



Qualitative research exploring the experiences and participation in Bikes for All

Research report

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November 2019



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Executive summary

1.1 Background and methodology

Bikes for All (BfA) is a Glasgow-based cycling inclusion project linked to the city's largest bike hire scheme, nextbike Glasgow. The project aims to reduce inequalities in access to cycling by: providing low-cost bike hire; building up cycling confidence; and by reducing barriers to cycling for first-time riders or lapsed cyclists. BfA offers annual membership to the scheme for £3. Participants are recruited by staff from the Bike for Good charity in collaboration with a range of Glasgow-based community groups with recruitment focusing on people who face financial barriers, are not currently cycling, do not have access to a bike or are from a population group that is less likely to cycle. Support to take up cycling is provided through cycle training, women-only bike rides, route-finding advice and confidence-boosting road skill sessions.

Following recruitment to the programme, participants were invited to complete two surveys; a baseline survey issued at sign-up, and a follow-up survey after at least three months of participation. Survey responses were captured over a 13-month period from March 2018 to the end of March 2019. In total, 189 participants completed the baseline survey and 81 completed the follow-up survey. The baseline survey captured information on demography and socioeconomic status, cycling capability and barriers to cycling, transport use and health. The follow-up captured the same information at a later time point, but also included questions on the health, social and financial impacts of the scheme for participants. A report on the findings from these surveys is available alongside these qualitative findings¹.

Following up on the key findings from these surveys, the GCPH commissioned qualitative research to provide an in-depth account of participant's experiences. This report summarises the key findings of this qualitative research. Overall, a total of 33 people participated in the research. This included three focus groups (with 15 participants in total) and 18 in-depth interviews.

Although this qualitative research did not aim to be fully representative of participants, it was important to ensure that participants from a range of socio-demographic backgrounds took part. From the 33 participants, there was a reasonably even gender split, participants were a varied in age and 73% were from a BME group (compared with 49% of respondents in the baseline survey). The employment status of participants was similar to the profile of baseline survey respondents.

1.2 Key findings

The research has shown that the targeted recruitment approach taken by Bikes for Good has been key to the successful engagement of participants in BfA. Importantly, participants were in an environment where they were comfortable, often with people from a similar background and level of cycling experience. The successful engagement with BME communities and asylum seekers was possible due through working with housing organisations and community organisations. However, it was noted that the engagement could be improved with the provision of materials in different languages, particularly for asylum seekers who may not have sufficient English language skills to enable them to participate.

Our research also identified that many BME participants, asylum seekers and refugees had never cycled or had not cycled for a long time. Many participants stated that in their country of birth they did not have access to a bike or that cycling on a road was extremely dangerous. As such, the support provided by BfA was critical both in terms of providing access to a bike through the nextbike scheme and developing understanding about how to ride a bike, the rules of the road and where to cycle in Glasgow. Having learned to cycle, participants benefited in a number of ways, including meeting new people, learning more about Glasgow and having access to a low-cost form of transport to access education and training.

For some participants, a key motivation for taking part in BfA was the desire to become more mentally and physically healthy. Others, meanwhile, sought to gain confidence in cycling. Some participants described being able to transfer the benefits into other aspects of their life, which demonstrates the wider impact of BfA beyond simply improving participants' fitness and cycling confidence.

Cycling is now a key mode of transport for many participants, particularly in the summer. This has allowed people to travel to and from work, education or training, to visit family or friends or to have a recreational cycle in their local area. For some, improvements in ability and confidence meant that they now used a nextbike for their commute to work on an almost daily basis.

An important aspect of BfA was the one-to-one training. This allowed participants to work with trainers to plan a route that suited their needs and to trial it in a safe and supported way. Importantly, one-to-one training allowed participants to see how cycling could work in the context of their own lives.

Financial savings were also highly valued. For asylum seekers and refugees, nextbike use provided an affordable means of travelling across Glasgow. For participants who worked shifts, significant savings were made on taxi fares, which could previously have been their only viable means of transport late at night and early in the morning. Students also used nextbikes to access employment, to socialise and to avoid expensive public transport.

Access to nextbikes for £3 was key to the success of BfA. Without this discount, nextbike membership was seen by many to be too expensive. Most participants did not have access to their own bike, meaning that a nextbike was their only viable means of cycling. Indeed, even where participants did have access to their own bike, a nextbike was often their preference for their commute as they were maintained and could be returned to and locked up at a docking station without worry. The flexibility and ease of using a nextbike was highly valued.

The main barrier to participation in cycling was the perceived lack of safety, which was in part shaped by a lack of good quality cycling infrastructure. While it was acknowledged that the cycling infrastructure was improving and there were safe cycle routes in some areas, there was also a belief that there was significant scope to improve this. Safety on the road remains a key concern for regular, occasional or non-cyclists alike.

In some parts of the city, limited access to a nextbike docking station was a barrier. Meanwhile, in areas where nextbikes could be accessed, availability could be limited or bikes could be broken. There was a general wish to increase the availability of nextbikes across the city.

It is notable that despite successful recruitment of many under-represented population groups, low numbers of older adults (aged 65 and over) participated. This was noted within the qualitative discussions and it was felt that the online nature of engagement with nextbikes was a barrier to participation for older people. To overcome this barrier, it was felt that an alternative method of sign-up which did not require a mobile phone should be made available.

1.3 Conclusions

In conclusion, BfA has largely been perceived as a successful project. Participants spoke widely about the multiple benefits that they experienced through their participation. Benefits included improved mental and physical health, increased confidence, financial savings through access to affordable transport, improved access to services, learning new skills, meeting new people, feeling part of a community and getting to know Glasgow.

