Cycle Nation: From development to real-world implementation of a community-based cycling intervention

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The problem

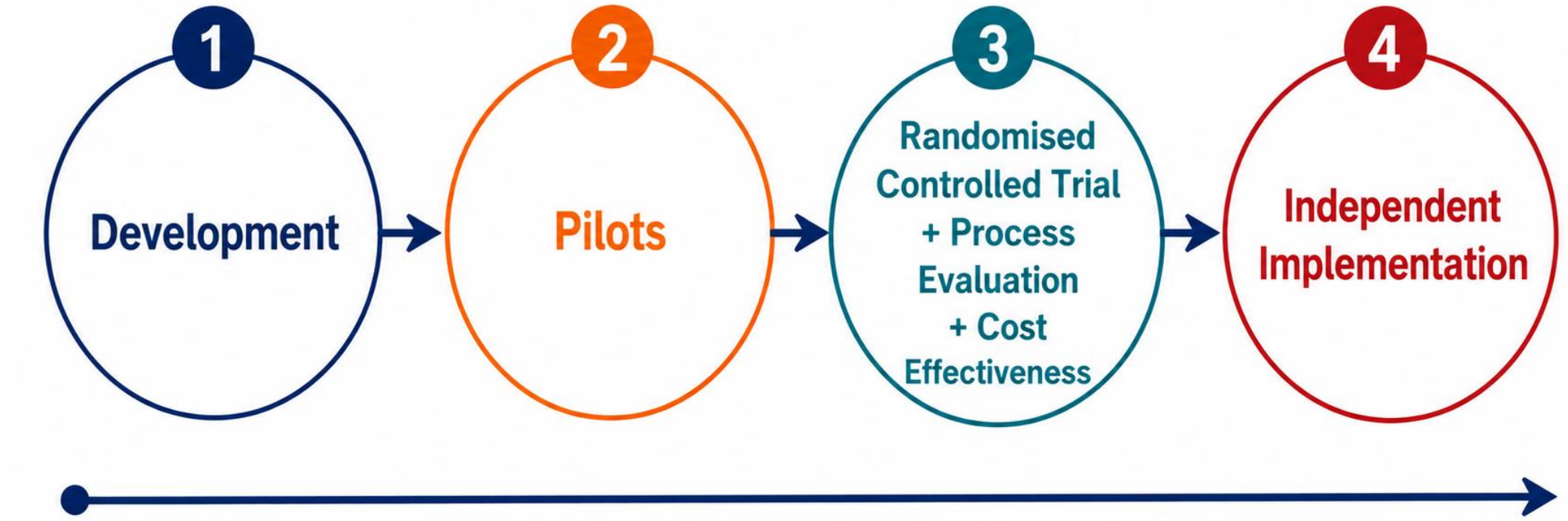




- In the UK, only **5%** cycle 5+ days a week.
- **43%** of people want to cycle more.1
- **Infrastructure** is necessary, but impact takes time and may be insufficient alone.[2]
- **Social and individual support** can be implemented quickly and work synergistically with infrastructure.[3]
- **However,** existing cycle training may not be enough to create sustained behaviour change.[2,3]

1. Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust. Walking and Cycling index 2025, 2026.
2. Logan et al. 2023, https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2023.1168357
3. Roaf et al. 2024, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2024.101860

The Cycle Nation journey



The Cycle Nation journey







HSBC UK
BRITISH CYCLING



In January 2017 HSBC UK and British Cycling started an eight-year societal partnership to create the biggest, single contribution to a greener, fitter, healthier Britain, with an overall aim to inspire two million more people to ride their bike.

THE SUNDAY TIMES



ttacks

Saddle up, says bank, as it slashes staff parking

HSBC is swapping spaces for bike racks to persuade workers to drive less, and to discover why Britons still refuse to pedal

Nicholas Hellen Social Affairs Editor

Pinching someone's parking spot can be unwise, but Britain's biggest bank has told staff their treasured perk must be sacrificed to help convert the country to a nation of cyclists.

HSBC UK is replacing 90% of the 700 staff car parking spaces in its two new regional centres, and installing bike racks and changing rooms instead. The move is part of an eight-year programme worth between £80m and £100m, in which the bank's 34,000 workforce will act as guinea pigs for a giant experiment to get Britons on their bikes.

The bank aims to solve a riddle that has defeated ministers. It wants to discover why so many people will not ride a bike even when they know it is good for them. Sport England recently reported that the number of twice-monthly leisure and commuter cyclists on the roads had dropped 355,000 in 12 months.

HSBC is seeking to enlist 1,280 staff to volunteer for a formal academic study to work out what is putting off potential cyclists – and to help increase Britain's monthly riders by 2m next year.

Researchers from Glasgow University and Edinburgh University will study employees' activity levels, motivation, cardiovascular health and their number of sick days.

Announcing the Cycle Nation Project this weekend, Ian Stuart, chief executive of HSBC UK, said: "Nobody gets a car parking space [at our Birmingham HQ] unless they have a disability. It won't suit everyone and I understand that." He added: "I am not a fanatical cyclist. I don't own Lycra."

The bank will spend more than £2m this year installing bike racks, showers and offering electric bikes to its staff, but the sums are dwarfed by its sponsorship of a programme to involve the public, in partnership with British Cycling, the national governing body. A programme of city centre rides is expected to attract more than 100,000 people.

An exhaustive review of academic literature for the Cycle Nation Project has found that cycling 100 minutes a week reduces the risk of early mortality by 17%, compared with non-riders.

It reports "unequivocal" proof that switching to a bike cuts pollution emissions and found that even cycling some of the way to work reduced the risk of early mortality by 24%.

Yet the excuses of reluctant cyclists are many and varied. Some blame safety fears, lack of cycle routes, hills, bad weather, poor facilities or cost.

