



shifting gears

Shifting Gears is a grassroots community led project that has been operating since April 2021 in Perth and Edinburgh. The aim of the programme is to support and work with individuals who have been typically underrepresented or excluded from sustainable travel programmes.

The following report is a summary of our activity since the start of the programme in 2021.



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Shifting Gears: overview

Shifting Gears is a grassroots community project that has been operating since April 2021 in Perth and Edinburgh. The aim of the programme is to support and work with individuals who have been typically underrepresented or excluded from sustainable travel programmes.

We work closely with our partner organisations in both cities to understand the needs of their communities and tailor our services to them. Our partners identify and refer clients to Shifting Gears who they feel will benefit from the service.

Once referred, participants then have access to a range of cycling related services from The Bike Station. These include:

- free refurbished bicycles with accompanying lock, lights and helmet;
- cycling workshops and training with our experienced cycle trainers;
- group rides;
- maintenance workshops;
- Velotech qualifications; and
- paid work placements.

There is no set formula for how participants access the above services and they can mix and match as they please. For example, we have some participants who join the programme who already have a bike so only engage in the cycling and maintenance workshops. The elements of the programme are detailed further below.

Shifting Gears is a two year rolling referral programme meaning that once referred, a person has full access to our services for two years. After this time they continue to have access to a reduced set of services as part of the Shifting Gears Club.



Referrals and partnerships

Overview

Since 2021, we have partnered with 15 organisations who have referred a total of 624 people to the Shifting Gears programme.

Over the last three years, we have developed a number of robust partnerships with charitable organisations across Perth & Kinross and Edinburgh. These organisations work with the demographics and communities we intended to support: specifically those typically underrepresented in active travel. People supported by our partner charities are then entitled to fill in a referral form to engage with the Shifting Gears programme and receive our services.

Number of referrals

	EDINBURGH		PERTH		BOTH
	Adult	Family	Adult	Family	Totals
2021-22	74	2	70	8	154
2022-23	71	50	97	19	237
2023-24	71	46	112	11	240
Totals	216	98	272	38	624

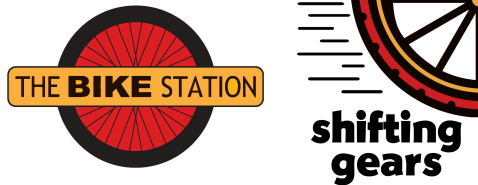
Showing a breakdown of adult, family and total referrals by year. In this context, 'Family' refers to children referred with an accompanying adult.

Our partners

We have partnered with 15 charities across Edinburgh and Perth & Kinross since 2021. The details of these partnerships are detailed below.

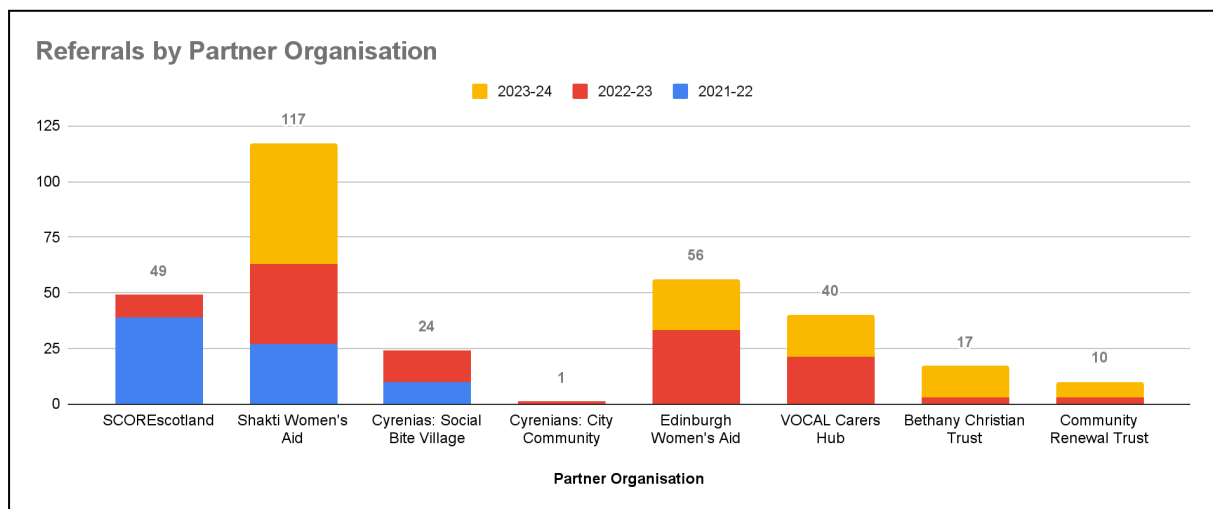
Edinburgh

Over three years we have partnered with eight charity organisations across Edinburgh to deliver the Shifting Gears programme. Of these, only *Shakti Women's Aid* has remained a partner since the programme's launch. *Edinburgh Women's Aid*, *VOCAL Carers Hub*, *Cyrenians: City Community*, *Bethany Christian Trust*, and the *Community Renewal Trust*, all



entered into partnership with us in year two. Together with Shakti Women's Aid these make up our current partners in Edinburgh.

We have two legacy partners, *SCOREscotland* and *Cyrenians: Social Bite Village*, who we worked with during the first two years of the programme. Although we have ceased working directly with them, we continue to support any clients of theirs who remain with Shifting Gears.



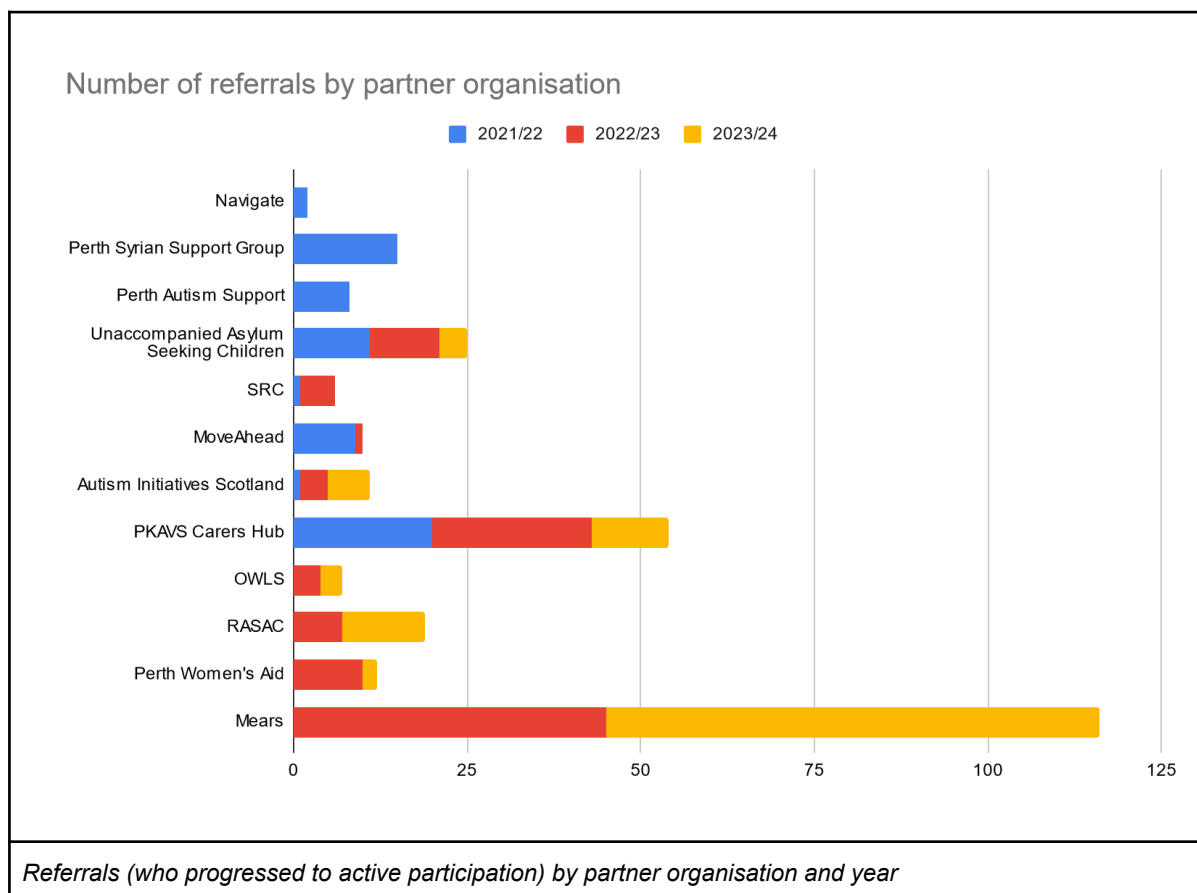
Stacked bar chart showing the number of referrals received from each partner over the three years of Shifting Gears in Edinburgh. Data labels are total referrals for each partner organisation.

