



Next-Gen Riders Storytelling Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

During autumn and winter 2022, Old Fire Station trained Broken Spoke Bike Co-op to use the Storytelling methodology. Members of the Broken Spoke team collected stories of “significant change” from participants in Next Gen Riders, a Bikeability Trust funded project. Next Gen Riders brought together partners across Oxford to deliver innovative support for communities that are under-represented in cycling, with a particular focus on young people and those in their households. We used the Storytelling methodology to help understand the impact of this project in a way that preserves the perspectives and amplifies the voices of those most closely involved.

Members of the Old Fire Station Storytelling team then met with Broken Spoke to discuss what could be learned from the stories about the impact of the project. Based on this discussion, the key impacts of the project were found to be as follows:

1. Participants with a diverse range of needs learned new skills in cycling and mechanics.
2. Participants challenged their own assumptions about who cycling is for.
3. Participants developed a sense of freedom, independence, empowerment, mastery, and possibility through learning new skills.
4. Participants learned new skills, developed in confidence, tackled oppression, and became role models in their community and in their other relationships.
5. Participants tackled and often overcame their fears about cycling despite Oxford’s poor cycling infrastructure

Factors that helped to bring this impact about included the following:

1. Informal teaching environments.
2. An emphasis on fun.
3. Person-centred teaching.
4. A diverse teaching team.
5. A whole-household, community-based approach.
6. An accessible, practical curriculum.
7. Opportunities to strengthen social bonds.
8. A spirit of giving things a go.
9. Valuing repair.
10. An emphasis on confidence building.
11. Ongoing practical support.
12. Working with those most excluded from cycling.
13. Engagement with cycling as a broader social and political issue.

The best way to engage with this learning is to read the stories themselves, because they are designed to be non-reductive and preserve as much as possible people's lived experience. The stories are included at the end of this document for your convenience.

Section One: Background

Introduction

Next Gen Riders delivered a holistic programme of support to involve young people in cycling who would otherwise have been likely to be excluded. The elements delivered were:

- Cycle training.
- Mechanics courses.
- Social rides.

A holistic cycling package including mechanics tuition and supported group rides in addition to cycle training has the potential to deliver more long-term impact than simply delivering cycle training in isolation.

Sessions were delivered in a number of locations and contexts: council-funded Summer Schools, community centres and community-owned spaces, schools, community events, and out on the streets of Oxford.

The project used an intergenerational, household-based approach, with cycling and mechanics tuition open to adults who live with young people, because up-skilling children alongside the adults in their lives leads to more sustainable behaviour change.

Broken Spoke's main partners were Oxford Hub (including their Ready Set Go Library), Joyriders Oxford and African Families in the UK (and the new project they are incubating called Black Women Bike). Other partners were also involved, including Windrush Bike Project, Wheels for All, The Children's Allotment, St Frideswide School and St Ebbe's School.

The Old Fire Station and the Storytelling Evaluation Methodology

The Old Fire Station (OFS) is a centre for creativity which encourages people from all backgrounds to understand and shape the world in which we live through stories, creativity, and connecting with others. As part of this work, OFS trains and supports partner organisations to use the Storytelling methodology to evaluate impact and amplify voices.

The Storytelling methodology is based on the Most Significant Change technique (MSC). MSC is used in international development circles and Asset Based Community Development (strengths-based) work.

Unlike conventional approaches to evaluation, MSC does not use quantitative indicators developed in advance – the storytellers decide what the most significant impact is for them. MSC is particularly effective for measuring change that is intangible or fuzzy – unexpected, emergent, personalised, or diverse – as well as understanding how change happens.

The methodology involves the following key stages:

1. **Identifying storytellers** – people who represent a range of different perspectives on the project being evaluated.
2. **Collecting stories** – each storyteller meets with a trained story collector. They have a conversation about their experience, what has changed for them through their involvement, how this change came about, and why this was important. Crucially, this is not an interview but a discussion – relaxed, informal, and on the teller’s terms.
3. **Editing stories** – these conversations are recorded, transcribed, and then edited down into 1-2-page stories, which aim to faithfully reflect the teller’s insights, accurately reproduce the teller’s voice, and vividly capture the reader’s attention.
4. **Discussion Session** – we then hold a facilitated discussion which brings together people with different perspectives on and experiences of the project, to assess the stories and identify themes emerging from them. This discussion becomes the basis for an evaluation report.

The Storytelling methodology focuses on stories of positive change and is therefore best suited to learning from things that went well, rather than anything that did not go as well. We believe that this learning is valuable, but it is worth bearing in mind that other methods can be used for learning from negative feedback.

In Autumn 2022, the Old Fire Station trained 3 members of the Broken Spoke team in Story collecting. Broken Spoke went on to collect 6 stories from people involved in different ways in this project – a cycle instructor, a mechanic, a project partner, two project participants, and someone who was both a participant and a project partner. In November 2022, the Story collectors reconvened with members of the Old Fire Station team to reflect on the stories and the learning emerging.

Section Two: Learning

The key positive impacts that we identified by reading and discussing the stories, and factors that helped to bring these about, are outlined in detail below along with relevant quotes.

Impact 1: Participants with a diverse range of needs learned new skills in cycling and mechanics.

What helped to bring this about?

Informal teaching environments: Because the project took place in informal ‘in-between’ spaces like Summer Schools, after-school clubs and community events (in between the familiar routine of school and unstructured playtime or family time), facilitators and trainers were able to be adaptive, improvisatory, creative, and inclusive.

