

Kiran's story

When Kiran lost her job, she was left feeling depressed and needed something to keep her busy. She was looking for an activity that would occupy her when one of her friends mentioned the Women's Cycling Project based in Newtown.

The project is delivered in collaboration with the West Itchen Community Trust, which pays for venue hire through its Local Conversation programme. This is funded by the People's Health Trust and was set up to benefit people in the St Mary's and Northam area in Southampton. The suggestion for a women's only cycling project came from a local voluntary group called TUVAA (The United Voice of Africa Association.) Cycling UK provided funding to purchase bicycles and equipment, with Cycling UK staff and volunteers leading the sessions. My Journey Southampton is responsible for the promotion of this type of community led initiatives.

Kiran was interested in practising her cycling skills, but the only issue was – she didn't have a bike! Kiran got in contact with the Cycling Development Officer in Southampton, Ruth Magennis. Although the sessions were not running during the winter months, Ruth decided to take on the task of teaching Kiran how to cycle with confidence and safely navigate Southampton's roads.

Kiran progressed rapidly and got great enjoyment out of the sessions. She was also able to borrow a bike and helmet to use, so it was very easy for her to walk to the venue and hop on a bike. She started with basic bike control and then was able to progress onto using small roads and navigating junctions with ease. Eventually Kiran was able to ride longer distances and make it to a local park, with Ruth leading the front of the group and a Cycling UK volunteer providing support at the back.

Kiran only stopped with the sessions after finding employment, which is a great outcome for her, but she's interested in riding with other community clubs and local groups for pleasure in the summer months.

She says: "I now have the confidence to cycle on the roads and I feel empowered to buy a bicycle of my own. That's my goal – to get a bike to help transport me to my work. I'm looking into getting a folding bike, so I can store it in my flat and take it wherever I want!"



West Itchen Community Trust is pleased to be working in partnership with key groups in the city to widen participation amongst many BME women, for whom cycling at a later age is a very new and exciting activity.

Gulzar Sharif, West Itchen Community Trust Programme Manager, said: *“Living in the inner city brings many benefits including access to shops, the city centre and parks. Being able to cycle to these places makes life a lot easier and at the same times is sociable and healthy.”*