

# HERO BIKES



Hero Bikes Report  
September 2020



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Stina, Support Worker



Joseph, Support Worker



**The Bike Station is Edinburgh and Perth's foremost bicycle recycling and cycling promotion charity.**

The Bike Station promotes cycling in all its forms by: refurbishing donated bikes and re-using components, enabling healthier, happier and more affordable journeys, developing skills, confidence and the spirit of adventure, and supporting better connected and environmentally sustainable communities.





## SUMMARY

The Hero Bikes scheme has provided free recycled bikes to key workers (as defined by the UK government during the coronavirus pandemic) to enable safe, affordable independent travel.

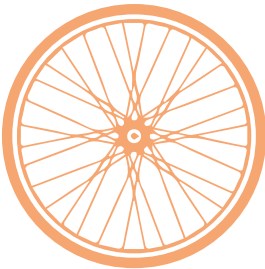
Our motivation was to support key workers in need to perform their roles effectively and maintain their physical and mental health during this demanding time, when there were significant risks associated with other transport options (i.e. public transport, taxis, liftsharing).

The scheme launched on 10 April and this report was compiled based on data received up to 31 August 2020.

## EVALUATION

We are evaluating the project by assessing impacts in terms of:

- Number of bikes provided to key workers
- Health, well-being and economic benefits to accessing a bike during the pandemic
- Additional benefits to cycling during a pandemic



Evaluation to date is based on analysis of responses from 37 individuals:

- Responses from 33 Hero Bike recipients to a 'check-up' email asking how they were getting on with their bike
- Semi-structured phone interviews with 4 recipients to provide more detailed case studies
- Information provided by recipients to journalists for media coverage of the Hero Bikes scheme (these recipients also responded to us by email)



## NUMBER OF HERO BIKES DISTRIBUTED

In total 207 bikes were given out between 10 April and 31 August 2020, this includes 104 in Edinburgh and 103 in Perth.

Percentage breakdown of recipients by key worker employment sector:

SECTOR	EDINBURGH	PERTH
Health and social care	69%	66%
Food and other necessary goods	13%	13%
Education and childcare	6%	3%
Key public services	2%	6%
Utilities, communication and financial services	2%	4%
Public safety and national security	4%	3%
Transport	4%	4%
Local and national government	1%	2%



## KEY THEMES:

### WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THEIR HERO BIKES

These are the key themes to emerge from our analysis to date, illustrated by quotes from recipients.



**65%**

told us how  
much joy their  
Hero Bike  
gave them



**70%**

are using  
their Hero Bike  
to commute

**30%**




saw an improvement  
on their mental  
health.

**48%**

saved time on their  
commute. Giving  
them more time  
with their  
families.

**48%**



talked about how  
their Hero Bike  
improved their  
fitness.

**24%**

are now  
encouraging  
others to cycle.



Colin, Baker



Amy, Support Worker

## PEOPLE ARE USING THEIR BIKES TO TRAVEL TO WORK

**70% of respondents say they are using their bikes to commute and do so for all or nearly all their work journeys.**

The small number of respondents who said they are not yet cycling to work stated the need to gain confidence, particularly in traffic.

*'First off I'm loving the bike it's been a great help in getting me to work on a daily basis and popping about in town.'*

Eunan, Nurse, Perth

*'I no longer need to pay 30+ quid a month on a bus pass and I need never be late for a shift ever again.'*

Joe, Health and Social Care, Edinburgh

*'...I've been getting used to be out on the bike and on cycle paths again....I use it a lot at weekends to exercise and get fresh air, whilst building up the confidence to cycle out on roads.'*

Sarah, Nurse, Edinburgh

## CYCLING IS A PLEASURE

**64% spoke about their enjoyment of cycling; for example,**

'loving/enjoying the bike/riding', citing cycling's 'very good feel factor', the fact it brought back happy childhood memories of cycling, that it gave them freedom and was an enjoyable form of exercise.



*'I have used it almost every day since I got it, mostly to go to work but also for exercise and pleasure, I do feel fitter now than when I first got the bike and have recently been given a tagalong bike so I can take my youngest grandson along with his siblings on cycle rides.'*

Yvonne, pupil support assistant, Perth





Karima, Support Worker



Wendy, Health Care

## TIME-SAVING IS AN IMPORTANT BENEFIT OF CYCLE COMMUTING

**48% reported time savings on journeys compared to walking.**

Respondents were delighted with journey times cut by half or more, and some said how important this was when working long shifts, especially if starting early or finishing late.