Perth

The chart below showing referrals by partner demonstrates the dominance of Mears participants in Perth since 2022/23, the transience of this group is a contributor to the high numbers as participants tend to move on from Perth after 6 months to a year and are replaced by new arrivals who also join Shifting Gears.

Other Perth partners tend to refer small but relatively consistent numbers of participants, it seems each organisation has a limited number of clients interested in cycling and in fact 3 of the year 1 partners did not continue engagement as demand appeared to have been saturated.

The most notable growth this year has been in referrals from RASAC - we consider this is due to pre-referral engagement in March this year plus word of mouth recommendations from existing participants via other RASAC activities. Referrals from Perth Women's Aid and the team supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children have fallen notably in 2023/24 - we will investigate this at partner reviews.



Our audience

Edinburgh

Approximately two thirds of all Shifting Gears referrals have been from women (Figure 7.3), with just under a third being men, followed by 'prefer not to say' (6) and non-binary (3). When we look exclusively at adult referrals we see that nearly three quarters are for women (~74%). This number reflects our partnership with two Women's Aid charities, and aligns with the core objective of Shifting Gears - to support individuals who have been typically underrepresented in active travel programmes.

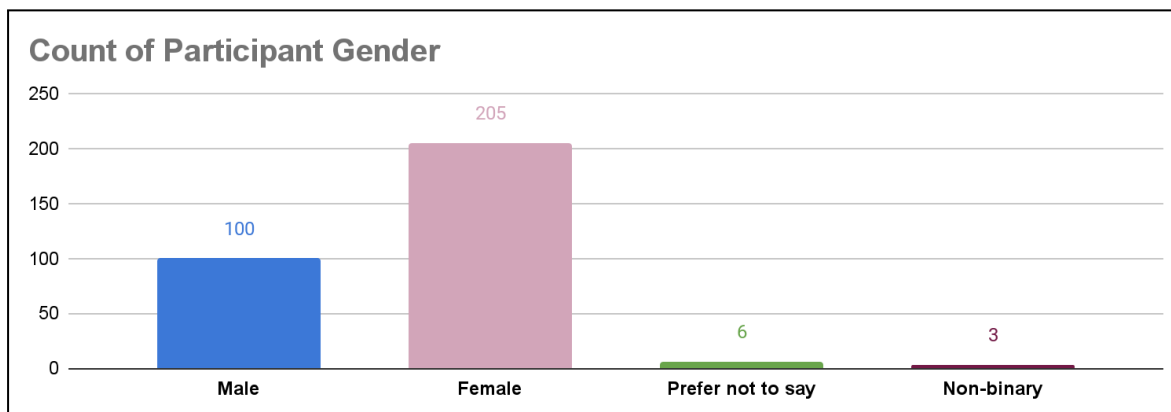


Figure 7.3 - Bar chart showing a count of all referrals split by gender in Edinburgh.

Another demographic who are historically underrepresented in sustainable travel programmes are people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. As such, we have partnered with organisations who support these groups. Figure 7.4 shows the proportion of our participants from different ethnic backgrounds. We can see that 45.2% of these indicated that they were Asian, Caribbean, Black, or African. White British and 'Any other White' made up 36.6% of referrals, and 'Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups', 'Other ethnic group', and 'Prefer not to say' made up the remaining 18.2%.

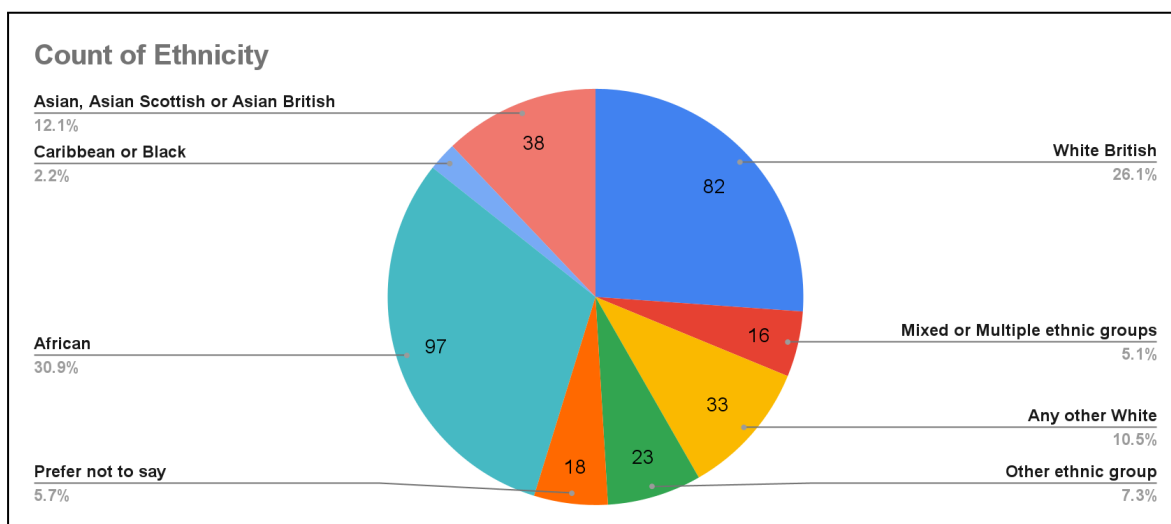


Figure 7.4 - Pie chart showing the breakdown of participants by ethnicity.

Perth

The charts below show the breakdown of all referred participants progressing to active participation split by gender and ethnicity to assess the programme against our aim to increase equality in active travel. Non-males and ethnic minorities are underrepresented in cycling hence we work with organisations supporting these demographics. In Perth just over two thirds of participants are male - this reflects the fact that Mears (largest referral



partner) clients are all men and so are the majority of unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Excluding Mears referrals the split is 46% male / 54% other which is more equal.

