A Quality Assurance System for Bikeability

Report

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1 Introduction

Background

1.1 The need for a complete system of quality assurance in Bikeability is recognised across the cycle training industry and by government. The purpose of this paper is to provide an outline of the new system and is the result of discussions between representatives of the cycle training industry and government. The system outlined here is intended to achieve a balance between regulation wholly by government and total self-regulation by industry. This balance is important to ensure the system is as far as possible credible, inclusive of all Bikeability schemes and cost effective.

1.2 This paper has been prepared on behalf of the Department for Transport (DfT) by the Bikeability support team working in consultation with the recently formed industry body, The Association of Bikeability Schemes (TABS). It takes into account cross-industry feedback on an initial proposal drafted by the Bikeability Support Team and TABS in May 2012. Feedback was sought at the TABS annual conference and in writing. A separate publication summarising all the feedback will also be available.

Summary of Feedback on Proposed Quality Assurance System

1.3 Broadly speaking all feedback welcomed the proposed system. The main feedback was in the detail of the system's implementation. It can be summarised as follows:

i) Greater emphasis is needed at the commissioning level. QA should take account of how a Bikeability scheme has been commissioned by a DfT grant recipient.

ii) The role and importance of instructor training in ensuring high quality Bikeability delivery.

iii) Bureaucracy and reporting associated with internal and external assurance must be minimised.

iv) Practicalities of the external assurance team working with Bikeability schemes in schools - need for CRB check and potentially school permissions.

v) Commercial interests - ensuring no conflict of interest should be the priority, rather geographical proximity, when allocating external assurance resource.

The Need for Quality Assurance in Bikeability

1.4 DfT's recognition of the need for a Bikeability quality assurance system is founded on:

❙ **Safety** – that appropriate steps are being taken to manage risk and ensure that training delivery safeguards participants.

I **Continuous improvement** – that once cycle training organisations are part of the wider Bikeability scheme, they are taking effective steps to continuously improve the quality of their delivery.

I **Value for money** – that the recipients of DfT Bikeability grant funding (local authorities and school games organisers) are buying/delivering cycle training of the highest possible quality.

I **Brand** – that Bikeability is recognised by all stakeholders, not least parents and children, as the choice for high quality cycle training.

Overview of Quality Assurance System

Principles

1.5   The following principles will be applied to the quality assurance system for Bikeability:

I **Inclusive** – all training providers recognised by DfT as Bikeability schemes, including those that contract-out their Bikeability to a registered provider, will be covered by the quality assurance system.

I **Credible** – the quality assurance must be conducted fairly and in such a way as to produce robust results that are respected by stakeholders.

I **Economical** – the system will not place an unreasonable financial burden on stakeholders.

I **Sustainable** – the approach will be deliverable in the long term and in a scenario in which there is less direct involvement from DfT.

I **Continuous improvement** – the system will not be punitive but instead have a positive focus on supporting the delivery and continuous improvement of Bikeability schemes.

Objectives

1.6   The system addresses the following objectives:

I Provide a complete and robust framework for quality assurance that can be delivered now and in the future.

I Enable Bikeability providers to take a proactive approach to their own continuous improvement.

I Ensure there is consistency between what Bikeability schemes say they will deliver at the point of registration and what they deliver in practice.

I Raise and maintain standards across the industry.

The three quality assurance elements

1.7   The system has three key elements that are introduced in the remainder of this report:

i)   Scheme registration;

ii)   Scheme 'reregistration'; and

iii)   Practical training quality assurance.

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2 Bikeability Scheme Registration

2.1 The current process for Bikeability registration will be maintained, to ensure all Bikeability schemes have been subject to a broadly consistent quality check at point of entry to Bikeability.

2.2 A refreshed version of the Bikeability registration application form has been in development in recent months and was made available for use in May 2012. It has streamlined the registration process by consolidating some of the information requested in previous versions of the form. The new registration form introduces a maximum of two rounds of feedback on applications. The purpose of this is to reduce the amount of time spent providing successive rounds of feedback to applicants and so make the registration process more efficient.

