

# Shifting Gears: Participant FAQ

## General

*Shifting Gears is The Bike Station's flagship community programme in Perth and Edinburgh. Launched in April 2021, we continue to work with our partner organisations to make cycling more accessible for all.*

*The programme offers year round opportunities to get involved with cycling and cycling-related activities. We work with a range of partner organisations in the two cities who refer people to the programme. Once you are a participant you have access to the range of services that make up Shifting Gears and can choose which ones you wish to take part in. Please note that places on all Shifting Gears services are limited.*

**Q** Can I apply to Shifting Gears?

**A** So long as you are supported by one of our partner organisations (listed below) then you can get in touch with your representative there to sign up.

### **Edinburgh:**

Cyrenians  
Shakti Women's Aid  
Edinburgh Women's Aid  
VOCAL Carers Hub  
Community Renewal Trust  
Bethany Christian Trust

### **Perth:**

Perth Women's Aid  
PKAVS Carers Hub  
RASAC Perth & Kinross  
One-Stop Women's Learning Service (OWLS)  
PKC CASA Team (Children Alone Seeking Asylum)  
Mears Group  
No. 3 One Stop Shop (Perth Autism Initiatives)  
MoveAhead (NHS Tayside)  
Scottish Refugee Council (Afghan Community Support)

**Q** I have a child, can they join the programme too?

**A** Yes, direct members of family are welcome to join the programme with you, just sign up using our family referral form. If you have any further childcare needs then please contact us directly and we can see how we can support you.

**Q** Are there any costs for Shifting Gears activities?

**A** No, all activities offered through the programme are free of charge to participants. We do charge for some bike repair services outside the 3 month warranty period for your Shifting Gears bike but aim to provide affordable options for all participants. See below for further details.

**Q** How long do I have access to Shifting Gears?

**A** Once registered, you have 2 years of full access to our services. This includes getting a bicycle, joining cycling and maintenance workshops, attending group rides, and applying to our work placements.

**Q** What happens after two years?

**A** After your two years as a Shifting Gears participant, you automatically become a member of the Shifting Gears Club. This gives you access to our group rides, and discounted access to our standard repair services including the cost of parts and Skills Development services (including all maintenance classes except Velotech).

## Referral Bike

*Our referral bike service gives you the opportunity to get a refurbished bike, along with a lock, lights, and helmet so that you can get riding straight away! Please note that this service primarily offers adult bikes for ages 16 and up. We have a limited number of bikes each year and if you join the programme after these are taken you will have to wait until the next year to receive a bike.*

**Q** Can I choose my bike?

**A** Yes, you can choose from our range of Shifting Gears bikes. We strive to offer everyone a choice of bikes in a suitable size and style, but this is subject to availability since our range is dependent on donations.

**Q** Is it a new bike?

**A** No. At The Bike Station we specialise in refurbishing second-hand, donated bicycles. All of our bikes are different, but they are all built to the same high standards. We pride ourselves on our work and in giving bikes a second chance!

**Q** Can I swap my bike?

**A** If you think that your bike is not the correct size then we can arrange a swap. Please get in touch with us as soon as possible using the appropriate email address below and we will arrange for you to get a more suitable bike. Swaps are limited to one per participant.

**Edinburgh:** [calumg@thebikestation.org.uk](mailto:calumg@thebikestation.org.uk)

**Perth:** [jrogers@thebikestation.org.uk](mailto:jrogers@thebikestation.org.uk)

**Q** What if something goes wrong with my bike?

**A** All of our bikes have a 3 month warranty which covers any mechanical fault that occurs or adjustments that need to be made to the bike during this time. The warranty does not cover punctures, usual wear and tear, issues caused by improper use or a lack of maintenance, tampering, or accident damage.

**Q** What if something goes wrong with my bike that is not covered by the warranty or occurs after the 3 month warranty period has ended?

**A** For the two years you are a member of Shifting Gears you have free access to maintenance workshops. At these sessions our mechanics can help you identify what is wrong with your bike and repair it with you. There is no charge for classes or secondhand parts but you will need to pay for any new parts at cost price (discounted normal price).

Alternatively if you would prefer us to fix your bike, we offer Shifting Gears participants a 50% discount on all our standard repair services. A list of which can be found [here](#).

**Q** I am in the Shifting Gears Club and something is wrong with my bike. What can I do?

**A** As a member of the Shifting gears Club you have one year's free access to Fix Your Own Bike at both our Edinburgh and Perth locations, and a 15% discount thereafter. Fix Your Own Bike sessions happen once a week and you will be given all the support, tools and knowledge you need to identify and repair your bike.

Shifting Gears Club members also get a 15% discount on our standard repair services including the cost of parts and [Skills Development services](#) (including all maintenance classes except Velotech).

**Q** Do you have bikes for children?

**A** We can provide bicycles for children through our sister project - The Wee Bike Library. If you would like to get bikes for children we will need to submit a separate referral [here](#).

