



# IMPACT REPORT 2019



GETTING REFUGEES  
CYCLING



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# A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR

"2019 was a significant year for The Bike Project. We were able to reach more refugees and asylum seekers than ever and the growth of our organisation through regional expansion has enabled us to further our impact across the UK.

We are very aware that refugees and asylum seekers in the UK are often found in vulnerable situations and that the demands on charities to ensure their most basic of needs are met are growing. At the same time the charity and refugee sectors face challenging and uncertain times. For The Bike Project our response to this reality is to ensure that as many refugees as possible are able to benefit from the financial savings and access to services that a bike can offer.

The Bike Project is nothing without the supporters, volunteers, trustees, beneficiaries and staff who drive forward our work. I would like to thank each and every one of them for their dedication and inspiration."



**ADAM OGNALL**  
CHAIR OF TRUSTEES





## WHAT WE DO

Our mission is simple – to match up refugees and asylum seekers without the means or money to travel around with the thousands of abandoned or unwanted bikes in London, Birmingham and beyond.

Founded in 2013, The Bike Project provides an innovative solution to one of the most pressing problems facing refugees in the UK: the cost of transport and the impact that a lack of mobility has on daily life.

Now 7 years later there are approximately 200,000 refugees in the UK whilst every year 27,500 bikes are abandoned in London alone. To date, we have refurbished and donated 5,859 of these.

"When you have to go from charity to charity to feed yourself, a bike becomes very important to your life."

### AND WHY WE DO IT

On arrival to the UK, most refugees are prohibited from taking paid work and can be living on just £37.75 per week asylum support whilst they await the outcome of their asylum claim that can often take years to resolve.

By refurbishing abandoned bikes, The Bike Project has created a sustainable model which achieves physical, emotional, social and financial benefits for one of the UK's most vulnerable, isolated and economically disadvantaged groups.

## BIKE DONATIONS

5,859

bikes collected,  
refurbished and  
donated to refugees

## TALENT DEVELOPMENT

692

volunteers hosted,  
trained and supported  
at our office, shop and  
workshop

## PEDAL POWER

385

refugee women taught  
to cycle at our weekly  
Pedal Power sessions

## BIKE BUDDIES

163

refugees matched  
with a local Bike Buddy  
to help cycle with  
confidence

# ACTIVITY REPORT

The last 12 months have represented another year of growth for The Bike Project. Although scaling up in size, the organisation has worked to retain its sense of community.

2019 was the year when we completed our regional expansion project and opened a new, locally staffed workshop in the West Midlands. At the same time, the team in London took on the ambitious plan to increase output to satisfy growing demand from both beneficiaries and customers.

Despite year on year growth of 33% in bike donations, demand for our services is at an all time high. Whilst donating more bikes than in any other year of operation, our waiting list has grown so that at any one time there is up to 600 refugees in need of a bike.

## 2019 IN NUMBERS

**Donated 1,617 bikes to refugees, representing 33% year on year growth.**



**Delivered 66 bike donation workshops in London and at our new Birmingham site.**



**Taught 149 women to cycle and expanded to 4 Pedal Power sessions per week.**



**Trained 58 new Bike Buddies who have been matched with 82 refugees.**



**Supported 138 people to volunteer at our workshop and office, a third of whom are former beneficiaries.**



# BUILDING COMMUNITY



NETWORK  
OF 30+  
BIKE  
DROP OFF  
POINTS

WORKSHOPS  
IN BOTH  
LONDON AND  
THE WEST  
MIDLANDS

58 NEW  
BIKE  
BUDDIES  
TRAINED

16 STAFF, 196  
VOLUNTEERS  
AND  
BENEFICIARIES

66 DONATION  
SESSIONS  
HELD IN  
LONDON AND  
BIRMINGHAM

1617 BIKES  
DONATED TO  
REFUGEES FROM  
62 COUNTRIES  
INCLUDING SYRIA,  
IRAN, SUDAN,  
AFGHANISTAN,  
AND TURKEY

WAITING  
LIST OF  
600  
REFUGEES

147 PEDAL  
POWER  
PARTICIPANTS  
ACROSS 4  
SITES

75+  
REFERRAL  
PARTNERS

## CHALLENGES

There is no indication that the UK government will increase asylum support to factor in transport costs, despite it being the UK's highest household spend. Instead, the hostile environment continues to force asylum seekers and refugees further into destitution.

