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PRIZE GUYS Some of the young players in Blyth Rugby Club's award-winning youth set-up

By Royal appointment!

Junior rugby special

BLYTH Rugby Club are celebrating a right royal honour for their work in finding the players of tomorrow. The club have received the Queens Award for Voluntary Service, recognising the outstanding efforts they have put into developing their youth set-up. Blyth are the only rugby club

in the country to be presented with this prestigious award, which they will receive at a presentation at Alnwick Castle in October. They earned the accolade for promoting participation in sport among schoolchildren in their area. For 26 years Blyth have put a lot of effort into youth de-

velopment, with up to 150 kids turning up on a Sunday morning to train. Age groups catered for are from under-six to under-18s -- and last season the club boasted a first team containing 13 players who had come through the youth ranks. Youth coordinator Max Proud has put a lot of his

personal time into running the youth system. He said: "The coaches here are all absolutely fantastic. "They all have at least level one coaching qualifications. We work very closely with schools, hosting festivals for them which helps us to attract new young players. "We also hold fundraising

events and have attracted sponsors for the youth section, one of the main reasons we have managed to win the award." The club also benefit from Newcastle Falcons' community programmes across the region, often having refereeing involvement in pre-match games or joining in with

open coaching sessions. Proud added: "It is a major achievement by the club to be given the Queen's award, especially at a time when keeping children active is proving very difficult. "The club have been terrific in their efforts and will be aiming to keep up their own high standards in the future."

Club receive top accolade for work in the community