An emphasis on fun: Informal environments meant that facilitators and trainers could emphasise fun as a central aim, which made it easier for the children and the adults in their households to engage in learning.

Person-centred teaching: Facilitators and trainers were also open to non-traditional or person-centred teaching methods and permitted by organisers to be imaginative, flexible, and holistic in their approach. This meant that they could respond to the individual needs of children and other members of a household. A culture of flexibility meant that facilitators and trainers were also able to adapt to aspects of the settings of the delivery work that were unexpected or disorganised (for example in the Summer Schools) and ensure that the need for spontaneity and responsiveness was turned into an asset rather than a limitation.

The provision was called 'Summer Schools', but I wanted to call it 'Summer Fun'. The children who came were referred for lots of different reasons; potentially needing extra support during the summer, and the idea was to give them the best time they could possibly have, and a hot meal. It didn't have to be educational in the sense of sit down and read. It could be educational in loads of ways, even if that's just engaging with new children, learning new skills, or having hot food and doing PE. Post covid restrictions we didn't feel the need to go down the literacy and numeracy route quite so much. The fun part for me was seeing what was on paper become reality. Seeing the children who were just referrals now running through the door wanting to be there, and at the end of the day saying to their parent: 'Why can't we come back tomorrow? It was really good fun!' (Story 2)

It would be nice if we could teach kids the ABCs of bike maintenance, so that they know how to turn their bike upside down and put a chain back on, and do a puncture, like standard things that go wrong with kids' bikes. But equally, if we can just get them interested in touching things, and have some material literacy happening – great! But in the end, we have taught, like, 60 kids how to do punctures, and they do know how to turn a bike upside down, and put the chain back on. And they have used different tools to break chains or whatever, and hopefully had fun. (Story 1)

The target was to get them engaging in the fun part, even if they're not very capable or not very willing, at least they're taking part, even if it's for just 45 minutes. (Story 3)

He's one of these children who if they're sitting down, he's bored. If he's doing something that's not what he wants to do, he's bored. So therefore, if we're in the house, we'll say, 'Okay, we're going for a ride,' or on a Saturday morning when I'm doing the Covid clinic, I'll say, 'Come on, we're going to clinic.' And he'll come. (Story 4)

This space is here. It's for us, led by us and the more of us that come the more visible we'll be on the street. (Story 5)

Today, I got onto a trike. I think when you're learning as an adult, it's very different than learning as a child. So as an adult, already, your thinking process is very different. So I have found it difficult to get the cycling motion, my feet to understand the cyclic motion. It just hasn't come. But today, I've been able to do that on a trike. (Story 6)

Impact 2: Participants challenged their own assumptions about who cycling is for.

What helped to bring this about?

A diverse teaching team: The project brought a diverse group of facilitators and trainers from across the city and beyond together with communities with varied knowledge and experience of cycling. This created opportunities for children and the adults in their households to interact with role models – specifically women, non-binary folk and members of the LGBTQIA+ community – who challenged exclusionary social norms about practical skills such as mechanics. Assumptions about cycling and mechanics, and about people in different parts of Oxford, were challenged on all sides, from participants to instructors.

A whole-household, community-based approach: By going into communities and working with whole households to assess and meet needs, the project was able to include people who may have been less willing or able to access classes elsewhere. In paying attention to individual circumstances, even small adaptations can make a big difference to somebody's ability to engage.

Lots of parents wrote on the forms: *Not very confident, don't really know what they're doing on the bike; Be careful, keep an eye on them.* To then hear the child say to their parent at the end of the day, 'I rode this bike and I went round the court,' it was lovely to see because they were growing in confidence. (Story 2)

You've got all this social messaging, but if we can just affirm, like, if you wanted to learn more of this, you could. You could be a mechanic. I'm a mechanic, you could be a mechanic. One of the girls was really smart, really understood movement and leverage. I was like, 'You're amazing! Please become a mechanic!'. She was like (shrug) 'Okay, you know, maybe I will'. (Story 1)

I sort of assumed that Blackbird Leys would be more complicated or more challenging than Summertown for example, or Jericho. And I was wrong. I've met quite a few people who were really engaging and interested in cycling. (Story 3)

I must say, as a new rider, what really did help was shin pads! I was getting bruised so badly from the pedals...My grandson kept saying to me, 'Nanny, pedal, pedal, just pedal.' The transition from not being able to ride to then being able to balance the bike—you're riding, you're pedalling!—it's amazing. (Story 4)

So I think there's a middle ground, a group designed around a social gathering. That may lead to us to being able to find a way to cycle for transport, active transport, active travel. Who knows. I think that's going to be everybody's personal journey. (Story 5)

And it's just if there's any reason that's making you think you can't try it actually that reason is not valid. So we are here representing all the cultural taboos that have told you you can't ride. They're not real. (Story 6)

Impact 3: Participants developed a sense of freedom, independence, empowerment, mastery, and possibility through learning new skills.

What helped to bring this about?

An accessible, practical curriculum: Cycling and mechanical skills are practical and promote independence because they provide a means of transportation and the ability to maintain it. They are also accessible and useful to all – anyone can succeed in, and benefit from, learning in this area with the right support and equipment.

Opportunities to strengthen social bonds: Learning to cycle also creates opportunities for socialising through a shared activity and mutual encouragement.

A spirit of giving things a go: Every stage of the project made space for trying new things out and being experimental – from the adaptable teaching methods to the participants' willingness to get back on a bike after a fall. This approach builds confidence, positively impacting other areas of life and making it easier to try new things in the future.

