



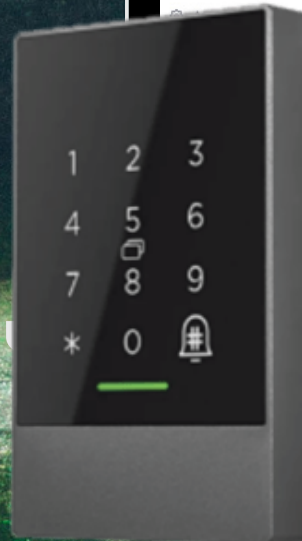
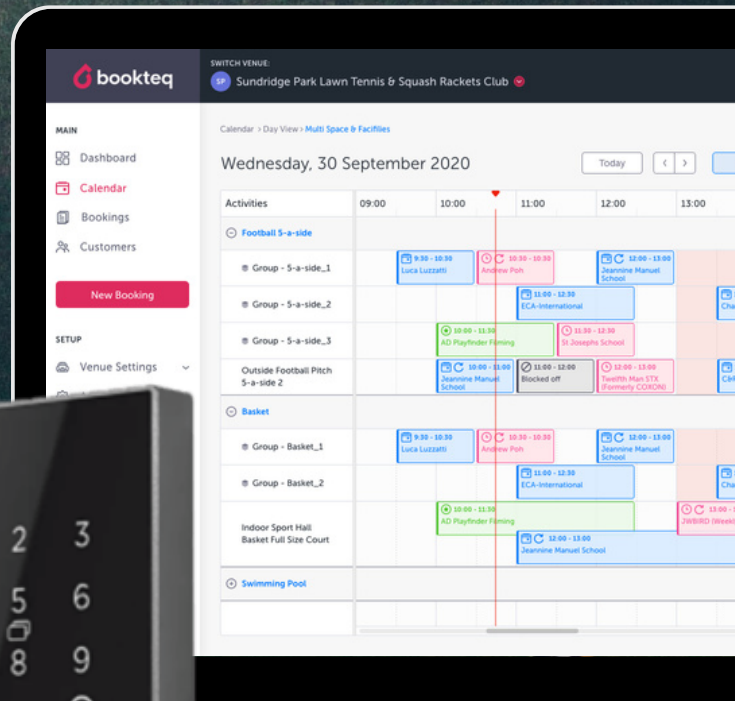
The Role of Digital in Opening School Facilities



AWARDS
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"Technology has the potential to transform the way people stay active and how they access facilities and physical activity opportunities"

The Lords Select Committee, 2021



Introduction

In 2021, Sport England released £10.1 million of funding to support schools in opening their sports facilities and unlock opportunities for the community to access these facilities, in addition to providing further opportunities for young people to participate in outside-of-school-hour activities. The ambition of this funding was to help more children and young people become more physically active during evenings and weekends.

Sport England collaborated with the nationwide network of Active Partnerships to distribute the investment, as well as support the delivery of the programme through local activity providers. The Active Partnership Network are regional organisations who focus on getting more people, more active in their geographical areas.

This initiative proved successful, with Active Lancashire reporting a range of positive outcomes from their schools, including more children and young people engaging in physical activity, but also spanning:

- Increased engagement from groups of disengaged pupils
- Positive impact on behaviour and confidence
- Increased independence and empowerment of pupil's own fitness
- A changed staff mindset on how to better engage disengaged young people

This isn't to suggest delivering these outcomes is easy. Consultation with schools carried out by Active Cornwall drew out the barriers schools face in opening their facilities. These included:

- **Staffing problems** – staffing the site out of normal school hours and safe-guarding issues that arise around this
- **Financial implications** – overheads for staff to manage bookings, staffing the site to honour bookings, and maintaining facilities
- **Additional admin** – additional administration to manage bookings and open facilities

It is anticipated an additional **£57 million** is due to be made available for the next 3 years, as part of the next phase of Opening School Facilities; and whilst in some places phase one drew out benefits, in others it did little to shift the dial. This additional investment into the sector has been proposed to further support schools to make their facilities **more accessible**, therefore creating more **safe and inclusive spaces** for young people and the local community to be more physically active.

We know from consultations carried out with schools that there are several barriers to successfully deliver on the outcomes of unlocking school facilities. However, we also believe a key driver of success lies in the role **digital solutions** play in **achieving operational efficiencies**, whilst enhancing a school's ability to **connect and engage with their young people, families and local communities** to promote and facilitate activity outside of school hours.

The three criteria of OSF

Below we have explored three key criteria schools might need to deliver against in order to secure Opening School Facilities funding. For each criteria we outline the role digital can play to ease the burden on schools whilst maximising the impact of this investment.

Criteria **1** Make your school's facilities available out of school hours



This is to enable delivery of activities for children and young people, outside of school hours; and where not being used for this purpose, the facilities should be made available to local clubs, coaches, and providers, or for the local community and for parents to book and utilise - putting school sports facilities at the heart of their communities.

