



Press release

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Digital innovation in sport must happen to make it easier for people to find and book activities online

- Sport England survey reveals that it is twice as easy to order takeaway food online as it is to book a sport or fitness class online.
- Sport Minister Mims Davies and Sport England CEO Tim Hollingsworth to urge providers of sport and physical activity to open their data to make booking fitness and sport classes easier for consumers and unlock new tech innovation.
- Sport England will award a further £1.5 million of National Lottery funding to the Open Data Institute (ODI) to continue working with providers like leisure centres and sports clubs to open their data – helping to supercharge engagement and participation.

Organisations that provide sport and physical activity will be urged to seize the opportunity of digital transformation to make it easier for consumers to get active, at a landmark event at the Wellcome Collection in London this morning.

The call comes as a new survey released by Sport England today highlights consumers current poor experiences of booking sports activities online and the impact of this on their participation. A survey of 1,815 people conducted by ComRes found that it is twice as easy to order a takeaway than it is to book a sport or fitness class online. 1/5th of adults have been put off doing a sport or physical activity because it was too difficult to find or book online.

Minister for Sport & Civil Society Mims Davies and Sport England Chief Executive Tim Hollingsworth will address sport industry leaders, tech investors and leisure operators to urge sport and physical activity providers to commit to opening their data by the end of 2019.

To support this an additional £1.5m of National Lottery funding from Sport England to the Open Data Institute (ODI) will be announced by the Minister to continue OpenActive, a sector wide initiative which gives activity providers of all sizes, from large leisure groups to local sports clubs, the tools and training they need to open their data.

Other findings from Sport England's ComRes survey include:

- Of the activities tested, including booking a holiday, taxi, concerts takeaways and barbers or hairdressers, most activities and services are considered easier to access online than sport with the exception of booking a haircut.
- 73% of adults find it easy to book a holiday online and a majority say the same for ordering a takeaway (68%) while just a third (34%) say it is easy to book sport or fitness classes online.
- Price, location, a description of what happens, the time it's taking place and the difficulty level of the session are the top 5 things consumers want to know when searching for an activity online and deciding if it is for them – with price ranking as the most important.
- 62% of inactive adults say they don't know how easy or difficult it is to book sport or fitness classes online.

More open data in sport - data about where and when sport and physical activity happens that anyone can access, use or share - will mean activity providers publishing information on the hundreds and thousands of sporting activities, fitness sessions and classes that they have available. Once more data is available it will also pave the way for innovators and entrepreneurs to create products and services that make it as easy for people to book a football pitch as it is to book a takeaway or holiday.

Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive at Sport England said:

“There is a significant prize to be won here if the sport and physical activity sector seizes the opportunity to embrace digital innovation and open up their data. Our survey shows that at the moment there are too many barriers to entry. So, this is about giving the public the choice to find sport and physical activity in a way that meets the expectations they have in all other aspects of their lives. But it is also about creating the conditions for brilliant, creative start-ups and innovators across England to come up with big digital ideas and solutions that are as diverse as the needs of the public.

“Twenty-seven pioneering organisations have joined the OpenActive movement and opened their data - we thank and commend them for their leadership in what is still a relatively new area in our sector. This is a real tipping point moment. Now is the time for the whole sector to collaborate to reach millions more people, remove the barriers they face and supercharge the number of people getting active in England for the health of our nation,”

Mims Davies, Minister for Sport and Civil Society, said: "It should be as easy to book a court, football pitch or exercise class as it is to order your favourite takeaway or hire a cab.

"Not being able to easily plan and book online potentially puts many people off doing more physical activity. By opening up data we can remove barriers to taking part, make it much easier for people to get active and promote much needed digital innovation."

Since OpenActive launched in November 2016, 27 organisations including GLL, British Cycling and Our Parks have published their data, resulting in over 170,000 physical activity sessions a month being made available online. Alongside this, Sport England has mentored 10 start-ups who are working on innovative tech solutions to get people active, to use this data. However, this represents a small fraction of the data held in the sector – highlighting significant untapped potential.

Sport England’s latest Active Lives research shows that although activity levels are rising, there are still 16.8 million people who aren’t reaching the threshold of 150 minutes of sport and physical activity a week to benefit their health. Within these figures there are stubborn inequalities. People on low incomes, women, black and South Asian people are less active than the general population.

With consumers increasingly expecting to access services online many sectors, including banking, transport and entertainment make this easy for customers. The sports sector has fallen behind in meeting customers online needs.

Opening data in sport will give consumers greater access to sport online in a way that fits into busy lives. Critically, it will enable the sports industry to better meet customer expectations and reach new audiences - those who want to get active but don’t feel able or know how to.

-ENDS-

Notes for Editors

For further information and interview opportunities please contact:

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About the survey:

ComRes surveyed 1,815 English adults aged 18+ between 18th and 22nd April 2019. Data were weighted to be nationally representative of English adults aged 18+ by key demographics including age, gender, region and social grade.

About OpenActive:

OpenActive is an ambitious, community led initiative, funded by the National Lottery via Sport England, that aims to use open data to help people get active. The goal is to make data on what, where and when physical activity sessions happen, openly available for innovators to access, use and share. It is delivered by the Open Data Institute (ODI), who work in partnership with Sport England and other sector partners including Public Health England, ukactive and London Sport.

About the ODI:

The Open Data Institute (ODI) is independent, non-profit and nonpartisan. It was founded in 2012 by Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Sir Nigel Shadbolt. From its headquarters in London and via its global network of start-ups, members and nodes, the ODI offers training, research and strategic advice for organisations looking to explore the possibilities of data.

You can learn more about the ODI at theodi.org

About Sport England:

Sport England is a public body and invests up to £300 million National Lottery and government money each year in projects and programmes that help people get active and play sport.

It wants everyone in England, regardless of age, background, or level of ability, to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. That's why a lot of its work is specifically focused on helping people who do no, or very little, physical activity and groups who are typically less active - like women, disabled people and people on lower incomes.