



Toolkit 2023

Achieving a healthier community and healthier planet together

A Green & Healthy Future for Frome is a partnership made up of the following:



Funded by:



Guide to this toolkit

This toolkit is intended for use by people who want to take action on climate and health including: healthcare professionals, local authorities, social enterprises and community organisers. It aims to share learning for anyone looking to adapt the Green & Healthy Future for Frome model in their own communities.

A Green & Healthy Future for Frome wants to achieve a health and climate win-win by exploring ways to help local people make changes which are good for their health and the planet's health. This community-led initiative is based on the fact that these issues are firmly linked – if we improve one, we'll also improve the other, enabling everyone to share in a healthier, fairer and more sustainable future.

The programme is a partnership between **Edventure: Frome, Frome Medical Practice, Frome Town Council** and our local community. Our programme is made possible by the **Climate Action Fund** through **The National Lottery Community Fund**.

This toolkit is part of a series of six and tells the story of one project strand: **Cycle Together**. The full series is:

- Future Shed
- **Cycle Together**
- Choosing Wisely
- Green Community Connectors
- Storytelling
- Healthy Homes



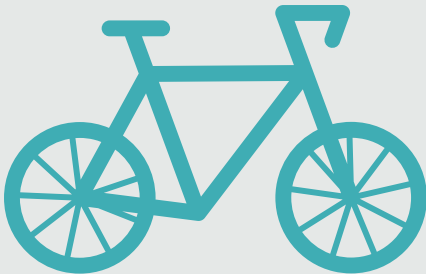
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This Cycle Together Toolkit was written by Emma Parker and Hannah Burd, Project Manager (until February 2022) from the Green & Healthy Future for Frome project. Thank you to Kate and Justin at Pronto Bikes, bike mechanic Paul Vincent, cycle instructors Alex Hooper and Laura Francis, Lee at Claud the Butler, Doug Stoddart and the team at Bike Rental Manager, Neil Howlett at Harris & Harris Solicitors, and last but by no means least, everyone who has taken part in Cycle Together as a participant. Thank you to the GHFF Evaluators Veronica Wignall (until April 2022) and Owen King. All photos by Laura Francis, Emma Parker, Alex Hooper, Miles Macey and Laura Hales.

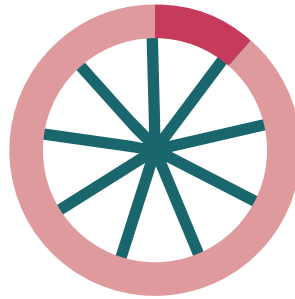
This toolkit was completed in February 2023. An earlier working version was published in July 2022.

In brief Cycle Together

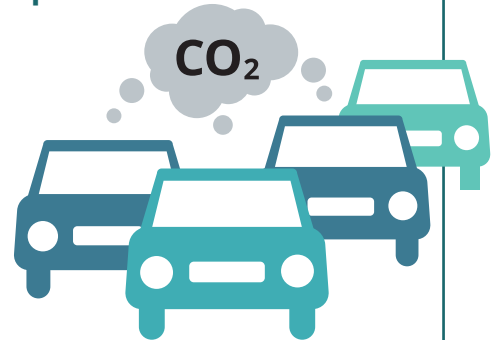


Why?

Cycling makes people feel happiest out of various modes of transportation



Only 11.6% of adults in England cycle once per week



When people swap cars for bikes regularly, clear health and environmental benefits arise

How?

Loaning an e-bike for free for one month and offering support to gain confidence riding it



Outcomes & Insights

At the time of writing, the scheme has been running for 18 months; 93 people have taken part and nearly 4,000 miles have been cycled.



75% will cycle more in future and 56% said they would cycle instead of using the car in future



What would encourage you to keep cycling in the future?

Checklist

- Safe bike storage
- Insurance and Ts&Cs
- Rental software
- Qualified bike mechanics
- Qualified Cycle Instructors
- Evaluation and feedback opportunities

What is Cycle Together?

The Cycle Together scheme allows people to borrow an electric bike (ebike) plus essential cycling accessories for four weeks so that they can tackle Frome's hills and improve their health whilst reducing pollution and congestion.

