

Learning from Bikeability External Quality Assurance: analysis of EQA reports from September 2018 to March 2020

August 2020

Background

The Bikeability quality assurance [framework](#), including guidance on provider internal quality assurance ([IQA](#)), was launched in 2012. It aimed to raise the quality of Bikeability delivery across England. The framework was based on four pillars: provider registration, provider registration renewal, provider IQA, and provider external quality assurance (EQA). Despite not including instructor training and development, the framework was intended to be a ‘complete, cost effective and credible’ system of quality assurance that balanced regulation by government with self-regulation by registered Bikeability providers.

A [review](#) of the framework in 2015 identified good practice but also major areas for improvement. These include inconsistent interpretation of the National Standard for Cycle Training in Bikeability delivery, resulting from proprietary approaches to instructor training, incomplete implementation of provider EQA recommendations, and weak provider IQA. The review recommended a ‘root and branch review of instructor training and development’. This was undertaken the following year.

Some of the issues identified in both reviews were addressed in the development of Bikeability in subsequent years. The reformed National Standard ([2018](#)) is now a much simpler statement of competent cycling that provides clearer assessment criteria for Bikeability, reducing the scope for inconsistent interpretation. Compliance with the current Bikeability Delivery Guide ([2019](#)) based on the reformed National Standard is now a condition of Department for Transport Bikeability grant funding, inhibiting divergent delivery practices. The advent of Ofqual-regulated instructor qualifications ([2019](#)) introduced a single specification for all instructor training based on the reformed National Standard with external quality assurance, ensuring greater consistency and fidelity. Taken together with the forthcoming Bikeability Management Guide (including strengthened guidance on provider IQA), and as the programme [expands](#) to reach all children in the coming years, these measures are intended to ensure *every child benefits from high-quality cycle training*.

Purpose

Currently, the provider EQA process is the main window on the quality of local Bikeability management and delivery. This report presents an analysis of all EQA reports completed from September 2018, when the Bikeability Trust started managing the EQA process, to March 2020, when EQA visits were suspended following school closures resulting from Covid-19. The report has been written for decision makers in the Department for Transport (government programme sponsor) and the Bikeability Trust (programme administrator), and for registered Bikeability providers and instructors, who will hopefully find it instructive for planning IQA and continuing professional development (CPD).

Since September 2018, the Bikeability Trust has overseen the production of 57 EQA reports. At the same time, the Trust has strengthened the EQA process itself significantly. These changes, including new data capture templates for scoring different aspects of management and delivery quality introduced in May 2019, were necessary to improve evidence traceability and reporting transparency. However, the changes mean not all reports produced between September 2018 and March 2020 are comparable (this is why the number of EQA reports varies in different parts of this report).

The report starts with a description of the current EQA process and quality scores before considering quantitative data for the quality of local Bikeability management and delivery. This is followed by qualitative data illustrating the strengths and areas for improvement presented in EQA reports completed between September 2018 and March 2020. The report concludes with recommendations for quality improvement as Bikeability delivery partners prepare to extend high-quality cycle training to every child in the coming years.

Quality assurance and quality improvement

Bikeability EQA aims to improve the quality of local Bikeability management and delivery across England, to ensure the National Standard for Cycle Training is delivered *nationally* through Bikeability. Each year, a small sample (10%) of registered Bikeability providers is selected for EQA visits against the following criteria:

- length of registration (long and short)
- delivery capacity (large and small)
- random selection (all providers).

The first two criteria prioritise providers presenting the greatest exposure risk to Bikeability participants, while the last ensures any provider can receive a visit. It is a condition of registration that all providers will participate in the EQA process. Individual EQA reports remain confidential to the provider and their contracting Bikeability grant recipient (for outsourced training delivery).

During an EQA visit, two members of the EQA panel of cycling and training experts, drawn from the Bikeability programme itself and supplied by Coachwise/1st4sport, interview the provider manager and observe Bikeability delivery over two days. The visiting EQA panel members formally assess aspects of the management and delivery quality using templates in items are scored under template subheadings. This method ensures consistency in the assessments made by different EQA panel teams. The process is reviewed every six months with the EQA panel to ensure compliance.

The completed visit templates form the basis of the EQA feedback report that is drafted by the visiting EQA team. The report covers strengths and areas for improvement in management and delivery quality and includes an action plan with recommendations for implementation. The Bikeability Trust edits the reports before they are sent to the visited provider mainly to ensure all areas for improvement are picked up in the recommended actions. Providers are expected to implement the actions using provider IQA, including observing, mentoring and developing instructors to strengthen Bikeability delivery.

