

The role of cycling to support the community during COVID-19

Bike for Good: Glasgow City

How a community organisation used their fleet of bikes, their volunteer networks and well established community links to meet new needs from shielding and isolation within a community.

"It has been a challenge but our staff and volunteers already have such great relationships with the community that it was easy to leap into action .. to support health and wellbeing."

Victoria Leiper, Bike for Good



What was the community need?

COVID-19 has limited access to food and other essentials for people in communities, with a risk of significant impact on health and wellbeing. This is particularly true for people in the shielding category and those reliant on public transport.

Bike for Good observed two key needs emerging within the community, both of which reflected UK-wide trends. There was a need for food distribution to support people unable to leave their homes. A wide range of community groups were offering home deliveries, but for many, the demand for these outstripped the capacity to make the deliveries. There was also an increase in demand for bikes as people used them as alternative transport to get to work and as a way of staying active during lockdown.

Bike For Good worked in collaboration with other local groups to reshape their services and asked the question 'how can we best help communities with our fleet of bikes?'



Background to the community organisation

Bike for Good is a community-based organisation with a mission to promote cycling as a mode of transport. Their vision is an environment in which cycling can benefit everyone, recognising the role of cycling as accessible and sustainable transport as well as the benefits to physical and mental health. They deliver a range of services that support people into active travel.

Bike for Good run two community hubs in Glasgow with a self-managed team of over 50 staff members as well as over 30 volunteers.

The team has a very strong development ethos, working with other community organisations to promote and enable equity of access to cycling. For example, they have partnered with The Women's Fund for Scotland to support more women into cycling via social bike rides and regular access to bikes. Partnerships with local housing associations and refugee groups provide free membership to Nextbike for those most in need (public bike hire scheme).

Insights into how community groups/national organisations are responding to new community needs during COVID-19

How was this different?

Bike for Good developed a number of different services to support health and wellbeing of the local community. This has included:

- food delivery service
- bike loan scheme for key workers, and
- community bike maintenance service.

Delivery of food and care packages has been a key service for people in the community. This has been supported by Bike for Good through their fleet of volunteers and electric cargo bikes. This service has developed in collaboration with a number of community partners including Queens Cross Housing Association, Flourish House and Woodlands Community Garden. Over 200 deliveries have been made to date.

The community partners identify people needing support and invite them to register for their food delivery service. This includes people who are shielding or who have had their income reduced. By working in partnership with Bike for Good the delivery capacity has increased with more people being supported.

In addition to receiving deliveries, people have benefited from this service through interaction with the Bike for Good volunteers. Volunteers will stop for a doorstep chat with individuals. This not only reduces the impact of social isolation but also enables people to share concerns that can be fed back to the relevant community partner to find solutions.

What was the response from the community?

“We had been working with Bike for Good on something very different previously. But then when this happened it was great to have them as partners. They have been really helpful in our efforts to support the community at this time, helping us to reach more people.”

Woodlands Community, Neighbourhood Food Service



Key insights:

Victoria Leiper, Head of Projects, Bike for Good

“When it became clear that coronavirus was going to change things, we wanted to help but it wasn’t obvious where we fitted in. Our starting point was the fact that we had clear assets – our fleet of bikes and staff team. From this we have now developed a range of offerings for people to support their health and wellbeing during lockdown. Key to the success of this has been collaboration and being able to build upon the existing, trusted relationships we had with community partners.

We have been able to access the Supporting Communities Fund which has enabled us to be flexible in developing a response that meets the needs of the community. We were assigned an advisor from Community Enterprise in Scotland (CEIS) who helped us focus our proposals.

The fund have been really flexible, with the option to revisit our bid as demand increases. This flexibility helped us adapt to the changing situation. Similarly, our core funders have allowed us to re-allocate some pre-agreed funding to support our coronavirus response.

Through this period we have reached a lot of new people and hope that the increased interest in cycling continues. We have been able to contribute in a really valued way to support people to stay well during lockdown. We want to keep building on our partnerships and hope we can continue to find new ways of supporting people.”

If you are interested in exploring something similar in your area or to find out more, please get in touch.

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