

# CYCLING TO SCHOOL

A review of school census and Bikeability delivery data

## REPORT

March 2012



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# 1 Introduction

## About this Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to examine available data on the level of cycling to school since the introduction of the Bikeability cycle training scheme in England during 2006/07. The report draws on travel data from the school census and on Bikeability delivery data collected from local authorities that receive Department for Transport (DfT) cycle training grants.
- 1.2 It is intended that this report provides insight into the potential impacts Bikeability cycle training may have had at a local level based on observed correlations between data sets. However, with the existing data, it is not possible to present in a statistically meaningful way the impact of Bikeability cycle training on levels of cycling to school due to the absence of a robust comparison group.
- 1.3 Analysis of school census and Bikeability delivery data are reported in separate sections of this report. Section 4 highlights correlations between the two sets of data and section 5 draws some conclusions from the analysis.

## Hypothesis

- 1.4 Bikeability cycle training has been delivered consistently in some areas of England during the past five years. The hypothesis of this report is that the highest levels of cycling to school will be in schools that have received long-term and sustained Bikeability training.
- 1.5 We believe this because:
  - On road cycle training improves trainees' cycling skills and competencies, potentially increasing the number and type of journeys they can make and the distance trainees feel they can cycle (or are allowed to cycle by parents/carers) - thus cycling may become a viable travel choice for the journey to school;
  - Previous research has shown localised success in increasing cycling levels among children and adults through training (Travelwise/Merseytravel, 2009, and London Borough of Lambeth, 2008);
  - Children in European countries with high levels of cycling receive extensive cycle training (Pucher and Buehler, 2008); and
  - Parents and children have indicated that Bikeability training improves their confidence, skill and willingness to cycle (Ipsos MORI for Cycling England, 2010).



### The Bikeability Scheme

- 1.6 Bikeability was launched by the Department for Transport through Cycling England in 2007 as cycling proficiency for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The scheme is underpinned by a National Standard for cycle training, which clearly defines the outcomes trainees must demonstrate before passing the course.
- 1.7 Bikeability and the National Standard comprise three levels - Level 1 teaches trainees basic bicycle control skills in an off-road environment; Level 2 is delivered on road, where trainees learn the basics of on road cycling; and Level 3 teaches trainees advanced on road cycling skills.
- 1.8 The majority of training is delivered to Year 5 and 6 primary school pupils (children aged 9-11). There is currently a much lower volume of training delivered to children in Year 7, the first year of secondary school.
- 1.9 DfT has provided funding for Bikeability child training places since the introduction of the scheme. This funding can be accessed by local authorities and, through joint working with the Youth Sport Trust, groupings of schools co-ordinated by a School Games Organiser host school<sup>1</sup>. Funding is provided at the rate of £40 per child, which must be used to deliver training up to Level 2.
- 1.10 The total amount of funding provided by DfT has increased year on year (always as a contribution at the rate of £40 per child), from £3m in 2007-08 to £11m in 2011-12. In this time, the number of local authorities accessing the grant has increased considerably, from 35 in 2007-08 to 103 in 2011-12.

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<sup>1</sup> Previously known as School Sports Partnerships.

## 2 School Census Data

### Overview

- 2.1 The school census<sup>2</sup> is a statutory survey administered by the Department of Education covering all state schools in England and Wales. Information is collected about the school and the pupils in the school. School level data includes modules of questions about admissions and staff, while pupil level data includes modules of questions about attendance, home information and pupil characteristics. For each set of questions, schools are required to collect data either once a year or once a term.

### Travel Data

- 2.2 Mode of travel data is collected within the pupil characteristics module. Travel information is usually collected via a hands-up survey at class level. Schools are required to report on the total number of pupils travelling by each mode, and may collect these figures once a year only; the school census guidance recommends travel data collection in the autumn term.