Quality scores

The EQA report includes overall scores for management and delivery quality based on the template items scored during the visit. These overall quality scores are on a scale on 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. A provider receiving an overall score of 2 for either management or delivery quality is required to have a follow-up visit within six months to ensure all recommended actions have been implemented. In the scoring scheme, introduced in May 2019, the overall quality score of 4 is the compliance or 'satisfactory' threshold.

Figure 1 shows how many allocated training places were delivered by providers with different aggregate (management and delivery) overall quality scores between May 2019 and March 2020. It includes the results for 29 EQA reports produced using this method (it has not been possible to include independent, London-based or international providers).

The figure reveals that all 29 EQA reports had aggregate quality scores of at least 2. However, almost all allocated training places (nearly 50,000 or 92%) were delivered by providers with aggregate overall quality scores of less than 4. Very few (less than 5,000) allocated training places were delivered by providers with a score of 4, the compliance or 'satisfactory' threshold, and none by providers with the maximum score of 5.

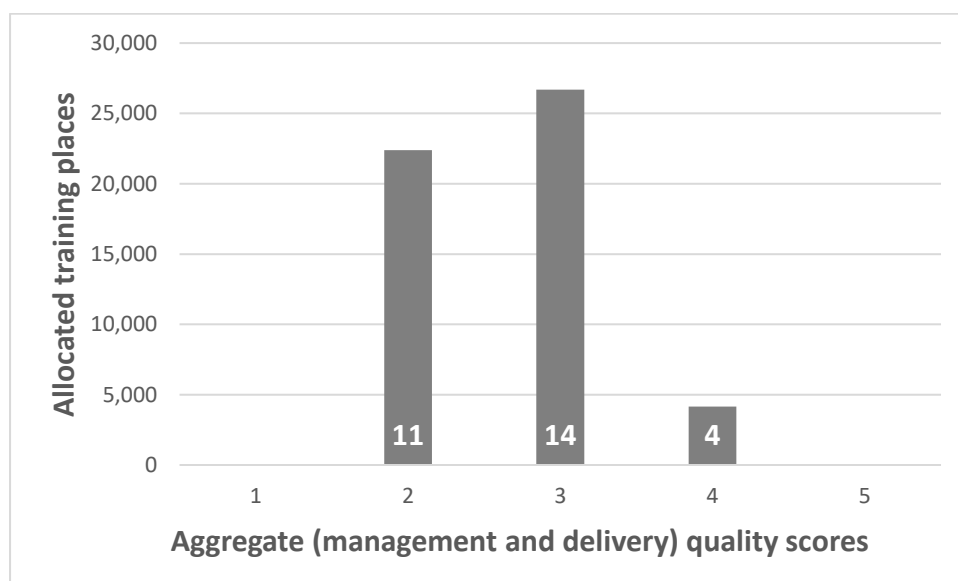


Figure 1: Allocated training places, by providers' aggregate EQA quality scores

The EQA reports are grouped by aggregate quality scores. An aggregate quality score of 4 indicates compliance with requirements. The white numbers are the number of provider EQA reports in each column. Only data from visits between May 2019 and March 2020 are included. EQA reports for independent, London-based and international providers have been excluded.

Figure 2 shows the regional distribution of the aggregate (management and delivery) overall quality scores for 50 EQA reports (excluding international providers) completed between September 2018 and March 2020. Aggregate quality scores in at least one region are very close to the score of 2, while others are more firmly heading towards score of 4. The national average aggregate quality score (brown line) is just above 3.



Figure 2: Overall EQA quality scores by region

The provider EQA reports are grouped by aggregate quality scores by English region. An aggregate quality score of 4 indicates compliance with requirements. The brown line represents the average overall quality score across all reports. The white numbers are the number of providers in each column. The chart includes EQA reports for 50 providers (excluding international providers).

Management and delivery quality

It is a condition of Department for Transport grant funding that Bikeability grant recipients deliver Bikeability based on the National Standard for Cycle Training that complies with the requirements set out in the current Bikeability Delivery Guide. When they do this in all management and delivery areas, the EQA panel would record all subsections within the visit templates as being compliant, resulting in an overall quality score of 4.

Figure 3 below shows the percentage of the EQA reports in which all items in each template subsection comply with these requirements (green bars) between May 2019 and March 2020.