Living on such limited means has a devastating impact on mobility, but also physical and mental health. Housed far from the charities and communities which can offer advice and support, many are forced to walk long distances to access vital services. As a result we are repeatedly told how exhausted, isolated and lonely beneficiaries are feeling. This was corroborated by the 2017 report from the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness which found that 58% of refugees in London describe loneliness and isolation as their biggest challenge.

Despite the challenges of 2019, The Bike Project has maintained focus on building a community of solidarity and support, celebrating diversity and ensuring our future through financial sustainability in the face of unprecedented demand for services and increased competition for funding.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- We donated our first 207 bikes from our new workshop in Birmingham
- We expanded Pedal Power to 4 lessons per week
- Our annual comedy fundraiser sold out and raised £29k\*
- We entered 36 beneficiaries, staff and fundraisers into RideLondon, raising a total of £21k\*
- Our shop reported income of £184k\*, its highest yet



## OUR IMPACT

Semi structured in-depth interviews conducted with our beneficiaries and published in The Lancet\* in 2018 found that The Bike Project:

- Provides opportunities to bring people together from different backgrounds
- Reduces prejudice and negative stereotyping and increases trust
- Reduces social isolation, loneliness and increases social confidence

### INTEGRATION

Refugees report using their bike for essential journeys every week, in fact, 70% are using it most or every day just to get from A-B. After getting a bike and support from The Bike Project:

- 78% of beneficiaries say they know their local area better
- 80% say they feel part of a new, cycling community
- 83% say they have visited new places and done new things on their bike

"Cycling gives me freedom, I can ride to wherever i want to be. It gives you wings, you're flying, it brings such happiness and joy."

### PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

Refugees often tell us that cycling gives a chance to reconnect with their bodies and get rid of the stresses of daily life. In fact, increased physical activity is proven to result in improved physical and mental health, especially for people who have experienced and are recovering from severe trauma.

Beneficiaries report much higher levels of physical activity after collecting a bike with 77% exercising for at least 180 minutes each week. This is supported by self-reports of modal shift: a decreased dependence on public transport and increased use of active modes (walking and cycling).





**90%**

refugees use their bike every week for essential journeys

**78%**

say that they know their local area better after getting a bike

**83%**

say they have used their bike to visit new places or do new things

**30%**

of beneficiaries are female refugees or asylum seekers

A young man with short dark hair and a goatee is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a blue quilted jacket with an Adidas logo on the left chest and a crest on the right chest. He has a brown strap over his shoulder. The background is a workshop or garage with various tools, boxes, and equipment.

**85%**

refugees say they feel less lonely and isolated since getting a bike

**80%**

say they feel The Bike Project has helped make them feel part of a community

**93%**

say the weekly cost of transport is no longer such an issue

**85%**

feel more confident and independent since getting a bike



## FINANCIAL SAVINGS

After collecting a bike, 93% of refugees say the cost of transport is no longer as much of an issue as before.

A bus pass in most cities costs an average of £20 per week, we estimate a minimum annual saving of £1,000 for every bike we donate. This estimate could be much higher as refugees living on limited means often pay per journey instead of realising the savings a weekly pass provides.

## NURTURING TALENT

All bike beneficiaries are invited to return to learn new skills at our workshop, office or at our cycling lessons. Qualitative interviews with our volunteers found that our volunteering opportunities:

- help people feel part of a supportive community
- improve skills and confidence
- Increase people's preparedness for the UK workplace

Bike beneficiaries are also twice as likely to be in training or education after collecting a bike.