Without BfA, most participants would not have taken up cycling. The project has been successful in engaging with groups that are typically less likely to cycle. This has been down to the targeted recruitment and bespoke approach to training.

2. Introduction, background and objectives

2.1 Introduction

This report presents and discusses the findings to emerge from a programme of research carried out by Research Resource on behalf of the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH). The research sought to gather qualitative views of participants involved in Bikes for All (BfA) by exploring their experiences and the impacts of involvement.

2.2 Background and objectives

BfA Glasgow is delivered by Bike for Good, CoMoUK, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Cycling Scotland and nextbike. The project aims to reduce inequalities in access to cycling by: providing low-cost bike hire; building up cycling confidence; and reducing barriers to cycling for first time riders or lapsed cyclists. To enable participation, BfA offers annual membership to the city's main bike hire scheme, nextbike Glasgow, for £3.

Participants have been recruited by Bike for Good staff through engagement with Glasgow-based community groups. Targeted recruitment has focused on people who face financial barriers, are not currently cycling, do not have access to a bike or are from a population group that is less likely to cycle. Support to take up cycling is provided through cycle training, women-only bike rides, route-finding advice and confidence-boosting road skill sessions.

Following recruitment to the programme, participants were invited by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health to complete two surveys; a baseline survey issued at sign-up and a follow-up survey after at least three months of participation. Survey responses were captured over a 13-month period from March 2018 to the end of March 2019. In total, 189 participants completed the baseline survey and 81 completed the follow-up survey. The baseline survey captured information on demography and socioeconomic status, cycling capability, barriers to cycling, transport use and health. The follow-up captured the same information, but also included questions on the health, social and financial impacts of the scheme for participants. The survey findings are published separately¹.

Following up on the key findings of these surveys, the GCPH commissioned qualitative research to provide an in-depth account of participant experiences.

Specifically, the research sought to cover:

- Motivations for taking part and experiences of participation by demographic group.
- Which aspects of the programme are most important to its success and why.
- How bikes are used by participants (i.e. types of journeys, replacement of other transport modes, impact of seasons/weather, routes).
- How participation impacted on other aspects of life (e.g. socialising, getting to know Glasgow, activity levels, employment etc).
- Barriers to participation/cycling more generally and how they could be overcome.

2.3 Research method

The baseline and follow-up surveys captured information on the profile of BfA participants and the impact of taking part. The aim of the qualitative research was to gather participant views in more depth. Overall, 33 people took part in the research.

A total of three focus groups (with 15 participants across focus groups) and 18 in-depth interviews were carried out to allow discussion and offer an opportunity to get a more comprehensive understanding of themes and issues emerging from the research.

The focus groups were recruited in partnership with Bikes for Good staff. In-depth interviews were carried out where it was felt that respondents either did not have the confidence to participate in a group discussion, where language was a barrier (English was not the first language of many) or where this was the participant's preference. In-depth interviews were also offered where individuals had been recruited for a focus group but did not attend on the day.

Although qualitative research does not aim to be representative, it was important to ensure that a cross-section of participants were included in the study in order to gather a range of views and experiences.

The demographic profile of participants who engaged with the qualitative research is shown below, together with the profile of participants in the baseline and follow-up surveys. This is intended to show how representative these participants are of the wider population of BfA participants.

Table 1. Demographic profile of BfA respondents

	Qualitative research (n=33)	Baseline survey (n=189)	Follow-up survey (n=81)
Gender			
Male	52%	55%	52%
Female	48%	42%	47%
Age			
16-24	12%	17%	12%
25-44	48%	58%	54%
45-64	33%	24%	29%
65+	6%	1%	5%
Ethnicity			
BME	73%	49%	40%
Work status			
Full time	18%	22%	19%
Part time/temporary	16%	14%	16%
Unemployed	24%	28%	23%
Retired	6%	4%	7%
Student	27%	24%	32%
Other	9%	13%	9%
Resident status			
Seeking asylum/ Refugee status in UK	21%	36%	31%

*Total percentages may not amount to 100 due to rounding, missing responses or unreported response options.

Focus groups were held in Bikes for Good West, Bikes for Good South and Calton Community and Heritage Centre in order to ensure good geographical coverage. In-depth interviews were carried out by telephone or at a location convenient to the participant.

A detailed topic guide was agreed with the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and used for facilitation of all focus groups and in-depth interviews. A copy of the topic guide is available in the appendix.

A semi-structured topic guide was used to provide guidance for the discussion. This ensured that key themes and topics were covered and that there was some uniformity across discussions. It also affords the facilitator some flexibility to explore any emerging issues which arise. Focus groups were facilitated by Lorna Shaw and in-depth interviews were carried out by Lorna Shaw, Rosemary Stafford and Amber Turnbull.

3. Research findings

3.1 Awareness of Bikes for All

Participants heard about BfA through a range of sources:

- Word of mouth from friends or family.
- Facebook.
- Serco (who provide community accommodation and support services for people while their asylum claim is being processed).
- Community centres.
- Thenue housing association.
- Through their child's school.
- Through awareness raising at Glasgow Central railway station.
- Through awareness raising at universities and colleges.

Engagement with community groups or organisations

While a range of sources of awareness were discussed, often the personal approach was cited as being most successful in engaging participants, with members of staff from Bikes for Good being mentioned positively. In particular, Bikes for Good staff promoted BfA in a location and environment where participants were comfortable and had a connection with.

