

Active Travel Case study: Generation Active, Hyndburn

Accrington & Rossendale College project

November 2008



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Intervention: Cycling programme

Activities:

- Bike pod installation
- Regular led cycle rides
- Cycle ride leader training

Aims

- To encourage students and staff to participate in regular physical activity
- To address sedentary lifestyles and related diseases including obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, and mental health problems.

Target groups:

- Students aged 16-25
- College staff

Setting: Accrington & Rossendale College

Geographical area: Hyndburn

Overview:

The project was developed in recognition of the need to increase levels of physical activity among students and staff at Accrington & Rossendale College.

Nichola Honey, Generation Active Project Coordinator, worked with the College to install a pod housing 12 bikes and set up a programme of regular led cycle rides. Nichola explains how the project evolved:

“The Generation Active programme has provided students with a great way to be physically active in an environment that is non-competitive and fun. From the start, young people who have become involved in this project have expressed that their confidence and independence have increased, as their cycling abilities have progressed. Many of them have reached the next level, training to become volunteer cycle ride leaders.”

In addition to student training, Generation Active offered training to college staff to enable them to take responsibility for organising their own programme of weekly rides. 22 staff took up the opportunity, including catering staff that plan to organise after work cycle rides for each other in the future.



How participants have benefitted:

It's often assumed that a lack of activities available to teenagers results in loitering and anti-social behaviour. However, through Generation Active, 18-year-old student Leanne Hacking has found a constructive way of utilising her spare time, and is reaping the health benefits as a result.

The teenager from Accrington, Hyndburn, has become a Generation Active volunteer cycle ride leader, guiding other young people through beauty spots in Accrington every week, and often introducing them to areas they have not seen before. Leanne comments:

“I didn't really do any exercise before, and I wasn't very confident in riding out alone, so this project was the perfect opportunity to explore the area with other people in a safe environment. As well as good exercise, it's also really interactive. I've made new friends on the project, and I've also met old friends who I hadn't seen for years.”

It's not just about exercise; the group of us ride together, motivate each other and have a laugh. It's great!”

Leanne, who lives with her mum, Susan, has also found that she has lost weight through the project. “I've never gone in for the scales, but I can see that I've lost weight. My mum's also noticed the results, and she's really pleased.”

Christine Shaw, Accrington & Rossendale College Retention and Enrichment Officer, has seen the positive benefits that cycling together has brought to students:

“This activity gives young people a 'buzz' and a feeling of excitement; they feel good and positive about themselves. They also develop a sense of kinship and bonding.”

She believes that the Generation Active programme has helped young people in Accrington better themselves both physically and mentally, as they pick up vital people skills along the way.

“In certain deprived, hard to reach areas there is a low level of self-esteem. Young people turn to alcohol and anti-social behaviour to fill a void. This project keeps them active, and inspires young people to help themselves and help others.”

Sustainability:

The aim is to roll-out the Generation Active programme to primary and secondary schools within Hyndburn Borough. The bike pod installed at the College by Generation Active will remain and the programme of training provided to enthusiastic students has also been rolled out to college teaching staff, who are leading regular cycle rides.

Plans for the future:

The project will continue to be run by staff and students. Accrington & Rossendale College are also in the process of looking at ways in which students can contribute to the local community, potentially by setting up a College based bike maintenance workshop where old bikes can be refurbished and recycled.



Local partnerships:

Generation Active is delivered on a local level by Cycling Projects. Cycling Projects are a registered charity based in the North West of England with a strong reputation in disability cycling and cycling for health.

In 1996 a partnership was formed between Cycling Projects and East Lancashire Primary Care Trust to demonstrate how cycling could be made more accessible to local communities. A pilot project called 'On the Move' was delivered within Hyndburn Borough, involving a number of cycling initiatives. On the back of this project's success, Generation Active was established as part of Sustrans' Active Travel consortium.

The Generation Active project partnership also includes Lancashire County Council. Generation Active worked in close partnership with Accrington & Rossendale College to deliver this project.

National partnerships:

Active Travel Consortium

Generation Active is working with Sustrans on Active Travel local projects as 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.

