

The Bikeability Trust – Written evidence (NPS0158)

About the Bikeability Trust

The Bikeability Trust is the national charity for Bikeability, the Department for Transport's cycle education programme. Cycling is a life skill and learning to ride a bike is a rite of passage. Education, together with infrastructure and enforcement, helps more people cycle, more safely, more often.

Bikeability is based on the Government's National Standard for cycle and instructor training. It prepares people to cycle everywhere cycling is permitted, and contributes to delivering the transport, environmental, health and economic benefits that more people cycling promises.

Bikeability is a progressive programme in which trainees first master cycle handling skills in traffic-free environments (Level 1), then develop the skills and confidence to cycle on local roads and simple junctions (Level 2), before tackling often busier, multi-lane roads and complex junctions (Level 3). Additional 'Bikeability Plus' modules aim to increase the take up of Bikeability training in schools and its impact on children's cycling.

The Bikeability Trust strategy to 2025 aims that Bikeability is the leading cycle training:

- **Child focussed:** *We deliver cycle training to both children and adults, but the majority of delivery is helping children learn the life skill of cycling*
- **Quality:** *Our Instructors deliver high-quality, consistent cycle training across England*
- **Inclusivity:** *We take action to reduce barriers to participation and ensure that anyone who wishes to access Bikeability cycle training is able to*
- **Efficiency:** *Our delivery programme offers value for money and is delivered in an economic and efficient way*
- **Influence:** *We share our evidence of the impact of cycle training across a variety of sectors (transport, education, environment, health, leisure, etc)*
- **Collaboration:** *We work with stakeholders, partners and commercial organisations to achieve our vision and ensure Bikeability is a household name*

By 2025 the Bikeability Trust aims to have helped more than 5 million children take up Bikeability cycle training. We will have also offered thousands more families and adults the chance to take up cycle training.

The Bikeability Trust welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the House of Lord's Committee on the National Plan for Sport and Recreation. We are providing evidence only on the questions where the Committee welcomed our expertise.

1. What are the key barriers to improving and encouraging active travel for children and young people and how can they be overcome?

During the first lockdown in the spring of 2020, cycling levels increased by as much as 600% in some places. The Government message around leaving the car at home and taking daily exercise resonated with families across the UK and children were some of the biggest beneficiaries of vehicle traffic dropping to levels not seen since the 1950's. The message about enabling children to make active journeys is not a new one, but we need a more concerted effort to keep us this level of active travel.

Bikeability cycle training plays a huge part in enabling more children to have the skills to do this and has been delivered to over 3.5million children in England since 2007. Funded by the Department for Transport it provides annually over 400,000 places for children, through an evidence based training program helping children to develop confidence to cycle. This training is also proven to be even more effective when linked to local plans for building active travel infrastructure, providing children with the skills not just to navigate the infrastructure on main routes, but also to navigate the local roads in neighborhoods.

Research into the effectiveness of Bikeability has shown a positive impact on:

- **Bikeability helps people to cycle more safely.** For instance, trained children are significantly better at perceiving and appropriately responding to on-road cycling hazards months after training according to report by [NfER 2015, Bikeability impact on hazard perception and response](#)
- **Bikeability helps people cycle more often.** For instance, it has positive, statistically significant impacts on children's cycling rates, parents' confidence in their children's cycling, and children's knowledge of cycling safely on the road according to a report by [SQW 2019, Bikeability impact study](#).
- **Bikeability gives parents and children confidence to cycle.** Parents say Bikeability improves their children's on-road cycle safety and gives them confidence to allow their children to cycle more according to a survey by [Ipsos MORI 2015, Parent and child perceptions of Bikeability](#)).
- **Bikeability offers the taxpayer value for money** with an impressive benefit-to-cost ratio (i.e. the amount of benefit being bought, or return on investment, for every £1 of cost to the public purse) in the range of 7:1 to 3:1 calculated in a study undertaken by the DfT in 2020, [Training children to cycle safely](#)

The case for investing in cycling has been laid in the Prime Minister's ambitious vision 'Gear Change', which recognises the huge benefits to health, wellbeing, congestion, business, environment, air quality, climate change and economy.