"I volunteer at my kid's school and Bike for Good staff came to the school to help the kids to cycle, so that's how I found out about it."

"I was volunteering at Turning Point and a lady came and was trying to encourage all the service users to join."

"I was doing a course last year through Thenue Housing and they taught us how to change a tyre and fix the tubing on bikes and we went for a few rides with nextbike. They gave me the information about Bikes for All and a few of us filled out the form and signed up for £3 for the year."

To engage with BME Groups, asylum seekers and refugees, Bike for Good staff went along to organisations that had an existing role in supporting them. This approach was felt to be successful.

“We are part of the Garnethill community, and we were introduced to nextbike when someone came along there to tell us about them.”

“I’m from Nigeria. I volunteered with this group: ‘African Women Against Climate Change’, so through the group I learned how to ride a bike and took cycling classes, got in contact with Bikes for Good and used nextbike.”

Social media

Social media was also noted as a means for raising awareness of BfA and a way of sharing positive experiences from existing participants, which could encourage others to join in.

“I have seen bikes around the city centre, but I didn’t know what they were for. I asked about nextbike and then my brother saw something on Facebook I think, and he showed me it, then eventually I got a subscription for nextbike.”

“When I started doing the group training, I took a lot of pictures and put them on my stories. People were keeping track and asking. People have been interested in getting involved.”

Personal recommendations

Personal recommendations were also important, with participants noting that a friend had encouraged them to take part or that they had recommended participation to a friend.

“I have a friend that volunteered here and she introduced me to the nextbike and Bikes for All.”

“Last year, my friend invited me to go along, we went around the city centre and the park, we did this for eight weeks and I took my family as well.”

“My niece is doing a 12-week course over in the West End, one where they build their bikes out of parts then get lessons on it, it’s really good. But she would never have done it if I hadn’t mentioned it because I know how good the trainers are here and I had the confidence that it would be very good. It has been excellent for her.”

“I’ve told all my friends about nextbike and they have asked me for details.”

3.2 Interest in Bikes for All

Participants had a wide range of motivations for getting involved with BfA, including:

- improving health, fitness and mental wellbeing
- personal goals/fulfilling dreams to ride a bike
- using bikes as a mode of transport/saving money.

Improving health, fitness and mental wellbeing

Improving health was a key motivation for many, and particularly for mental health reasons.

“Two years ago, I had never ridden a bike. I learned to ride a bike for my health, mental health to help with depression.”

“I suffer from anxiety, depression issues. It was just a challenge for me to figure out another way to overcome my anxiety issues and communicating and being around Scottish people and White people, so I went along.”

The perception that being on a bike is good for general health and fitness was also widely noted as being a key motivator for interest in cycling for those that were involved.

“One of my motivations was to be more healthy, be outdoors more, get more fresh air. I was working full time. I was inside all day getting no fresh air, no sunshine and no exercise.”

“I just enjoy cycling generally and its good exercise.”

Personal challenge/goal

Cycling was an aspirational goal for some, something that participants dreamed of doing but lacked the confidence to take up. Bikes for Good staff were described as providing the motivation to learn to cycle and to fulfil this personal aspiration or goal. Many also noted that they had to overcome personal barriers, including doing something that they had not done since they were a child. Cultural barriers were also cited, with cycling seen to be a male activity or something that was done by ‘others’.

“I did a lot in childhood but didn’t pick it back up until just recently. It was a struggle, so I had to do classes to build up my confidence again. It was almost as if I hadn’t learned before but yeah, I caught up.”

“I wanted to take bicycle lessons because I’ve never been on a bike, it was forbidden in our house ‘cos that’s a boy thing, not a girl thing. We were poor as well, never seen a bike except on TV or in somebody else’s house.”

“One day I was walking down Victoria Road and I looked in the window. I saw in the window these serious guys fixing these bikes and I was thinking I can’t go in there they’ll just laugh at me so it took months and months before I went in. I think there was posters saying you can be a beginner just come so eventually I went in.”

“In the back of my mind I always wanted to cycle again because my husband cycles. I just thought that’s his thing, I won’t be able to do that as I haven’t cycled since I was a teenager. I’ll just crash, I’ll be too unfit. I had these ideas in my head that I can’t do that.”

For some, cycling was seen to be an activity that younger people did.

“It is my wee mini goal, to ride a bike. I know I’m over 60, but that’s what I’m aiming for. I refuse to let anybody look at me and say... but your age, you should be sitting at home and knitting, why should I?”

Saving money on transport

For asylum seekers, the main motivation of getting involved in BfA was the opportunity to have access to affordable transport.

“To travel, because I have no money for transport.”

“It’s seven months we are here. When we come to the UK we don’t know how to use transport because it’s very expensive for us. We were just looking for a bike. We are part of the Garnethill Community Group and we were introduced to the nextbike. We use nextbike to go the college and after that we use them to go everywhere.”

However, cost was not only a motivation for asylum seekers. For another participant, cycling was also a low-cost means of transport and nextbike provided them with access to a bike.

“I was having financial problems; my bike broke and I couldn’t afford a new one so I accessed nextbike. I cycle often... everyday, it’s my main mode of transport.”

People chose to cycle for a variety of other reasons. Some stressed that it allowed them to enjoy the outdoors in summer in a way that was environmentally friendly and to commute to places where public transport was not suitable for their needs.

“I was always on the bus. I was looking forward to using the bikes and cycling more in the summer, so that was the reason why I used them.”