Maybe tough love is the answer. James Royal, 34, a tax IT portfolio manager at HSBC in Sheffield, is one of those whose car parking space will vanish next month. The 700 spaces in Sheffield and Birmingham are being reduced to 70.

He admits that he used to drive the 1¼ miles to his gym, and, before he was told his parking space was being withdrawn, he and his partner were considering buying a second car.

For the past three weeks, however, Royal has commuted the four miles to work by bike, halving his journey time to 20 minutes.

@NicholasHellen

Confidence to ride.
Confidence to invest.

How cycling can make the UK greener, fitter, and healthier.

BRITISH CYCLING AND HSBC UK ANNOUNCE LAUNCH OF CYCLE NATION PROJECT

Yellow Jersey @YellowJerseyUK · Jun 4

How do we get more people on bikes? @BritishCycling and @HSBC_UK are trying to find the solution with the largest trial of its kind ever undertaken in the UK.

British Cycling and HSBC UK launch **Cycle Nation Project**: bikebiz.com/?p=53654

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Cycle Nation Intervention Development

Six main steps in quality intervention development (6SQuID model)[1]	How applied in the Cycle Nation Project
1. Define and understand the problem and its causes 2. Identify which factors can be modified	• Narrative literature review[2] • Secondary analysis of national survey data[3] • Six focus groups with HSBC UK employees[3]
3. Decide on the mechanisms of change 4. Identify how the mechanisms of change will be delivered	• Scoping review of previous interventions[4] • Mapping exercise[3] • Co-design workshop with 10 HSBC UK Staff[3] • Interviews with five HSBC UK managers[3]
5. Test and adapt the intervention 6. Collect sufficient evidence of effectiveness to proceed to a rigorous evaluation	• Feasibility study in four HSBC UK Offices (London, Edinburgh, Southampton, Manchester) [3]

1 Wight et al. 2016, doi: 10.1136/jech-2015-205952; 2 Logan et al. 2023, https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2023.1168357;
3 Connell et al, 2022, doi: 10.3389/fspor.2022.857554; 4 Kelly et al. 2020, doi:10.1136/ bjsports-2019-101447

Cycle Nation Intervention Components

Access to bike & essential equipment

Participants received:

- Bicycle
- Lights
- Lock
- Helmet

+

9-week group-based programme delivered by trained facilitators

- Week 1
- Week 2
- Week 3
- Week 4
- Week 5
- Week 6
- Week 7
- Week 8
- Week 9

Essential components

- Technique & skills
- Goal setting
- Road safety
- Bike maintenance
- Route planning

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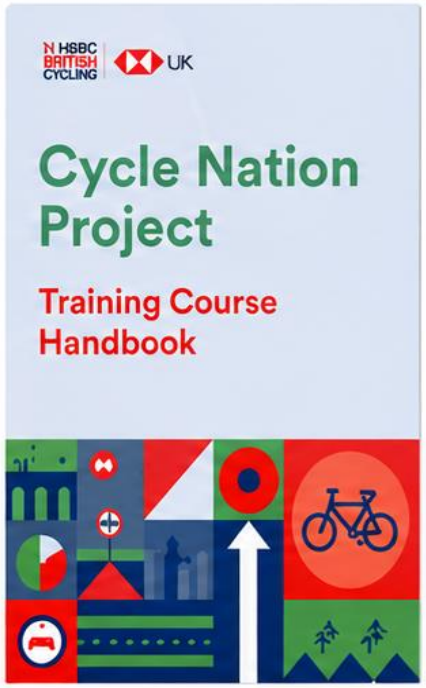
Participant handbook



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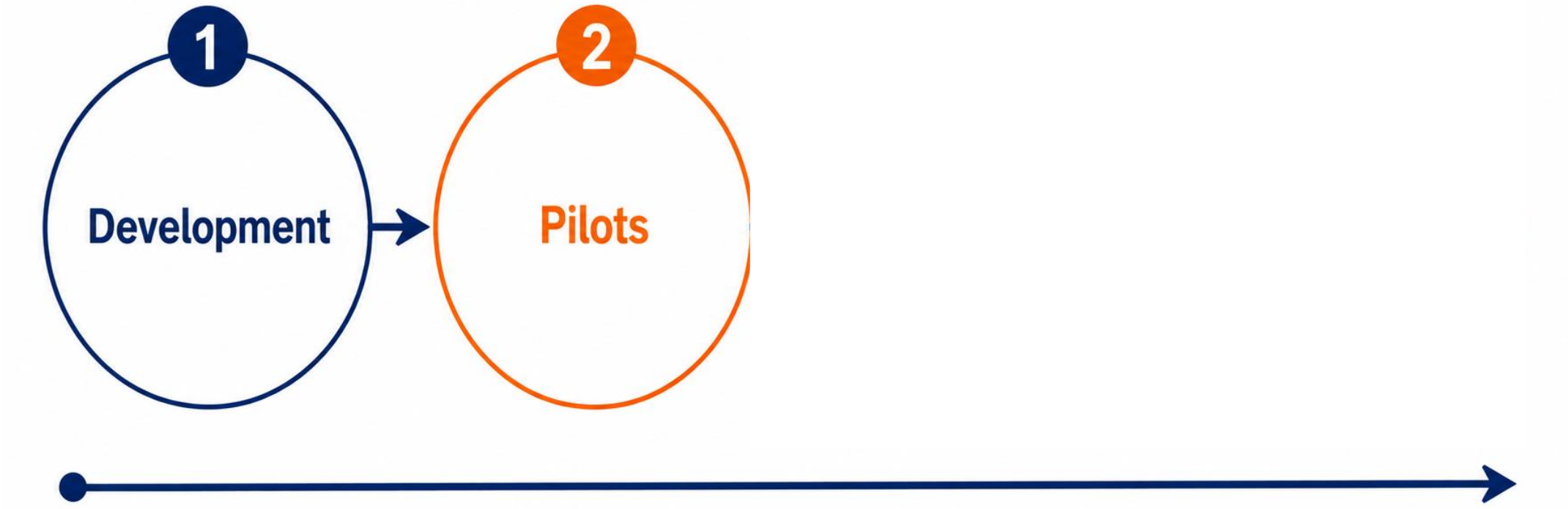
Peer support