Sport and activity is vital for children's mental health, for their self-esteem, and to improve sleep, physical health, social skills and team working; but we also know that it helps children to improve their academic performance. Sport achieves these things by many mechanisms, but particularly by improving concentration. Studies show that GCSE results are better for those children who do more sport. We believe that cycling delivers significant impact for children.

Barrier: Curriculum Time

Through the Bikeability course, children can achieve their full potential to cycle to the National Standards of Cycling; meaning more confidently and safely on the road.

Currently, as Bikeability is not part of the statutory curriculum, there is no protected teaching time and no leadership accountability for delivering as part of the broad and balanced curriculum in schools. Schools have many demands on their time, but seeing cycling as a life skill that helps children's wellbeing, health, safety and independence in the same way that swimming has a statutory requirement will increase take up. We have wide variance in take up, which is often aligned to Headteacher discretion. In 2019, we estimated 85% of schools in Cambridgeshire took up Bikeability compared to only 14% in Bradford.

84% of parents surveyed in Bike to School week said they do not want to drive their children to school, and 4 in 5 parents wants cycling skills to be part of the National Curriculum^[2]. Sport and cycling also crosses in to the main stream curriculum by providing a practical way of delivering numeracy and other core curriculum material.

However, this is not solely about encouraging more children to cycle to school, instilling a love and joy of cycling through early child development will impact on future life choices and so it is vital to embed cycling in early childhood.

Barrier: Lack of Infrastructure

We welcome the vision in Gear Change to dramatically invest in infrastructure including cycling, bus and walking corridors, low traffic-neighbourhoods and Mini-Hollands. We strongly support the inclusion of 'school streets'. Infrastructure dramatically increases the number of people cycling, and investment is required to improve cycling experience across the country.

We also hear from practice anecdote from our Instructors and Training Providers:

- Many schools cite lack of cycle storage facilities as a common reason for refusing Bikeability courses
- Safe, affordable cycle storage in urban areas is a common barrier for cycle ownership
- Lack of community facilities with dedicated cycle storage prevents wider active travel choice for short urban journeys

However, infrastructure alone is not the sole answer, cycling training wherever cycling is permitted is vital in ensuring that everyone has the skills and knowledge to choose active travel with confidence.

^[2] [Sustrans Bike to School Week](#) and [Bike to School Week: Should cycling be added to the curriculum? - CBBC Newsround](#)

Barrier: Parent and Children's Fear

We recognise that the role of parents and carers in being an advocate in developing children's confidence to cycle is significant. In training our Instructors often hear that parents and carers can be a significant negative barrier to allowing children to cycle. If parents and carers are not themselves cyclists they are more likely to prevent their children from cycling, and most often cite road safety fear as the rationale.

In response to this the Trust has already developed resources for parents and schools and will do further work in 2021 to target parents and carers with information about cycling with confidence. See: [Bikeability | Professional cycle training | Tools for Schools](#) and [Bikeability | Put cycling training skills into practice by cycling as a family](#). We have also developed a whole new Bikeability course for Families to learn together; raising the skill and confidence of both parents and children together.

The Bikeability programme is built on teaching children to cycle with confidence wherever cycling is permitted by demonstrating ability to cycle to the National Standards of Cycling. Through our independent evaluation we have found that:

- Bikeability schemes enjoy a very high degree of customer satisfaction (98% of parents surveyed said they were satisfied with the Bikeability scheme, of which 76% were very satisfied).
- The overwhelming majority of parents whose child has taken part in Bikeability feel that it has had a positive impact on their child's safety when cycling on the road (93%).
- Similarly, children who have taken part in Bikeability also report that they feel more confident about riding their bike generally (93%) and riding their bike on the road (86%).
- The main things that the children interviewed say that they learnt from taking part in Bikeability are 'to ride my bike more safely' (68%), 'to ride my bike safely on the road' (53%) and 'to ride my bike with confidence (36%)'.