### Data Limitations

- 2.3 It is important to recognise the following limitations when considering school census mode of travel data:
- Data collection methodology - travel data is most commonly collected by a teacher or member of school staff asking all the children in each class how they usually travel to school, with the children responding through a show of hands for each mode of transport. While this approach may guarantee a high response rate because it targets large groups of children at once and is not dependent on a parental response, the accuracy of the data may be subject to some variation across year groups and schools. For example, younger children might be inclined to 'vote' in the same way as their friends for want of not being seen as 'different' by their peers. This means certain modes are potentially under- or over-represented. However, a report by Transport for London (Transport for London, 2008) concluded that overall the 'hands up' survey produced robust and accurate results although the report also suggested that this method may not be suitable for large classes or classes of younger pupils.
  - Linking travel data with other pupil characteristics is not possible because travel data are reported at school level and are a sum of the responses collected in individual classes. It is therefore not possible to cross tabulate travel data at an individual pupil level, with for example, home postcode location to determine to what extent mode choice may be linked to factors such as distance travelled to school.
  - Usual mode of travel - children are asked to report their 'usual' mode of travel to school. Their responses may be influenced by how they travelled to school that morning, which may or may not have been their most often used mode.

<sup>2</sup> Known previously as Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) or annual school census (ASC).

Those who frequently alternate between modes may find it difficult to conclude which is their usual mode. Further, trips combining different modes such as public transport and walking are potentially underrepresented in the data if pupils are unsure which is their 'main' mode.

- What constitutes cycling to school - respondents who say they 'cycle to school' may include pupils who cycle to school independently on road; with a group of other pupils on/off road; on road with a parent/carer; or younger children cycling off road accompanied by a walking parent/carer. This covers a range of cycling types and abilities and may in some cases, such as very young children, be closely aligned with walking to school.
- School census data is usually collected during the winter months. People may be less inclined to cycle during the winter months due to adverse weather conditions and dark mornings and evenings. If data is collected during a particularly cold or wet winter, the level of cycling may be less than in a milder, drier winter where weather conditions are more conducive to cycling.
- Under representation of cycling for trips other than the journey to school - other research has concluded that Bikeability training increases leisure cycling. These additional leisure cycling trips will not be accounted for in the school census data, which only considers cycling for the journey to school. The Lambeth Cycle Training Program Effectiveness Assessment (London Borough of Lambeth, 2008) and the Cycle Training Evaluation Research based on Merseyside (Merseytravel, 2009) both suggested cycle training significantly increased the number of leisure cycle trips amongst trainees.

- 2.4 In addition, the school census may not show all increases in the amount of cycling to school, since only pupils' usual main mode is reported. This may hide increases in the number of children who occasionally cycle to school but for whom cycling has not become their usual mode of travel.

### Travel to School Data Analysis

#### *Mode share of cycling for the journey to school*

- 2.5 Table 2.1 below shows the variation in the proportion of all school children cycling to school in the five years since 2006. Across all years, slightly over 1% of 5-10 year-olds cycle to school and just over 3% of 11-15 year-olds. Among 5-10 year olds, there has been a very slight decline in the proportion cycling to school while among 11-15 year-olds there has been a very slight increase. However, across all journeys to school there has been no discernible increase in the proportion of trips made by bicycle since 2006<sup>3</sup>, the figures remaining static and may be the result of sampling or data collection error given the data limitations explained above.

<sup>3</sup> This finding is consistent with the findings of the Evaluation of the Travelling to School Initiative (Department for Education, 2010) - the evaluation reported a 1.5% decrease in car use and 1.3% increase in walking for the journey to school.



**TABLE 2.1 CYCLING MODESHARE TO SCHOOL**

Pupil Age Range	2006/07 (%)	2007/08 (%)	2008/09 (%)	2009/10 (%)	2010/2011 (%)	Change (2006-2011)
5-10 years	1.16%	1.16%	1.13%	1.12%	1.15%	-0.01%
11-15 years	3.16%	3.37%	3.36%	3.32%	3.22%	0.06%
All ages	2.0%	2.1%	2.1%	2.0%	2.0%	0%

- 2.6 As a benchmark for the figures in Table 2.1, cycling data have been extracted from the National Travel Survey (Table 2.2). These figures show that the average number of bicycle trips per person across the UK, for any journey purpose, has declined slightly between 2006-2010.

