

Shifting Gears

Mid Year Report



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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.

Introduction

Shifting Gears is a grassroots community led project that has been operating since April 2021 in Perth and Edinburgh. The project aims to support those most impacted as a result of Covid-19, enabling them to receive a free bike, to develop bike riding skills and bike maintenance skills. It also offers an opportunity to access industry standard bike maintenance certification and paid employment.

Shifting Gears was developed following the evidence of impact and need identified during The Bike Station's highly successful Hero Bikes programme, providing free bikes to key workers during the pandemic. In late 2020 The Bike Station consulted widely about the changes our communities faced; and by working in partnership with organisations who are experts in the lives of those most impacted by Covid-19 key outcomes and objectives were identified.



PARTNERS



Evaluation

Methodology



Phone Calls



Face 2 Face



Surveys



Team Discussion



Case Studies



Observations

With a commitment to ensuring our programme activity demonstrated strong evidence of impact, our programme delivery is underpinned by a robust evaluation framework.

In order to create this the two community outreach workers created a theory of change model that formed the backbone of the evaluation. Using a range of evaluation methods we have gathered baseline data for each of the individual elements of delivery and then returned to our participants to gather information regarding the impact of the programme elements.

Gathering qualitative and quantitative information has enabled us to better understand the success of our activity, as well as any key learning points and areas for improvement. Furthermore, we have developed specific case studies to demonstrate the impact on individuals and have extensive video and photographic information supporting the evaluation data.



147

Bikes refurbished and distributed with Lights, Locks and Helmets + panniers and child seats where needed



177

Cycling Sessions run including 121 & group lessons and group rides



4

Assistant Mechanics recruited from our programme participants to start work in Nov

Partner Feedback

Being a member of staff at PAS I was fortunate enough to be offered the last place to receive a free bike. This was amazing as it allowed me to go on the cycling sessions with the young people and give them that extra support when doing so. I hadn't cycled for years and forgot how fun it can be.

Not only do I get exercise but I get to join in with the joy the young people have when going out on the bike. I can now also get more fit and healthy by cycling my bike to and from work and I can also join my nephews on cycle runs which they love to do often.

Bike Magic

65%

Said riding bikes improved their mental health

55%

Chose cycling over public transport or walking

44%

Use their bike more than twice a week

“ See the service that you’ve provided, I might be getting older, life’s life, my relationship ended, and for the mental illness side of it, getting out on a bike again, it’s just been tremendous. It’s like all my Christmases come at once’



“I fell off the bicycle when I was a child and I never went back on it but my kids love to ride on the bikes. I always run after them to keep up when we are out and about, so I was determined to learn but couldn't just do it until I registered with bike Station this summer. Now after 3 weeks, I can go out for 15 miles on a bike ride.

Gerry, my instructor, has been superb, very calm and patient. I couldn't have done it without his encouragement and reassuring words.

Thank you Bike Station

90%

Use their bike to improve health & fitness

Cycling

Lessons & Rides

“ Being able to ride a bike on the first day of my cycling lessons is something that I never expected, but thanks to my instructor I did what I thought was not possible on that first day. I feel that I have benefited both a skill and a bike.



Partner Observations



The smile on Zen and Theresa's faces was a sight to behold. Both, who had never met before, are arranging to meet up for coffee and are already excited about next week's workshop.



'K was very keen to continue building on progress made at his morning lesson with pedalling and arranged to go on a second lesson that afternoon with another participant. He said "I'm really proud of myself" when reflecting on his progress so far i.e being able to pedal after two lessons.'

90%

Benefited from socialising and meeting new people

75%

Now felt confident cycling off road

55%

Now felt confident to cycle on roads

60%

Discovered new cycle routes

63%

Completed an improver session

Bike

Care & Repair

“ Getting to engage with others and being able to handle and fix parts of the bike was excellent.

85%

Are confident completing safety checks on their bikes before rides.