“I regularly recycle and I am very conscious of the environment so when I lived in Maryhill, the environment was a big reason that I decided to get involved with Bikes for All, so I could cycle into the city centre.”

“At the time, I had a problem getting places. Links between buses were a problem, so using a bike makes it easier, especially between Govan and Partick.”

3.3 Participation in Bikes for All

Participants were involved in a wide range of activities through their involvement in BfA, including training, group rides and one-to-one support. All were very positive about their experience of involvement in each activity. The discussions went on to explore some of the participants’ specific experiences of these.

Training

Training was provided at schools, in women’s groups and in groups for complete beginners. Training allowed participants to learn to ride a bike in an environment where they felt safe and supported, and with similar people.

“There were about six in the group and it was in the Primary school. It was just parents because they say most parents don’t know how to ride a bicycle. We trained for 4 weeks every Tuesday.”

A key aspect of the training was that it helped participants meet new people and make friends, which built their confidence.

“It allowed me to meet new people and also to develop my skills so I can ride a bike better.”

“We learned in groups, so it was kind of like a bonding experience for me and exercise as well so that’s why I started using them.”

An important benefit for participants from outwith Scotland was that it allowed them to learn the rules of the road in their new country. It was noted by some participants that cycling was not common in their home country as the roads were very dangerous.

“I enjoyed meeting new people. It helped me build confidence because it’s different from my country. I had to learn different rules of the road and so it helped me learn how to ride safely.”

“No, it’s too dangerous (in Nigeria). There are no roads for cycling. We don’t have cycle paths and the roads are already full of people trying to walk so you don’t want to be there on a bike.”

One participant spoke about the importance of staff recognising her background in the group training context. That is, as opposed to suggesting that it would be difficult to cycle in the clothes she was wearing, adaptations to the bike were suggested. This made her feel welcome and able to get involved.

“I went to Victoria Road, that was the best one ‘cos I recognised there are Asians there. I was too petrified to go anywhere else. I arrived and said “I’m here for my lesson” and they were like ‘ok’. They didn’t look at me and say that I couldn’t go on a bike because of the way I was dressed. They just said they’d need to lower this and raise that to make it fit with my Jilbab. It was a great.”

Group rides

Group rides were highlighted as a particularly enjoyable part of BfA which allowed participants to build on their initial training and become more competent in cycling. This was important for building confidence. Group rides were also described as social events,

where participants could talk to new people, have a coffee afterwards or take their family along.

“I do the Thursday class and the Free Wheel on a Monday and I aim to do both and occasionally a Saturday one. That’s for leisure, health and exercise. When I cycled with the group I built my confidence I was able to navigate the streets and stay on the left lane and things like that.”

“It’s usually in the summertime they do family rides and it starts at the SECC and goes up to Glasgow Green or somewhere. It’s friendly you get the chance to chat to people, just social things. On a Sunday morning its great just to go from 11:00-13:00 just to chat to people and get a coffee after, it’s a great way to spend a Sunday morning.”

“The full family enjoyed it. It was very fun. We were able to meet new people. It was good for my son, he really enjoyed it. We went from Glasgow Green to the science centre, the transport museum... it was exciting.”

One-to-one support

The one-to-one support was highly valued and was seen as being key to the transition from training and group rides to participants becoming independent and proficient cyclists. Both beginners and experienced riders described benefiting from the one-to-one support. For example, one participant at the very beginning of her cycling journey received one-to-one support as she had never ridden a bike before and the group rides and training were not appropriate for her level.

“I’ve always wanted to ride a bicycle so when I found out about the group rides I jumped at it but the group had started a few weeks before and it was a group of ten which only had three weeks to go, so (Bike for Good member of staff) took me one to one. The first day I was so scared I was going to fall down but I never fell. I literally learned from scratch. It’s been nice because I’ve always wanted to ride a bike.”

For one experienced rider, one-to-one support provided them with the ability and confidence to go beyond riding within a park by doing so in an area in which they were familiar.

“I met (Bike for Good member of staff) at Cessnock. He was going to show me one or two cycle routes, obviously not a big long journey, but he was going to show me where to go, how to get there. Then I did all that myself, he showed me first and then I did it. I think that’s a brilliant idea and maybe a lot of people don’t know that the chance to do that is there.”

For competent riders, the one-to-one support helped them develop a specific route which met their needs and allowed them to cycle more confidently. This was important in allowing them to transition from recreational cycling to using their bike as a mode of transport for their regular journeys to work or education.

“After the training I felt like I needed more support to go from my house to Uni, so I had to set up an appointment and they helped me know where to go and how to get there on the roads.”

“I want to be able to cycle into work so (Bike for Good member of staff) showed me how I could get there from Victoria Road into the city safely and using cycle routes. I hope to do this much more in the summer.”

The important aspect of the one-to-one support was that it was taking the participant to the next step in their cycling journey, whatever that step was. The way in which this support was delivered was engaging and made participants feel comfortable and secure in their learning.

3.4 Use of nextbike

BfA offers a discounted membership of nextbike for £3 per year. This was well used by most participants. Several benefits were highlighted, including:

- Low cost.
- Convenience and flexibility.
- Security/safety.
- Access to transport.

However, it was also noted that some users had experienced issues with the availability of nextbikes, whether that was due to bikes being broken or bikes not being available at the desired location.

Low cost

Access to a nextbike for £3 was felt to be really good value, particularly for students or people on a low income.

“Because we had a low budget at that time, that’s why we used it.”

“Not everyone can afford a bike either and this gives people the means to cycle.”

