



# 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 – Christine Bainbridge



**Christine Bainbridge is an e-Communications student at The Sheffield College and a Level 3 accredited DOT (Digital Outreach Trainer) who has just started as an eMentor, advising and guiding other DOTs online. While she has experienced frustrations and setbacks during her journey on the DOTs scheme, she has discovered that it's a model which brings generations of the community together, and it has given her a chance for positive personal reflection.**

A PA and secretary for many years, Christine is used to a busy and demanding working life. Having worked in charity administration and Sheffield City Council, following a serious illness Christine suddenly found she was unable to work in the way she had before. "I was shellshocked, and I was looking for something that I could do and found the e-Communications course at Sheffield College. It was another student on the course who sent details about the DOTs scheme around. I've always liked helping people with computers and technology, and I was looking for different ways to stay busy, so I got involved.

"Not long after this, I went away for three months to stay in Suffolk. I became friends with the landlady of the local pub, and she wanted to start using a computer because her son was going on an around-the-world trip and she wanted to be able to stay in touch with him. She could only really do Word and Excel, she didn't have any idea about the internet or anything else she could do. So I spent a lot of time helping

her get set up – getting her online, setting up an email account and moving onto Skype so she could talk to her son when he went away. She has family in Ireland as well, and now she’s on Facebook and Twitter and she can keep up with everybody.”

This extended period of help provided her with the experience she needed for the DOTs scheme: “That’s basically how I started, though I found the actual recording of my examples frustrating at times – I just found it difficult to record everything under the right category. My eMentor through the process, Sue Harpham, was very patient with me and guided me along the whole time.”

Christine found further opportunities to help closer to home in Greenhill, Sheffield, where an elderly neighbour wanted to find a way of preserving her memories of the area. “She was eighty-two at the time, and she had a lot of very old photographs of the village dating from the 1920s. So I helped her scan the photos and make an online album from them, which she could send to her sister in Canada. And because she told her friends at the luncheon club, and they all had things they wanted to do as well, I found myself helping them with lots of different things. Some of them want to track down old army friends, and others want to get on ‘this Facebook thing’, so they can keep up with their children and grandchildren more regularly. They phone me sometimes, and pass the phone around asking questions.

“A lot of older people are realising that they need to get online to stay connected to everything. And because some of them can’t get out as much as they would like, being online helps them stay connected to everything and means they feel less isolated.”

## **The more people who are able to help others to improve their skills and join the digital age is something worth doing**

Although she’s been a computer user since the 1980s, Christine still finds many things she doesn’t know about: “Like when I needed some software to put together the photo album. I used the DOTs community forum to find links to free imaging software and tutorials and ended up finding exactly what I needed.

Having achieved Level 3 accreditation, Christine has now become an eMentor herself, someone who advises and guides other DOTs. She has achieved this by working through the eMentors toolkit provided by the DOTs scheme. “It’s rewarding to help other people get on. Being a DOT has been such a positive experience when I look back on it, even though the process at times was frustrating. Because before I would just do something and forget about it, now I have a record of it in my online DOT diary, and because that’s such a good thing I just want to continue doing that.

“Helping someone out makes you feel good about yourself, and now I can help people going through the DOTs scheme who are in need of guidance. I believe that the more people who are able to help others to improve their skills and join the digital age is something worth doing, and by helping a trainee DOT I’m doing my bit.”

**Find out more at [www.makingitpersonal.eu](http://www.makingitpersonal.eu)**