

# **FAQs for Providers of the Lifelong Learning Account**

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These FAQs are intended as a resource for all delivery partners of the Lifelong Learning Account including learning providers and Next Step advisers.

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## General

### **Q6. What is a Lifelong Learning Account?**

A Lifelong Learning Account is a free online service aimed at adults aged 19 + throughout England. It offers greater flexibility, control and choice for skills and learning development. A Lifelong Learning Account will give individuals access to a range of information and tools to match their personal circumstances and needs - the results of which can be saved in a private and secure and easily accessible space.

Visit the following sites for more information:

[www.direct.gov.uk/lifelonglearningaccount](http://www.direct.gov.uk/lifelonglearningaccount)

[www.direct.gov.uk/nextstep](http://www.direct.gov.uk/nextstep)

### **Q7. Who is eligible for a Lifelong Learning Account?**

A Lifelong Learning Account is available to all adults in England aged 19 years and over and 18 years old for Job Centre Plus claimants or offenders in the community. There is no upper age limit.

### **Q8. Where can an individual get access to and open a Lifelong Learning Account?**

A Lifelong Learning Account can be opened in a number of ways:

1. Open an account online through [www.direct.gov.uk/lifelonglearningaccount](http://www.direct.gov.uk/lifelonglearningaccount)
2. Next Step face to face or telephone services can register an individual for a Lifelong Learning Account.

In addition, other stakeholders may wish to promote and encourage their learners or customers to take up a Lifelong Learning Account by visiting the website as above.

### **Q9. Is a Lifelong Learning Account compulsory for an individual?**

No; A Lifelong Learning Account is currently optional.

**Q10. Will there be help for those individuals who have difficulty in using IT?**

Yes, support in opening the Account is available from either Next Step advisers or providers (see Question 3).

**Q11. What is the future of the Lifelong Learning Account?**

The Lifelong Learning Account is a key part of the “Skills for Sustainable Growth” strategy announced in November 2010 aimed at stimulating recovery, giving control to the individual and increasing the UK’s skills base. The Government wants to encourage people to see learning as an investment. The Lifelong Learning Account will be a key mechanism by which individual adults will access their entitlement to funding for training including in the future, FE loans.

The Lifelong Learning Account reflects the commitment to a FE system that is responsive to individual learner choice, giving you the opportunity to tailor your offer for maximum return. They will help shape the delivery of a skills system fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century putting choice in the hands of learners.

The Lifelong Learning Account is designed to empower learners by providing personalised advice, in this way they are contributing to the responsiveness of the FE system.

## **Funding**

**Q12. Is eligibility for a Lifelong Learning Account the same as eligibility for learning/funding?**

No; all adults in England are eligible for a Lifelong Learning Account (see question 2).

The Lifelong Learning Account is not a funding stream. One of the key objectives of the Lifelong Learning Account however, is to help individuals to understand and access the Government funding entitlement to a particular chosen learning course. Whilst normal Skills Funding Agency funding eligibility applies, this indicative entitlement will vary, depending on the individuals’ age, current level of learning, residency and course interest. The value of the entitlement is derived from the subject and course information stored in the National Learning Aims Database (LAD).

**Q13. Do learning providers still have to run the usual eligibility checks on a learner, who has checked their entitlements via their Lifelong Learning Account?**

Yes; learning providers must continue to check that learners are eligible for funding. The responsibility of audit evidence is still on the learning provider.

**Q14. Will an individual have to pay any extra for a course in addition to the amount shown by the Lifelong Learning Account?**

There may be extra to pay. The price a college or training provider charges (course fees) will be in addition to the government contribution highlighted in the Lifelong Learning Account. The purpose of the Lifelong Learning Account is to provide an indication of the amount of money the Government may invest in an individual's learning.

**Q15. Will a Lifelong Learning Account affect an individual's benefits?**

The opening of the Lifelong Learning Account will **not** affect an individual's benefits. However, receipt of various funding may do so. An individual should check with their Jobcentre Plus adviser as to whether their entitlement to benefit will be affected.