The Cycle Nation journey



Workplace-intervention with HSBC-UK staff



Cycling increased by

3 rides and **43** minutes

per week

Workplace-intervention with HSBC-UK staff



Cycling increased by **3** rides and **43** minutes per week

Community-intervention with South Asian women in Manchester



Cycling increased by **3** rides and **89** minutes per week

Pilot in Glasgow

Participants:

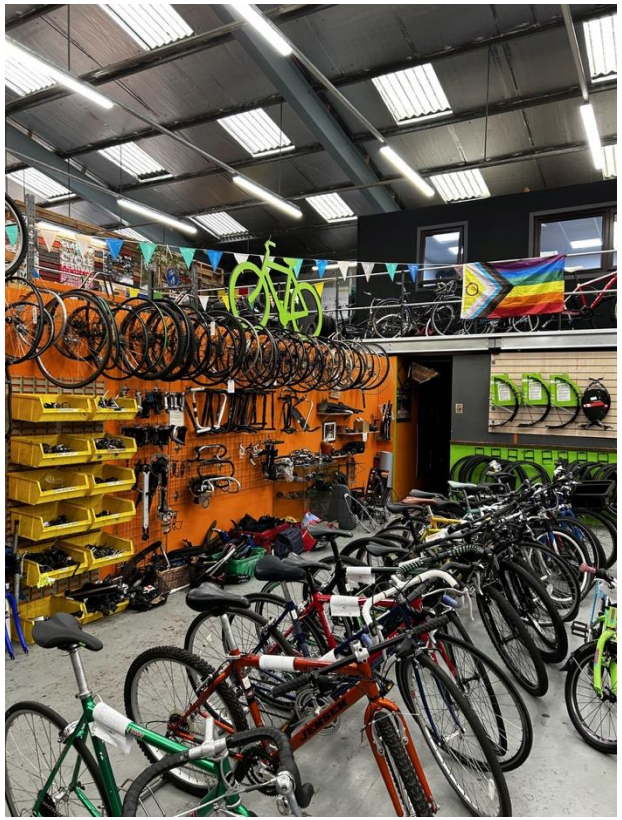
- Adult residents living in Glasgow who used to cycle but do not anymore/regularly
- 30 participants were recruited

Programme delivery:

- Delivered by trained facilitators from Bike for Good
- Groups of up to 8–10 participants







Workplace-intervention with HSBC-UK staff



Cycling increased by
3 rides and **43** minutes
per week

Community-intervention with South Asian women in Manchester



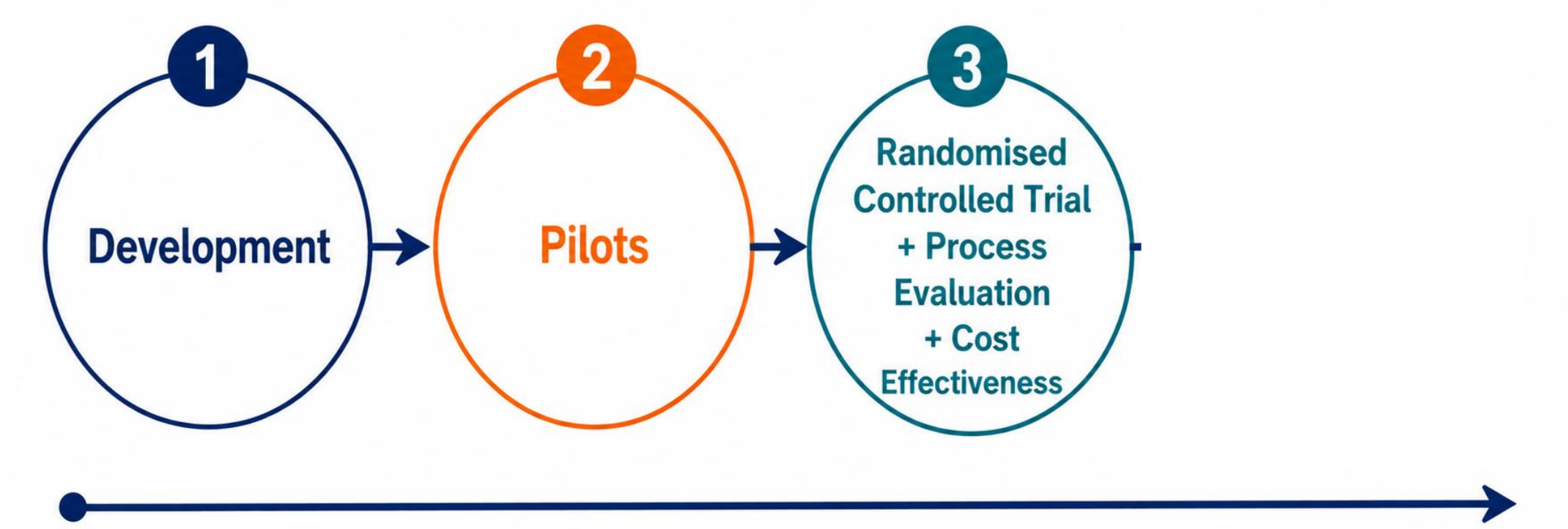
Cycling increased by
3 rides and **89** minutes
per week