Participants are also offered 6 hours of group cycle confidence classes alongside maintenance advice to support people to ride safely and confidently beyond the four week loan. The group format enables peer support and social benefits to create a more positive experience and long term enthusiasm for cycling.

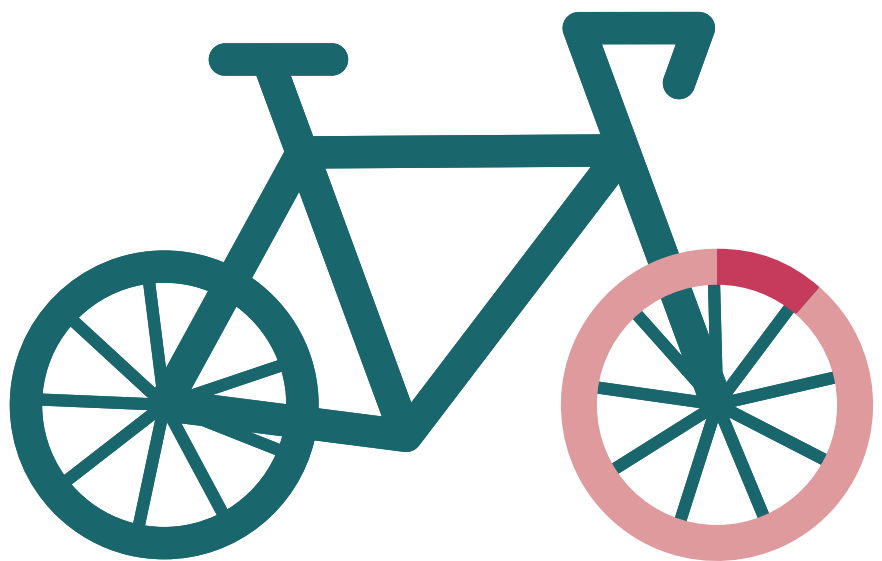
Below: Participants on a group ride at Longleat House



Why did we set up Cycle Together?

We know that cycling has many health benefits - physical and mental. Health benefits include improved cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength and immune response, as well as reductions in stress and anxiety.¹ Having an active lifestyle is one of the NHS' key tips for staying healthy² and is recommended by the leading mental health charity Mind for helping and avoiding depression.³ A 2019 study concluded that biking made people feel happiest out of various modes of transportation.⁴ In another study, regular cycling to work was shown to reduce the risk of developing cancer by 45%.⁵

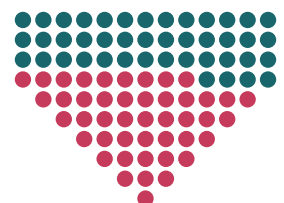
Meanwhile, when people swap cars for bikes regularly, clear health and environmental benefits arise through reductions to greenhouse gas emissions and harmful outdoor air pollution. This pollution has been linked to cancer, asthma, stroke, heart disease, diabetes, obesity and worsening dementia. It is estimated to cause more than 40,000 premature deaths in the UK.⁶ An average person substituting one journey per day from driving a car to cycling for 200 days a year decreases their CO2 emissions by 0.5 tonnes over a year,⁷ the equivalent of flying to New York. If half of Frome's population started doing this, we would take 3208 cars off the road each year.



According to the Department for Transport's National Travel Survey (NTS), only 11.6% of adults in England, 12.2% in Somerset, cycle once per week and less than 20% cycle once per month.⁸ We asked Cycle Together participants (those who had access to a bike) why they do not cycle often or at all before they borrowed an ebike. 67% cited the hills; more than 'Road safety concerns' and 'Local traffic levels' which were selected by 44% and 28% of respondents respectively. 'Limits to physical fitness' was selected by 28% and 'Low cycling confidence' by 33%.

11.6%
Only 11.6% of adults in England cycle once per week

45%
Regular cycling to work was shown to reduce the risk of developing cancer by 45%



Why did we set up Cycle Together?