Source: [Ipsos MORI 2015, Parent and child perceptions of Bikeability](#).

The Trust supports the vision of Gear Change in investment in infrastructure and the continued offering of training for every child and every adult. Delivered together the cycling revolution is more achievable.

2. The Committee has heard that the number of people cycling to school and kids who are able to cycle reflects their economic background and the level of inequality in the country. Do you agree with that assessment and how can this inequality be addressed?

Currently the funding available via the Department for Transport for Bikeability training enables a proportion of all of England's school children to receive grant funded training. The ambition in Gear Change is that every adult and every child should be offered cycle training and we are working with the Department for Transport on the plans for investment in cycle training. Our published delivery statistics are in the Appendix, and the government have just announced an increased £18million investment in the 2021 year Bikeability funding. [£18 million](#)

announced for cycle training for children and their families - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Bikeability funding is awarded by competitive bidding by Local Highways Authorities and School Games Organisers. All English Highways Agencies are now Grant Recipients and our courses cover the whole of England. Note that we do not cover London as the funding is run by Transport for London. Grant funding is not distributed on the basis of population in a locality, and demand is always higher than we have grant funding to distribute. Therefore not all schools and not all children in England will currently have the chance to take up Bikeability in 2021.

It is though our ambition to ensure that every child has a chance to receive Bikeability training by 2025, and this is an ambition restated in the Gear Change vision. We are working hard at the moment with our partners to support Bikeability providers and instructors to scale-up in response to increased funding so they can deliver more training places at the same high-quality, professional training level. Ultimately, we are committed to our vision to ensure that everyone has the confidence to cycle and enjoy this skill for life, and will be pushing for the investment in funding to reach every child in the forthcoming Government Spending Review and through the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

All Bikeability instructors are fully qualified and trained to an Ofqual regulated standard to deliver high quality Bikeability courses to anyone, across the country and on any form of cycle, provided it is roadworthy. Training will be delivered to ensure it fits with the individual's abilities and will attempt to remove any barriers to participation.

Outside of the funding to reach every child, the Bikeability Trust recognises that there are further barriers to accessing Bikeability in England and we are actively taking action to address this, starting with looking at who and who isn't being trained. The 2021/22 Bikeability grant terms and conditions include a requirement to report trainee characteristics (anonymously and at an aggregate level) of children taking part in training by:

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Pupil Premium
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

This data has not been systematically collated in the past, therefore Bikeability Trust does not hold accurate and reliable data that would enable us to plan targeted interventions on under-represented groups in training delivery. Therefore, we believe from practice anecdote the barriers to accessing Bikeability are:

- Poverty and deprivation (access and ownership of cycles)
- SEND (cost of adapted equipment and access to training in specialist schools)
- Cultural barriers within ethnic groups about the importance of cycling

Throughout 2021 we will be gathering the characteristics of trainees and will then analyse against school level population data. This will give a more accurate picture of take up and enable us, the Bikeability Trust, to plan with our Training Providers interventions that enable all children to take up Bikeability. We are also fundraising through our charitable status to be able to provide additional funding to take action on barriers to participation, including cycle ownership.

Whilst we build on the picture of evidence around take up of Bikeability, it is vital to note that many of our Bikeability Training Providers already work hard to ensure that all children can access Bikeability and we have a number of measures in place for providers:

- An inclusive Bikeability delivery guide
<https://professionals.bikeability.org.uk/download/719/>
- A system of Quality assurance of Training Providers
- Continuing Professional Development expectations on training
- Observation and Mentoring of Instructors
- Webinars and practice sharing
- Innovation and targeted work with under-represented groups (e.g. muslim women's groups, work with young offenders, homelessness and housing charities, work with asylum seeker groups and cycle loan schemes)
- Our partnerships strategy for 2021 which is seeking to secure corporate partners in the Bike industry to be able to offer bikes at low cost in areas of deprivation

In addition, many of our Training Providers have invested through their own finances in:

