



**making IT  
personal**  
joining the DOTs



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To find out more about the project visit: [www.makingITpersonal.eu](http://www.makingITpersonal.eu)

To register interest in becoming a DOT, or simply to access some free IT resources visit: [www.makingITpersonal.org.uk](http://www.makingITpersonal.org.uk)

# Going DOTty in Malta



Malta plans to move beyond traditional industry towards a digital economy

## South Yorkshire's e-mentors discover a whole new digital world in the Mediterranean.

For one week in May 2011, 16 of South Yorkshire's Digital Outreach Trainers (DOTs) visited the island of Malta to learn from and share experiences with their European partners.

On the face of it, Malta and the UK appear to be very different countries with very different goals. While Britain is home to the world's sixth largest economy powered by 60 million people, Malta has a population of only 415,000.

Yet when it comes to digital skills the two share much in common. Both are English-speaking island nations that rely heavily on trade and communication with the outside world. Both are seeking to build their economies around technological products and services rather than natural resources or manufacturing. Most importantly, to build these 'digital economies' both Malta and the UK have made digital inclusion a big priority.

All of which made the Malta Communications Agency an ideal European partner for

South Yorkshire's 'Making IT Personal: Joining the DOTs' scheme (MITP:JtD), and Malta a great place for the DOTs to develop their e-mentoring skills.

"This trip was of enormous benefit to the DOT scheme as a whole," said Martin Cantor, Project Director of MITP:JtD. "Bringing the DOTs together as a team in Malta has fostered a real community of e-mentors, who will continue to work closely together in South Yorkshire.

"All of the participants have gained new insights into digital exclusion, which will make them better mentors. For the younger ones especially, discussing and presenting their views to a professional audience for the first time has shown them that they can influence policy in a positive way."

This special edition of the MITP newsletter reports on what happened during a week of team building, knowledge sharing and activities at some of Malta's leading ICT projects.

## What's a DOT?

### South Yorkshire's Digital Outreach Trainers (DOTs) teach people the digital skills they want to learn.

We all know someone who could be a great DOT. They're the IT-literate friends and family members who show us how to set up our mobile phones, teach us to sell something on eBay for the first time or help us to make our first Skype video call.

DOTs don't teach in a classroom. They are volunteers who mentor people of all ages and backgrounds to become part of our digital society. Learning from a DOT is free and it opens up lots of new opportunities to

people who might otherwise be excluded from our increasingly online world.

#### Spreading digital skills

DOTs are a relatively new concept. The pilot scheme 'Making IT Personal: Joining the DOTs' (MITP:JtD) was launched in 2010 to create and coordinate DOTs across South Yorkshire.

The scheme is already contributing to South Yorkshire's

plans to create a digital economy, which would mean lots more jobs in electronic goods and services. Currently, around one third of people in South Yorkshire have never used the internet – but with the help of DOTs digital skills are spreading throughout the community one person at a time.

#### Creating new mentors

DOTs also benefit from being part of the scheme. They receive coaching in how to be a good

mentor and have access to learning resources and courses which can lead to a recognised OCN qualification as a digital mentor. Sometimes this can lead to new career opportunities and at the very least, it looks great on a CV.

The MITP:JtD scheme was recently awarded funding to allow the scheme to continue until 2012, with a new focus on employability skills.

# Building a real team



The South Yorkshire DOTs arrive in Malta

**The DOTs' real adventure began with Monday's visit to ICT4ALL, a national programme delivering ICT learning to hundreds of people across Malta.**

Having arrived in Malta on the Saturday, however, the DOTs had spent an enjoyable weekend settling in and meeting in person for the first time.

This aspect of the trip was especially helpful for a community of e-mentors that had previously worked separately and communicated entirely via the web.

"It was great to meet the other DOTs," said DOT Jamie Jackson. "Both the younger and older DOTs were able to share their experiences and really bond with each other."