Community-intervention in Glasgow



Cycling increased by
5 rides and **144** minutes
per week

The Cycle Nation journey



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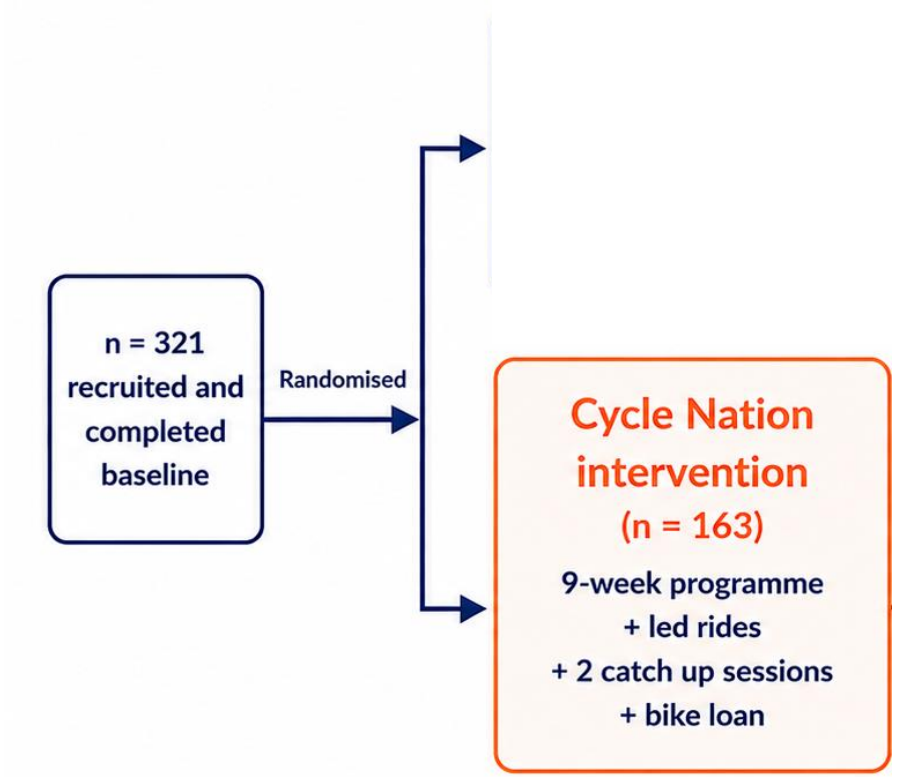

Sunny Cycles

DRUMCHAPEL CYCLE HUB

DYNAMO

WOMEN ON WHEELS

bike for good

LAMBHILL STABLES

BIKE FREEDOM CIC

Lawlor ER et al. BMJ Open 2026;16:e112768. doi:10.1136/ bmjopen-2025-112768

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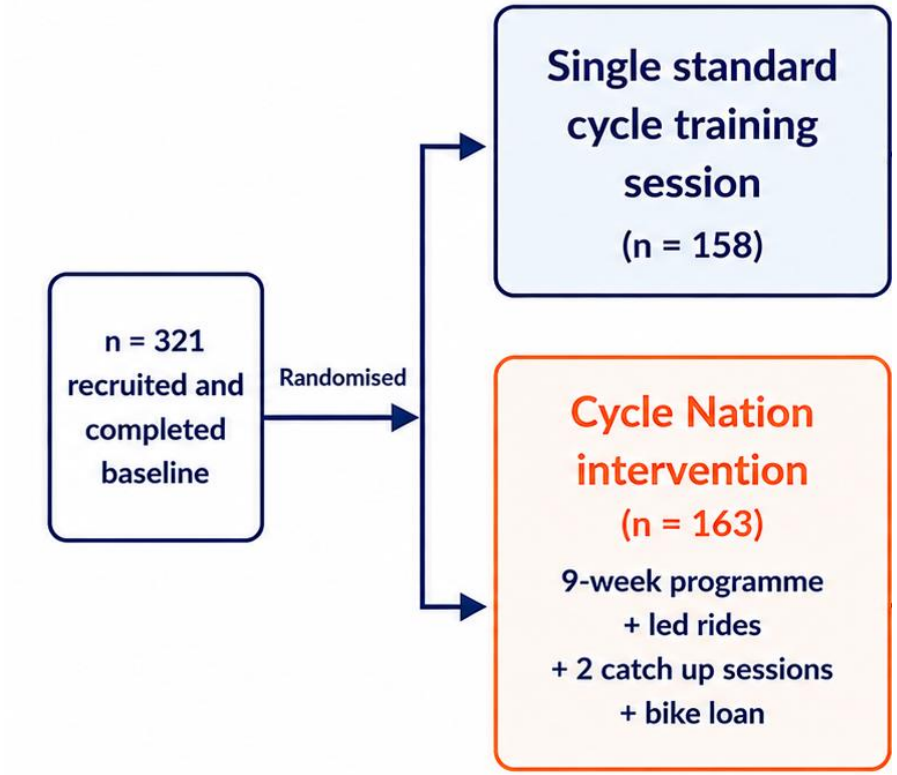

