A Quality Assurance System for Bikeability

Report

June 2012

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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 initial outline of such a system. The system outlined in this paper is intended as a preferred option that could be taken forward for development and implementation. It 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 cost effective, credible and inclusive of all Bikeability schemes.

1.2   This paper has been prepared on behalf of the Department for Transport (DfT) by the Steer Davies Gleave Bikeability support team working in consultation with the recently formed industry body, The Association of Bikeability Schemes (TABS).

Next steps and timescale

1.3   Detailed development of the quality assurance system will take place during the summer of 2012. It will be rolled-out during the autumn of 2012.

1.4   Feedback is welcomed on the system outlined in this paper and should be submitted to contactus@bikeability.org.uk by 5 July 2012. Any practical suggestions relating to the operation of this system are encouraged. A list of questions and topics for consideration is included as an annex to this paper.

The Need for Quality Assurance in Bikeability

1.5   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.

❙ **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.

❙ **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.

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

Overview of Proposed Approach

Principles

1.6   We believe the following principles should 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, should 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 should not place a substantial financial burden on stakeholders.

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

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

Objectives

1.7   Our proposed approach is intended to address 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.

Proposed quality assurance elements

1.8   The proposed approach 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.

Have your say

- Your feedback is welcomed on the system outlined in this paper.
- Practical suggestions on the operation of this system are encouraged.
- A list of questions and topics for consideration is provided on page 11.

Please send your feedback to contactus@bikeability.org.uk by **5 July 2012**.

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2   Bikeability Scheme Registration

2.1   We believe the current process for Bikeability registration should 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 aims to streamline 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 should also provide evidence that the contract enables the supplier to deliver Bikeability in accordance with the standards expected of Bikeability schemes.

3 Bikeability Scheme Reregistration

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

3.2 Annual reregistration requests would be generated automatically and emailed to registered schemes for completion. Scheme organisers would 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 should not place an unnecessary burden on stakeholders, not least Bikeability scheme organisers. Reregistration should 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 would be considered 'active'. Those that do not respond or do not complete their registration would be considered 'inactive' and the scheme would be removed from the published list of recognised schemes.

3.5 Schemes would have a three month window in which to complete their reregistration. If at the end of the three months a scheme had not completed its reregistration it would be given a final two week window in which to do so. If a scheme had not completed its reregistration after the final two weeks it would be considered inactive.

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.

3.7 Scheme reregistration would be covered by an appeals process as described in paragraph 4.30 below.

4 Practical Training Quality Assurance

Overview

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

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

I **External assurance** an observation of a scheme's practical training delivery by suitably skilled staff 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 would be achieved through:

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

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

4.3 All active Bikeability schemes should be eligible for external assurance. There should be a selection process for prioritising schemes for external assurance in light of available resources (paragraph 4.15 below). External assurance would be undertaken on behalf of the Department for Transport.

Internal Assurance

Process

4.4 Internal assurance should build on the current requirement for Bikeability schemes to provide a mentoring role for their instructors.

4.5 The purpose of internal assurance would be to:

I Provide support to fellow instructors;

I Monitor the quality of delivery by fellow instructors;

I Take responsibility for quality assurance within a Bikeability scheme; and

I Ensure the scheme consistently meets the requirements for external assurance.

Internal assurance – toolkit for schemes

4.6 To facilitate this aspect of quality assurance, a toolkit of resources developed in partnership with the industry should be made available to Bikeability schemes.

4.7 The toolkit would contain, for example, internal assurance checklists and guidance and recommendations on the approach to and frequency of internal assurance.

4.8 The toolkit would be focused on the quality assurance of Bikeability training delivery on the ground.

4.9 A wider range of supporting material could also be made available to help enhance other aspects of managing a Bikeability training scheme – the industry body would play a key role in developing and disseminating this wider range of materials among its members.

External Assurance

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

4.11 The purpose of external assurance would 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 proposed 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).

Resourcing external assurance

4.12 A 'virtual team' or panel of industry and training professionals should be formed to undertake the external assurance. Selection criteria would 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).

