

# ***Maximising the potential of mobile technologies for learners with disabilities at North Glasgow College***

## **Presenters:**

Jim Brady	Extended Curriculum Manager
Sandra Gemmell	Supported Learning
Iain Abercrombie	Head of Department



## **Introduction**

Featured in the '[JISC TechDis Go Mobile](#)' publication, teaching staff at North Glasgow College who work with students with a wide spectrum of learning difficulties have been involved in initiatives that use multi-media tools and mobile technologies to transform their learning and teaching. Throughout this initiative, teaching staff have acknowledged the impact students play in leading the way in this field along with the ubiquitous nature of new and

emerging technologies which students are very comfortable with, and that can create outputs that are typically very professional.

The team at North Glasgow also very modestly claim that there was nothing new in the initiatives that they undertook, and activities/ideas that started in one class project have ultimately produced a model that has found success and has permeated through different departments, subject areas and ultimately externally to provide North Glasgow College with authentic and student-centred promotional material which now features prominently as a case study in a [national inclusion initiative](#). These developments have created exciting experiences for students and opened new doors to create innovative learning opportunities.

Jim, Sandra and Iain all offered interesting and varying perspectives on their contributions to this area of work. They described their experiences and their own individual evaluations of using mobile technologies for learning and teaching and the very 'organic' way that the initiatives developed, matured and were adapted as staff and learners grew in their experiences. They also highlighted the strategic implications of using new, innovative and mobile technologies and how the benefits can be applied in a wider context.

### **Partnerships**

Jim described his background in media production, sound engineering and radio production. He explained how, alongside his role as Extended Curriculum Manager, he became involved in delivering media based courses to students with more complex learning needs, describing this element of his job as something he was 'not really trained to do' however moved very quickly to being 'the guy who was doing it every week'.

Jim's department were involved in 'servicing' and providing a wider range of choices of training for students within supported learning programmes at North Glasgow College.

Partnership approaches are very important, and none more so when supporting learners with more complex needs. Sandra Gemmell and her colleagues within Supported Learning at the college have worked effectively with many staff teams and curriculum areas across North Glasgow College including Applied Arts. These partnerships have in turn have created opportunities for students attending supported learning programmes with the chance to participate in a range of subjects across the curriculum (including beauty therapy, radio/sound engineering, construction and others).

Sandra's experience of supporting learners and Jim's experience of utilising the mobile technologies (or playing with the toys as Jim explained) has given students a wonderful opportunity to use the latest mobile technologies to transform learning experiences.

Almost as importantly the collaboration in the classroom and team teaching approach allows staff to develop their skills in teaching groups they are not familiar with or using hardware and software which is new to them.

### **Client group and inclusion benefits**

The student involved in these projects had particularly complex needs and attended courses which ranged from Pre Access 1 to Access 3 Programmes within the [SCQF framework](#). The groups included students with a variety of learning support needs including learners with visual impairments, students whose needs fall within the autistic spectrum and learners with challenging behaviours.



Sandra and her colleagues discovered that very often it is the teaching staff who are less familiar with mobile technologies, and students have been able to take the opportunity to share their knowledge and demonstrate their skills to staff. In fact there may be opportunities to reflect and accredit learners skills with technology by assessing their abilities in new and innovative ways.

## Mobile Technologies

One particular initiative involved creating radio programmes, and this activity allowed learners to use resources, tools and technology and to undertake actions which journalists and those in the media industry would use on a day to day basis. Students used [Flip Digital Cameras](#), [Zoom H4 digital recorders](#) with stereo microphones which are used by all media students at the college and are simple and easy to use. Using these resources, students were asked to interview staff, students and others about their studies, experiences at college. This process was not only fun, but the skills undertaken and developed as part of these activities helped map to core skills, media based industry standards and provided a sense of ownership of resources created. These recordings were then processed using [Adobe Audition](#) previously [Cool Edit Pro](#) which Jim described as reasonably standard radio software and fairly simple to use. [Audacity](#), free recording software which features on [EduApps](#) was also used.

Jim also highlighted the organisational issues regarding mobile technologies, especially the management of hardware, maintenance, storage and responsibility



## **Inclusion Benefits for Learners and for North Glasgow**

Output was placed on CDs, pen drives and MP3s and given to students to be used in other classes. The resources provided evidence of work, accreditation of performance and achievement, and also developed video and audio teaching materials which - on a week to week basis - provided material to help re-orientate, prompt and remind students of the tasks that they have been undertaking. The immediacy of material created offers a quick, professional and often extremely satisfying end product for students. The college now intends to use the material in the wider college context. Resources are used for promotional material to assist college publicity and recruitment from special schools and other articulation areas into supported learning programmes at North Glasgow College. This is not the end of the developments however!

## **Strategic Impact of Mobile Technologies and Student Oriented Materials for Recruitment and Induction**

Iain talked about the use of social networking , the use of mobile technologies and the output created by students attending the college as material which ultimately has been used as legitimate resources integrated into the college recruitment, marketing and induction programme. He described process of using emerging technologies and the resultant content created by students as excellent methodologies to reach out to prospective students to describe the college, and to help get a better sense of the environment and the culture at a pre-entry level.

Iain discussed the authenticity of student work as a valid recruitment resource and in addition, once students had applied to North Glasgow

College, to help orientate new learners to the campus. He also talked about the benefits of video material to help explain to learners the range of student support services which are available to them. In effect the induction process begins earlier and provides the type of information needed by the students in a format they are more comfortable with, as opposed to being given reams of paper in a classroom context.

Finally the developing range of e-Learning resources and methodologies in a more general sense at North Glasgow College have made an impact in in outcome measures and student achievement ratios by providing learning and teaching resources which can be accessed more readily by students with a range of learning styles and learning needs.