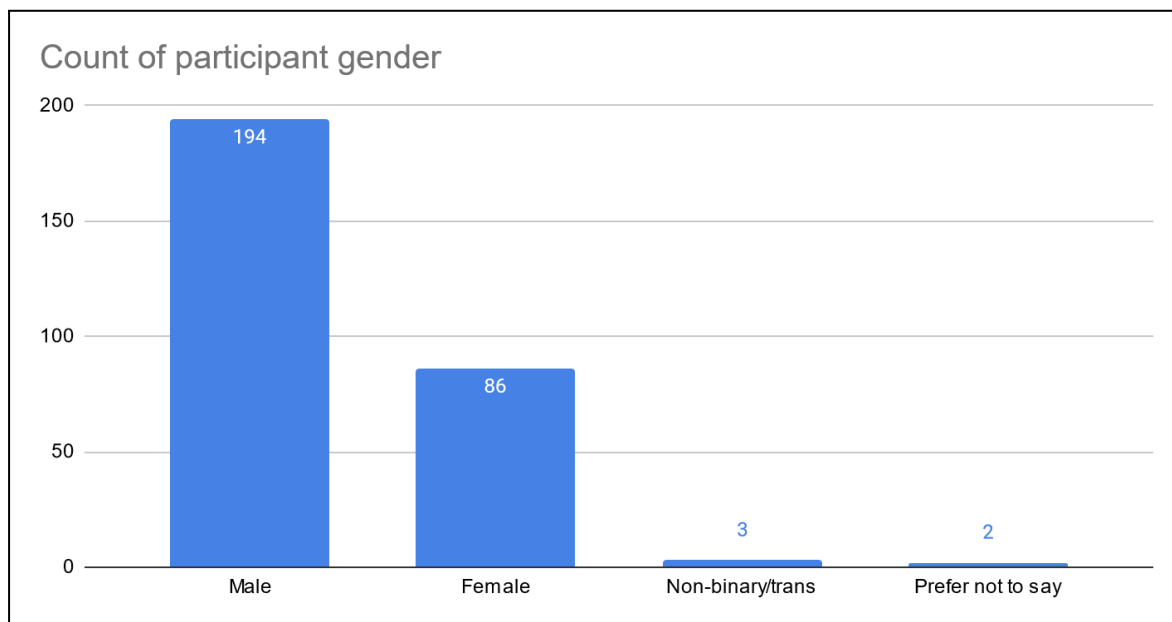


Figure X.2 - All referrals who progressed to active participation split by gender

Over half of participants are an ethnicity other than white British. Again this is largely due to the Mears group, if they are excluded non-white British participants drop to around one third of total referrals. This likely reflects the general demographic profile of Perthshire which is less ethnically diverse than Edinburgh.

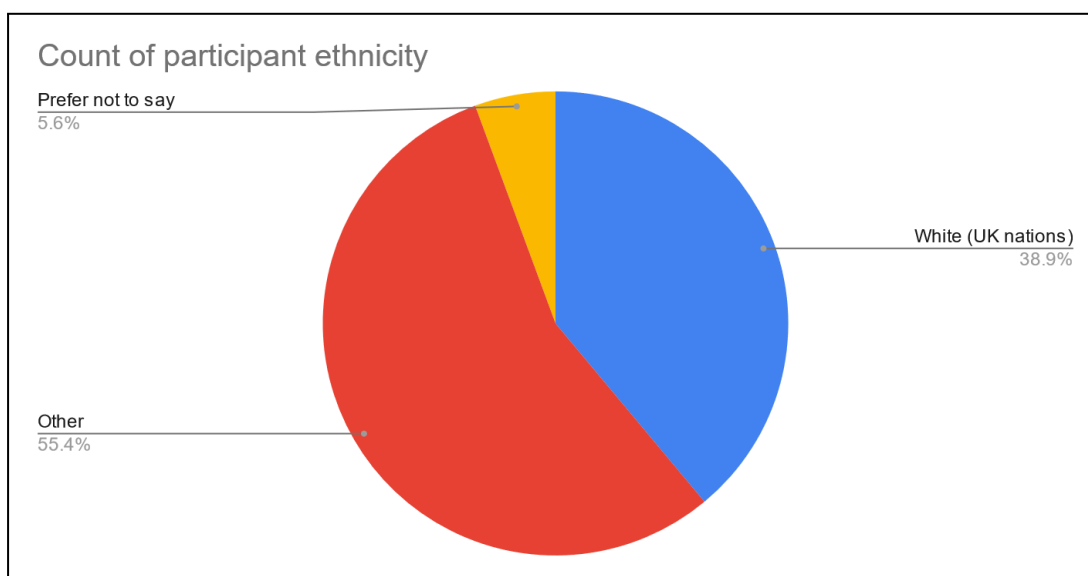


Figure X.3 - All referrals who progressed to active participation split by ethnicity



Bikes

Overview

Over the three years of Shifting Gears we have distributed 532 free refurbished bikes with accompanying lock, light and helmets.

More information

Our bikes

	Edinburgh	Perth	Totals
2021-22	71	65	136
2022-23	97	98	195
2023-24	100	100	200
Totals	269	263	532

Below is a testimonial from a participant referred to us by VOCAL about the impact of receiving a bicycle through Shifting Gears:

"Getting the bike had made an enormous difference to RP – she had been using it several times a day and found it particularly useful to get a break from her caring role. She had also joined cycling groups and was using it as an opportunity to meet other people and reduce social isolation. She told me the bike 'brought me peace'."
- RP, Shifting Gears participant



Cycling workshops

Edinburgh

Three years into the delivery of Shifting Gears in Edinburgh we have run a total of 810 sessions, with 1283 bookings, and 824 attendances. The majority of these have been 1-to-1 (60.9%) and family group (33.7%) sessions (see Figure 9.1). These types of sessions are more flexible in terms of time and location which might explain their popularity because in Edinburgh our participants are more geographically spread out. Additionally, many of them have busy itineraries making it difficult to align their availability for group activities.

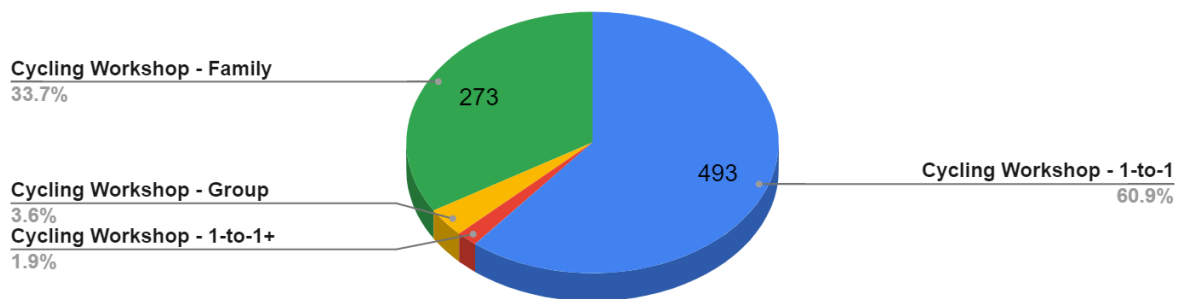


Figure 9.1 - Pie chart showing cycling attendance per partner organisation across the three years of Shifting Gears.

Cycling Attendance per Partner Organisation

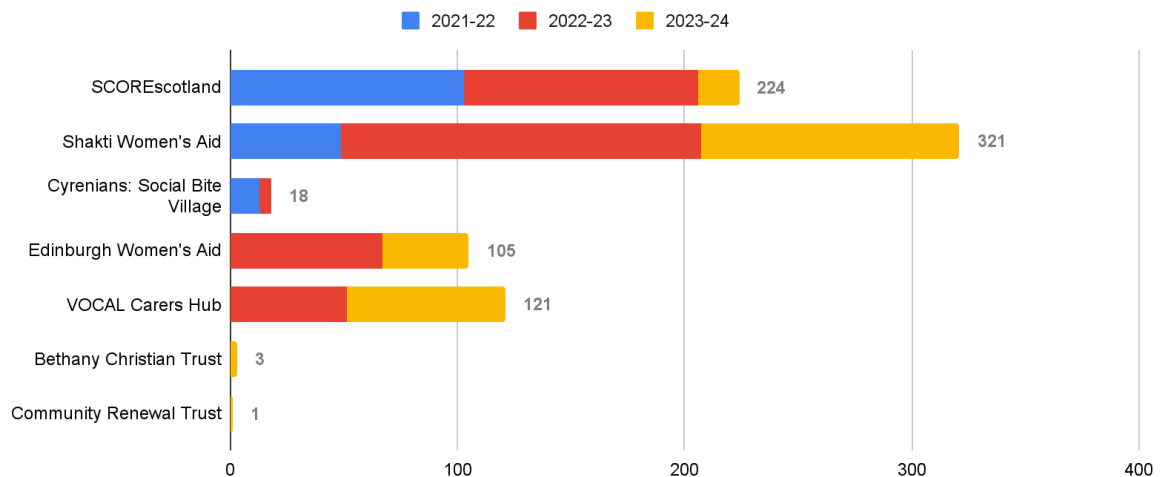




Figure 9.2 - Bar chart showing cycling attendance per partner organisation across the three years of Shifting Gears.

