



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**  
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

# **Evaluation of Free Bikes Pilots for School Age Children Who Cannot Afford Them**

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**Appendix One: Discussion Guides (Separate document)**

# I. Introduction

## About this report

This report sets out findings from an interim evaluation of the Free Bikes Pilots for school age children who cannot afford them (the Free Bikes for Children Pilot Scheme). This report was produced in February 2022. It draws on information gathered from pilot project proposals, reports and early stage interviews with project leads and partners as well as a small number of parents and young people.

The report covers:

- Chapter two: Project set up
- Chapter three: Procurement and distribution
- Chapter four: Targeting children and young people
- Chapter five: Adaptive bikes
- Chapter six: Early feedback from families
- Chapter seven: Interim conclusions.

## The Free Bikes for Children pledge

The SNP manifesto<sup>1</sup> for the Scottish election in 2021 contained a commitment to start to deliver free bikes to children who cannot afford them. This commitment sat within the wider aim of tackling the climate crisis and bringing about a revolution in transport, through providing a mechanism that allows young people to travel independently. The pledge also connects strongly with wider policy priorities around increasing active travel and reducing car travel, increasing health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities.

When the SNP government was elected, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon re-iterated this commitment in May 2021, through the Priorities of Government statement<sup>2</sup>. The pledge was to establish pilot projects within the first 100 days of government, and commit to rolling the scheme out fully within 12 months.

As a result, the Free Bikes for Children Pilot Scheme was introduced to try out a range of ways to offer free bikes for school age children who could not afford one.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://issuu.com/hinksbrandwise/docs/04\\_28c\\_snp\\_100\\_days\\_210x297mm](https://issuu.com/hinksbrandwise/docs/04_28c_snp_100_days_210x297mm)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/priorities-government-statement-26-2021/#:~:text=Our%20most%20immediate%20priority%20is,measures%2C%20when%20outbreaks%20do%20arise.>

Six pilot projects were introduced within the first 100 days, with a further four pilot projects introduced in autumn/ winter 2021. One pilot project withdrew from the pilot in early 2022, for wider reasons not related to the pilot.

The Free Bikes for Children pledge links with and supports a wider range of work that the Scottish Government is undertaking to ensure that cycling is available and accessible to all – including changing behaviours, enhancing infrastructure and providing access to active travel options. Scottish Government, working with its partners, has supported a wide range of activity to improve access to bikes - including funding for employers, community groups and schools to support access to equipment, parking or showers to encourage cycling; bike share programmes; support for e-bike projects; and support for projects to create more opportunities for people to walk or cycle.

## Evaluation aims

This evaluation focuses strongly on the process and mechanisms of providing free bikes for children. The evaluation explores:

- **Viability** - The evaluation explores the positives and negatives of each approach, the impact of each pilot, the challenges and the opportunities offered. It explores how each pilot project can contribute to reducing inequalities and provide fairer and easier access to bikes for children.
- **Scalability and cost** - The evaluation explores the feasibility of scaling successful approaches to a national level, including unit cost to deliver.

## Evaluation method

The evaluation of the Free Bikes for Children Pilot Scheme runs through to August 2023. This interim evaluation involved six key stages. Due to Covid-19 related restrictions, all fieldwork was undertaken remotely – online or over the phone.

### Stage 1: Building relationships and understanding

The evaluation method involves in depth work with each of the pilot projects, and open and honest reflection from pilots around what works well and what has been challenging. It also involves building on feedback and evaluation work already being undertaken by each pilot project, and adapting the evaluation method to each pilot project as appropriate.

At an early stage, time was spent building relationships and supporting pilot projects to understand the approach to evaluation within the Free Bikes for Children Pilot Scheme. It was made clear that the evaluation would:

- identify successful approaches and what works – without directly comparing the performance of projects individually
- sensitively present challenges and barriers in the form of learning – alongside actions taken to address challenges, and outcomes of this
- share findings and learning themes openly while retaining individual participant anonymity
- focus on the overall aim of identifying the range of approaches that work well for achieving positive outcomes for children, young people and families.

A collective session was held with project leads and partners in September 2021, and a recorded presentation provided for projects unable to attend or funded after this date. Individual sessions were then held with each pilot scheme during October and November 2021, to discuss the approach to evaluation in more detail. An individual plan was made for each pilot scheme, tailored to their activities, timescales and target group<sup>3</sup>.

## Stage 2: Desktop review

The pilot schemes attend monthly check-in meetings with Transport Scotland leads, as well as providing monthly reports, budget updates and presentations to the Free Bikes for Children Pilot Scheme Board. This information was reviewed to identify key learning points, successes and challenges, to understand progress in project set up and delivery and to inform fieldwork with the project leads and partners.

## Stage 3: Fieldwork with project leads

Individual interviews were held with project leads for nine of the pilot schemes. The final pilot scheme was not yet active at the time of interim fieldwork, and will be held in spring 2022. Interviews followed a semi-structured discussion guide<sup>4</sup> and explored:

- project set up
- identifying children and young people
- working with partners
- procuring and distributing equipment

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<sup>3</sup> Nine projects were involved at this interim stage.

<sup>4</sup> Included as Appendix One.

- meeting a range of needs
- supporting safe and sustainable use
- costs and resources
- impact
- learning and support.

For the final evaluation, repeat interviews will be held with all ten project leads in spring/ summer 2022, towards the end of their pilot scheme delivery.

## **Stage 4: Fieldwork with partners**

Individual interviews were held with nine project partners, from six of the pilot schemes. Partners included bike providers, cycling clubs, school teachers, youth organisations and others. Interviews explored similar issues to project leads, but focused in on the elements that the partners had been particularly involved in.

For the final evaluation, 18 further interviews will be undertaken with partners. Permissions have been received to speak with school staff, who are important partners in a number of the pilot schemes.

## **Stage 5: Fieldwork with families**

At this early stage of pilot scheme development, most projects were in set up phase and felt it was too early to speak meaningfully with families about their perceptions of the scheme and its impact. At this interim stage, two interviews were held with parents and two with young people who had received bikes through one pilot scheme. Interviews explored:

- how families felt about the opportunity
- how families accessed the scheme
- views on equipment offered through the scheme
- views on safety, storage and sustainability
- impact of the bike and associated support, including impact on activity levels, cycling skills, health and active travel.

Detailed evaluation work with parents, carers, children and young people is planned for spring and summer 2022. This will include 46 interviews and a short survey of parents and carers, and children and young people.

## **Stage 6: Analysis and reporting**

Qualitative evidence was analysed using a process of manual thematic coding, to identify patterns and key themes. An early framework was also developed for understanding the cost of providing free bikes to children, based on learning from the pilots.

This interim report was produced for discussion within the Research Advisory Group, before being finalised and presented at a learning event for pilot scheme in spring 2022. Content relating to each pilot project was sent to the project lead for approval.

## 2. Project Set Up

### Introduction

This chapter sets out the profile of the ten Free Bikes for Children pilot projects. It explores their broad approach and experiences of project set up including early learning from bike procurement and distribution.

For this interim report, as projects are at a very early stage in development, this chapter is based on the project proposals and early discussions with nine of the ten project leads<sup>5</sup> and partners. We understand that projects were designed to test different approaches, learn and adapt along the way. Projects will not necessarily have followed their exact plans set out in their project proposal, as they tested their ideas. Projects talked openly to us about the challenges they experienced and how they addressed these, and it is important to note that these challenges were also anticipated, recognised and planned for in robust, regular risk registers for each project which were discussed on a monthly basis.

