland (GB&I), and more than 7,500 across 155 countries worldwide.

1.2. What is a Rotaract club?

A Rotaract club is sponsored by one or more Rotary clubs. Without this sponsorship (which means the continued active participation of Rotarians) it does not exist. Rotaract clubs hold meetings twice a month at an established meeting venue (often the back room of a pub or social club).

Clubs have a council of elected members who organise events and help to run the club. During the meeting each member of the council gives a short report on past and forthcoming activities. Clubs may also organise speakers as part of the meeting, or post-meeting activities such as short quizzes, games or simply a drink in the bar.

Club members take part in:

- Community activities: group-oriented to encourage working together as a team in a social atmosphere. Events are many and various, but could include taking children to the

pantomime, decorating a nursery or school playground or producing the Talking Newspaper for the Blind.

- **Fund raising:** all Rotaract clubs raise money for local, national and international charities through small events such as quizzes and barn dances right through to organising the town's firework display (raising over £6000 in one night).
- **Social and sports activities:** all Rotaract clubs have a lively calendar of social and sporting activities enabling members to make new friends and discover new talents. It's very much down to the members to organise the activities they want to do, so some clubs may indulge in athletic hikes and bungee jumps, whilst others might be known for their talents at the pool table!
- **Professional development:** a grand term for learning new skills. Such activities can be direct, for example visits to museums and others places of interest or reading out a favourite poem at a meeting, or indirect through chairing a meeting as President or helping to organise a fund raising event.
- **International:** Because Rotaract clubs are part of an international organisation there are many opportunities for getting involved in international activities. Examples include twinning with another club, or attending a conference organised by foreign clubs/district. Rotaract in Great Britain & Ireland offers Rotaractors the opportunity to take part in a Rotaract Overseas Project. Projects involve some sort of decoration, refurbishment or construction, e.g. building dormitories at a vocational college in Uganda.

For more ideas of what Rotaract clubs do, take a look at some websites such as: [www.rotaract.org.uk/ealing](http://www.rotaract.org.uk/ealing), [www.rotaract.org.uk/camberley](http://www.rotaract.org.uk/camberley), and [www.rotaract.org.uk/maidenhead](http://www.rotaract.org.uk/maidenhead)

### 1.3. *What is a Rotaract district?*

Rotaract clubs are grouped in districts – the same districts as Rotary. Each district with more than one Rotaract club has an elected representative – the District Chairman – who has a team to help them. Rotary's District Rotaract Officer is part of that team, and the two should work closely together.

Ideally, Rotaract clubs in a district meet regularly, and also hold regular socials and attend each other's fundraising events.

### 1.4. *What is Rotaract in Great Britain & Ireland (RGI)?*

RGI is the 29 districts of the UK and Ireland – the same as RIBI. The RGI Council comprises the 29 District Chairmen, chaired by the RGI Chairman and their team. RGI holds an annual conference which is a great opportunity for Rotaractors to get together and learn about successes around GB&I.

## 2. **What does Rotary sponsorship of Rotaract mean in practical terms?**

Sponsorship of a Rotaract club means the continued personal and active support of Rotarians from the sponsoring club – not just the club's Rotaract Officer. A Rotarian should attend at least one Rotaract meeting a month (this could be by rota rather than the Rotaract Officer being the only Rotarian to ever attend). The sponsoring Rotary club receives minutes of all Rotaract club meetings.

Sponsoring Rotary clubs should consider inviting the Rotaract President to club council meetings to facilitate communications between the two clubs.

Sponsorship of a Rotaract club does not involve any ongoing financial obligation beyond start-up costs (see 4.2). Contacts are far more useful – e.g. for cheap/free meeting venues, or good deals for fund raising events.

Rotarians should help bring new members to Rotaract – all the young people aged 18–30 who they come into contact with. Sometimes Rotaractors are so involved in having a good time that they forget to recruit new people to replace them when their time comes to leave. The sponsoring Rotary club can play an important part in reminding Rotaractors that the club is not theirs forever – they have a duty to find new members to pass it on to.

For more information about Rotary's involvements with Rotaract, RIBI publishes two information sheets: *Rotary & Rotaract – Partners in Service* and *Rotaract Care and Counselling*. These are available from the RIBI Secretariat or [www.ribi-rotary.org](http://www.ribi-rotary.org).

### **3. Some history of Rotaract in GB&I and the lessons it has taught us**

Many Rotarians will be aware that Rotaract in GB&I is not the size it was in the 80s and early 90s; in fact, between 1995 and 2002, RGBI lost 90% of its members and 70% of its clubs! There are many theories as to why this may be, but it remains that Rotaract is enjoyed by 1200 (and growing) Rotaractors in GB& I today, and that we are willing to fight for this organisation to continue. Rotaract has not outgrown its purpose.