Overall, Shakti Women's Aid has the greatest number of attendances at our cycling workshops (Figure 9.2). Interestingly, although we only partnered with SCOREscotland for the first two years, their participants have attended significantly more workshops than several other partner organisations who we have worked with for the same amount of time.

Poor weather and short winter days are two of the primary predictors of cycling attendance. When we examine the reasons given for non-attendance at sessions we can see that "weather" is the most frequent (Figure 9.2).

Cycling Non-attendance Reasons

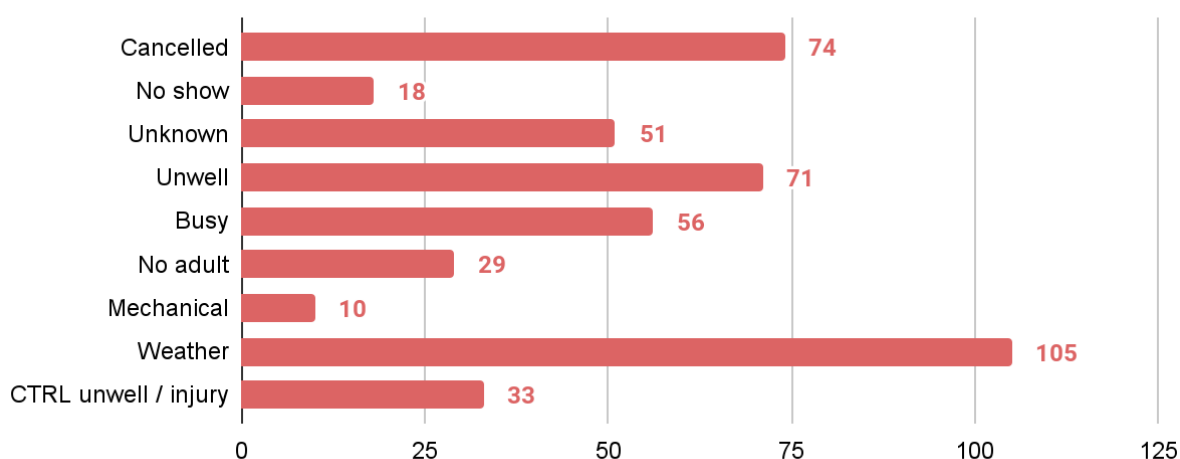


Figure 9.2 - Bar chart showing the coded reasons for cycling non-attendance.

If we look at a scatter plot of the average daily sunshine in Edinburgh versus the number of attendances at cycling workshops we see a moderate positive correlation ($R = 0.55$) indicating that as hours of sunshine increases, so do attendances (Figure 9.3). This further supports the fact that weather is a critical factor when it comes to outdoor activities.



Cycling Attendance vs Average Sunshine

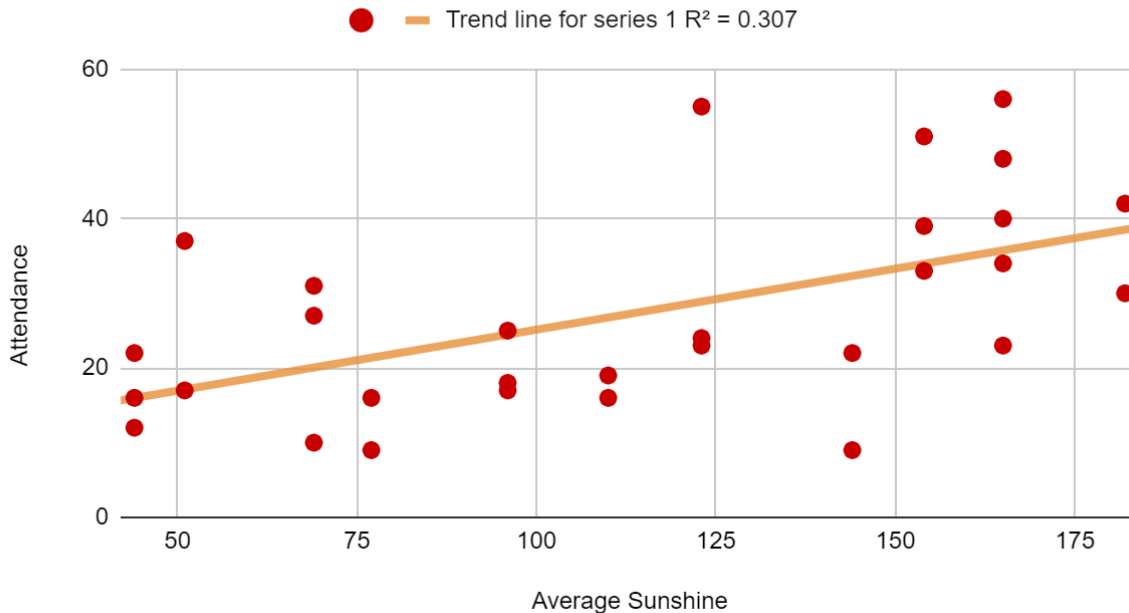


Figure 9.3 - Scatter plot with trend line showing cycling attendance against the average daily sunshine in Edinburgh.

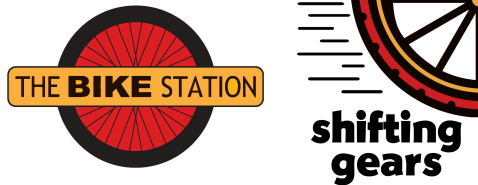
To mitigate the influence of Scottish weather we have offered participants wet weather cycling equipment - gloves, waterproof trousers and jackets.

Perth

Cycling workshops:

To date we have run 46 cycling workshops attended by 54 participants. The majority (31) have been 1 to 1 cycling workshops with 7 group workshops and a handful of family/couple workshops. Compared to last year uptake has been lower. This is likely to be due to the lower number of participants who joined as complete beginners this year (only 1 to date who learned very quickly). People who are already competent cyclists tend to require less individual support, although 1 to 1 workshops are still valued by those who want to build cycle confidence, prefer a 1 to 1 setting or are unable to attend group rides due to logistics constraints. A number of clients have also specifically cited a dip in mental health over the winter as a reason for stopping/cancelling workshops.

	Sessions	Bookings	Attendance	Drop outs	%
2023/24 to date	46	65	54	10	15%
2022/23 full year	107	128	108	20	16%



As in Edinburgh, the conversion rate from expression of interest in cycling workshops to uptake is low (see table below). We know from participants and partners that anxiety, other mental health issues and challenging circumstances (e.g. the need to balance childcare, college, work etc) are contributory factors to low uptake. We also guess that low uptake may be due to prospective participants telling us/referring partners what they think we want to hear at the point of sign up (i.e. they are interested in cycling workshops).

Requests	Uptake	%
82	23	28

We have found that partner organisation staff accompanying participants is something that helps overcome anxiety-related barriers but is not always possible due to staff time constraints.



