Sign In App ®

Case Study

Exeter College

A background of Exeter College

Exeter College is a large tertiary college providing further education and university level courses to around 10,000 students. The college which has roots back to the 1800's is this year celebrating its 50th anniversary as the UK's first tertiary college.

During this last year, the college has been going through something of a digital transformation, having launched a new Data Hub at the tail end of 2019. As part of their digital transformation, they've recently implemented Sign In App into the college.

We recently caught up with Anthony Martin, Digital Innovations & Engagement Manager at Exeter College, to see how they're getting on with the app.

Anthony said, "We are embracing technology to boost the learning experience and outcomes for our students as well as establishing a presence in the education sector as Digital Centre of Excellence. Which brings me onto Sign In App..."

Why did you look for a visitor management system?

Before we found SIA, we were using traditional paper-based processes with a visitor book at each of our sites.

We recognised that this was an outdated and inefficient way of working in a modern, connected world. It left us with time consuming manual processes, production of custom-printed visitor books and ID badges which were then handwritten for each visitor. As you may imagine, the college has many visitors, approximately 4000 people passing through our Hele Road campus reception in just 6 months, or ~25 visitors a day and that is before we count regular contractors.

We wanted to look for a solution that could:

- Reduce wait times in our reception areas and improve visitor experience.

- Reduce the cost of production of custom visitor books and reduce wastage when site information changed. This could then reduce our environmental footprint for unused pre-printed books.

- Allow our reception teams to handle higher throughput of visitors while reducing their workload in addition to providing easy access self-service sign in options.

- Support the college events teams with a way of managing attendees

- Provide better management of visitor data in line with GDPR.

- Provide reliable whereabouts information in the event of emergencies.

- Improve safeguarding of staff and students with visitor Photo-ID and enable college-wide oversight of visitor movements at all locations.

- Provide an audit history of site visitors whilst remaining GDPR compliant.

Why did you look for a visitor management system?

> Find ways of supporting event registration and large groups

> Better announce visitors to their hosts on arrival

> Better inform visitors of policies whilst on-site

> Capture and record acceptance of those policies and maintain an audit trail.

And above all else, operating at a time with extremely tight budgets within the education sector, our chosen solution must be affordable and sustainable.

In pursuing a solution, we took part in product discussions with several suppliers and found having a demo system to try for ourselves invaluable. We needed to be able to trial the processes in our own time, with our own staff on our own platform and consider any changes to existing processes, as well as the capabilities of any systems.

Why did you choose Sign In App?

Let's just say we reviewed several systems and compared both product features, company values and attention to detail when it comes to things like security and data privacy. There were certain key features we knew we needed, and then there were the things we didn't know we needed until we trialled Sign In App.

The SIA solution met almost all of our requirements out of the box. For those that were not quite a fit, we were able to find ways to adapt our processes to fit the product, and 6 months on, we are glad we did it this way, as we now have a better visitor process because of it.

Cost was of course a factor in our decision and SIA is one of the more reasonably priced solutions on the market. There was no guess work or speculation on the number of visitors we might have just so we could work out our license need. With SIA it's simple. One Platform. One Price. The pricing model of some of the products we reviewed meant we may suddenly find ourselves with a large over-spend if we decided to use the system to sign in staff or students.

For the college, data security is of paramount importance and learning SIA are ISO27001 accredited, with all data held in encrypted form, in UK datacentres and that the app has been designed to operate in isolation in the event of disaster are all of great comfort to our ICT and Data governance teams. It is very easy for a developer to state their product is GDPR compliant, it is a far different experience.

How's your experience been with the Sign In App team?

As a systems integrator I have worked with many product development teams over the years and can safely say I have never worked with a team so truly behind their product and vision, so open to discussion, open to ideas and so dedicated to customer service as the folks at Sign In App!

The development teams have listened to our feedback and have quickly embedded elements back into the product – that's an incredibly agile way of thinking and leaves me confident that we chose the right solution.

I am keen to work as partners for change with any of our suppliers, and I always feel both customer and supplier can benefit from a less transactional, more partnership-based relationship.

> **"Considering that our deployment is relatively small but with high visitor numbers, the Sign In Apps teams responsiveness and adaptability is great for our relationship going forward and makes us feel as though we are a valued customer. I'm looking forward to this rolling out to more sites in coming months."**
>
> - Admissions and Customer Services Manager, Liz Stevens

Which features have you made particular use of?

Self-Service – this has been a game changer for our visitors. The process is slicker, particularly at busy times. Visitors manage their own visit, have a badge with Photo ID printed automatically. Sign In App then notifies their host of their arrival automatically, so the whole process can be run without reception intervention, should this be preferred.

Contactless Sign In – During the Covid-19 lockdown we have made use of the contactless signing in process. Allowing visitors to use their mobile phone and a handy QR code to sign into the college with their own devices – the visitor simply uses their own mobile device, to scan a unique QR code, complete our visitor form, review and accept our terms and conditions, safeguarding and health and safety policies, then use the camera built into their device to create a digital ID Badge.

Additionally, the whole service acts as a track and trace tool in support of social distancing and contact tracing measures too.

Which features have you made particular use of?
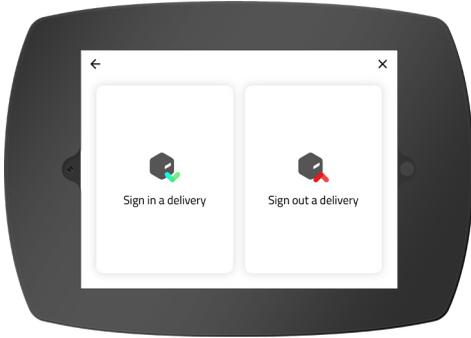
Deliveries – You will rarely hear a delivery driver mention an enjoyable wait in reception to drop off a parcel. Well, now couriers don't have to. With the delivery module, couriers can scan the address label through the camera on the SignInApp iPad and automatically notify the recipient that a delivery is ready to collect. Yes, couriers at our main site now use the self-service delivery module to speed up their drop-offs.

Sign In App prints out its own label which we can use for quickly tracking and identifying those parcels and facilitate self-service collection.

We simply love this feature. It's such a time-saver for everyone involved. The audit trail then shows when parcels arrived, who they were for and who signed them out as collected. This replaces yet another paper-based system.

We're also now actively looking at:

Remote sites (in light of the working from home Covid-19 scenarios but also for our workplace assessors when out at employer sites)

Pre-registering visitors directly from Outlook to allow staff members to set their visitors up on the system ready for their arrival.

Sign In Points – to allow non-contact sign ins for staff and students without having to set up hardware in every location. We also see a lot of potential from this new feature to help with another problem we have, which is in tracking and ensuring the wellbeing of our lone workers or staff working on-site out of hours in datacentres and plant-rooms etc.

"

With Sign In App we quickly realised we were looking at an affordable, feature rich, simple to use solution, which uses industry standard, readily available hardware, on a secure platform, backed by a responsive development team. What's not to like?

On top of this, the fact we can customise the screens ensures the system looks professional too.

Sign In App ®