### The pilot projects

The Free Bikes for Children Pilot Scheme aims to test a range of methods of delivering free bikes to school age children who cannot afford them. It is not envisaged that there will be one preferred option, but rather a range of possible options for development. There is a strong focus on learning through the process, with regular monthly meetings with Transport Scotland, and opportunities for each project to reflect on learning and share this with the Project Board.

In June 2021, ten pilot proposals were submitted and considered by Transport Scotland. Eight of these proposals were taken forward. Six were launched in August 2021 and two shortly afterwards in September 2021. Two further proposals were developed and approved in autumn/winter 2021, taking the total funded projects to ten.

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<sup>5</sup> Pedal Up Shetland was new to the programme in late 2021 and was not involved at interim fieldwork stage.



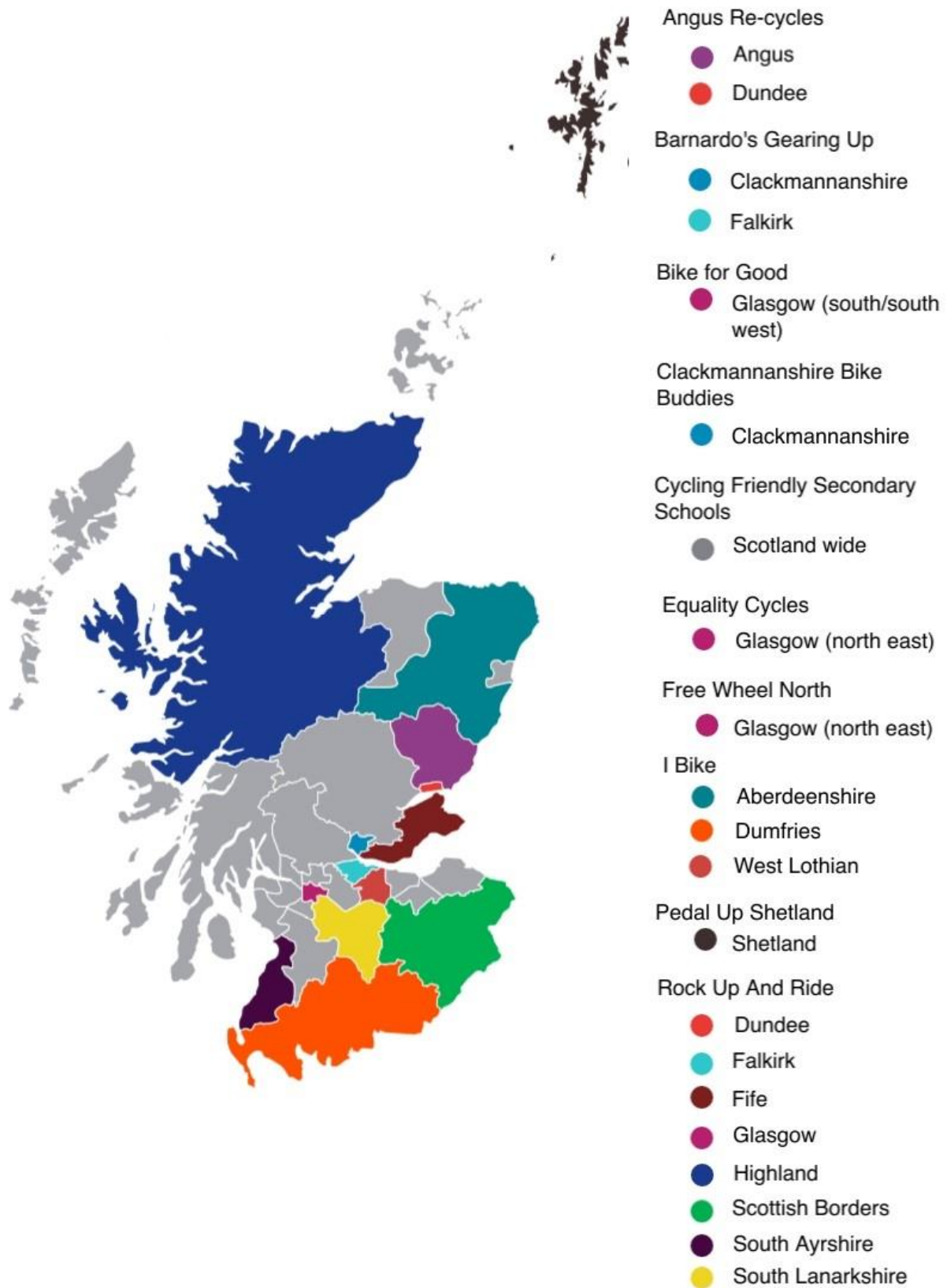


Figure 1 Map of Scotland showing locations of projects

## Project approaches

Each of the pilot projects takes a different approach to delivering free bikes, this is summarised below:

**Angus Re-Cycles: A hub approach, refurbishing 500 bikes for young people with care experience or deprivation in Angus and Dundee**

**Barnardo's Gearing Up: Bikes and cycle training for 30 young people with life challenges (working with Barnardo's) in Forth Valley**

**Bike for Good: A free bike subscription service for children in three schools in the south of Glasgow who are in receipt of free school meals**

**Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies: Focusing on one school cluster in Clackmannanshire, providing 160 bikes for young people to own using an opt-out model**

**Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools: A grant programme funding 37 secondary schools across Scotland to purchase bikes for pupils**

**Equality Cycles Cycling hubs in deprived areas in north east Glasgow, offering 300 bikes for ownership to people in receipt of free school meals**

**I Bike: Fleet and loan bikes at 3 primary and 4 secondary schools in 3 local authority areas**

**Pedal Up Shetland: Bikes issued to 50 children without bikes at time of Bikeability Scotland training<sup>6</sup> on library basis, to return when not needed**

**Rock Up and Ride: Four week fun and free opportunities at 8 sites in Scotland, with up to 800 bikes available, issued to children who complete the blocks**

**Free Wheel North(Exited early 2022): A safe cycling centre, suitable bikes and cycling opportunities for children with additional support needs in north east Glasgow**

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<sup>6</sup> Bikeability Scotland cycle training is the national cycle training programme for school children, usually delivered in schools between P5 and S2.

Some projects include a range of approaches, to provide an opportunity to test different methods with the same target group. Broadly, the approaches include:

- bike fleets
- bike libraries, loans or free subscription services
- ownership – with a condition the bike is returned when no longer needed
- ownership – for the young person to keep
- mixed – through providing grants to schools to agree their own approach

#### **Proposed Approaches:**

- **Angus Re-Cycles: Loan and bike fleet/ library**
- **Barnardo's Gearing Up : Ownership, for young person to keep**
- **Bike for Good Loan: Free bike subscription service**
- **Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies Ownership: For young person to keep**
- **Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools: Range of loan and ownership options**
- **Equality Cycles Ownership: Must return when no longer needed**
- **I Bike: Bike fleets in schools, loans through mini bike libraries and small scale exploration of ownership**
- **Pedal Up Shetland: Bike library, issued at Bikeability stage, take home once completed, must return when no longer needed**
- **Rock Up and Ride: Ownership at end of block of training sessions and in one location piloting an adaptive bike library.**
- **Free Wheel North Exited early 2022: Bike library and cycling centres**

Discussion with project leads highlighted advantages of each approach. Projects using an ownership model felt it supported young people to develop responsibility, a sense of ownership, and to feel trusted. Those using a loan model felt it encouraged ongoing engagement and longer term relationships with the children and young people. Two projects indicated that they selected an ownership approach as their organisation was not set up to manage a lending system. Another indicated that the ownership model was simpler for insurance purposes than a loan model.

