

08 Cycle Training Programmes

Key Principle

Quality cycle training (to the National Standards) enables people to cycle with confidence, helping them to ride safely and in a manner which also makes their intended manoeuvres clearly understood by other road users. It is an important component in overcoming the 'fear of traffic' that deters adult cyclists and prevents parents from allowing children to cycle.

'Bikeability' is a branded programme of national standards training offered to young people. Instructors and scheme providers accredited to Bikeability have access to a range of supporting materials and presentation packs and badges to present to participants.

Programmes of cycle training and other cycling activities that actively involve parents, particularly mothers, can be effective in helping to encourage family cycling either for leisure or utility purposes. Cycle training can be incorporated into a 'package' of cycling activities such as after school clubs, bike maintenance courses or as part of a multi-activity course in school holidays for example. This can be a more attractive way to offer training to older pupils of secondary school age.

Background

Historically cycle training was often only available to children in local authority primary schools and the quality and content was variable. However, the provision of cycle training has recently changed following the implementation of new National Standards, which cover adults as well as children. The standards were developed by over 20 organisations including RoSPA and LARSOA and are maintained by the Cycle Training Standards Board. The standards reflect the training and skills required for making cycling trips in today's road conditions. Help and advice about the National Cycle Training Standards is available via the National Cycle Training Helpline on 0870 607 0415 or visit the [cycle training](#) section of the CTC web site.

Having a national standard and accreditation process offers local authorities new opportunities to deliver cycle training and a variety of 'models' is emerging including directly employed permanent or temporary contract staff; buying in qualified private sector trainers; accredited volunteer staff and delivery through other agencies such as schools sports partnerships, youth groups and cycling clubs.

The CTC charitable trust in partnership with the Department of Transport and Cycling England offers a wide ranging, inclusive approach to cycle training and funding. The cycle training section of the CTC website also offers a range of advice both for adults and children who either wish to take up cycling, or improve on their existing cycling ability.

Cycle training not only educates the cyclist, but also plays an important role in promoting other aspects of cycling, including:

- Supporting and building up the confidence of cyclists, especially those who are wishing to pursue a more active lifestyle;
- Changing the attitude of cyclists, especially in relation to the highway law and other users, such as pedestrians;

- Highlighting road safety issues to younger cyclists and providing them with a knowledge base that can be transferred to whichever mode of transport they choose; and
- Reducing the number of cycle-related injuries.

Bikeability

Bikeability is the branding for the three stage national standards training offered to young people and was designed to give the next generation of cyclists the skills, awareness and confidence to safely ride their bikes on today's roads. The [Bikeability](#) website was set up to inform people about the project, a 'cycling proficiency test that is fit for the 21st century.'

The training programme provides three levels of assessment that encourage better and safer cycling. The aim is that by 2009 half of all year six pupils in England will be trained through schemes awarding Bikeability. The levels are as follows:

- Level 1 is about learning to control the bike, making it possible to cycle where there are no cars.
- Level 2 starts to deal with real traffic on quiet roads. Once completed the participant has the basic skills to practice cycling on quiet roads.
- By Level 3 participants have to deal with busy roads and advanced road hazards. On completion the riders will know how to cycle safely in most situations they are likely to encounter on the roads.

The scheme was piloted across 10 areas in England with resounding success. Research found that 83% of instructors saw an increase in the number of children cycling to school, while 67% of children said they were cycling more after taking part in the project.

£1.5m additional funding was provided to local authorities by the Department for Transport to encourage the national roll-out of Bikeability in 2007, and this funding is likely to be increased in 2008-9.

Employing Accredited Cycle Trainers

On-road training to national standards requires over ten hours of tuition, with a ratio of 1 trainer per six trainees, and so can be resource intensive. Local authorities and other organisations have a variety of employment models to draw upon depending on the level of local demand, funding available and degree of 'flexibility' required. Some authorities choose to train existing permanent road safety staff to enable them to deliver national standards training as part of the wider programme of road safety education. Typically the road safety team is only a small team and this may place a restriction on the number of courses that can be offered. Others may choose to buy in the services of independent accredited trainers (list of accredited trainers available from Cycle Training Helpline). This has the advantage for the authority that they only pay the trainers for the time when they are actually delivering training, but they may find it difficult to guarantee the availability of qualified trainers when forward planning. Others choose to recruit and train the trainers and employ them on a part-time basis or on a temporary contract. A number of specialist cycle training companies are beginning to appear that will offer an authority a complete 'package' of qualified

trainers and an accredited training course, and also manage all of the contact with schools. Details are available from the Cycle Training Helpline and Bikeability websites. Some authorities are also investigating the possibilities of training a permanent member of staff in each school to become an accredited cycle trainer so that schools can then take more control over delivering their own programme of cycle training.

