

# Barking & Dagenham Hub Impact Report 2022



**FREEWHEEL**  
BY RIDE FOR FREEDOM



**Barking &  
Dagenham**

December 2022

# Acknowledgements

The research was undertaken, and the report was written by Bethany Lee MA International Relations and Security, University of Liverpool.

Research originator and funder

Ride For Freedom CIC, led by Gordon Miller

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# List of Definitions

## Modern Slavery

“The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (Palermo Protocol, 2000).

## Active

Within the context of this survey, active refers to the amount of physical activity the participants generally partake in, whether for enjoyment or to improve their mental and physical health.

## Transport Independence

Within the context of this survey, transport independence refers to how much the participants rely on others for transport to go about their daily life.

## Mobility

Within the context of this survey, mobility refers to the participants ability to go where they want, when they want to.

# Executive Summary

This report studied the impact of the Freewheel by Ride For Freedom programme on survivors of modern slavery in Barking & Dagenham, East London. The programme provides the survivors with a bicycle, accessories and cycling proficiency and road awareness training to support their physical and mental health, as well as 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.

## Service Users

Thirty-three victims of modern slavery registered for the Freewheel programme in Barking & Dagenham, during 2022. Seventeen completed the training, delivered over three sessions from March to September, to Level 1 or 2 of the national Bikeability standard. Seventy (70%) per cent of service users identified as female and 30% male; (40%) are aged 18-24. 33% 25-34 years old, 17% are 50-64 and 10% aged from 35-49; 65% are from a BAME background.

## Findings

The information in this 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, cycling ability was the category that was improved on the most, in particular, how often participants' cycling increased. Access to bikes improved the participants' confidence cycling, and thus their ability to travel without dependence on others.

The case studies showed that for participants who had ridden bikes before the cycling training, *Freewheel by Ride for Freedom* still had a positive impact on their sense of mobility, as well as their cycling skills and mental health.

Overall, participants also felt an improvement in their mental health, especially in terms of how much confidence they had when cycling, as well as how cycling impacted their calmness. The

participants overall only felt a small level of improvement in their physical health, but there was still an improvement in how active participants felt they were, thus underlining an improvement in participants across the board: mental health, cycling ability, and physical health.

## Conclusions

When asked about how they felt after the cycling training, participants commented on their sense of positivity having completed the training. This was reflected in the overall improvement in mental health within participants, especially in how calm participants felt and their overall confidence when cycling.

**"Cycling makes me feel confident, reduces stress and makes me sleep good"**

### **Freewheel participant VB - survey**

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

Participants also commented an overall sense of improvement in their life being able to cycle, which certainly contributed towards the improvement seen within the mental health of the survivors, and develops a connection between the improvement in cycling ability and mental health improvement.

Overall, according to the data, *Freewheel by Ride for Freedom* improved cycling ability, mental health, and physical health of survivors of modern slavery. All participants felt the programme improved their relationship with cycling, as well as confidence by providing them with bikes, accessories, training, and support.

**"Cycling is one of the best things in my life" Freewheel participant BM – survey**

## Learnings

For the development of *Freewheel by Ride for Freedom*, there are learnings that can be taken from this research report which will help to improve any development research and the programme.

A change in the method of measuring anxiety amongst the survivors is necessary in order to improve the accuracy of the mental health results. The Likert scale uses a 1-10 system, and across the survey we used 1 to represent the worst and 10 to represent the best. However, this changed when asking the questions about anxiety, with 10 representing high levels of anxiety. This proved confusing both for participants and for calculating the improvement afterwards as we were looking for a decrease in results to represent.

Furthermore, in future surveys, allowing for more typing input may allow further insight into participants sense of mobility and independence. However, this input would not be able to contribute towards the statistical analysis of any improvement, more a qualitative understanding of the improvement for participants. This could be done through specified question boxes for each section: i.e., how you feel physically, how your cycling ability is, how is your mental health, how is your transport independence.

## Recognition

The *Freewheel Barking & Dagenham Hub* programme was shortlisted for the category **Rebuilding Lives** at the prestigious **Anti-Slavery Day Awards 2022**, held in October 2022, at the House of Commons, SW1. The Human Trafficking Foundation's annual Anti-Slavery Day awards recognise the important role played by the media in raising awareness, and those organisations and individuals going above and beyond in fighting modern slavery.

Gordon Miller, Founding CEO, Ride For Freedom CIC

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Miller', is displayed within a white rectangular box.