## Digital skills for everyone?

**"ICT4ALL is very similar to the DOT scheme in that training is tailored around useful skills that people will really use," says trip organiser and DOT Nick Jeans.**

"The difference is that the training is given by paid professionals instead of volunteers, so it is much more costly to the Maltese government."

During a visit to an ICT4ALL class at the Zejtun Learning Centre, the DOTs (whose comments were recorded anonymously) were able to observe a professional ICT tutor's approach to digital

skills training and how ICT4ALL differs from the DOT scheme.

### Tailored teaching

Like MITP:JtD, ICT4ALL follows no set curriculum. Instead, teacher Jesmond Marshall took questions from his class and taught skills they wanted to learn – an approach made possible by the small class size of just ten.

"Malta offers much smaller classes so is better placed to tailor their delivery to the needs of the class," said another DOT.

The skills learners asked for reflected Malta's particular needs. In a class of elderly learners, the skills taught revolved around email, video calling and other communications tools.

"Maltese people have a particular interest in mastering communication technology because more Maltese live abroad than in their own country," said one DOT. "With

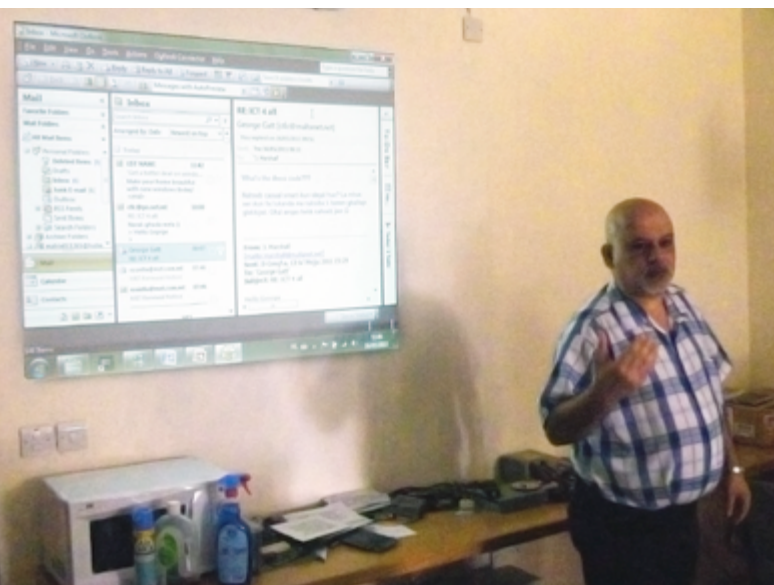
their strong family ties, free communication with relatives abroad is a strong motivating factor for getting to grips with Skype and email."

### Free ICT classes

But perhaps the biggest difference between ICT4ALL and many UK schemes is the government funding behind it. ICT4ALL is completely free to all learners. This has brought people of all ages to the classes, including an 87 year old in the class visited by the DOTs.

The level of investment involved also reflects the high level of priority placed on digital inclusion by Malta.

"ICT4ALL showed that once costs are removed, people of all ages are interested in learning ICT," noted one of the DOTs. "Cost is a big issue to people in the UK. By being more flexible in learning times, keeping courses short and just teaching what learners are interested in, ICT4ALL has attracted people from all parts of the community."



Jesmond Marshall teaches ICT skills his class ask to learn

**"Their thinking is that people don't learn effectively when it is something they won't find useful. With South Yorkshire's larger average class sizes, this would not really be feasible."**



# Influencing Malta's ICT policy

Tuesday's all-day seminar, 'Helping Everyone Get Digital', was a chance not just to learn but to present MITP:JtD to Maltese ICT professionals. The young DOTs grabbed the opportunity to influence Maltese policy with both hands.



Filming DOT interviews by the sea

Video editing enthusiast Sam Blake, 17, had stayed up until the early hours to prepare a short film about MITP:JtD. Several other DOTs aged 16-19 were set to speak publicly for the first time in their lives. The result of these presentations was that Maltese projects such as eGov4U are now seriously considering adopting a DOT-style approach.