Clear information on facility availability for providers and the community

Providers, parents, and the community need access to clear information about your facilities (e.g. type, capacity), amenities (e.g. toilets, parking, access), and availability (available slots, pricing). An online booking system like Bookteq makes it easy to publish and maintain this on your website.

Easy online booking process reduces administrative burden on school staff

To remove the burden of calls and emails and subsequent admin of manual bookings management, booking systems like Bookteq provide a high quality online user experience to manage and take bookings for your facilities.

Important safeguarding measures captured as part of a booking process

Like a paper form, any number of questions and documents can be requested as part of an online booking, simplifying this process for all.

Keypad smart access can provide admittance while maintaining security

Smart access isn't one-size fits all, but can reduce staff overheads regarding access and limit energy consumption by controlling floodlights, while maintaining security. The long term pay-it-forward benefits are numerous.

Track facility utilisation and financial performance in real-time

Bringing booking online means generating a wealth of facility utilisation and financial performance data, available at your fingertips real-time.

Provision of extra-curricular and wraparound care activities

The availability of school facilities out of hours should enable the school, local coaches, or children's activity providers to deliver a varied offer of new opportunities to engage young people in the benefits of play and sport.

Showcase the range of opportunities available to parents and young people

With a range of delivery models available, from schools delivering internally, to the contracting of local coaches and providers, and even their delivery of pay-and-play opportunities accessed directly by parents, it can be confusing for parents to know where to go and who to go to for extra-curricular and wraparound care opportunities. Parents need to know activity information (what's involved, difficulty level, age range), availability (dates, times, spaces left, and locations) and costs. Housing all available activities in an online booking system like Bookteq can put everything in one place, reduce barriers to access, and improve the experience for all. If that's not feasible, creating a landing page with the various options signposted to parents, or even using open activity data (the role of OpenActive) could be a solution.

Providing instant access lowers barriers to book and secure a space

By making activity and sport opportunities bookable using online booking systems, you lower the barriers to access for a parent and provide the ability for parents to confidently lock in a space, guaranteeing them and their child(ren) that provision. Booking systems like Bookteq make the experience of booking easy for a parent, allowing them to make the booking on behalf of their child (parent-child booking feature) and book in multiple children at the same time, through a multi-participant booking feature.

Tracking attendance, safeguarding data, and impact reporting

Capturing bookings in a booking system makes it easy to track attendance in an online registration list; all data is stored safely, limiting the risk of data loss or a breach, better protecting young people. Systems like Bookteq provide real-time dashboards and instant reports to make impact reporting back to funders easy.

39%

of sports facilities are locked behind school gates, out of hours and during holidays

Signpost engaged young people towards further local play and sport opportunities

Schools are in the best position to support young people and families sustain engagement in extra-curricular activities after the funding has come to an end. To ensure sustainability and build somewhat of a legacy off the back of this funding, enabling those newly engaged young people to discover further local opportunities is vital to capitalise on their initial engagement and build an active habit for life. This harnessing of digital signposting tools takes the direct pressure off school resources, while marketplaces can support schools themselves achieve their own sustainable income and community impact from opening their facilities and building lettings.

Marketplaces can increase booking and revenue from community lettings

Through facility information, availability, and booking being brought online, a school increases its accessibility long-term, unlocking the potential of community lettings, and acting as a sustainable income generation channel. Tools like sports booking marketplace, Playfinder, aid schools in generating local awareness through digital marketing and outreach support, and make it easy for your facilities to be found on Google through industry-leading Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). This is even more poignant in times of budgetary strain and rising costs.

Dedicated digital tools for children and young people with SEND

Following the London 2012 Olympic Games, investment and interest in creating a grassroots sporting legacy led to services like Parasport, developed by ParalympicsGB in partnership with Toyota, providing a one-stop-shop to discover inclusive local activity opportunities. Building awareness of these tools by signposting parents and young people to them is essential to maximise their impact by harnessing existing digital services.

National and county-wide signposting tools and discovery portals

National Governing Bodies like the Football Association and Badminton England have invested in tools like the FA's Find Football tool and Discover Badminton respectively, while many Active Partnerships provide these regionally, like Active Lincolnshire's Let's Move Lincolnshire, where even greater localised knowledge and insight drives the user experience. These tools should be introduced to participants engaged through this funding.

Nike and ukactive's Open Doors blueprint for opening school facilities states that clear data collection is key to ensuring clubs are fun and that partners can showcase the impact post-delivery. They emphasised that: **"it was important to have a system for registration and storage"**.



To access the blueprint
Scan this QR code or go to
www.opendoors.ukactive.com




Playfinder and Bookteq are not affiliated with Nike and ukactive's Open Doors programme



Get in touch to discuss how we could support your Opening School Facilities aims and objectives.

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