

IMPACT EVALUATION

of Scottish Cycling's
Rock Up & Ride
programme 2025/26



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evaluation of Scottish Cycling's Rock Up & Ride (RUAR) 2025/26 programme highlights its impact on cycling enjoyment, barrier identification and cycling behavioural shifts in four Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) regions in Scotland. RUAR was delivered in sites within the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran), North East of Scotland Transport Partnership (Nestrans) and Shetland's Transport Partnership (ZetTrans) regions against three of Transport Scotland's People and Place behaviour change priority themes: Schools & Young People, Accessibility & Inclusion and Capacity & Capability Building. RUAR continues to successfully engage diverse individuals and communities in Scotland. Across regions and themes, 43% of participants were female, 46% belonged to a minority ethnic group and 35% were from the most deprived SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) quintile.

SPT region

A number of different RUAR delivery projects took place in 2025/26. The RUAR Young Coaches Programme at two high schools supported young people to develop coaching, leadership and cycling skills through structured BMX training and qualifications. There was evidence of improved confidence, coaching ability and leadership skills among these teenage participants. Wider impacts included improved school engagement, attendance and transferable skills relevant to education and employment. RUAR also contributed to increased visibility of cycling and improved access to equipment at schools, supporting long-term participation and potential progression into coaching and active travel.

In the Inclusive Communities sessions with underrepresented adult groups, participants reported highly positive experiences, driven largely by supportive and patient ride leaders who fostered trust, safety and sustained engagement. The programme created strong social connections and a sense of belonging, helping participants explore Glasgow, build friendships and engage with cultural spaces. Cycling also supported confidence, skill development and mental wellbeing, offering relief from their own personal challenges and isolation. However, ongoing participation beyond sessions is limited by infrastructure, safety concerns and practical barriers, highlighting the importance of continued support, trust-building and accessible environments.

Children participating at The Loading Bay Inclusive Communities sessions reported feeling confident (75% agreed), having or learning new skills (72%) and enjoying (91% agreed) their RUAR sessions. Children identified personal barriers to cycling (e.g. poor weather, screens and parental restrictions) while parents cited distance (living too close or too far from school), insufficient cycling infrastructure and concerns about driver behaviour as key barriers.

Nestrans region

Delivery demonstrated strong impact on confidence, skills and participation, particularly among groups with historically low engagement in cycling. Community-based sessions, including women's wellbeing rides, supported progression from initial learning to more regular cycling, with participants reporting increased confidence and more frequent independent riding. Inclusive provision at Ellon Wheel Park, including adaptive bikes, enabled participation for people with disabilities improved wellbeing, independence and a sense of belonging.

Sessions with children in schools also showed positive outcomes in enjoyment, confidence and skill development, alongside growing demand. Delivery by Aberdeen Cycle Hub was strengthened through partnership working and using flexible, locally responsive approaches. This is helping embed cycling within communities while also overcoming logistical challenges.

SEStran region

Teenage participants in the RUAR off-road delivery demonstrated notable improvements in cycling competence, including resilience, problem-solving and positive risk-taking, within a supportive and inclusive environment. Sessions were characterised by strong peer encouragement and high levels of enjoyment. RUAR also contributed to positive school-related outcomes, with reported improvements in classroom engagement, focus and attendance. Some pupils increased their time in school, reflecting enhanced motivation to participate in learning. Demand for the programme grew over time. Delivery insights from the SEStran region are relevant to all RTPs; here delivery highlighted the importance of local relationships and experienced coaches, alongside challenges including a fragmented cycling delivery landscape and limited resourcing for sustainable programme delivery.

ZetTrans region

RUAR delivery in Shetland was highly positive, with participants reporting enjoyment, increased confidence and the development of cycling skills. The programme also supported local capacity-building through developing young people as young coaches. Key barriers to everyday cycling included challenging weather conditions, limited safe cycling infrastructure, traffic concerns and parental restrictions. Facilitators included peer support, improved infrastructure and access to quality RUAR bikes. There was notable enthusiasm for BMX cycling, identified as an accessible and engaging entry point for cycling participation and potentially for local transport. Shetland's strong community relationships, outdoor culture and local enthusiasm and openness is supporting participation despite geographic and infrastructural challenges.

CONTENTS

	Executive Summary	1
	Background	4
	Evaluation Preparation	5
	● How Data Were Collected	6
	Who Participated in Rock Up & Ride 2025/26	8
	Rock Up & Ride for Children and Young People in the SPT region	9
	● The Young Coaches Programme	9
	● Sessions for Primary School-Aged Children	19
	Inclusive Communities Strand in SPT Region	20
	● Tertiary Education	31
	● Indoor Sessions at The Loading Bay, Glasgow	32
	Rock Up & Ride in the Nestrans Region	37
	● Aberdeen Cycle Hub	37
	Rock Up & Ride in the SEStran Region	44
	● Mountain Biking Progression Programme	44
	Rock Up & Ride on Shetland Mainland - ZetTrans	50
	● Preparation for Evaluation	50
	● Feedback and Insights from RUAR on Shetland	51
	Short Videos	54

BACKGROUND

Rock Up & Ride (RUAR) is a programme funded by Transport Scotland's People and Place Programme, regionally, through the Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs). The programme focuses on reducing barriers to cycling activity and improving access to bikes, predominantly for children from high deprivation areas and underrepresented adult groups. The ultimate goals are getting more people to discover the fun of cycling, giving opportunities, and supporting future active travel behaviour.

RUAR started as a pilot in 2021 and has been running annually since. The programme operates in two different strands – Young People and Inclusive Communities. In the Young People strand, Scottish Cycling work with schools and Active Schools teams predominantly to put selected young people from low SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) areas through cycle coaching courses and a mentorship programme to work with younger peers delivering fun and inclusive coached sessions. Through the Inclusive Communities activities, the RUAR team works with community organisations and clubs to deliver cycling skills sessions and led rides in different settings including country parks, the velodrome, indoor and outdoor skate parks, and pump tracks to both adult and children's groups with targeted characteristics. As part of both strands, a fleet of bikes and other equipment is provided to groups and schools for running regular and tailored cycling activities. Additionally, selected, committed participants get a chance to receive their own bike through the programme.

The evaluation of the 2025/26 financial year runs up to the end of March 2026 and captures activity from four RTP regions in Scotland. Capturing the impact of the programme on participants, delivery staff and wider communities is important to demonstrate the impact of the financial investment in RUAR on key behaviours related to cycling for transport and leisure, how the participation impacts their lives (bike skills, confidence levels, enjoyment of cycling, health and wellbeing), to explore progress towards active travel behaviour change and identify what could be changed or retained for the upcoming year of delivery.



This programme evaluation has been funded through the Transport Scotland People and Place programme in the following Regional Transport Partnerships regions: SPT, SEStran, ZetTrans and Nestrans.

EVALUATION PREPARATION

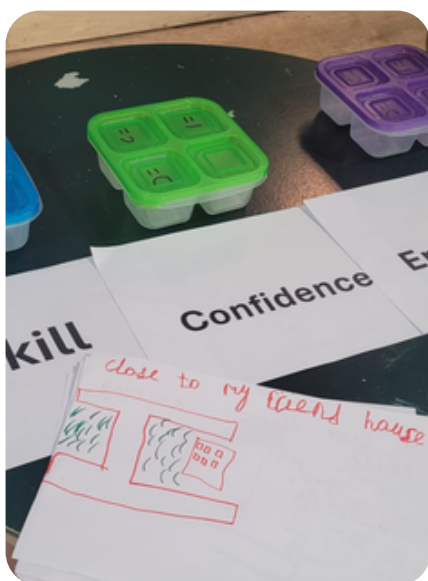
The Evaluation Team Refreshed their Plan for 25/26:

The approach taken in the 2025/26 evaluation built on the team from the University of Strathclyde's 2024/25 RUAR evaluation experience. As several activities, locations and underrepresented target groups had changed slightly, the evaluation plan was revisited and refreshed. The suggested evaluation questions from RTPs were considered as part of the People and Places Monitoring and Evaluation approach with slight differences in evaluation for changing audiences and consistent audiences used. The multiple data collection methods used in the RUAR 2025/26 impact evaluation are found in Table 1.

All Necessary Approvals for the Project and Staff were Renewed:

Renewed ethics approval for evaluation documents and participant-facing materials. Protecting vulnerable groups (PVG) scheme applications for the Strathclyde staff and students were gathered. Risk assessments, contingency planning and communication channels continued from the 2024/25 evaluation.

HOW DATA WERE COLLECTED



Interactive voting and drawings from children.



Evaluation team members cycling to location for parent/carer focus group.



Coffee stop during a led ride where developing relationships before the evaluation began.

**Table 1.** Evaluation methods

Method	Description
Sign-up details	Demographic information (age, gender, ethnic background, SIMD) collected via People and Place Monitoring and Evaluation sign-up questions.
Children's interactive voting	A quick, fun voting system used immediately after RUAR sessions. Children responded Yes / Maybe / No (represented with a smiley face, a neutral face or a sad face) to three statements using little tokens or stickers: Confidence — "I could do this session" Skill — "I learned something new in this session" / "I had the skills I needed to do this session" Enjoyment — "I enjoyed this session"
Focus groups & drawings with children	Follow-up evaluations using drawing and recorded group discussions. Children discussed their experiences with the programme and whether they had been using bikes between sessions. They were also invited to draw or write down their ideas to complement their verbal responses.
Parent / caregiver focus groups	In-person focus groups held with parents/caregivers of children attending RUAR sessions, using a semi-structured interview guide. Transcripts were thematically analysed; common themes relevant to the impact and future of RUAR were collated under broader theme headings.
Ride alongs with adult participants	An evaluation team member attended multiple adult RUAR sessions at different locations as an active participant — cycling and chatting with the group, stopping for coffee, building familiarity and trust, and generally being part of the dynamic before engaging in more formal focus groups.
Focus groups with adult participants	In-person focus groups using a semi-structured interview guide. A translator was requested when necessary, or another group participant provided ad hoc translation. Transcripts were thematically analysed and common themes extracted and organised under broader headings.
Interviews with delivery staff and coaches	In person and online interviews were held with various individuals involved with RUAR delivery. Similar to the focus groups, there was a standard set of questions used, themes were identified in each transcript and common themes across all interviews are presented here.

WHO PARTICIPATED IN ROCK UP & RIDE 2025/26?

Participation Opportunities

TOTAL
5478

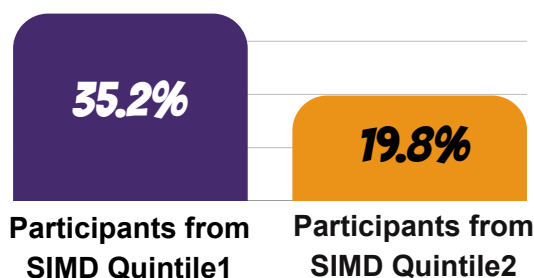


Opportunities were spread across RTPs with the majority (65.9%) being from delivery in the largest and most populated of Scotland's RTPs - SPT region. Participation opportunities from each RTP are included in the the individual RTP sections of this report. Variation in participation opportunities in the RTPs reflects differences in project delivery type, differences in population size and the availability of eligible participants within each area.

