

Spotlight on...

Cycling for safer roads

What the need was and how we identified it

Reducing the number of road traffic collisions (RTCs) and road casualties is a priority for Calderdale District. WYFRS has established a number of partnerships with other agencies, working together to maximise every opportunity for delivering road safety education and awareness.

For 20 years, Calderdale MBC ran a cycling proficiency scheme for children, each of whom had to pay a fee and use their own bike to take part. As a result, this presented barriers to many children from more deprived areas of Calderdale – those who would benefit most.

Bikeability is a new, free, practical cycling proficiency scheme which launched in April 2011. It's delivered by WYFRS in partnership with the Calderdale Access Team and Road Safety teams at Calderdale MBC. Combined with UK Department for Transport funding, Bikeability's one of the first projects to benefit from an £18,000 bequest made to the Fire Authority by local resident Mrs. Mary Eastwood.

What we did and the difference we made

Taking place at Halifax, Illingworth and Todmorden Stations, Bikeability provides free, nationally-accredited national standards cycle training, including access to a fleet of bikes and safety equipment.

Eight firefighters and prevention staff have received training and are qualified Instructors. Together with Calderdale Council staff, they deliver courses, working with 12-24 children at a time. The course lasts a day-and-a-half, covering Levels 1 and 2 of the national standard. All qualified WYFRS staff deliver Bikeability training off duty and are paid through the Department for Transport funding.

These practical courses cover bike check basics, off-road/playground skills, cycling in residential areas, signalling and safe navigation of road junctions, through to cycling in traffic. For cyclists who complete Level 3 this includes the use of filter lanes, roundabouts and safe behaviour at traffic lights.



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Outcomes

Around 1,500 young people from Years 5-7 are taking part over a 12 month period, from around 90% of Calderdale primary schools. Just under 1/3 of these schools wouldn't have participated under the previous Proficiency scheme.

As well as improving children's confidence and competence on the road and giving them practical advice, Bikeability provides an ideal opportunity to deliver vital road safety messages to children and their parents/carers. This project contributes directly to achieving key Calderdale District Service priorities (set out in its Risk Reduction Plan).

Weekend sessions also take place at events, open to people of all ages – including adults, some of whom haven't cycled since childhood.

By taking part, WYFRS employees' personal development skills have been enhanced and they've improved their own safety and cycling competence.

Keys to our success

- Fire Authority Members said they believed it was the first time such a bequest had been made by a member of the community, and were delighted that money was being spent for the benefit of Calderdale people.
- WYFRS and Calderdale Council teams working in partnership to achieve common road safety goals.

- Free participation and access to locally-sourced bikes and equipment, stored at Stations – particularly benefiting those who don't own any.
- Training taking place at Stations – providing ideal road training conditions, benefiting those Schools with sites for unsuitable cycle training, in particular.
- Proactive, enthusiastic and committed members of staff with a personal interest in cycling.

Contact

Halifax, Illingworth or Todmorden stations:

www.westyorksfire.gov.uk/your-area

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