“I use the bike to go to my university, so if you think about it, you use it a lot during the day, two times for sure, to go and to come back. So, it’s not worth paying for 5 minutes to go to work or university. It’s too much. The subscription of £3 is good value. Others must pay more like £100 per year.”

Others noted that they used nextbike regularly as it allowed them to make journeys more quickly and cheaply than with public transport or a taxi.

“The main thing is when I’m going to work because the buses around here aren’t that good, so I’ll leave about 08:30 and it’ll take me about 15 minutes. On a Saturday night I don’t like waiting about on the buses. I’ll use the nextbike to get home then.”

“It’s really handy for me to get from my home to work, it’s faster than public transport and it’s practically free with the discount.”

Convenience and flexibility

Using nextbike allowed users to be flexible in their journeys and respond to changing plans or weather.

“You can find nextbike everywhere, also you can walk for part of the journey then get on a bike for the rest of the journey.”

“I use them depending on the weather. For example, if it’s been nice in the morning I may take nextbike in to work but if its wet I’ll jump on the bus on the way home.”

Security/safety

A key benefit of using nextbike was that it allowed users the comfort of knowing that they did not have to worry about their own bike being secure when parking it. This was particularly important as investing in a bike would lead to concern about leaving it somewhere.

“I think that’s what’s good about the nextbike is that you don’t have responsibility for them, you can just take them to work and lock them up and do a day’s work then pick up a different one and go home.”

“Having your own bike, you worry a lot like you have to lock it in a good place where it is secured and have your own lock so you have to buy that and if you don’t have a place to lock it around your house then you have to carry it up into your house. Whereas when you use the nextbike you just leave it at the station and that’s it. It’s more convenient.”

“I had four bikes stolen in ten years. With nextbike, I don’t worry too much, if I’m tired, I leave the bike at a station and use public transport for the rest of the journey.”

Storage and convenience

Some participants noted that they didn’t have space to store a bike or that it can be inconvenient to have a bike in a flat, but that nextbike offered the chance to access bikes more conveniently.

“I didn’t have space to store my own bike and nextbike is a great system, it allows people to get about.”

“Nextbike just seemed like a good opportunity. I do have a bike but I don’t take it out all the time as I live on the 2nd floor, so it’s a hassle to take it up and down, nextbike is convenient as I can just hop on and off.”

The nextbike app

The nextbike app was helpful as it showed availability of bikes at stations. This prevented people from wasting their time going to a bike station without bikes.

“If you look at the stations on the app that don’t have bikes, they’re in grey and the ones with bikes are in blue. It’s very useful to know what stations don’t have bikes.”

“You can check if there’s bikes available so you’re not wasting your time. It might change when you get there or it could turn out to be a broken bike.”

However, it is worth noting that the use of the app requires a mobile phone and that data is required. This is not always affordable for people low incomes. Others noted that they have found issues with the bikes on arrival at a bike station. Despite the app saying that there were bikes available there was some bikes were faulty.

Availability of a nextbike

Availability of a nextbike was also an issue for some. While nextbikes are widely available across many parts of Glasgow, it was noted that in some areas where they were well used there was often a shortage, in particular at peak times. This often meant that participants had to walk to the next nearest nextbike station, which could be far away.

“The closest is Alexandra Parade. I think they have two. There’s one at Alexandra Parade and one at the Forge. The first time I went there were two bikes but they weren’t working so we had to walk to the Forge to get a bike. It was about a 15-20 minute walk.”

“I usually take it from the top of Queens Park or if that was empty then head to the other corner. If that’s empty I’d walk further along to where Victoria Road meets Pollokshaws kind of meet there’s a station next to the petrol station.”

It was highlighted that there were some areas in the city where there was a shortage of nextbike hire locations. In particular, Partick West, towards Gartnavel Hospital and towards Anniesland College, Royston, Ibrox and South West of the city were all highlighted. This was a barrier for some participants who wanted to cycle to other parts of the city.

“It’s very useful but the problem is if you quickly look at the app it shows the stations are scattered on the map in the city centre in the Northwest, South and the East but the area where there is no station is Southwest, in the Pollok Park area, there are no stations in this area.”

“Availability in the West End isn’t too good, like Partick West, there are not as many bike racks, so I’d just use the bus.”

“It’s convenient. It’s a good service but we need more stations and more stations further out of the city and also stations at the colleges. To go from the city to Anniesland college, you need to drop off at Gartnavel and it’s quite a walk from there to the college which can mean that I just end up driving. This is a barrier that restricts the cycling that I do.”

It was noted by an asylum seeker that he and others used nextbikes to attend college, but that there was not a lot of availability where they were housed.

“One thing I think stops a lot of people is that there are not many bikes in the stations. In Royston there are not any bikes.”

“We’re in Ibrox and there is no station near us. ”

3.5 Barriers to use of nextbike

A focus group was held with participants that had attended training but had not gone on to use nextbike, despite being registered. All had been shown how to access nextbikes at the time of registration but a delay in access to the bikes meant that some had forgotten how to do so. Other reasons for not using nextbike included forgetting the PIN number, confusion over the website and difficulties around the location of available bikes.

“Well, I had signed up for it but then I’d never used it. We got in touch with (Bike for Good staff member) and she explained it to me how to use them and showed us a bike and it must be an age thing, but I’ve forgotten again.”

“I forget my pin number.”