75%

Are confident in maintaining their bike, including parts & pumping tyres.

71%

Are confident completing a puncture repair.



'I learned a lot of new things and it felt engaging and inclusive.'

'In case I ever have a puncture, or my chain falls off, then he [Gerry] has shown me what to do.'

CASE STUDY

Perth



Alexa got a bike through Shifting Gears after not having ridden for years.

In July she joined an initial programme of confidence builder cycling lessons.

She started to go on organised group rides, cycling initially once a week, then twice a week through August and September.

She found the lunch time hour and a half rides were most enjoyable, and gradually built up to cycling over 14km until ill health prevented her from riding:

"I was thoroughly enjoying it. It was a sociable activity, it was nice to get out and do something that I've not done for many years and meet

new people. I always felt refreshed after a ride and that I'd achieved something instead of just sitting around on my bum".

Overall, the impact of taking up cycling was "very positive, when I was well enough to be able to do it. And also because of the area, cycling next to the golf course, I ended up dusting down my golf clubs as well and getting out for a couple of rounds of golf as well which was great."

Alexa has particularly benefited from the opportunities to cycle with others that Shifting Gears has provided because she would not yet be confident to cycle alone: "in the group, now that I've got back on the bike, as long as I knew there were people around I was fine. "

“
I always felt refreshed after a ride and that I'd achieved something instead of just sitting around on my bum.



In April Mo received a bike through the Shifting Gears programme having never ridden before.

When cycling workshops began back in July, Mo was the first person to sign up and has gone from strength to strength ever since

Despite having next to no prior cycling experience, by the end of her first lesson Mo was pedalling confidently and by the end of her fifth lesson she was riding over 10 miles, a testament to her consistent practice and determination. She now rides regularly both with Gerry - our cycling instructor - and on her own.

Overall, Mo's experience of learning to ride has been positive, listing it as one of her major achievements for this year:

CASE STUDY

Edinburgh

“I look forward to going out on my bike and just enjoying it. Since I have learned to ride...there is nothing that has been stopping me... One of the things that I wrote down this year for 'what are my achievements' is the fact that I can ride a bike and go out on my own. It is a very big tick for me.”

She also says that cycling has been beneficial for her knee injury, something that has caused her pain in the past

“I have been running forever but my problem with running is that I get pain in my knee when I overdo it sometimes. I realised that since I learned to ride the bike this summer...my knee has gotten better.”

“I had never ridden a bike before. I tried going on my husband's bike once and I fell so I never went on it again....so July 2021 was my first time ever riding a bike.”

There haven't been any mechanical problems with Mo's bike so far:

“...my bike has been good. It might be old but it is rugged. It is perfect and it has done the job. It has not given me any problems whatsoever.”

Mo talks passionately about how learning to cycle with Shifting Gears has changed her attitude towards other road users,

particularly when she is driving:

“Yes! When I am driving I am much more considerate of cyclists. I think about them especially when I see them trying so hard on the hills, I just know how that feels... I am much more considerate of other road users.”

Now a keen cyclist, Mo has big ambitions for the future! When asked what her intentions for cycling are going forward she replied:

“To do the Tour de France [laughing]... But really I would like to be able to cycle to work and back at least two or three times a week. That is one thing that I am really

looking forward to in the next few months.”

Two aspects of Shifting Gears that Mo highlighted as particularly good were that the trainer can meet you at a location of your choice, and that the lessons were 1-to-1.

“Since I have learned to ride...there is nothing that has been stopping me.”

“When I heard about this programme and I saw that you could choose the location where the instructor would come to

meet you I thought that this is just the best ever. I didn't have to drive twelve miles to learn how to cycle. Being able to start and finish the ride at my house has made everything very easy.”

Areas that she would like to see improvement are in having more group activities available now that she is confident on the bike, and having family sessions.

“I now understand road positioning and other things, but my kids learned how to cycle by jumping on the bike and just going...It would be good if we could have a session for my family and anyone who is interested.”