Within **management quality** (first group of bars), full compliance by all providers was only achieved in one template subsection, 'Incidents and complaints management'. Around half of all visited providers complied fully with requirements for 'Communication' and 'Instructor Recruitment and Registration'. Other areas of management quality show greater deficits, notably instructor development, IQA leadership and IQA planning.

Results obtained within **delivery quality** (second group of bars) are weaker. Only a minority of providers achieved full compliance with the requirements, with deficits in practice delivery principles and practices and other subsections.

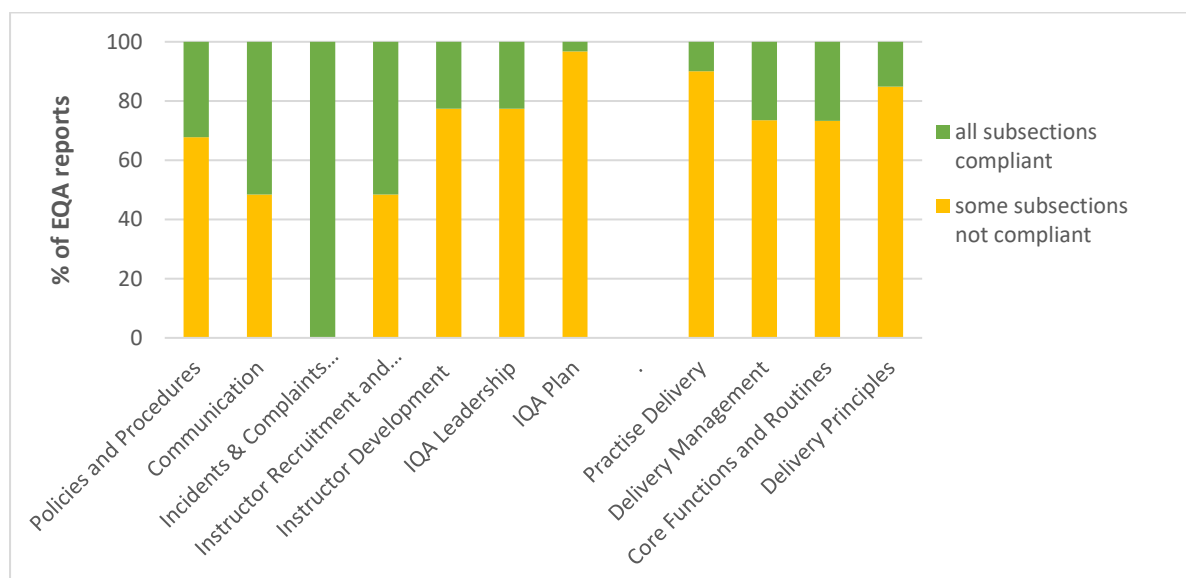


Figure 3 Percentage of EQA reports in which providers complied with all management and delivery requirements

First group of bars are results from management template subsections, second group of bars present results from delivery template subsections.

Strengths and areas for improvement

The EQA reports completed between September 2018 and March 2020 illustrate many strengths in Bikeability management and delivery quality and identify many areas for improvement. In the table below, extracted EQA report statements are grouped within themes that emerged during qualitative data coding, in no particular order. They are drawn directly from actual EQA reports, and should be instructive for Bikeability providers and instructors planning IQA and CPD, to ensure *every child benefits from high-quality cycle training* in the coming years.

Provider internal quality assurance	
Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provider works with other providers to share good practice. The provider observes and monitors instructors and has embedded a mentoring system for new instructors. An effective CPD system is in place to enhance instructor progression. A recorded IQA process is in place that ensures actions from instructor observations are followed up. The management team have identified the new 1st4Sport instructor training requirements and have a thorough plan of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No written evidence of quality assurance internal assessments. The manager undertakes informal instructor observations whilst delivering Bikeability but does not record any findings. There are no formal observations or IQA systems in place. The provider collects feedback from stakeholders but only verbally. Instructors were not aware of the new 1st4sport instructor qualification. There is no feedback gathering process used with schools/riders/parents to inform an IQA plan.

