External Assurance: Review of Good Practice

Introduction

The Bikeability External Assurance (EA) programme was established in autumn 2012 as part of the wider quality assurance system for Bikeability. Quality assurance aims to raise and maintain Bikeability delivery standards across the industry. The target is that all local authority areas will have had the opportunity of at least one EA visit by March 2015. As of July 2013, 54 visits have been completed.

The purpose of this report is to highlight good practice based on the common themes identified in the visits so far. The intended audience for the report is all registered Bikeability schemes. Our hope is that this report will enable all schemes, regardless of whether they have had an EA visit yet themselves, to learn from the experience of the visits undertaken to date.

Good Practice in Bikeability

Above all what's clear is that there is a very committed network of Bikeability training providers in England. Without exception Bikeability schemes are creating safe learning environments for their trainees to learn the skills of cycling on today's roads. Within all the schemes we've seen there is a real sense of enthusiasm and passion for cycling among instructors, and a clear desire to convey this to trainees. The 18 points below show what the best schemes are doing to ensure they deliver the highest quality Bikeability training. We give further details about each point in Annex 1.

PRACTICAL TRAINING

1. Ensure that trainees get enough **practising time**
2. Deliver outcomes in a **logical order**
3. Teach all outcomes **fully and accurately**
4. Give trainees **space to achieve** outcomes themselves
5. Encourage instructors to **position themselves dynamically**
6. **Record trainee progress** effectively and on an on-going basis
7. Choose training sites that provide an **appropriate degree of challenge**
8. Use **biked demonstrations**
9. Use **real road** environments
10. Sign-off outcomes as they are **achieved**
11. **Check trainees' ability** to demonstrate Level 1 outcomes prior to taking them on-road
12. Encourage instructors to use trainee feedback as a **learning tool** for all
13. Understand the **limitations of group riding**
14. Respond to the needs of **individual trainees**

SCHEME MANAGEMENT

15. **Comply** with minimum Bikeability training delivery times and instructor ratios
16. Adopt a structured approach to **internal quality assurance**
17. Ensure **continuous improvement**
18. Ensure good document **management and control**

Next Steps

The visits to date have revealed the very considerable experience and expertise that exists within Bikeability. Areas for further improvement and progress have also been highlighted and we hope that all Bikeability schemes can learn from the visits so far and can find enhancements, no matter how small, that they can make to their training.

We encourage all schemes to review their practices in light of this report and consider which of the good practice elements they can include in their scheme.

From September the programme of visits resumes after the summer break and we expect to see around 45 schemes this year.

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions about Bikeability quality assurance please don't hesitate to contact us: contactus@bikeability.org.uk.

About this Report

This is an independent report of good practice in Bikeability, based on the common themes identified through the External Assurance programme. In developing content we have consulted with The Association of Bikeability Schemes (http://www.tabs-uk.org.uk/), the body set up to represent the cycle training industry. We are grateful for their comments on the draft report as well as their continued support for the Bikeability quality assurance system.

Annex 1 – Good Practice in Bikeability

PRACTICAL TRAINING

1. Ensure that trainees get enough practising time

As the National Standard for cycle training is outcome-oriented it is essential that trainees are provided with sufficient riding time to be able to practise and demonstrate the outcomes. A ratio of 80:20 riding:discussion is set out in the published National Standard Instructor (NSI) manual. While the ratio of riding to discussion may vary across different parts of the course (for example there may be less riding during earlier parts of the course and more later), this ratio is what schemes should be aiming for overall, and it is achievable. Further guidelines on achieving 80:20 will be published soon. The best schemes were using the following methods to increase riding time within sessions:

❚ Ensuring a well-planned and highly structured start to the training session to ensure a prompt and organised session start

❚ Keeping explanations brief and to the point

❚ Cycling to and from training sites when it is possible to do so – this reduces the time spent travelling to sites and may also increase the number of suitable sites available, however, it is important to remember the limitations of group riding; group riding must not be used to assess trainees' achievement of outcomes (see also point 13)

❚ Linking outcomes; at Levels 1 and 2 drills and manoeuvres that allow trainees to demonstrate achievement of multiple outcomes can be used. Games and activities can be used to good effect at Level 1 particularly as they also help to make training fun and fluid. At Level 2, joining up junction turns (e.g. right turn out, u-turn and left turn in) can ensure more riding happens and trainees ride a loop ending back near the start enabling them to have another go more quickly

2. Deliver outcomes in a logical order

Bikeability is most effective where schemes are delivering outcomes in a sequential and logical order. The best schemes are ensuring that their trainees progress to more challenging outcomes later in the training.

However it is also good to see schemes taking opportunities for trainees to practise manoeuvres slightly out of sequence in order to make the most of the training sites chosen or the circumstances arising during training. For example, if cars park in the training site during a session, it is encouraging when instructors take the opportunity to have trainees practise passing the parked car in addition to completing other manoeuvres, rather than moving to a new site.

