

Better cycling to the new National Standard for Cycle Training

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Do you remember the first time you travelled by cycle, and the feeling of joyful independence that cycling somewhere brings? In England today, more than half of all children leave primary school after experiencing that feeling in Bikeability, the government's cycle training programme based on the National Standard for Cycle Training, backed by £50million from 2016 to 2020.

The National Standard and Bikeability are also on a journey, following their launch in 2007 and two periodic reviews in 2012 and 2017. The next destination is the launch of the new National Standard, the new Bikeability delivery guide, and new 1st4Sport Bikeability instructor qualifications, on May 1, 2019.

The National Standard is a holistic statement of cycling competence. Put simply, it describes what good cycling and good cycling instruction look like. The National Standard sets out the skills and understanding needed to cycle safely and responsibly, not limited by the rider's current ability, their choice of cycle, the infrastructure they use, the traffic or weather conditions, or the time of day. The National Standard is an infinite entity, something all riders can aspire to cycle within and continue cycling towards throughout life.

Four principles underpinned the 2017 National Standard review:

- **Simplicity** – focus on the core functions used in everyday cycling
- **Inclusivity** – improve access to the National Standard, cycle training and cycling
- **Flexibility** – enable cycling everywhere cycling is permitted

- **Clarity** – address inconsistency and align with established National Standards.

Although bigger than Bikeability, the National Standard provides assessment criteria for the government's flagship cycle training programme aimed at children and young people. Bikeability is a progressive programme in which riders first master cycle handling skills in motor traffic-free environments (Level 1), then develop skills and confidence to cycle on single-lane roads and simple junctions with mostly moderate motor traffic flows (Level 2), before tackling often busier, faster, and sometimes multi-lane roads and complex junctions (Level 3). Most Bikeability training is delivered at Levels 1 and 2 in primary school years 5 and 6, and is designed to ensure young riders start their journey towards cycling to the National Standard.

The new Bikeability delivery guide for Bikeability providers and instructors promotes four core functions and systematic routines which underpin safe and responsible cycling strategies.

Core functions (which inform behaviour and routine):

- making good and frequent observations
- communicating intentions clearly to others
- choosing and maintaining the most suitable riding positions
- understanding priorities on the road, particularly at junctions.

Systematic routines (to be standard practice at each junction or piece of infrastructure):

- planning well in advance, anticipating and responding



- looking behind before communicating intentions and changing riding position
- the most suitable riding positions for different parts of journey
- knowing when to give way to others or take priority assertively.

The expected outcome from all training is learners will demonstrate independent decision making, becoming progressively more competent, consistent and confident, in increasingly challenging environments. Bikeability trainees will have the ability to reflect on decisions they make, continually improve their cycling, and continue their progression towards cycling to the National Standard. This should give trained young people the confidence to make informed active travel choices, and contribute to an increasingly calm, considerate and happy shared space for all road users.

The National Standard, approved by the DfT's Cycle Training Standards Board, was published by the DVSA in October 2018 and will become operational with the new Bikeability delivery guide on May 1, 2019.