<p>how to assist their instructors with the course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent use of feedback from stakeholders to confirm impact of delivery. • The provider uses rider-based feedback forms to monitor how the training was received and if they will cycle more often as a result. • The provider employs an effective mix of senior and newly appointed instructors who share good practice. • The lead instructor has attended a Bikeability delivery guide orientation day and has disseminated information in team meetings. • Honest, self-critical and reflective approach to quality assurance by managers and instructors. • There is a robust tracking system in place to ensure all elements of training are audited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only verbal feedback is given when mentoring instructors, there is no written feedback or follow up. • All schools receive evaluation forms but very few are returned. • Recent instructor observations have all been scored 'Good' which did not match the EQA team's observations and therefore require recalibration. • There was no sampling plan for instructor observations, and observations did not inform provider IQA planning or instructor CPD.
---	--

Provider policies and procedures	
Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genuine commitment and proactive strategy to working in an area with high levels of social deprivation where cycling isn't encouraged. • Policies are embedded in all Bikeability operations and delivery practices. • Good internal communication of policies between management and instructors. • A comprehensive and easy to use online booking system for schools and parents. • Pre-course information sent to parents confirming requirements and consent. • Concise and relevant documentation that is monitored and updated regularly. • Policies are communicated to the instructors including when any changes and updates are made. • All policies are reviewed annually and monitored regularly. • All instructors had the appropriate checks and training, and this was recorded well. • Good communications with the grant recipient. • Support materials such as incident forms and procedures are held in dedicated packs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All policies used by the provider were out of date and had not been reviewed in some time. • Instructor information was incomplete as not all instructors working had NSI numbers recorded. • Instructors do not check parental / guardian consent at the start of each session to confirm medical needs. • There was a lack of comprehensive documentation to support instructors' experience and qualifications. • All policies used were generic and were not applicable to cycle training. • Dates on policies seen ranged from 2013 to 2018. • Instructors do not check parental / guardian consent at the start of each session to confirm medical needs.

<p>at all schools where Bikeability training takes place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good course administration of consent forms, registers, assessment sign off sheets. • The complaints response and recording system is excellent in quality. • The provider used electronic recording of rider achievement that is immediately available to the manager and the instructor team. 	
---	--

Delivering the National Standard	
Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructors have excellent knowledge of the current National Standard. • The playground layout for Level 1 encouraged riders to understand priorities at an early stage. • Use of the four core functions and systematic routines was evident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedal setting was not always reinforced. • Riders must not start a journey when their view of the road is obscured. • Instructors were telling children to signal and stop at give way signs from the outset. • Covering brakes and pedal setting was not always corrected. • Some of the instructors used the terms “primary and secondary position” but this was not enforced during riding. • The core functions must be communicated to riders throughout delivery; this was not evident on either day one or day two. • There was little evidence that riders understood priorities when passing junctions and parked cars. • Level 2, start and end a journey must include looking over the left shoulder before stopping, and riding in secondary position. • Observation into side roads and when passing parked cars not taught. • Riding position was taught correctly but riders’ positioning was not corrected. • Riders were observed cycling up on pavement at the end of their turns. • Riders did not appear to understand why they were doing things, e.g. the reasons for road positioning were not explained. • Signalling was not instructed or practiced at junctions where other road users were present. • Evidence was not seen or heard regarding the importance of eye contact or other forms of communication other than signalling. • The EQA team saw limited evidence of riders communicating with other road users.