**Q** I don't live close to The Bike Station, can you deliver my bike to me?

**A** Arrangements are different in Edinburgh and Perth:

**Edinburgh:** While we encourage participants to collect their bike from us where possible, if this is not convenient then we are able to arrange for the bike to be delivered to you. Our normal delivery day is Monday from 10am - 4pm. Please get in touch with us directly to arrange this ([calumg@thebikestation.org.uk](mailto:calumg@thebikestation.org.uk)).

**Perth:** The standard arrangement for getting a bike is to pick it up from our shop. If you are unable to do this and don't have anyone who could help with transport, please speak to your contact at the Shifting Gears partner organisation who referred you to the programme (see above for a list). We don't want this to be a barrier to getting a bike.

**Q** Do I have to give the bike back?

**A** No, the bike is yours to keep. If you chose to donate your bike back to us we will re-use it to get a new participant on the road, but this is completely optional.

**Q** What about accessories?

**A** As part of the referral bike service we provide you with a helmet, lights, and a quality lock to make sure you have all the things you need to get you moving.

**Q** What if I lose my bike lock key?

**A** You will get 2 keys with your lock. We recommend that you separate these so that you have a spare key. Each key has a unique number which we register with the lock manufacturer. If you lose both of your keys, please contact us and we can request new ones.

**Q** What if I lose or break my helmet, lock or lights?

**A** We provide one set of accessories per participant only. If you lose or break any items you are responsible for replacing them. We can provide replacements at cost price for current Shifting Gears participants.

**Q** What if my bike is stolen?

**A** We are unable to replace stolen bikes so please ensure your bike is always stored securely. Click [here](#) for guidance on how to lock your bike.

## Cycling Workshops

*Get moving and build your riding confidence with cycling workshops for people of all abilities. Our trainers offer 1-to-1 and group workshops to teach you the skills you need to ride a bike and feel confident to make the journeys you want to make. Sessions are tailored to your ability and interests. The first sessions will always be in a safe, off-road environment (such as a playground or carpark) and you will only progress to riding on the road when you are ready.*

**Q** I have never ridden a bike before, can you teach me to ride?

**A** Shifting Gears has been designed to accommodate people of all abilities. If you have never ridden or haven't ridden in many years, we can teach you from the beginning. You will start by getting comfortable moving and controlling the bike on foot, then learning to scoot, steer and brake without pedals, and finally pedalling. If you can ride but want to improve your skills to give you more confidence on the road then we can help too.

**Q** I can ride already, what will I do at a 1-to-1 cycling workshop?

**A** Our cycle tutors can help you with anything you want to achieve with your bike! Here are just some of the options:

- refresh basic cycling skills e.g. using gears, signalling
- show you how to ride safely on roads
- find new routes in your local area
- help you plan the best way to make a specific journey
- provide some friendly company and motivation to get out and rediscover the fun of cycling
- advise on kit and accessories, nutrition, setting cycling goals or training
- help you build your confidence to join group rides

**Q** Can I start anytime?

**A** Yes, we recommend you book a 1-to-1 cycling workshop to get started and your trainer will then recommend further sessions and activities for you.

**Q** Can I bring someone with me?

**A** Yes, you can book a 1-to-1 cycling workshop for yourself and a support worker, friend or family member if you want a bit of moral support. You can also team up with someone else on the Shifting Gears programme and do workshops together.

**Q** Can children join cycling workshops?

**A** Yes, you can book a 1-to-1 cycling workshop for your family including yourself and any children. Use the session to learn about the best routes for your family, build your skills together with games and challenges, or practice riding safely together on the road. Children under 16 must have a responsible adult with them at all times during activities.

**Q** Do I need to bring anything with me?

**A** It's a good idea to bring any drinks or snacks you may need to keep you going during the workshop. Dress appropriately for the weather and consider bringing an extra layer or waterproof. You may also want to consider gloves to protect your hands.

**Q** I don't have a bike, how can I get involved?

**A** As a participant in Shifting Gears, you can apply to get a bike and any accessories that you need to get you started.

**Q** Do I need to wear a helmet?

**A** It isn't compulsory but we do advise wearing a helmet if you have one.

## Group Rides

*Our group rides are guided social rides in small groups (usually a maximum of 5 to 8 people) along quiet routes in Edinburgh and Perth. They are a great opportunity to practise your cycling skills and to explore new routes and places in your area.*

**Q** I don't have a bike, how can I get involved?

**A** As a participant in Shifting Gears, you can apply to get a bike and any accessories that you need to get you started.

**Q** What is the minimum age to join rides?

**A** Under 16s need to be accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult who is a Shifting Gears participant. Parents are responsible for checking the ride description to ensure it is suitable for their children. Just ask Shifting Gears staff if you're not sure!

**Q** Are there family friendly rides?

**A** Yes. There will be some rides which are suitable for families and all rides will be accompanied by trained members of staff. While the rides are guided, we remind parents that they are responsible for their children.

**Q** Can I bring my friend?

**A** Unfortunately, rides are only open to members of the Shifting Gears programme and we cannot accommodate others.

**Q** How often are the rides?

**A** In general, rides are monthly. We will provide details of rides coming up every month.

**Q** Do I need to bring anything with me?

**A** It's a good idea to bring any drinks or snacks you may need to keep you going on the ride. Dress appropriately for the weather and consider bringing an extra layer or waterproof.

**Q** Do I need to wear a helmet?

**A** It's not compulsory but we do advise wearing a helmet if you have one.

## Maintenance Workshops

*Join Bike Care + Repair group classes and 1-to-1 Maintenance Your Way sessions where you can learn how to look after your bike. We understand that bike maintenance can seem messy and daunting, so we have designed these classes to be inclusive and straightforward.*

**Q** Are courses open to beginners?

**A** Our Bike Care & Repair: The Basics courses are designed as an introduction to looking after your bike, and so are beginner friendly. By the end, you will be able to

name the parts of your bike, check that it is safe to ride, know how to clean and lubricate your bike, and be able to fix a puncture.

**Q** I already know the basics, are there more advanced classes?

**A** Yes, at the Bike Maintenance Your Way sessions you can choose what you want to learn. We have a menu of topics covering a range of skills from basic to advanced, or you can choose a bespoke session to fix any specific problems with your bike.

**Q** Where will the classes take place?

**A** Classes will be hosted at The Bike Station or at locations in the community by our partner organisations.

**Q** Do I need my own tools or equipment for the sessions?

**A** No. All equipment and tools will be provided by The Bike Station on the day but please bring your own bike to work on if possible.

**Q** I don't have a bike, how can I get involved?

**A** You do not need a bike to join maintenance classes. We can provide a bike for you to work on if you don't have your own. As a participant in Shifting Gears, you can apply to get a bike and any accessories from us (subject to availability).

## Qualifications

*We offer the opportunity to gain Velotech qualifications in bike maintenance and a Cycling Scotland qualification in ride leadership.*

**Q** What are Velotech qualifications?

**A** Velotech training courses are industry recognised qualifications in bicycle maintenance and repair. The courses are arranged into three distinct levels - Bronze, Silver and Gold - which go from making adjustments and addressing simple issues on a bike to being able to completely strip and rebuild a bike. Places are limited.

**Q** Are there any prerequisites to joining Velotech courses?

**A** The requirement for the Bronze qualification (where you must begin) is a reasonable understanding of the basic functioning of a bicycle, how to address minor issues, and make adjustments. We will cover many of these themes in the Bike Care + Repair service, so if you don't have this knowledge already we recommend signing up for that.

**Q** Do I need to go through all three Velotech levels?

**A** You must complete the levels in order (from Bronze to Gold) but it is completely up to you which level you want to reach. If you only want to complete Bronze then that is okay, if you want to go all the way and become Gold qualified then we will support you all the way!

**Q** How long are the Velotech courses?

**A** All three levels - Bronze, Silver, and Gold - take place over two days.

**Q** What is the ride leadership qualification?

**A** The Cycling Scotland Ride Leader qualification is a one day course where you will learn to design and lead bike rides for up to 8 people. You could use the qualification

to be an assistant leader on Shifting Gears group rides or to lead rides for other groups. For more details about this course, see the [Cycling Scotland website](#).

**Q** Are there any prerequisites to joining the ride leader course?

**A** You need to be a confident cyclist - able to ride in traffic, up moderate hills and on off road surfaces. You also need to be a good communicator and it is useful to have some basic knowledge of how to identify and fix common problems like punctures.

**Q** Is there a minimum age to join these courses?

**A** The minimum age to take any qualifications through Shifting Gears is 16.

## Work Placement

*Over the winter months there will be opportunities to learn more about what we do at The Bike Station and gain experience alongside by joining our team as an Assistant Mechanic. If you have fallen in love with bikes, like we have, and would like to explore a career in the bicycle industry then this could be just the thing for you!*

**Q** Who can apply?

**A** If you are a Shifting Gears participant and you have the right to work in the UK you can apply. We will provide full training but recommend you complete at least four Bike Care + Repair classes or Maintenance Your Way sessions before you apply. This will give you experience of working with bikes and give you a feel for whether you would enjoy the job.

**Q** How long does the placement last?

**A** The placement is 5 months starting towards the end of the year. We will inform all participants when applications open.

**Q** How many placements are there?

**A** There are currently two full time equivalent paid work placements available in each of our branches (two in Edinburgh and two in Perth). Each role could be filled by two people working part time hours.

**Q** How many hours does the work placement involve?

**A** All placement holders must work a minimum of 14 hours per week. We aim to provide flexible working patterns to allow you to combine the placement with other commitments such as college, other part time work or childcare.

**Q** Is the role paid?

**A** This is a paid work placement. The salary is the Living Wage in Scotland.

**Q** What if I do not have the right to work in the UK or I cannot commit to a job?

**A** If you are interested in gaining experience of working with bikes but are not eligible or unable to complete a work placement, volunteering opportunities may be available with more flexibility. Please ask us about volunteering if you are interested.