For many of the projects, the idea for the pilots had emerged from existing work and understanding of need. Most lead partners already worked with young people, in communities and/ or in the cycling sector and felt well placed to deliver a free bikes pilot. Where possible, the partners used existing contacts, relationships and project infrastructure to develop the projects and built on learning from existing approaches.

#### **Example: Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies**

The lead partner within Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies, Forth Environment Link, already had a travel hub set up in a school cluster and is building on this for the pilot project. Building on and working alongside the hub helps to add value to the approach.

#### **Example: Bike for Good**

Bike for Good is piloting a bike subscription service for children and young people. It already ran a bike subscription service for adults, and had systems in place for managing this.

#### **Example: Angus Re-Cycles**

Angus Re-Cycles already had a service level agreement in place with Angus Council for recycling bikes. The infrastructure and model to deliver the project were already in place.

#### **Example: I Bike**

The lead partner within I Bike, Sustrans, already had the I Bike project established to encourage active travel within education. They were able to get set up quickly because they already had an existing schools programme in place, staff who knew the schools well, existing partners and connections.

#### **Example: Cycling Friendly Secondary schools**

Cycling Scotland had an existing programme distributing grants to fund cycling based activity in schools. They had previously received requests from schools for bikes for children who could not afford them. The existing fund could fund bikes for a school bike fleet, but not for individual use. The pilot therefore was designed to meet a need that had already been identified.

## **Timescales**

Each of the projects will run for between six and twelve months. Nine of the projects will have delivered their funded activity by August 2022, while the tenth project runs through to January 2023. Some projects found that their planned timescales for launching activity had been slightly delayed due to the pandemic and challenges launching outdoor activity in the late autumn and winter.

## Project Timescales

**Angus Re-Cycles: Angus Cycle Hub - August 2021 - August 2022**  
**Barnardo's Gearing Up: Forth Environment Link - August 2021 - August 2022**  
**Bike for Good: Bike for Good - August 2021 - June 2022**  
**Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies: Forth Environment Link - August 2021 - August 2022**  
**Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools: Cycling Scotland - August 2021 - August 2022**  
**Equality Cycles: St Paul's Youth Forum - August 2021 – August 2022**  
**I Bike: Sustrans - August 2021 - August 2022**  
**Pedal Up Shetland: Shetland Islands Council - March – August 2022**  
**Rock Up and Ride: Scottish Cycling - August 2021 - July 2022**  
**Free Wheel North (Exited early 2022): Inclusion Scotland - January 2022 - January 2023**

## Staffing

Most projects were able to recruit the staff required. At the time of fieldwork, one project had a vacancy for the project manager role, but work was being shared across other staff. One project noted that they initially struggled to recruit a mechanic for the project and felt that there was high demand for bike mechanics across Scotland, which they felt was related to a general increase in cycling.

One project has been able to use the pilot funding to support volunteers to take on a paid role delivering the project. This has worked well, providing valuable upskilling and recognition for their work. Projects supported new staff with appropriate training including industry standard cycle training, health and safety, IT, first aid and leadership training. Project partners also played an important role in some projects in offering training and support around cycling and engaging with disadvantaged young people.

## Partnership working

Each project has a lead organisation, and works in partnership with a wide range of organisations including cycling organisations, schools, community groups, bike providers and other third and public sector organisations.

### Project Partnerships

**Angus Re-Cycles: Angus Cycle Hub Angus Council, Dundee City Council, Urban Foresight and third sector partners**

**Barnardo's Gearing Up: Forth Environment Link, Barnardo's, Recyke-a-Bike**

**Bike for Good: Bike for Good Active Schools, targeted schools, Motion Forward Ltd**

**Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies: Forth Environment Link, Clackmannanshire Council, Active Clacks, Recyke-a-Bike and community groups**

**Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools Cycling Scotlan: Adventure Aberdeen, CamGlen Bike Town, Velocity, Bike for Good, community groups**

**Equality Cycles St Paul's Youth Forum: Rosemount Development Trust, Royston Regeneration Strategy Group, Glasgow City Council, schools, Active Schools, Police Scotland**

**I Bike, Sustrans: Cycling Scotland, West Lothian Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Nestrans, Active Schools, Learning for Sustainability School Network**

**Pedal Up Shetland: Shetland Islands Council, Anchor Project, Ability Shetland, Shetland Bike Project, ZetTrans**

**Rock Up and Ride: Scottish Cycling, Local cycling clubs, local authorities, Active Schools, local schools, community groups, Frog Bikes**

**Free Wheel North (Exited early 2022): Inclusion Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, GM4X, Inclusive Countryside Access, Wee Cycle Cumbernauld, Scottish Cycling, Glasgow Life**

Partnership is an important factor for most of the projects. Broadly, project leads and partners spoke positively about their experiences of working in partnership. Most project leads felt that the partners were helpful, receptive and happy to be involved in the project.

*"Without their engagement, we couldn't deliver it." Project lead*

*“It’s been good. We’ve been pretty open and honest with each other and we’re able to share and learn. They’ve been pretty open, honest and receptive.” Project partner*

Partners helped pilot projects to access their target group of young people and families. Most of the projects were working with local authorities and schools, to promote the project and generate referrals, providing knowledge about levels of need and disadvantage. Generally, project leads felt that schools, particularly primary schools, had engaged well. Delivering across a school cluster also worked well, particularly where secondary schools had an active travel hub. This helped to link primary and secondary school activity, and promoted active travel opportunities.

*“The schools have been very proactive, they are on board and really promoting it.” Project lead*

However, projects that aimed to work with schools noted several challenges. Firstly, they were limited in their ability to develop the necessary relationships, while schools were closed over summer. In addition, school timetables are often set well in advance. Working with schools often meant that project leads were dependent on schools and local authorities to share information about the free bike opportunity with eligible families. This responsibility often fell on one or two key individuals within the school. Project leads were conscious of the pressures on schools, and the way that the changing capacity of school staff could affect delivery.

Some projects worked closely with community-based organisations, including community groups, sports clubs and housing associations. This worked well in small localities, where community work was well developed and active. Staff in community partner organisations understood the needs of the target group and passed on information. As these organisations had strong relationships with families, they were well placed to encourage take up of the bikes and support the relationship between the project and the bike recipient.

*“Working with them helps us guarantee that the bikes will be getting to the right people.” Project lead*

### **Example: Equality Cycles**

**The Equality Cycles project involves joint work between St Paul’s Youth Forum – a youth focused programme based in the North East of Glasgow – and Rosemount Development Trust - a community based organisation which was formed by local residents in Royston who were concerned about the high level of unemployment and poverty in the area. Together the organisations have strong connections and links with local communities.**



Working with partners has also helped to share and build skills within organisations. For example, one partner felt that the pilot had provided a positive experience for club coaches, who were delivering the activity. It gave them a chance to work with a different demographic, which they found quite fulfilling. It also helped them build confidence working with a different audience.

To help manage partnerships, some projects developed service level agreements. Although developing the agreements took time, the project leads hoped that it would lead to more effective delivery, as roles and responsibilities would be clearly set out.

A few project leads noted that agreements, responsibilities and finances between the key delivery partners (as set out in the application) needed to be carefully negotiated as the application process had been quick and there had not been time to discuss this in detail prior to submitting the application. Others noted that they did not have formal agreements or contracts. However, most projects had an understanding with partners about their needs, and maintained regular written communication.

#### **Example: Rock Up and Ride**

**Scottish Cycling's Rock Up and Ride pilot project involves delivering bikes through eight existing cycling facilities and cycling communities across Scotland – including cycling clubs, schools and community groups. In particular, the project involves close partnership working with existing or newly created cycling clubs at each location. There are partnership agreements in place with each club.**

Some projects faced challenges when partners were not able to commit to the activity, or caused delays in progressing the project. Some projects found that working with local authorities took time, particularly as local authorities had other priorities around management of the Covid-19 pandemic. Where partners were not able to commit to the activity, projects have had to reassess their timescales and approaches, or focus in on developing the most critical partnerships first before expanding to work with others. Most projects continued to develop partnerships and most were able to overcome the difficulties and progress towards delivery of the project.