*'...Helped me a lot in my normal day, making my life much easier. Now I spend less time on my way to work so it gives me the chance to rest a little bit more or to have time to myself.'*

Francesca, Food Retail, Edinburgh

*'I'm using it 5 days a week to commute to and from work, the difference it has made is huge. Prior to having my Hero Bike, I spent a total of three hours walking. Due to the cycling this has reduced to an hour, which means I'm more refreshed for work and have more time to spend with my children in the evening.'*

Keira, support worker, Perth

*'It's lovely, it's to do with the time, it cuts my travel time down. After a twelve-hour shift, the thought of walking home is like 'Oh God' but with a bike you're back so quick.'*

Lena, carer, Perth

In one case, the time saving compared to walking was so significant it enabled the recipient to keep his job when public transport services were reduced:

*'At the beginning of coronavirus, I think I would have lost my job if it hadn't been for that bike. Because the number 70 was cancelled so I needed the bike to get to work.'*

*I've got two children, so I have to work, and that bike just saved my life, I don't know what I would have done without it.'*

Male, aged 26-35, Perth







Raphael, Chef at Home Care

## PHYSICAL BENEFITS

48% talked about losing weight, feeling healthier, getting or keeping fit and riding for exercise.

Several liked the fact that cycling to work built exercise into their routine.

*'I've just used it to try and get my fitness levels up as much as anything... Even in the first couple of weeks I've taken time off my journey home.'*

Kyra, carer, Perth

*'...using this bike a few times a week for leisure, and ... this is great, and helps keep me fit and stops me getting bored with the [running] I used to do ... I can't say thank you enough.'*

Heather, Health and Social Care, Edinburgh



*'Best choice I have made because my life style is changed and my health improved.'*

Nicola, Food Retail, Edinburgh



Elaine, Teacher

## POSITIVE IMPACTS ON MENTAL HEALTH AND GENERAL WELL BEING

30% found cycling helped them to 'unwind', 'clear the head' or just made them 'feel better'.

This was a more prominent theme in Edinburgh.

*'I have become so much more independent and I've been using it daily.'*

Elaine, Primary School teacher, Edinburgh

*'Thank you so much again - I absolutely love my bike and can't imagine not having it anymore!'*

Theresa, Junior Doctor, Edinburgh

*'It's helped me to get work much faster which means more down time for myself which is needed greatly. I've also been discovering more of the beauty outside of the city ever since.'*

Joe, Health and Social Care, Edinburgh

*'As well as reducing the time of my commute, I've noticed that the exercise I'm getting by cycling has lifted my mood. On days off I've been exploring parts of the city by bike as my confidence has increased. I genuinely think this has been a game-changer for me.'*

A female Health Care Assistant, Edinburgh



## HERO BIKES ARE INSPIRING AND ENABLING OTHERS TO CYCLE

24% told us they have acted as catalysts encouraging others to cycle.

Respondents use the bikes to get outdoors with their families, and at least two have sourced accessories to get out with young children. One recipient also said her cycling had 'inspired people', with some colleagues looking into getting bikes.

*'My Hero Bike has helped me hugely for getting to and from work. It has also been useful during work as I am able to go out on cycle runs with one of the people that I support which is a very positive activity for them.'*

Carriane, support practitioner, Perth.



Dee, Nurse

## CASE STUDIES

More detailed stories from two interviews.

# 1.

MALE

AGED 36-45

FROM PERTH

This recipient used his bike for all his work journeys - previously he walked, or when available, took the family car. Cycling was quicker than walking (10-15 instead of 30 minutes) and became his preferred mode of transport for all short journeys, even when he had the option to drive because he felt better for using the bike, there were no parking issues, and it was 'just as easy'. In addition, he said:

*'the cycle still gives you time to unwind and clear the head, the physical activity just helps you relax a bit. Especially if I take the longer way home by the river, it's nice to see the wildlife too.'*

He also found the bike was a 'massive bonus' for getting out of the house with his wife and children during lockdown. He had put off getting a bike for himself before, so the Hero Bike enabled these outings and the family's distances increased as they explored the local area, making new discoveries and spending more time outdoors:

*'The first time we went for a family cycle, it was actually the children's idea, 'could we cycle down to the park?'*

It took my wife a bit of persuading but once we were past the busy traffic and she saw how safe

it was and how nice it was just to cycle she really enjoyed it. It went from there and it just expanded, the more I saw how far the cycle paths extended the more I looked for new ones.'

The local rides gave them a new appreciation of 'what the surrounding area has to offer' and overall the bike appears to have had a significant impact on the whole families' travel behaviour:

*'It's motivated my family to get out more as well, they'll see me use my bike frequently so it motivates them to use their bikes too. Instead of just jumping in the car to nip down to town, we as a family now opt to cycle. Just for little things, so that's had a huge impact. I haven't really seen a financial saving yet...but we're not filling the car up with petrol as much so that will make a difference.'*

He intends to continue cycling, possibly using the cycle paths for commuting more often as traffic returns to normal, and planned to look into using bikes for the school run, although his children will need to cycle on the pavement as there is no safe route by road or cycle path.

2.

FEMALE

AGED 26-35

FROM EDINBURGH



Leigh Anne, Nurse

Like many key workers, N was motivated to apply for a Hero Bike because:

***'I work in ICU so did not want to spread the Virus in the morning from the bus to my patients.'***

Because she had no other way of getting to and from work, she spent a lot of time walking.

