



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 Stories—Yvonne Gavin and Khalid Mohammad



Yvonne Gavin is a careers advisor, employed by the **MST JET** project, funded by the **BIG Lottery Reaching Communities**, and is based at the **MST Sheffield Station** providing accommodation based support to single and homeless refugees. She provides information, advice and guidance on jobs, education and training. **Khalid Mohammad** is a resident at the **MST Station Foyer** who is working towards qualifications in IT and volunteers his skills and knowledge in the centre. Yvonne and Khalid both became **DOTs (Digital Outreach Trainers)** in **February 2011** and have found that different aspects of the scheme have complemented and enhanced their teaching and learning experiences.

The **MST JET** project provides courses and training for education and employment, and learning digital skills as part of this is essential. Yvonne delivers classes providing a combination of computer skills and literacy to people who need it the most. "The people I teach IT to – some of them don't know anything at all about it, even how to use a mouse and keyboard. I show them the basics – how to log on, how to use the hardware – up to how to use IT in getting employment.

“A lot of job hunting is online now and it’s more important to know the basics. One of my courses is a two-hour session in which I show clients how to find job opportunities, complete applications, create and upload their CV and how to manage an email client and attachments so they can repeat the process themselves in the future. It’s half-tutoring, half-practical, so there’s a hands-on, mentoring approach built into my work.”

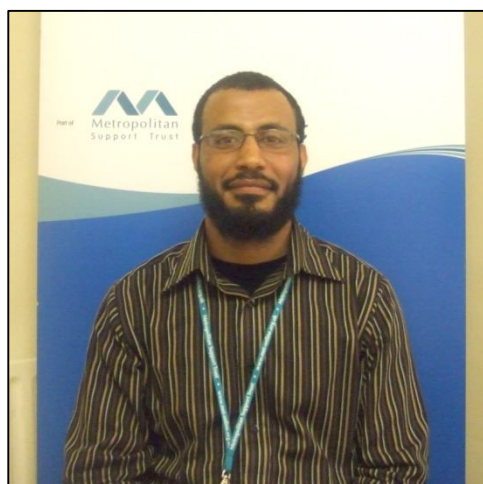
When she discovered the DOTs scheme, it was clear to Yvonne that her working life fitted into the everyday mentoring approach of being a DOT, and quickly made the scheme part of her routine.

Yvonne has also discovered the “brilliant” Fast Forward literacy materials, a suite of help manuals for use in learning English produced especially for the DOTs scheme, and how she can integrate this resource into her sessions. “The Fast Forward booklets are fantastic,” says Yvonne. “I’ve started using them in my classes for job hunting and interview skills. They provide a really good way of illustrating what I’m teaching, and I can build exercises around the activities as they are based on step-by-step processes.

“Because English is not the first language of many people in the classes, the content can be hard for them. The Fast Forward materials make it easier, as they are so down to earth. They help keep the sessions alive and interesting, so for me it’s a brilliant tool.”

Khalid is a client of Yvonne’s who also helps with her English classes as well as volunteering IT sessions of his own and providing general IT support for the MST Station Foyer. “The residents go to Khalid for IT help all the time,” says Yvonne, “so I suggested he join the DOTs as he could get accredited for it.”

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“If anyone needs IT advice here, it’s me they come to,” agrees Khalid, “I’m busy.”

Outside of the classroom, Khalid helps informally with a variety of issues arising from digital technology. “One the residents here wanted to use Hotmail video messenger to speak with his family in Kurdistan,” explains Khalid. “I took him through each step – starting up an account, downloading the software and setting everything up. He wasn’t going to bother because he didn’t have the knowledge to do it himself, so I was glad that he came to me for help.

“Almost everything is digital now, so it’s important that people know at least the basics. I volunteer a lot of IT help in the centre and around Sheffield as well. IT is my life, so being a DOT really appealed to me. I like to help people—it makes me happy. Being a DOT means I can help people and get a qualification. It means I’m more sociable and has given me more confidence.”

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