**TABLE 2.2 NATIONAL TRAVEL SURVEY - NUMBER OF BICYCLE TRIPS PER PERSON PER YEAR (UK)**

Mode	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Change from 2006/2010
Bicycle	16	14	16	15	15	-1

- 2.7 Table 2.3 shows how the proportion of children cycling to school has varied by year in the different English regions. While the proportions are small, there are some interesting trends and differences between regions. The greatest decline in cycling has occurred in the North East (-0.5%-points); the greatest increases in cycling have occurred in Yorkshire and the Humber, the East of England and the South West (0.3%-points). In London there has been a marginal decline of 0.1%-point since 2006 although the mode share has been constant since 2008-09.

**TABLE 2.3 MODE SHARE FOR CYCLING FOR THE JOURNEY TO SCHOOL BY REGION**

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	%-point change (2006-11)
North East	1.8%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	-0.5%
North West	1.0%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	0.2%
Yorkshire and The Humber	0.9%	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%	0.3%
East Midlands	2.2%	2.2%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	-0.1
West Midlands	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.4%	0.1
East of England	3.3%	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%	3.6%	0.3
London	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	-0.1
South East	3.1%	3.3%	3.4%	3.4%	3.2%	0.1
South West	2.4%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	0.3
Average across all regions	1.9%	2.02%	2.01%	2.00%	1.97%	0.07

### 3 Bikeability Delivery

#### Background

- 3.1 As a condition of receiving DfT cycle training grant, local authorities and school games organiser host schools (SGOHSs) are asked to provide details of the numbers of pupils undertaking DfT funded Bikeability in their area. Since 2009, these delivery figures have been collected annually. Grant recipients are asked to report their delivery figures by year group, although in practice few recipients provide this level of detail. Among those recipients that have reported by year group, 31% of children trained are in Year 5, 60% are in Year 6 and 8% are in Year 7.
- 3.2 At present, the delivery dataset does not account for any baseline Bikeability training funded by local authorities, to which DfT grant funding is additional. Further, some local authorities do not draw any DfT cycle training grant, therefore any Bikeability that is delivered in these areas is not recorded within the DfT's delivery dataset.

**TABLE 3.1 09/10 DFT FUNDED BIKEABILITY LEVEL 2 PLACES BY ENGLISH REGION**

Totals by Region	DfT funded local authority places	DfT Funded SGOHS places	Total	Total numbers of Year 6 children
South East	24,911	22,305	47,216	88,240
East of England	12,326	15,218	27,544	63,130
West Midlands	24,250	15,327	39,577	63,140
North East	20,668	1,435	22,103	27,990
Yorkshire and Humber	10,558	17,818	28,376	58,050
North West	37,790	10,259	48,049	78,320
East Midlands	6,507	12,190	18,697	49,540
South West	13,742	13,428	27,170	54,480
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150,752</b>	<b>107,980</b>	<b>258,732</b>	<b>482,890</b>

### Year Group Data

- 3.3 Year group data has been supplied by around one third of local authorities; authorities that did not supply this data have been omitted, with this in mind the analysis here is only indicative. The purpose of this analysis is to determine whether training in Year 5 leads to a higher proportion of cycling to primary school compared to training in Year 6. This is because it is assumed those trained in Year 5 will have more opportunity to use their training to cycle to primary school.
- 3.4 Whilst training occurs in Years 4 to 7, Table 6.1 illustrates that the highest numbers of pupils are trained in Year 6.

**TABLE 3.2 BIKEABILITY LEVEL 2 TRAINING IN SCHOOLS BY YEAR GROUP**

Year Group	Average Number Funded (per school)	No. Pupils in SGOHS delivery	No. Pupils in LA delivery	Total pupils (both SGOHS and LA delivery)	% of total trained
Year 4 (Age 8)	7.9	563	464	1,027	1%
Year 5 (Age 9)	14.7	8,866	16,249	25,115	31%
Year 6 (Age 10)	16.9	21,932	26,956	48,888	60%
Year 7 (Age 11)	28.5	5,274	935	6,209	8%

- 3.5 SGOHSs deliver more training to Year 7 pupils, with local authorities concentrating on Years 5 and 6. This may be due to partnership working arrangements between local authorities and SGOHSs, whereby one party agrees to train different age groups.

