

CASE STUDY



Key Worker Cycle Scheme

Free bike loans & vouchers which have helped key workers to safely and healthily access work during the pandemic.



The Key Worker Cycle Scheme aimed to give people needing to travel to work during the pandemic the option of cycling. Throughout April-June 2020²⁰ key workers could take advantage of one of two offers:

1. Free access to a short-term **bike loan** – for those who did not own a bike, to give them the opportunity to try cycling to work.
2. A **£50 voucher** for cycle repairs and essential accessories – for those who already owned a bike and wanted to start, or re-start, cycling to work.

A survey of the key workers who took part showed that, generally, they wanted to cycle more to improve their health and well-being; to improve air quality; to reduce their commuting costs; and to take advantage of less traffic on the roads.²¹

Bike Loans

163 key workers took up the offer of a loan bike, which was delivered to their home along with a helmet and bike lock, for them to use for up to 3 months.

This initiative was particularly popular with women (71% of initial survey respondents) – who are traditionally less likely to cycle; as well as with new, novice and lapsed cyclists (90%). On average, these key workers went from zero cycling trips a week before their loan, to seven trips a week by the end of their loan (three for commuting, three for leisure and one for other essential travel).

Only 2% of people said they used a bike as their main mode of transport to get to work before their bike loan. After six months 7% said they were mainly cycling to work – a 250% increase. Most had transferred from travelling by car, either driving alone or car sharing.²²

Immediately after getting their loan bike, more than three quarters of people (81%) said they intended to buy their own bike after the loan ended. In reality, only half of survey respondents (48%) still had access to a bike after 6 months. About 30% had bought their own bike, while others had repaired a bike they already had, or borrowed a bike when they needed one.²³

All of the loan bike recipients expressed satisfaction with their experience (100%), making comments such as:

"I have been reminded about how much I loved cycling when I was younger. It has encouraged me to get out more on a cycle and not by car."

"[I] loved it and have lost weight and got fitter. It also really helped my mental health after stressful shifts."

"It was brilliant. Really helped my mental health as well providing me with a good way to get to and from work when my car broke. I've enjoyed it so much I'm looking to buy a bike myself to keep at it."

"[I] don't own a car and bus times during lock down were awful, so having a bike gave me... much needed freedom."

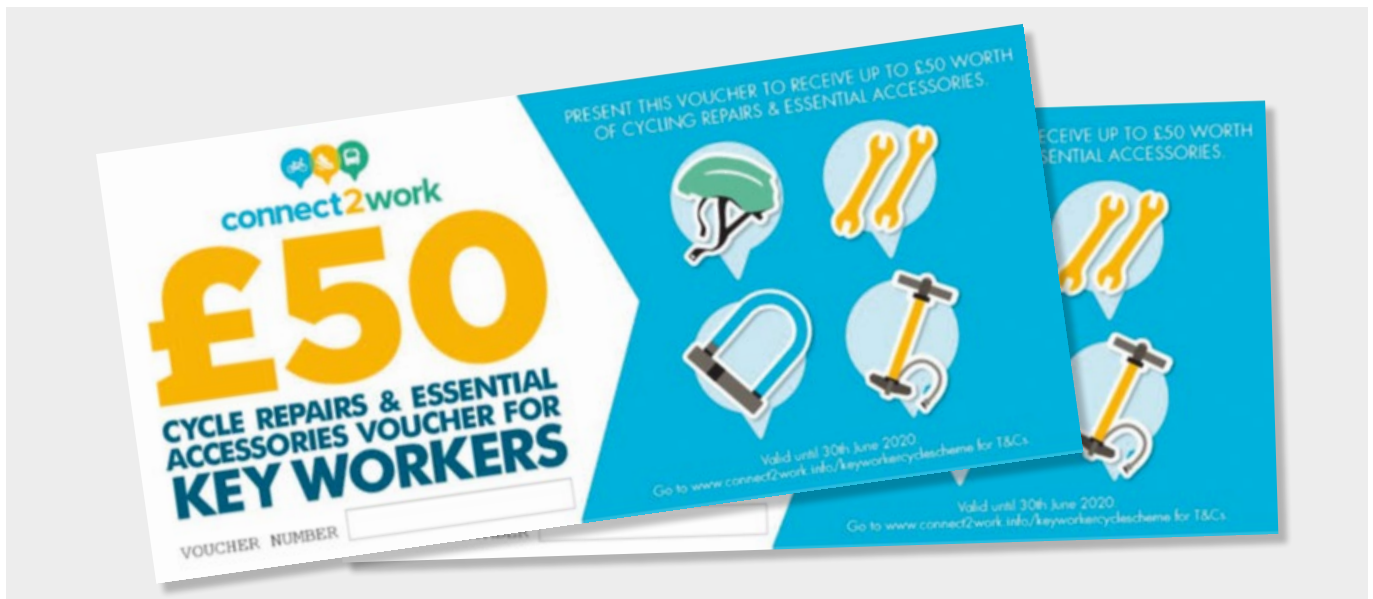
"I've really enjoyed the physical benefits and feeling that I start my day off well. I've started to cycle on my days off and have made savings on fuel and parking costs. Really hope to keep it up."

