

**SKILLS
ACCOUNTS**



SKILLS ACCOUNTS E-BULLETIN MARCH 2009

27 March 2009

**Our
future.
It's in
our hands.**



Welcome to the ninth edition of the Skills Accounts e-bulletin.

Skills Accounts will help individuals take control of their learning and working life. Skills Accounts provide a personalised service that allows learners to access a range of careers advice as well as information about how to improve their skills and access financial support.

Trials of Skills Accounts began in the South East and East Midlands on 29 September 2008. The aim of the first year of the trials is to ensure that what is being offered through a Skills Account meets with learners' needs and expectations.

This e-bulletin provides our partners with the latest information on Skills Accounts and will keep them updated during the trials.

If you would like additional names added to our distribution list or if you would like to be removed from this list, please contact sally.askew@lsc.gov.uk

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1. THE EVOLVING SKILLS ACCOUNTS SERVICE

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The Skills Accounts trials provide the opportunity for different features and functions of the service to be developed and tested so that we are able to ensure that Skills Accounts meet the needs and expectations of learners. The next phase of Skills Accounts' development will take place in April when learners will be able to access a personal learning record. Through this, learners will be able to add details of their previous learning achievements and any courses they are currently undertaking. The learner record will allow learners to track their skills development. At this stage in the trial the personal learner record is for the learner to use but going forward this will become a record of learning used by learning providers so that learners are able to use it confidently when talking to employers. This will also provide employers with assurance about the skills that individuals possess.

The next phase of development will also see the introduction of the Learner Statement. The Learner Statement includes a record of the contributions that the learner has made as a personal investment in their own development. It will also help Skills Account users to identify the financial contributions that the government may have been making to help them improve their skills.

Both of these new tools will be further developed in the coming months to provide additional functionality to the Skills Accounts service.

2. MARKETING SKILLS ACCOUNTS – A PROVIDER'S EXPERIENCE

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Northampton College is a strategic learning provider in the East Midlands Skills Accounts trial. The college has been actively promoting Skills Accounts to all potential learners when they visit the college's enrolment centre. According to Charles Leggitt from Northampton College, "the enrolment centre is the best place to talk to learners about Skills Accounts as the conversation starts at the point of entry. It means that Skills Accounts are promoted from the very beginning." In the enrolment centre learners are told about Skills Accounts by advisers, who also provide learners with materials such as the Learner Leaflet so that they have something to take away with them.

Northampton College is taking an innovative approach to Skills Accounts by enrolling learners onto scheduled 'Skills Accounts support sessions'. Charles explains: "we recognised that there was the possibility of losing learners from the Skills Accounts loop, even though they might have expressed an interest in them. We therefore took the decision to host support sessions once a month for learners so that they could come along and complete the interest that they have shown in Skills Accounts by actually helping them to go online and open them. We did this because we recognised that some adult learners have issues about confidence, ability and resource. We wanted to ensure that these three issues do not become an impediment to learners fulfilling their potential."

We would like to hear more from you about what you are doing to market and communicate Skills Accounts. Please send your examples and experiences to Sally Askew at sally.askew@lsc.gov.uk.

3. SKILLS ACCOUNTS AND IES TRIALS

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In the West Midlands the Integrated Employment and Skills (IES) trials are in operation. The IES trials are designed to improve the integration of customer-facing employment and skills services from Jobcentre Plus in order to offer a seamless journey from worklessness to sustainable employment and further progression. It is therefore appropriate that Skills

Accounts have recently joined the IES trials in the West Midlands providing support to Jobcentre Plus clients.

The Learning and Skills Council has worked closely with its regional **nextstep** contractors to put in place processes to enable individuals to open Skills Accounts and to ensure that advisers understand the benefits of the service for clients.

These advisers are now starting to open Skills Accounts with **nextstep** IES clients in Staffordshire and the initial feedback has been extremely positive. In addition to **nextstep**, the Employability Skills Programme (ESP) providers have been fully briefed and trained on the Skills Accounts service. As a result of this, a number of providers have now started to embed the opening of Skills Accounts into their learning programmes. By April 2009, all ESP providers will be opening Skills Accounts alongside all **nextstep** services within the West Midlands.

We will keep you updated on the development of the IES trials in future e-bulletins.

4. THE SKILLS ACCOUNTS IDEAS TREE

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In the last edition of the e-bulletin we told you about the **aacs ideas forest** (February 2009). This month a **Skills Accounts tree** has been "planted" to help you give us your ideas and thoughts.

We welcome your opinions and feedback on the key questions and issues that we have outlined on the website. It is essential that we hear what you have to say so that we can ensure that Skills Accounts are developed successfully.

Currently we are asking for ideas and comments in response to the following questions:

- How can Skills Accounts help people to get new skills?
- What would you want a Skills Account to offer you?

In the ideas blog we are particularly eager to discuss how we can demonstrate the value of a Skills Account to better inform, motivate and engage with all adults, whatever their circumstances. Please help us to answer this and other questions by visiting the adult advancement and careers service **Ideas Forest** and **Blog** at <http://ideas.iagreview.org.uk>. Make your opinions heard!

5. LEVEL THREE LEARNER SUPPORT

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Additional funding has now been allocated through Skills Accounts to provide further support for adults who need to re-train at Level 3. This funding is particularly available in skill areas which are needed for economic growth, but also for those who find a range of barriers in their way.

As part of the trials in the South East and East Midlands, the LSC will test ways of using Skills Accounts to allow adults to gain access to Level 3 skills. They will provide information and help with meeting the costs of learning so that learners have all the information they need when deciding which course is best for them.

Delivered over two academic years, 2008/09 and 2009/10, the benefits will include a proactive identification of eligibility for extra support, assistance in accessing provision and learner support services as well as increased retention rates. Providers involved are currently targeting learners who would benefit from the Regional Recovery Plans in response to the current economic downturn.

6. THE NLD – PREPARING FOR SEPTEMBER ENROLMENTS

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At this time of the year, learning providers are preparing for September enrolments. It is therefore vital that the National Learning Directory (NLD) is updated with any new courses or amendments to older courses that you are planning.

As you know, the NLD is crucial to the success of the Skills Accounts trials but it is also an important tool for you to promote your courses to prospective learners. Therefore we strongly encourage all learning providers in the trial regions to ensure that their information on the NLD is as complete and accurate as possible.

If you require background information about the NLD please refer to the January edition of the Skills Accounts e-bulletin which can be found here: [Skills Accounts January E-Bulletin](#)

More information is available from:

<http://www.advice-resources.co.uk/learningproviders/newproviders/cmhelp.pdf/>

7. SUPPORTING MATERIALS & HELPLINE

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Supporting materials for Skills Accounts include a DL size leaflet for learners, A3 posters, banner stands, as well as Powerpoint presentation templates, web and advertising copy. All of these are available for download from the LSC Campaign Resources Site:

lsc.gov.uk/campaignresources

Helpline

The helpline offers support to all Skills Accounts stakeholders that would like further information or support. It can be contacted on skillscampaign@lsc.gov.uk or 020 7413 3400.

8. MORE INFORMATION

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For further information about the Skills Accounts trials in your region please contact your Regional LSC Skills Accounts team:

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We hope you have found this edition of the Skills Accounts e-bulletin useful! If you have any queries or questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please look out for the next edition of the Skills Accounts e-bulletin on 24 April 2009.