



iPhone attached to bicycle handlebars by the Thames

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Covid-19: How FitTech, SportTech and HealthTech are supporting activity at home



As covid-19 lockdown measures take effect, London Sport and a host of tech innovators have been looking at the role of digital and tech in keeping the country active. Here, Alex Zurita outlines the steps that have taken place so far,

and the action that's still to come.

The extraordinary lock-down measures announced last night by the Prime Minister included one important exclusion; a daily stint of exercise remains a valid reason to leave the house, so long as you keep to the word and spirit of social distancing measures: stay 6-feet apart; do so alone, or with immediate members of your household only; do it sensibly; and, under no circumstances, do it if you have or have the symptoms of covid-19.

There's good reason for the exception; physical activity has proven positive impacts on our physical wellbeing and our mental health.

Protecting those things is going to be even more critical than ever in the coming weeks, and it's something that we should keep sight of.

But for some, getting outside for a daily walk or run isn't going to be the solution.

People will need something new in their routine, which is where finding new and innovative ways to stay active in the home has such an important role to play.

It's what sits at the heart of Sport England's excellent [#StayInWorkOut campaign](#), and it's also what the thing I and colleagues have been working on through our SportTech, FitTech and HealthTech networks.

For years now, I've been a huge believer in the idea that tech businesses working in sport, fitness, wellness and health have a huge role to play in keeping people active, engaged and connected; today, that role is more immediate and urgent than ever before.

And it's not just those of us working within the industry that see this.

Google search data has seen searches for "home workouts" quadruple and "full body home workouts" increase by over 100% since March.

People are crying out for ways to keep physical activity in their routine, and

as an industry we have a responsibility to respond.

In these circumstances, perhaps more than ever, it's important that the information available to people covers both 'continuing' activity as well as opportunities for people looking to get active at home, perhaps for the first time.

That's why last week we put out a "call-to-action" to our tech partners – those we've worked with through Sport Tech Hub and others – to help collate a range of free or low-cost physical activity offers: an open, inclusive list of tools from London and around the world that people and organisations can use to stay active at home.

[>Active At Home - Sport, Fitness and Wellness Solutions to stay active at home](#)

It's an approach that has been backed and supported by a range of sector partners, with ukactive and the Open Data Institute each showing their own support for the role of technology and digital in the current situation:

Dave Gerrish, ukactive's Head of Digital Transformation said:

"ukactive – together with its members, partners and government agencies – has an important role to play in supporting the public through these difficult times, using innovative digital solutions to help keep us active. ukactive encourages all those organisations that can support the sector in this challenge to list their services."

Orsola De Marco, Head of Innovation Programmes at the ODI, said:

"The ODI, along with ukactive and Sport England, are committed to continuing to deliver OpenActive's mission to use data to help people get active. We welcome initiatives like this open database and look forward to working closely with the OpenActive community to help people keep active in and around their home."

The teams behind these products aren't just showing what their business does; in many cases, they've chosen to make their products free-to-use, buying into a wider purpose of supporting people in every part of the nation at a time of unprecedented need.

And, for us, it's a window into part of the way we'll be working in the coming months.

We're committed to remaining a champion for physical activity and sport in London throughout the coming weeks and months, but we also know that the way in which we do that simply can't continue in a business-as-usual sense.

Tech and digital have been a core part of our work for a number of year now, and we'll be working hard to support London's physical activity and sport sector, and Londoners themselves, to make the most of the digital opportunities ahead.

Adaptation will be key to maintaining physical activity levels during this temporary 'new normal'; we're all expecting people to adapt, and organisations working in sport will need to adapt in line.

For some, physical activity will need to be gamified and to become a by-product of an experience they may want to have.

For others, it will be a key part of remaining connected to others even while we distance ourselves in person.

Others, again, will need specific, personalised approaches based on illnesses or other conditions.

And for parents and families, it may simply need to be something fun and simple for children temporarily kept to their homes; in that way, [Joe Wicks' #PEwithJoe broadcasts](#) are already reaching almost a million people in their homes in the morning.

At a time like this, it can be difficult to find positives, but I think it's important to leave with one.

And there is a big one here: the covid-19 enforced lockdown offers a window to win the hearts and minds of people who haven't yet experienced the positive opportunities to be physically active through a technological or digital approach.

Together, we can show how technology can play a critical role for physical activity in a time of crisis, and where it can continue to be central to people's physical activity experiences in the future.

The [Active At Home](#) table is available now and will be updated daily with new products and service offers.

For more information on London Sport's work with Tech Innovators during the covid-19 crisis, contact Alex Zurita on alex.zurita@londonsport.org

About London Sport

London Sport is a charity working to ensure more Londoners live happier, healthier lives through access to sport and physical activity. Supported by Sport England and the Mayor of London, we collaborate with those that share our vision, running and supporting projects that help children, young people and the least active adults to embed sport and physical activity into their lives.

For more information on London Sport, visit www.londonsport.org

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