## Funding awarded

The funding awarded to the pilot projects varied from £39,950 to £597,040. This range reflected the large variety in projects in terms of volume, approaches, target groups, number of sites and wider activities.

Project	Planned capital funding	Planned resource funding	Total funding
Angus Re-Cycles	£107,000	£256,000	£363,000
Barnardo's Gearing Up	£27,350	£14,980	£42,330
Bike for Good	£128,304	£129,431	£257,735
Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies	£38,000	£23,940	£61,940
Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools	£150,000	£50,000	£200,000
Equality Cycles	£272,252	£96,730	£368,982
I Bike	£213,267	£14,000	£227,267
Pedal Up Shetland	£30,950	£9,000	£39,950
Rock Up and Ride	£464,000	£133,040	£597,040
Free Wheel North <i>Exited early 2022</i>	£75,000	£175,000	£250,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,506,123</b>	<b>£902,121</b>	<b>£2,408,244</b>

Table 1: Project funding

The balance at pilot proposal stage was roughly £1.5 million capital funding and just over £900,000 resource funding<sup>7</sup>. Transport Scotland has been working with projects to understand these costs in detail and ensure that capital and resource funding is categorised consistently, across the projects so this balance may change slightly for proposed costs as a result of this work.

<sup>7</sup> This is based on the breakdown provided in pilot project proposals.

## Learning and support through set up phase

Broadly, project leads were positive about the pilot process. Most felt that having the scope to run a pilot was helpful, and fitted in well with their own priorities. Projects welcomed the focus on learning. Some would value more discussion between the pilots, to share experiences and ensure effective links between pilots as appropriate.

*“It feels very positive. The process to date has felt very positive, solutions based and flexible. What is so refreshing is that there is no right, or wrong answer and the wrong answers will result in the right outcome.” Project lead*

A few project leads and partners commented that it might have been helpful to have collectively agreed eligibility criteria. This could have helped projects to get started more quickly, and ensure that the offer was consistent. A few felt slightly under pressure in terms of timescales for the pilot, and felt it was difficult not being able to plan over the longer term or offer long term security to staff members.

## 3. Procurement and Distribution

### Introduction

This chapter explores early approaches to procuring bikes for children and young people, distributing them to families, storing and maintaining them. While many projects were at the stage of procuring bikes, and had learning from this, few had reached the stage of distributing and maintaining bikes to children and young people at the time of the fieldwork for the interim report.

### Approaches to procurement

An important early step for many projects was procuring bikes for children and young people. The projects range in size and approach, and the number of bikes required ranged from 30 to just over 800.

Project	Planned volume of bikes
Angus Re-Cycles	500
Barnardo's Gearing Up	30
Bike for Good	239
Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies	160
Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools	400 <i>increased to 566</i>
Equality Cycles	300
I Bike	292
Pedal Up Shetland	50
Rock Up and Ride	800
Free Wheel North <i>Exited early 2022</i>	<i>Not set out at proposal stage</i>

Table 2: Planned volume of bikes

The projects used different types of bikes including:

- new bikes – from local suppliers, national suppliers, bike manufacturers and international suppliers;
- recycled bikes – refurbished at existing local charities and cycle shops; or
- unused or abandoned bikes – to be refurbished within the project itself.

## Proposed type of bike

**Angus Re-Cycles: Refurbished by project – hand back when grow out - to be refurbished again**

**Barnardo's Gearing Up: Refurbished or new**

**Bike for Good: New – then refurbished and loaned again**

**Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies: Refurbished through local charity**

**Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools: Grants to schools - range of new bikes and recycled bikes**

**Equality Cycles: New – from local or national bike shops**

**I Bike: New from local and trade suppliers**

**Pedal Up Shetland: Mix of new and refurbished**

**Rock Up and Ride: New – from bike suppliers**

**Free Wheel North (Exited early 2022): Refurbished by project - abandoned adaptive bikes**

Most projects offered young people a bike, along with a helmet, lock and lights, and showed them how to use the accessories. Some projects also offered additional accessories such as pads, gloves, a waterproof jacket, mud guards and a rain cover. One project worked with a partner that provided a welcome pack, including a bike maintenance booklet, personal cycling chart and local map with active travel routes.

One project, the Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools grant programme, did not procure bikes directly as schools were provided with grants to purchase the bikes they needed. This project provided pre-application support to schools to help identify bike suppliers, distributors and refurbishing organisations, and provided guide prices and specifications.

Across the projects, whether bikes were new or recycled, all of the projects were conscious of quality and safety, opting for higher quality bikes that would last and withstand regular use. Partners commented that the quality of the bikes was important, and they valued that projects had selected good quality bikes. They felt this would encourage sustained use and combat any stigma associated with receiving a free bike.

*“Because these bikes are high quality, I feel that the children won't stand out in the wrong way.” Project partner*

A few projects noted that there were differing needs for localities in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, bikes were less likely to be used for commuting to and from

school (due to the distance), but would be valuable in helping young people travel independently to socialise. Projects also noted that in rural areas it was important for young people to have bikes that allowed them to make full use of the terrain. One project is prioritising procurement of mountain bikes to facilitate this.

## Procuring new bikes

Projects offering new bikes liaised with both manufacturers and retailers. Some project leads found that liaising with manufacturers directly worked well, allowing them to negotiate price, model and delivery. Some projects found that purchasing bikes that required assembly could be substantially cheaper than purchasing ready built. However, this resulted in increased staff time to assemble the bikes once the parts were delivered. One project was able to use some volunteer time to help assemble bikes, along with staff time.

Most projects sourcing new bikes and accessories found that there was likely to be some time (ranging from weeks to months) from order to delivery. This was due to the significant increase in demand for bikes since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, along with challenges in the global supply chain. Some also found it challenging as they needed to order bikes in advance of delivery and often did not know what sizes would be required. Projects also had to consider how to balance giving young people choice in the brand, type and colour of bikes with the need to procure effectively and efficiently.

*“The timescales are tricky, and it’s hard for me to predict what size and how many of each thing we need.” Project lead*

Most projects offering new bikes sourced them from a range of suppliers, and directly from manufacturers, according to availability and delivery schedules. This provided projects with a good range of options to offer young people. Working with a mix of national and local suppliers worked well. National suppliers were able to fulfil large orders at competitive prices but could be less flexible. Local suppliers (of new and recycled bikes) were better placed to respond quickly and with smaller orders, or for accessories.

One project found just one supplier that could provide the bikes in a reasonable time frame, and another chose to source all the bikes from one manufacturer after speaking with several. For this project, there was only one manufacturer that could supply the quality and quantity of required bikes within the required time frame. The manufacturer felt able to work with this project easily, as the project lead was able to provide clear information on the type, style, number and size of bikes required. The

manufacturer was happy to negotiate a competitive price for the bikes, as they felt the free bikes pilot aligned with the company's ethos.

#### **Example: Equality Cycles**

**At Equality Cycles, all of the bikes are new, sourced from Raleigh, Halfords and Cougar. In negotiation the project managed to achieve a significant reduction from one supplier. An initial batch of stock was ordered based on an estimate of what was needed, and the project will keep procuring as they get a better idea of what size of bikes are needed.**

## **Procuring recycled bikes**

Recycled bikes were sourced in different ways. Two projects aimed to refurbish bikes themselves and sourced discarded bikes through local authorities, clubs, their own bank of unused bikes or through donations of bikes from the general public.

