



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 – Wakas Hussain



Wakas Hussain is a final year iMedia student at Sheffield College who initially became a Digital Outreach Trainer (DOT) as a way of adding to his CV and personal statement for university application. However, he found that being a part of the scheme has opened doors onto learning experiences and personal growth he had not anticipated.

18 year-old Wakas, the first 'young DOT' to gain approval on the scheme, is working towards a career in the gaming industry, and quickly realised that being a DOT was very relevant to him. "The scheme matches my day-to-day life. At home I'm known as the tech guy—everything that breaks I have to sort out. I thought, "this is perfect for me, I've got plenty of stories to tell," and I started to fill my diary up in no time.

"You don't realise how much you've been helping people until you write it all down. It made me happy to see how much I had accomplished."

At home and amongst friends, Wakas has been able to help with some common problems. "It's often really simple things that you can use for your diary entries. When my Mum used to buy something online, it was down to me to enter all the bank details and make sure the transaction was done properly. But being a DOT has taught me how to show her to be self-reliant, so she can do all that by herself now.

“It was the same with my friend who couldn’t install some anti-virus software. He brought his laptop round and we went through a number of steps, like updating the operating system and changing the installation settings. He learnt something and now knows how to install software himself.

“Part of the guidance you’re given as a DOT is that you are there to show people what to do, not to do it for them. I’ve always understood that I had a role as a teacher in this scheme. If you don’t do it like that, eventually they’ll have the same problem again and won’t know what to do. And, actually, it doesn’t take that long to teach someone something.”

Wakas was also able to help his younger sister over a more sustained period. “She’s autistic, and she relies a lot on routines. One of these is watching CBeebies, everyday, from 3 to 7 o’clock. At one point our television was broken so I showed her how to watch the BBC iPlayer on a laptop. I also showed her how she could search for and watch older programmes. It was difficult to get her to learn a new routine, and I had to go slowly through the process, but after a while she went from not knowing how to use a laptop at all, to watching her favourite programmes on it. Like many autistic people, her memory is very sharp, so once I had guided her carefully, it sunk in.”

“Being on the scheme has boosted my confidence. I’m glad I’ve taken this opportunity to be a DOT and put my time into it.”

Now at the end of his college course, and awaiting approval as a Level 2 DOT, Wakas recently discovered how being a DOT has given him access to experiences beyond mentoring. “I was asked to give a speech at a DOT awards event, which I wasn’t prepared for, but I got a lot of encouragement. Afterwards, quite a few people congratulated me, which made me happy.”

Wakas continued this trend on the recent study trip to Malta, arranged in partnership with the Maltese Communications Agency, and attended by many of the DOTs, when he made a similarly enthusiastic speech in praise of the MCAST College’s approach to education in digital technology.

“Being on the scheme has allowed me to stand up and talk in front of complete strangers which has boosted my confidence and made me think about doing this more in future. I’m glad I’ve taken this opportunity to be a DOT and put my time into it. I’ve met some great people and made some good friends.”

Find out more at www.makingitpersonal.eu