***'but that's sometimes not possible with the amount of overtime I am doing and the time it takes me to walk.'***

At the time she applied, she rated her cycling confidence quite low at 3/5, as during a previous winter a few years ago, she had come off her bike on a slippery road and had become weary of cycling. She now uses her Hero Bike 3-4 times weekly to cycle the 5-mile journey each way to work and back, partly on the off-road cycle path network and partly on the road amongst peak-time traffic, and says she feels so much better for it in many ways.

***'I was nervous at first but now it feels good to be cycling again....With an increase in traffic, will keep cycling on the paths but also on the road - mixed is fine. Yes, noticed cars are driving faster as they had quieter roads... But I just have to not think about that': Definitely a bit more careful now, ...so fingers crossed, .... getting a lot more confident now.'***

She says the Hero Bike is helping her get fitter.

***'The hills were a bit of a shock in the morning but it wakes me up and am now getting used to it...'***

Alongside her commute, it is also getting her out in her free time, to exercise more and be out in the fresh air. She now does cycle outings on the weekends and on days off and explores the cycle paths that start near her house,

***'At work, I am on my feet all day, then I am not motivated to go for a walk after work - just too tired. But with the bike, I use different muscles so feel much more like cycling and getting out after work.'***

N is also well aware of the benefits this new cycling routine is having on her mental well-being:

***'The good thing about cycling is that I was using headphones whilst walking, which I do not do on the bike. I realise now that my head was full of noise - and I appreciate the peace and quiet in my head. Gives my brain a chance to slow down, especially on the way home - the whole busy day of work - I get a chance to reflect on work and clear my head. I get home much more relaxed.'***

And there are benefits for the people she lives with:

***'My partner sees how I am so much less stressed when I get home, so he is now thinking of getting a bike because he sees how positive this is for me.'***

She says: 'Altogether I really appreciate having the bike now - it has been a great opportunity to get back into cycling. Thank you very much.'



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## KEY LEARNING POINTS

Hero Bikes provided a rapid response to the changes Covid-19 brought in March 2020. We knew that we could provide bicycles for key workers, as reconditioning bicycles is what we do best. We also knew that bicycles could be a solution to a whole set of challenges that key workers were facing, not least: the risks of spreading the virus through their use of public transport or lift-sharing; saving significant time spent commuting during times of restricted public transport services and for many, longer and changing patterns of shift hours; and alleviating stress by taking additional exercise and being out and about in the fresh air.

The feedback we have received from recipients confirms this scheme provided a significant response and addressed these challenges.

As a team, we have considered what we have learnt as a result of the last six months. The following areas were identified as areas of key learning:

### Publicly promoting free bikes generates a lot of interest - anticipating oversubscription will enable us to plan our resources better.

There was an overwhelming number of requests for bicycles, our small team looked to respond quickly and reallocate our rapidly diminished resources (this was compounded by a reduced workforce with some members of the team remaining at home due to health vulnerabilities, restricted spaces in which we could enable the remaining team to work safely, and the requirement to pause the public donations of bicycles for reconditioning)

### Prioritising recipients is challenging.

The initial response within the first few days was incredible - **by developing our assessment process of key workers' particular needs**, we could have refined the selection criteria for key workers to be matched with bikes.

### Providing bikes is only part of the answer.

Our key workers were provided with a newly refurbished bike during a time when our streets were significantly quieter. Providing support for maintaining the bike and its road-ready ability and providing support in route mapping, cycle training and campaigning for safer infrastructure will continue to be essential for long term bike use.

### Evaluation methods need to be respectful and creative.

We took an early decision to reduce additional demands on key workers when thinking about our evaluation methods. There is a need to capture information and feedback about our project's impact while still respecting the stress and pressure many bike recipients are working under.



## SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

Covid-19 has created a series of significant changes and challenges to our daily life. The Bike Station wants to build on what is strong and look at how we can continue to provide a response to the pandemic on a local level.

We recognise that Covid-19 continues to impact on our lives but also impacts significantly in particular areas of our community widening the gap of inequalities. We want our bikes, training and support to make a difference with those that need it the most.

We are therefore looking to develop Hero Bikes into a community referral scheme, informed by the emerging evidence of what is needed locally. Our approach is to listen to the needs of local partners and develop our programme with refined selection criteria and a broader skills development opportunity. Feedback and learning from Hero Bikes will be essential information and we will be conducting a longer-term survey with Hero Bikes recipients to assess longer-term impacts.

For future community-based activity evaluation frameworks will continue to be sensitive to the needs and lives of those receiving bikes and will provide creative opportunities to capture information about the project's success and impacts.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

It has been uplifting to hear the many different ways Hero Bikes helped improve people's lives and a privilege to help support key workers during this time. We are very grateful to our funders for the flexibility and support that made this programme possible.





**THANK YOU TO OUR AMAZING  
HERO BIKE RECIPIENTS,  
YOU CONTINUE TO INSPIRE US.**



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