#### **Example: Angus Re-Cycles**

**Angus Re-Cycles aims to offer free recycled bikes to children and young people across Dundee and Angus. The project has an agreement with the local authority to collect all disused bikes. By December 2021 it had 515 recycled bikes ready to be distributed, had received 171 referrals and distributed 102 bikes. They are working with partners who have relationships with families to distribute the bikes, and it has taken a little while to get the partners fully involved and making referrals.**

Some projects sourced recycled bikes from a trusted local supplier of upcycled bikes. Often this supplier was a key partner in the project. Projects found that working with suppliers of recycled bikes could have wider benefits as they were often already well embedded into the community or could offer additional resources, such as bike maintenance. However, at times using recycled bikes limited young people's choices as the stock of recycled bikes depended on what had been collected or donated.

In one project, the project leads and bike supplier carefully selected high quality recycled bikes for young people. However the young people did not like the bikes as they had strong ideas about the brand and style they preferred. Going forward, young people will be taught about the different types of bikes on the market, before being invited to the shop to select their own bikes using a voucher. A digital catalogue will also be created so young people can see the bikes that are available.

*“It makes sense for them to come into the shop and choose. It gives them choice and power.” Project partner*

## Approaches to distribution

Projects were at an early stage in terms of distributing bikes to children and young people. Planned approaches included:

- delivery of the bike through partners with strong connections to families and young people
- distribution through schools – often connected to the Bikeability stage
- distribution through cycle clubs
- young people coming to a hub or centre to collect their new bike
- home delivery of bikes at a time that suits the family
- attending a local bike shop to choose their bike
- access to bikes at certain times at cycling centres.

### Example: Rock Up and Ride

**The Rock Up and Ride project offered its bikes through a cycle training programme. Young people were required to attend at least four cycle training sessions (using fleet bikes) to demonstrate their commitment, before they could request a bike of their own. It is also piloting an adaptive bike library where bikes can be ridden free of charge in one location.**

Projects found that having the flexibility to deliver the bikes to young people at suitable locations helped to reduce the barriers to access and build relationships with families.

One project originally planned that young people would come and pick up the bikes from two locations. However, this didn't work well and the project has had to develop a new approach. For the moment it is delivering bikes to young people, but this is not efficient in terms of time or environmentally friendly. The project is working with partners to develop a new approach to delivery.

One project which asked young people to come into their base to collect bikes found that they had to procure shipping containers in which to store the bikes to assist with distribution and assembly of new bikes. This meant that they had to spend time shuttling a short distance between the project base and storage to get bikes for people when they came in to collect them.

Each project had clear consent processes in place to ensure that parents and carers were happy with the young person receiving a bike. To ensure the ownership

approach is clear, a few projects working with schools have developed a protocol for the transfer of assets (i.e. the bike) to young people. This varies from a formal arrangement, such as that used by schools when transferring iPads or laptops, to a more informal agreement requiring the young person and parent/carer to sign a form stating that they understand their responsibilities.

## Storage

### Individual storage

Each project providing a bike to take home also provided a lock for the bike. Projects had considered the possibility of bike theft, and hoped to minimise the risk of theft by providing high quality locks and education. One project also maintained a secure database of the padlock codes and spare locks, in the event that young people forgot their code and could not access their bike. A few projects were considering getting bikes marked or registered with the national cycle database.

Project leads providing bikes for young people to take home acknowledged the challenge that some people will have around safe storage, particularly in flats. One project asks that bikes are stored indoors overnight, and found that a few young people are saying that they have to keep their bike in the bedroom, so is exploring other options. One project provided rain covers for bikes, along with locks, so that they could be stored outdoors.

A few projects are working through the detail of secure storage of the bikes and how this will work. Two projects noted that they were speaking with housing associations to develop safe bike storage solutions. And one project suggested that, if necessary, young people could store bikes in the community bike library which is open at set times during the week.

Most projects said that if a bike was stolen, they would aim to replace it. A few projects noted that this was a particularly difficult issue to plan for. One project felt that the risk of theft was low, and that the community they worked in was small, so there was a high chance of recovery.



## Communal storage

Several projects used shipping containers to store the bikes safely on site in schools or in the community. Shipping containers were mainly used to store bikes on site (in schools, at clubs or at hubs), and in some cases to help organisations store a stock of bikes on or near their own premises, for distribution.

*“We knew the containers would be very secure, don’t need planning permission and can double up as works of public art.” Project lead*

Shipping containers were felt to be a safe and cost effective storage solution. Most commented that the cost of shipping containers was higher than expected, due to high demand. A few projects commented that they planned to engage the community in personalising the shipping containers, but others did not want to draw attention to them due to the high value of goods stored.

One project is working with the local authority to map the existing storage capacity in schools, with the view that the project can help augment this if necessary. One project is considering use of cameras on site, to deter potential thieves and gather evidence in the event of theft.

One project has a warehouse which it has found works well as a storage space, and a separate office space. The warehouse does not have heating, and the project would ideally like a single space that can hold bikes and where staff can work.

### **Example: Rock Up and Ride**

**At Rock Up and Ride, each of the eight sites has been offered a shipping container for bike storage during the introductory four week sessions offered to children and young people. The shipping container could also potentially be used by young people to store their bikes, if needed.**

## Maintenance

Each of the pilot projects has built in approaches to maintaining the bikes to ensure ongoing and safe use. There are a range of approaches including project maintenance undertaken by project staff, arranging services through local bike suppliers and community projects, or offering vouchers for maintenance to young people. The projects undertaking maintenance themselves employed qualified mechanics to undertake this activity. As the projects were at early stages, learning about maintenance over time at this interim stage was limited.

## Project approaches to maintenance

**Angus Re-Cycles: Free one month safety check**

**Barnardo's Gearing Up: Service every eight weeks**

**Bike for Good: Proactive - One bike service per year & Reactive - fixed within 48 hours/ replaced if needed**

**Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies: Service every eight weeks**

**Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools: No maintenance costs included (Grant programme with maintenance responsibility sitting with schools and local networks)**

**Equality Cycles: 3 monthly maintenance**

**I Bike: Light servicing by project staff**

**Regular full service with local bike supplier**

**Pedal Up Shetland: 3 monthly maintenance through community project**

**Rock Up and Ride: £50 maintenance voucher for each bike to be used at local bike shops**

**Free Wheel North (Exited early 2022): Project maintenance facility and service depot created in shipping containers in unused land**

## Wider support activities

In addition to providing bikes, bike equipment and maintenance services, the projects also aimed to undertake a wide range of additional activities. All of the projects aimed to ensure that young people accessing bikes had cycle training and safety advice, so that they were able to use their bike safely.

Project	Cycle training/ safety	Maintenance skills	Fun cycle sessions	Provision of safe cycle space
Angus Re-Cycles	Yes - direct	Yes	-	-
Barnardo's Gearing Up	Yes – direct, group	Yes	-	-
Bike for Good	Yes – clubs and events  <i>Bikeability link</i>	-	-	-
Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies	Yes - direct	Yes	Yes	-
Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools	<i>Bikeability link</i>	-	-	-
Equality Cycles	Yes – Travel Hub	-	-	-
I Bike	<i>Bikeability link</i>	Yes	Yes	
Pedal Up Shetland	<i>Bikeability link</i>	-	-	-
Rock Up and Ride	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
Free Wheel North <i>Exited early 2022</i>	Yes – direct, group or 1/1	-	Yes	Yes

Table 3: Wider support activities

Some projects offered maintenance skills development classes for children and young people, and some offered fun cycle sessions like led cycles and group cycle opportunities. Two of the projects involved creating a safe cycle space for young people to develop their skills.

