

INSIGHT INTO THE PERCEPTION, BARRIERS AND UPTAKE OF CYCLING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES ACROSS WALES

Commissioned by Welsh Cycling - Prepared by StreetGames

February 2020



Welsh Cycling approached StreetGames to support the gathering of insight into the perception, barriers and uptake of cycling for young people living in deprived communities across Wales.

Data for the report was gathered through a combination of a desk-based review of existing research, an online questionnaire for which there were 143 respondents, and consultations with focus groups involving young people and project leaders from various communities across Wales. All the research and insight that was explored and developed drew out key findings and considerations for Welsh Cycling and the Geraint Thomas Cycling Trust.



Executive Summary

The mixed methods approach has enabled us to engage with over 200 individuals from across Wales, with focused conversations in four different locations. The young people engaged in the research were generally positive towards cycling, but seem to lack the knowledge and the means to cycle regularly. There is a latent demand for cycling amongst young people in areas of poverty, and a desire from Local Project Leaders to provide cycling activity.

GERAINT

CONVENIENCE **FITNESS** **ADVENTURE** **HEALTHY**

ENJOYMENT **EXPLORE** **FUN** EASY

RACE **ACTIVE** **FREEDOM** HEADSPACE **FRIENDS**

RELAXING **OUTDOORS** TRAVEL **EXERCISE** TRICKS

ACHIEVING **TDF** **FAST**

When asked to describe what the word 'cycling' meant, the responses from survey respondents and focus group participants were overwhelmingly positive. There were many references to being outside, exploring and a chance to be free. Many also described being with friends, having fun and exercising. Not all of the participants in this research own a bike, or regularly cycle, therefore it is encouraging that there is a positive perception of cycling across the board.

Bike Ownership

There are issues around bike ownership. This came out from all the focus groups and the survey.

69%

of survey respondents
stated that they currently
own a bike

96%

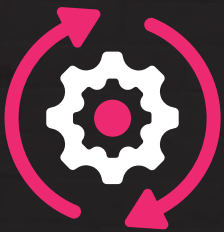
of those who do not
currently own a bike have
owned one in the past

The findings from both the survey results and the focus groups discussions were that, many young people have grown out of their bikes, and cannot afford a new one, some had had their bikes stolen and were unable to replace them, and others stated that their bike was broken and they got rid of it.

One young person said

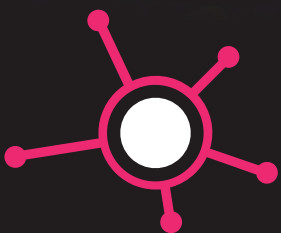
“I think money stops kids from having bikes around here because most people are poor.”

Bike Maintenance



When discussing this issue with Local Project Leaders, many reiterated these points. The young people that they engage with do not have the skills to fix their own bikes, and the Local Project Leaders, although keen to help, do not have the tools or the knowledge to help themselves. This then results in bikes with a simple puncture being discarded and never used again. One Project was involved in loaning bikes to young people for free, in partnership with a local bike repair shop. This small initiative was proving popular, but they were unable to keep up with the current demand, so feared some young people were still missing out.

Local Partnerships



Project Leaders recognised that local partnerships would be beneficial to provide access to bikes. Many Project Leaders talked about the desire to develop partnerships with local Policing Teams, Local Authorities, corporate partners and even clubs, to gain access to bikes for young people. One Project Leader said that their Local Authority *“have loads of bikes in storage from the local PCC,”* but when asked if they can be used, she said that she had not been able to find out how.

Theft



Many young people shared that their bikes had been stolen, and they were unable to replace them due to cost. These young people were unaware of local and national initiatives to register their bikes through the Police and other organisations, nor did many of them own bike locks. Some survey respondents told us that they did not have a safe place to store their bike at home, and this was a barrier for them even owning one in the first place.

Project Leaders also shared that young people often told them that their bikes had been stolen. Most of these thefts were not reported to the police. One Project Leader shared that:

“Bikes do also get stolen or swapped, and often young people are persuaded to let others ‘borrow’ their bikes, often for an extended length of time.”



Many young people told us that they enjoyed cycling because it was fun, they liked the freedom it gave them, and it helped enhance their sense of wellbeing. Some survey respondents also stated that they enjoyed cycling for fitness and exercise; this view was not reflected in the focus group discussions.

Participants of the focus groups stated that they would like help at their Doorstep Sport Club to fix their bike, so that they could use it, and would enjoy taking part in informal, but organised activities locally. They described these sessions as places to learn about how to look after and fix their bike, sessions where they could ‘mess about with my mates’ and where they could explore their local area, so they knew where they were allowed to cycle with friends at other times.