2.3 DfT grant recipients that contract-out their Bikeability training will be expected to provide evidence that they outsource their training to a registered Bikeability scheme. They will also provide evidence that the contract enables the supplier to deliver Bikeability in accordance with the standards expected of Bikeability schemes. Bikeability registration for recipients that contract out their training should also encourage a consideration of the relative importance of quality versus cost in procuring Bikeability.

3 Bikeability Scheme 'Re-registration'

3.1 A system for recognising the status of schemes will be introduced. This will be achieved by formalising a 'reregistration' process.

3.2 Annual reregistration requests will be generated automatically and emailed to registered schemes for completion. Scheme organisers will be asked to confirm they are delivering Bikeability at or above the standards expected of Bikeability schemes, including training times and instructor to trainee ratios and the extent to which they are implementing quality assurance in their scheme.

3.3 Reregistration is therefore effectively a means of renewing schemes' commitment to Bikeability. Scheme reregistration will not place an unnecessary burden on stakeholders, not least Bikeability scheme organisers. Reregistration will capture sufficient information to determine whether a scheme is still actively delivering Bikeability in accordance with the expected standards.

3.4 Schemes that successfully complete their annual reregistration will be considered 'active'. Those that do not respond or do not complete their registration will be considered 'inactive' and the scheme will be removed from the published list of recognised schemes.

3.5 Schemes will have a three month window in which to complete their reregistration. If at the end of the three months a scheme has not completed its reregistration it will be given a final two week window in which to do so. If a scheme has not completed its reregistration after the final two weeks it will be considered inactive. Inactive schemes would be ineligible to deliver cycle training funded by DfT, since under the terms of the grants, the funding must be spent on Bikeability training. Grant recipients that contract out their training should check the list of registered schemes on the Bikeability website to ensure they are procuring training from a registered Bikeability provider and if still in doubt contact the Bikeability support team.

3.6 In certain circumstances it may be necessary to 'de-register' a scheme – for example a scheme may choose to deregister if they are no longer operating or it may be necessary to deregister a scheme that no longer commits to the standards expected of Bikeability schemes. Any scheme deregistered and wishing to 're-register' would need to go through the complete registration process again.

3.7 Scheme reregistration will be covered by the appeals process as described below.

4 Practical Training Quality Assurance

Overview

4.1 In line with the principles and objectives set out in chapter 1, practical training quality assurance will consist of two parts:

❚ **Internal assurance** undertaken by Bikeability schemes themselves, allowing them to take responsibility for their own continuous improvement.

❚ **External assurance** an observation of a scheme's practical training delivery by suitably skilled professionals from outside the scheme.

4.2 To help ensure inclusivity, enhance credibility and reduce the potential for conflict of interest, it is important that the system contains a suitable degree of 'externality' from the cycle training industry itself. Externality is achieved through:

4.3 The Department's ownership of the system as a whole and their place at the top of decision making and appeals hierarchies.

4.4 The utilisation of professionals from within the cycle training industry and training professionals from outside the industry who would together undertake external assurance free from conflict of interest.

4.5 All active Bikeability schemes will be eligible for external assurance. There will be a selection process for prioritising schemes for external assurance in light of available resources. External assurance will be undertaken on behalf of the Department for Transport.

Internal Assurance

Process

4.6 Internal assurance will build on the current requirement for Bikeability schemes to provide a mentoring role for their instructors but it will not require an instructor trainer within the scheme.

4.7 The purpose of internal assurance will be to:

❚ Provide support to fellow instructors;
❚ Monitor the quality of delivery by fellow instructors;
❚ Take responsibility for quality assurance within a Bikeability scheme; and
❚ Ensure the scheme consistently meets the requirements for external assurance.

Internal assurance – toolkit for schemes

4.8 To facilitate this aspect of quality assurance, core guidance will be made available to Bikeability schemes. It is expected that over time the Industry (through TABS) will develop a toolkit and training support packages in addition to this if there is a need for further support.