Valuing repair: Encouraging people to take responsibility for mending and maintaining things helps to foster a culture of resilience, self-worth, and self-efficacy.

I felt I needed to ride because my grandchildren are riding. I can't be going somewhere and they've gone off and left me behind, or I'm trying to keep up because they're riding and I'm walking. It's been

a journey. A few lumps and bumps along the way. But now that I can ride with them, it feels absolutely fantastic. (Story 4)

I've had a few situations outside the project where the kid would be properly very grateful, saying thank you for helping me. And that's really touching. Most of all I want to cry. And on the other side, I feel like I'm making a difference. Who knows, maybe one of these kids later will be in politics? They could make cycling more of a thing across society. (Story 3)

The importance of cycling in Oxford for children is huge. It really is. Not to say that's your only way of getting around, but so many people cycle in Oxford and it's such a great way of getting around as a child...One kid got a slight injury, a scraped hand, but he was so keen to go back out and try again. That's what can happen when you've got a really excited kid on a bike. (Story 2)

I was told that I couldn't do this, or made to feel inferior. I don't have to pass that on. I can have so much fun, teaching something that was a struggle for me to learn. Angle-grinding things and using a crowbar and throwing my body weight around and seeing that I can break stuff, fix stuff, mangle things, and be okay. I have much more autonomy in my own body, and I'm like, I want to use it. (Story 1)

Here is a space where you can be yourself where we celebrate each other. You know, it's inspiring. This is what people feed back to us, when they come, they're inspired. And you're going to feel community in this space. So as we go, we're going to open it up so more and more of us can gather. (Story 5)

Impact 4: Participants learned new skills, developed in confidence, tackled oppression, and became role models in their community and in their other relationships.

What helped to bring this about?

An emphasis on confidence-building: Building confidence in individuals can have positive effects that radiate forward into the future, or outward into the wider community. This can build and strengthen relationships within families or between friends, and across generations.

Ongoing practical support: Meanwhile, support offered by partners in this project means that people who are interested in learning to cycle can maintain their enthusiasm through any setbacks such as a lack of equipment or skills.

Working with those most excluded from cycling: Focussing some elements of this project directly on supporting people of colour, and primarily women of colour, into cycling tackled head-on the oppression brought about by systemic racism and sexism in cycling and mechanics.

I've done a lot of different jobs to try and find a way of working that suited me. So hopefully, the kids at the summer school don't have to go through so many trials and errors, or if they do go through trials and errors, they can see that it's okay. (Story 1)

Learning to cycle can be more of a psychological journey than a physical journey. And so in a lot of sessions that I do people tell me in a positive way that my training is more like a life lesson than cycle training. Because I base cycle training or cycle skills, first, on confidence. If you spread confidence, like butter on a piece of bread, it can really change your life and turn it around. Because then with confidence, you can achieve great things. (Story 3)

I suppose it's something to think about, how we all could network. I've got this friend of mine and I've been telling her that she needs to start riding so she can go out with her granddaughter. She says her bones are too old to break. And I said, 'No, they're not. I fell off my bike and I didn't get a broken bone. You can do it as well. You just got to know where you're riding and how you ride, and that will make all the difference.' (Story 4)

The great thing is that the cycling didn't have to end at summer school. We could say we've got some spare bikes through the 'Ready, Set, Go' programme. Even though summer school is finished, and it feels like a long time ago now, there are still people getting involved in cycling programmes in different ways. I think it shows the impact we can have in a short amount of time, when reaching out to so many people. And it's an ongoing impact. (Story 2)

It felt like they could see us being seen, I spoke about this earlier. You know, a lot of our community groups are not visible, but we can be seen on the roads, you know, and what it will do for others, our children. We self-identify as mothers first. So imagine, now we have the opportunity to do this with our children. (Story 5)

I think, actually, it's beautiful. This project, just really targeting black women. I work with all women. And I really believe in the power of empowering women to get a voice where we've not had a voice before to get seen where we previously not been able to be seen, but particularly for black women living in Britain. There is so many reasons why you think you just want to shy away and stay in the background. I think not one more thing. But we are saying actually not, we are mothers! We are resident here, we are here now! And it's just if there's any reason that's making you think you can't try it actually that reason is not valid. (Story 6)

Impact 5: Participants tackled and often overcame their fears about cycling despite Oxford's poor cycling infrastructure.

What helped to bring this about?

Engagement with cycling as a broader social and political issue: Learning to cycle gave participants an opportunity to reflect on challenges and obstacles that remain when attempting to increase the use of bikes in a community. Although Oxford is known for cycling, it still lacks the infrastructure for people to cycle safely everywhere. This can mean that people are afraid to learn. However, it is possible to overcome much of the fear associated with cycling despite the poor infrastructure, with support and practice.