The benefits of cycling extend to electric bikes. Electric bikes provide power assist to the cyclist and deliver moderate-intensity exercise – putting ebikes on a par with ordinary bikes. One recent study tracked 10,000 people across seven European cities, and found those who rode traditional bikes and ebikes amassed roughly the same amount of physical activity. Whilst ebikes demand less pedal power, the impact of the pedal assistance was cancelled out by the longer distances and greater frequencies that those on ebikes often rode.⁹

A study of ebike users in the UK and Netherlands showed that ebikes help to maintain personal mobility, substitute short car journeys and promote health and wellbeing. Importantly, electric bikes provide new opportunities to people who do not use a pedal bike for reasons including limited physical ability and challenges of local topography, for example in particularly hilly areas.¹⁰

We are interested in what it takes to switch many more people across to regularly swapping cars for bikes or ebikes in our town, so we tested whether loaning an ebike for free for one month and offering support to gain confidence riding it would encourage more bike use overall and more ebike purchases. Recent research (shown below) gave us hope that this could be persuasive for a sizeable number of people and we were also inspired by other local schemes where health practitioners were referring people to local cycle confidence programmes as a way to boost both physical and mental health.¹¹

We found that Frome residents signed up to take part in the scheme for a wide range of reasons. The most common reason was to try out an ebike (70% of participants), with other reasons including wanting to be more active (56%) and health reasons (35%).



35%

35% signed up to the scheme for health reason

Below: The first Cycle Together group collecting their ebikes from Pronto bike shop in May 2021



How did we set up Cycle Together?

In advance of offering out the bikes, the project officer arranged safe storage with a local bike shop, insurance, Ts&Cs, and bike rental software to ensure a smooth and secure movement of the bikes throughout the project. Staff time for administering the scheme, mechanic time to service bikes and instructor time to lead cycle confidence classes was also agreed before the scheme began.

Planning how the scheme would look and feel for a participant from initial enquiry through to the final post-loan survey was of paramount importance. The whole process has been designed to ensure that any nervous participants are given plenty of opportunities to ask questions and to take part at their own pace. Everyone in the scheme is able to talk to a real person at each stage, from an initial phone call to talk through the process and book out the bike to meeting the instructor for a social cycle confidence group ride.

We offered the scheme out openly to our town via the local newspaper and social media posts that referred people to a new page on Frome Town Council's website where people could sign up and join the waiting list. In Year 1 of running the scheme we experimented with two rounds of sign-up criteria:

Sign-up criteria

- In the first half of year one the scheme was open to all. From data collected for the first five months of the scheme, over half of participants reported being confident cyclists (18% very confident, 39% quite confident, n=33). Access to bikes was high, with 73% owning a pedal bike and 12% with access to someone else's; a small number already had access to an ebike. Among people with access to a bike, 41% had used it within the last seven days, for an average of three days in the last seven. We therefore updated the eligibility criteria in order to direct the targeting of the scheme towards those with lower access to a bike and lower cycle confidence
- In the second half of year one we added the following additional questions to the registration form:
 - Do you use a bike frequently (at least once a week)?
 - Do you already use an e-bike regularly?
 - To help us plan the group rides, please tell us how you would describe your cycling confidence?
- Our rationale for the criteria was:
 - To provide relatively few barriers to joining the scheme - making it as open-access and inclusive as possible
 - We wanted to direct anyone who already had regular access to use of an ebike and high cycle confidence to take up paid-for ebike rental alternatives that also exist in our town
 - We decided not to include any screening on the basis of health or income so as not to associate the scheme with any kind of social stigma and because ebikes have benefits to all - not just their riders - wherever cars are taken off the road

You can see our full screening [questionnaire here](#).

