

Active Travel case study: Active in Ashington, Northumberland

Bike recycling and loan scheme

January 2009



Northumberland **NHS**
Care Trust



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Intervention: Bike recycling and loan scheme

Activities:

- volunteer recruitment
- bike maintenance skills training
- second-hand bike restoration
- long-term bike loan scheme.

Aims:

- to overcome transport barriers to work or learning experienced by local unemployed people
- to increase physical activity levels and sense of well-being through active travel
- to address sedentary lifestyles and related diseases including obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, and mental health issues.

Target group:

- unemployed persons aged 16+ living in Wansbeck District

Setting: Hirst Welfare Centre, Ashington

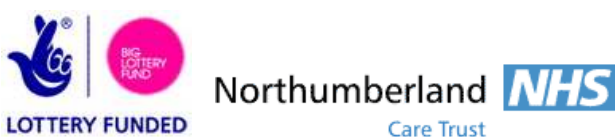
Geographical area: Wansbeck District

Overview:

Active in Ashington aims to increase physical activity levels and sense of well-being amongst residents of Wansbeck District, Northumberland. Active travel is promoted as a means of accessing employment, education, local services, parks, green spaces and the wider countryside.

Since the project started in August 2007, a number of enthusiastic local volunteers have been recruited to support its walking and cycling initiatives.

The Active in Ashington bike recycling and loan scheme was officially launched by former Newcastle United and England striker Peter Beardsley in May 2008. 8 volunteers undertook training to become cycle mechanics and are now actively involved in recycling bikes donated by Ashington, Cramlington and Hexham police and the public. Volunteers work from two 40ft shipping containers based on the Hirst Welfare Centre site which act as a workshop and bike storage facility. Recycled bikes are loaned out to local unemployed people, referred to the project by Buzz Learning, Wansbeck Works and Wansbeck on Wheels (WoW).



Buzz, Wansbeck Works and WoW work in partnership with Active in Ashington to deliver transport advice and solutions to unemployed persons aged 16+ living in Wansbeck who have the opportunity to take up work placements or learning, but are prevented from doing so by transportation barriers.

Mary Lockie, Active in Ashington Project Coordinator, explains:

“Active in Ashington is all about improving people's health by showing them how easy it can be to travel in more active ways. Our volunteer led bike recycling and loan scheme is central to this.

So far, thanks to the local profile of our project and strong partnership working, 41 bikes have been donated; 30 from the local police, and 11 from the public. Our hard working and dedicated team of volunteer bike mechanics have managed to fully refurbish 14 bikes, which have been loaned out to people who need them.

Nothing goes to waste, bikes that can't be recycled are dismantled, and their parts will be used as spares.”

How participants have benefitted:

Husband and wife John and Sue Albutt are dedicated Active in Ashington volunteers. Sue plays a vital support role managing the Sustrans office, and has seen husband John and other volunteer bike mechanics work hard in turning old bikes into a safe form of transport that can be used by the community. John, a retired electrician explains how he benefits from this experience:

"I get a lot of job satisfaction knowing that we are helping people who have been unemployed get to work placements and hopefully into full-time employment."

Bike loan beneficiary Norman Gray has done just that, and is also feeling the health benefits of regular cycling:

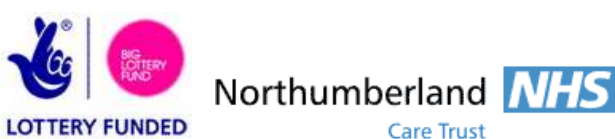
"As well as getting me to and from work, cycling has also improved my fitness and has helped me lose some pounds.”

Kathleen Gresty at Buzz Learning feels that bikes are continually needed, so that people from areas with poor transport links can attend placements and training. Kathleen comments:

"Due to the rural nature of Northumberland, the bikes provided by Sustrans have enabled learners from Buzz to apply for and maintain jobs in areas they would not normally have been able to travel to.”

WoW Consultant, Wendy Brown has also seen how the project has benefitted her clients and anticipates the continuation of an effective partnership:

“Thanks to Sustrans, our clients are able to undertake work experience which helps them gain the necessary skills in their chosen field of work. This experience will hopefully help them to gain a permanent position in the future. Our partnership has proven a great success, and I hope it will continue for many years to come.”



Sustainability:

The bike recycling and loan scheme is run by volunteers. Active in Ashington Project Co-ordinator Mary Lockie continues to offer and promote volunteering opportunities through the Ashington based Wansbeck Centre for Voluntary Service and Wansbeck Works. Training offered by Active in Ashington helps to build skills within the community, which it is hoped will ensure the sustainability of the initiative.

Plans for the future:

The project's current shipping container workshop will be adapted to ensure that it is heated and lit for use during the winter months.

There are plans to install an additional 40ft container, so that the project's bike storage capacity can be expanded.

Continual promotional work will be undertaken to ensure that bikes are donated on a regular basis. It is anticipated that the project will form a partnership with Household Waste Recycling Centres in the Wansbeck area, with a view to recovering more unwanted bikes.

Local partnerships:

Active in Ashington is delivered by Sustrans in partnership with The Big Lottery, Wansbeck Initiative, Northern Rock Foundation and Northumberland Care Trust.

Active in Ashington works in close partnership with Ashington, Cramlington and Hexham police, Buzz Learning, Wansbeck Works and WoW to deliver this scheme.

National partnerships:

Active Travel Consortium

Active in Ashington is a Sustrans Active Travel local project. Sustrans forms part of a Consortium of leading walking, cycling and health organisations being funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Well-being programme, which provides funding to support the development of healthier lifestyles and to improve well-being.

The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004.

Sustrans

Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity. Our vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. We work on practical programmes to enable people to incorporate health-enhancing active travel - walking and cycling - into their daily routine, thus helping to improve public health, address disease prevention (including



obesity, cancer, CHD, diabetes and mental ill-health) and make a major contribution to the government's physical activity targets.

Sustrans is the charity behind the award winning National Cycle Network, Safe Routes to Schools, Bike It, TravelSmart, Active Travel, Connect2 and Liveable Neighbourhoods, all projects that are changing our world one mile at a time.