Instructor delivery practices	
Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible and inclusive training accommodates a range of learning styles and individual needs. • Good rapport and communication with schools and riders. • Passion and commitment to promoting cycling in all its forms. • Excellent use of developmental questioning to confirm understanding. • Peer training used, with engaged riders. • Excellent amount of riding time which meets the 80:20 ratio successfully. • Excellent introduction to training activities which were then delivered in logical sequences and combinations. • Demonstrations were of a high standard. • The provider had an excellent bad weather contingency pack to engage riders. • Instructors always corrected errors and in a constructive manner with one-to-one feedback. • Good consistency of delivery across the instructor team. • Good use of whiteboards to confirm understanding. • Level 1 training activities concluded positively in the playground with round-table discussions using the Bikeability handbooks. • Discussions were engaging and instructors asked questions to check rider understanding. • A variety of training techniques were used throughout ensuring that the learning was dynamic. • Training activities are repeated several times before moving on to make sure all riders had had sufficient time to practise. • Instructor's communications were clear, concise and understood. • The provider used detailed session teaching plans. • Instructors gave riders positive encouragement. • Behaviour management was excellent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were several instances of leading the snake from the front which can lose control of the back of the line. • Riders were observed visibly straining to listen as they were facing the sun and couldn't focus properly. • NSIPs were delivering training alone when they must always deliver training alongside a NSIQ. • Some sessions were cut short on practice before all the riders were consistently competent. • The EQA team witnessed several 'walk through' demonstrations without the use of a cycle. • In all training sessions observed by the EQA team, instructors used the term 'life saver'. This negative language portrays cycling as a dangerous, life threatening activity. • Not enough praise was given whilst riding. • A 3 hr 15-minute session is too long without a break. • In order to mark out a road hand drawn chalk lines were used on more than one occasion to simulate the centre of the road. • The instructor team did not spot the errors and without exception all riders were then given 'good' or 'great' feedback. • The EQA panel observed sessions which included much discussion with limited ride time and lacked an opportunity to engage waiting riders. • Instructors' delivery lacked enthusiasm in most instances. • Lengthy descriptions of manoeuvres before and after demonstrations resulted in excessive standing around. • Journey time to training locations on first day took >20% of time available. • Instructors stood in the road to teach, observe and coach throughout the session. • Riders observing drills did not always have clear sight of the road or the instructor performing the demonstrations. • Instructor-rider interaction took more of a 'tell' approach rather than using questions to assess understanding. • During the 52 minutes of delivery time observed for Level 2, riders were on their bikes for less than 1 minute 30 seconds.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructors all receive annual safeguarding training from the Council and are up to date with their first aid. • The provider had an inclusive approach to working with all children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the last session on both courses the group rode round in lines playing follow the leader. • At Level 2 the instructors were inconsistent in their demonstrations with some observed riding too close to the curb and starting and stopping journeys too close to the junction. • Training activities took place too close to junctions. • There was very little linking of training activities. • The use of manhole covers and instructors in the road to indicate primary position and where to turn is not realistic or in line with the Bikeability delivery guide. • There were occasions when riders were asked to dismount and walk back to the start, when a U turn and linked training activities could have been used instead to increase riding time. • Delivery is inconsistent across the instructor team. • On two occasions instructors asked drivers to move their parked cars from the training location. • Some groups started too close to the junction to enable riders to demonstrate the National Standard assessment criteria.
--	--

Rider progression	
Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bikes and helmets are offered to riders who do not have their own, enabling all to take part. • Instructors kept accurate and up to date records of rider progress which is then given to the school and parents. • Instructors empowered riders to make decisions with minimal direction and supervision through use of exercises using multiple training activities. • Progressive, challenging sites used for training. • A variety of training sites was used with a good flow of traffic. • A teaching assistant was present during training to support riders throughout. • Multiple training activities were linked throughout the Level 2 module. • The provider used progressive, appropriate sites for the level of training and ability of the group. • Instructors empowered riders to make decisions with minimal direction and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some riders evidently did not have the Level 1 skills needed for participation in Bikeability Level 2. • The view of the EQA team was that not all of the riders who achieved Level 2 were competent. • Although all riders imitated the instructor demonstrations there was no clear evidence that they were demonstrating conscious awareness of what was expected. • Throughout the three-hour session, the chosen road infrastructure did not change. • Training did not enable riders to make their own decisions (including one instructor who guided riders by their handlebars to the pavement while he stood in the road). • The 80:20 guide for riding: discussion time was not met in either Level 1 or Level 2 delivery. • The pace of delivery on some days was unacceptably low. • More able riders were not challenged or given the freedom to negotiate turns. • Riders did not demonstrate understanding of National Standard cycling because the training was tightly controlled by the instructors.

<p>supervision through use of multiple training activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent continuous assessment throughout. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructors have a tendency to teach risk avoidance rather than risk management. • Riders were only given two attempts to demonstrate the assessment criteria regardless of satisfactory performance. • Assessment sheets are completed at the end of the course rather than continuously and do not cover the four core functions and systematic routines. • There were many training activities where the instructor rode alongside the riders. • The road sessions did not provide sufficient traffic to make it a realistic riding experience for the children.
---	---

Risk management	
Strengths	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorous bike and personal kit checks. • The journeys to and from the training site were safe and well managed in challenging conditions (narrow, busy roads). • A dynamic risk assessment was clearly in place allowing for changes to locations to be made with little or no fuss. • Snaking practice was conducted before going on the road and the group were ridden from the school to the training site. • Colour coding of the roads on the risk assessments to highlight volume of traffic. • Pre-course teacher meetings to gain information on riders, complete a rider risk assessment form and ensure riders are clothed and equipped for the sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk assessments were done by the management team prior to the course and did not include routes to/between sites. • On request instructors could not produce a completed risk assessment. • The site risk assessments which the instructors were working from for the specific location visited, were outdated. • Risk assessment needs to be a more dynamic process and reflect the conditions on the day. • One of the training site junctions being used was becoming unsafe for the riders due to speed of cars. • The level of risk on one of the observed days with new instructors was unacceptably high. The EQA team observed riders not watching demonstrations, not listening to explanations, riding ahead of the group snake and walking along roads rather than on pavements. • Site specific risk assessments are generic and anything new is added at the end of the day.

Conclusions and recommendations

Bikeability provider managers and instructors are responsible for delivering Bikeability to hundreds of thousands of children every year with Department for Transport funding. They share a real enthusiasm for cycling and a desire to communicate this to developing riders. Much more will be asked of them as the Bikeability programme expands to reach every child in the coming years.

The last two years have been a period of considerable change for Bikeability delivery partners, with the arrival of the Bikeability Trust in September 2018, the launch of the reformed National Standard

for Cycle Training and Bikeability Delivery Guide in May 2019, the strengthening of provider EQA from May 2019, and the introduction of Ofqual-regulated instructor qualifications in August 2019. The goal posts for Bikeability management and delivery quality have moved, and the analysis presented in this report shows this was necessary. The following conclusions and recommendations are intended to keep Bikeability providers and instructors moving in the right direction.

1. **The EQA reports contain examples of strong Bikeability management and delivery.** These should be celebrated to provide clear guidance and encouragement to Bikeability providers and instructors who are challenged to strengthen their management and delivery quality.
 - a) The Bikeability Trust should review all EQA reports annually and report strengths and areas for improvement to inform provider IQA and instructor CPD.
 - b) The Bikeability Trust should celebrate the strong provision identified through EQA and recognise its achievement in the annual Bikeability awards.
 - c) The Department for Transport and the Bikeability Trust should actively consider incentivising quality improvement through the Bikeability grant allocation and amendment mechanisms.

2. **Bikeability would not exist without the dedication and commitment of instructors.** Bikeability provider data show most Bikeability instructors are on low-paid and insecure (freelance or zero hours) contracts. It is likely many will have left the Bikeability workforce during the Covid-19 crisis. The government's ambition to extend Bikeability to every child in this parliament cannot be delivered on goodwill alone. More instructors must be recruited, trained and retained.
 - a) The Department for Transport and the Bikeability Trust should actively consider the introduction of a minimum national pay rate for Bikeability instructors as a condition of grant, with evidence demonstrating instructors are delivering the National Standard.
 - b) The Department for Transport and the Bikeability Trust should actively consider the re-introduction of instructor training bursaries.

3. **The National Standard for Cycle Training is not yet delivered nationally through Bikeability.** This threatens the integrity of the Bikeability programme and increases the risk that children are exposed to poor quality training. There is little point in having a national standard to underpin Bikeability if it is not delivered *nationally*.
 - a) The Department for Transport and the Bikeability Trust should actively consider measures to strengthen delivery of the National Standard through Bikeability in the forthcoming Bikeability grant terms and conditions, and the grant allocation and amendment mechanisms.
 - b) The Bikeability Trust should actively consider providing more direct support to Bikeability instructors, and those who train them, to ensure the National Standard is delivered nationally, by setting up professional practice networks for 1st4sport recognised delivery centres and their tutors, and delivering a programme of online instructor CPD.

- 4. EQA recommendations are unlikely to be implemented without strong provider IQA systems.** Most EQA reports include recommendations to strengthen provider IQA and reveal a degree of provider confusion about what IQA entails. The 2012 IQA guidance lacked clarity and has not been implemented by all Bikeability providers as intended.
- a) The Bikeability Trust should develop a strong professional development offer for IQA leaders in Bikeability providers, by setting up a professional practice network for provider IQA leaders and delivering a programme of online CPD for them in partnership with 1st4sport.
 - b) The Bikeability Trust should include clearer guidance on provider IQA in the forthcoming Bikeability management guide.
 - c) The Bikeability Trust should require all registered Bikeability providers to self-assess their IQA systems and report on actions to strengthen them in order to complete their annual registration renewal.
 - d) The Bikeability Trust should include consideration of provider IQA in the selection criteria for EQA visits.
 - e) The Bikeability Trust should take steps to de-register providers without adequate IQA systems.

These conclusions and recommendations set an agenda for necessary improvement. The analysis presented in this report shows that delivery of the National Standard through Bikeability is possible but is not yet universal. The government's ambition to extend Bikeability to every child in this parliament now adds urgency to necessity, to ensure *every child benefits from high-quality cycle training*.