The signs say: *Welcome to Oxford, the cycling city*. And so when I first moved here, I was like, 'Oh, well, clearly, everyone cycles, it's fine.' But for a cycling city, it's only gradually getting the infrastructure. If we can't have the physical infrastructure, then the more people that learn how to cycle with the infrastructure we do have, the better. That's why the cycling built into summer provision was such a wonderful opportunity for these kids. (Story 2)

But again, a lot of people are not confident cycling, because of how heavy the traffic can be. There are ways of making things easier, which always relate to a stronger community. If you go through a bad neighbourhood alone in the dark, fair enough — you're scared and you don't like it. But in a strong community, you've got 50 people in the same neighbourhood at night, then people can feel safer. (Story 3)

We tend to do a lot of lessons at Kassam Stadium because I need to get my confidence up. We've then gone on to the road, side roads, and cycle tracks like from Littlemore down to Tesco's roundabout and back up. But it's the major roads—that's where my big fear is. You're so aware of what can happen, and you'll hear of all these accidents in the city. (Story 4)

I believe in a society where we are more kind to each other. With more cars, it doesn't make people any nicer to each other. (Story 3)

So we are here representing all the cultural taboos that have told you you can't ride. They're not real. All the social taboos that have to be contrived and with the Joyriders and other women as well. We overcoming even some of the social issues that make women feel unsafe or feel we shouldn't be on the road actually together. We're getting together and saying actually no, we can ride. (Story 6)

Reflections on the Storytelling Methodology

This was the first time that Broken Spoke had used the Storytelling approach to evaluate impact. Staff enjoyed the opportunity to listen to people's stories and build relationships. In the midst of a busy project, it also created valuable space to reflect on learning in a meaningful way. The stories that were collected led to rich, versatile learning which centres the experience of those most involved.

Conclusion

The stories collected as part of this project demonstrate how learning cycling and mechanical skills can build confidence and independence, tackle oppression, and build community. They also show the value of a flexible, adaptive approach to teaching that emphasises fun and inclusivity. Because Broken Spoke's community of staff and include female and nonbinary bike mechanics, the children and adults who participated in Next Gen Riders were able to benefit from role models who challenged exclusionary social norms about who can or should be interested in, or capable of, learning practical skills. This was coupled with a non-judgmental, playful approach to tuition that supported all participants to feel welcome and supported to learn.

The adaptive approach taken by the organisers of this project meant that individuals and families were able to access training in cycling and bike mechanics in ways that suited their needs. The partnership with Oxford Hub meant that equipment and support was available in an ongoing way through the 'Ready, Set, Go' programme.

The consequence is that participants in this programme have developed new skills that support independence, freedom, socialising, and wellbeing, and that these changes have the potential to positively impact their wider relationships and communities.

The stories affirm the value of the Next Gen Riders project, and the need to build on and sustain the projects and relationships developed going forward.

Written by Will Long (will.long@oldfirestation.org.uk) and Sarah Cassidy, Old Fire Station, Oxford, December 2022

With thanks to all the storytellers, collectors, transcribers, and editors, and to the project partners.



The Stories

Story 1: A Very Strong Idea

It started out with like, just phone calls. I hadn't even met Inês. We were both just like 'Yeah, we would love to teach something, let's plan – oh you've got funding? Amazing!' What seemed very basic then immediately became super ambitious, kids from 6-11 years old, like six of them at a time, just a lot going on! It was really fun anyway. There were steep learning moments for the kids but also for me and Inês!

I think Broken Spoke was looking for someone that could just adapt, but also not try and contain enthusiasm, not try and like, rein people in but be like, okay, if they like tactile things, and they want to pump stuff up, how can we integrate as much of that as possible? And luckily Doireann and Inês were both super onboard and when Doireann came on the first day, she was basically like: 'As long as they're happy and safe, that's a great foundation and then let's see if we can build on that.'

I think that gave me just such a deep sense of relief. Like, it would be nice if we could teach kids the ABCs of bike maintenance, so that they know how to turn their bike upside down and put a chain back on, and do a puncture, like standard things that go wrong with kids' bikes. But equally, if we can just get them interested in touching things, and have some material literacy happening – great!

Broken Spoke is such an amazing team, and the Summer School project wasn't really bound in such a tickbox way. If all the kids want to do for the first ten minutes is pump things manically, we can facilitate that, and then if there seems like there's a moment where maybe this can go into punctures, great, and if they want to just carry on, like, faffing, then fine. But it meant that actually, in the end, we have taught, like, 60 kids how to do punctures, and they do know how to turn a bike upside down, and put the chain back on. And they have used different tools to break chains or whatever, and hopefully had fun.

Now there's other plans in the works for doing more sessions. So it's been really fun, and so wild at the same time! I really liked that, I liked the kids, some of them, you couldn't just assume that they would do what they were told. And I was like, 'Yeah!' - I shouldn't assume an adult can just come and tell a kid what to do.

It's a Summer School. It's not school and it's not 'play time' - maybe something in between? We were trying to figure out how much we wanted to demand of them, and then when the bar was like, 'as long as they're safe and happy', I think it just gives you the spaciousness to be creative and resourceful about like, how do you slot learning into that, how do you slot a skill into this play session?

A typical session, we get four to six kids, of different ages, ideally within a couple of years of each other. We would ask them if they cycled, whether they had bikes, who cycled with them. We had a massive diagram of the parts of a bike. We laid bike parts out on the floor and got them to pick them up and match them. We had a round of Hangman, where we got them to spell out the parts of the

bike and guess names. And then after that, taking the inner tube out of a wheel, putting it back in the tyre, putting the tyre on the wheel, patching a tube with a hole in it.

But if there is disruption, or the space is a bit too overstimulating – what are they drawn to? Do they want to play with chains? Do you wanna learn how to break a chain? Do they like pumping things? Here's a punctured tube – see how many holes you can find in this tube. There was a kid in the first session who was pumping a tube, and I was like, 'I'm gonna unplug you because it's gonna blow up at any point now' I come back two seconds later, and BOOM! Bless him, his soul left his body for a little second! I was like, 'You okay?' I don't need to rub it in, he's already felt the lesson!