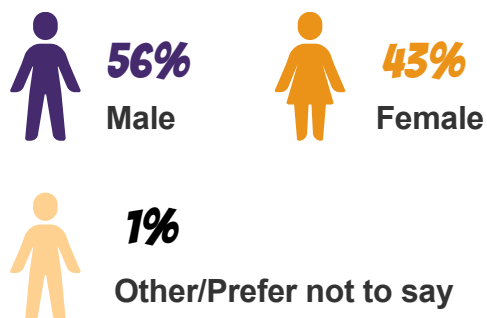
Demographic Details

SIMD

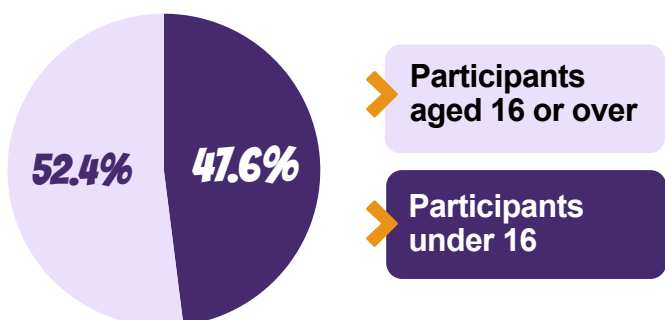
(Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation; where lower is more deprived)



Gender

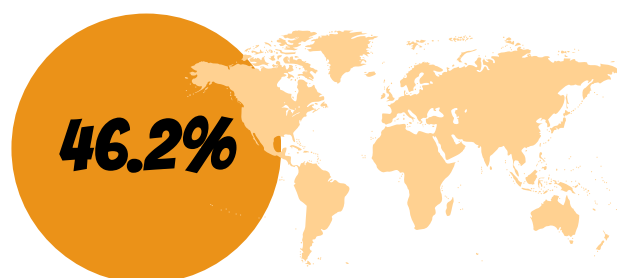


Age



Ethnicity

Participants from ethnic minority groups:



ROCK UP & RIDE IN THE SPT REGION



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE SPT REGION

Participation opportunities

1718



Children and Young People were engaged via school programmes in the SPT region. Specifically RUAR was delivered to primary school-aged children and to young people in high schools who were also trained as young coaches to help delivery to younger pupils.



THE YOUNG COACHES PROGRAMME

The Young Coaches Programme is designed to support young people to become future cycling coaches, equipped with the skills, confidence, knowledge and experience required to deliver BMX coaching sessions either as part of RUAR or in the future when they leave school. Young people did this through gaining qualifications and helping coach BMX sessions to local primary school children at their own high school.

In total, the evaluation team attended multiple Young Coaches sessions in the two participating high schools in the SPT region: Inverclyde Academy and Kilwinning Academy. At each school, we observed both the outdoor and e-learning components of the programme and noted participants' progress throughout its duration. To evaluate the impact of the initiative, baseline data were collected prior to the commencement of the course using an initial survey. Following completion, a follow-up survey was administered to assess participants' achievements, their experiences of the course, and any changes in their attitudes or engagement with cycling.

Comparison of pre- and post-course surveys completed at both high schools shows that participants entered the Rock Up & Ride Introduction to Coaching course motivated by enjoyment of cycling, skill development and interest in coaching. Post-course responses indicate that these expectations were largely met, with young people reporting improved coaching, leadership and cycling skills, alongside increased confidence.

What the young coaches felt they had achieved:



"Coaching skills, biking skills, coaching qualifications" "Learned how to plan/structure sessions." "Leadership skills" "Skills and more confidence" "A lot more skills and how to lead a group"



How the young coaches felt about cycling after completing the course:



"I feel more confident" "Better because I'm better" "The same" "Very good, confident and able" "Made me better at cycling"



While cycling frequency remained broadly unchanged for most participants, attitudes towards cycling remained positive and future intentions included coaching and leadership roles. While external factors such as weather presented challenges, participants remained engaged and reported positive outcomes. The course supported confidence building, sustained participation in cycling and progression towards coaching and leadership pathways, making it a valuable intervention for young people interested in cycling and youth leadership.

Understanding the impact of RUAR through the experiences of delivery staff and Kilwinning Academy pupils



Personal Development and Building Transferrable Skills

Skills and confidence were developed through the programme that are applicable beyond cycling itself. Participants and staff felt this can open future opportunities in education and employment.



RUAR gave me a coaching qualification, if they need for a job, I have that.



It has helped me get into university; it has got me into Uni.



These outcomes were closely tied to the personal growth observed in the young coaches throughout the programme. Staff highlighted that participants were developing a range of core, transferable skills that would support them in future contexts.



They are learning all these core skills that they can take onto the next thing.



Staff also identified a notable shift in confidence among participants, particularly given that cycling and coaching were initially unfamiliar and outside their comfort zones. Through gaining experience and achieving their coaching qualification, participants began to develop greater self-belief in their abilities.



Speaking to the young people, their confidence...and believing themselves and that I can do something that I'm completely out of my comfort zone with.



Visibility and Attitude Towards Cycling

The delivery staff noted a positive shift in attitudes towards cycling in the participating schools, which they attributed to the visibility of the young coaches engaging with bikes in the school playground. By seeing older students actively riding and using the bikes, other pupils began to view cycling as a more appealing and "cool" activity. This increase in visibility, according to staff, has led to a growing presence of bikes in the school's bike shed.



I think we've kind of started to change that culture a wee bit there's more bikes there [in the bike shed] these four, five, cool S6s that are there every Friday, the whole school looks out the window and sees them going and grabbing the bikes at the containers. And I think that's my massive change that I never expected to happen.



This change in culture was not only noticeable among students but also caught the attention of staff. The young coaches' visible cycling activities sparked conversations across the school, contributing to a broader recognition of RUAR.



I just feel like I do see that change for everybody's like, oh, is that the bike thing? And everybody's chatting away and even like from a staff point of view, maybe not even just like cycling in, but you know, like staff will see me and go, oh, you've got your bikes in the container or you're doing that bike thing.



Kilwinning
young coaches
engaging in the
course.



Longer Term Sustainability of Cycling at the Participating Schools

A key aspect of the programme's success has been its focus on longer-term sustainability, ensuring that the impact goes beyond initial sessions. The resources staying at the schools include a storage container and multiple bikes that have laid the groundwork for ongoing cycling initiatives at the school and surrounding primary schools.

The impact that it's had on our school has been amazing because it wasn't just a let's come in and do six weeks and then all the equipment disappears and that can never be done again. There is now storage for bikes. There is now a library of bikes... We now have all the resources to continue this

Having seen the impact of RUAR on young coaches and primary children, there is an aspiration to further develop cycling as an extracurricular activity, with plans to establish a bike club using the RUAR equipment.

Just kind of hammering home about that, that long term sustainability stuff, like the resources that they've managed to provide has been absolutely amazing... I was even chatting about support. We started with BMX and then we're talking about going forward, can we start a cycling club or a mountain bike club?



Kilwinning Academy young coaches delivering their first session to primary school kids.



Insights from Inverclyde Academy



Socioeconomic Situation - Access to Resources and Removal of Financial Barriers for Pupils and the School

All participants in the RUAR Young Coaches Programme came from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds. Staff felt this had limited their prior opportunities to access facilities and engage in structured physical activity, including cycling. Financial constraints meant participants had minimal access to bikes, helmets, or other safety equipment. Provision of these enabled participants to engage fully in cycling activities both within and beyond the sessions.



A couple of our pupils have never probably had their own bike. If they've got a bike, it's probably a third-hand, fourth-hand bike with the wheels falling off it



According to staff, the young coaches use the equipment confidently and independently during sessions and continued to cycle in their own time. The scale of support provided by the RUAR programme at the school and the fact the programme does not draw on the school's own finances was appreciated by school staff.



They've [Scottish Cycling] paid for the bikes, the bike shelter, they've even paid for insurance... and the principal doesn't have that worry of, hi, by the way, I'm going to be asking for 100 pound all the time.



The wider community also gets access to the bikes that were purchased for RUAR by the school.



So, I've had three, four, five maybe groups that have been on their bike. We've had one pupil in another group, which is a group that I have with 4 autistic lads in it. And one of them has never learned how to ride a bike in his life and now he knows how to ride a bike through the resource that the Rock Up and Ride project gave. We would never have been able to do that and teach them how you'd ride a bike.



Retention of Pupils in Sessions and in their Education

Important for attainment and future life chances, staff reported higher attendance at school on RUAR programme days compared to usual school attendance, with one noting that participants with attendance levels of *“around 75% and 68%... have pretty much been 100% attendance on Tuesday morning. So that's really important. It's been really good.”*

They also noted the difference in retention of this group compared to other activities offered that one staff member had experience in.



We started with eight and this is very rare for a group of that size [for them to stay engaged]. Usually we start with a group and then it gets whittled down and it gets changed based on dynamics, but that's never happened with this group. So, it just shows how beneficial it has been for them.



The young coaches joined experienced Scottish Cycling coaches in delivering BMX sessions to local primary school children. The children's own experiences (Figure 1) showed that they too gained skills and confidence and enjoyed the sessions with voting scores ebbing naturally over the weeks. Staff also valued how the programme brought the younger primary school children together with the young coaches who are older. Staff felt this RUAR approach of high school student helping coaches with sessions for primary children demystifies the school a bit. A staff member noted that this may help the school to overcome a more negative reputation that it has.



The primary school children who are maybe worried about coming here are not seeing these big bad boy, as they've been told that they're going to see in this, they see these young people that are actually good for them and showing a good example and teaching them things.



Personal Development and Building Transferrable Skills

An increase in confidence and personal skill development among the young coaches was consistently reported and reported by parents. There was an initial apprehension linked to the unfamiliar nature of the BMX activity and the coaching but this reduced over time as the young coaches became more invested.

Those who initially exhibited low self-belief became progressively more able to engage in different programme aspects. The young coaches demonstrated improved communication with staff and peers, showed increased initiative, occasionally volunteered for tasks during sessions, were more willing to take on responsibility of managing smaller groups of primary pupils and participated in ways they previously avoided:



You do see the impact of it with these young people... their behaviour gets better. They realise they can actually do things that they didn't before... you can definitely see a change in their personality.



Staff observations indicated that their gained confidence extended beyond the RUAR sessions, with participants showing greater willingness to contribute, take initiative and assert themselves in classroom settings. The evaluation team also noted the patience, flexibility and empathy provided by the Scottish Cycling coaches to the Young Coaches themselves. Especially on bad weather days or mornings where the young people needed a listening ear or a wee emotional boost, coaches were more than happy to adapt the session, reduce the expectations and just chat with the young people over a hot breakfast.