At a separate focus group, a participant spoke about the barriers that other refugees or asylum seekers he knew had encountered. Many of his friends were not able to speak English and did not know how to access nextbike. He noted that the company that promoted BfA also provided accommodation, but that they were housed in areas where there were no bike stations.

“My friends, they can’t speak English so they don’t know how to use it. They need someone to explain it to them and after that they can help them install the nextbike app on their phone then they can use their number and that code for the nextbike.”

“The company that promote Bikes for Good is the company that houses us but where we get housed there are no stations near us.”

3.6 Cycling behaviour

Since getting involved with BfA, a number of participants were now cycling regularly. This could be for pleasure, to spend time with family, to keep fit or to enjoy being outside.

“It gives me an opportunity to spend more time with my children. I’m 40 years old and want to keep fit with the family. We’ll go out and cycle together which is lovely.”

“I used to stay in Govan and travel to the city centre to meet friends. Now I live in Hillhead, instead of walking or getting a bus, I can cycle, it’s more convenient and has many health benefits.”

Cycling was also being used as an alternative to other modes of transport, particularly where the journey was short and it was felt to be practical and/or safe to do so on bike.

“I would say I’m cycling about 4-5 times a week and with the commutes so roughly 40 minutes a day.”

“I go from the West End to the city centre about 2/3 times a week.”

“Cycling has replaced the car a lot and I’ll cycle instead of using the bus.”

Cycling was also acknowledged as being more environmentally friendly, and the desire to protect the environment was a key factor for some in the decision to cycle.

“I use the car for longer journeys. I try to use public transport or the bike instead for environmental reasons, it’s important to be environmentally conscious.”

3.7 What stops people cycling more?

The decision to cycle was influenced by a range of factors. Although described as not being important to some participants, for the majority cycling was weather and season dependent.

“It depends on the season. I cycle about 2/3 times a week up until September.”

“We cycle about two times a month but more during the summer months, maybe two times a week in the summer.”

“Weather also affects my decision to cycle. I will cycle in the winter if I have something to do in the city but in the summer I cycle for enjoyment and to get out and enjoy the weather.”

“The weather, if it’s raining I stay home.”

A key concern was safety and almost all participants who were cycling regularly noted that they only cycled where they felt safe. This was a key determinant in their decision about where to cycle. This meant that many only cycled where there were safe cycling routes, and that if it was not available then they would not cycle on roads or would choose to do so at times when there was less traffic.

“I’m not that confident cycling on the road due to safety concerns, there’s not many cycle paths, only in certain areas. They need to improve road conditions for safety.”

“Better routes which make me cycle more. The routes are getting there, it’s in progress but does need to be better.”

“I would like more cycle lanes. Sometimes I have to ride on the sidewalk and pedestrians don’t like this, so more lanes would be beneficial and would mean I would cycle more often.”

Bike security was also an issue. This was cited as one of the benefits of using nextbikes as this would allay the fears of having a bike stolen. However, it was also suggested that knowing how to securely lock a bike and general bike security would be a useful skill for BfA to cover in cycle training.

“I think a factor for getting people cycling is just the security of locking it up, I don’t think many people know the best way to lock it up. Maybe provide more information on the best way to lock your bikes up and using D locks.”

“I can lock my bike inside at work and that’s the only reason I cycle to work. I wouldn’t leave it in the streets. I can think of safer places to lock your bikes.”

It was noted by some participants from other countries that cycling was not a safe activity or something that was promoted in their country. The fear that cycling conditions may be similar to that their home country was a barrier for some.

“I started because I never had any training since I was a child. I had accidents, I was falling off the bike so I had to find a way to cycle again and I fell off the bike many times. I was on the road and the drivers were very careful. I feel safe because if you go to Greece we don’t have bikes because the drivers don’t care. So here it’s much, much better if you compare them.”

“Iran is the same (as Greece), people don’t like cyclists.”

3.8 Benefits of Bikes for All

Those who participated in the research spoke about the multiple benefits of getting involved in BfA. It is important to note that while these benefits have been identified thematically below, for example improved health and wellbeing, saving money and getting to know Glasgow, it was rare that these benefits were mentioned in isolation.

Improved health and wellbeing

A key benefit was improved health and wellbeing. Many noted that that they felt happier and more positive as a result of their experience of cycling.

“I feel on top of the world.”

“It’s enjoyment while the kids are at school and some time for me. Other benefits are that it makes me have more energy, provides a release, I can go out when I want and where I want, it gives me some mind space, helps with mental wellbeing and has physical benefits.”

Gaining confidence was also important, not just for cycling but also for other aspects of their lives and for feeling more able to do things.

“I think that it’s good for your confidence like if you’ve had a bad day and you’re going to conquer the hill that gets steeper and steeper then... It’s good. You know you can conquer the hill.”

Others, meanwhile, talked about very personal circumstances and how cycling had benefited them as a form of therapy or an aid to their mental wellbeing.

“Bikes for All was a complete saviour for me and my family. I was a full-time carer for two terminally ill relatives who passed away. I was in a really dark place and so my doctor suggested getting involved with Bikes for All as a therapy rather than going down the medicinal route. I honestly don’t know where I would be without it. I got all of my family involved. We live near Glasgow Green and the kids go out every day to the park on the bikes rather than sitting at a computer all of the time. I’m grateful.”

“Since I’ve been cycling, my nieces and nephews, for the first time, look at me and they’re like “you’re amazing.” Three years ago I was in a psychiatric ward crying my eyes out going. Now I’m building a career... and my confidence is slowly growing.”

Physical health benefits and fitness gains were also mentioned.