Most projects offering wider activity as part of the pilot had not yet delivered, with plans to do so from early 2022. Overall, projects indicated that it was important to build skills, rapport and commitment before handing over the bike.

A few projects also incorporated cycle leader training (for adults and teenagers) into the project. Partners were hopeful that this would help sustain the activity beyond the pilot. One project hoped in the future to incorporate a café into the hub and to run it as a social enterprise, which would fund ongoing activity.

## 4. Targeting Children and Young People

### Introduction

This chapter explores the pilot project approaches to identifying children and young people who cannot afford a bike, and ensuring delivery focuses on this group.

### Target groups

The projects set their target group themselves, within the parameters of a pilot for children who cannot afford a bike. Pilots developed different ways of identifying and targeting children and young people who could not afford a bike. This included:

- focusing on areas of high deprivation based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)
- focusing on children eligible for free school meals or universal credit
- focusing on children who may have difficulties affording a bike due to life challenges, experience of care, rural deprivation or additional support needs
- focusing on children identified as needing a bike for Bikeability training
- focusing on children identified as in need of support through existing systems such as partner holiday club programmes

## Project: Target group profiles

**Angus Re-Cycles: Care experience, low income, SIMD, rural deprivation, 3-17**

**Barnardo's Gearing Up: Life challenges, working with Barnardo's 10-16**

**Bike for Good: Low income or eligible for free school meals, P6-S2**

**Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies: Identified working through schools on opt-out basis, P7+**

**Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools: SIMD deciles 1-5, and adaptive bikes, school age S1-S6**

**Equality Cycles: SIMD areas, 8-18**

**I Bike: Eligible for free school meals and parent confirming no access to bike, school age P5+**

**Pedal Up Shetland: Identified as needing a bike for Bikeability training, 5-17  
Focus on P5-7**

**Rock Up and Ride: Entitled to free school meals (excluding universal primary school meals) and/ or school clothing grant**

**One site a focused disability hub, and adaptive bikes at two other sites as required, 7-14**

**Free Wheel North (Exited early 2022) Young people requiring adaptive bikes, focus on deprived areas, 0-18**

As well as set criteria, some projects also aimed to take a holistic approach, and were keen that young people in need did not miss out because they did not qualify for free school meals, or live in a particular locality. For example, some projects accepted referrals from school staff or community partners who identified young people based on their personal knowledge of young people and their families.

One project has chosen an 'opt out' model. This pilot is open to any P7 pupil in the target cluster. And another, which is offering bikes on loan, provides enough bikes for a whole class to use at a time. Both projects chose this model to make it as easy as possible for young people who need bikes to access them, with minimal stigma attached to the opportunity.

The age range targeted varied significantly between projects. Some projects selected the age of delivering the bike to the child to fit with wider activities, including school-based Bikeability training or transition from primary to secondary school. Some focused on a wider age range, including secondary school of all ages, in

recognition that cycling can drop off as young people get to secondary school. A few included younger children in early primary school.

In a few cases, the age range was designed to match bike sizes, for example focusing on upper primary age children to ensure that bikes can last longer as they grow up. In some cases projects were working out how to balance the need for a bike at P5 stage for Bikeability, and the good links with this programme, with the likelihood that children may quickly grow out of a bike offered at that stage.

## Approaches to reaching the target group

Projects used a wide range of approaches to reaching target children, young people and families. This included:

- asking schools to take the lead on identifying children in need of a free bike
- issuing information to targeted families through schools
- working closely with partners connected to schools such as Active Schools
- identifying eligible young people through partners working closely with the target group.

### Example: I Bike

Within this project, schools are taking responsibility for targeting pupils from P5 upwards, when they start Bikeability training. Priority is given to pupils who would not normally have access to bikes, who are in areas of high deprivation based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and who are eligible for free school meals. The schools are managing this process themselves, as they know their pupils well. It also means that individual details for pupils don't need to be passed between organisations.

### Example: Barnardo's Gearing Up

The Gearing Up project includes Barnardo's as a key partner. Barnardo's identifies the young people eligible for a free bike. All are aged 10 to 16, and working with Barnardo's for a wide range of reasons due to life challenges. Staff work with the young people on a one to one basis and recruit young people. This process is in its early stages.

### Example: Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools

The Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools pilot involves grants to secondary schools. Schools are asked how they would identify and assess pupils' eligibility. A range of suggestions have been made by schools, and at the time of the fieldwork the grants had not yet been made to the schools and bikes had not yet been distributed.

### Example: Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies

**The Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies pilot is a universal programme offered in target schools, and also raises awareness through wider routes. All pupils in P7 will receive a letter about the programme. The programme is universal, and pupils can choose to opt out if they don't want to be involved.**

#### **Example: Equality Cycles**

**Equality Cycles works closely with schools. All of their work is in an area of high deprivation, and access to the bikes is further targeted. Schools send out letters to pupils eligible for free school meals, and families get in touch with the school to opt in. These contact details are then passed to the project, which gets in touch to arrange the free bike. This approach is working well so far.**

## Learning

Projects were in the early stages of this work, but identified some useful learning from the approaches. Most projects felt that their approach was working reasonably well so far.

Projects working with schools generally found this approach worked well. Families could be targeted effectively, and the knowledge of teachers and wider support staff could be built in to ensure families were not overlooked due to strict criteria. Administering the bike distribution through schools also helped to reduce the need for personal information to be shared between partners. The timing of the launch of the pilots coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic and the emergence of the Omicron variant, which put some additional pressures on schools and impacted capacity to some extent.

#### **Example: Rock Up and Ride**

**Rock Up and Ride targets young people through working closely with Active Schools. There is a broad criteria for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or eligible for the uniform grant. However, they work closely with schools because there can be young people who don't meet that criteria but can still be deemed to be in need of a free bike.**

Some projects also found that they needed to invest time in building relationships with young people and families. This could involve working closely with partners who have good relationships with families and communities, or taking time to develop relationships gently over time.

#### **Example: Engaging young people**

One project aims to target a group of young people who have high levels of need, working with a trusted third sector partner agency. It found that it needed to invest in staff training around the needs of the target group, and introduce a gradual approach to building relationships with the young people. It now plans to meet young people informally and individually over a hot drink or for a walk, to build rapport before connecting them into the cycle project.

#### **Example: Using cycle leaders to engage families**

In one project, the partners were trained as cycle leaders, and will be involved in delivery of the cycle training to young people. Staff in the partner organisation have strong relationships with the young people, so are able to obtain their buy-in and use the existing rapport to facilitate engagement in the cycling activity.

In some cases, projects had to take time to think about how to raise awareness of the opportunity in a way that would connect with their core audience. One project partner ran a successful social media campaign, and another is planning to translate information into different languages to ensure all are aware of the opportunity.

#### **Example: A social media campaign**

One partner, a sports club, initially found it difficult to reach the target group in a way that felt friendly and appropriate. As a community club, staff and volunteers were not used to gathering detailed information about participants' socioeconomic status. The partner ran a social media campaign targeting families in receipt of the uniform allowance which it found was highly effective. The club now has a waiting list of over 100 young people, who are eligible, and who will receive a bike.

#### **Example: Bike for Good**

Bike for Good targets pupils through sending letters out through three schools to parents of children eligible for free school meals. Parents then apply for a bike online via the website, and get a message when the bike is ready for pick up. The approach is working well so far. The project is also planning to translate letters into a range of languages, and re-issue as there is a high volume of families for whom English is not their first language.

Some project leads and partners commented on the challenge of finding a balance between efficiently identifying and reaching the target group, and not wishing to stigmatise people through the offer.

*"I didn't want people to feel like it was a charity bike, so we framed it as an active travel opportunity." Project partner*



One project found that using an opt out model helped to reach many families, but created some challenges around parental engagement. And one project found that using an opt in model created some challenges in terms of families being willing to accept the offer of a free bike.

**Example: Learning about small communities**

In one small, rural community no families took up the offer of a free bike, despite a teacher identifying and communicating directly with eligible families. Partners reported that this was not an unusual response, as people in the community did not want to be seen as being in need, and did not want to accept 'hand outs'.

**Example: Using an opt out model**

In one project, a partner felt that the 'opt out' model provided fewer opportunities for engagement. Families were invited to complete an online survey to share more information about their needs, but so far very few had chosen to provide this. The partner noted that the only reason for families to communicate with them was to opt out, and they would have preferred more direct engagement at this early stage.

## 5. Adaptive Bikes

### Introduction

This chapter explores provision within the pilot projects for children and young people who require an adaptive bike or a bike that specifically meets their individual needs. We use the term ‘adaptive bikes’ throughout this chapter to refer to bikes which are designed or modified to fit the needs of an individual.

### Provision of adaptive bikes

Most projects expect to deliver some adaptive bikes within their pilot. The Free Wheel North project focused entirely on refurbishing abandoned adaptive bikes and developing a hub where young people can come to use the bikes in a safe environment. **When the Free Wheel North project exited the programme in early 2022, after the completion of this interim evaluation, the funding was distributed between the other nine projects to ensure inclusion of adaptive bikes within each project.**

Project	Proposed volume of adaptive bikes	Budget in proposals
Angus Re-Cycles	-	-
Barnardo’s Gearing Up	-	-
Bike for Good	12 adaptive bikes	£9,720
Clackmannanshire Bike Buddies	-	-
Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools	Not specified	£10,000
Equality Cycles	Not specified	£20,000
I Bike	4 adaptive bikes	£16,000
Pedal Up Shetland	3 adaptive bikes and 3 hand bikes	£7,200
Rock Up and Ride	At least 4 bikes	£20,000
Free Wheel North <i>Exited early 2022</i>	Not specified	Not specified*

Table 4: Proposed number of adaptive bikes and budgets

\*This is integral to the project, refurbishing abandoned adaptive bikes.

All projects were keen to support young people with a range of needs. However, a few felt that their model meant that they were unable to offer adaptive bikes. Projects which didn’t include adaptive bike provision were keen to either adapt their project in the future to include adaptive bike provision or signpost families to other services. Two projects indicated that they were able to make minor adaptations to standard

bikes to accommodate some needs – such as removing the pedals to turn a standard bike into a balance bike.

At the time of the interim evaluation, Pedal Up Shetland had not yet started up. The other five projects which included a provision for adaptive bikes were at reasonably early stages. One project – Cycling Friendly Secondary Schools - experienced very high demand for adaptive bikes from schools through their grant applications. The project explored potential to bring existing adaptive bikes back into use, and has also funded new adaptive bikes, through the grant programme.

Two projects – I Bike and Bike for Good – are working with schools to explore needs. One school has identified existing adaptive bikes near the school that aren't being used, and I Bike is exploring if these can be brought back into use. Bike for Good is liaising with a special school to explore needs and storage options, and will build in specific training on repairs and maintenance for pupils at this school. The Rock Up and Ride project is also in the process of sourcing refurbished adaptive bikes which are built to order, bespoke to needs.

One project did not specifically budget for adaptive bikes but is working with a special school to explore how many adaptive bikes are needed. The project has access to adaptive bikes for short term rental, but not for ownership. The project is working through how to make a fair offering to pupils who need an adaptive bike.

Another project which did not specifically budget for adaptive bikes had access to an adapted bike fleet which offered opportunities for long term loan, and was also exploring community group sessions. This work will develop over future months.

## Learning

Project leads and partners found it challenging to predict how many young people would need an adaptive bike, and the type of bike required. The cost of new adaptive bikes is high and without knowing how many young people would need an adaptive bike, projects found it hard to forecast budgets. One project noted that whilst it set aside a budget for adaptive bikes, the demand has been five times more than expected.

A few project leads and partners commented that there are banks of unused adaptive bikes across Scotland, which are likely to be falling into disrepair. They felt there was scope to work with the people storing these bikes to repair them and bring them back into use, but it could be hard to access them.

*“There are fleets of them sitting in shipping containers, but they’re hard to access and people don’t want to give them up because they’re so expensive.” Project partner*

Several projects plan to work with one particular partner organisation which makes and repairs adaptive bikes. This organisation was aware that several projects might be in need of support, and was keen that they understood requirements as early as possible in order to be able to meet the needs of all the pilots.

Projects also found that it was important to think about storage. Adaptive bikes are usually larger than standard bikes, and require more space for storage. Project leads were conscious that a family may not have sufficient and secure storage to keep it. One partner suggested that the solution may be for projects to store the bikes on site for people to use, rather than expecting families to store, and insure, the bikes at home.

Lastly, a few project leads highlighted that it was important to think about how young people would use adaptive bikes, which cannot always be used on the road, and the best way to provide bikes and safe cycling opportunities.

## 6. Early Feedback from Families

### Introduction

This short chapter sets out feedback from two young people (both aged 10) and their parents. Both had received bikes from the same project. The final report will include interviews with many more young people and parents, as well as results from a wider survey of young people, parents and carers, and any further feedback gathered through evaluations of the individual pilot projects.

### Views on process

Both young people were very happy to have received a bike and parents were pleased to receive the offer. Both parents appreciated the bike, but noted that they would have purchased a bike for Christmas if this opportunity had not arisen.

Both parents found the process of receiving a bike very straightforward. Each parent reported that they signed a consent form, and then the bike was delivered to their home. Parents were pleased that the process was quick (within a week) and that bikes were delivered at a time which was convenient to them.

*“Personally, the experience was quick. From giving my details to him coming to the door with a bike was about one week.” Parent*

Both parents indicated that the bikes were good quality and would suit the needs of their children. There was not a choice of style or colour, but parents and young people were happy with their bikes. Originally one parent was concerned that the quality and condition of a free bike may be low, but they were happy with the bike they received.

*“I’m just glad she could get a bike because a lot of her friends have one.” Parent*

One young person initially received a bike which was too large, so it had to be swapped. The parent felt that conversations about the height of the child in advance would help, to get the size right first time.

One parent had a suitable place to keep the bike in the garage, but another had to ask his daughter to keep the bike in her bedroom. A rain cover for the bike would help this family to store the bike outside in the back yard.

One young person particularly appreciated that the bike was recycled, as she is conscious of reducing environmental waste. The parent was happy that the project took their old bike away to be recycled for other families.

*“I really do think the scheme is brilliant.” Parent*

## Views on impact

The young people used their bikes for cycling and playing with friends and going to the park. One young person said that having a bike helped her to spend more time outside. She uses her bike every night, usually for an hour or so – as she is allowed to be outside while it is daylight. Without the bike, she would have been spending time on her x-box or on her phone.

*“The bike is really good. It got me outside.” Young person (10)*

Neither of the young people used their bike to cycle to school. One currently walks to school but will cycle when the weather improves in the spring. Another may be allowed to cycle to school by her parents after she completes Bikeability training.

Both parents felt that having a bike helped their children to be active and to spend more time with their friends outdoors. One parent noted that the pandemic had kept children indoors more than usual. She felt her daughter was healthier and able to sleep better, because she was spending more time outside, and less time on devices.

*“She’s sleeping better and finding it easier to sleep. And I think she has less interest in the devices.” Parent*

Both parents and young people also noted that the bikes would be used more as the weather improves and the days become longer.

*“In the summer I would use it 24/7.” Young person (10)*

Parents felt that the bikes provided through the pilot would last their children for around one to two years.

In a few cases, project leads and partners also highlighted evidence of some positive outcomes for young people at this early stage.

**Example: Outcomes for young leaders**

In one project, two young people had been trained as cycle assistants. One young person is now using the bike as his main mode of transport. The project partner reported completing the training had helped the young people feel a sense of achievement, boosting their self esteem.

**Example: Culture change**

In one school, teachers have been particularly enthused about the opportunity and have used it across the curriculum. For example, teachers have taken classes on educational excursions with the whole class travelling by bike rather than bus. Teachers reported that pupils were using the bikes well, to travel to school and recreationally.

**“They’re happier. They’re proud of themselves...I can see a difference already.” Project partner**

## 7. Interim Conclusions

### Introduction

This chapter explores early learning from the Free Bikes for Children pilot projects, including key findings and areas for consideration. It should be recognised that some of the challenges and themes will already be areas of learning and discussion within the pilot scheme, due to regular reflection, risk registers and discussion around progress with each project.

### Approaches

The ten pilot projects were set up to test ways of delivering free bikes to school age children, to promote and support active travel and reduce inequalities. Each project takes a different approach to delivering free bikes – including through community hubs, school clusters and community organisations, through bike fleets, libraries, free subscriptions, loans and ownership. At the time of this interim report, pilot projects were in the early stages.

There were advantages of each approach. An ownership model could support young people to develop responsibility, a sense of ownership and trust. Loan, subscription, fleet or library options could encourage ongoing engagement and longer term relationships.

Learning over time about the loan or free subscription model would be useful to help inform future approaches, as some were unsure about how they could use this approach and how it would be managed. Projects would also welcome sharing approaches to eligibility criteria, to build consistency and collectively agree an approach.

Working in partnership is important for the pilot projects. Partners helped projects to access their target group of young people and families, promote the project, generate referrals and provide knowledge about levels of need. Schools have proven particularly useful partners for understanding need and targeting young people, as have community based organisations.



## Procurement and distribution

Together, the pilot projects aimed to procure approximately 2,627 bikes. Approaches included purchasing new bikes, purchasing recycled bikes and refurbishing bikes within the pilot project. All of the projects were conscious of quality and safety, opting for higher quality bikes that would last, withstand regular use, and combat any perceived stigma associated with receiving a free bike. A few projects noted that there were differing needs in rural and urban areas – for example with people in rural areas requiring mountain bikes to make full use of their bike.

Lessons learned in procuring new bikes included:

- Liaising directly with manufacturers worked well and enabled negotiation on price, model and delivery.
- Buying bikes that required assembly could be substantially cheaper. However it did mean that the project needed to invest time in assembly. It would be useful to analyse the cost of this time, to establish whether there can be a real saving in this approach.
- It took time for new bikes to be delivered, due to demand for bikes and challenges in the supply chain globally. This made it more difficult to match supply and demand flexibly.
- Local suppliers could often respond more quickly, but for smaller orders.
- Projects had to balance choice for young people with efficient procurement.

Projects which were procuring recycled bikes found that having trusted local suppliers of recycled or refurbished bikes as a project partner could be a real benefit.

Most projects also offered a safety package – a helmet, lock, lights and bell. Equipment such as waterproof clothing, gloves and a rain cover helped to enable all weather cycling, and storage of the bike outdoors. Projects provided locks to minimise risk of theft, but some found that young people had challenges around safe storage, particularly in flats.

Maintenance of the bikes was also central to most projects, to ensure ongoing and safe use. Approaches to maintenance, and associated costs, varied significantly and projects were at early stages in terms of learning about maintenance.

## Identifying and targeting eligible children and young people

Pilot projects developed their own approaches to identifying and targeting children and young people who could not afford a bike. This included focusing on areas of high deprivation, eligibility for free school meals or universal credit, wider life challenges or additional support needs, or children identified as needing a bike for Bikeability training in upper primary school. Projects found that working with schools to target eligible young people worked well, despite schools experiencing significant pressure over the pilot time period.

### Adaptive bikes

Most projects expect to deliver some adaptive bikes within their pilot. All projects were keen to support young people with a range of needs. However, a few felt that their model meant that they were unable to offer adaptive bikes. Projects were largely at early stages in exploring needs with schools. One project experienced very high demand for adaptive bikes from schools through grant applications.

Project leads and partners found it challenging to predict how many young people would need an adaptive bike, and the type of bike required. Projects also found that it was important to think about storage – as adaptive bikes are usually larger – and how and where young people would use adaptive bikes which cannot always be used on the road.

### Early feedback from families

From a very small number of early interviews – with two young people and two parents - participants were happy with the process of receiving a free bike and felt the bikes were good quality. The young people found the bikes helped them to spend more time outside, meet with friends, spend less time on screens and sleep better. Importantly, both parents indicated that the bike their child received would probably last them one to two years. Further work understanding the longevity of bikes for children and young people would be useful, to help understand how to manage the process of children growing out of their bikes in a sustainable way.

## Next steps for the evaluation

The final evaluation report is due in September 2022. Fieldwork for this report will include:

- An interview with the lead for the newly established project – March 2022
- 10 interviews with project leads towards the end of their project – spring/ summer 2022
- 18 interviews with project partners – spring/ summer 2022
- 46 interviews with children, young people and families – spring/ summer 2022
- An online survey of children, young people and families (appended).

The discussion guides with children, young people, parents and carers were piloted as part of this interim report. We suggest that the parent and carer discussion guide is slightly amended to include a question exploring what would have happened without the Free Bikes scheme, probing on whether the young person would have had access to a bike, what options the family had for acquiring a bike, and what impact these options would have had on the household.

Some issues with home storage of bikes arose from the early discussions with children and young people. We suggest slightly amending the online survey to specifically ask how easy it is to store the bike, with space for commentary on what works and what doesn't in this regard.

The discussions guides with project leads and partners for the interim phase focused strongly on project set up and approaches. We suggest developing the focus on safety and sustainability to allow for in-depth exploration of approaches to assembly and maintenance – including the detail of the approach, who is undertaking this and the qualifications of these staff – and sustainability – in terms of how long a bike would be expected to last, how often a bike could be refurbished, and approaches and costs of refurbishing the bikes when they are returned (as applicable to each project).

A key element of next steps will include developing an understanding of the cost and value of each approach. At interim report stage most pilot projects were in the very early stages of project set up or delivery. Learning about real costs was limited, and understanding of the value of different approaches will be developed as part of the final report. Some early work was undertaken to develop a cost framework to ensure that costs can be understood in a consistent way across projects, for the final report.

The approach for understanding costs and value will include exploring:

- direct costs per bike
- direct costs for the wider bike package (such as helmet, lock, lights, bell, gloves and waterproofs)
- associated costs with identifying eligible families, raising awareness, distributing the bike and supporting use of the bike
- ongoing maintenance costs.

The approach will also explore the impact of approaches which enable multiple users per bike – such as bike fleets and libraries – and the impact of recycling bikes within the project once children and young people no longer need them.

The approach to understanding costs will also explore the value of each approach – for example the benefits of providing certain types of equipment, certain types of support, or certain levels of maintenance. The approach will not directly compare individual projects, which are very different, but will understand the costs and value of different approaches to providing free bikes for school age children who cannot afford them.

A tailored approach will be taken to understanding the cost of providing adaptive bikes. These costs vary widely, but understanding needs, cost and value will be important, as a key reason for not being able to afford a bike may be that a young person has additional needs which require a bespoke bike.



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**

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