## 4 Correlations between School Census and Bikeability Data

4.1 This section highlights key correlations between the school census and Bikeability data. It is, however, important to recognise that these are correlations only and should not be taken as indicative of any underlying causation.

4.2 In this chapter we examine:

- The number of children cycling to secondary school and the incidence of cycle training in primary feeder schools using Hertfordshire as a case study;
- The longevity of Bikeability provision in local authorities in comparison to the mode share of cycling to school; and
- The level of funding received by local authorities in comparison to the mode share of cycling to school.

### **Bikeability Training and Cycling to Secondary School**

#### ***Hertfordshire***

4.3 Hertfordshire has been used a case study in this section of the report. Hertfordshire has delivered Bikeability since the launch of the scheme so delivery data is available covering a period of four years.

#### ***Focus on individual schools***

4.4 Three secondary schools in Hertfordshire received training in each of their feeder schools during 08/09 and 09/10. These schools are the Sir John Lawes School in Harpenden, and the Sandringham and Beaumont schools in St Albans.

4.5 At the Sir John Lawes School the number of pupils cycling to this school has increased from 20 to 52 during 08/09 to 09/10. The number of pupils cycling to this school continued to grow by 20 from 2010-2011.

4.6 At both the Sandringham School and the Beaumont School, the number of pupils cycling to school has increased by 40 between 2008 and 2010. The number of pupils cycling to these schools continued to grow by 16 from 2010-2011.

4.7 Table 4.1 below shows the performance of these three Secondary schools.



**TABLE 4.1 HERTFORDSHIRE SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITH A HIGH PROPORTION OF TRAINING IN FEEDER SCHOOLS**

Town	Secondary School	2008 Cyclist numbers	2009 Cyclist numbers	2010 Cyclist numbers	2011 Cyclist numbers
Harpenden	Sir John Lawes School	20	34	52	72
St Albans	Sandringham School	56	66	64	79
St Albans	Beaumont School	13	35	45	46
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>89</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>197</b>

- 4.8 By comparison, there are ten secondary schools that had low numbers of cycle training in their feeder schools. These schools received no training in any feeder school in 09/10. This level of training in feeder schools is coincidental with a stable or decreasing number of children cycling to school as shown in table 4.2.

**TABLE 4.2 HERTFORDSHIRE SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITH LOW NUMBERS TRAINED IN FEEDER SCHOOLS**

Town	High School	2008 Cyclist numbers	2009 Cyclist numbers	2010 Cyclist numbers	2011 Cyclist numbers
Stevenage	Barclay School	97	104	109	84
Stevenage	The John Henry Newman Catholic School	38	31	19	21
Stevenage	The Nobel School	59	55	46	46
Berkhamsted	Ashlyns School	15	6	7	5
Kings Langley	Kings Langley School	22	17	8	6
Hemel Hempstead	Longdean School	75	52	52	22
Rickmansworth	Saint Joan of Arc Catholic School	1	1	5	6
Hertford	Richard Hale School	6	6	5	7
Letchworth	Fearnhill School	28	47	47	47

Town	High School	2008 Cyclist numbers	2009 Cyclist numbers	2010 Cyclist numbers	2011 Cyclist numbers
Hitchin	Hitchin Boys' School	11	8	12	12
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>352</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>256</b>

