



**NEXT
STEP**

Helping you get on
in work and life

**Skills Funding Agency
Communications Briefing:**

**Introduction to Next Step, the
integrated adult careers service**

Purpose of the document

This Communications Briefing, as part of a communications toolkit, has been prepared for use by the Skills Funding Agency, BIS, strategic partners, prime contractors, providers and those involved in the delivery of Next Step. This document will be reviewed monthly and I welcome your input and contributions.

For updates, questions and input please email:

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Background

The arrival of Next Step brings together major commitments set out in the following key documents:

World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch review of Skills for England (July 2007)

This document explains how the Government will provide the right supporting framework to act as a catalyst for the skills revolution, and to close the gap between where we stood in 2007 and where we need to be in 2020.

<http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/leitch.html>

Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver

The system for the adult sector is focussed on establishing a market which rewards success and brings together education and skills in a high quality offer to respond to the needs of adults and employers.

As a key part of creating a genuinely demand-led system, the Skills Funding Agency will lead the development and management of the new England-wide integrated adult careers service. It will play a vital role, with Jobcentre Plus, in boosting individual demand for skills and guiding people to the right training to meet their needs and help change their lives.

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/Raising%20Exoectations%20pdf.pdf>

Skills for Growth: A national skills strategy for economic growth and individual prosperity (Nov 2009)

highlights the commitment to empowering individuals through skills accounts giving people 'consumer choice', supported by high quality information, advice and guidance on the quality and relevance of courses.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/docs/s/skills-strategy-summary.pdf>

Shaping the Future – a new adult advancement and careers service for England

October 2008

http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/migratedD/publications/5/5203_1_dius_prospectus

A more recent publication **Fuelling Potential: A blueprint for skills accounts and the adult advancement and careers service** (April 2010), outlines how the single service will become operational from August 2010.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/Policies/further-education-skills/skills-audit/skills-account-blueprint>

Vision

Our vision is for millions of individuals to enjoy more rewarding lives. We want to create a culture where careers development and acquiring new skills is the norm. This will improve individuals' lives and society as a whole, which in turn will increase productivity and boost the economy.

Next Step, the integrated adult careers service, will give everyone access to the best information and advice supported by resources to enable make more effective choices about skills, careers, work and life. Information, advice and resources will be available online, as well as through advisers on the telephone and face-to-face.

How to describe Next Step in sixty seconds :

Next Step will be launched in August 2010 and will be available to all adults, 19 and over, (or 18 and over if a Jobcentre Plus customer) in England; online, by telephone, or face-to-face, as a single service under a new brand.

Next Step will provide information, advice and resources to help adults make more effective choices about skills, careers, work and life. Adults will be able to register for their Next Step personal online space (formerly skills accounts) in a way that suits them.

Next Step will promote aspiration, by giving people the power to improve their skills, and through that, their lives. As well as providing information and expert advice, the service will encourage and support people to help themselves, and to remove the barriers that stand in their way.

Through one online channel, adults will be able to assess their skills, aptitudes and interests; look at labour market information; find a suitable course; find out how much Government funding could be available to support them; look at information about careers; and register for their personal online space, where individuals can store personal information on their skills development, achievements, careers, financial support and a CV in one easily accessible location that is private to them. Through their personal online space they will be able to see a secure record of their accredited learning and also record other learning experiences.

In addition to using the website those individuals who require additional support can speak to an adviser on the telephone or face-to-face. For those with greatest need, we will provide more intensive and ongoing support.

Next Step will be fully inclusive and delivery will be shaped in response to customers' needs. Advisers will take responsibility for each customer's experience, and we will work to ensure there are no barriers to accessing the service for specific groups.

People receiving out of work benefits who need skills training to move into sustainable employment will be referred to the Next Step service by Jobcentre Plus.

Over time, we will use Next Step as the catalyst for wider change. We want the service to provide advice and support to a range of service providers to help them to work better together to help their customers to break down the barriers that stop them from moving forward. By building strong networks rooted in local communities, we can provide more effective ways of helping people improve their lives. This network will include the Citizens Advice Bureau, housing associations, debt advice agencies, community legal advice etc.,.

Our brand: Why we exist

Our vision – what we plan to achieve in the next 3-5 years

For millions of individuals to enjoy more rewarding working lives; and to create a culture where career development and acquiring new skills is the norm. This will improve the lives of individuals, society as a whole and in turn increase productivity and boost the economy.

Our mission – how we plan to get there

Give everyone access to the best information, advice and resources that will help them make more effective choices about skills, careers, work and life choices.

Service description – how we talk about what we do

Next Step is about changing culture – so that career development and acquiring new skills is the norm. It depends on the belief that everyone has the ability to develop and grow in their life and work.

We are at the beginning of that journey towards culture change. The Next Step brand can help us to secure buy-in to that change from stakeholders, from delivery partners, and from frontline staff on whom we depend to deliver that change.

Next Step will give everyone access to the best information, advice and resources to make more effective choices about skills, careers, work and life. Information, advice and resources will be available online, as well as through advisers on the telephone

and face-to-face. The personal online space will provide individuals with a secure space where they can manage their own careers and skills development.