"Brooke (16) and Wakas (19) spoke and really went down well," said tutor Valerie Peterson afterwards. "To have the confidence to do that, in front of a group of people in suits that you don't know, was fantastic."

During the seminar, the DOTs also took part in focus group discussions on reaching the elderly,

opportunities for disabled people, as well as gender and ICT.

"The significance of going to Malta and representing the DOT scheme cannot be underestimated," said tutor Julie Hooper. "The young DOTs' confidence and self esteem is just simply soaring."

After performing so well, the DOTs came together on Wednesday for a team building day that included a boat trip to the Blue Grotto and Stone Age temple dating back to 3,500 BC. The team discussed what they had learned so far and set goals for the rest of the trip.

## DOT Profile Sam Blake

17-year-old student Sam has ambitions of being a professional video editor. Did his first trip abroad teach him anything new?



### What impressed me most:

Malta was eye-opening on a personal level, because the people we met were so friendly and so keen to help us. I was impressed by the level of technology at the institutions we visited, but also by how clean and safe Malta is compared to Sheffield. We were out at 11pm on one night and kids were still playing outside. That wouldn't happen where I live.

### The new skills I learned:

I'm really into video editing and I've made lots of YouTube music videos. Malta was the first time one of my edits has been shown to an audience of professionals, at the Helping Everyone Get Digital Seminar, and it was well received. I also used a video camera for the first time in Malta, and I'm currently editing the footage I shot to create a new film about the trip.

### My plans for the future:

My experience in Malta has given me the belief to take my video editing skills further. It's something I've enjoyed doing for a while, but I didn't think I would be good enough to become a professional video maker until I edited the DOT video. Now I'm looking into developing a career and hopefully I'll be involved in making professional music videos one day.



Ready for an exciting day of team building





# 'DOTs reach disadvantaged groups'

**Putting government services online saves money, but it only works when enough people have the ICT skills to use them. Following the DOTs' presentations at the 'Helping Everyone Get Digital' seminar, a new solution to this problem may have emerged.**

Malta's project to remove barriers to using online government services, 'eGov4U', was presented at the seminar by Jimmy Magro of the Maltese Local Councils Association. Although it aims to reduce the cost of these services, the ICT training it relies on remains expensive.

"Malta is currently using the ICT4ALL programme and e-Gov training to teach the skills needed to make eGov4U a success," says Mr Magro. "However the training is being done by professional tutors and not young people. The approach presented by the DOTs today is clearly good practice and could be applied in Malta, but we would need EU funding to finance the scheme."

## Key to employment

eGov4U specifically aims to help socially disadvantaged people in parts of the community that MITP:JtD is known to reach. As European partners of the MITP:JtD scheme, Malta Communications Agency (MCA) is already looking at the possibility of running a similar project.

"Making IT Personal: Joining the DOTs is very similar to our projects and targets the same groups – specifically, those people for whom digital inclusion is a key to engagement in employment and in society," says Fiona Tesi,

Project Coordinator at MCA's Information Society.

"The DOTs project proposes new approaches to address different groups of society. We are currently in discussions with different organisations to see if we can apply the DOTs scheme in Malta, so we can reach all those who are at risk of digital exclusion."



Fiona Tesi of MCA's Information Society

## Future partnership

Mr Magro also suggested the possibility of a future partnership with MITP:JtD, should a DOT-style approach be adopted by eGov4U in Malta.

"At present, we do not have in place a web-based online network needed to run a DOT-style project. However we would be eager to share a web portal if and when we can use it."



Jimmy Magro presents eGov4U, a new online services project

## DOT Profile

# Iain Milner

34-year-old accounts administrator Iain became a DOT to learn new mentoring skills. What did he pick up in Malta?