3. Teach all outcomes fully and accurately

Bikeability schemes have been required to deliver the updated National Standard for cycle training outcomes since April 2013. The EA team has seen several schemes that have clearly taken on board the updated standards. Notable examples of good practice included:

❚ Focusing on discretionary signalling ensuring trainees understand the reasons for signalling and know when it is appropriate to signal

❚ Emphasising that stopping at a 'give-way' is not mandatory with instructors taking time to ensure trainees understand how 'give-way' works

❚ Reinforcing the correct road positioning to adopt, for example when passing side roads or at junctions

4. Give trainees space to achieve outcomes themselves

In signing-off outcomes, instructors need to be assured that trainees are 'Confident, Competent and Consistent' in their demonstration of the outcomes. The best schemes:

❚ Ensure trainees have plenty of opportunities to practise and demonstrate manoeuvres

❚ Allow trainees to make independent decisions while riding and thus demonstrate to instructors they understand the principles of the outcome

In addition, it is good to see instructors who avoid standing in the road while trainees were practising. Instructors may find it useful to stand in the road when instructing or giving feedback, even getting trainees into the road to experience a teaching point such as whether drivers can see them from a specific position, if this is appropriately managed. However, doing so while the trainees are riding is less appropriate since this adds an element of falseness to training that can hinder trainees' achievement of outcomes – it can stop trainees thinking for themselves and may change the behaviour of other road users.

5. Encourage instructors to position themselves dynamically according to existing conditions and trainees' ability

Many schemes favour set positions for instructors when running manoeuvres, e.g. immediately opposite the junction mouth. While these are generally the optimum positions for instructors, in practice being very prescriptive about positioning can mean that instructors are not always in the best position to deal with situations that arise. The best schemes encourage instructors to position themselves dynamically according to the prevailing conditions and trainees' abilities. This means that instructors may move position while a trainee rides to optimise their view of the riding or to optimise their management of risk.

6. Record trainee progress effectively and on an on-going basis

Instructors are responsible for ensuring that National Standard course outcomes are being achieved effectively and that progress is being recorded. Tracking trainees' progress is essential as this determines when instructors can move on in the programme and the feedback given to trainees at the end of the course. The best schemes make sure that instructors track trainee progress against the Bikeability outcomes throughout the course supported by concise feedback notes. It is good to see instructors conferring about each trainee's progress and what might be needed to ensure the trainees are all up to the same level of competence.

7. Choose training sites that provide an appropriate degree of challenge

Overall, Bikeability schemes we've visited so far were selecting sites that allow a suitable degree of challenge and progression during training. The best schemes ensure that training sites provide a suitable degree of challenge for the trainees and the stage of training. They also allow trainees to progress to more challenging environments as their skills increase and help trainees to find practical techniques to master them.

The best schemes make sure there is a wide range of local training sites that have been risk assessed for their instructors to choose from and give instructors the authority and discretion to move among various sites, dictated by the circumstances on the day of the training and the ability of their trainees.

One scheme was particularly notable for the quality of its instructors' dynamic risk assessment, which enabled a productive and challenging session that not only maintained safe boundaries but also extended and reinforced the learning and skill levels of the trainees.

8. Use biked demonstrations

The majority of schemes visited so far made sure that instructors demonstrated manoeuvres by bicycle. Walked demonstrations were only observed in a small proportion of visits. Walked demonstrations do not do not enable instructors to demonstrate how outcomes are achieved by bike and can be time consuming, taking time away from trainee practice. The best schemes ensure instructors demonstrate faultless manoeuvres and positioning to their trainees by bicycle and clearly recognise that a well-executed ride through demonstration is often the best way to illustrate positioning.

A small number of schemes also demonstrated 'what not to do' (usually alongside a demonstration showing 'what to do'). Demonstrating 'what not to do' can be misleading for trainees – it is better to demonstrate the correct manoeuvre instead.

9. Use real road environments

It is encouraging that many schemes are delivering training that embodies the Bikeability ethos of giving people the skills necessary to ride on today's road. The best schemes deliver training in real road environments where trainees encounter other road users and use the variety of local road infrastructure available.

It's really important that trainees learn to cycle on the infrastructure as it appears in their local area, after all, it's in these conditions that they will be cycling in future. On occasions at Level 2, the prevailing conditions were

modified for example by using chalked or portable 'give-way' lines, temporary road signs to warn other road users or by asking trainees to imagine that traffic was approaching and undertake the manoeuvre accordingly. These techniques are not appropriate in Bikeability training as they do not prepare trainees effectively for the varied situations and circumstances they may find themselves in once training is complete. Trainees must be taught to use the local road environment as it is.

10. Sign-off outcomes as they are achieved

Most schemes structure their training so that instructors sign-off trainees' achievement of outcomes as they are achieved throughout the course. This allows training to progress at a pace suitable for the group and helps instructors to gauge the most appropriate level of challenge for the trainees. A small number of schemes we visited reserved the final training session to 'test' trainees. The published NSI manual provides a strong steer against the use of a test ('trainees should not be expected to undergo a test at the end of training as instructors would have assessed their riding skills continuously'). In addition, they can take time away from trainee practice. Schemes are not barred from using tests, but they should not be used as a substitute for signing-off outcomes as they are achieved.