Group rides

Overview

We offer a regular monthly group ride for Shifting Gears participants. These are planned to be accessible, fun, and will often visit historical places or places of natural beauty. In addition to our monthly group rides, we also ran smaller weekly rides for a group from the Community Renewal Trust at Bingham, and several one off rides for other partner organisations such as Bethany Christian Trust and Edinburgh Women's Aid.

Edinburgh

We have run 45 group rides in Edinburgh over the three years of Shifting Gears with a total of 99 attendances. These are usually held on the third Saturday of each month and are planned to be accessible to riders of all abilities. Our rides have visited many interesting places since the programme began in 2021, such as Newhailes House, the National Museum of Scotland, Portobello Promenade, and Prestongrange Museum.

Although attendances have improved slightly over the three years (Figure 10.1), when compared to the Perth programme, we still struggle to get participants to join our group rides. Shifting Gears participants in Edinburgh are spread out over a larger area than in Perth, and many of them have childcare commitments. This makes it much harder to align people's availability for group activities. Feedback from participants corroborates this, with many of them saying that the rides are not in locations they can get to easily or at times that they can join.

Group Rides Attendance and Drop-outs by Year

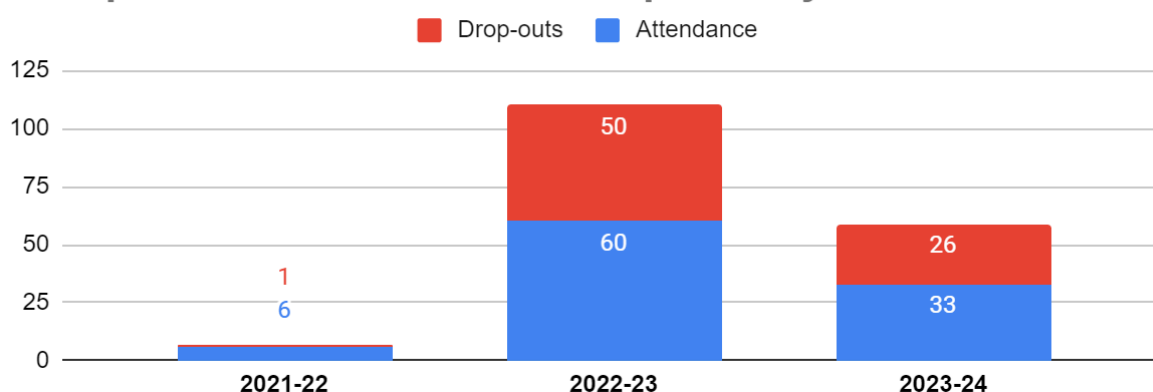


Figure 10.1 - Bar chart showing group ride attendance and drop-outs per year.

In an attempt to reduce these barriers we usually run our rides on weekends and ensure that the routes are family friendly so that people with childcare and work commitments are more able to attend. We also regularly vary the starting location of our rides to give different groups of participants around the city the opportunity to join. For participants who are not yet



confident enough to cycle independently to the start locations, where possible we arrange to collect them en route and drop them off on returning. On top of this we offer free warm drinks and snacks on our rides to ensure that participants stay motivated and warm.

2023/24 examples of group rides:

- April | **Pedal to the Botanics - 29th April**
- May | **Pedal to the Lagoons! - 27th May**
- June | **Pedal to Roslin Glen - 24th June**
- July | **Pedal to Portobello - 22nd July**
- August | **Pedal to Prestongrange - 26th August** Cancelled, no interest
- September | **Pedal to Prestongrange - 9th September**
- October | **Pedal to Portobello - 14th October**

To the right is a picture from one of our group rides to Prestongrange Museum back in September.

Four women joined this ride, two more booked but were unable to attend on the day.

Anna reported that:

“we had a great cycle to Prestongrange Museum where we learned its history...”



Perth

Group rides are the most popular activities offered in Perth - the geography of Perth as a small city probably influences this compared to Edinburgh where it is more difficult to find ride locations accessible to a large number of participants.

Rides featuring an additional activity or visiting a location outside the city continue to draw the most participants but we also run regular group rides around Perth, some are open to all participants while others are tailored to specific groups e.g. Women's Rides and Autistic Friendly Rides.

This year our activity rides have included:



- April | **Loch Leven Circuit**
| **Litter pick on the Lade**
- May | **Ride from Dunkeld for coffee**
- June | **Rewilding Denmarkfield tour & tree planting**
- July | **10 pin bowling ride**
| **City swap ride - Perth participants to Edinburgh**
- August | **Dundee to Monifieth ride**
| **Bike packing trip**
- Sept | **Ride to Bankfoot for lunch**
| **Picnic by the Tay ride**
- Oct | **Newport to Tentsmuir ride** (cancelled due to red weather warning)
| **BBQ and smores ride**

We have seen really positive interaction and integration of clients from different referral partners during these rides and one participant has made two YouTube videos explaining how they work and his experiences of them ([Perth social ride video](#), [Edinburgh ride video](#)).

Case study - Autistic friendly rides

Our Autistic Friendly Rides have become a valued offering and really gained momentum. Running every other week, they attract a small core of regulars plus others more sporadically. A support worker from our partner organisation No. 3 One Stop Shop joined the rides initially and now attends any new participant's first ride. Rides normally last 1.5 hours but listening to demand from the group, we ran two longer activity rides in summer (a 13 mile circuit of Loch Leven and a picnic ride).



We have seen participants grow in confidence and The Bike Station has become a social space for the group e.g. regulars have lunch here after their rides and one joined our Bike Salvage Club maintenance sessions. Another participant has really seen her confidence grow; before joining Shifting Gears she had not joined any group activities offered by No. 3 One Stop Shop and was anxious about new group situations. She is now happy with larger groups and attends other Shifting Gears social rides, including our first Bike Packing trip (which she rated as "100 out of 10!"). She has also started going to different activities organised by No. 3 One Stop Shop.



Case study: bikepacking trip:

In August 2023 we went on our first overnight bikepacking trip with a number of Shifting Gears participants from Perth. The route was over two days and started from nearby Luncarty and cycled over to Spittalfield with an overnight stop at Blackhaugh Community Farm, then back to Perth via another route.

This was something completely different for all the participants and they thoroughly enjoyed the sense of adventure of the off-road cycling and overnight camping. Undoubtedly a highlight of the year so far!



After the event we asked participants for some feedback and received the following when asking about their highlights:

- *'Everything - it was 100 out of 10!'*
- *'Foraging - blackberries, plums, mushrooms'*
- *'Not knowing where we were going when we set off, dealing with the challenges of the route as they came - felt like an adventure'*
- *'Stargazing'*
- *'Campfire'*

Naturally, there was room for improvement with one participant recommending *'bringing earplugs'*...

The bikepacking trip was not in our budget for the 2023/24 financial year and requires a fair amount of kit. We therefore partnered with Alpkite (who have a branch very close to our Causewayside store) who provided us with sleeping bags, roll mats and other bits of equipment completely free of charge as part of their Continuum programme.