## What impressed me most:

The focus of Malta's digital skills programmes on women was very interesting, and showed how digital exclusion affects different social groups in Malta and the UK. Malta still has gender inequality in the workplace, with most women staying at home and raising children once they are married. To address this, Malta is trying to encourage women to learn new digital skills so they have more opportunities. It shows society shapes their approach to digital inclusion – UK schemes usually don't address a specific gender.

## The new skills I learned:

The carers at the Inspire Centre were fantastic role models in how to pass useful skills on to other people. They work closely with the families of the disabled people they care for, showing them how to give the same kinds of care at home. They are also great communicators, which I believe is a really important skill for DOTs to have too. Following the trip I feel more confident in my mentoring skills than ever before.

## My plans for the future:

One of the reasons I became a DOT was to gain new skills and experiences. The high cost of university prevented me from going, but my experience in Malta and as a DOT has allowed me to work towards a mentoring qualification and develop new skills for free. It has opened the door for me to consider further training and education, and it looks great on my CV too.



Discussing digital inclusion

# Teaching ICT skills for employability

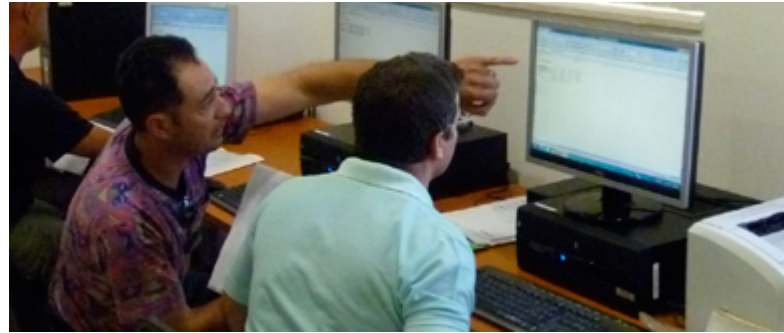
**Thursday and Friday brought visits to Malta College, Inspire and Malta's Employment Training Corporation (ETC), which provides ICT training to improve job prospects for the unemployed.**

"Digital exclusion can prevent people from finding a job in Malta just as it can in the UK," said one of the DOTs after the visit. "The ETC programme seems to react quickly to the needs of employers by offering tailored ICT training."

Friday was also the day the DOTs said a fond farewell

to Malta, as their adventure came to an end.

"The young DOTs conducted themselves extremely well on this trip," said trip organiser and DOT Nick Jeans. "They coped very well with speaking to high-ranking officials from Malta. They responded particularly well to the visit



ETC tailors its training to the needs of employers

to Inspire and the kids with special needs we saw there, understanding how ICT might help such kids. Most

of all, they worked very well as a team in supporting and encouraging each other."

## Inspired support for special needs

**Malta's Inspire Centres presented the DOTs with new ways to apply their ICT mentoring skills, which they are now using to become better trainers back in the UK.**

Inspire's aim is to realise the full potential of every person with special needs in Malta, so that they can become fully involved in the community.

As Malta's Foundation for Inclusion, Inspire works with over 1,000 children and adults with

During a meeting with Inspire's team leaders, the DOTs saw how ICT was being used to enable people with disabilities to learn, play and interact with each other in new ways.

"It was very interesting to see how Inspire's specially designed software helps disabled children with memory tasks, speaking and other skills," said DOT Wakas Hussain. "Their technology really engaged the children and seemed to be very beneficial!"

**"It was very interesting to see how Inspire's specially designed software helps disabled children with memory tasks, speaking and other skills"**

Wakas Hussain, Digital Outreach Trainer

physical and learning disabilities including autism, brain injuries and Down's syndrome. The organisation runs five centres across the country and on the neighbouring Island of Gozo.

### Gaming research

Since returning to the UK, several of the DOTs have begun putting what they learned at Inspire into practice.



Inspire helps over 1,000 people with disabilities across Malta

"They have been researching different games that can help with cognitive development, concentration, motor skills and so on," said Sheffield College tutor Julie Hooper. "The DOTs have been inspired by their visit to Inspire."