11. Check trainees' ability to demonstrate Level 1 outcomes prior to taking them on-road

One scheme delivered Level 2 as a standalone course and therefore provided a Level 1 assessment at the start. While the preference is for schemes to run a full Level 1 training course of 2 hours or more before Level 2 is started, the National Standard does not make this a prerequisite for Level 2. The key issue is that schemes allow plenty of time to check trainees' abilities to demonstrate Level 1 outcomes prior to taking them on-road for Level 2 training.

The National Standard is outcome-oriented, which means that trainees are assessed on their achievement of the set outcomes, and the amount of time required to achieve these outcomes may vary from person to person. What is important is that:

❚ Trainees who demonstrate they are capable of participating in a Level 2 course are not turned away because they cannot evidence having completed a Level 1 course (e.g. by showing a certificate)

❚ Trainees are given enough time to evidence Level 1 competencies before Level 2 training is commenced

If a scheme can ensure both of the above, then it is consistent with the key principles of Bikeability.

12. Encourage instructors to use trainee feedback as a learning tool for all

There were numerous examples of instructors providing really fine feedback to trainees that was motivational while picking up the appropriate development points. The best schemes encourage instructors to share trainees' feedback with the whole group. They also structure their training to enable trainees to provide feedback to their peers (within specified ground rules), which helps the whole group to achieve outcomes more easily. Some excellent techniques for managing trainees giving feedback to each other involves teaching them a simple method, such as asking a trainee to tell their peer something they did well and one thing they could do differently. Involving trainees in each other's learning will also encourage instructors to split up trainees so they are not all waiting to have go at the start point at the same time. Some will be at the start with one instructor and some will be at the end with the other instructor. All should be involved in a task rather than just waiting around.

Some schemes we visited were cautious about giving feedback and coaching individual trainees in front of their peers, opting instead to give private one to one feedback at the end of a manoeuvre, for fear of being seen to 'single out' particular trainees. However, only providing feedback in this way means that there is much less opportunity for the other trainees to learn from the feedback provided to their peers before they have their turn. As a result the same mistakes can be repeated by other trainees and the group as a whole can take longer to achieve the outcomes.

13. Understand the limitations of group riding

Group riding is a great technique for groups to reach training areas quickly and therefore maximise the time for practising while they are there. The best schemes recognise the limitations of group rides (i.e. they cannot be used by instructors to sign-off outcomes and encourage trainees to simply 'follow the leader' rather than actually

practising the skills they have learned) and ensure group riding is only used to travel to, from or among training sites.

14. Respond to the needs of individual trainees

There was much evidence to suggest that instructors were aware of and responded to the individual needs of their trainees and were able to adapt their approach accordingly. This helps to speed up achievement of individual outcomes allowing as many trainees as possible to progress through the course. Some excellent schemes are delivering differentiated outcomes (especially at Level 1) where trainees who achieve an outcome quickly are given an additional extended task while other trainees worked on the basics.

SCHEME MANAGEMENT

15. Comply with minimum Bikeability training delivery times and instructor ratios

Almost all schemes visited met the minimum requirements for training time and instructor:trainee ratios. However, five of the schemes visited had planned training times that were below minimum Bikeability requirements and one scheme used instructor ratios that were below minimum requirements. Cycle training delivered in this way does not meet the standards expected of Bikeability schemes and is contrary to the National Standard for cycle training.

There are minimum requirements for the structure of Bikeability courses that all schemes must meet, including minimum training times and instructor:trainee ratios. These requirements can be found here:

http://www.dft.gov.uk/bikeability/wp-content/uploads/National_Standard_for_Cycle_Training_Course_ratios_and_times2.pdf.

16. Adopt a structured approach to internal quality assurance

Internal quality assurance is one of the cornerstones of the Bikeability quality assurance system. It draws together the various strands of continuous improvement that all Bikeability schemes should have in place. The best schemes have a structured approach to internal quality assurance that is embedded within their operation.

Schemes must formalise current continuous improvement activities into a robust Internal Assurance policy. Guidance is available on the Bikeability website:

http://www.dft.gov.uk/bikeability/wp-content/uploads/Internal-Assurance-Framework-for-Bikeability-Schemes1.pdf.

One scheme visited is collaborating with other local schemes to establish reciprocal peer review arrangements for mentoring and monitoring as part of their internal quality assurance. The schemes aim to learn from each other on an on-going basis in a cost-efficient manner while sharing good practice.

17. Ensure continuous improvement

The vast majority of schemes visited were focused on continual improvements, identifying learning points from the instructors themselves as well as through feedback from trainees and schools. The use of an online feedback system for parents and children has been a popular addition to one scheme's approach to seeking feedback and this, coupled with a prize draw every month, has encouraged a feedback response rate of 80-100 per cent on all courses delivered.

18. Ensure good document management and control

Many of the schemes visited had a sound approach to managing the documents and policies governing their Bikeability delivery. This included:

❙ In-date documentation

❙ Clear version control

❙ Organised filing ensuring documents were always easily accessible

Notable examples of good practice include schemes ensuring that staff have easy access to scheme documents via the organisation's intranet, notifying instructors when documents have been updated and complementing detailed corporate health and safety documents with a code of practice which is relevant to cycle training.