**Q16. What will a Lifelong Learning Account cost an individual?**

There is no charge, it is a free service.

## **Data Protection**

**Q17. Who will access the information held about an individual?**

The personal details an individual provides are used to create a Lifelong Learning Account. At no time will their personal details be passed to organisations for sales or marketing purposes. From time to time, an account holder may be contacted on behalf of the Skills Funding Agency by email, mail or phone, as part of our efforts to monitor performance, promote new offers, improve quality and plan future provision of training and education.

**Q18. How does an individual close an account?**

The Lifelong Learning Account holder will need to contact the Next Step team using the 'Technical Support' tab within the 'Contact us' link on the Next Step website; stating their full name, date of birth, postcode, email address and Lifelong Learning Account number if they have it. The Next Step team will retrieve their personal details and remove them from the system.

**Q19. What should an individual do if they forget their username or password?**

An individual can reset their password or retrieve their username by following the on screen prompts at the log in screen.

Three known facts are requested when an individual opens/activates their account; their mothers' maiden name, the name of their first school and their place of birth. These facts are used to verify the identity of the Lifelong Learning Account holder when their password and/or username have been forgotten.

If for any reason an individual doesn't know the answer to any of the known facts during initial registration e.g. their mother's maiden name, then any memorable piece of information can be entered. However, it must be stressed that they need to remember these details in order to retrieve their password or username if they have forgotten.

If an individual requires assistance they can contact the technical helpline 0800 496 4665.

### **Q20. How secure are the passwords and usernames and what should individuals do if they believe they have been lost or stolen?**

It is essential that personal data such as passwords and usernames are kept secure. Individuals should be advised when creating their username and password to avoid using variations of their name and birthday as these can often be guessed. It should be stressed that individuals log out of their Account when they are finished and do not leave their Account unattended.

If individuals believe that their password has been stolen or compromised, they should change it as soon as possible and follow the instructions through the Account section of the website. An email (if given at time of registration) will then be sent to the individual to inform them that the password has changed. If such a notice is received without the individual's knowledge the technical helpline should be contacted on 0800 496 4665 as soon as possible.

Customers should take the usual precautions to avoid disclosing their username or password.

## **Lifelong Learning Account Service**

### **Q21. What will a Lifelong Learning Account give an individual?**

A Lifelong Learning Account brings together all the information, support and services an individual would need in order to make informed choices about their learning and working life. With the Lifelong Learning Account, they will be able to save:

- the diagnostic report as a result of the Skills Health Check. A **Skills Health Check** provides an objective assessment of an individual's strengths, skills, abilities and areas for development in key

competencies which underpin success at work. As a result of a diagnostic report, an Action Plan can then be produced.

- the results of the **Course Search**. The Course Finder is used for viewing courses that are available in particular areas so that individuals can choose the provider, course and time that suits their needs.
- the results of the eligibility checker. The eligibility checker provides an **indication of the government funding** contribution and support towards an individual's chosen learning
- an **Unverified Learning Record** which allows them to add previous learning achievements and any courses they are currently undertaking
- a **Personal Learning Record**, verified data which contains details of an individual's past achievements and qualifications to date as well as their current participation data.
- CV's. The **CV Builder** helps individuals to create step by step their own C.V.
- a **Learner Statement** which shows the actual funding the government has put towards an individual's learning.

### **Q22. How do I ensure courses are available on the Course Directory?**

Providers in the first instance should visit the following website for further information:

<http://www.coursedirectoryproviderportal.org.uk>

### **Q23. What is the Learner Statement?**

Behind most course fees which colleges and training providers advertise, is a contribution made by the government. Many people are unaware of the investment that is being made in their training. Recent evidence suggests that by helping individuals to understand the cost of training and the investment involved, it will help and encourage individuals to think carefully about the commitment and the importance of making an informed decision about their particular needs.

The **Learner Statement** shows the actual funding the government has put towards an individual's learning. This information is verified from Skills Funding Agency data sources.

