



making IT personal

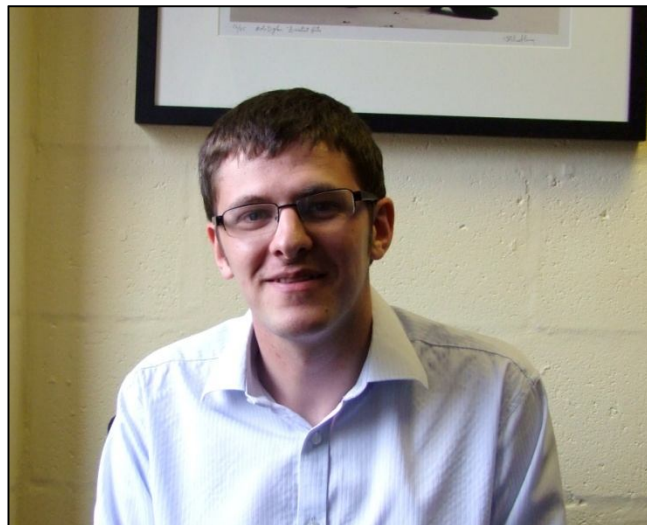
joining the DOTs

Making IT Personal: Joining the DOTs is a scheme which creates Digital Outreach Trainers (DOTs) from volunteers.

DOTs deliver informal mentoring in digital technologies in a work, community or home setting.

The DOTs scheme is a European Commission funded initiative to address digital inclusion.

DOT Story – Ben Fuller



Ben Fuller, a resident of Rotherham, has a long standing love of computing and is a self-diagnosed 'gadget geek.' Ben is channelling his digital enthusiasm into the DOTs scheme and finding that mentoring can lead to qualifications and personal achievement, as well as a study trip to Malta.

"When I signed up I had no idea that being a DOT could lead to a free qualification," says Ben. "I found out about it through a creative iMedia course at Doncaster college, and it seemed very easy and straightforward, something I could do." Like many DOTs, Ben quickly realised that informal mentoring was already a part of his life, particularly at work in the Sheffield Council offices.

"There were lots of things I was helping out on, and being a DOT gave me a way to formalise it. For example, I created step-by-step, 'how-to' guides on some of the more complicated but useful things in Microsoft Word and networking. The guides went down really well, and some of the senior managers have laminated copies to keep on their desks."

In creating guides like these, instead of just fixing the problems himself, Ben thinks he is allowing a learning process to happen: "It's about empowering people, finding ways to help them help themselves, showing how, rather than doing it for them. And it's always easy to find new situations where help is needed. Being a DOT has made me more proactive in looking for opportunities to help."

Ben's approach to mentoring is to give as much information as possible and to outline what might happen or could go wrong, placing the responsibility in the hands of the user. Ben takes this approach with his family as well, finding that his step dad often needs his help.

"My step dad is of a generation that isn't completely comfortable with computing, but he still uses it for a lot of things. He's wary about paying online, so I often guide him if he's using eBay or something. I'm there to say 'no, don't do that' when he needs me to."



Ben at the DOTs awards evening

**'It's about
empowering people,
finding ways to help
them help themselves'**

Ben is also an active user of the DOTs online community forum where he can provide more informal help, as well as find out things for himself. "It ties in with me being really gadgety. I can discuss things like the iPhone—what it can do, what it can't, what it should. I recently helped another DOT with their iPhone through something that came up in discussion. I've also found help myself with fairly advanced computer programming, so the forum covers the whole range of what you can talk about.

"I like being involved in the community, it's very much my type of thing. You get to know the other DOTs, and the areas that they know most about."

For Ben, the DOTs scheme has opened the door to many opportunities. He has visited Malta as part of the programme's links with European partners to exchange ideas and approaches. He is also due to start the Sheffield College e-Communication degree, provided and funded by his participation in the DOTs scheme. The fact that the degree features a significant mentoring aspect ties in with his DOT experience so far, and provides a bridge for extending it.

Having provided him with so much in such a short space of time, Ben is understandably enthusiastic about being a DOT: "The best thing about the scheme is this huge network of people, passing on skills one person at a time. The community is clearly growing, and with people become approved and accredited they prove to themselves that they are good mentors while providing inspiration for others."

Find out more at www.makingitpersonal.eu