²⁰ The voucher scheme was subsequently superseded by the Government's Fix Your Bike voucher scheme, while the bike loan scheme continued to run, at a reduced level, throughout the remainder of 2020 and into 2021, when e-bikes were also included in the offer.

²¹ Participants were invited to complete an initial survey a few weeks after using their voucher or returning their loan bike. Those who responded were then invited to complete a further follow-up survey six months later. 48 bike loan recipients completed the initial survey (29% of 163), and 27 the follow-up survey (56% of 48). 218 bike voucher recipients completed the initial survey (55% of 393), and 150 the follow-up survey (69% of 218).

²² These figures should be treated with caution, as the number of survey respondents was low.

²³ Ditto



Key Worker Voucher Scheme

681 key workers completed the online form to request a bike voucher – which gave a £50 credit towards repairs and accessories at participating local cycling businesses. Of the 508 vouchers posted out, 393 were redeemed (77%).

The remaining 173 applicants were referred to the national Fix Your Bike voucher scheme; which was in part influenced by, and subsequently superseded, the Island's scheme.

Three fifths (59%) of voucher recipients who responded to the initial survey identified as either a 'regular' or 'semi-regular' cyclist (respectively cycling more than once a week or more than once a month). A quarter (24%) were lapsed cyclists and nearly a fifth (17%) were a new or novice cyclist.

The scheme was equally popular with men and women (54% male, 46% female); although the female recipients were more likely to be lapsed, novice or new cyclists (55% compared to 29% of men). It was particularly popular with employees of Isle of Wight NHS Trust – with 163 of their staff applying for a voucher (5% of their workforce).

19% of people said they used a bike as their main mode of transport to get to work before using their voucher. After six months 38% said they were mainly cycling to work – a two-fold increase. Most had transferred from either travelling by car, car sharing, or walking.

On average, recipients went from making five trips a week by bike, to, after six months, seven a week – with three trips to work, three for leisure and one for other essential travel.

Again, satisfaction was high amongst people who had received a voucher (99%), who made comments such as:

"I've absolutely loved it and am going to carry on. It actually takes me less time to get to work from Cowes cycling than it did driving, if you take into account parking and then walking to work in town. I get a glorious ride along the cycle track and feel buzzed by the time I get to work!"

"There were days when I was tired after work but felt so much better after cycling home rather than sitting in a car. It also improved my fitness, although I was hungrier than ever!"

"The scheme has given me a chance to buy all the essential things that I need to start my bike running again, and ever since I started to cycle again, I've felt more and more energised each day."

"Cycling during lockdown was such a pleasant and rewarding experience without the usual aggressive drivers that frighten and bully me off the roads. I didn't feel the need to try and hide on pavements and in gutters. I could enjoy my ride. It was stress free. Felt so good, just like cycling should feel."



Benefits for Local Businesses

The successful operation of these two initiatives relied on local cycling businesses, who were enthusiastic about taking part. In the words of one business owner: *"We were delighted to be involved with the Key Worker Cycle Scheme... Not only were we proud to support key workers cycle to work safely via a green transport mode, the scheme allowed our business to stay open at a time when the tourism market didn't exist for large periods."*

Three local businesses delivered the bike loans – with each given a geographical area of the Island where they were responsible for all hire requests.

All eight independent bike shops and cycle workshops / mobile mechanics on the Island participated in the voucher scheme. They were reimbursed the full £50 value of each voucher redeemed, and very often also benefited from an additional boost, when cyclists ended up spending more than £50 on repairs or equipment.



Find out more from:

KEY WORKER CYCLE SCHEME: SUMMARY REPORT

(January 2021, Isle of Wight Council)