The **Learner Statement** can also include the contributions made by the employer or the learner has made himself or herself in terms of **course fees** towards their learning. This figure should not include other costs associated with learning such as the cost of course materials/tools etc or exam fees.

**Q24. What should an individual do if they feel the type of funding is incorrect? e.g. displays fully funded when it should be co-funded**

An individual can challenge the accuracy of the data provided in their Learner Statement by contacting Next Step on 0800 496 4665. Action will not be instant so they should be advised it might take a few weeks for this information to be amended.

The Learner Statement will only refer to information from 2008 onwards.

**Q25. What is the Learning Record?**

A Learning Record allows an individual to track their skills development. An **Unverified Learning Record** allows an individual to add details of any previous learning achievements, hobbies and interests and any courses they are currently undertaking so that individuals are able to use it confidently when talking to employers.

The **Personal Learning Record** (PLR) displays accredited learning achieved by the individual and verified by approved learning providers. Additionally, the PLR shows current participation data which has been collected on behalf of the individual from Learning Providers. This utilises the Unique Learner Number (ULN) (see Q27) to identify learners through the Learning Records Service (formerly MIAP) data set. It can take up to four months to display achievements from the date of award. Only records starting **from 2007/08 academic year onwards** are available.

**Q26. What if an individual's Personal Learning Record is displayed blank?**

There are a number of reasons why the Personal Learning Record might appear blank:

- The Personal Learning Record refers to data collected from 2007/08 onwards. There may not be any details recorded for that individual
- Not all listed qualifications may appear on the Learning Records Service
- The learner has not been verified during registration so the information cannot be matched to the individual
- There may be a time delay of about 6 weeks from registering for a Lifelong Learning Account for the details to be visible
- The details on the Lifelong Learning Account are different to those held on Learning Records Service for the individual. In this instance, the adviser should check whether the individual has recently changed name or address. If yes, the individual should either update their details on the Lifelong Learning Account directly or via their learning provider

- The learner may have requested that they do not wish to share their personal data when enrolling on their course via the Fair Processing Notice (FPN). If this is the case, their learning information will not appear in their Learning Record. The learner should contact their learning provider to change this.

### **Q27. What is the Unique Learner Number (ULN)?**

The Unique Learner Number (ULN) is a 10-digit number that allows students over the age of 14, to build a lifelong record of their learning participation and achievements, which they can access securely and choose to share if they wish to. It will not provide access to any details relating to exclusions or expulsions.

Unlike the Unique Pupil Number system, which cannot be used beyond school age, the ULN will follow learners throughout their life, easing transition from 6th form into further education. The use of the ULN as a single candidate number will also reduce many administrative burden and costs for schools and colleges, for example, when it comes to organising examinations or sharing pupil data with other educational establishments.

The ULN is a different and separate number to the Lifelong Learning Account number allocated to the individual. The ULN can be entered as part of the Lifelong Learning Account registration. However, it will not be presented on the Lifelong Learning Account.

### **Q28. What information will be recorded on the Personal Learning Record?**

Only accredited school and further education learning and achievement records starting **from 2007/08 academic year onwards** are stored. For example, GCSEs, A/S levels, NVQs, Apprenticeships and other further education course information is available. Higher education information such as awarded degrees are not currently recorded.

### **Q29. What should an individual do if the information within their Personal Learning Record is not correct?**

An individual can challenge the accuracy of the data provided in their Personal Learning Record by contacting Next Step on 0800 496 4665. Action will not be instant so the individual should be advised it might take a few weeks for this information to be amended.

### **Q30. Who else can see an individual's information contained within their Personal Learning Record?**

Only the individual has access to the Personal Learning Record. However, they can share this information should they wish to with careers advisers, employers or learning providers.

**Q31. How can I get involved?**

We are currently working with partners and other stakeholders on the Next Step service. However, final timings and scope of further enhancements are under discussion. We hope to have finalised this over the next few months. For further information, please get in touch with your Skills Funding Agency contact.

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