- Cycles and helmets that can be loaned to trainees who do not have their own
- Adapted cycles for SEND pupil participation

The Bikeability Trust has also invested our own charitable funds (our Innovation Fund) and we recently released £300,000 of grant funding for 18 SEND pilot projects. The purpose of this funding was to:

1. To gather information on training costs for children with SEND in order to build this into future grant funding programmes
2. To compile case studies / best practice with innovative training solutions for children with SEND.
3. To increase the number of children trained with SEND
4. To ensure accurate delivery records of children trained with SEND

The pilot projects are being evaluated by Oxford Brookes and Cardiff University researchers and we expect results of the evaluation in Autumn 2021. This evaluation will further build the case for what targeted interventions have the most impact on SEND children. Our Innovation Fund will also release further funds in 2021 on targeted interventions likely with under-represented groups in cycling and we are currently considering the next steps for the fund.

As Department for Transport builds up the plan to offer to 'every child', we will clearly need to define what this means, for example offer every child in England Bikeability Balance, Learn to Ride, Level1, Level, 2 and Level 3. However, the ambition and direction is contingent on securing the funding in the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, and dependent on the outcome the offer may need to be refined.

The Bikeability Trust is committed to our mission and vision to ensure every child has the confidence to cycle and we welcome the opportunity to submit evidence to the Committee.

For more information about Bikeability Trust: www.bikeability.org.uk

Appendix: Bikeability Delivery Statistics

Bikeability has now been delivered to more than 3.5million children in England (not including London figures) since in started in 2006. The Bikeability Trust took over operations of the Bikeability programme in 2017.

Figures are broken down by Local Highway Authority (LHA) and School Games Organiser Host Schools (SGOHSs). The Bikeability programme has now been delivered to over 3.5million children in England.

Financial year	LHA	SGOHS	TOTAL
06/07	7,983	N/A	7,983
07/08	26,894	N/A	26,894
08/09	71,958	20,621	92,579
09/10	123,890	10,094	133,984
10/11	129,379	69,818	199,197
11/12	181,497	112,472	293,969
12/13	210,873	44,960	255,833
13/14	231,859	47,499	279,358
14/15	288,363	62,198	350,561
15/16	259,289	54,191	313,780
16/17	289,812	65,944	355,756
17/18	334,448	70,343	404,791
18/19	341,158	69,911	411,069
19/20	352,887	67,520	420,407
		TOTAL	3,546,161

We report delivery statistics annually: [Bikeability | Documents and reports relating to Bikeability cycle training](#)

Regional delivery of places (2019/20)

* Excludes any London data, as Bikeability funding is provided by Transport for London

Region	Core	Plus	Total
East Anglia	41,417	5,169	46,586
East Midlands	32,913	8,375	41,288
North East	20,405	7,539	27,944
North West	66,565	16,540	83,105
South East	54,576	9,381	63,957
South West	39,198	9,281	48,479
West Midlands	48,544	5,080	53,624
Yorkshire & The Humber	40,710	14,714	55,424
Total	344,328	76,079	420,407

Regional distribution of funding (2019/20)

Region	Funding	% distribution
East Anglia	£ 1,326,257.00	10%
East Midlands	£ 1,322,591.50	10%
North East	£ 742,940.00	6%
North West	£ 2,764,469.00	20%
South East	£ 2,143,655.00	16%
South West	£ 1,638,151.00	12%
West Midlands	£ 1,740,937.00	13%
Yorkshire & The Humber	£ 1,721,596.00	13%
Total	£13,400,596.50	100%

Delivery figures (2019/20)

Number of children in year 6 in England (excluding London) 2019/20	582,050
Number of combined level 1 & 2 places and level 2 places delivered in 2019/20	257,088
% of year 6 children in England receiving either L1&2 combined or L2 Bikeability training	44%

* Using pupil data source: [Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2019 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Note: Additional, paid-for training is also available in many local authority areas, but the Bikeability Trust does not hold data on how many paid for additional places are delivered in local authority areas. We solely report on DfT grant funded places.

23 April 2021