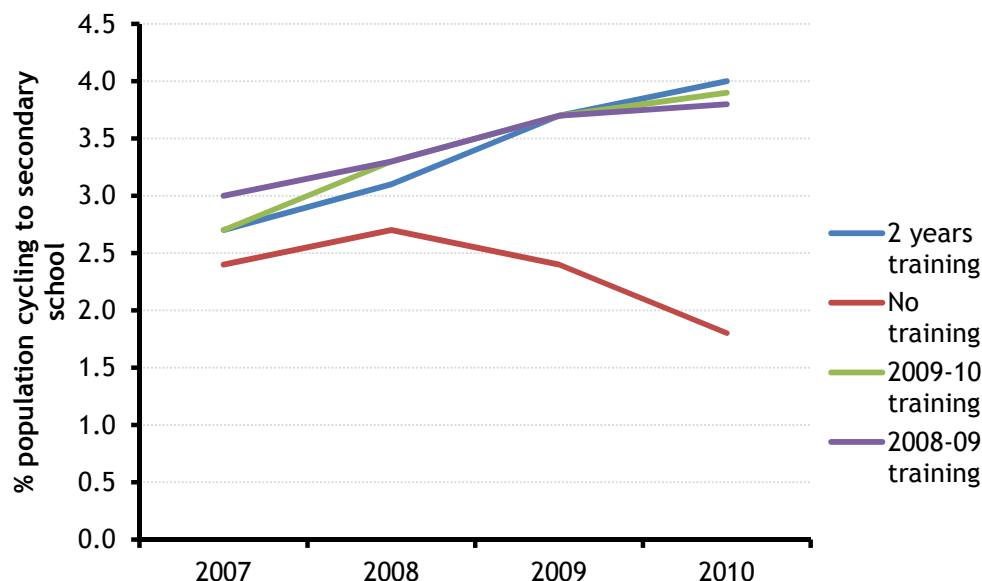
***Cycling mode share and level of Bikeability training across all schools***

4.9 Table 4.3 shows the proportion of the secondary school children in Hertfordshire cycling to school by whether or not the school had Bikeability training in their feeder schools.

**TABLE 4.3 MODE SHARE OF CYCLING TO HERTFORDSHIRE SECONDARY SCHOOLS BY LEVEL OF BIKEABILITY TRAINING IN FEEDER SCHOOLS**

Level of training	Cycling mode share 2007 (%)	Cycling mode share 2008 (%)	Cycling mode share 2009 (%)	Cycling mode share 2010 (%)	Number of schools
2 years Bikeability training	2.7	3.1	3.7	4	32
No Bikeability training	2.4	2.7	2.4	1.8	10
2009-10 Bikeability training only	2.7	3.3	3.7	3.9	49
2008-09 Bikeability training only	3	3.3	3.7	3.8	42

**FIGURE 4.1 MODE SHARE OF CYCLING TO HERTFORDSHIRE SECONDARY SCHOOLS BY LEVEL OF BIKEABILITY TRAINING IN FEEDER SCHOOLS**



4.10 Table 4.3 and figure 4.1 above show that where there is a history of delivering cycle training this coincides with a higher proportion of children cycling to secondary school. In schools where pupils have not received any training this is matched by a decline in the mode share of cycling for the journey to school.

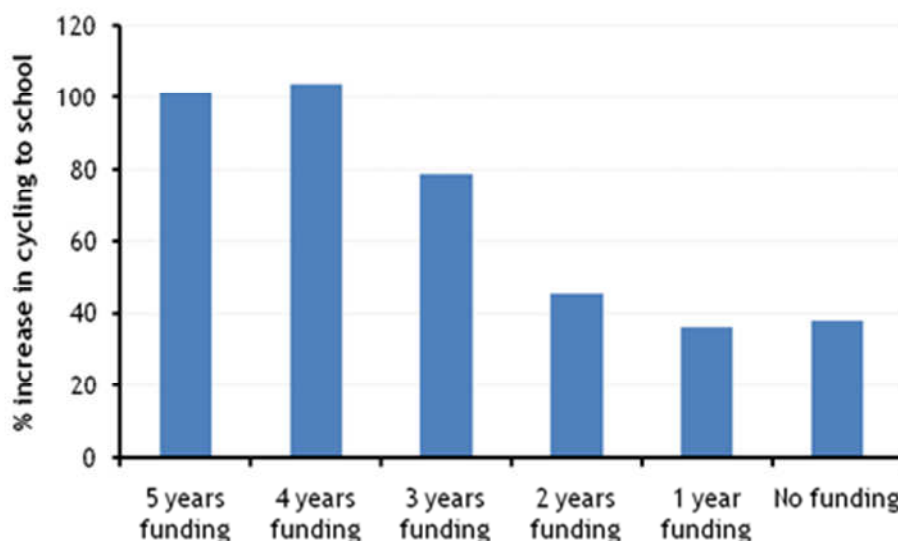
4.11 It must be emphasised that the above is a correlation between two sets of data. Any causal relationships between the two data sets cannot be determined conclusively as there is no robust comparison group against which alternative explanations may be tested.