But that's one of my favourite things, that we were able to be specific with their needs. There was a kid in one of the last sessions, looking at someone else doing a puncture, and he was like 'I'm rubbish! I can't do it! I'm bad at this!' And I was like, 'I've just helped him, that's why he's okay, now I'm here to help you, it's going to be fine.'

One kid was super loud, like 'I'm not gonna tell you my name!' And I was like, 'Wow! I used to be like that!' And she was so like 'I want to learn', but also quite antagonistic to other kids. She asked me and in a point blank if we were lesbians and I was like, 'Yes! I'm your first lesbian am I?! Nice to meet you!' I think that person who's still figuring out the world, like 'What can I be? How can I be? Who can I be this to?' You've got all this social messaging, but if we can just affirm, like, if you wanted to learn more of this, you could. You could be a mechanic. I'm a mechanic, you could be a mechanic. One of the girls was really smart, really understood movement and leverage. I was like, 'You're amazing! Please become a mechanic!'. She was like (shrug) 'Okay, like, you know, maybe I will'.

The way that Broken Spoke have worked has really brought out the best in me – having staff paid well, paid for their travel, having time to talk about things afterwards, having meetings and feedback. That's really nice to see, that there can be teaching in schools, and it can still be very funky and creative. That models that kind of resourcefulness that I think, like bodging and bike mechanics and whatnot, can teach you.

I've done a lot of different jobs to try and find a way of working that suited me. So hopefully, the kids at the summer school don't have to go through so many trials and errors, or if they do go through trials and errors, they can see that it's okay.

The idea of being able to repair something is a very strong idea. You're programmed to just get rid of things when they're not working. I feel like it gets in your mind, as a child, just like, 'If I'm not good at this, then I'll be thrown away'. It's so tragic. You can have a hole in something, it doesn't hold air, you put a bit of sandpaper, a bit of glue, add a bit of time, stick a patch on it, boom, it's very satisfying. 'Here's something I've impacted with my hands. I could do it again. And something that was broken is now fixed' That's amazing, that's beautiful!

Anything that's practical is good for the world around us and, like, mental health, and our physical wellbeing, our relationships, and our sense of interconnectivity. I was told that I couldn't do this, or made to feel inferior. I don't have to pass that on. I can have so much fun, teaching something that was a struggle for me to learn. Angle-grinding things and using a crowbar and throwing my body weight around and seeing that I can break stuff, fix stuff, mangle things, and be okay. I have much more autonomy in my own body, and I'm like, I want to use it.

Story 2: Summer Fun in the Cycling City

I've lived in Oxford for five years. Where I grew up, you didn't cycle on roads because the infrastructure wasn't there. I cycled on the canal. It was something you did for pleasure. And not something I find at all pleasurable in Oxford at this point in time. I bought a second-hand bike, knowing full well it could be stolen, so I'm not to become attached to this bike. I just need to get my confidence up. I need to get some tuition maybe. I cycle for pleasure rather than for need. But I'm trying to combine them, because it'd be nice to enjoy a commute on a bike. I'll get there. I'm doing it small and steady. Little, little cycles. Not when it gets dark. And only on roads that I know. It's shown me the importance of learning to cycle on the road when you're younger.

I work for Oxford Hub in the youth team, and part of my role is planning and coordinating holiday provision. That's how I got involved with Broken Spoke, through three weeks of summer provision in Orchard Meadow Primary School and two weeks at St. Christopher's Primary School. I was recruiting staff and volunteers, securing the funding, getting the referrals for the children and working out some of the activities. The provision was called 'Summer Schools', but I wanted to call it 'Summer Fun'. The children who came were referred for lots of different reasons; potentially needing extra support during the summer, and the idea was to give them the best time they could possibly have, and a hot meal. It didn't have to be educational in the sense of sit down and read. It could be educational in loads of ways, even if that's just engaging with new children, learning new skills, or having hot food and doing PE. Post covid restrictions we didn't feel the need to go down the literacy and numeracy route quite so much, hence 'Summer Fun'. The fun part for me was seeing what was on paper become reality. Seeing the children who were just referrals now running through the door wanting to be there, and at the end of the day saying to their parent: 'Why can't we come back tomorrow? It was really good fun!' That's the reason we were doing this.

At Orchard Meadow we had consent forms that went out to parents beforehand, which caused such excitement, like, 'Ooh is it the cycling day today? I've got a bike. Is it today?' That was fun to see, and the parents could feel that excitement as well. For those who didn't have bikes we could provide a bike. Lots of parents wrote on the forms: *Not very confident, don't really know what they're doing on the bike; Be careful, keep an eye on them.* To then hear the child say to their parent at the end of the day, 'I rode this bike and I went round the court,' it was lovely to see because they were growing in confidence. One kid got a slight injury, a scraped hand, but he was so keen to go back out and try again. That's what can happen when you've got a really excited kid on a bike.

No matter how much preparation you do in advance, you're always going to have to adapt and change and think on your feet. That's something I thought I knew. And that's something I knew I was going to have to apply going in. But I didn't realise quite how much that was the case. We adapt to suit the fact it's raining, and we're about to have 40 children coming through the doors with four classrooms to split everyone up into. The children look at you and go: 'What next?' And you can normally solve that by saying let's play a game. But when you've got the practitioners or volunteers looking at you, it was completely new. I had less experience leading groups of practitioners or volunteers. So I had to learn to adapt in different ways. Putting that into action was definitely the biggest progression for me.