jetpace cycling

DRUMCHAPEL CYCLE HUB

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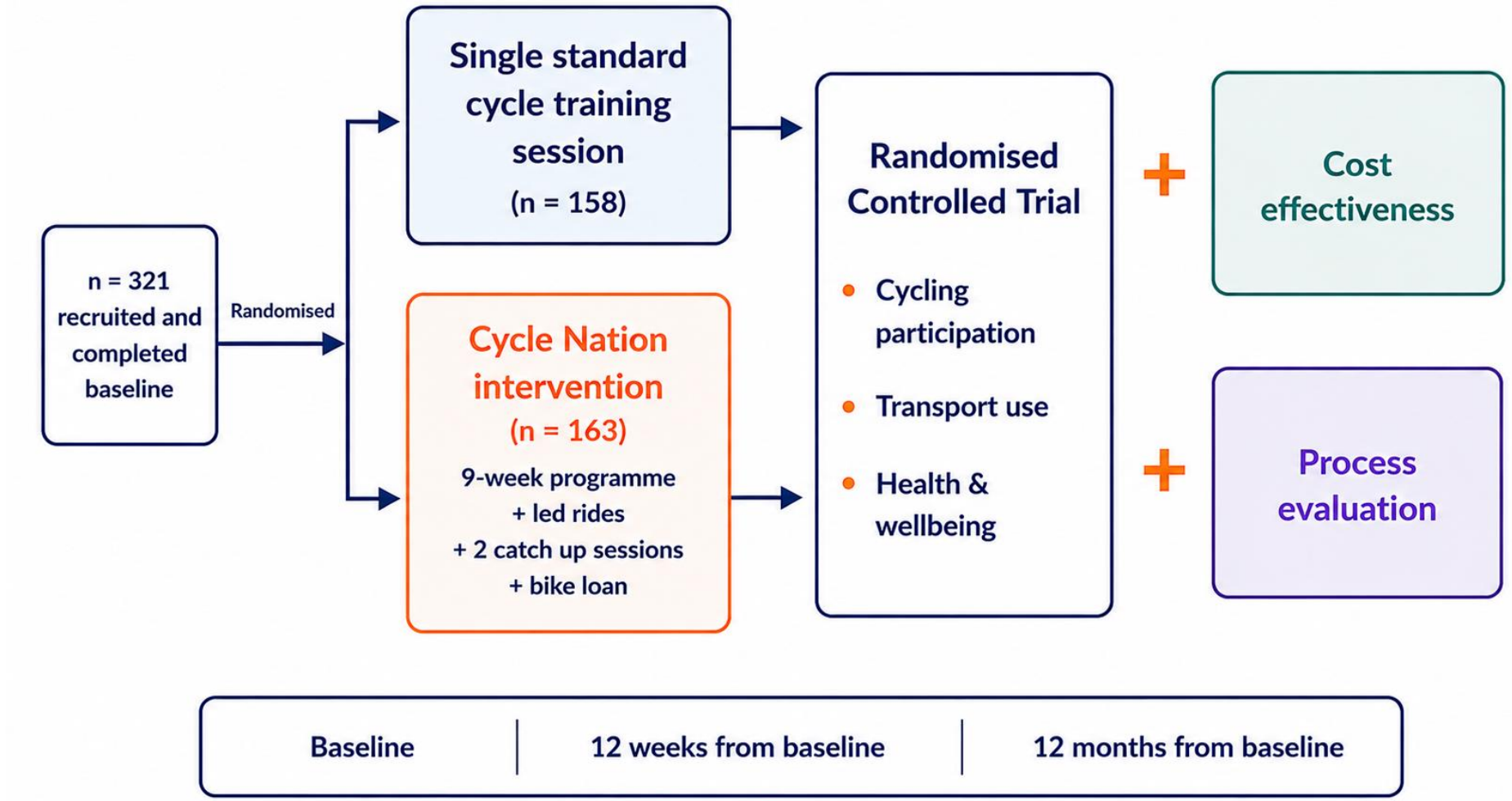

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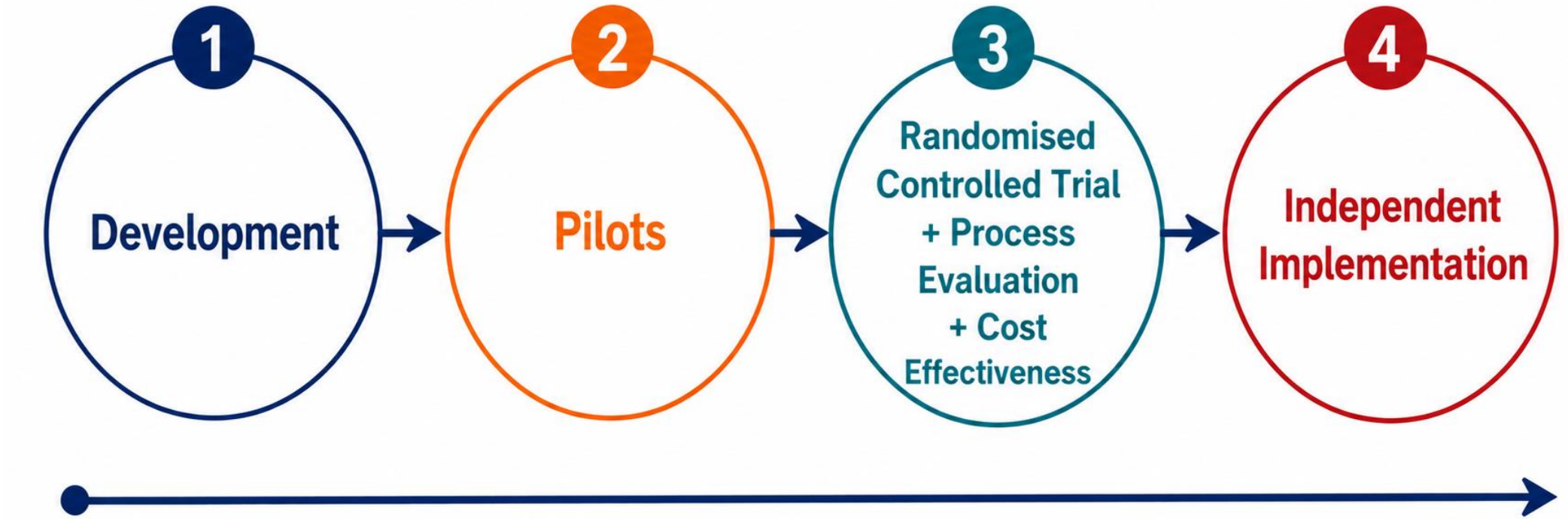
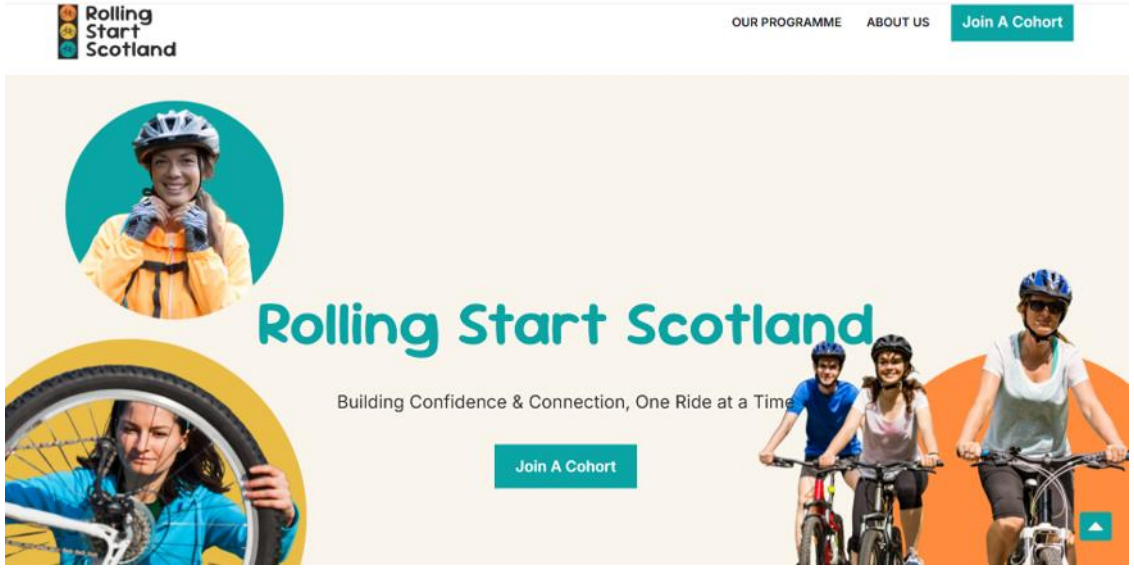