Go-Ride

['Go Ride'](#) is a cycle coaching programme for young people funded by British Cycling, the governing body of cycle sport in Britain. The programme, which takes place in traffic-free venues, is overseen by qualified British Cycling coaches who provide a wide range of activities and games to take part in, with an aim to challenge and improve the ability of young cyclists.

As part of the training a set of workbooks are available for the participants to progress through. The books include games and activities and are aimed towards improving the cycling knowledge and awareness of young people, as well as introducing them to the various types of cycle sport e.g. mountain biking, BMX, circuit racing or track riding. In order to reward progression through the programme, cycle certificates are available to print off giving the recipient a sense of personal achievement.

Cycling England is currently working with the BCF to develop processes to enable Go-Ride coaches to become accredited to also offer National Standards cycle training. This will increase opportunities for clubs, community groups and schools to offer a variety of cycling experiences to participants.

Adult Cycle Training

There is increasing demand for adult cycle training courses. The National Standards provide a framework for such courses and an expanding network of individuals and organisations offer training courses. While some adults may require one to one training to actually learn the physical skills to ride a bike, others may just need a few hours tuition to build confidence and pass on the skills to ride in traffic. Adult cycle training therefore may be offered in the following ways:

- 'Family' cycle training where courses are geared towards giving parents and children the skills to ride safely;
- One-to-one or small group intensive courses for adults, either at complete beginner level or 'advanced' skills for commuters;
- Workplace based training courses delivered as part of a travel plan;
- 'Bike Buddy' schemes where an accomplished cyclist accompanies a novice to help give them the confidence to undertake a particular journey;
- Professional training for people who cycle in their work e.g. police officers and postal workers.

Case Studies

Lifecycle Bristol

One of the most successful adult cycle training organisations is [Lifecycle](#) in Bristol. It is funded jointly by local authorities in the area and also receives support from local businesses and developers for whom it provides cycle training and other support services for cycling such as help in setting up Bike User Groups (BUGs), often as part of travel plan implementation.

Lifecycle also offers subsidised cycle training to people on benefits or living in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. In many parts of England there is a correlation between areas of deprivation and higher than average levels of injury accidents, so cycle training may be one of the measures (alongside infrastructure, enforcement and other road user training schemes) to help create safer communities.

Cycle Derby

Within the [Cycling Demonstration Town of Derby](#), Level 2 cycle training is offered to all Year 6 pupils through a team of twenty part-time 'Bikeability' trainers. Thirty-two after school cycle clubs have been formed to offer further cycling activities and there are also Bike-It officers working in local schools (see [Cycling to School](#)). A Community Cycle Coach also offers Go-Ride activities and information about cycle training opportunities is available via the Cycle derby website and through publicity at a series of events throughout the year.

Parkview Primary was one of the first schools in Derby to have a school travel plan and has become involved in cycle training. Year six children are allowed to cycle to school unaccompanied and use the cycle storage if they complete the Bikeability Level 2 course.

Through interest from the school's Head Teacher, Parkview has also been involved in British Cycling's Physical Education School Sport and Club Link PESSCL initiative. This involved British Cycling coaches visiting the school to deliver free activities for 30 year five children. The school has also received one free training place on the British Cycling Activity Coach Award for Teachers course. This means the school can run its own cycling activities and become a registered British Cycling Go-Ride school club and now offers a weekly after-school cycling activity. This has been very successful and has improved the cycling skills of all the children on the course. The only costs that were met by the school were the time required to organise the children for the taster session and in helping develop the link with local cycling clubs. It costs schools an annual fee of £10 to register with Go-Ride and in return the school receives free coaching and promotional resources.

Further information

[Cycling policy: an overview](#) (DfT, 2007) answers some of the most commonly-asked questions regarding cycle training.

[Bikeability](#)

[National Cycle Training Helpline](#) Tel: 0870 607 0415