



Joy, second from the right, at an event at Edgbaston Reservoir

JOY ANIBABA

New cyclist **Joy Anibaba** from the West Midlands became a key figure in one of Cycling UK's Community Cycle Clubs. Tony Upfold spoke to her

Joy Anibaba hasn't looked back since getting into cycling in a big way – and now she's helping others do the same. Joy, who lives in Olton in the West Midlands, has been instrumental in the growth of Joyful Bellas and Fellas Community Cycle Club at Edgbaston Reservoir.

The 51-year-old has found cycling to be a real life-changer and considers getting out into the fresh air on two wheels a great way to beat stress, not to mention good for her physical health. Joy is diabetic and has high blood pressure, but cycling regularly has helped her lose weight. She never learnt to ride as a child – the emphasis in the family was on education and there was no push to exercise. She did join a gym but never really got into it.

LEARNING TO RIDE

About 10 years ago, Joy and a friend decided they wanted to learn to ride a bike. She had a few lessons and attended a session run by Sandwell Council for a while, then about four years ago took part in some sessions at Ward End Park. She knew a lady at the council called Fareeda Akhbar, who set up Women on Wheels, and for a while

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they were meeting regularly, with the group also targeting local women to become ride leaders so they could take others out too.

As she works for Birmingham City Council, Joy heard about Big Birmingham Bikes and the Birmingham Cycle Revolution, and she and Fareeda became key figures helping with the new group at Edgbaston Reservoir – where one of the BBB hubs is situated. Big Birmingham Bikes provide a programme of free bikes, cycle training, and activities with employers, schools and communities to encourage cycling, as part of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution project.

Cycling UK is working with BCR/BBB to help get people cycling in Birmingham, and providing groups like Joyful Bellas and Fellas CCC with the resources and opportunity to stand on their own two feet. Joy and two

other women in the group were trained as ride leaders by Cycling UK back in October 2015.

The group initially attracted five women but now has 35 regular riders, both men and women, and it's still growing. New members are sent to BikeRight! to get their Level 1 and 2 National Standard training, if required, and are then able to come out with Joyful Bellas and Fellas CCC on rides.

Joy said: 'Coming to Joyful Bellas and Fellas doesn't feel like exercise, and it's great to find something that is so much fun. Being outside in all weathers is exhilarating. It also helps your mental health and wellbeing and is a great reliever of stress.'

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Joyful Bellas and Fellas CCC has grown to the extent that it now needs more volunteers, so three more ride leaders have been trained. Joy has been researching new routes for the group to explore. She has also bought her own bike – a Raleigh Pioneer – through the Cycle to Work scheme. She loves it.

'The women in Joyful Bellas and Fellas are very supportive and it creates a really nice atmosphere,' Joy said. 'Ideally, it would be great to get even more of us trained as ride leaders, and also to attract new volunteers and members.'

Vanessa Morris, Cycling UK's Community Clubs Development Officer in Birmingham, said: 'Joyful Bellas and Fellas CCC is a great group – so friendly and supportive of each other. I hope Joy's story inspires others to discover the gift of cycling and share its endless benefits.' 