4.9 The guidance will include internal assurance checklists and guidance and recommendations on the approach to and frequency of internal assurance.

External Assurance

4.10   External assurance will recognise that every scheme, however good, has scope for improvement.

4.11   The purpose of external assurance will be threefold:

i)   Review a scheme's internal assurance findings for consistency with the views of the external assurance team (i.e. is a scheme carrying out accurate internal assurance).

ii)   Gauge the extent to which a scheme is delivering training in accordance with its registered scheme (i.e. the approach it set out at the point of registering with Bikeability).

iii)   Ensure delivery meets the standards required by Bikeability (i.e. if a scheme is following its registered approach to delivery, the external assurance may still highlight how the registered approach could be improved upon, if it is deemed to be below the standard expected of Bikeability schemes generally).

4.12   External assurance will review schemes against standard criteria using factual and objective evidence to support findings made. This will include information provided by the scheme as part of the process to ensure a full and balanced review takes place.

Resourcing external assurance

4.13   A 'virtual team' or panel of industry and training professionals will be formed to undertake the external assurance. Selection criteria will include:

❚   Evidence of experience in delivering Bikeability cycle training.
❚   Evidence of relevant expertise in training and education.
❚   Relative impartiality from interests of the industry (for non-cycle training members).

4.14   The panel will consist of people who are located across the country to help reduce the time and distance travelled. Details of an application process and timetable will be made available in late summer 2012.

4.15   There will be an induction programme for the external assurance panel to ensure full awareness of the principles and objectives of Bikeability quality assurance and ensure consistency of approach.

Process for selecting schemes for external assurance

4.16   DfT (through the Bikeability Support Team)will be responsible for selecting schemes for external assurance. Full details of the selection process will be published during summer 2012. The selection process will comprise a mix of random, planned and prompted external assurance:

❚   **Random** – a baseline number of schemes would be reviewed each year, selected quarterly at random.
❚   **Planned** – targeted, based on characteristics such as the volume of Bikeability training they deliver.

▌ **Prompted** – a level of resource will be kept in reserve to allow for prompted external assurance, for example in response to queries or feedback about a Bikeability scheme.

Process for selecting which team members do the external assurance visits

4.17 Two members from the external assurance panel will attend each external assurance visit. To help limit the potential for conflict of interest, the team of two will be part selected by the scheme. The scheme will be given two shortlists, one containing external assurance panel members from within the cycle training industry and one containing panel members from outside the industry. The scheme will be able to select one member from one of the shortlists. The other team member would be selected on behalf of DfT from the other list. If for some reason a scheme feels they are unable to select someone from the shortlist (e.g. conflict of interest), this will be referred to the DfT team for consideration.

Process for the external assurance visit

4.18 Schemes selected for external assurance will be asked to provide dates on which they have Bikeability cycle training arranged and a date will be agreed for the visit based on the availability of the selected external assurance team. There will be at least one month's notice. Although some members of the industry favoured unannounced visits, on balance the weight of feedback suggested as much notice as possible was preferable.

4.19 Commissioners of training will be involved wherever possible.

4.20 Prior to an external assurance visit the selected team will review the registration documents submitted by the scheme, with a focus on the scheme's delivery manual.

4.21 External assurance will observe at least two sessions, at least one of which must be on road.

4.22 Level 3 training may also form part of the external assurance.

4.23 A guide will be developed to define the conduct, role and responsibilities of those involved in external assurance (including the schemes) and the level of interaction expected between the external assurance team and the scheme (and trainees). The overarching principle for the visits will be to adopt a 'non-invasive' approach, to ensure that instructors are not distracted from delivering training and that trainees can concentrate on participation.

Reporting

4.24 The external assurance team will prepare a concise report, providing feedback to the scheme with suggestions for improvement, development and recommended next steps. A summary will also be prepared for the commissioners of the cycle training delivery – especially highlighting where contractual or local funding requirements change the nature of the scheme's delivery.