#### **Longevity of Bikeability Funding and Cycling to School throughout England (excluding London)**

4.12 Mode share data for 11-15 year olds cycling to secondary school was compared with the length of time local authorities have drawn down DfT cycle training grant.

4.13 Figure 4.2 shows that the greatest increases in the level of cycling to secondary school coincide with a history of funded Bikeability training places. Local authorities that have received funding for Bikeability training for over four years have on average also experienced an increase in the proportion of 11-15 year olds cycling to secondary school by over 100%. Local authorities that are new to Bikeability or have yet to take Bikeability up (zero - two years Bikeability training) have an average increase of around 40%.

**FIGURE 4.2 INCREASE IN 11-15 YEAR OLDS CYCLING TO SCHOOL BY LONGEVITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY FUNDING**

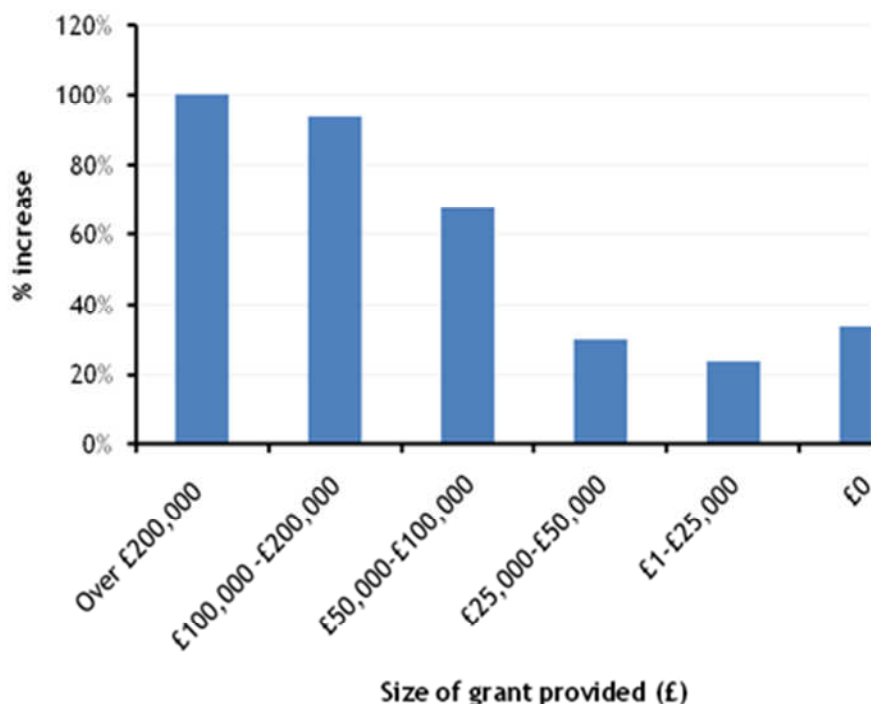


- 4.14 Again, it must be emphasised that figure 4.2 is a correlation between two data sets and should not be taken as indicative of a causal relationship. Other factors and funding sources may also have contributed to the increase in cycling. For example, those in the ‘no funding’ category have not received DfT cycle training grant funding, but may have received funding from other sources or participated in other behaviour change schemes that could have had an impact on the number of children cycling to school. This may partially explain why those in the ‘no funding’ category have also experienced an increase in cycling of almost 40% - it also illustrates that other factors will have been behind the results in the other categories.

#### **Level of Bikeability Funding and Cycling to School throughout England (excluding London)**

- 4.15 Figure 4.3 shows the percentage increase in the mode share of cycling to school across local authorities, categorised by differing levels of Bikeability funding (the total amount a local authority has drawn down throughout 2007-2010). Local authorities that have drawn down over £200,000 are on average associated with a doubling of cycling to secondary school.
- 4.16 Again, these figures do not account for the influence of other funding sources or schemes. This may account for some of the higher percentages for those drawing down £0 for cycle training and will no doubt have contributed to the increase in local authorities in the other funding categories.