"When you have the stress you gonna come here and they give you a positivity of mind"

## LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

It may come as no surprise, but cyclists speak to each other! Refugees report feeling better connected in general and are making twice as many trips for social or leisure reasons after collecting a bike. On follow up:

- 85% beneficiaries feel less lonely and isolated
- 85% feel more confident and independent

## GENDER EQUALITY

Women make up 28% of the general refugee population, and on average just 27% of cycle trips in the UK are made by women. Through Pedal Power we have tackled this challenge head on to lower the gender gap. We are pleased to report that in 2019, 30% of our bike beneficiaries were female (compared to just 4% in 2014).



"Having a bike made me feel more at home in Birmingham. The Bike Project has been like a family to me. I want to help break down the stigma of cycling for women and get them excited about accessing the freedom of a bike. "

## MAJDA'S STORY

When Majda first came into contact with The Bike Project she had only just arrived in Birmingham and didn't know many people at all. It was her housemate that recommended she learn to cycle to help her with the cost of travel. Little did she know how much she would fall in love with Pedal Power, our female-led, women only cycling course.

It was a long journey, from Omdurman in Sudan, to getting on her first bike in that first lesson in Digbeth, Birmingham. Majda said: "I was so nervous, I thought I would be judged for never having been on a bike before."

But nothing of the sort happened and Majda quickly grew comfortable in

the saddle. It wasn't just confidence in cycling that Pedal Power brought her, but much more: "As a Hijabi woman, you never saw other Hijabi women cycling in Sudan. I feel so proud to be able to cycle now. When I am cycling I can feel the wind in my face, I feel so happy. Without the bike, I would have been so worried about travel costs, and been stuck at home, getting more depressed."

After graduating Pedal Power, Majda was fitted with a bike and given safety gear. It was then that she decided to continue volunteering with The Bike Project, and she now helps support other refugees who collect a bike each week from the Birmingham workshop.

But Majda doesn't want to stop there. She hopes to become an advocate for other refugee women to take up cycling, an ambition which we will support her to achieve.

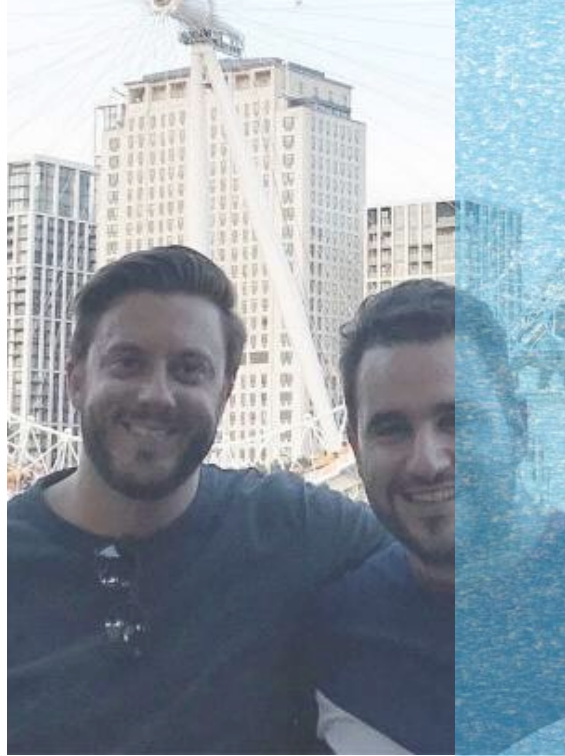
"Having grown up here, sometimes you forget just how much there is to see and do, so seeing it through someone else's eyes has made me fall in love with London again."

## BIKE BUDDIES JACK & SAAD

As one of our successful Bike Buddies matches, Jack and Saad have enjoyed quite a few bike rides together. Their experience shows the lasting impact this initiative has on both local volunteers and refugees.

Saad received a bike from The Bike Project in June 2019. When he was told about Bike Buddies he was very keen to be matched with a local cyclist. He said: "I wanted to experience it, I found the project interesting. With a volunteer, I discovered places calmly and it gives you vitality."

Bike Buddy volunteer, Jack, was equally as excited to take part. "I found out about The Bike Project through Twitter and I applied. After a great day of training with other volunteers, I was hugely excited to get started and meet a buddy."