For those interested the route can be found here:

<https://www.strava.com/routes/3116768298799786040>

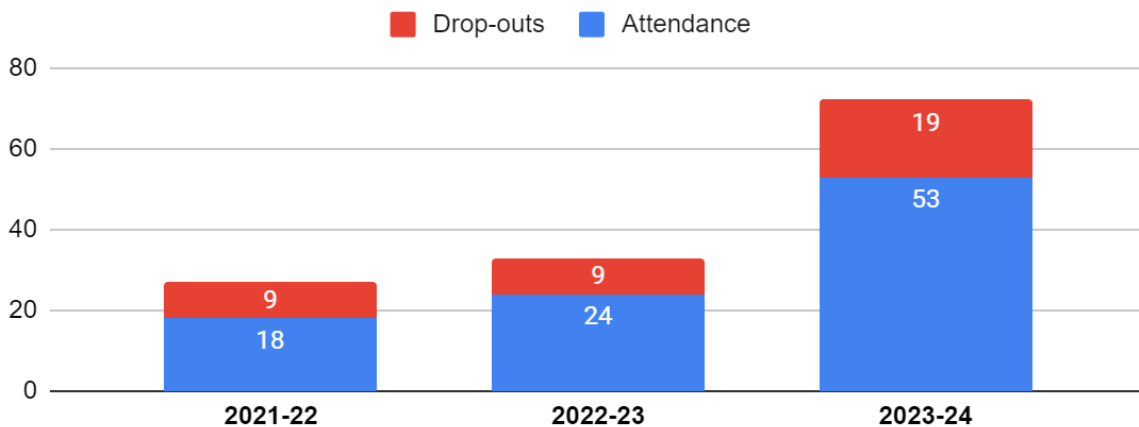


Maintenance

Edinburgh

Attendance at maintenance workshops has improved markedly this year, with more than double the numbers that we saw in either of the previous years (Figure 11.1). This is largely due to the success of our group workshops in Bingham with the Community Renewal Trust which accounted for 62% of all attendances.

Maintenance Attendance and Drop-outs by Year

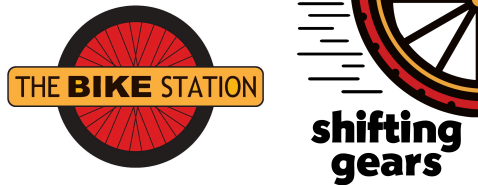


Bar chart showing maintenance attendance and drop-outs per year.

Historically, there has been less interest in maintenance classes in Edinburgh than for other services, and an even smaller uptake of the service amongst those who did express interest. The total number of people who expressed interest in maintenance workshops over three years was 128, and of these only 24 attended one or more workshops (18.8% uptake). To put this in perspective, uptake for cycling workshops is over 45%.

One possible reason for this is that maintenance classes are limited in terms of where they can be run. Unlike cycling workshops which are mobile by nature and so can be flexible in terms of location, maintenance workshops must be in a fixed location (usually in the training workshop at Causewayside) which is less convenient for participants. We tried to address this by offering sessions at locations around the city however these were often poorly attended and came with a higher penalty for our mechanics as they couldn't do other work if people failed to show up.

Another factor that may contribute to our low uptake is the 'readiness' of our participants. Around half of participants who indicated that they would be interested in maintenance classes were new to cycling or hadn't cycled in many years. We suggest that a person who



is not yet confident to ride a bike is unlikely to be motivated to join bicycle maintenance classes.

Going forward, we intend to run more community based sessions such as those at the Community Renewal Trust in Bingham which seem to be a successful model.

Case Study | Community Renewal Trust: Bingham

Our group workshops at CRT in Bingham were particularly successful (33 attendances). Here, we organised a series of weekly basic bicycle maintenance classes based at Bingham Community Centre. Five people signed up to the workshops, and most attended all 8 weeks.

These taught them how to perform an M-check, clean and lubricate their bikes, fix a puncture, index gears, and set up brakes. As well as improving their confidence and learning new skills, the classes acted as an opportunity to socialise and meet new people in their neighbourhood.

Quotes from CRT members who took part in the maintenance course at Bingham:

"Doing this course has helped a lot since I lost my mum and dad. It's given me confidence when I was in a low place and [helped me to] make new friends and smile again." - GS

"I second what [GS] said. It has given me a new perspective on life and a better understanding of how mental health can affect people. Just being around you guys on this course is a God send. Thank you all." - PS

"This project has genuinely changed my life. I love getting out on my bike." - DB

"We haven't just learned a lot [on this course], we also made friends." - SJ

[Testimonial from Paul](#) - a CRT member - on his experience of the Shifting Gears programme.

Below are pictures from our workshops at Bingham and some of the rides that we went on with the group.







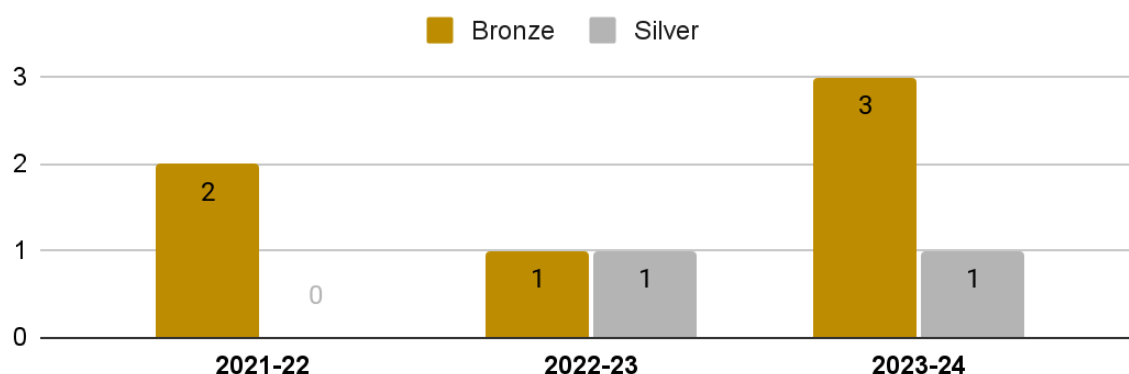
Velotech

Edinburgh

Shifting Gears has a limited number of spaces each year for participants to gain Velotech bicycle maintenance qualifications. Across the three years, the number of people expressing interest in our Velotech training is small, between 12 and 25 people each year. In total, 6 participants have received their Bronze certificate, and 2 have received Silver qualifications.

In Figure 12.1 we can see that 2023-24 has been the busiest year for Velotech so far with 4 people gaining qualifications.

Velotech Bronze and Silver Courses per Year



Bar chart showing the number of Velotech courses run each year.

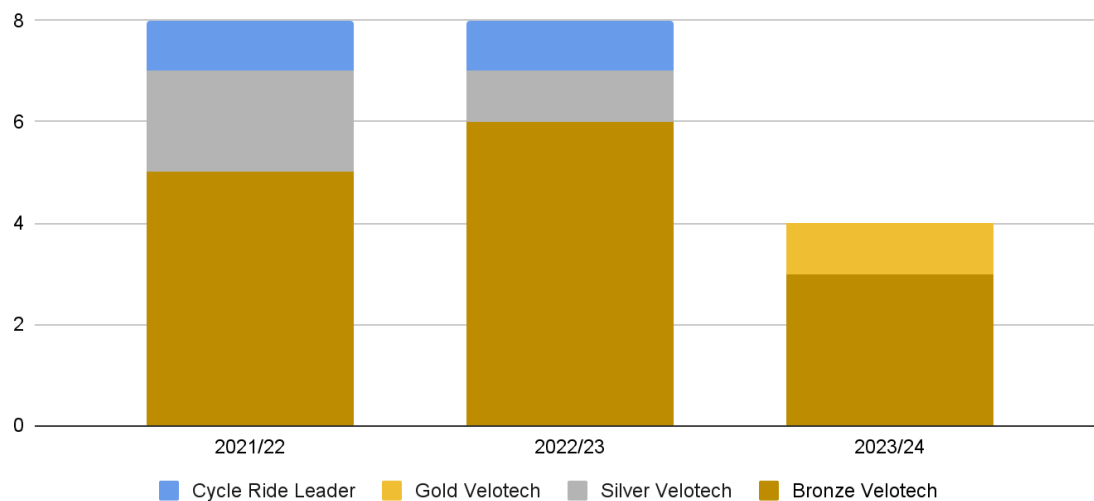
Perth

We offer participants the opportunity to gain qualifications through the programme in bike maintenance (Velotech, with three award levels Bronze, Silver and Gold which are each two day courses) and ride leadership (Cycling Scotland's Cycle Ride Leader award, a one day course). To date 20 qualifications have been gained in total by 15 individual participants including Shifting Gears assistant mechanics who work towards Velotech as part of their work placement training.