FIGURE 4.3 INCREASE IN 11-15 YEAR OLDS CYCLING TO SCHOOL BY LEVEL OF BIKEABILITY FUNDING AWARDED 2007-2010



- 4.17 Both figure 4.2 and figure 4.3 show there are correlations between the longevity and amount of grant awarded (and thus number of pupils trained) against the increased number of pupils cycling to school.
- 4.18 However, this may only be one factor influencing mode choice for the journey to school. Local authorities that draw down large amounts of Bikeability funding, or that have been delivering Bikeability for a long period of time may also be involved in other cycling schemes that have potentially contributed to the increase in 11-15 year olds cycling to school.
- 4.19 Further, it should be recognised that a 100% increase does not necessarily represent high numbers cycling to school if the baseline number cycling to school was low. While there have been substantial percentage increases, this should be viewed in the context of the national change in the mode share of cycling to school presented in chapter 2.



## 5 Conclusions

### Cycling to School

- 5.1 Overall this report shows the level of children cycling to school in the last five years has remained stable. There have been small increases in the actual numbers of secondary school age children cycling to school between 2006 and 2011 across the UK. However, this has been almost matched by a very small decline in the proportion of primary school children cycling to school.
- 5.2 The relationship between Bikeability and the proportion of children cycling to school has been examined in a number of ways. Although no strong claims about causality can be made from this analysis, there are some encouraging indications that Bikeability is positively associated with higher levels of cycling to school.
- i) Data from Hertfordshire shows that there has been an increase in the number of children cycling to secondary schools where all the feeder primaries have delivered Bikeability training, compared to a decrease in levels of cycling to secondary school where none of the feeder primaries offered Bikeability.
  - ii) Data from England shows that where there is a longer history of delivering cycle training in local authorities, this coincides with a higher proportion of children cycling to secondary school.
  - iii) Local authorities that have drawn down higher levels of Bikeability funding have seen larger increases in cycling to secondary school than those which drew down smaller amounts.

### The Impact of Bikeability

- 5.3 There are many factors that may affect mode choice for the journey to school such as year round climate, day to day weather conditions, topography, the distance a child lives from school, the availability of parents to accompany their children to school, the cost of fuel. Short or long term variations in any one of these factors may have an impact on how children travel to school.
- 5.4 In the timespan covered by the analyses in this report, many other interventions have been delivered across the UK that may also have had an impact on travel to school. In the realm of transport alone, journeys to school may have been influenced by:
- the wider school travel planning work undertaken as part of the DfT-DCSF Travelling to School Initiative;
  - infrastructure and behavioural interventions delivered as part of the DfT funded cycling demonstration towns;
  - the work of third sector organisations such as Sustrans and CTC through DfT funded initiatives such as Bike It and Bike Club (which, like travel plans, may introduce cycle training as part of a package of measures designed to increase levels of cycling) and the Safe Routes to School infrastructure improvement programme;

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- local level strategies such as Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategies (SMoTS) for schools; and
  - infrastructure improvements funded through local level sources such as Local Transport Plans.
- 5.5 Within the available data it is only possible therefore to make observations about the correlation between Bikeability delivery and mode shift since the impacts of other schemes cannot be disaggregated.

### Recommendations for Future Analysis and Research

- 5.6 Further analysis could be undertaken to identify other local authorities where there appears to be a link between cycling to secondary schools and delivery of Bikeability training in primary schools.
- 5.7 From 2011-12, the mode of travel question will no longer be included in the school census. This may be an opportunity for focused research with local partners to examine the impacts of Bikeability. The local partners, e.g. local authorities, would need to collect journey to school data, ideally at pupil level and in such a way that it could be linked with other pupil characteristics such as participation (and, crucially, non-participation) in Bikeability training.
- 5.8 A pre- and post-Bikeability study across a sufficient sample of training participants may provide the basis for a more comprehensive statistical analysis than has been possible with the existing data. This could form the basis for more confident assertions about any links between Bikeability training and cycling to school.

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## CONTROL SHEET

Project/Proposal Name            Cycling to School

Document Title                    A review of school census and Bikeability delivery data

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## REVIEW

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## DISTRIBUTION

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