Young people were also reported to being on the pathway of developing a range of key transferable skills particularly leadership, communication and teamwork. The secondary pupils were observed across multiple sessions supporting and delivering cycling sessions to primary pupils, during which they gave instructions, coordinated activities, collaborated with peers and managed smaller groups. The leadership roles enabled participants to also develop practical competencies such as coaching, planning, organisation and timekeeping.



Some of the comments they were making that I just kinda taken note of a bit Greenockian chat of like, oh, this is dyno, and all this kinda chat, but they do see the benefits of it.



Enjoyment and Engagement

Staff highlighted high levels of enjoyment and engagement among both the young coaches and the primary school pupils throughout the RUAR programme. They indicated that this enjoyment translated into consistent participation and enthusiasm from the primary school pupils, with them actively engaging in every activity during each session. Parents, classroom teachers and senior school leaders have been hearing about bicycles and cycling from the young coaches which means, according to the staff, they are enjoying RUAR.

The young coaches themselves were enthusiastic about the opportunity to do something totally different as part of RUAR– a trip to the Emirates Arena to cycle at the Chris Hoy Velodrome.



⚙️ *"This is the best thing I've done!"*

⚙️ *"Aye this is dyno!"*

⚙️ *"It was fun going round and I would do it again!"*

⚙️ *"It was heavy knacker going round but was class"*

⚙️ *"Buzzing [That I got a bike in RUAR] I have been asking for a bike for Christmas"*



Active Travel Potential

Delivery staff also identified potential longer-term benefits related to active travel and community engagement. Ensuring participants retained access to a bike was viewed as critical, with one staff member highlighting that *"they're all going away with a bike, which is really important,"* as this may encourage ongoing active travel. Raising awareness of local cycling infrastructure was also seen as beneficial, with staff noting efforts to highlight *"the local skate parks, the local pump track."*

It was reported that the young coaches do kick about on their bikes or potentially use them to go between mum and dad's place or the shops. However, not to school due to the type of school and how other pupils might view a student arriving to school on a bike.

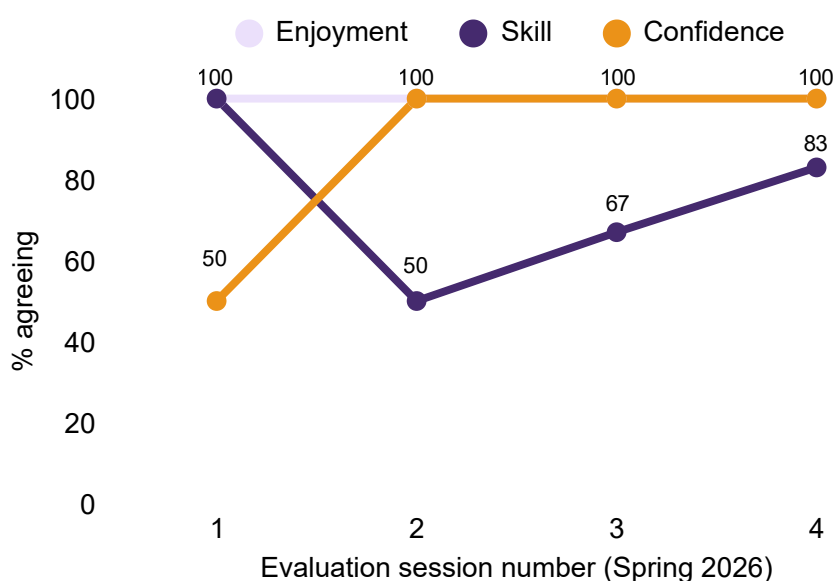
I was going to say the word stigma, wouldn't say a stigma, but probably a bit of "who's this guy riding his bike in?", which because of the wider school community who haven't had this project and don't see the benefit of it and the fun of it

One staff member noted how important the investment is in programme delivery as well as cycle infrastructure and educating local residents about why new cycle lanes may not be being used as much as people expect.

Inverclyde generally, there's loads of cycle lanes now started getting put up round about the area, which have a varying use of involvement... the way there's a local kind of joke in the wider community that sorry, all the funding could just go to cycle lanes, all the funding could just go to cycle lanes. But if they actually were aware and opened their eyes a little bit to projects like this, which are going on in the schools, they would see that the bike lanes are more likely to get used and actually educated, educated themselves as opposed to just firing in at the Council as much as they can.

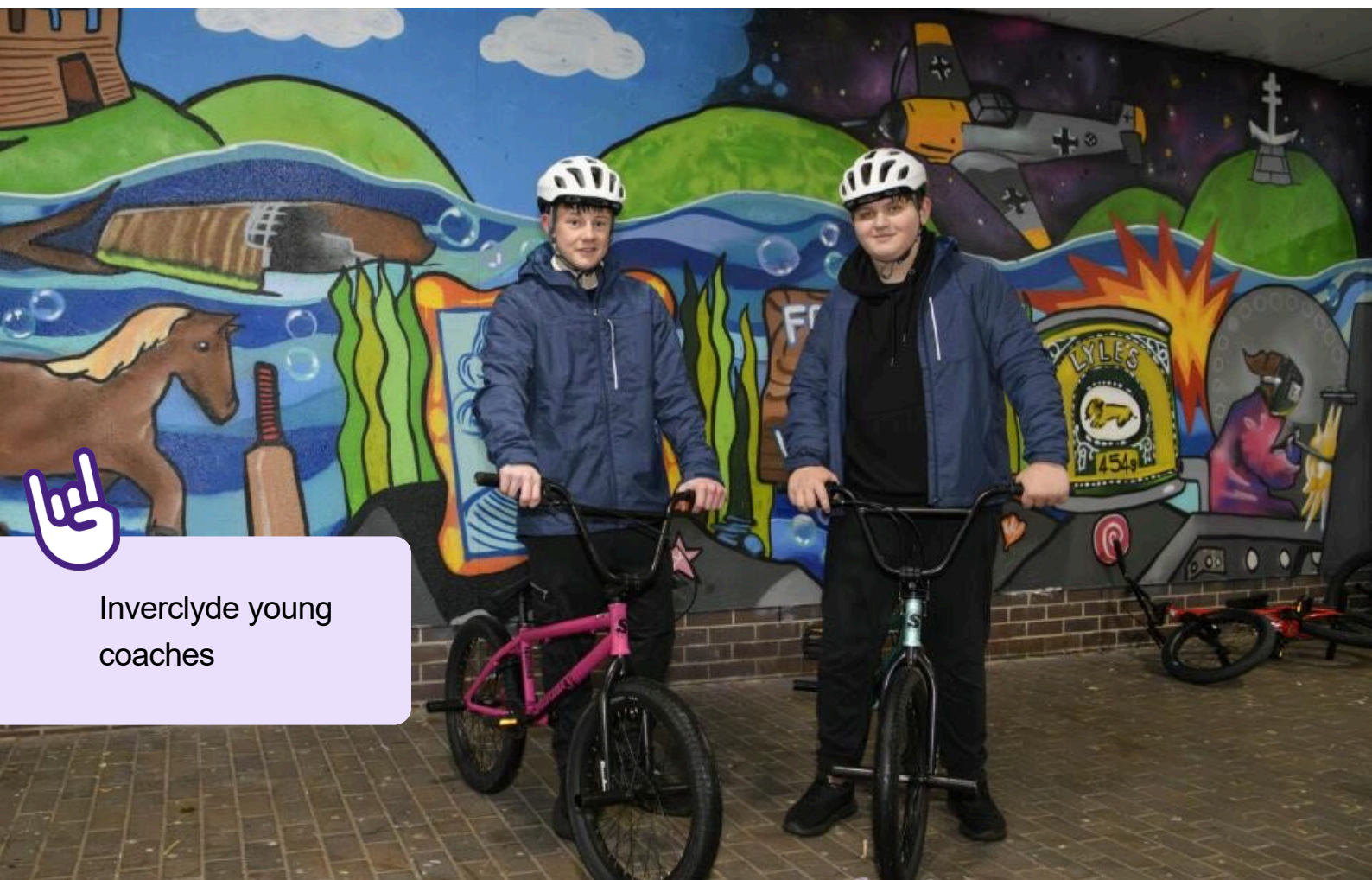
Figure 1.

Scores for skill, confidence and enjoyment from primary pupils at one school in the Young Coaches programme over four consecutive weeks



Pupil and Staff Recommendations for Future Young Coach Programmes

- For the RUAR team to give as much advance notice of session scheduling or changes as possible. Otherwise, it can be challenging for school staff to coordinate with class teachers to secure permission for pupils to leave class, adjusting class schedules or dealing with logistical constraints.
- Have access to indoor facilities or back-up indoor activities on cold or rainy days where motivation of the younger pupils can drop.
- Introduce confidence-building and soft skills earlier in delivery before progressing to leadership and coaching elements.
- Give greater session structure to support skills development, including clearer guidance on warmups, skills and how you would deliver it.
- There was also a suggestion of having more classroom based on these topics at the start that the young coaches could then apply out in practice. But the risk there is the learners would turn off and “vote with their feet” by not turning up. Which chimes with some participants sharing they would like less e-learning as this is harder to stay engaged with.



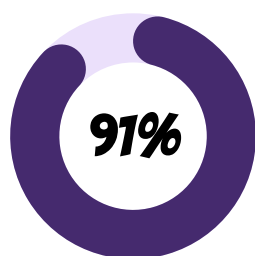


Inverclyde young coaches helping to run the primary kids' session.

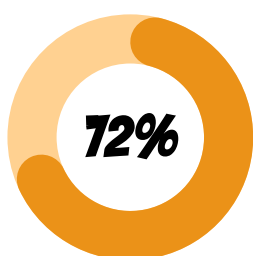
INSIGHT INTO SESSIONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

A range of sessions for primary school aged children were offered in the SPT region with settings and bike types tailored to the children and making use of available community facilities. Sessions included off-road sessions from Dolphin House in Culzean Castle, indoor BMX blocks at Shred Skatepark in Troon, BMX sessions co-led by young coaches in high schools for children in feeder primary schools and pump track use by various groups.

We evaluated 22 individual sessions with six different groups of children in both the Young People and Inclusive Communities strands. Three of these were one off sessions and three of these were part of a block of RUAR sessions with the same children.



of children
enjoyed
their RUAR
session



felt they had
the skill or
learned a new
skill in their
RUAR session



agreed they
had the
confidence to
do their
RUAR session

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES STRAND IN SPT REGION

Participation opportunities

1890

Delivery of RUAR with Underrepresented Groups

The evaluation team joined rides with three key delivery groups representing communities in Glasgow city underrepresented in cycling. These were refugee family rides at Cunnigar Loop, LGBTQ+ rides with LEAP Sports and women only rides led by CWIN (Central and West Integration Network Glasgow). The evaluation team joined the rides, stopped for coffee and built relationships with the participants over the course of the weekly sessions before undertaking in person focus groups with adult participants and online interviews with the delivery staff (ride leaders). From chatting with these participants and delivery staff, several key themes from their Rock Up and Ride experiences emerged.

