



Bikes for All: widening access to cycling through social inclusion

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A summary of evaluation
findings and conclusions

About Bikes for All

Bikes for All (BfA) is a Glasgow-based project which aims to increase access to cycling by breaking down barriers related to ability, lack of confidence or low income through the provision of shared bikes and personal support to use them. BfA offers annual membership to the city-wide bike hire scheme, nextbike Glasgow, for £3. Additional support is offered through one-to-one advice, group rides, route-finding tips, road skills and general advice on cycling.

Participants are recruited by Bike for Good staff through their links with a range of community groups across Glasgow.

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 (e.g. ethnic minority groups and women).

The aim of the programme is to reduce inequalities in access to cycling and to encourage participation from a more diverse population.

The project began in July 2017 and Bike for Good staff are continuing to recruit participants.

In a two-year period (July 2017 – July 2019), 414 people were signed up, representing 8% of all new annual members of the nextbike scheme in Glasgow during this time.

In the same period, 10,253 bike rentals were made by BfA participants, representing 2.3% of all nextbike hires in Glasgow.

The project is delivered by Bike for Good and is managed and evaluated by a partnership of CoMoUK, Bike for Good, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Cycling Scotland and nextbike.

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About this evaluation

The findings presented here are based on a two-part evaluation of the project^{1,2}. Following recruitment, BfA 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.

In total, 189 participants completed the baseline survey and 81 completed the follow-up survey. Data was captured over a 13-month period from March 2018 to the end of March 2019. Additionally, focus group discussions and interviews were held with a sample of participants (n=33) between April and July 2019.

1. Yates G, Whyte B. Bikes for All evaluation: Phase one report 2018/2019. Glasgow: GCPH; 2019.
2. Shaw L. Qualitative research exploring the experiences and participation in Bikes for All. Cambuslang: Research Resource; 2019.

Main findings:

Recruitment and demographic profile

Participants are recruited through their involvement with a community organisation in Glasgow. Our findings show that this approach has been effective at encouraging participation in cycling among under-represented and minority population groups.

Almost half (49%) of the participants came from a Black and minority ethnic (BME) group, 26% were seeking asylum, 10% were refugees, 28% were unemployed, 9% were homeless, 42% were women and 61% were from the most deprived 20% of communities in Scotland. Older adults (aged 65 and over) were the only poorly represented group. Overall, the project has demonstrated that with the right approach, a diverse population can be encouraged to take up or re-engage with cycling.

Motivations for taking part

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

- Improving health
- fitness or mental wellbeing
- meeting personal goals or fulfilling a dream to ride a bike
- replacing other more expensive modes of transport
- accessing new parts of the city.

Impacts of participation

Participants have benefited through increased physical activity, improved mental wellbeing and by becoming more confident cyclists. 52% had never cycled as a mode of transport before and 30% are now cycling regularly. 90% feel it improved their cycling confidence. 47% now use nextbike to visit their friends & family, 33% to access social welfare health services and 33% access to work, training or study. Additionally, the project has enabled participants to meet new people, learn more about Glasgow (particularly for those who were new to the city) and has provided a low-cost form of transport for access to education and training opportunities.

For participants who worked shifts, savings were made on taxi fares, which was previously the only viable means of transport late at night and early in the morning. Students also used nextbikes to access employment and to socialise in order to avoid “expensive” public transport.

Enabling factors

The intensive work of Bike for Good staff and their ongoing engagement with community groups has been crucial in enabling many to participate. This work has been comprehensive, from identifying and approaching local groups, providing cycle training, arranging events and resolving ongoing issues, to ensuring that participants were to complete the evaluation forms. There has also been a commitment to providing personal support and demonstrating how cycling can be incorporated in everyday life. Importantly, participants described the benefits of being in an environment where they were comfortable, often with other people from a similar background or level of cycling experience.

The successful engagement with BME communities and asylum seekers was possible through working with housing and community organisations. Many BME participants, asylum seekers and refugees had never cycled or had not cycled for a long time. Other participants stated that they did not have access to a bike or that cycling on a road was extremely dangerous in their home country. However, through tailored support, many were able to overcome the perception that cycling was dangerous or unattainable.

Appendix 1 highlights some of the key enabling factors that have made the project a success.

Barriers

Despite the positive feedback on the support given for on-road cycling skills and route finding, participants had greater safety concerns and less confidence after participating in BfA.

This can plausibly be explained as a reaction to the experience of cycling on Glasgow's roads and illustrates the need for safer cycling infrastructure in the city. Further barriers include the current limited geographical range of the nextbike pick up locations in Glasgow and difficulties in understanding the hire process.

Conclusions

Shifting the demographic profile of cyclists

The delivery and impact of BfA has implications for how this project is expanded and for the successful establishment of similar programmes elsewhere.

The project has brought multiple benefits to people who have previously faced barriers to cycling.

In particular, the social inclusion focus has been important on an individual level, but also more widely in terms of shifting the demographic make-up of cyclists in Glasgow. Without projects like this, it is unlikely that the benefits of new cycling infrastructure or bike share schemes will be felt across the whole population.

Personal support to build cycling into ‘everyday life’

A key lesson from this project is that people who may not previously have considered cycling can build the activity into their everyday life through appropriate training and one-to-one support.