The importance of cycling in Oxford for children is huge. It really is. Not to say that's your only way of getting around, but so many people cycle in Oxford and it's such a great way of getting around as a child. The signs say: *Welcome to Oxford, the cycling city.* And so when I first moved here, I was like, 'Oh, well, clearly, everyone cycles, it's fine.' But for a cycling city, it's only gradually getting the infrastructure. If we can't have the physical infrastructure, then the more people that learn how to

cycle with the infrastructure we do have, the better. That's why the cycling built into summer provision was such a wonderful opportunity for these kids.

The great thing is that the cycling didn't have to end at Summer School. We could say we've got some spare bikes through the 'Ready, Set, Go' programme. Even though summer school is finished, and it feels like a long time ago now, there are still people getting involved in cycling programmes in different ways. I think it shows the impact we can have in a short amount of time, when reaching out to so many people. And it's an ongoing impact. It doesn't have to be bound by that set space of time. So even though someone came to St. Christopher's for three days they want to hear more about cycling and we can stay in contact with them. That's how we can also do more partnership work. The more partnership work we can do, the better. That kind of connectedness is what will form a stronger community.

Story 3: Changing the world

I'm a cycle instructor at Broken Spoke. The first reason I joined was to help, at a small level, create more cyclists.

I believe in a society where we are more kind to each other. With more cars, it doesn't make people any nicer to each other. It's my belief that the car industry makes people feel that by car everything is better. You have the spot where you can put your drink, you can listen to your radio, it's safer. It's warmer when it's cold. You can even open windows. And I think that they're counting on making people feel that driving a car is just way more comfortable. But too much comfort kills innovation, the spirit that we can have for trying new things. The more comfort you have the more you want to keep it, and then you never come out. That's what I experienced during lockdown. I was comfortable inside. For a week, I didn't come out because I was nice inside and then you don't go out and then you smell bad! So I think as a society, all together, we just need people who are willing to try new things.

I see Broken Spoke as a family where everyone has different skills but everyone has the same interest: helping people understand bikes better. 'Next Gen Riders' — the project with Blackbird Leys — aimed to make a change in people who don't see cycling as a way of transportation. Some of the kids were willing to do it, some of them were not. Some of them already had some skills, some of them didn't. So it was not very straightforward. Sometimes those who were not willing to do it were the ones with the skills, and sometimes the opposite. So, it was a bit challenging. But the challenge doesn't make it impossible.

The target was to get them engaging in the fun part, even if they're not very capable or not very willing, at least they're taking part, even if it's for just 45 minutes. At least they were doing something. It's still better than playing video games. I was telling them things like — oh, if you go around the blue cones, then you win — very simple tasks. But again, some lost interest. I ended up with only one or two kids that day. But it was really engaging, trying to grab their attention. And I kind of succeeded at it for about half an hour. They were changing the gears and signalling. But again, at some point, they were like — I'm going back inside. But at least they did some cycling. So that was good.

I sort of assumed that Blackbird Leys would be more complicated or more challenging than Summertown for example, or Jericho. And I was wrong. I've met quite a few people who were really engaging and interested in cycling. There is a bigger involvement out there. I wish and I hope that Blackbird Leys won't be just an experiment or a project. I hope that it will be a thing for the future. It could spread involvement to Rose Hill, Barton, and help young people to understand what the world really is.

Learning to cycle can be more of a psychological journey than a physical journey. And so in a lot of sessions that I do people tell me in a positive way that my training is more like a life lesson than cycle training. Because I base cycle training or cycle skills, first, on confidence. If you spread confidence, like butter on a piece of bread, it can really change your life and turn it around. Because then with confidence, you can achieve great things.

But again, a lot of people are not confident cycling, because of how heavy the traffic can be. I will always tell people who I train that I do understand how they feel, but it shouldn't matter. We shouldn't be changing our journey based on the fact that you don't feel safe. There are ways of making things easier, which always relate to a stronger community. If you go through a bad neighbourhood alone in the dark, fair enough — you're scared and you don't like it. But in a strong community, you've got 50 people in the same neighbourhood at night, then people can feel safer.

I've had a few situations outside the project where the kid would be properly very grateful, saying thank you for helping me. And that's really touching. Most of all I want to cry. And on the other side, I feel like I'm making a difference. Who knows, maybe one of these kids later will be in politics? They could make cycling more of a thing across society. There was another kid, he was okay cycling but he was not in control of his bike. I did a one to one with him for like 15 minutes. I explained to him what to do for looking behind, signalling, going straight, and what he needed to work on to get better. At the end of the training, which was over two days, he came to me and wanted to give me a hug. He said that now he can signal and he can look behind when he's cycling. And that made a big difference in his life. It might be just one person. But we are all related. By changing the life of someone, that can have a domino effect on somebody else. We haven't changed the world but maybe we changed the world for them. And I think that as a cycling instructor, that's all you can hope for.

Story 4: Just Pedal

I must say, as a new rider, what really did help was shin pads! I was getting bruised so badly from the pedals. But I felt I needed to ride because my grandchildren are riding. I can't be going somewhere and they've gone off and left me behind, or I'm trying to keep up because they're riding and I'm walking. It's been a journey. A few lumps and bumps along the way. But now that I can ride with them, it feels absolutely fantastic.