Positive Experiences with the Ride Leaders

Participants consistently described their ride leader as central to their positive experiences and their sustained engagement with the programme. Rather than focusing solely on instructional ability, participants emphasised interpersonal qualities such as patience, attentiveness, and responsiveness to individual needs. These characteristics were seen as fundamental to creating an inclusive and supportive environment within the sessions.



The reason why the project is still going on. Very patient and helpful, she was always attentive to our needs.



Participants also reflected on the importance of the long-term relationships built with their ride leaders, highlighting the time and care they have invested in the participants across multiple sessions. Participants also described how the leader's presence was particularly reassuring in managing personal anxieties and fears.



I been cycling with [the ride leader] for more than a year... she is amazing and the effort she has made for us a lot of kindness.



Social Connection, Belonging and Cultural Engagement

Participants valued how the ride routes supported their sense of belonging and connection to Glasgow and Scotland. By showing participants *“good locations in Glasgow parks and museums”*, the ride leaders helped them explore and engage with their new home city in meaningful ways.



At first, I'd only passed by Queens Park, but now I can say I know all the corners of Queens Park...I've learned about Glasgow Green, I've been there only once before. Now I know all the corners and all the facilities in it.



For participants who were relatively new to Scotland, often isolated and still building English language skills, the social dimension of the programme was almost more important than the cycling itself. The groups discussed how cycling together created a sense of community and allowed new relationships to be built. The communal experience of visiting cultural spaces like the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow city as a group was noted as better than visiting alone.



At first I was totally alone and little by little I am meeting new people from different countries. I am feeling like part of the community.



It has built my confidence — not just in cycling, but in making friends. At first I thought I was an introvert... it has taught me teamwork because nobody has been left behind. Confidence, teamwork and unity — together.



Ride leaders planned their rides to allow for this cultural and social exploration. This meant that the rides are “not just about cycling, it's like cycling with a purpose. We'll cycle to a place and we'll visit a place.” Rides went to the library, a clothes charity for refugees and asylum seekers, free museums and cultural places where participants could return and know they are welcome.



A lot of people, they don't feel these places are a space for them. So just bringing a group in, showing them, this is how you access it. Even if you just need a toilet, here's the toilet, here's the library.



Participants and ride leaders also said that the combination of shared physical challenge, movement through the city, practicing English and informal social time during their hot chocolate and coffee stops created a particular kind of belonging that more structured or indoor activities did not replicate.

Skill and Confidence Development

Skill development was another significant benefit of RUAR, particularly for participants who had limited or restricted access to cycling in their home countries.



Women not allowed to ride bicycle in the street and we are limited... an opportunity to learn and improve my skill.



Another participant reflected that cycling “was not part of my life,” but had always been something they thought about, describing RUAR as “a very good opportunity for me” to take part in being very new to Scotland.

The ride leaders noted the boosts in confidence of their participants, which was especially important for the women. They were participating in a skill and activity that they or their family never expected them to do. The ride leaders hope that this confidence and bravery would trickle into other parts of their lives.



[A participant] said that she was not a brave person. But I said you are brave for doing this. Now you've learned to cycle and that shows you can do other things as well.



Emotional Relief and Wellbeing

Participants in these adult cycling groups face numerous personal challenges or are away from their home countries. RUAR led rides were described as a space for enjoyment and escape from everyday worries or the precarity they are experiencing in their personal lives.

It's more than just cycling...a time for having fun aside from difficulties and problems... something to have fun for three hours to enjoy.

Another described RUAR cycles as “my happy moment,” adding that during the sessions they “don’t think about anything,” indicating the positive impact on stress relief.

Participants consistently shared that cycling had a positive impact on their mental wellbeing, with many describing it as a helpful way to manage stress and anxiety. Beyond the physical benefits of exercise, cycling provided a sense of relaxation and mental clarity.

It is helping my mental health and it is good exercise... it's very relaxing for me to bike.



One of the Hope House group ride outs during the winter 2025/26

Some of the participants are in the asylum system and particularly are waiting for an asylum decision. Taking part in these group rides was a space to relax and distract from what is going on:

As asylum seekers we are always in one place, all we are waiting for is our cases to be decided. You need something to go out and get your mind off that for a while. It's really helpful when you know you are doing something like that in the morning, and it will just ease your mind for the moment and it's good for you.

Barriers to Cycling

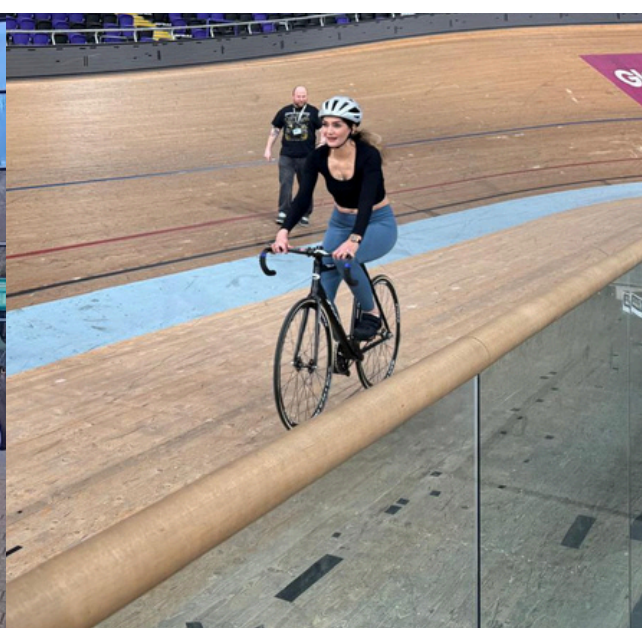
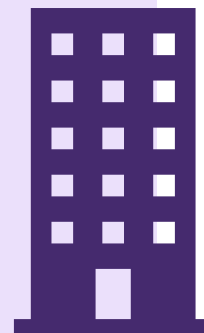
The ride leaders work hard to break down the initial barriers to cycling but they say they can only get so far without the infrastructure to support cycling outwith the sessions. The absence of cycle paths make cycling feel unsafe and inaccessible to participants. Fear of traffic and unsafe roads discourage participants from cycling beyond the structured and supported group rides where they are being led.

It's really hard to cycle up the road where people go and it's really dangerous.

The ride leaders also mentioned a range of barriers they anticipated their participants could face when trying to cycle outwith sessions. These included:

- Participants not being quite ready to do journeys by themselves outside of the security of a led group ride.
- Group cycles taking place in a different area to where participants live and not knowing how to navigate their area close to home.
- Some participants could be rehomed outside of Glasgow and end up losing touch with cycle group opportunities.
- Some refugees and asylum seekers are just not used to the west coast of Scotland's weather and don't have money for the culturally suitable and weatherproof gear.
- Cultural norms exist, especially for women coming from vulnerable situations. Also for them, riding in the rain, amongst traffic or on patchy infrastructure is just not what these women need to feel comfortable and protected.

- Participants themselves mentioned the practical barrier related to bike storage. Participants reported an absence of secure external storage or space within their dwelling for a bicycle. Generally, storage in indoor communal areas (e.g., in shared hallways) was not safe, or risked conflict with their housing provider (housing associations) where such practices would be considered a safety hazard to other residents. This limits ownership of their own bike or borrowing a bike from a bike library.



One of the weekly led ride groups went on a ride to Emirates Arena where they got to try the Chris Hoy velodrome

What was needed for this impact to happen



Connections:

Ride leaders/staff with established networks and connections to organisations and individual participants for promoting cycling opportunities to was instrumental for promoting cycling to underrepresented groups. In RUAR, having ride leaders with WhatsApp chats of hundreds of people to promote the cycling programme allowed authentic connections to be made between the RUAR programme and individuals that are new to cycling.

⚙️ Time to build trust and momentum:

Even before one pedal is turned, ride leaders need time to meet potential participants, explain the programme, build relationships, show the bikes, establish ways of communicating, answer questions, listen and spend time getting to know participants (where are they from, what languages do they speak, what motivates them). The paid hours are gratefully received by delivery staff. However, the evaluation team continually hear stories across the sector about the background trust building and creating momentum being unseen work in cycling behaviour change which is often unfunded. This is an issue that is not unique to RUAR. The ride leaders' passion and drive for getting more underrepresented people cycling was clear.



That was such a big part of it. But I don't think that's factored into the [hourly funding or reporting] model. That takes up such a big chunk of time, like I would say two or three hours every week. I went along and just had to do outreach and just speaking to people.



⚙️ Promotional hooks:

Identifying other 'hooks' was a useful way to bring underrepresented participants to led rides. Here the RUAR ride leaders promoted RUAR with: coffee stops, new social opportunities, a chance to practice English and benefits of the programme "rather than saying 'do you want to go cycling?'" Sharing photos in established WhatsApp chats was also used to increase excitement and demystify what the cycling rides are like.



A group ride out to Queen's Park in Glasgow during winter 2025/26.

Planning

As well as route planning, rider leaders spend time up front planning and anticipating for who would turn up, their skill, the weather, what weather kit they might have, having snacks/tea.



Every week I have a plan B and a plan C and plan D because you don't know who's going to turn up.



Managing expectations:

Of funders, partner organisations and themselves for how long partnership working and getting underrepresented groups into cycling programmes actually takes. That the enormous amount of time that is done promoting cycling programme, participant numbers must be realistic and the pre-activity before delivery even starts needs to be factored in and funded.

When getting new groups into cycling through RUAR, it is not just a case of rocking up and riding as there is so much background work and relationship building needed.



That invisible work that has to happen first. It's an investment.



Cuningar Loop
Family ride out



Case study 1 Inclusive Communities

“Exciting, Fun, Exploring”

Fatou is 31-year-old, originally from Tanzania and she first came to Glasgow in 2023. Fatou is a regular member of a RUAR cycling group in Glasgow. Fatou came to the group initially because she wanted to do some exercise and keep fit. The sessions have improved Fatou’s physical health, have made her more relaxed and have even improved her mental health:



It makes me calmer. It helps you think more clearly.



The regularity of sessions is important, as Fatou highlights:

“When you skip it, you will feel a little bit down, but it being regular is good, because you will keep up.”

The social aspect of the programme was a highlight, and Fatou has made new friends because of the programme. During every cycle, the group stops for coffee and a chat which is the best part:



Because we get to learn about each other, each other’s cultures, how emotional we can stand for each other.