We have only had two participants to date gain a ride leader qualification through the programme and we are aware of one other who has taken the course outside Shifting Gears. This is something we would like to promote more widely, especially to multi-lingual participants who could then encourage those who are less confident in English to join rides.



Qualifications gained by participants



Qualifications gained by participants by year



Assistant Mechanic employability programme

Edinburgh

We have had 6 Assistant Mechanics in Edinburgh since the start of the programme. Of these, half have come through the Shifting Gears programme. The same number (3) have gone on to take permanent positions with The Bike Station in a variety of roles, a testament to the effectiveness of the work placement and the welcoming environment of the organisation as a whole.

Below is the transcript of a focus group conducted with our Assistant Mechanics in Edinburgh and Perth at the end of the first year.

 Shifting Gears: Assistant Mechanic - Evaluation

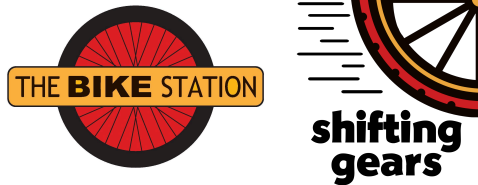
Perth

The employability aspect of the programme is beginning to show long term positive impacts. In year 1 we had funding for one FTE 5 month work placement and in subsequent years this has doubled. In total 9 assistant mechanics have taken up the work placement opportunity to date and 50% of the previous placement holders are either employed or currently volunteering with us. As well as benefits to participants, the Bike Station has benefitted from a more diverse workforce improving representation of the communities we serve.

	No. Assistant Mechanics	No. of hours per week worked	Progression after placement
2021/22	2	17 & 18	1 employed as CTRL, 1 volunteering in shop
2022/23	4 (2 were non-SG participants)	21, 15, 14 & 14	1 employed as mechanic
2023/24*	3	14, 17 & 35	n/a currently on placement

*Note the full time assistant mechanic recruited in 2023/24 left after 2 months due to unexpectedly moving away from Perth

Feedback received via exit interviews and focus groups has shown significant wellbeing impacts. There are key themes of gaining new skills, gaining in confidence (partly as a result of skills development), benefiting from the social aspects of work (particularly working



with others 'in the same boat' and making new connections) and also greater interest in/positive attitude towards cycling and cyclists.

This [programme] is what got me off my couch playing video games into cycling up to 80km a week. ... Now I could look at a bike, think what parts it would need, how to build it up - I can do bike mechanics! It's the first thing I can do that's not a commonly held skill."

"I was a complete beginner so learning how to put a bike together was a huge achievement for me... My motivation is to say to my children you can do anything, coming from my background in a different sector, to working in a bike shop, you can do anything. It's a lot for me, more than just an apprentice job." [EDINBURGH QUOTE]

"The main achievement for me is confidence, getting my confidence back. Knowing there's something I'm good at. I feel like I'm semi back to myself now, I've dug myself out of the hole that I was in before."

"I've enjoyed being able to learn more skills and broadening the skills I already had, also getting out of the house. I liked knowing what I'm doing and when I'm doing it. And getting to work as part of a team, I surprised myself because I never thought I'd enjoy that but I did."



The Shifting Gears club

The Shifting Gears programme allows participants to access our suite of services for two years from the date they were referred to us. Once the two years have elapsed participants are then automatically enrolled in our Shifting Gears club.

The Shifting Gears club ensures participants don't just get dropped once the programme has finished and allows us to continue supporting them in a reduced capacity.

The Shifting Gears club then enables former Shifting Gears participants (alumni) to continue to have access to monthly group rides arranged by our Cycle Trainers. Alumni are also entitled to discounts on our commercial maintenance sessions and our regular fix-your-own bike sessions.

This is the third year of the programme and as such the first year people have been transitioning out of Shifting Gears and into the Shifting Gears club.



Evaluation and feedback

Improvements following evaluation

Family referral stream:

Assistant Mechanics:

Last year did some great work to ensure that the Assistant Mechanic role was accessible to Shifting Gears participants first. That being said, last year we struggled to recruit Assistant Mechanics from our pool of Shifting Gears participants and as such had to open the recruitment process up to community organisations and support groups we hadn't previously worked with. This led to delays with the recruitment process and also a few issues from taking people who were not yet ready for a job.

This year we wanted to do things differently. As such, we introduced the possibility of the Assistant Mechanics job at The Bike Station much earlier and encouraged people to join maintenance classes to build skills which they could rely on at interview. We also built relationships with employability partners such as Venture Trust who shortlisted applicants through expressions of interest. This meant we had a pool of people interested in the role for the eventuality that we do not get enough interest from our Shifting Gears participants.

We were therefore in a much better position when it came to the period of recruitment this year and we actually received a record number of applications (8) from Shifting Gears participants. As of writing this we have just finished recruitment for the Assistant Mechanic role and have three people starting in Edinburgh and three people starting in Perth w/b 30 October.

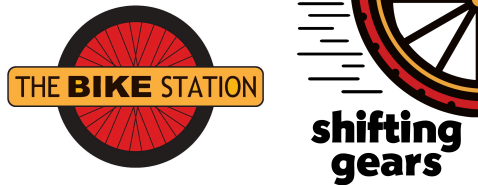
Group rides

To encourage engagement on our social group ride activities we started making these more exciting than simply just a bike ride. We now try and incorporate a cultural venue or area of natural beauty in all the rides which has seen an uptick in our attendance figures.

The best example of this was our overnight bikepacking trip as discussed above.

Shifting Gears club

One thing we have always grappled with is how to ensure people who have joined the Shifting Gears programme are not left high and dry once their time with the programme has finished. This was something that had never truly been bottomed out until this year.



Shifting Gears participants have access to the programme for 2 years from the date of joining (not the financial year as in previous years). The reason for this was that we were seeing people join at the end of a financial year and then only going on to be able to receive services for a very short period of time.

When people leave the programme, we have now established the Shifting Gears club. This is for alumni of the programme to ensure they are still connected. Shifting Gears club members are entitled to come along to the monthly group rides and have other internal perks around access to repairs and maintenance classes.

SG end of year feedback survey 2023/24 - key themes

Modal shift

Shifting Gears clearly demonstrates an ability to drive a modal shift away from cars towards sustainable travel in hard-to-reach communities. This is shown by:

- 62.1% of our participants either agree or strongly agree that they cycle more often since joining Shifting Gears;
- 22.4% of our participants either agree or strongly agree that they use their car less and cycle more since joining Shifting Gears. [56.9% answered this question neutrally as they do not have a car];
- 27.6% either agree or strongly agree that they use the bus less and cycle more; and
- 34.5% either agree or strongly agree that they walk less and cycle more.

Bike usage

The Shifting Gears programme also clearly results in more people cycling. This is shown by:

- 68.9% of people surveyed use their bike at least once a week;
- 24.6% of people surveyed use their bike 3-4 times a week;
- 24.6% of people surveyed use their bike 3-4 times a week;
- 62.1% of our participants either agree or strongly agree that they cycle more often since joining Shifting Gears;
- 56.9% either agree or strongly agree that their cycling confidence has increased; and
- 56.9% either agree or strongly agree that they have a more positive attitude towards cycling.

