

A low-angle, close-up shot of a person's legs and feet pedaling a white bicycle on a dark, textured dirt path. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a setting or rising sun, creating a strong silhouette effect and a hazy, orange-tinted background. The person is wearing black shorts, white socks, and brown cycling shoes. The bicycle has a white frame and black tires. The overall mood is one of freedom and movement.

Freewheel by Ride For Freedom

An impact study on the physical and mental health benefits of providing survivors of modern slavery with bicycles, accessories and cycling proficiency training

“The more I cycle, the happier I am. It gives me freedom” Participant VCL

January 2022

Executive Summary

This report studied the impact of *Freewheel by Ride For Freedom* programme on survivors of modern slavery. The programme provided the survivors with a bicycle, accessories, training, and support, in order to see that there would be improvement in their physical and mental health, as well as sense of independence and mobility. The participants answered survey questions before and after the programme, and the report analysed and compared these answers in order to find levels of improvement amongst mental health, physical health and general cycling ability.

This study has been undertaken to evidence the need and ongoing demand for the Freewheel provision and service. Post-report, the aim by *Ride For Freedom CIC*, working in partnership with the third sector and commercial organisations, is to initially rollout the programme in a series of 'Freewheel Hubs' in cities and regions nationally and globally in the future.

Findings

The report concludes that *Freewheel by Ride For Freedom* successfully improved the mental health of the survivors of modern slavery that participated in the programme. On average, across the participants, mental health was the category that was improved on the most, in particular, a sense of independence surrounding the participants' transport. Access to bikes improved the participants' sense of mobility and ability to travel without dependence on others.

The case studies showed that for participants IKM and VCL who had ridden bikes before the pilot, *Freewheel by Ride For Freedom* still had a positive impact on their mental health, and left them feeling as though they have more independence in terms of their transport and ability to get around.

“The more I cycle, the happier I am. It gives me freedom”

Freewheel Participant VCL – survey

Participants also felt an increase in their sense of general fitness, and an overwhelming improvement in terms of their mental health and how they feel about their ability to be ‘transport independent’. The participants in this particular group did not feel an improvement in terms of their cycling ability, as most felt confident to begin with and thus did not feel they needed to improve, but rather gain confidence and access to a bike.

The sense of mobility gained by the participants was clear to see within the data collated from the surveys. A sense of independence is very important to the survivors, and the ability for them to have cheap, reliable transport is essential to this sense of independence.

Participants also commented on the sense of happiness they felt when riding the bikes, which certainly contributed towards the improvement seen within the mental health of the survivors.

Overall, according to the data, *Freewheel by Ride For Freedom* improved the mental health and sense of transport independence of survivors of modern slavery, as well as having an improvement on their general health.

All participants felt as though the programme gave them a sense of freedom and happiness by providing them with bikes, accessories, training, and support.

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