Fatou likes the camaraderie and the supportive nature of the group: “We help each other, we really look after each other.” She has been active in encouraging others to come along to the group. Fatou gave some advice to people who see barriers to participating in a group cycling project like this. She noted that people may feel reticent about their cycling abilities and worry that they would hold the group back but the supportive nature of the group would not let this happen:



It’s just because they’ve not experienced it yet. But when they come along, they will know that we are a team. When they come along, they will know that they don’t have to be shy about the fact that they will hold us back, we will be there to help.



Fatou would recommend the programme:



I would say as an asylum seeker, I would advise you to go for it, because it will get you in touch with people and improve your confidence. And that is all you need, because if you have that confidence, you can go through your case with ease.



If Fatou were to get a bike, she would use it to commute and go to the supermarket, helping her save time and money, as well as keeping fit.

Case study 2 Inclusive Communities

“Accommodating, Encouraging, Loving”

Hellen is 28 years old, from Kenya and she arrived in Scotland in May 2025. Hellen cycled regularly in her home country; however she had never cycled in Scotland before taking part in RUAR group rides. Cycling in a group makes Hellen feel safe and she likes the fact that she does not need to worry about the traffic lights and the street signs. However, the project has also taught her how to navigate these for transport: **“It’s you [another ride participant] who said, this sign means stop.”**

Hellen had not seen much of Glasgow before attending RUAR group rides:



I get to see new places about Glasgow that I’ve never been to before, that I would never have known apart from the cycling programme.



Taking part in the cycling project has improved Hellen’s physical health. As an asthma sufferer, Hellen believes that the cycles have helped improve her asthma:



I was having a chest problem, and since I was cycling, everything about my chest problem just stopped. When I stopped cycling, that’s when my chest problems came back. When I was going cycling with you guys, I feel no asthma attack, no nothing.



As well as making her feel physically fitter and healthier, cycling on a Monday morning helps her start the week on a positive note. The cycles have helped improve her mental health, as she highlights: “considering my mental challenges, it keeps me away from my stress.”

The social aspect of the group is particularly important for Hellen, and she has made new friends by coming along to sessions. Hellen loves the supportive nature of the group and participants and ride leaders looks after one another:

Like anyone would do anything to stick around with you and make sure you are. Because I remember this one time, like coming up the hill and I couldn't cycle so strong and [the ride leader] pushed me. She came and pushed me. Everyone is so loving.

One of the best things about the cycle, Hellen adds, is trying all the different coffee spots around the city and comparing the coffee!

The good thing about cycling, Hellen notes, is that it is free, especially for those who do not have a bus pass. When asked if she would recommend the programme to others, she replied “Of course’ definitely, if I had a chance, I would recommend it to everybody right now.”

If Hellen were to get a bike, she would use it daily as a way to get around the city, to go to the supermarket, to attend solicitor meetings and Home Office appointments.



TERTIARY EDUCATION

Scottish Cycling have also branched out to tertiary education and have been working with City of Glasgow College, Kelvin College and Clyde College. The target groups were students with additional support needs and those in Outdoor Sports Coaching courses. An adaptive environment introduced young people to various types of cycling through different fleets of bikes. The evaluation team attended a session with City of Glasgow College (COGC) students at Cunnigar Loop. The participants here were enrolled in the COGC Outdoor Sports Coaching course. The session involved young people planning what a session would look like if they were cycle coaches, allowing them to be creative and giving them some responsibility. This ride also took a café stop at the Emirates Arena. Through informal chatting with the participants, they emphasised that they are enjoying the experience RUAR has provided them with. It has improved both their confidence and technical abilities on the bike. The relationship between RUAR and the colleges are looking to continue in the next financial year. The evaluation team aim to work with these groups and report on progress in the next financial year.





INDOOR SESSIONS AT THE LOADING BAY, GLASGOW

As part of the Inclusive Communities strand, sessions were run at The Loading Bay where children from several underserved areas got access to world class indoor facilities in Glasgow. These sessions targeted children through community groups including NG Homes (which now have set up an associated Springburn Bike Club), ANSAR and Pollok United already working in the city. By providing organised bus travel, RUAR enables children to access the skatepark, while providing bikes for them to use. We spoke to coaches, parents and the children themselves about their blocks of RUAR sessions at The Loading Bay.

Parents speaking about RUAR sessions



Parents identified the benefits of RUAR BMX programme at The Loading Bay through the focus groups we ran. They also spoke about the strengths of the RUAR offer as well as suggestions for the future running of RUAR.

Increased Confidence and Personal Development

According to parents, participation in RUAR sessions helped the children build confidence, independence and self-belief, particularly through cycling which is an individual rather than team-based activity.



Confidence — something they are doing that's not their parents taking them... they are expected to go on the bus and behave themselves.



The Appeal when there is Limited Local Spaces

Parents highlighted a shortage of safe, local BMX and cycling facilities, with some outdoor facilities in the city removed or poorly maintained. The RUAR sessions plug a major gap with the coaches and the location being different to their usual after-school activities and are considered quite cool. They highly value the coaches, what the programme offers and overall ethos of RUAR sessions at The Loading Bay.



The Loading Bay, it's quite a cool place to be, and getting to go on their own as well.



Improved Access but Barriers Still Remain

Parents highlighted that the free bus transport laid on as part of the RUAR session reduced financial barriers and made it easier for children to access The Loading Bay, which might otherwise be difficult due to distance, cost or logistical challenges. Having access to equipment and getting a hot meal also was an appeal to an otherwise costly afternoon of cycling.



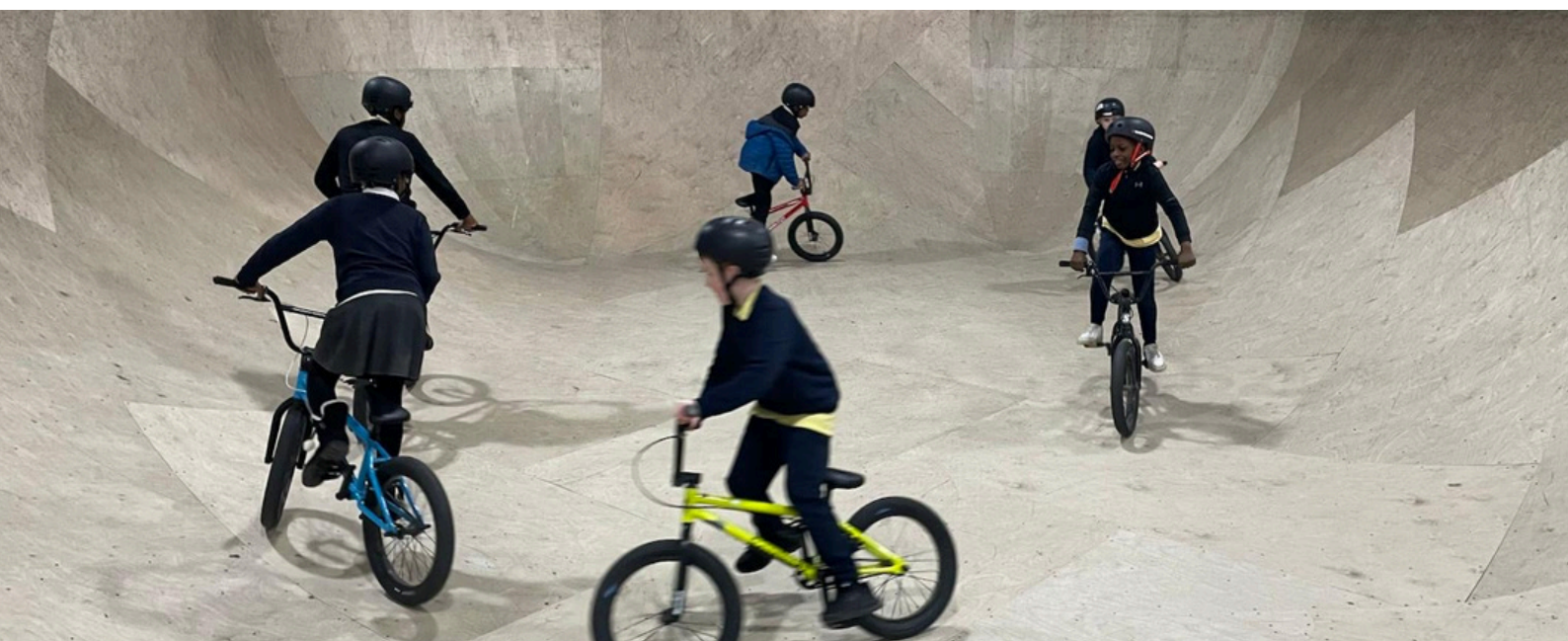
Only for the fact the amount of money you are spending on clubs, driving a way up there I would maybe do it once a while as a treat but I wouldn't go on a weekly, it would not be a regular club I'd go to.



However, one parent noted that outside of the RUAR sessions travelling to The Loading Bay independently can be challenging as it requires travel across the city.

Suggestions for the Future

Parents highlighted a strong desire for sessions to be more regular and predictable. The programme was described as highly valued. They were surprised by how little advertising was done for this RUAR opportunity with awareness depending heavily on word-of-mouth. Week-on-week there were cancellations and gaps by the RUAR team which led to frustrations. This shows the importance of consistency and clear scheduling which would support families in planning and encourage continued and consistent participation of the same children. Parents were also advocating for expansion, more funding and more coordination across organisations (schools, housing associations, other cycling bodies). Housing associations were particularly mentioned regarding storage of bikes.



Children at The Loading Bay talking about RUAR Sessions



Enjoyment of the RUAR Sessions

Findings were consistently positive about RUAR at The Loading Bay, with no negative responses being reported. Figure 2 shows how the children scored sessions for developing skills, confidence and creating enjoyment. As seen in session 5, enjoyment scores can drop as skill sessions get more difficult or for reasons other than the session itself. From the focus groups with the children they expressed high levels of enjoyment of their sessions, describing these as “fun” and saying they “love everything”. Children particularly enjoyed using the ramps and equipment available alongside the opportunity to learn and develop new skills. They enjoyed cycling with friends and the coaches, highlighting the importance of the social aspects of the programme.

