



OpenActive

Strategic Direction 2024-2026



Context

As OpenActive's Steering Committee looks to the future, this strategic direction sets out our refreshed vision, mission and strategic objectives. **It sets out the principles the committee think everyone involved in OpenActive should support** and outlines how applying these principles will make OpenActive a success.

A lack of access to high-quality data in the sport and physical activity sector is a barrier to getting people active.

OpenActive helps to address this by defining and operating a data infrastructure that enables data about opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity to flow between organisations. This infrastructure is made up of: the data; the organisations that provide an use the data; and the specifications, processes and technologies that enable the exchange of data.

OpenActive enables the delivery of Get Active, the UK Government's Sport Strategy, Sport England's Uniting the Movement strategy, and numerous local and national sport campaigns like MCRActive and Every Body Moves.

OpenActive is also a community led movement for change. It is currently funded by Sport England and its data infrastructure is stewarded by the Open Data Institute (ODI), with support from volunteers and implementers from across the sector.

Vision

If OpenActive is successful...

People can understand and access opportunities to participate in physical activity because the sector has moved from data fragmentation to data standardisation.

Mission

How OpenActive will realise this change...

OpenActive will work across the sport and physical activity sector to enable and encourage the publication and use of open opportunity data.

Why is OpenActive important

OpenActive enables a wide range of activities across the sector.

	Finding and Booking	Understanding provision	Building a digital future for sport and physical activity	
			Improving Capabilities	Modernising Infrastructure
Who	People seeking opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.	Policy makers, activity funders and activity providers.	Individuals and organisations working in and driving change in the sector.	
How	Sharing data held in booking systems, in common formats, makes it easier for innovators to develop new ways for the public to find and book opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.	OpenActive data enables decision makers to improve their understanding of the provision of sport and physical activity in communities and areas.	Improving digital and data capabilities and skills.	Future proofing the data infrastructure that is critical for the sector to grow - developing together a clear roadmap for the role that open data can play.
Why	Making it is easier to find and book activities reduces barriers to participation. More people participating improves the health and wellbeing of the population, including those historically underserved in local communities, reducing healthcare costs.	Policy makers, activity funders and providers can target provision more intelligently reducing inequalities and barriers to entry across the sector.	Digital and data literacy improves across the sector enabling more efficient and effective delivery of services.	Support and evolve business models for the system providers, operators, clubs & individuals that are critical to our collective success Enable innovators to develop new ways to use data to improve the understanding and accessibility of sports and physical activities.

Objectives

To deliver our vision and mission OpenActive will ensure that:

1. The physical activity sector is serviced by an **independent initiative** capable of meeting the needs of industry, government and society.
2. OpenActive is a key component of our **national data infrastructure**. It is robust, easy to use and sustainably maintained.
3. Physical activity providers are proactively publishing standardised open data, enabling people to **understand and access opportunities** to participate in sport and physical activity.

This strategic direction sets out how OpenActive will achieve these objectives over the next 3 years.

OpenActive Principles

These principles should guide the work of everyone involved in the delivery of our vision and mission, including our steward (the ODI), our committees and our volunteers.

Principle 1 - OpenActive is an independent initiative led by a sustainable organisation.

Principle 2 - The community will collaborate to sustain OpenActive.

Principle 3 - OpenActive's data infrastructure is open, robust and easy to use.

Principle 4 - Use of open opportunity data grows.

Principle 5 - OpenActive is demonstrably helping people to understand and access opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

Principle 1. OpenActive is an independent initiative led by a sustainable organisation.

Context

The ODI undertook research in 2023 to evaluate options for a future operating model for OpenActive. This work included exploring the business models employed by a range of data institutions, a community survey and seeking legal opinion.

Based on this work the Open Active Steering Committee concluded that OpenActive should aim to become an organisation in its own right, and that this would enable OpenActive to operate with a greater degree of independence.

The Steering Committee agreed that the development of a sustainable business model/plan and organisational design is required to make this happen.

Success Criteria

- An organisation has been established to lead the OpenActive initiative and ensure it's associated data infrastructure is properly stewarded.
- Funding has been secured to enable the new organisation to operate for at least 2 years. The new organisation is suitably resourced to enable it to provide this leadership and stewardship.
- Key stakeholders are engaged and support the establishment of the new organisation.
- The new organisation is led by suitably qualified and experienced directors/trustees.
- The new organisation is empowered to explore opportunities to drive improvements in the wider sports data sector.

Principle 2. The community will collaborate to sustain OpenActive.

Context

Since its inception in 2016, OpenActive has successfully engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, the OpenActive community, and has benefited from the knowledge and experience of this community in its development, often through voluntary commitments of time and effort.

OpenActive has had successful teams throughout its evolution including: core stewarding teams within ODI, a Steering Committee, the W3C, the AEF and various working groups.

As OpenActive moves into the future, maintaining this collaborative approach is important. Taking this approach will enable OpenActive to operate with a small budget and team, and will provide resilience through collective responsibility and knowledge sharing.

