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### **Our Position on Cycle Helmets**

We follow the view of The European Cyclists Federation who state: 'We are not opposed to the wearing of bicycle helmets, but firmly believe that this should be a decision for each individual cyclist. Parents should be allowed to make an informed choice as to whether or not their child wears a helmet.'

Our trainers do not insist on helmet use for any trainees. If wearing helmets, we will advise trainees how to make sure they fit correctly. We will also briefly discuss a helmet's effectiveness when road cycling.

We ask teachers to check if a child has brought a helmet to school, and if so to equip them with their helmet before the lesson starts. We will only advise about helmet wearing during the first lesson.

If in our trainers' judgment, a helmet is unsafe, for example due to an unacceptable reduction in vision or hearing, we may advise the child that the helmet is not worn. In this case we will inform the teacher and ask them to inform the child's parents.

We advise schools not to insist on helmet use for participating children, as we believe that all children should receive cycle training, not just those who have and are prepared to wear cycle helmets.

If a school does still insist on helmet use at all times, we will then expect the school staff to ensure all children have correctly fitted helmets before the start of each session. We will offer advice on how to do this for a short period of time at the 1<sup>st</sup> lesson only, and after that it will be entirely the school's responsibility. (We will also reserve the right to advise against the wearing of ill fitting or dangerous helmets as above)

For more information on cycle helmets see the Bikeability fact sheet overleaf:

### **Bikeability Helmet Factsheet:**

Whether one should wear a crash helmet while cycling is a contentious issue and there are good reasons for and against. Here is a selection of those reasons:

- Helmets are known to reduce the severity of head injuries resulting from a direct low-speed blow to areas of the head, such as might result from a fall or glancing collision.
- The actual protection offered is much lower than is commonly thought. Helmets provide no protection for significant regions of the head nor any other part of the body, and do nothing to prevent damage due to torsional forces that usually cause more severe brain damage than concussive forces. Helmets increase the diameter of the head, making it more likely to be contacted and sent into a spin during a fall or collision, leading to possible torsional brain damage and damage to the neck and spinal cord.
- Helmets can cause the wearer's head to overheat, especially in hot weather, leading to a reduction in concentration.
- Wearing a helmet can give the wearer undue confidence and affect their risk-taking behaviour so as to make a fall or collision more likely. It is thought that drivers may also increase the risks they take with cyclists if they perceive them to be protected because of helmet use. Following the introduction of a mandatory helmet law in the Australian state of New South Wales, the rate of cycling head injuries reduced only slightly and the overall rate of cycling injuries increased.
- Wearing a helmet is recommended in the Highway Code, and not doing so may leave cyclists vulnerable to claims of contributory negligence if they are injured,

although such claims failed in a recent notable case.

- The countries with the highest levels of cycle use and the lowest risks per kilometre cycled have chosen to create safer road conditions rather than promote the wearing of helmets. Any emphasis on the use of protective equipment for vulnerable road users necessarily detracts from all other road users' responsibility for their actions in preventing harm to vulnerable road users, as evidenced by claims of contributory negligence mentioned above.