The type of journeys taken by Shifting Gears are varied in both destination and length:

- 57.4% of journeys taken by our participants are between 1km - 5km; and
- 27.8% of journeys taken by participants are longer than 5km.



- The main journey type being undertaken by those surveyed are those for leisure and exercise (75.4%)
- However approximately 1/3 of people (31.1%) use their bike for errands/shopping.
- A significant proportion also use their bike for their commute to college or school (19.7%). This is higher than the number of people using their bike for a work commute (8.2%). This is to be expected given many of our participants are in education or unemployed.

Mental and physical wellbeing

Not only does Shifting Gears promote active travel, it also demonstrates clear benefits to participants mental and physical health:

- 53.5% of participants either agree or strongly agree that their physical health / fitness has improved since joining Shifting Gears;
- 50% either agree or strongly agree that their mental health has improved; and
- 36.2% either agree or strongly agree that they have made new social connections.

Barriers to cycling

The key barriers to our participants cycling were the weather, lack of cycling infrastructure and the perception that cycling on the roads is unsafe:

- 57.4% of people surveyed identified bad weather as a barrier to them cycling;
- 32.8% said they do not feel safe cycling on the road; and
- 29.5% said there were not enough safe cycle routes.

Case studies:

2021/22 - MO

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 session 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.

"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."

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



"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 over do it sometimes. I realised that since I learned to ride the bike this summer...my knee has gotten better."

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."

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.

"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 [across the city] 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."

2022/23 - AO

When Abiodun joined Shifting Gears in April 2021 through our partner organisation SCOREScotland, she had never ridden a bicycle before and found it hard to imagine herself as a cyclist.



"I had never cycled in my life before. I didn't think that it would be possible to learn at my age."

Initially she struggled with her confidence, particularly on steeper gradients and narrow sections of path but with the help of our cycling instructors (and encouragement from her kids) she now feels that she can go most places that she wants.

"I am much more confident now. I used to be afraid of going up and down steep hills and cycling beside the canal but with help from my kids and from Gerry I feel that I can cycle safely."

She used to enjoy walking and skipping to get exercise but when she started experiencing knee pain she had to stop. Cycling has enabled her to continue exercising and spend time outside, something that is especially important because she often works from home.

"I work from home through the week so it is nice to get out and get some exercise on the bike at the weekend. It has been a new dimension in my life, cycling is a priority for us at the weekend now."

Now in her second year with Shifting Gears, and with more than twenty lessons under her belt, cycling has become an important part of her life. She feels that it has had significant mental and physical health benefits for her.

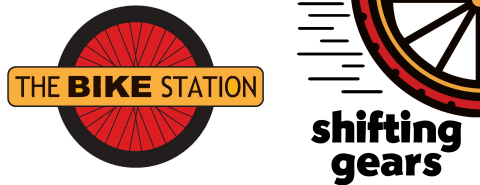
"It has had a very positive impact on my life. When you cycle you do it with all your heart and don't feel the cold because you are enjoying yourself. You forget your troubles... I used to get tired very easily but since I started cycling I feel that my fitness is better. My body feels stronger, I feel that I will live longer. People who cycle look younger!"

One key change that has come about from her participation in Shifting Gears is in her attitude towards cycling. Previously, she believed that people cycled primarily out of necessity because they couldn't afford to drive or take public transport. To her it seemed like something you would only do if you had to.

"I used to think that people who cycled didn't have money - why would you cycle if you could afford to get the bus? It looks painful, like hard work!"

But thanks to her participation in Shifting Gears she now sees cycling in a totally different light.

"Seeing how much other people enjoyed it encouraged me and made me realise that people didn't just cycle because they can't afford to drive but because it is healthy and fun... I realised that cycling is a wonderful way of life."



Her enjoyment of cycling has even begun to spread to others in her social group through photos and posts that she makes.

“I post many pictures of me cycling which draws a lot of comments... Several of my friends have said that they are jealous of me and my kids being out on our bikes.”

With the addition of the family referral option in the second year of the programme, Abiodun referred her two children Darmy and Olu so that they could receive bikes and join her on rides. Now they love cycling and can't wait for their next session with Gerry.

“It is fun with Gerry, the kids are always asking when he is coming, they love going out on the bikes even when the weather isn't great.”

She feels that cycling has had a positive impact on them as a family, highlighting the physical benefits in particular.

“Cycling has improved everything about me and the kids... They have shedded a lot of weight which has made them very happy.”

Looking to the future, she would like to make more of the social aspect of cycling, and hopes to go on some longer rides and even some small trips away.

“I want to make more friends and meet other families cycling. I would like to cycle longer distances, maybe go away overnight somewhere.”

Overall, Abiodun's experience of Shifting Gears has been very positive, in particular she praised the cycling instructors for their patience and flexibility.

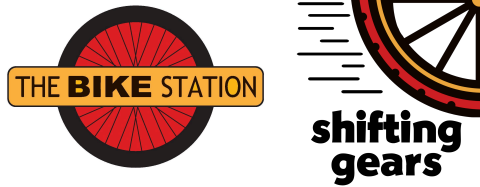
“The cycling instructors are fantastic. They come to you at convenient times... The instructor was 200% perfect! The programme was one of the best I have ever taken part in.”

2023/24 - JF

Jill joined Shifting Gears through our partner VOCAL back in June 2022 along with her son Arlo. Owing to a history of arthritis and a recent ankle injury, Jill felt that a low impact activity such as cycling was a good choice for her. Although she had cycled within the last five years she was lacking in confidence, particularly around traffic and so requested cycling lessons as well a bicycle.

“Walking is still a bit of a struggle for me (after my ankle injury) so cycling enables me to go further and travel longer distances because the bike takes the weight.”

Soon after receiving her refurbished bicycle through the programme she began joining cycling workshops and group rides. Two major barriers for Jill were the often inclement



Scottish weather and living in a top floor flat, which meant that she had to carry her bike up and down several flights of stairs. Consequently she didn't attend many lessons at first but thanks to her perseverance and a little encouragement from our cycling instructor she was soon a regular attendee.

Now, 18 months after joining the programme, Jill is one of our most active participants. During this time she has joined 27 cycling workshops, 7 group rides, and 2 maintenance classes. As a result of her determination and practice she feels more confident in her cycling ability and can cycle further than before.

"I am a lot more confident than when I first started. I am now happier to go on the roads. Roads were one of the things that put me off before. Now I can make quite long journeys."

Alongside her progress with cycling she has enjoyed exploring new places and learning about Edinburgh's network of off-road paths.

"Anna has taken me to lots of places that I didn't know about (in Edinburgh). Discovering this warren of cycle paths that I never knew about was great."

Two rides that she highlighted were the group rides to North Queensferry and the trip to Loch Leven. As well as cycling new routes and visiting new places she especially enjoyed the social aspect of these trips.

"It was really great getting out to Loch Leven for the day. I've enjoyed the group rides and meeting new people. Cycling across the Forth Road Bridge was brilliant, I haven't done that since I was a kid."

Her mechanical confidence has also improved thanks to Bruce and our maintenance workshops.

"Now that I have done two sessions I feel I could have a go at fixing a puncture. The stuff with Bruce helped to break things down and make it more approachable."

Jill said that her friends and family are happy to see that she is getting out more and that she has received several invitations to go for rides with them. Going forward she hopes to get out for more rides on her own, something with which she hasn't felt ready for yet. She also hopes to ride more with her son Arlo and with her friends.

"I want to try and get out without Anna a bit more. Arlo has a bike as well so it would be nice to go for a ride along the waterfront."

Overall she is grateful for the opportunity to cycle and for the support of Anna and the Shifting Gears Team and feels that it has had a positive impact on her.