After carefully planning their first ride, Jack and Saad met at Parsons Green tube station and cycled into central London via Hyde Park to visit some key landmarks including Buckingham Palace, Parliament and the Royal Albert Hall. Saad says: "Cycling has been a great way to see London. It's good for the environment and gives light sport for my body."

At the end of the energetic first day of exploring London, both Jack and Saad were keen to arrange another ride and agreed to meet the following weekend.

Jack and Saad went on to meet a total of four times throughout the summer, exploring new areas of London together whilst building Saad's confidence to navigate the city by bike for himself.

## MEDIA & PR

Through media engagement, The Bike Project aims to raise the profile of our charity and provide a platform for positive representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK media.

In 2019 we have made a number of appearances in broadcast, print and digital media, including:

The Big Issue, Top 100 Changemakers

Waitrose News, Clare Balding Column

BBC Radio London, Jo Goode Show Interview

Third Sector Magazine, New Innovative and Making a Difference

Business Cloud, Tech gives thousands of asylum seekers a difference

BBC Woman's Hour, Jane visits The Bike Project

Prolific London, My start up

Southwark News, National Lottery favourite project

The Big Issue: Jem Stein gets refugees moving

The Big Issue, Watch Louis Thoroux get on his bike for refugees

BBC WM 95.6, Llewela Bailey speaks to Sarah Goss

The Guardian, From chefs to cyclists: Inspiring charities making a change

Road.cc, Xmas goodwill suggestion

Cycling Industry News, The Bike Project receives 106k to hire more staff

ITV London, Interview by Antoine Allen on ITV London news at 6pm

# FUTURE PLANS

The UK government's hostile environment and austerity measures are continuing to restrict refugees' and asylum seekers' access to financial support and adequate housing. As a direct consequence this puts refugees in an increasingly vulnerable position where they are dependent on charitable aid to meet their basic living needs. At the same time, demand for our services has never been higher whilst the imminent departure from the EU creates economic uncertainty across the UK charity sector.

As such, the financial savings and access to vital support and opportunities that a bike can provide have never been more significant. Beyond the bike donation itself, our programmes of Pedal Power, Bike Buddies and Talent Development which help to promote social integration and reduce social isolation are prescient.

Looking forward, we will continue to address the growing need from refugees in the UK by increasing our output from our current bases in London and the West Midlands. At the same time we will improve the quality of service delivery and consolidate our learning from the regional expansion to maximise the transformative impact of every bike that we donate.

To ensure our financial security we will continue to diversify our income stream, including a focus on community fundraising and have been named RideLondon 46 Charity Partner for 2020. We also plan to open a new, standalone bike shop, with the addition of bike servicing, to enable our social enterprise to flourish.

Beyond 2020 we are excited to announce an ambitious national mobile bike donation programme to reach all cities across the UK where there are refugees living.





# SUPPORTERS

The Bike Project only exists because of the generous support of our funders. Without the following trusts, funds and organisations, none of our work or achievements outlined in this report would be possible.

AB Charitable Trust  
Alan and Babette Sainsbury Charitable Fund  
AD Trust  
Betty Messenger Charitable Foundation  
BlackRock  
Clifford Chance  
Comic Relief  
Cycling Podcast  
Dulverton Trust  
Duveen Trust  
Ebay Foundation  
Edward Cadbury Trust  
Eranda Rothschild Foundation  
Help Refugees  
Henry Smith Charity  
Hoare & Co  
Lansdowne Partners  
London Community Foundation  
Mishcon de Reya  
Mosaic Liberal Synagogue  
Network For Social Change  
Newby Trust  
National Lottery Community Fund  
P&G Charitable Trust  
Prudential  
PwC  
Southwark Council  
Team London  
The Bridgewater Charitable Trust  
The City Bridge Trust  
The Leathersellers Company  
The Parker Johnson Prentice Charitable Trust  
The Rayne Foundation  
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Vitol Foundation  
W A Cadbury Charitable Trust

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**THANK YOU!**