I heard about this scheme from a colleague of mine who works for Oxford Hub. She told me about these bikes, so I put my name down. Learning to cycle is important for me because some of the cars on the road these days, people don't stick to the limit. At times I've been driving at 20 mph and other people have been beeping at me. If a car should overtake you, and something else comes up, you've got to be aware that there might be a cyclist. How will you react? What will happen to that cyclist?

I've been learning where to position yourself, how to signal at a junction, what to do if nothing's coming, all that kind of stuff. It's being more aware of those things—although a bit of it is already there, because that's what you would automatically do if you were driving. We tend to do a lot of lessons at Kassam Stadium because I need to get my confidence up. We've then gone on to the road, side roads, and cycle tracks like from Littlemore down to Tesco's roundabout and back up. But it's the major roads—that's where my big fear is. You're so aware of what can happen, and you'll hear of all these accidents in the city.

I've had three falls on the bike. The first one was in the early days of riding. I tried to miss a pothole and went down. The second one my grandson came riding into the back of me. He had been riding too close or he wasn't looking where he was going. I'd really grazed my knee from the pothole, and this incident was like the very next day, so you can imagine falling on that knee a second time! But my grandson is slowly getting there. He can ride. He needs to start doing the signals and staying on the road because there are times he's on the pavement instead of the road. When there's a lesson booked for him, I will say: 'This is your lesson and you need to listen to what Cedric is explaining because you need this for when you go to secondary school!'

The first time I went out riding with my grandson all I can remember is Cedric saying, 'This is what you need to do,' and explaining how to sit on the bike and how I needed to get going to get balanced. But what he was saying just wasn't registering, because I had it fixed in my head that I need to go down the hill. The next lesson, we went into the Kassam Stadium and there was a little bit of an incline. I went down it and that's how I managed to get my balance. Balanced properly, I could start pedalling. My grandson kept saying to me, 'Nanny, pedal, pedal, just pedal.' The transition from not being able to ride to then being able to balance the bike—you're riding, you're pedalling!—it's amazing.

We've mainly been riding around Littlemore because when we start off we tend to meet Cedric in the car park in Kassam Stadium. We'll ride around in the car park and then we go into Littlemore, ride around that way and Minchery farm. And then we'll go down the cycle track and back up. We feel comfortable, and safe enough, in that area. It's a 20 mph zone. Of course, some people stick to it, and some people don't. But it's okay. My grandson just needs to be more roadworthy, and more aware of what is around him.

He says: 'Nanny, come on, you can do it. You can do it nanny!' And in the week he'll text and say, 'Nanny, how is riding going?' I say, it's brilliant. It's about talking more often and having more to talk about, instead of him being on his gadgets. He's one of these children who if they're sitting down, he's bored. If he's doing something that's not what he wants to do, he's bored. So therefore, if we're in the

house, we'll say, 'Okay, we're going for a ride,' or on a Saturday morning when I'm doing the Covid clinic, I'll say, 'Come on, we're going to clinic.' And he'll come.

It's great—absolutely great. It's the whole feeling of being outdoors. I was born and grew up in Jamaica, and it's so much different compared to here. We'd play outdoors. But here, you don't get much of that anymore because of all these gadgets that children have. The very first time I rode a bike was in my late teens in Jamaica. I wouldn't say it was riding, it was more balancing. I was basically going downhill. This is why I've got this fixation on hills. I will go down the hill and when I get to the flat, I will get off the bike. I'd go for a mile or over and then I would push the bike back home.

I appreciate the scheme because it's helpful, and it gives children more meaning, something to do, instead of being in the parks or hanging around the shops and doing nothing. There's more and more children riding because petrol is so expensive as well. With everything going up, it does make a lot of difference for parents to let the kids ride. I suppose it's something to think about, how we all could network. I've got this friend of mine and I've been telling her that she needs to start riding so she can go out with her granddaughter. She says her bones are too old to break. And I said, 'No, they're not. I fell off my bike and I didn't get a broken bone. You can do it as well. You just got to know where you're riding and how you ride, and that will make all the difference.'

Story 5: The Dreamer

I am the Dreamer, let's call it that.

I had dreamt this vision of Black Women Bike. Those who come from Africa, from the Caribbean and all in between living in Oxford. During lockdown, we just knew that our communities were at the sharp end of all the inequalities that were thrown into the spotlight with the pandemic, and we're still emerging from it. Our work is increased. There are fewer of us doing the work, and more of us on the frontline. So with all these inequities in place, we decided to look at this question of visibility, of what support's needed, and why we were so invisible.

One of the other things that we've experienced with the pandemic is that of the community leaders. I'm really interested in this cohort, in particular, because we are always either getting the money in, running the projects, working with each other. But actually, when do we have anything for ourselves? One of the things that is not so visible, is that we carry the trauma of our lived experience, we hold this in our bones, you know, and I look, and I think, what is there for us?

So the inspiration was a vision. And health. I was very aware also, and especially over the last few years, we're all exhausted. Exhausted, but the work doesn't stop. The demand is growing. What do we do? Yeah. And so with this health orientation, you know, this way of being in life, I also saw my own daily practices were suffering, I just thought, wow, I'd look out of my window and see these beautiful groups of cyclists riding around. I'm also a green activist, and campaigner. And I'm just, I'm very conscious that, again, African heritage communities are very much outside that discourse, the activism, etc. The green spaces we have around us, there's a green agenda here. Being able to connect with our environment, we know the benefits of fresh air in our lungs, you know, we have so many beautiful green spaces, and our communities are not accessing, they're not working with, they're not connecting to nature. So for me, there's the health agenda. There's the equitable space agenda, you know, and how we can connect with the green agenda as well. There's no climate justice, without the social justice aspects, you know, so, yeah. Culture, activism, and policy. That's really what we're here about, you know.