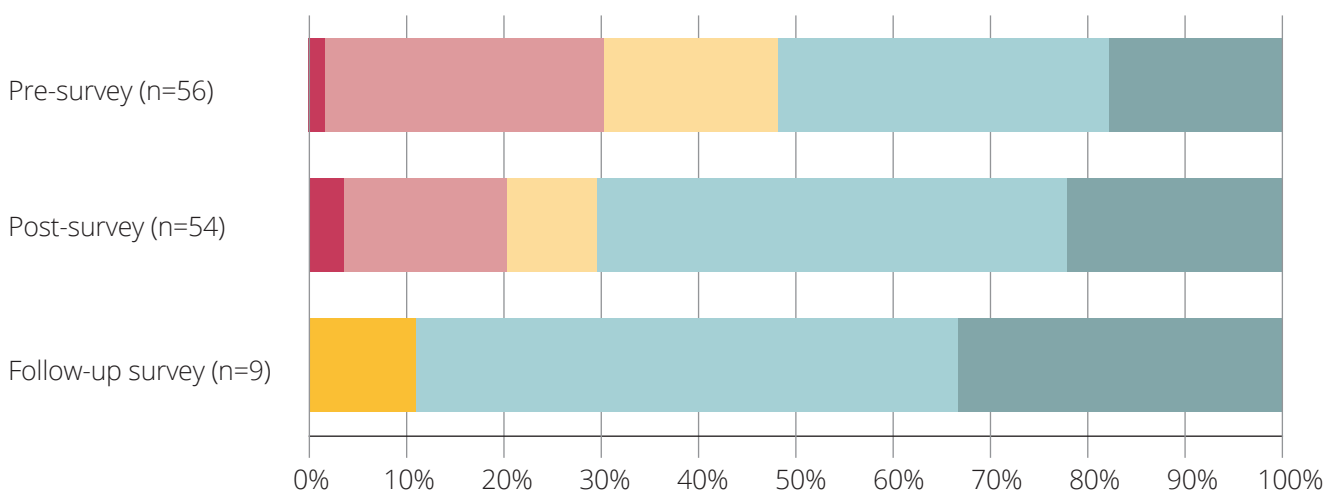
Outcomes and Insights

All participants are asked to complete a pre-course survey before collecting the ebike and a post-course survey after returning the ebike. At the time of writing, the scheme has been running for 18 months; 93 people have taken part and nearly 4,000 miles have been cycled. Although the current data is based on a small sample size, we will continue to use this information to adapt and evaluate the scheme to ensure the best possible outcome for participants.

We found that people signing up to use the scheme were relatively evenly spread across age and income brackets. From data collected for the first five months of the scheme, there was a skew towards women participating (2/3 of participants were women).

Confidence before and after Cycle Together*

■ Not at all confident ■ Not very confident ■ Neutral ■ Quite confident ■ Very confident



*Results shown are from surveys taken after the sign-up criteria was updated to prioritise those with lower cycling confidence

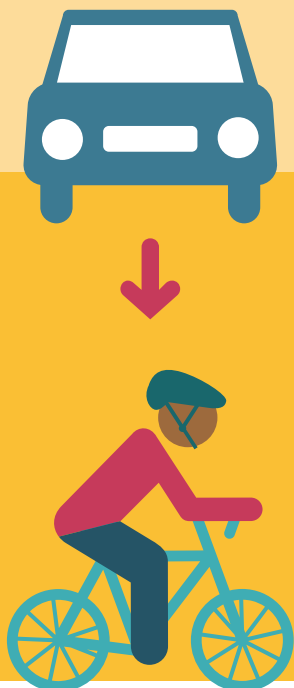
Outcomes and Insights

After 12 months we saw small improvements in cycling enjoyment and confidence: 33% said they were 'Very confident' following training compared to 24% before training. This change is smaller than we expected given participants' positive feedback. However the eligibility criteria was very open during the first five months of the scheme and based on the outcomes we were finding we adapted the criteria for people signing up to the waiting list (see the chapter: How did we set up Cycle Together? for more details on this). As the scheme progresses into year two we hope this change will see people with a lower base level of cycling enjoyment and confidence taking part in the scheme and therefore lead to a bigger shift in enjoyment and confidence and people gaining more from the programme.