Moving towards independent delivery

- Accelerating the impact of academic social science research
- From researcher-supported delivery towards organisations being able to deliver Cycle Nation themselves.

Economic and Social Research Council



Synthesise previous evidence

Review learning from pilots and the RCT to identify key findings and insights

Half-day workshop

Cycling organisations share experiences and help shape the implementation approach

Implementation model and materials

Develop protocols, guidance and supporting resources for delivery

Independent delivery

Organisation uses the model and materials to deliver Cycle Nation

Train-the-Facilitator delivery

Organisation delivers the two-day training to new facilitators



Synthesise previous evidence

Review learning from pilots and the RCT to identify key findings and insights

- **Challenges and tensions around recruitment**
  - Research criteria vs organisations' usual recruitment approaches
  - Lengthier lead in time than expected
  - Organisations wanted more involvement and use of their networks

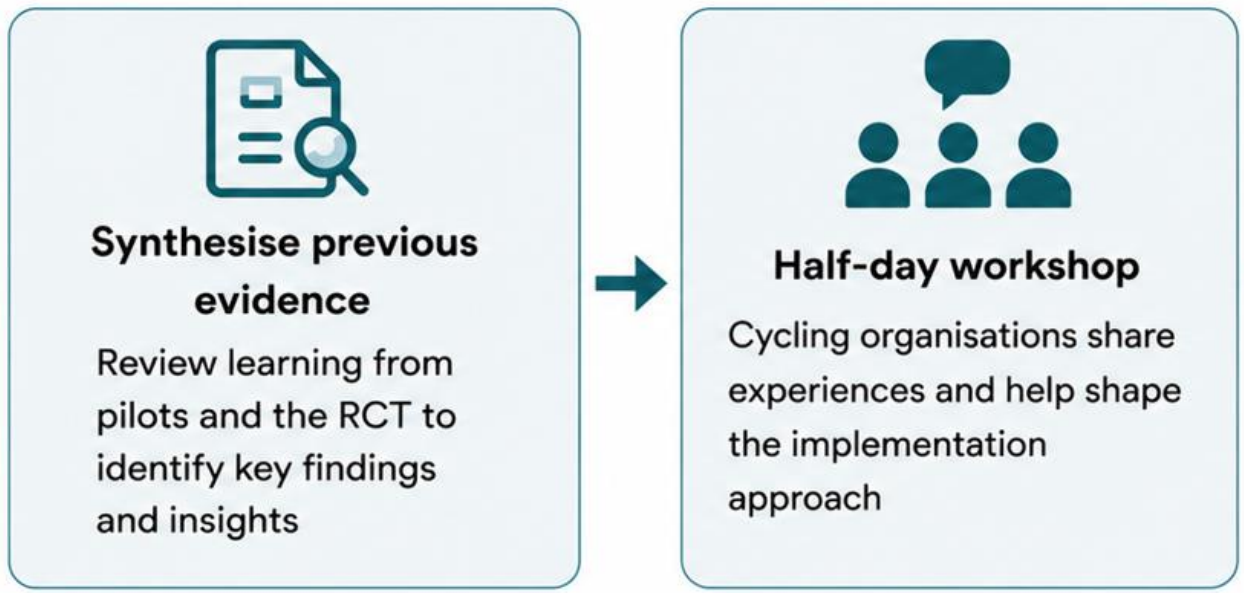
- **Building and maintaining facilitator capacity**
  - Existing capacity, but more Cycle Nation-trained facilitators needed
  - Tension around wanting feedback, but observers unable to provide it
  - Need for funding