Everyone has cycled but none of us have cycled on the road. We started off as a group of 10 women, only two of us had cycled ever before. So this is now week five. It's significant because we have seen every single woman that's participating, actually actively riding. We've made decisions around what kind of bike are most appropriate for those who need a bit more support. What was symbolic and significant about today, was that we went out on the road. We're addressing lots of fears that we all have, even those of us who were riding from a young age. It felt amazing to go off and actually think, and not only think, but feel, and experience, we can do this.

The seven women who are now at the core of this initial group - the nucleus heartbeat group. In Season Two this group will move forward to become Bikeability instructors. So like you see Bikeability instructors going into schools, teaching children to ride so we can also teach those in our community groups, right. And then we evolve into the next stage in Season Three after Easter, which is the vision. So like the partners with us today, we're going to be leading such rides, learning how to map routes. I know there's so many spaces across the county. We don't even need to stay in the city, you know, because I'm also thinking about clean air as much as possible. But the vision for me is that we are nurturing a culture, where every Saturday morning, we are out on our bikes in all seasons. As long as it's not, you know, hazardous on the road, evidently, but we have developed a culture whereby we are visible. We have seen when we're looking at social justice, three key things, its voice, its visibility, its participation and its representation. Just this morning, going out on the road, we could see people

saying, "Ah, there's that group of women." It felt like they could see us being seen, I spoke about this earlier. You know, a lot of our community groups are not visible, but we can be seen on the roads, you know, and what it will do for others, our children. We self-identify as mothers first. So imagine, now we have the opportunity to do this with our children.

This vision is huge, it works at so many levels, I would love to see this as a national movement, a movement that enables us to address some social justice issues, whilst we are getting fit and healthy. You know, enabling us to better serve our communities. And you know, because I'm dreaming even bigger now. And with every time we connect with partners and other allies - the allyship has been phenomenal, we couldn't do this on our own. We don't have the intel, we didn't have the experience. We don't have the networks, you know that social capital is really, really important.

I always saw these people riding in the middle of town and you know, I work with people that come to work on a bike and I just think culturally, that can't work for us because it's not in line with our cultural values. You know, the idea of how we dress and how we present ourselves in the world arriving sweaty at work. Those two things don't align, it just doesn't align. So I think there's a middle ground, a group designed around a social gathering. That may lead to us to being able to find a way to cycle for transport, active transport, active travel. Who knows. I think that's going to be everybody's personal journey. Yeah. But I know that those are definitely cultural reasons why you'll find less of us on the road.

We've had so many people who just hear it, they feel the energy, they feel the vibe. All the partners have said, "Oh my gosh, we've never had such an amazing experience!" Here is a space where you can be yourself where we celebrate each other. You know, it's inspiring. This is what people feed back to us, when they come, they're inspired. And you're going to feel community in this space. So as we go, we're going to open it up so more and more of us can gather but because we're also learning, we want to take a very patient approach. Next year, we're going to have another group of ten. And I think you know, if the funding and the resources are there, because we want to ensure that every woman who comes can leave with a bike and the very basic equipment that enables them to continue because you see this is a thing with projects, sometimes they start, the funding runs out, and everything falls apart. We're not doing that in this one, you know, we have the opportunity. We have the energy, everybody has come and said well, you all are amazing, you're phenomenal and we know this, so just to let you know this space is here. It's for us, led by us and the more of us that come the more visible we'll be on the street. Karibu. Thank you.

Story 6: I got it!

I'm part of the Black Women Bike. This project is in Oxfordshire, trying to get particularly women leaders, and those who haven't ridden for a long time or who do not try it at all, to just get rid of our fears about riding and get on the bike. Now, for me, just living in Oxford with all the LTNS and I need to get to work quickly, I realise I need a different option for travel. And I want to ride just to be healthier as well. So I haven't ridden ever. As a child I think I just tried a bike but I've always feared hurting my knees or things like that. So I'm an adult now and I'm learning to ride a bike.

Yeah, so I'm hoping with this, I'd be able to travel to work. Get places, have somebody help me.

Today, I got onto a trike. I think when you're learning as an adult, it's very different than learning as a child. So as an adult, already, your thinking process is very different. So I have found it difficult to get the cycling motion, my feet to understand the cyclic motion. It just hasn't come. But today, I've been able to do that on a trike. So I think for me, it's going to be an adult trike.

I just felt I could do it. Because I think it's when you want something so badly and then think, Oh, I got it. Finally feeling okay, now, my feet actually understand what I'm trying to do here.

I think, actually, it's beautiful. This project, just really targeting black women. I work with all women. And I really believe in the power of empowering women to get a voice where we've not had a voice before to get seen where we previously not been able to be seen, but particularly for black women living in Britain. There is so many reasons why you think you just want to shy away and stay in the background. I think not one more thing. But we are saying actually not, we are mothers! We are resident here, we are here now! And it's just if there's any reason that's making you think you can't try it actually that reason is not valid. So we are here representing all the cultural taboos that have told you you can't ride. They're not real. All the social taboos that have to be contrived and with the Joyriders and other women as well. We overcoming even some of the social issues that make women feel unsafe or feel we shouldn't be on the road actually together. We're getting together and saying actually no, we can ride whether we multitask and carry our children, our shopping, because they get to do that together.