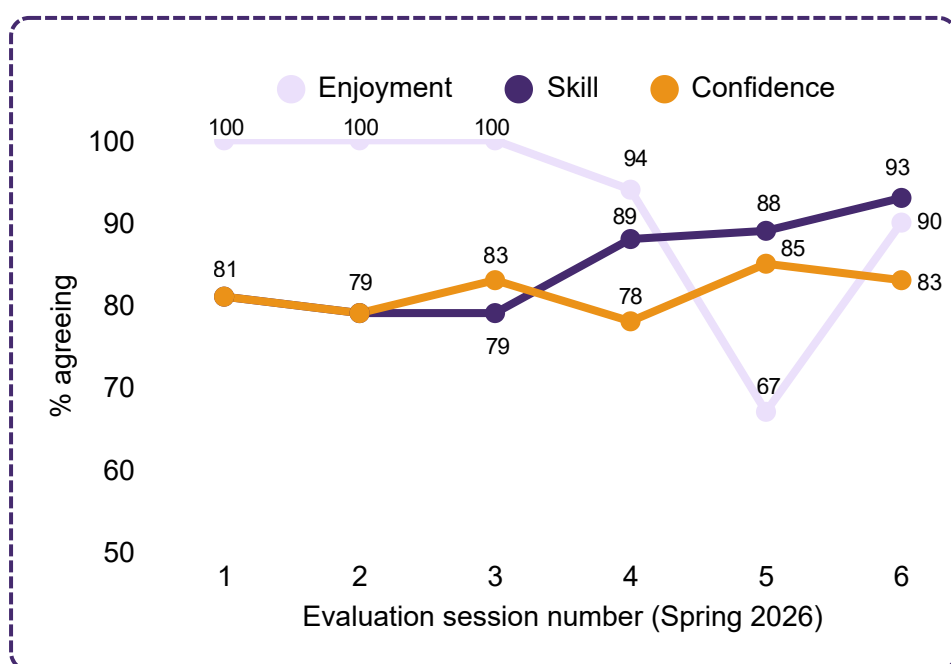


Figure 2.

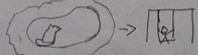
Scores for skill, confidence and enjoyment from two groups of community primary school-aged children at The Loading Bay over six consecutive weeks.



Drawings and writing from The Loading Bay where children were asked what they do with their bikes, where they go and the best thing about the RUAR sessions.

1) Yes: Mountain Bike
 2) Pollok Park hth trails
 Cathkin blaes Whitelee
 Wild-farm School
 The Loading Bay
 Kelvingrove Skerries
 Church
 3. Time
 4. My favorite thing
 about the loading
 bay is ramps and
 cycling with Paddy
 and I am also chips

1) Learning new tricks and going on
 the trampolines
 My favourite trick is a bunny hop

 2) Lenzie park, Springburn park and
 School and the field and the
 hill at my house
 3) with my cousin and Springburn
 Park or any other park with my friend
 Sophia

 Carolina

Cycling Behaviour outside of RUAR Sessions

All children reported having access to or ownership of a bike including BMXS's and mountain bikes. Children reported cycling to and from local parks and areas as well as to and from school. A smaller number reported using their bikes within wider recreational settings.

Barriers to Cycling

The most reported barrier was weather, where children mentioned that rain, ice and snow stop or discourages them from cycling. Other reported barriers included increased use of screen-based technology, extra-curricular activities, time and traffic/safety concerns. One child also reported fear as a barrier, however they described overcoming this through participation within RUAR, whilst some reported no barriers.

Coaches on the Impact of the RUAR sessions at The Loading Bay



Increased Confidence

Confidence of the children was mentioned in three different ways: increased self-efficacy, overcoming fears and building resilience. Coaches described seeing increases in children's self-efficacy being built gradually, where over time it was observed that the children were becoming more confident and comfortable within themselves. They became willing to attempt skills, they were once apprehensive of.

Fear was also described as a common barrier for the children initially, with coaches describing the children as feeling "scared" to attempt different skills. This was not the case after participation in multiple sessions, with coaches describing the children becoming "not scared at all".



It's nice when you see the kids push through that fear barrier and then achieve what they're wanting to do



Coaches also described increased resilience amongst the children, with children becoming increasingly more comfortable with falling and making mistakes over time, learning persistence and determination.

Social and Wider Impact

Coaches reported the development of social skills, building friendships and behaviour change. Coaches described that sessions had a positive impact on children's social skills, allowing them to develop communication skills through interacting with peers. The development of friendships between children who came from different schools was an important piece of the RUAR sessions.



So, before they came, they were all, there was a few of them that kind of new each other, but now, they are all just pals with each other.



Participants also reported that RUAR has played a key role in behaviour change beyond sessions. Coaches reported that children have adopted cycling outside of sessions, to and from school with friends and as a hobby.

Improved Access to Cycling

RUAR was felt to have improved cycling access and opportunities for the children involved, reporting that RUAR has only had a positive impact for everyone involved. Coaches reported that RUAR has helped reduce barriers, particularly by removing financial and access barriers, which increased accessibility by providing bikes and access to world-class facilities such as The Loading Bay, which children may not have had the opportunity to access and use without the initiative. RUAR was described as “targeting the right kids” and “providing opportunities to the right people”.

Skill Development

This theme explores how RUAR has influenced and taught children different aspects of cycling, including development of basic cycling skills, learning to cycle safely, progression and application beyond sessions. Coaches described that RUAR was successful in teaching children basic cycling skills needed to cycle safely, including basic skills such as balance, control and steering, which are the basic foundations of cycling for future leisure or transport.

Upon teaching safe, responsible cycling, one participant also highlighted how the children went from having little knowledge of safe cycling practices to it becoming a habit. Coaches also described how the children used these skills to cycle outside the RUAR sessions.

Enjoyment

Enjoyment was the most consistent finding. Coaches reported that children were always excited and happy within sessions, stating that they “never saw a frown”, and the children are “always happy”. RUAR adopts a play-based approach, which is a key contributor to increased enjoyment, skill development and confidence through a range of activities and games, ensuring a relaxed and positive environment. Coaches also spoke on the high levels of engagement and participation from the children, with children returning each week consistently, stating that they see the “same familiar faces every week”. In addition, coaches again reported not only high levels of enjoyment from the children, but from themselves, stating that sessions are “always a good time” and it’s their “favourite shift of the week”.

ROCK UP & RIDE IN THE NESTRANS REGION

Participation opportunities

1310



ABERDEEN CYCLE HUB

The Aberdeen Cycle Hub, run by Sport Aberdeen, provides access to bikes, adaptive bikes and delivers inclusive cycling activities for the local community and schools. RUAR funding has provided much needed resource to the Hub, has been flexible to allow adaptation to the local needs of the Hub and arranged for them to be able to source a hire van which has been helpful to flexible and accessible delivery.

Delivery progress from this delivery area was monitored through regular monthly reports submitted by the team at Aberdeen Cycle Hub and backed-up with several in-person visits from the evaluation team. Together these provided a valuable window into the work being carried out, the context and settings and the impact on local people and the delivery staff too. Some key themes from the work in Aberdeen include:

Community Engagement

Areas where cycling participation has historically been low was a central focus throughout the RUAR project in Nestrans region. Work in Torry was approached carefully and slowly as building trust and presence in underrepresented communities takes time. The team established a Friday morning cycling session, developed links with a local youth group in the area, all while managing realistic expectations about the pace of uptake. Similar outreach efforts happened in Northfield, though progress was slower due to partner availability and capacity. This is something seen across all RUAR locations in Scotland where delivery pace needs patience.

Partnership Working

Similar to other RTP regions, working with other established organisations was fundamental to how RUAR delivery was structured in the Aberdeen area. Relationships with groups like Family Learning, Active Schools and the Fit Like Wellbeing Hubs opened-up novel pathways to participants who might not otherwise have been reached. The project also demonstrated a willingness to develop new partnerships, exploring collaborative opportunities with Grampian Inclusive Cycling and attending a University of Aberdeen volunteering fair to widen its network and volunteer base.

Practical Solutions

An important addition to RUAR delivery in Nestrans was a hire van provided by Scottish Cycling. This has had a positive impact on delivery, where it has allowed bikes and equipment to be transported easily, contributing directly to the smooth running of those sessions. It has also opened-up new possibilities, including potential partnership work with Grampian Inclusive Cycling to make community rides more accessible using trikes, handcycles and recumbent cycles and to bring sessions closer to where participants live rather than requiring them to travel to the Cycle Hub.

Women's Wellbeing Rides at Aberdeen Cycle Hub



Women's wellbeing rides are short and social rides, designed to build cycling confidence away from main roads. Participant feedback highlights growing confidence and wider cycling habits:



I've always wanted to improve, so this felt like a really good way of getting better at cycling...having people around you who are patient and improving my pace.



I've been out on my bike a lot more since going...they've really given me a lot more confidence to get out there.

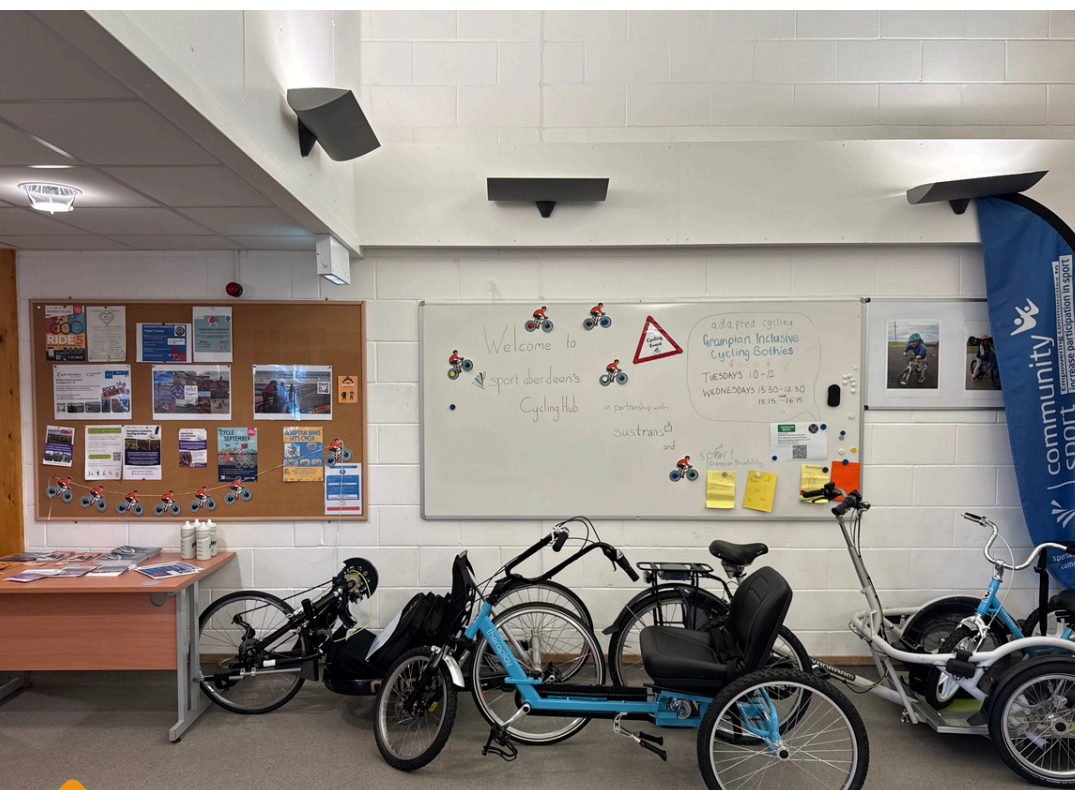


Delivery staff noted the strong sense of enjoyment and value participants place on the sessions, stating that “the ones that we've got coming and keep coming back, they seem to very much value them” and that participants “seem really... to enjoy it,” often “smiling a lot” as they pedal independently for the first time.