- **Tension between flexibility and fidelity**
  - Appreciated session plans but felt strong sense of responsibility to deliver as specified
  - Experienced facilitators wanted flexibility to adapt delivery
  - Balancing facilitator expertise with fidelity to the evidence-based programme

- **Importance of facilitator continuity**
  - Continuity supported trust, rapport and social connection
  - Tension with how organisations allocate facilitators

- **Tensions around monitoring and quality assurance**
  - Evaluation needs vs burden of data collection
  - University GDPR requirements vs real-world delivery
  - How to quality assure future delivery without university oversight

- **Challenges around equipment and bike access**
  - Participants became attached to university bikes
  - Difficulties with bike distribution and logistics
  - Is there a need for payment in future to ensure more sustainable?
  - Concerns about post-programme bike access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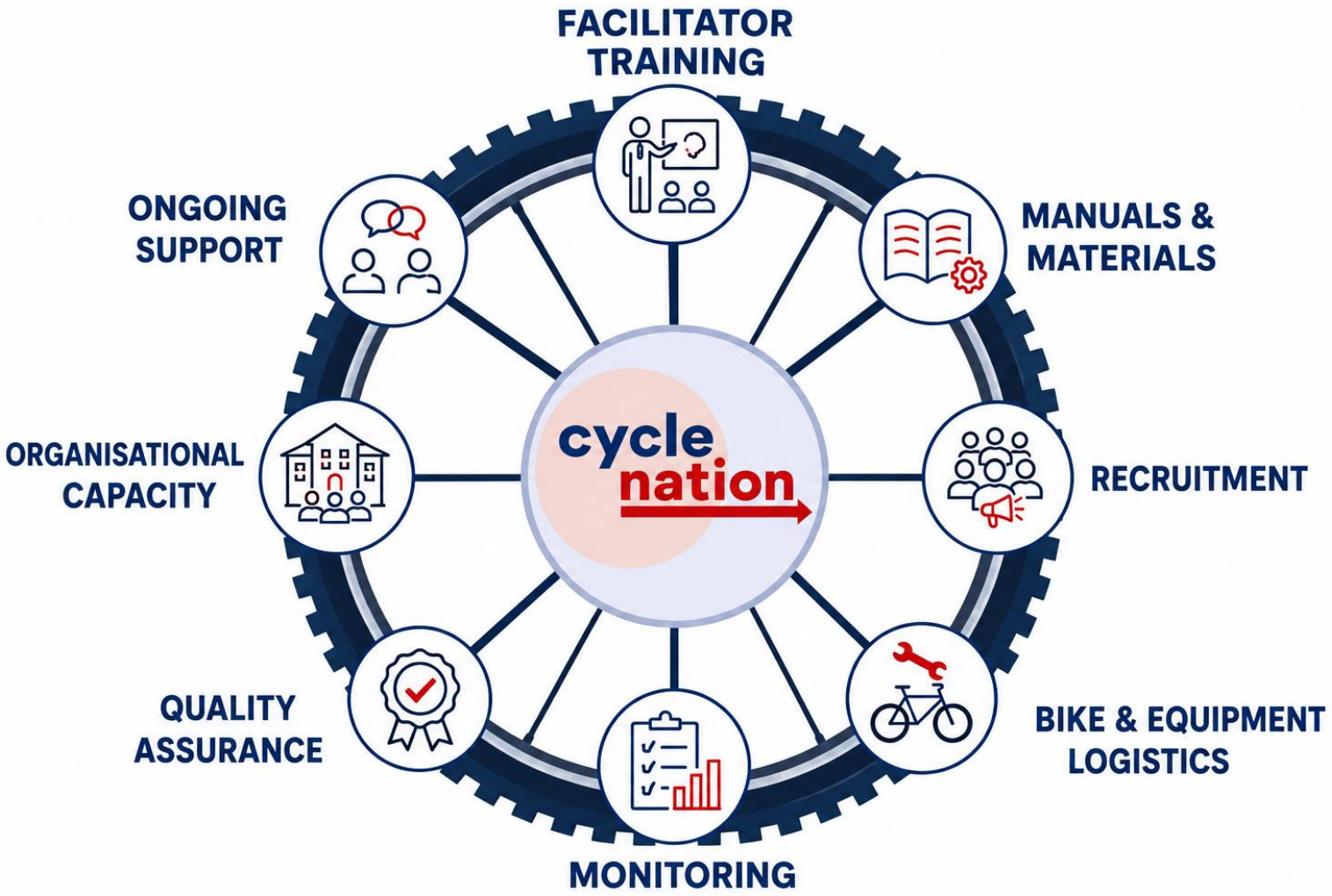
Interactive workshops