“Because I’m at Uni I sit down a lot and in front of a computer a lot I feel like when I am cycling I feel healthier.”

“I’m definitely fitter and healthier since doing it.”

“Health-wise it feels good, it doesn’t feel like much exercise when I’m doing it, but people will ask me how I get to work and they’ll say you must be really fit to do that. I guess it does add up. Cycling every day it does keep you in shape.”

Others spoke more widely about societal gains that could be harnessed by increasing involvement in programmes such as BfA, and by increasing the number of people cycling.

“It’s a good programme, it’s good for people, good for the environment, keeps people healthy and fit. It’s also good for society, when people are more active it means less cost to the NHS.”

“Generally speaking, it gives people more confidence with the activities they do and provides opportunities to learn through training.”

Saving money

Saving money was also noted as a benefit of participating in BfA. Cycling was a cheap mode of travel which allowed people to save money compared with using buses, cars, taxis or other modes that they may have used to travel.

“It’s a cheap mode of travel.”

“Public transport in this country is expensive. Cycling is not.”

“I’d say money is one (benefit). It’s way cheaper, free practically.”

By saving money, participants were able to do things that they may not otherwise have been able to afford. For example, one participant noted that being able to cycle had allowed him to save money that he would otherwise have spent on commuting. As a result, he was now able to buy his own bike. Another noted that he had been able to take employment that he may not otherwise have been able to do due to the cost of travel.

“I remember last year when I signed up, I managed to get some work in Edinburgh at the Fringe and I was commuting on the bus back and forth. I was getting back around 01:00 or 02:00 then having to get a taxi. I probably wouldn’t

have made any money because I would be spending it on taxis. So I used the nextbike to cycle home at night and then cycled to the station in the morning and it was a life saver.”

“It’s only because I’ve been able to save money where I would maybe be spending it on commuting, I can now afford to buy my own.”

Getting to know Glasgow

Asylum seekers and refugees noted the benefit of getting to know Glasgow by being able to explore the city on a bike. Importantly, they also noted that their participation in BfA had helped them to meet new people and to feel like they were becoming part of the community.

“It’s amazing. It’s helping me understand bits about Glasgow. I really thank you for it, I can’t thank you enough.”

“I think so, when I moved here, I’d just go on long walks around the streets and getting lost. It’s good, but there’s only so far you can go, whereas on a bike you can go further and see how it all links together and suddenly understand the place better.”

The benefit of getting to know Glasgow better was not confined to new residents. It was also noted by someone who had started to cycle through BfA and was now experiencing Glasgow and seeing the city differently.

“I got to experience Glasgow there were a lot of places I never knew existed until I got on a bike and started cycling.”

One asylum seeker spoke about the benefits of participating in BfA that he had witnessed in others.

“Well cycling is a great way of promoting communication and can provide support for Asylum Seekers by helping them to meet new people. There are real benefits like learning new skills, financial benefits and health benefits. It can be especially beneficial to those who have just moved to Glasgow, it can help them find out more about the city, helps them meet new people and can improve their sense of independence and confidence.”

Personal journey planning

The environmental benefits of cycling were recognised by some participants. However, an important part of realising these environmental benefits was to understand how behaviour changes could be integrated into everyday living. This was possible through personal one-to-one support to through the identification of safe routes.

“The environmental thing has just recently dawned on me. I obviously knew that cycling was more environmentally friendly. But now I could actually just do everything with bikes, walking or train. I could see myself cutting out the car journeys. Now I think why can’t everyone do it? There’s great infrastructure in Glasgow for cycling.”

“I didn’t know many cycle routes when I started. I cycle up Pollokshaws Road into town which is usually quite busy with cars but it doesn’t bother me as long as I abide by the rules of the road and I’m aware of what’s going on I feel safe. The one-to-one training helps that.”

3.9 Promoting cycling and Bikes for All

The focus groups and in-depth interviews concluded by asking about how BfA could be more widely promoted and cycling could be encouraged.

Promoting BfA

Awareness raising activities were suggested to promote cycling and BfA. Several methods were mentioned to raise awareness, including advertising on radio, TV, in the Metro newspaper and via social media, as well as providing leaflets in a wide range of locations such as schools, community centres, doctors surgeries and community groups. It was felt that engaging young people at an early stage was important in changing behaviour. However, it was also argued that cycling should be promoted to older people through the NHS.

“They should tell children the benefits of cycling and how it is better for the environment and teach them young that cycling is better than travelling by car. Also, if they can, the local community should get funds to teach kids how to cycle safely on the road.”

“The NHS should tell older people, advertise and just make them aware of Bikes for All. These people would benefit through community involvement.”

A suggestion from BME participants was that it was important to have leaflets translated into different languages, particularly to engage with asylum seekers and refugees who may just be arriving in the country with a limited ability to speak and understand English. It was also suggested that making links with community groups or support organisations had already been successful and should continue to be used.

“Just explain in our language. I know interpreter can be expensive, but you can have a pamphlet in many languages to introduce into some communities where there are refugees or Asylum seekers.”

“My friends they can’t speak English so they don’t know how to use it. They need someone to explain it to them and help them install the nextbike app on their phone.”

Finally, in order to build confidence with cycling, it was felt that BfA could develop a cycling proficiency system whereby those in training would work towards level 1, then level 2, and so on, so that there is a clear progression route to become a confident and skilled cyclist.