Indeed, the intensive work of Bike for Good staff and engagement with community groups has been crucial in enabling participation for many. This level of support will need to be maintained for the continued successful roll-out of the programme and would be important to have in place if replicated elsewhere.

Nextbike expansion should be accompanied by cycling safety improvements

This project has demonstrated that there is demand for access to bikeshare schemes from a variety of population groups. As the nextbike Glasgow scheme is grown it will be crucial that it expands into neighbourhoods that are deprived or less well-connected.

The success of any further expansion will be dependent on ensuring that the current financial assistance, training and one-to-one mentoring support is provided alongside good quality, safe, cycling infrastructure. Safety is still a real and perceived barrier to cycling. Wider evidence suggests that to address barriers relating to safety or a lack of confidence, a range of complementary approaches will be needed, including reduced traffic speeds.

Tackling the climate emergency and other policy areas

BfA touches on a range of policy areas, including transport, social and financial inclusion, health and sustainability, and the evidence from this evaluation suggests that it is a cost-effective approach to addressing multiple societal challenges.

In the current climate emergency, effective approaches to reducing harmful transport emissions and increasing the proportion of active travel journeys are needed. Findings from this project show that BfA and the continued expansion of nextbike in Glasgow can be part of the solution to this challenge.

Next steps and recommendations

Findings from this report have implications for a range of organisations, including the providers of the bike hire scheme (nextbike and Glasgow City Council), BfA project partners, for organisations wishing to implement a similar approach elsewhere and for organisations that are able to support active travel improvements, either through funding for similar projects or through implementing supportive policies.

A set of recommendations for specific organisations is provided in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1. Enabling factors that have aided the success of the BfA project.

Enabling factors	Domain
1. People are aware of Bikes for All 2. People feel confident, willing and able to take up cycling 3. People feel that cycling can be integrated into their daily routine	Participant needs
4. Hire bikes do not require maintenance or to be stored by participants 5. Fear of bike theft is removed 6. Bikes are cheap and can be used to link journeys	Motivational factors
7. Population groups are identified for inclusion 8. Community organisations with an existing link to target population groups are identified 9. Specific needs are accounted for (e.g. language and cultural barriers, timing, location, activities)	Planning
10. One-to-one support is offered based on individual needs 11. Provision of bespoke route-finding advice/training 12. Participation in a familiar environment with peers 13. Equipment is made available to support cycling in all weather	Personalisation
14. Bikes are well maintained 15. Bike stations are expanded across the city 16. The payment/unlocking system is easy to understand 17. Continuous low-cost membership is offered to people on low incomes 18. Sufficient staff and resources are available to support the recruitment and retention of participants	Operational
19. Reduced road speeds in urban areas 20. Continued investment in cycling 21. Cycling becomes a mainstream activity /form of transport 22. Other modes of public transport are compatible with cycling 23. Safer driving around cyclists 24. Cycling infrastructure is good quality and well maintained	External influences

Appendix 2. Recommendations

Recommendations for nextbike and Glasgow City Council

- Continue to expand the provision of nextbike stations with a priority given to expansion into more deprived areas.
- Promote the opening of new stations and ensure that appropriate measures are in place to enable local residents to take advantage of them.
- Ensure that bikes are regularly maintained and people are adequately supported to use them (e.g. consider cultural or language barriers that can prevent or deter use).

Recommendations for Bikes for All partners

- Continue to deliver BfA through current approaches (i.e. with an emphasis on one-to-one support).
- Expand the reach of the programme with sufficient financial and human resources to meet the needs of additional participants.
- Ensure that people who have signed up and used nextbikes regularly are given the opportunity to do so for another year.
- Ensure that learning from phase one informs the future delivery of the programme (e.g. providing support/resources for users when operating for the first time)
- Continue to support women and encourage further sign-up from over-65s and people not in employment. Seek out local organisations that can support the recruitment of people from these groups.
- Engagement could be improved. Provide access to materials in different languages, particularly for asylum seekers who may not have sufficient English language skills to allow them to participate.
- Continue to evaluate the impact of the programme and use learning to shape how it is delivered and who is targeted for recruitment.

Applying the approach elsewhere

- Establish relationships with community organisations across the bike share area for the purpose of recruiting participants.
- Set targets for the recruitment of participants based on particular demographic or socioeconomic characteristics and monitor this for the duration of the project.
- Ensure that the programme is affordable and offers participants one-to-one support suited to their particular needs.

Supportive organisations

- Support other cities to adopt similar approaches based on learning from this evaluation.
- Continue to invest in cycling infrastructure, education and other measures to promote and enable cycling, particularly in areas of low participation.
- Continue to evaluate the impact of cycling measures in terms of demographic reach and socioeconomic impacts.
- Provide routes to BfA (or similar inclusion-focused bike sharing projects) through social prescribing.
- Ensure co-ordination of sustainable travel policies to maximise impact of access to bike initiatives.

www.bikeforgood.org.uk

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Migrant Help; Flourish House; Bridgeton Family Learning Centre; Thenue Housing Association; Central and West Integration Network; Govan Community Project; NHS Restart; NHS Esteem; Glasgow City Mission; Glasgow Clyde College ESOL; Glasgow Kelvin College ESOL; SEAL community health (Gorbals); British Red Cross; Youth Community Support Agency; Night Shelter; Rosemount Lifelong Learning.