Many women begin with low confidence or a belief that physical activity "is not for me," but through gentle encouragement begin to see themselves as capable and active. This is a shift that is central to promoting active travel where someone feels that cycling is "for people like me". There was clear evidence of participant development and progression as women moved from Learn to Ride sessions into regular led rides. The long-term vision is "more people on bikes, more people seeing it's possible to cycle" in what staff described as a "very cyclable" city. Children's sessions are also helping to engage wider families, with parents drawn in after watching their children participate.



Working with the kids first is a great way to get parents who are unsure or sceptical to ride, because they'll see their kid doing it.... And start to think, I could do that.



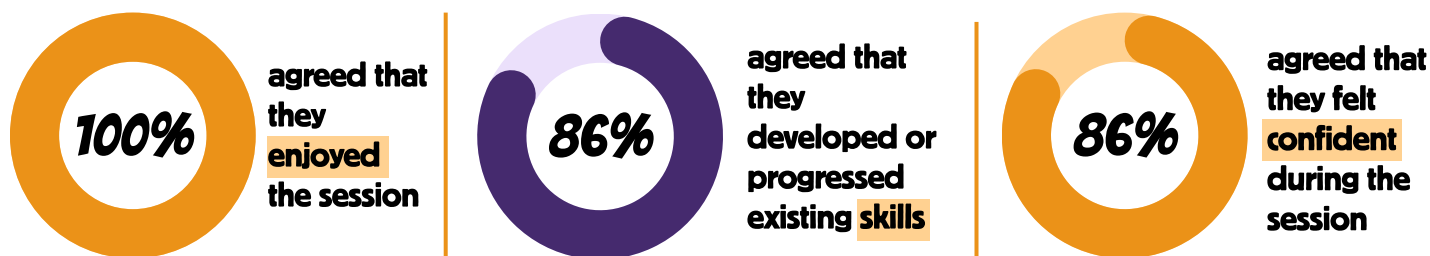
Adapted cycles in the Aberdeen Cycle Hub and a seafront Women's Wellbeing Rides

Schools Sessions with Aberdeen Cycle Hub



The Sport Aberdeen Cycle Hub staff consistently worked around challenges to make delivery in Aberdeen schools consistent, engaging and fun. Challenges included poor weather, a lack of indoor space on poor weather days to practice skills, challenges when partnership working and being flexible to work within school calendars.

Seven children provided evaluation data at one primary school and were asked to rate their confidence, enjoyment and skill during the session.



Young people who are not regular school attenders require particular support needs when delivering cycling skills sessions. The delivery team noted the importance of "providing lots of variety and flexibility to keep them engaged" within the school sessions. There was clear evidence of participant development and progression within the school pupils. Also, demand at Tullos Primary grew quickly enough to require a second session slot within the first two weeks.



Delivery at one Aberdeen primary school featuring on-going noise pollution from overhead flights



Ythan Cycling Club



Ythan Cycling Club's weekly inclusive sessions support adults and young people with disabilities through an adaptive bike library housed at Ellon Wheel Park, allowing participants to choose equipment that best meets their needs and ride at their own pace on a traffic-free circuit.

The evaluation team interviewed a delivery staff member and two staff accompanying participants to the sessions. They highlighted the immediate physical and emotional benefits for participants not possible through other activities offered locally.



It's being physically active when you're not using a walker, you're not using a wheelchair, but you're getting that feel of speed. You're getting that feel that you're mobile yourself, you're independent.



Staff also noted a marked improvement in mood following sessions, with participants leaving "happy with themselves" and eager to return the following week, having built social connections and a sense of belonging. They also make friends and personal connections at the sessions and look forward to a social connection and being part of something like 'normality'.



You can interact with people. You can point, you can do whatever you like, and you're outside... You're actually out there feeling as if you're normal.



Care facility staff who accompany the participants say the sessions are a lifeline especially during a time of cuts to health and social care services. The positive effects the sessions have on carers and even the volunteer coaches were noted during the sessions that the evaluation team visited. They noted that having volunteers at the sessions gives carers a rare moment of relief and social connection.



Someone else takes the responsibility and they can have a chat with you about... their day or whatever else they're doing. So I think for them it's a little bit of respite.



The impact of the programme is also evident in starting to develop everyday active travel and mobility habits. We heard of at least two participants who were able to buy their own trikes. One cycles to the shops with her mother and another cycles along quieter back roads with his carer walking and chatting alongside him. For this young man, there is no other physical activity that is as accessible to him than this type of cycling. Participation in the sessions is directly encouraging cycling as part of daily life.



Case Study Inclusive Communities – Ellon Wheel Park

“Awesome, Fulfilling and Proud (because I can cycle)”

Reece is a 24-year-old man with a diagnosis of moderate to severe learning disability who is also a wheelchair user. Prior to engaging with an inclusive cycling group, Reece had no opportunity to participate in cycling or physical activity due to a lack of accessible equipment. The introduction of adapted bicycles, including tricycles and wheelchair-compatible bikes, enabled him to engage in this activity for the first time.

Participation in the cycling group has had many positives on Reece’s wellbeing. Physically, regular cycling has contributed to improved leg strength, overall fitness and supports his ability to maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle. Reece feels happier and more fulfilled when cycling.

It also supports me with my general fitness, my legs are stronger and I feel better when I am able to cycle.

Socially, the group has provided a structured opportunity for inclusion within the local community. Reece cycles alongside peers and is supported by his personal assistant, Kaelin, from his day service. Without the group he would lose both the opportunity to cycle and the social connections it facilitates.

I am included in the local community with peers and supports me to build on my social skills by allowing me to see friends.

The positive experience has further encouraged independence, as Reece now uses a similar adapted bicycle at home unless the weather is bad.

I would be very sad if the group were to stop... I wouldn’t be able to cycle with my friends.



Reece and Kaelin at Ellon Wheel Park

ROCK UP & RIDE IN THE SESTRAN REGION

Participation opportunities

506

MOUNTAIN BIKING PROGRESSION PROGRAMME

Over the course of the RUAR programme in Fife 2025/26, structured and progressive mountain bike (MTB) programmes were delivered at St Columbus High School in Dunfermline city centre with a wide catchment area and Glenwood High School, which is at the epicentre of the new Glenrothes pump track. Sessions were framed differently in both schools, reflecting the tailoring of sessions, capitalising on existing relationships with Active Schools and the knowledge of local coaches. In St Columbus RUAR was offered as an alternative activity within the PE curriculum. Glenwood was different in that it was offered to a group of additional support needs (ASN) learners, with a clear focus on developing both cycling skills and experiences as well as broader personal skills. The sessions began with fundamental cycling techniques on flat playground surfaces and steadily advanced to trail based MTB and pump track skills, allowing each participant to build confidence at their own pace.

Some of the impact below is reported for the two schools by the Fife-based coaches. While the evaluation team did get to attend and observe some of these sessions, they felt it was premature to ask the young people questions on sensitive topics without having had much connection to/with them. Due to their precarious engagement with school, we wanted to build familiarity in person before engaging in formal or in-depth evaluation focus groups. This is something the evaluation team will do in future funded RUAR programmes in Fife. Below reports several impacts on the students related to their cycling skills and outcomes related to being learners in their school. A key part from the evaluation are themes coming from interacting with coaches and what can be learned or actioned into 2026/27.

Coaches on the Impact of RUAR Sessions



Impact on Cycling Skills for Participants

Throughout the programme, the coaches reported that pupils demonstrated notable resilience, regularly engaging in self-discovered learning as they experimented, problem solved and gained independence on the bike. Many pupils were able to find and surpass their own limits, showing increased trust in both their equipment and in themselves. We observed laughter, peer encouragement and positive risk-taking which coaches noted became key features of each session, contributing to a highly supportive and inclusive cycling environment.

One student even progressed from being taught how to ride a bike to helping another pupil.



So she went from being non-communicative, non-verbal with us on day one to then helping to teach another young boy who couldn't cycle a bike. She was then coaching him on how to cycle. So the peer-to-peer learning and sharing was really, really good.



A significant highlight was the group's visit to the Glenrothes Pump Track, the largest in Europe, where pupils applied their newly developed bike skills in a challenging yet exciting setting. Their enthusiasm and determination reflected the progress made over their own six-week block.

Impact on School-Related Outcomes for Participants

Improved Attainment in Class:

Pupils participating in the MTB programme have been reported to have shown improvements in class attainment, particularly in engagement, focus and task persistence.

Increased School Engagement:

Several pupils have extended their time in school, now attending two additional afternoons per week. Behaviour was also reported to have improved too. This marks a significant improvement in overall attendance, motivation and willingness to participate in structured learning.

Benefits for the School:

One quote demonstrates the benefit that teachers themselves are feeling:



The kids who cycle that wouldn't know each other normally in school got to know each other and you could see a bond developing over the weeks together. The ASN teacher commented that they were a diverse bunch in the classroom and very difficult to manage. And the fact they came together around cycling has made their lives and the staff's life much easier.



Growth, Sustainability and Future Directions

The RUAR programme grew from six to 10 pupils, demonstrating strong interest, positive messages being circulated by word-of-mouth and a noticeable increase in pupils' readiness to engage in physical and outdoor learning opportunities. It is also useful to look beyond the individual participants themselves and report on insights from those delivering the programme.



Relationships:

The importance of local relationships with and between coaches and stakeholders (including with schools, Active Schools and cycling clubs) was emphasised just like the other RTP regions. In some cases where trust has not been built yet, it is harder to get a block of sessions off the ground or there is not buy-in from the schools or supporting organisations. This is especially important where something needs to be planned and delivered at pace.



...at that stage the relationships was in place [between Scottish Cycling and Fife coaches], some trust was in place, [the coach] had done some work in the region and I had better understanding of the impact so the ducks were already lined up, so once the funding was released we were able to hit the ground running and execute a rough plan.



Cluttered Market Causing Confusion:

There is a mix of governing bodies, local authorities, national and local cycling organisations and local clubs operating locally which can cause confusion and competition.



When i try and go into a school and articulate that [the particular programme and how each is different] to a head teacher it gets messy really quickly.



It was suggested that some form of pathway or flowchart could be developed to show a headteacher, an Active Schools coordinator or someone who is not a cyclist to explain what RUAR delivery is and where it fits.

Longevity on the 'Scene'/Familiarity:

There is an enormous amount of knowledge of the local area, the organisations and the history of getting cycling 'up and running' in Fife. They also know what did not work and have suggestions for what could be done differently in the future. This capital allows coaches to navigate the cluttered cycling environment and make connections to allow a new programme like RUAR to take hold. One of the coaches is a former pupil of one of the schools himself, so was seen as an ideal person to engage learners at that school



What better person to go back and deliver RUAR to the community he grew up in, he knew the community really well.