Barriers

When asked what participants did not like about cycling, many of the barriers were again reflected. Many stated that they were unable to fix and maintain their bike; therefore, they did not like it. When this was explored in the focus groups, as stated above, many were keen to learn how to look after their bikes, but had never had the opportunity to do so. Some participants stated that the weather and the physicality of cycling were not enjoyable, particularly related to cycling in the winter, and up hills!

Safety concerns were also a big factor when discussing what is least enjoyed about cycling. Many young people were afraid of cycling on the road, did not know what safe local routes existed and did not wear safety equipment. There were comments around how road closures during lockdown helped make cycling feel safer, now that the cars are back, that feeling has gone. In the focus groups, almost no young people said they wore a helmet, and several described it as uncool. Similarly when discussing lights, none knew that it was a legal requirement. There was more of a positive appetite to have lights on bikes, but again, the young people said they did not know where to get them, or they could not afford them.



MAINTENANCE



WEATHER



BUSY ROADS



SAFETY



PHYSICALITY

The Project Leaders shared that they were keen to support young people with bike maintenance, with one Project Leaders commenting:

“ Unfortunately, as soon as the young people’s bikes break, brakes, gears, tyres etc, we do not see the bikes again. ”

“ I would be more than happy to keep a repair kit here and help the young people fix their bikes. ”

64%

of respondents to the online survey stated that they would be interested in taking part in organised activities

Organised Activity

The reported level of interest in taking part in organised activities was slightly higher than the 2018 Sport Wales School Sport Survey data and the FE Active Lifestyle Survey, which demonstrates a latent demand for more cycling opportunities. Project Leaders told us that they currently do not deliver cycling activities, and many said that they personally lack the skills and confidence to do so. All of the Project Leaders said that they have provided information to young people on local trails/cycle routes, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, but were unsure of the uptake. Some Project Leaders spoke of nearby facilities being inaccessible to the young people due to cost and availability. They shared that many were not free to use.

Of the survey respondents that said they would not be interested in organised cycling activity, reasons given were:

It would take the fun out of cycling

They did not feel they were good enough

They did not like the idea of competition

They were too nervous/scared

Young people in the focus groups told us that they would be interested in organised activity, but wanted the sessions to have a purpose; for example, bike maintenance, local exploration and the opportunity to take part with friends. With this in mind, any organised activity should be co-designed by the young people to meet their needs; this is likely to be different in different geographic areas and for different age groups.

There were also comments in the focus groups around female participation, and the drop off rates being high at secondary school age, which is consistent with data available. One young person said:

“ My sister doesn't ride her bike anymore. I think more boys ride bikes to go and meet their friends. ”

More information needs to be collected around what would contribute to a positive female cycling experience in these communities.

National Governing Bodies

During the Project Leader interviews, the experiences of working with NGBs generally were explored, and then further discussed in relation to Welsh Cycling specifically. Many of the Project Leaders had had minimal contact with NGBs, and those that did, described a feeling that NGB coaches would...

“ Parachute in and out, without leaving anything behind. This makes it a bit meaningless. ”

All of the Project Leaders were positive about the research and felt that Welsh Cycling were demonstrating that they were interested in their communities and the young people that they support. Project Leaders stated...

“ We would love to work in partnership [with Welsh Cycling] to provide activities for young people. ”

“ We would love to see more engagement from Welsh Cycling, and would be happy to work together. ”

There is an appetite for partnership and collaborative working amongst communities, to ensure positive experiences are provided for young people within deprived communities.

Recommendations

Based on the completed research, the following recommendations are being made. These are not quick fixes, but suggestions for further investigation and partnership working, and/or sharing existing resources that should be amended as appropriate, to suit a new audience. The recommendations are themed into five key areas:

1

Access to affordable bikes

- o Increase awareness of and access to affordable, or reconditioned bikes available locally to buy, rent or borrow.
- o Develop meaningful, cross sector partnerships to enable access to bikes locally, e.g. PCCs and local policing teams, Local Authorities, corporate partners and cycling clubs amongst others.

2

Increase knowledge & skills in basic bike maintenance

- o Upskill both young people and community leaders to maintain bikes, including puncture repairs, adjusting saddles/handle bars, brake checks and chain repairs.
- o Provide a basic toolkit for community leaders, to ensure any training can be implemented locally, and the skills can be used.

3

Bike safety

- o Increase awareness of safe, traffic free local routes, including off-road routes.
- o Increase access to basic safety equipment, especially lights, which could be given to community leaders to distribute.

4

Bike security

- o Increase access to basic security measures, such as bike locks, which could be given to Community Leaders to distribute and information about registration schemes.
- o Increase awareness of safe places/safe methods to store bikes at home and/or within communities.

5

Increase knowledge and skills to deliver informal, organised activity locally, in partnership with Welsh Cycling and/or GTCT

- o Upskill both young people and community leaders to deliver themed, informal activity locally. Themes can include bike maintenance, tricks and skills, local route planning and road safety.
- o Further exploration around a suitable female offer is also recommended.