4.25 Depending on the scale and nature of the feedback, it will be followed-up in the future either remotely or as a repeat external assurance visit. In certain circumstances, for example where high risk practices have been observed, a repeat visit may be required by DfT.

4.26   Schemes may be asked to provide evidence of having implemented the recommended changes within a given timescale. Schemes that have had significant concerns identified through external assurance may be subject to a further 'planned' external assurance visit. In some circumstances this may not be notified to the scheme in the form of a 'spot visit'.

4.27   A timescale of one week is suggested for preparation of the report and submission to the Bikeability Support Team by the external assurance team. The Bikeability Support team will sign-off the report, reviewing for consistency and quality. Final reports will be made available to DfT and the Bikeability scheme in question. This will happen within two weeks of the visit.

4.28   An annual report with a focus on sharing best practice will be published to highlight key themes and trends emerging from the external assurance to help the whole sector improve. Lessons learnt from implementing quality assurance will also feed into the materials, guidance and overall approach to quality assurance in the future, ensuring that the quality assurance process is itself subject to continuous improvement.

Reporting quality issues to the quality assurance system

4.29   A complaints form is available on the Bikeability website. Where there appears to be reasonable grounds for concern, a scheme that is the subject of complaint may be referred by DfT for 'prompted' external assurance. This will ensure the scheme's delivery practices are externally verified and if any issues are highlighted, the scheme will be able to gain support with overcoming any issues.

Sanctions

4.30   Sanctions are necessary for the quality assurance system to be robust and to take effective action in instances of substandard practice. Sanctions will only be used in cases such as significantly substandard practice or repeated failure to provide information (e.g. reregistration) or implement recommended improvements.

4.31   Sanctions include:

▌ **Temporary suspension** - of a scheme's Bikeability registration (scheme status set to 'inactive').
▌ **Deregistration** – to be used following temporary suspension if a scheme fails to implement recommended improvements within a given timescale.

Appeals

4.32   If a scheme believes they have specific, objective and justifiable evidence that an external aspect of the quality assurance process has not been carried out correctly it will be able to make an appeal. There will be a two stage appeals process, first to the Bikeability Support Team with escalation to DfT if the appeal cannot be resolved at stage one.

5 A Review of the Proposed Approach to Quality Assurance

5.1 This chapter reviews the proposed approach to quality assurance against the overarching principles for quality assurance set out in the introduction.

Inclusive

5.2 Any cycle training scheme will be able to apply for Bikeability registration, as at present.

5.3 All registered Bikeability schemes will participate in internal assurance and be eligible for external assurance.

Credible

5.4 The system builds on current, established processes.

5.5 The system will draw upon the knowledge and skills of the industry, both in developing the system and its operation.

5.6 The presence and role of DfT will ensure quality assurance is undertaken fairly, providing reassurance to competing organisations within the industry.

Economical

5.7 Improvements to the processes will enable these to be undertaken more efficiently than at present.

5.8 No unreasonable financial burdens will be placed on training schemes. Internal assurance will build on schemes' current mentoring/CPD obligations; external assurance will be free of charge to schemes.

5.9 The utilisation of industry staff for external assurance presents some efficiency in comparison to a system relying wholly upon DfT or consultancy staff.

Sustainable

5.10 Insofar as the Bikeability cycle training market as a whole is largely dependent on the funding from government, the approach will be sustainable into the long term.

5.11 Some revenue funding will be required to operate the system. It will be possible to meet this requirement by tapping a share of the funds provided to Bikeability grant recipients e.g. the share of award materials revenue that is currently returned to the Bikeability scheme could be hypothecated to implementing quality assurance.

5.12 Should grant funding be removed it may be unlikely that demand would exist to support the size of the current market, which would likely contract. The quality assurance revenue requirement will expand and contract in proportion with the size of the market, since fewer operating schemes means a lower resource requirement for external assurance and less potential in the market means fewer schemes applying for Bikeability registration.

Continuous improvement

5.13 Internal assurance supported by external assurance will better enable all schemes to take responsibility for their own continuous improvement.