Success Criteria

- There is a broad understanding of the community, its priorities and the open data opportunities - OpenActive's engagement is focused and measured.
- Clearly defined roles and teams are in place enabling the maintenance and development of OpenActive. The roles of the core OpenActive team and volunteers are clearly defined.
- There are effective community engagement processes including methods to commission work from specialists when required.
- There is a single, agreed, approach to measuring the impact of OpenActive that the whole community can use.
- Contributions of volunteers are valued and account for providing a basis for match funding applications.

Principle 3. OpenActive's data infrastructure is open, robust and easy to use.

Context

Maintaining a robust and easy to use data infrastructure, is essential to the success of OpenActive.

It should be possible for new users, publishers or consumers of OpenActive data, to approach the infrastructure and quickly understand how to use the infrastructure in their context.

Investing in continuous improvement of the infrastructure, including: specifications, documentation, tooling and processes will enable users to be confident in the infrastructure and will enable organisations to more easily contribute to its maintenance.

As much maintenance as possible will be undertaken by volunteer maintainers and contributors. OpenActive's operating model should also enable us to contract-out improvement tasks where they would be too burdensome for volunteers.

Success Criteria

- The data infrastructure is properly documented and continuous improvement tasks are identified and prioritised in a roadmap.
- Product and service management processes are in place to ensure issues, problems and requests are resolved appropriately.
- Identify, address & improve aspects of the current data specifications and guidance to make it easier for new users to publish or access open data.
- Publishers and users can be supported in adopting OpenActive's specifications develop and grow the OpenActive vendor community and support vendors in developing and marketing their service offers by developing a partner programme / forum.
- The quality of data in OpenActive feeds is improving.
- OpenActive is adopted as a UK government data standard.
- There are feedback loops with data publishers (via use cases) that are improving the relevance of the data standards & the quality of data being opened.

Principle 4. Use of open opportunity data grows.

Context

OpenActive has demonstrated its ability to transform the accessibility of data about opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

Developing a use case framework and engaging policy makers has enabled us to identify the areas in which OpenActive can add further value for example by: improving the accessibility of sport and physical activity, enabling public health through social prescribing and in the education sector.

It is important for OpenActive to realise this value, as this will form the basis for the sustainable, independent organisation that the sector is demanding.

It is also important for OpenActive to be able to continue to evolve and adapt so that it can be implemented across a wider range of use cases. This growth will improve sustainability and will lead to a bigger pool of users who can develop into the OpenActive volunteers of the future.

Success Criteria

- A comprehensive programme of engagement and community building is driving adoption of OpenActive. There is a renewed commitment by specific users - e.g. leisure operators and large NGBs to open their data.
- Key use case communities are engaged to identify, develop and test use cases for OpenActive data.
- Key policy makers are engaged and have clarity on how supporting OpenActive enables their policy development and delivery.
- OpenActive is being adopted beyond England because it is engaging with devolved and international governments and sports bodies.
- OpenActive aligns with other relevant data standards/specifications to maximise data interoperability.

Principle 5. OpenActive is demonstrably helping people to understand and access opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

Context

A wide range of people, including people seeking activities, policy makers, activity funders and providers and Individuals and organisations working in and driving change in the sector need to understand the opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

Fundamentally OpenActive enables people to find and book opportunities, removing barriers to accessing sport and physical activities.

But it also has the potential to enable organisations, including NGB's, local authorities, Active Partnerships and the NHS to better understand the provision of sport in communities and across regions. This understanding of opportunities is critical to ensuring investments are properly targeted to address inequalities in provision and ensure that everyone can access high quality, activities and facilities.

Success Criteria

- Measurable KPIs allow us to track the impact of OpenActive on participation in sport and physical activity.
- OpenActive is promoted as a trusted source of data that can be used by analysts to understand the provision of sport and physical activity.
- OpenActive data can be easily integrated with other data sources for analytical purposes.
- Regular case studies demonstrate the impact OpenActive is having on participation and outcomes.

Timeline

- **Short term - Jan 2024 to Dec 2024**

ODI steward OpenActive with the support of Sport England Lottery funding to maintain and improve the data infrastructure whilst developing a new organisation to steward OpenActive in the longer-term.

- **Medium Term - Jan 2025 to June 2025**

Stewardship of OpenActive will transition to the new organisation.

- **Long Term - July 2025 beyond**

The new OpenActive organisation is established and is stewarding OpenActive.



Delivering this strategic direction

The ODI's stewardship of OpenActive will deliver a significant number of the success criteria outlined in this strategic direction.

The steering committee will:

1. Track and communicate progress in delivery of this strategy to the wider OpenActive community.
2. Provide leadership and challenge to the OpenActive community including Sport England and the steward (currently ODI) where required.
3. Support and advise on the design, delivery and transition to a sustainable host organisation for OpenActive.
4. Support the development and delivery of use cases that demonstrate and increase the impact of OpenActive.
5. Advocate for OpenActive with senior stakeholders making the case for investment in OpenActive.
6. Ensure strategic risks to OpenActive are identified, logged, mitigated and managed.

Get involved with OpenActive

Implement OpenActive in your booking systems to make your opportunity data open and reusable.

Consume OpenActive data to improve your understanding of opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

Contribute to the maintenance of the OpenActive data infrastructure.

Participate in OpenActive's governance and community groups.

Fund OpenActive through a sponsorship or project.