### Yorkshire expertise

Despite impressing the DOTs, Inspire believes it is not yet making the best possible use of technology.

"Children currently visit the Inspire centre for one morning and one afternoon per week, with no reinforcing learning taking place in between visits," explained Philipa Arrigo, Inspire's newly appointed EU Funding Executive. "They forget much of what they learned by the time

they come back to us. We are keen to explore the potential of ICT to provide additional learning opportunities when the children are not at the centre."

The foundation's need for ICT expertise in this area could be met through partnerships with organisations in Yorkshire.

"A partnership between JISC Techdis (a leading advisory service on technology and inclusion) and Inspire seems an obvious collaboration that could bring in extra funds for Techdis and technology expertise for Inspire," said trip organiser and DOT Nick Jeans. "One particular area where they could use help from Techdis is in the use of digital learning materials, which students can work on from home."



The Centre's unique facilities impressed the DOTs



# An invitation to Malta College



Meeting Mario Pace, Malta College's IT director

**Friday's visit to Malta College of Art, Science and Technology (MCAST) brought an opportunity for the DOTs to discuss ICT learning with a college director – and to study in Malta themselves.**

Mario Pace, the college's Acting Director of the Institute of ICT, presented a new set of IT courses at MCAST which have been created in collaboration with Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) and using EU funding. Reflecting Malta's drive to create a digital economy, the new course subjects included video game design, mobile device software development and e-commerce.

As all of the DOTs who visited MCAST were iMedia students at Sheffield College, these new

opportunities offered them a place on a Level 4/5 HNC Digital Media course.

"Malta and MITP:JtD has made the next part of their journey seem more possible than before."

## 'Attracted to the UK'

Opportunities for staff and student exchanges between MCAST and learning institutions in South Yorkshire could also be on the cards, if the UK colleges are open to them.

## DOT Profile

# Wakas Hussain

Wakas is a 19-year-old iMedia student at Sheffield College with an interest in game design. What inspired him in Malta?



## What impressed me most:

Malta's education system really impressed me. Because Malta has very few natural resources – they even have to import drinking water – the government there recognises that they have to invest in people. People are Malta's only resource, and so they receive free education and lots of help from the state.

## The new skills I learned:

I was just very glad to see so many people in the scheme who are friendly and want to help others. Meeting everyone in person for the first time has given me even more enthusiasm and I'm looking forward to continuing mentoring others as a DOT.

## My plans for the future:

After seeing how the Inspire centre used ICT to allow disabled people to play and learn at the same time, some of the DOTs and I have been researching a similar project. Equipment like the Xbox 360 Kinect sensor, which tracks body movements, allows disabled and able-bodied people to interact on the same level and helps them to bond and make new friendships. We're now looking for funding to put the project into action.

**"I think the students that went to Malta will aim higher in their lives."**

Julie Hooper of Sheffield College

courses offered appropriate progression routes for each of them – and they were interested to hear from Mr Pace that they would all be welcome to study at the college.

"I think the students that went to Malta will aim higher in their lives," said Julie Hooper of Sheffield College. "They are talking about university. They came in to college at a pre-GCSE level, and now here was someone in another college taking them at face value and

"I have always been particularly keen on collaborations with the UK because of our shared language and the similarities in our education systems," explained Mr Pace. "Equally, Maltese people are as attracted to the UK as a place to visit and study as British students are to Malta.

"So far, however, we have found it much easier to approach colleges in Germany, Sweden and other EU countries."

**"Malta was a fantastic cultural exchange and ICT learning experience"**

Ben Fuller, Digital Outreach Trainer

MITP:JtD's first study visit to one of our European partners was a big success in terms of ICT learning, building a community of e-mentors and creating new partnerships. For this, everyone behind the Making IT Personal project would like to say a big thank you to our welcoming hosts in Malta. We also thank the DOTs who participated and proved to be excellent ambassadors for South Yorkshire and MITP:JtD.