Linked to this, the multi-year and small funding can take a toll on delivery staff and there is a risk they would be lost to the sector, taking with them their skills, experience and knowledge of the cycling scene in Fife. This is something the evaluation team have observed and heard about across all RTPs and is an issue beyond just RUAR.

Impact on Coaches:

RUAR gives coaches the opportunity to engage with new groups and the payment for hours are gratefully received. All the same, there are more hours for engagement and delivery than are paid for:



In terms of personal impact there was a small bit of money put aside for the coaches and it didn't even touch the sides to what we actually delivered.



There are also added costs and unseen work that goes on for delivering these types of cycling programmes:



On top of that I used my personal vehicle to transport the bikes and had to purchase extra insurance for my own personal vehicle to cover the transportation of the equipment.



Visibility of Cycling:

RUAR has allowed new groups to be reached, new relationships to be built and without it “we wouldn’t have gotten cycling back on the agenda again” with high schools in Fife, not just the PE departments, but the entire schools. “If we didn’t have the Rock Up and Ride funding, none of that would have happened.” Without sustained funding then coaches and staff are reacting instead of being part of a sustainable plan for cycling in Fife.



I use the analogy of a house being on fire and I’m being handed saucepans of water to try and put it out with all these little tactical projects.



Linking to Infrastructure and Transport:

Like other locations in Scotland, the Council has made large investment in cycling infrastructure but the funding for behaviour change programmes has not caught up. This was a call to action from coaches in Fife:



There are hundreds of bikes out there and bike libraries being unused and there is no payment for the professionals to deliver the service.... let’s spread the money to services and not purely capital.



In some schools there is large geographical dispersion/catchments where cycling to/from school may not be a viable option. Also many children are happy to walk together socially, or they have a free bus pass or they just want to ride bikes for fun or participation at this stage. However, with targeting, coaches can identify pupils where offering a bike may indeed make cycling into school a reality. There does need to be engagement with schools to explain the cycling scene, what RUAR is and what the link is between a transport programme and the relevance to indicators of interest to educators for getting it into schools.



The problem...the challenge...is a transportation employee trying to sell that to a headteacher in a school is not working.





ROCK UP & RIDE ON SHETLAND MAINLAND - ZETTRANS

Participation opportunities

54

As part of the RUAR evaluation, two of the evaluation team members from the University of Strathclyde visited Shetland separately in 2026. They joined the Scottish Cycling coaches for visits and activities at multiple RUAR delivery sites in Shetland and met with various stakeholders during two three-day visits in February and March. They also ran some interactive insight sessions with young people, undertook observations and looked to link activities with the two Children's Living Well Locally Plans for the North Mainland and South End.

PREPARATION FOR EVALUATION

Meetings and Visits

Before the evaluation began, the first trip included meeting with ZetTrans, Shetland Islands Council Transport Planning, sitting in on interviews with candidates for the Playmaker role, meeting with teachers and observing sessions. These meetings and visits provided an opportunity to observe delivery, gather feedback and insights directly from participants and generally get a sense of what cycling is like in the area where young people live, study, socialise and travel. Other informal or 'off the cuff' interactions with locals on Shetland (e.g. runners at parkrun, security staff at the airport and taxi drivers in Lerwick) helped form part of the story and understanding more about life in Shetland present and past. These informal interactions and generally being out and about around the mainland helps give context to emerging themes and helps us give recommendations back to Scottish Cycling.

Observing RUAR Session Delivery

As part of the evaluation, we first did observations of delivery at all the schools involved. We have a palette of different evaluation methods to use so it is always useful to observe the setting and the children too to get an idea of what might work for the gathering feedback and insight as part of the evaluation. We undertook some interactive feedback and insight sessions with primary school children in the schools in the North of the island including Brae Primary School, Brae High School, Aith Junior High School and Mossbank Primary School.



At Brae Primary, Scottish Cycling coaches worked alongside four young coaches from Brae High School to deliver two sessions for Primary 5 and 6 pupils. The sessions included a mix of children, some confident on bikes and others just starting out. The young coaches adapted well, making sure that those who needed more space and support were still able to take part and feel included. At Aith Primary, children got to try out the BMX bikes while at Mossbank Primary, Scottish Cycling coaches introduced eight primary-aged pupils to BMX cycling.



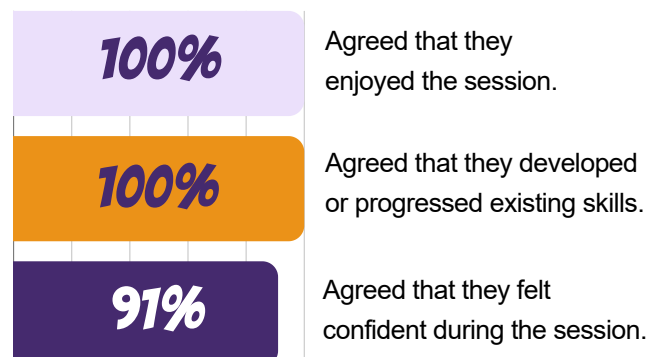
Delivery at Brae Primary School's MUGA, pupils trying out BMX at Aith Primary and Scottish Cycling coach Neil at the centre of discussion at Mossbank Primary

FEEDBACK AND INSIGHTS FROM RUAR ON SHETLAND

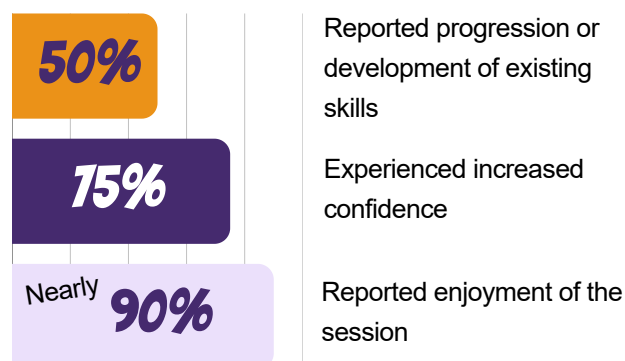
Skills, Confidence and Enjoyment

Mia spent some time in classrooms with the primary pupils. She used a simple sticker activity where three questions with three possible answers were shown to the children. Each child chose three stickers that represented them. Giving them time to do this helped them feel more engaged and comfortable expressing themselves. They then used the stickers to place on the answer to each question.

At Brae, 11 children were asked to rate their confidence, enjoyment and skill during the session.



At Mossbank, among the eight participants



The young coaches from the high school who worked with Brae Primary shared that they see this Rock Up & Ride delivery as a valuable opportunity and have enjoyed developing their skills as coaches through Scottish Cycling.

Barriers and Facilitators

Mia interacted with pupils in Brae and Aith using a familiar childhood game of “snakes and ladders” to explain what a barrier and facilitator was. This was used as a starting point to guide a group discussion around barriers (“snakes”) and facilitators (“ladders”) to cycling. This helped draw out some clear and consistent themes.

Pupils at two of the primary schools shared that the main barriers to cycling to school included:

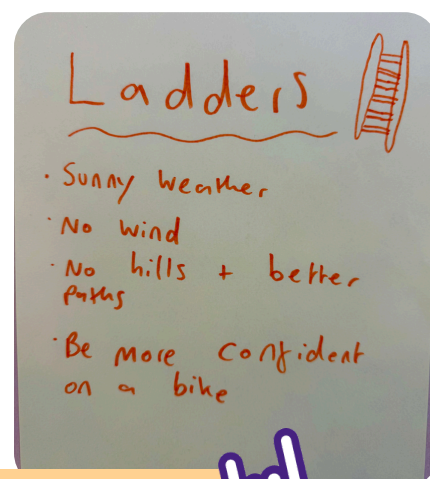
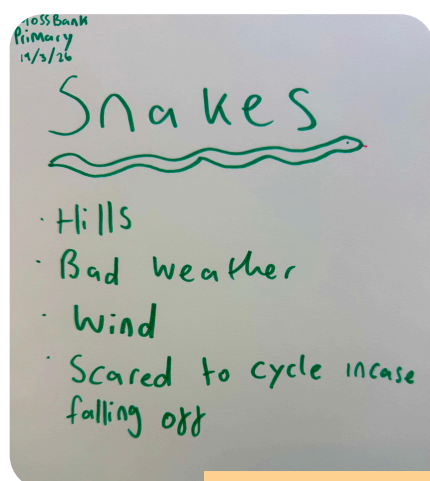
- ⚙️ challenging/poor weather conditions
- ⚙️ lack of safe roadside paths
- ⚙️ concerns about traffic safety
- ⚙️ hills
- ⚙️ parental restrictions.

In contrast, key facilitators included:

- good weather (particularly calm, sunny days like the day Mia visited)
- having friends to cycle with
- better infrastructure
- increased confidence
- access to high-quality bikes.



Many pupils also expressed enthusiasm for BMX riding, with several highlighting a desire to own BMX bikes and learn tricks.



Feedback and insights through “snakes and ladders” at Mossbank.

To build on this, Mia provided arts and crafts materials so the children could draw or creatively express how the session made them feel and about cycling more broadly. This resulted in a mix of drawings, notes and thank-you cards, with a clear theme emerging: the children really enjoyed the experience, wanted the coaches to return and would love more opportunities like this. This creative approach provided additional insight into how they are feeling about cycling and can serve as starting point for future discussion with the young people to try and ask more in-depth questions.

Thank you cards from Brae primary school pupils



Most of the children said they would like to ride BMX and see it as something exciting, they'd like to get involved in. BMX bikes appear to offer a novel and accessible way for young people to engage with cycling locally, acting as a potential gateway into more regular cycling activity in Shetland or if they move away.



Doodles from Mossbank Primary showing lots of positive vibes and the skill of cycling with one hand!

SHORT VIDEOS

Across various sites, short videos were recorded to capture the programme and its participants in action. The videos below showcase the range of communities and young people who took part in RUAR, highlighting the impact of the programme across different locations and delivery partners.

Delivery Partner	Site	Video Link
SEStran – Young People	Dunfermline Learning Campus	Watch video
SEStran – Young People	Glenrothes High School	Watch video
SPT – Young People	Kilwinning Academy	Watch video
SPT – Inclusive Communities	Central West Integration Network	Watch video
SPT – Inclusive Communities	Cuningar Loop	Watch video
Nestrans – Inclusive Communities	Sport Aberdeen	Watch video

Prepared by

Deirdre Harrington, PhD

Senior Lecturer in Physical Activity and Health

Mia Carballo, MSc

Research Assistant

Department of Psychological Sciences and Health, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

Strathclyde's Active Mobility Hub

Version 20MAY2026

A big thank you to all the those from RUAR in diverse and amazing regions of Scotland who spoke to us for this evaluation. We are also grateful for the support from Undergraduate students Lauryn Bell and Jenna Welsh as well as Dr. James Bonner and the wider Active Mobility Hub at the University of Strathclyde.



University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow

