

1. Context

- 1.1 *Making IT Personal* (MITP) is the South Yorkshire Programme for digital inclusion. It is heavily dependent on the concept of digital mentors (called DOTs or Digital Outreach Trainers) who will pass their knowledge of digital solutions and skills to others in the community. As yet MITP is not being fully implemented, owing to lack of resources. It is hoped to be able to implement the bulk of the programme in the medium term (1 to 2 years). Details of the MITP vision and outline programme can be found in the document *Making IT Personal : A Road Map*.
- 1.2 *Making IT Personal : Joining the DOTs* (MITP-JtD) is an ESF-funded project whose principal purpose is to develop a training, accreditation and qualification package for digital mentoring. This package would be deployed as a key underpinning element in the implementation of MITP. Details of MITP-JtD are to be found in the project contract.
- 1.3 Although the creation of DOTs is not the principal purpose of MITP-JtD, it is recognised that those being trained and accredited within the development of the package will be on the DOTs learning ladder, that the scheme is required to output 300 DOTs, as well as engagement which will see some pilot deployment to test and validate the package.

2. Rights and responsibilities

- 2.1 It is important to define the rights and responsibilities of the individuals and organisations involved in the DOTs scheme. The principles in this paper, in defining those responsibilities, will ensure:
 - that the public are adequately protected
 - that the DOTs and trainees are adequately protected
 - that organisations involved are adequately protected
 - that, within that framework, participation, sharing and mentoring are encouraged and supported to the maximum extent.

3. The problems

- 3.1 If DOTs, or people linked to the DOTs scheme, give advice to other people, do they carry any responsibility for that advice, either overtly or by implication? If not, can the public be misled into thinking they do?
- 3.2 If DOTs are deployed by an organisation to give advice, does the deploying organisation or the host venue carry any responsibility for that advice, either overtly or by implication? If not, can the public be misled into thinking they do?

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3.3 What arrangements are necessary to safeguard children and vulnerable adults?

4. Solution 1 – disclaimers

4.1 In part the answer is to issue (short and clear) disclaimers or statements appropriate to the various situations envisaged. Initially the following disclaimers/statements are envisaged (more can be added if required in the light of experience):

- statement to DOTs of their rights and responsibilities and how they can represent themselves to the public
- statement to deploying or host organisations of their rights and responsibilities
- statement to people being advised by DOTs (when formally deployed) of what they can expect from the DOTs
- statement to people being advised by DOTs and DOT trainees (when NOT formally deployed) of what they can expect
- disclaimer to people being advised by DOTs (when formally deployed) of the non-responsibility of the deploying and host bodies

5. Solution 2 – accreditation – the distinction between trainees and DOTs

5.1 The second part of the solution is accreditation as a DOT, clearly separating those who have acquired DOT status from those who are trainees on the DOT learning ladder.

5.2 DOTs (digital outreach trainers) are those who have advanced sufficiently along the learning ladder, in terms of both mentoring and ICT awareness, to be considered capable of delivering appropriate level advice of an adequate standard to the public.

5.3 Trainees on the scheme are not DOTs (ie Digital Outreach Trainers), and this distinction between trainees on the scheme, and those who have been accredited as DOTs is crucial.

5.4 Just where that distinction lies, and how it will be assessed, is a matter for further work by the Content Working Group. However, the distinction needs to be a clear one – becoming a DOT needs to be a step change up from being a trainee within (or indeed outwith) the project.

5.5 Note that accreditation does not imply that DOTs will never be wrong, and the disclaimers will make that clear. Accreditation does not therefore imply quality assurance, but does offer some degree of quality control.

6. Individual activity and formal deployment

- 6.1 A corollary of this approach is a clear distinction between what DOTs do as individuals, and what they do when formally (or semi-formally) deployed by organisations.
- 6.2 What they or anyone else (including trainees) does as an individual is entirely up to them, just as I could go around telling people how to wire a plug. However, the statement to DOTs (paragraph 6.1 first bullet), while encouraging them to share their knowledge, will also discourage them from using their knowledge or position inappropriately.
- 6.3 When DOTs are deployed by an organisation, especially if they are employees of that organisation, then the organisation could carry at least implicit responsibility for the quality of the advice given. The disclaimers above will limit such liability, and DOTs deployed in this way will be made aware of their responsibilities.

7. Community of practice

- 7.1 The checks above are designed to protect the public, DOTs and organisations, and sound very negative. The other side of the coin is the need to encourage people to share their knowledge and mentor each other.
- 7.2 An online and open Community of Practice will be established to encourage and support peer to peer mentoring and sharing and the development of ideas and skills.
- 7.3 The Community of Practice will carry a clear statement of purpose and code of conduct on its home page, which will further reinforce the protection.

8. CRB checks

- 8.1 CRB checks are required by law for people who regularly work with children or vulnerable adults.
- 8.2 It will be the responsibility of any deploying body to ensure that DOTs who meet the criteria requiring CRB checks are indeed CRB checked.
- 8.3 Beyond that, it is a matter of personal choice for individual DOTs whether they choose to have themselves CRB checked.
- 8.4 It is self-evident that no-one (DOT or otherwise) should represent themselves as being CRB checked if they are not, and the statement to DOTs (paragraph 6.1 first bullet) will make this clear.

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9. Next steps

- 9.1 It is believed that this approach provides adequate safeguards for all concerned. However, before proceeding with any formal deployment of DOTs, it is proposed to ask Barnsley Council legal department to confirm this.
- 9.2 Other organisations may, of course, seek their own legal advice or other reassurance, at their own cost.