



St Augustine's Centre offers repair workshops and rides for asylum seekers

Feature

RIDE WITH US

Many people lack the opportunity to ride a bike. Cycling UK community groups across the country are providing it, as **Jennifer Young** explains



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Cycling UK believes that cycling is an activity that everyone should be able to enjoy. You might think that a bike is all that's needed to open up almost limitless opportunities to improve health and fitness, save money on transport and have fun. In practice, however, if you're not an able-bodied, heterosexual white man, you are much less likely to cycle.

The reasons for this are many and varied, but Cycling UK has a number of Community Cycle Clubs and affiliated groups that are making cycling more accessible in their local areas. I spoke to three of them to find out what they are doing to increase the number of people from under-represented groups in cycling.

ST AUGUSTINE'S CENTRE

St Augustine's Centre works with asylum seekers and refugees in Halifax, West Yorkshire. Last year its Community Cycle Club was born, offering bike repair and maintenance workshops as well as led rides to support members into cycling and to enable them to embrace active travel. Initially, it also repaired donated bikes to give to members, but changing to a bike library setup has allowed it

to create a community of new cyclists.

Premises manager Paul Clarke told me: "It's easy to give a bike away but harder to create a regular cyclist who feels part of a community. Before, we didn't know how people were using the bikes, or even if they were using the bikes at all. Due to the transient nature of the sector, sometimes people are told to move quickly, without enough time to return the bike. Or it may be that they get a puncture and don't know how or can't afford to fix it. Some people may not have cycled since childhood and need a helping hand to work the gears, or they may not be confident to ride much in an unfamiliar area. We can help with all of that."

Since moving to a scheme that provides short-term bike loans for free this year, Paul and his team have been able to build relationships with members who are repeat visitors, to offer them further support with cycling as well as introducing them to suitable activities taking place there.

"We don't want people to just come and get a bike then wave goodbye to them. We want to encourage them to take part in music, football, dancing, boxing, art or one of the many other activities we offer, to give them a chance to socialise with others and enjoy themselves."

And, of course, cycling is a big part of that, with weekly led rides and repair sessions attracting healthy numbers. These activities are possible thanks to the efforts of dedicated volunteers, some of whom took part in training courses offered by Cycling UK through the Community Cycle Clubs programme.

St Augustine's has also delivered events funded by Cycling UK's Big Bike Revival and Active Calderdale. Its involvement with Cycling UK extends to referring a number of community