4.13 The panel would ideally consist of people who are located across the country to help reduce the time and distance travelled.

4.14 There would 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

4.15 DfT and its agent would be responsible for selecting schemes for external assurance. The selection process would 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 should 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 who does the external assurance visits

4.16   Two members from the external assurance panel would attend each external assurance visit. To help limit the potential for conflict of interest, the team of two would be part selected by the scheme. The scheme would 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 would 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.

Process for the external assurance visit

4.17   Schemes selected for external assurance would be asked to provide dates on which they have Bikeability cycle training arranged and a date would be agreed for the visit based on the availability of the selected external assurance team. There would be at least one month's notice.

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

4.19   External assurance would look at a Level 1 course session and two Level 2 course sessions to ensure the external assurance team sees enough training delivery to make a robust assessment of the scheme.

4.20   If a scheme delivered a substantial amount of Level 3 training this would also form part of the external assurance.

4.21   A guide would 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). We suggest the overarching principle for the visits should 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

4.22   The external assurance team would prepare a concise report, providing feedback to the scheme with suggestions for improvement, development and recommended next steps.

4.23   Depending on the scale and nature of the feedback, it would 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.

4.24   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.

4.25   A timescale of one week is suggested for preparation of the report and submission to DfT/its agent by the external assurance team. DfT/its agent would sign-off the report, reviewing for consistency and quality. Final reports would be made available to DfT and the Bikeability scheme in question. This should happen within two weeks of the visit.

4.26   An annual report with a focus on sharing best practice would be published to highlight key themes and trends emerging from the external assurance to help the whole sector improve.

Reporting quality issues

4.27   A complaints form is available on the Bikeability website. A scheme that was the subject of complaint may be referred by DfT for 'prompted' external assurance.

Sanctions

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

4.29   Sanctions could include:

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

Appeals

4.30   If a scheme believes an external aspect of the quality assurance process has not been carried out correctly it should be able to make an appeal. There should be a two stage appeals process, first to DfT's agent with escalation to DfT if the appeal cannot be resolved at stage one.

steer davies gleave

5 A Review of the Proposed Approach to Quality Assurance

5.1 This chapter presents a review of the quality assurance approach put forward in this paper 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 would participate in internal assurance and be eligible for external assurance.

Credible

5.4 The proposed approach 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 A substantial financial burden would not be placed on training schemes. Internal assurance would build on schemes' current mentoring/CPD obligations; external assurance would 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 proposed approach should be sustainable into the long term.

5.11 Some revenue funding will be required to operate the system. It should 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 would 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.

ANNEX

Questions and topics for consideration

1. Respondents are encouraged to consider whether the **objectives** that form the basis of the proposed approach are a suitable expression of the priorities for quality assurance in Bikeability.

2. Respondents' views on the **timescales for reregistration** are welcomed.

3. Bikeability scheme organisers are encouraged to state the extent to which they currently feel able to implement **internal assurance**.

4. Respondents are encouraged to make suggestions for any **advice, support or materials** that they believe would help them in implementing and delivering internal assurance.

5. Respondents are encouraged to give their views on the **frequency of external assurance** visits that the system should aim to achieve.

6. In rolling-out the scheme it is inevitable that some organisations will undergo external **assurance before others**. We invite views from the industry on the potential impacts of this and how any impacts could be mitigated.

7. Respondents are encouraged to give their views on how Bikeability schemes might be **prioritised for external assurance**, particularly during the roll-out of the quality assurance system.

8. Respondents are invited to give their views on the **amount and type of Bikeability** training delivery that should be viewed during the external assurance visits.

9. Respondents are invited to give their views on whether **'inactive' schemes** should eventually be deregistered if they do not reactivate their registration, and if so, the period of time after which an inactive scheme should be deregistered.

10. A deregistered scheme may wish to **reapply for Bikeability** registration; respondents are invited to give views on the potential impacts of this and how impacts could be mitigated.

If you would like to provide feedback please do so to contactus@bikeability.org.uk by 5 July 2012.