Encouraging cycling

It was suggested that a barrier to cycling could be the fear of trying, the perception of being too unfit or that it was an activity for ‘others’. Participants felt that just providing the opportunity to have a trial session for free would help people to overcome their fears and that potentially having electric bikes to try would encourage some people to get involved if they did not feel able to cycle a pedal bike. It was also felt that showing people how to incorporate cycling into their daily life would encourage more people to cycle. This was perceived as one of the key benefits and strengths of the BfA project, but it was felt that much could be learned from successful approaches elsewhere.

“I don’t know if you’ve ever been to Cambridge but if you go it’s a city full of bikes, there are more bikes than cars. You see professionals with suits, family they all have bikes. They have promoted how to have a bike in your life and I wonder how they have done it.”

Finally, it was suggested that a range of changes could be implemented to improve awareness of cycling and to make it easier to navigate around the city. This could

include clearer signage on cycle paths, cycle route information and more bike stations. Improved visibility of cyclists and cycle routes, it was believed, would raise awareness and could lead to more activity. With regard to nextbike use, it was felt that the requirement to sign up online could alienate some people (older people were mentioned) and that a physical alternative should be available.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, BfA has been a successful project for the those involved in this research. Participants spoke widely about the multiple benefits that they realised through taking part. This included improved mental and physical health, increased confidence, improved access to services, learning new skills, meeting new people, financial benefits related to the scheme providing affordable transport, feeling part of a community and getting to know Glasgow.

Indeed, without BfA, most participants involved in this research would not have been cycling at all. Evidently the project has also been successful in engaging with groups that are typically less engaged in cycling. This has been achieved through a targeted recruitment and the bespoke approach to training.

References

¹ Yates G, Whyte B. Bikes for Good Evaluation: Phase one survey findings 2018/19. Glasgow: GCPH; 2019.

Appendix 1: Topic guide

Introduction and background

Thank you very much for coming along today, we really do appreciate you giving up your time to come along and give your views.

Thank you for agreeing to attend our focus group which is being held on behalf of Bikes for All. You have all been invited here as you have been involved in Bikes for All. The aim of the focus group is to have a discussion with you about how you have found being involved in Bikes for All, how you now feel about cycling and whether you currently cycle or not.

We really are keen to get a good understanding of a range of different participant views. In that respect, there are no right or wrong answers in what we are going to talk about today and if your views, experiences or priorities are different from others round the table than that is fine, that is actually what I want to hear and discuss with you. Can I therefore ask that you give everyone here today the chance to speak and that, even if your view differs from theirs that you do not think of it as 'wrong' it is merely different from yours.

The group will last for approximately 1 ½ hours. It will be semi-structured in the sense that I have what is called a 'topic guide' which gives me some broad questions which I hope we can cover during the course of the discussion. However, these also give me some flexibility to cover additional issues, issues which you may raise during the course of the discussion.

There is deliberately nobody here from Bikes for All during the discussion in order that you can feel free to speak openly and honestly. Can I assure you that everything we discuss here will remain confidential and feedback will only be given to Bikes for All in terms of overall themes or issues discussed as opposed to individually attributed comments.

Any questions?

Note to moderator: confirm permission to record

- Introductions (age, gender, ethnicity, where you live, who you live with, what you do?)

Awareness and interest

- How did you find out about Bikes for All?
- Why were you interested in Bikes for All? What made you take part, or interested in getting involved?

Involvement in Bikes for All

- What aspects of the programme have you been involved in?
 - **TRAINING?**
 - **GROUP RIDES?**
 - **NEXTBIKE?**
 - **ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT**

 - Why did you get involved in these parts specifically?
 - How have you found each of these?
 - What has been most important to you in helping you take part in Bikes for All? Why?
 - After the training, did you feel your attitude to cycling changed? Why is this? What changed?

Cycling behaviour

- How frequently have you been cycling since getting involved in Bikes For all?

- **If not cycling at all**, why not?
 - [probe for availability of bikes, safety concerns, inability to cycle with children, any other barriers?]
 - Could anything have been done to encourage you to cycle more? [probe for further support, contact, anything else?]

- Have you used nextbikes?
 - How frequently have you used nextbikes?
 - What is your experience of using nextbikes? How do you find them?
 - For what types of journeys have you been cycling? [who with? Where to? Distance? Location?]

-
- Has this replaced other modes of transport or are you now making more journeys and travelling more?
 - What affects your decision to cycle? [route, weather/ season? Journey type? Safety?] When would you choose to use another mode of transport and when would you choose to cycle?
 - **[IF NOT BEEN CYCLING REGULARLY]** Is there anything that could be changed to help you cycle more regularly using nextbike?
- What do you think stops you cycling more? How can this be overcome?

Benefits of Bikes for All

- What have been the benefits to you of getting involved in Bikes for All?
 - [probe for issues such as financial benefits, feeling part of the community, getting out and about more, getting to know Glasgow better, meeting new people]
 - Rank benefits
 - **[for non participants]** even though you haven't used nextbike, do you feel that there have been any benefits in getting involved in Bikes for All?
- **[for participants]** To summarise, thinking about your experience of Bikes for All and cycling, I'd like to get you to think of what word or words you would use to fill in the blank if you were to try to encourage a friend or family member to cycle or get involved, what would you say...
 - 'You've got to try cycling because.....[participants to fill in the blank]!
 - 'Bike for Good can really help you because.....[participants to fill in the blank]!

General behaviour and attitudes towards cycling

- Thinking more generally of getting people cycling and making this accessible, what parts of the Bikes for All programme do you think are most important to encourage this?
- What are the key barriers the Bikes for All programme has to help people overcome to get them cycling?