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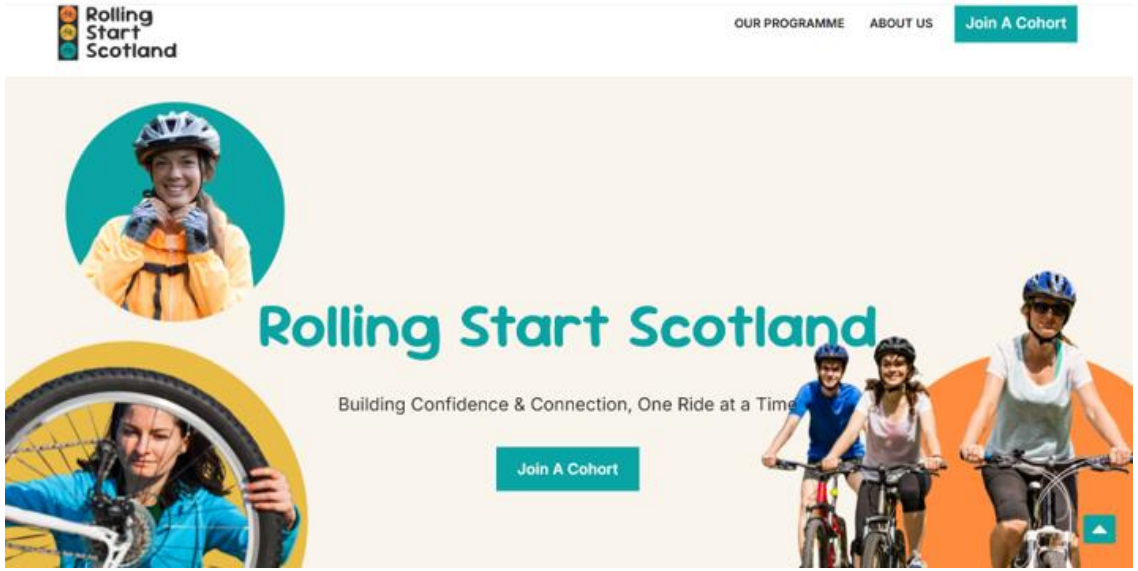

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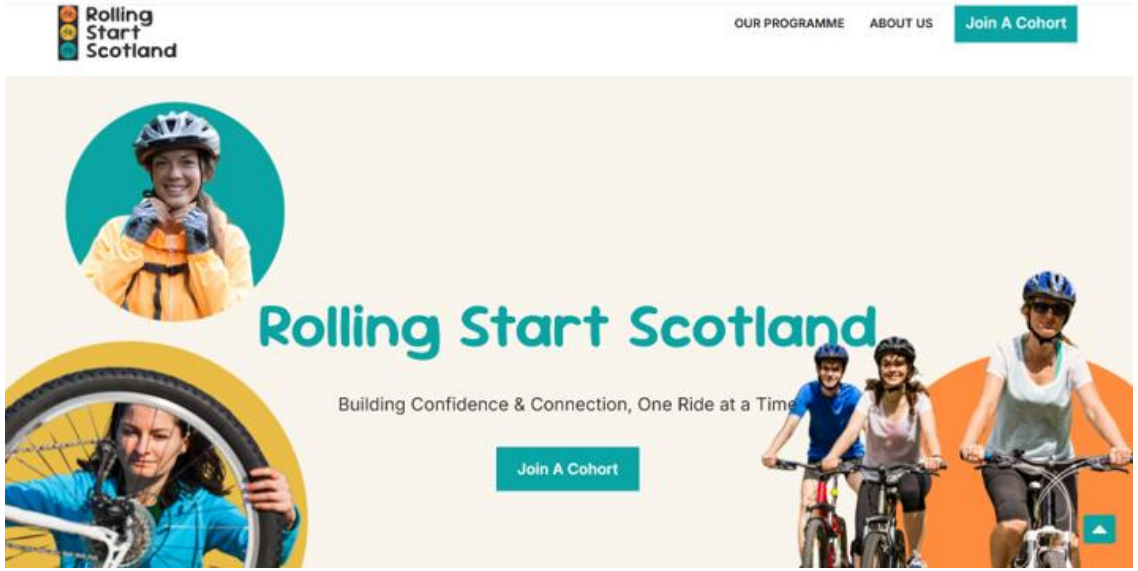

Independent delivery

Organisation uses the model and materials to deliver Cycle Nation

Implementation model and materials

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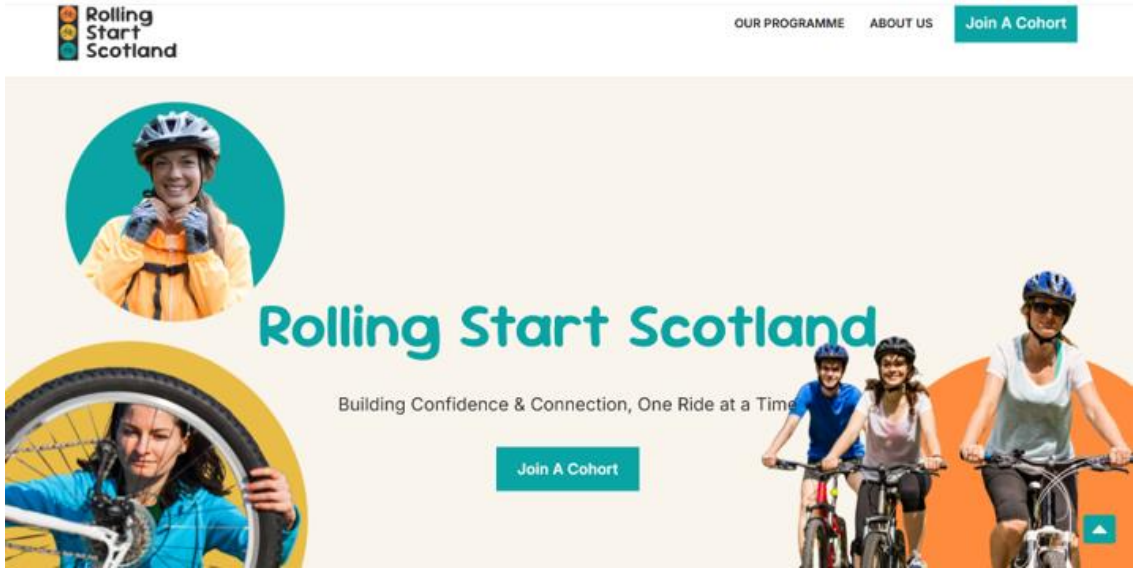

Implementation model and materials

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Train-the-Facilitator delivery

Organisation delivers the two-day training to new facilitators

From Glasgow to different contexts



DynamiCity

Funded by the European Union

https://dynamicity.eu/

Thank you for listening



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