56%

56% of participants said they would cycle instead of using the car in future



Statistics

Other significant statistics include:

- 75% participants said they will cycle more in future and 19% said they might cycle more in future
- When asked if they would cycle instead of using the car in future:
 - 56% said yes
 - 35% said maybe
 - Just 9% said they wouldn't
- Carbon savings:
 - If these 56% participants shifted from using a car to cycling for 10% of their journeys, this would save 3,191kg CO₂e per year
 - This is the equivalent of one person flying from London to Auckland New Zealand and back
- Health benefits:
 - Many participants mentioned exercise as a key benefit with physical and mental benefits
 - Others mentioned enjoying the chance to connect with others and take part in a social activity
 - One person said it helped them to quit smoking

Outcomes and Insights

What people loved about the scheme¹²

"I have absolutely loved having the ebike. I feel so much stronger and I look forward every day to going out on a new mini-adventure... Having the ebike has had a huge impact on me mentally and physically! We have been to Longleat so many times that we ended up getting annual passes... It has actually kinda replaced a summer holiday for us we've had loads of fun. I had to give the e-bike back on Saturday and was really sad! On Sunday morning, I bought a secondhand ebike"

"It was great to meet up with other people in the scheme and to cycle as a group."



I loved having the bike for a long enough period that I now know how it would impact my life to own one."

"Lovely to have the opportunity to try one for 4 weeks and really make it part of life. Also great that my husband and friend were also in the scheme at the same time, so we went on our own group rides!"

"I would have loved to have the ebike for longer than the 4 weeks, it was plenty of time to get used to it and to help me decide what type of ebike to buy."

"The e-bike was really fun! And it was really interesting for other friends and visitors over the month, who tried it out and were really positive."



It was a wonderful gift, Thankyou! I had not understood how effective the electric bike is. It was fun. It took me a few weeks to realise that my cycle journeys could be 4 times further than I would normally go."

Outcomes and Insights

What people told us they'd like changed about the scheme¹³

Themes that emerged regarding what people would change about the scheme included:

Having the bike for longer

Further information about options for hiring ebikes in Frome

The opportunity to be added to waiting lists for future months in case a place opened up unexpectedly

More notice for the group rides to be able to save the date

What people told us would help them keep up cycling more after the scheme ended¹⁴

34% said that having an ebike, or access to an ebike, would help them to cycle more. The surveys showed that the cost of an e-bike remains prohibitive for personal ownership, with several participants mentioning financial support to buy an ebike or that they were considering buying one second hand

"An affordable e-bike"

"Support to source an affordable/2nd hand ebike"

"A grant ! A part-payment or deposit to kick start a purchase"

31% of participants mentioned that improved local traffic levels and better cycling infrastructure, such as more dedicated cycle lanes, would help them to cycle more

"Safer cycling routes around Frome, and better cycle parking facilities"



34%

34% said that having an ebike, or access to an ebike, would help them to cycle more.

Next steps

- Collect case studies to share
- Invite current and previous participants to maintenance classes in a dedicated workshop
- Invite previous participants to join regular Cycle Together social rides
- Provide volunteer opportunities, these could include:
 - Training as ride leaders
 - Buddying with other new participants
 - Being part of a meet and greet team for new participants

Resources

- Bike rental software: <https://bikerentalmanager.com/>
- Hire bike insurance broker: <https://butterworthspengler.co.uk/>
- Sustrans, the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle: <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/>
- Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking: <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/>
- Cycling UK, a charity inspiring people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to discover the joys of cycling: <https://www.cyclinguk.org/>
- Active Travel England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/active-travel-england>
- Cycling and walking investment, grant funding, research and infrastructure case studies: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/cycling-and-walking>
- Active and sustainable travel information: <https://www.activetravel.org.uk/>

References

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- ⁹Castro et al (2019) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333682725_Physical_activity_of_electric_bicycle_users_compared_to_conventional_bicycle_users_and_non-cyclists_Insights_based_on_health_and_transport_data_from_an_online_survey_in_seven_European_cities
- ¹⁰Jones et al. (2016) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2016.04.006>
- ¹¹<https://www.cyclinguk.org/press-release/more-1000-people-reached-cycling-health-referral-scheme>

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- ¹²Feedback in response to the question: *What was the main benefit of borrowing an ebike for you?*

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- ¹³Feedback in response to the question: *Is there anything you would change?*
- ¹⁴Feedback in response to the question: *What would help you cycle more, if anything?*, asked after participants completed the scheme.

Watch our short films to see our project in action and download our other toolkits at www.greenhealthyfuturefrome.org/storytelling

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February 2023

