

HANDS THAT TALK – Translating Web Content into Sign Language

Dungiven based social enterprise Hands That Talk provides advocacy, support, recreational and training opportunities to the Deaf Community. As grant funding decreases in Northern Ireland, Hands That Talk is focusing on its long term sustainability and the development of income generating business ideas.

Hands That Talk identified an opportunity to translate web content into sign language by uploading podcasts. Although research has shown that younger people who are deaf can read and access web content fairly easily, it is more difficult for older people as their first language is sign language. In many cases they are unable to access information provided through the web, for example important health and wellbeing messages.

Hands That Talk was hindered by a lack of technical know-how to develop this new service and applied to Invest Northern Ireland for an Innovation voucher to access the missing skills and expertise. Having secured a voucher they worked with Jim Curran, Teaching Fellow in TV Production Techniques and Cross Platform Delivery in the School of Media, Film and Journalism.

Jim provided comprehensive video skills to Hands That Talk employee Ruari Bradley. He trained Ruari in the production of sign language adaptations of DVDs by introducing video green screen technology and Adobe Premier editing skills at the University's Television Studio in Coleraine. These skills will provided Hands That Talk with the infrastructure and Ruari the skills to develop a community video enterprise with this new service.

Jim also advised on the necessary hardware and software for Hands that Talk to set up and efficiently run such a business. This company will be capable of offering local government or organisations the opportunity to produce sign language productions in both Irish and British sign language.

In addition a full video specification was drawn up for a potential new purpose built building incorporating a state of the art video production company. This is a long term aim but the skills necessary to operate at such a level are now in place.

As a result of working with the Ulster University, Hands That Talk now have the potential to create new employment opportunities for members of the deaf community and provide training and development opportunities for the wider deaf community. It is envisaged that the new social enterprise will provide access to web-based information relating to health, wellbeing and statutory and non-statutory services produced by and for the deaf community.

Denise McConnell Dillon, Client Services Manager at Hands That Talk was very impressed with the skills and expertise offered through the Innovation Voucher Programme:

"This programme has been invaluable to our social economy enterprise. We have been able to develop the skills of our staff through the expertise delivered by Jim Curran. We are now in a better position to design, develop and deliver our product to market".