Learning Points

Adapting The Programme

Feedback from our younger participants gave us an opportunity to develop the programme to better meet their needs. Our younger participants expressed an interest in group rides which visited local pump tracks and explored off road mountain bike trails.

Building relationships

Feedback from participants noted the impact of Covid-19 on their confidence to try new things and meet new people, especially in new places. Moving forward we will offer introductory sessions and open events to people referred to the programme so they are able to meet the project team, hear about the programme and build valuable relationships with the team.

Cycle Training with Referral Bike Distribution

In April 2021 due to changes in the project team, there was a notable gap between the provision of a referral bike to a participant and the offer of bike skills sessions. The impact of this delay meant some participants reported they had developed their cycling skills themselves and as a result did not require ongoing support from the programme and meant engagement later was more challenging. Moving forward we will ensure that cycling skills are offered as part of the initial bike referral and provision of a bike.

The diffuse geographic nature of the participants in Edinburgh led to a delivery model being adopted to distribute bikes. Although this was popular with participants, it proved to be an inefficient system from our perspective. Sizing alterations, repairs, and other issues all had to be driven to and from the shop.

In Perth we provided a central point for bike collections at The Bike Station premises which worked well. It enabled us to offer participants a range of community bikes to choose from, meant bikes could be adjusted on site to ensure a good fit, and all accessories could also be fitted. For many this experience added value to the experience and built important relationships with the project team.

Moving forward we will use this approach in both cities and use it as an opportunity to provide 1:1 cycle training.

Skills Development Sessions

Feedback from participants caused us to review the definitions of our skills development sessions. Using terms such as cycling beginner, confident and improver lessons sometimes put people off coming to sessions as they didn't understand or have the confidence to state what they needed. We also found a reticence for participants to share if they were a beginner.

Considering the feedback from participants above, we will refine how we offer skills development sessions including; how we assess readiness, communicate the content and how we deliver the sessions. Initially our focus will be on offering 1-2-1 sessions, enabling greater confidence building and mutual assessment of skills and readiness for other sessions. Participants can then progress onto group lessons and rides at a more incremental and needs-based pace.

Partnerships Development

Working in partnership with Perth Autism support we adapted the programme to ensure it met the needs of the participants to ensure a supportive and manageable experience. This included tailored group cycling lessons and dedicated maintenance classes.

It is worth noting that partners in Edinburgh will need to be reviewed. A key learning experience was that some partners were problematic in their support of the programme and in particular they had their own cycling lesson programme. This meant a conflict of interest arose and participants benefited from both services.

Whilst this was positive for them it did impact on our ability to deliver lessons. It meant lower coaching numbers and no need for group rides. This should not detract from the impact of the Bike Station as it was wholly positive but an identified need to reshape the partnership agreements so partners understand the parameters of the Shifting Gears service.



Shifting Gears

Winter Programme

The project is now entering its winter phase, designed to encourage use of bikes throughout the season.

Specifically it aims to achieve:



Group Rides

Organise group ride elements where people can gather and ride together on specifically identified routes.

Inductions

Induct 2 of our Shifting Gears participants into their paid roles as Assistant Mechanics and learn about maintaining and refurbishing bikes.

Analysis

Take the lessons and data from this year to implement key changes to the Shifting Gears model to ensure the project grows and is able to deliver more bikes, group rides and employability.

Build Bikes

Build 100 bikes for Shifting Gears participants for April 2022 delivery.

Velotech

Provide industry standard bike maintenance training and certification, Velotech Bronze to 6 participants.

Maintenance

Offer a winter bike maintenance programme for those who want to maintain their bikes but don't necessarily want to ride during the colder/wetter months.

Funders & Supporters



Edinburgh

250 Causewayside

Edinburgh

EH9 1UU

Perth

284 High Street

Perth

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thebikestation.org.uk

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