

**Co-founder of Sheffield Skatepark for vulnerable young people nominated for Sportswoman of the Year Award**



*Amy Cooper, 45, is the co-founder of Onboard in Sheffield, and has been nominated for the award.*

Amy Cooper, co-founder of Onboard in Sheffield, has been nominated for the [Sunday Times Grassroots Sportswoman of the Year Award 2022](#).

The Grassroots award, partnered this year with This Girl Can, aims to celebrate women breaking down barriers and bringing together their communities through sport. Sheffield's own Jessica Ennis has won the main award twice and features as a judge this year.

Amy said: "It's a bit of a pinch me moment because you think, gosh, everybody does such amazing stuff and there's other nominees that I was like, I want to vote for them.

"It's just a privilege because actually it's nice to be recognized, but also for the work that goes on to be recognized, I think is more important, really."

Onboard was founded in 2017, growing from a skatepark only open on weekends and evenings, to a not-for-profit organisation that provides alternate provision and [works with some of Sheffield's most vulnerable young people](#).

Amy said her late-father Mick Hulley was the inspiration, who would often help troubled young people when she was growing up.

When Mick passed away with Leukaemia 15 years ago, Amy and Mum Jan Hulley decided to use the inheritance he had left to create a legacy for him - buying the empty warehouse in Heeley that has now become a safe space for young people in Sheffield.

Sport is used as a “hook” by Amy’s team, to allow young people who may not function well in mainstream school to channel their physical energy into something. They can then teach them English, maths, as well as helping them develop emotionally.

Onboard youth worker Joey Webb said: “When they then go on to education or work, or whatever they pursue once they leave here, that’s the most rewarding part of it - seeing them grow into these people”.

Amy was quick to redirect praise onto her team, calling them “the heart of Onboard”. She said that the trust that young people have in them means Onboard is used by social workers and drug support workers to run their sessions, who may struggle to start the conversation otherwise.

On her role, Amy said: “We call it a way of life. It's not a job.

“It's exactly what Mum and Dad did. They didn't shut their door. We're just very fortunate to have a team that is equally passionate.”

[You can vote for Amy here before 10 November.](#)