A comment we often hear from Rotarians is, “We tried Rotaract and it failed. All the members coupled up and left or got other jobs and left at once.” Well, yes, this does happen, because Rotaractors do couple up or get new jobs, and leave, sometimes very quickly so that suddenly a club has few active members. It is the role of a responsible sponsoring Rotary club to help Rotaractors to constantly recruit new members. Clearly sponsoring a Rotaract club is a long-term commitment and therefore requires the support of the whole Rotary club on an ongoing, year-on-year basis. Without constant and consistent strong Rotary support, the Rotaract club will not survive for long.

### **4. Starting a new Rotaract club**

#### *4.1. How do we go about starting a Rotaract club?*

The best resource is the Rotaract Extension Manual, available from the RIBI Secretariat or [www.rotaract.org.uk](http://www.rotaract.org.uk). This answers questions in much more depth than this document.

RI's Rotaract Handbook ([www.rotary.org/downloadcenter/programs/rotaract.html](http://www.rotary.org/downloadcenter/programs/rotaract.html)) is also useful, and includes official documents such as the Standard Rotaract Club Constitution.

Rotary clubs wanting to start up a new Rotaract club are recommended to work with the district team (the Rotaract District Chairman and District Rotaract Officer) and other neighbouring Rotaract clubs to ensure maximum success.

#### *4.2. What does it cost to set up a Rotaract club?*

Costs vary, but may include publicity materials, venue hire and food for an initial interest meeting, £35 to charter the Rotaract club, and cost of regalia (you may be able to adapt a previous club's regalia).

It may seem that the initial start-up of a new Rotaract club costs quite a lot, but a way to spread the costs and also encourage a group of Rotary clubs to get involved with the new

Rotaract club is to ask the Rotary clubs to donate the regalia or other Rotaract items such as a gavel.

#### 4.3. *Mining the potential of universities and colleges*

2003/04 saw the first university- and college-based Rotaract clubs in GB&I, something much more common in other parts of the world. The key to setting up clubs in colleges and universities is, as ever, personal contacts within the institute. You may also like to explore college websites for details of the volunteer and Student Union clubs that you may be able to tap into. Also remember that each year there are Ambassadorial Scholars coming to many of our universities for 1–2 years, and many are required to get involved with Rotaract during their stay by their sponsoring district. Liaise with your district Foundation Officer for details of the Scholars.

#### 4.4. *How many members does a new Rotaract club need?*

RI recommends a minimum of 15 members for a club to charter. In RGBI, most clubs have an average of 10 members, so this is a more realistic figure to aim for. If you have an initial core of approx. six members from an interest meeting, you should aim to build on this as soon as you can.

### 5. **Why should Rotarians support/sponsor Rotaract?**

#### 5.1. *Why should Rotarians invest time in sponsoring a Rotaract club when they need to recruit members for their own Rotary club?*

By sponsoring a Rotaract club, you are developing young adults' leadership skills, enhancing the strength and capability of your Rotary club, and providing dynamic young resources for community service.

Rotaractors can help extend your reach into the community by increasing the numbers you can call upon for help when running an event (e.g. Christmas collections).

In addition, you are building your membership of the future (see below).

#### 5.2. *Why Rotaractors make good Rotarians*

The fifth goal of Rotaract is "To motivate young people for eventual membership in Rotary". (This is a new goal, added by the RI Board of Directors in February 2004.)

Rotaract is a Rotary-sponsored training ground for future Rotarians – if treated correctly. Through Rotaract, young people learn to give service above self, as well as finding new friends, learning new skills that help them in their careers, and having lots of fun.

Rotaract clubs are increasingly taking on extremely professional fund raising and community projects that a Rotary club may have second thoughts about holding: e.g. Blackburn and Salisbury & Wilton Rotaract Clubs run the town/city fireworks display.

This is all very well, but what evidence is there that Rotaractors become Rotarians?

- In 2004/05:
  - Two District Governors in RIBI are former Rotaractors (Andrew Cowling D1070 and Janet Pierce D1260)
  - At least 20 Rotary club presidents are former Rotaractors.
  - Ten of the 25 District Rotaract Officers are former Rotaractors.

- At least six Rotary clubs formed over the past five years mainly comprise former Rotaractors (Bloxwich Phoenix, Pendle View, Bolton Lever, Dundee Discovery, Eltham Phoenix, Wessex Mead).

**And if you need any more convincing...**

RIBI has lost 10% of its members since 1990 (and this loss becomes 17.5% when new club extension is removed). The average age of a Rotarian is 63 years.

Rotaract faced the same warnings regarding age and membership in 1995. These were ignored, and Rotaract went on to lose 70% of clubs and 90% of members in the following seven years.

This loss is now being reversed: in 2003/04 there was no net loss of Rotaract clubs for the first time in 14 years; nine new clubs were launched in 2003/04, and there are a dozen or so in the pipeline for 2004/05; membership is increasing, and enthusiasm with it. But this has taken a lot of hard work!

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| Without Rotary support, Rotaract cannot and does not function. Without Rotaract support, what future does Rotary have? Treat Rotaractors as partners in the Rotary family, and more will join Rotary when their time in Rotaract comes to an end. |
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