Branding

The Next Step brand will unite the three channels under a common identity and fuelling the potential of millions requires that we can live the brand values by being:

- **Enthusiastic:** positive energy is infectious. It inspires and motivates others.
- **Expert:** we need to know our stuff to deliver high-quality effective information and advice.
- **Impartial:** we only ever act in the best interests of our customers.
- **Pragmatic:** our aim is to get the job done. The right outcome is more important than the right process

The Brand name – Next Step

The roll out of the brand, including the name, will be conducted in an agreed planned approach.

Next Step will not be introduced externally until August 2010. The Minister has approved the brand name and identity.

The brand guidelines and a brand book have been completed. The brand implementation and production of core materials and templates for the network are being developed by a recently appointed agency, Leo Burnett. which will be used by the prime contractors and other delivery agents.

More information on implementing the brand across the service will be available at <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/campaignresources>

Accessing the service

Customers can access the service, including the facility to register for their personal online space, online, by telephone or face-to-face and can choose to access the service by one or all of the channels to suit their needs. Next Step will operate as one service, so customers will be referred and/or signposted between the different channels according to need.

Customers can access the service by:

Contact	Opening Hours
Search online for Next Step or www.direct.gov.uk/nextstep	24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Telephone 0800 100 900	8am to 10pm, 7 days a week
Visit your local Next Step centre	To be displayed on the website
You can also register for Next Step (formerly known as skills accounts), by visiting your local college or learning provider.	Information available on the Next Step Course Directory

The offer

Next Step, the integrated adult careers service, will be available to all adults in England, providing personal, relevant advice on getting on in work and in life, reflecting individual needs and situations. Any adult aged 19 or over (or 18 or over for Jobcentre Plus customers) will be able to access the service, and will receive personalised help and support. This can be accessed on-line, or with the help of an adviser either on the telephone or face-to-face. People who require more intensive, ongoing support will get that support on the basis of their need. The service will work in close partnership with Jobcentre Plus in order to provide intensive support for Jobcentre Plus customers.

Next Step will provide a core offer of labour market focused careers and skills information and advice and the facility to register for their personal online space, accessed face-to-face, by telephone, or online (with access to information and advice through email, web forums and text messaging). Next Step will operate in a national, regional and local context, working closely with Jobcentre Plus and Connexions. It will be steered by regional priorities (areas, sectors, customer groups) and provide advice in a labour market context informed by high quality, up to date labour market information

Next Step will offer to everyone, via the channel that they choose:

- professional information and advice on careers and skills;
- access to up to date labour market information, which reflects national, sectoral, regional and local intelligence;
- a personal skills assessment, with the aid of online tools as necessary, to diagnose individual need;
- information to raise awareness of an individual's potential entitlements to public funding to support learning;
- access to up to date information on courses;

- more detailed careers information and advice, such as information about the qualifications and skills required for roles, funding options, returning to work, and childcare;
- support to enable individuals to manage their own careers and help them get on in learning, work and life, including support to register for their personal online space;
 - this secure on-line space is where individuals can store and manage personal information on their skills development, achievements, careers and financial support and a CV in one easily accessible location that is private to them;
- the ability to book telephone or face-to-face careers and skills advice sessions; and
- referral to and from a wide range of relevant and specialist services and agencies (including appropriate websites) such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, housing associations, debt advice agencies, community legal advice.

National priority groups

In addition to the services available to all adults to access as they choose, there will be national priority groups for the face-to-face service element of Next Step who will be eligible to receive intensive and ongoing face to face support (listed below). A Next Step adviser will identify whether the customer meets the criteria for a national priority group.

- Low skilled adults (without a Level 2 qualification) who are locked in low skilled, low prospects jobs – especially women;
- Young adults aged 19-24 without a Level 3 qualification;
- Adults facing redundancy, newly unemployed or at a distance from the labour market;
- Jobcentre Plus customers in receipt of out of work benefits;
- People from ethnic minority communities;
- Older people;
- Carers as defined by Department of Health guidelines;
- Offenders in custody and in the community under the supervision of probation services, and ex-offenders;
- People with learning difficulties or disabilities (including those with mental health conditions).

Web based tools and services

It is anticipated that the web service will provide the first point of contact with the service for many customers. Customers will be able to access the following tools and services on the website:

- **skills diagnostic tool**, using psychometric techniques to enable individuals to assess their skills, abilities, personal attributes and preferences, and career and work objectives;
- **CV builder**, providing a template for effective CV structure and headings, with guidance on how to complete a CV;
- **labour market information**, including:
 - sector information provided by Sector Skills Councils, and updated on a quarterly basis;
 - “Live” local job vacancies via Jobcentre Plus systems; and
 - comprehensive information on career paths, setting out the qualifications, skills and experience required for specific careers and jobs.
- **course search**, enabling individuals to search a new Next Step Course Directory with access to course information for all colleges, private and third sector training providers accredited to receive public funding by the Skills Funding Agency, and information on provider quality drawn from the Framework for Excellence;
- **entitlement checker** enabling individuals to get information on their potential entitlement to public funding for training, covering support with tuition fees, and learner support funds to help with other costs (transport, childcare, books and equipment);
- a wide range of online **information and advice** including access to advisers via email, forum facilities, text and audio information on careers and jobs; the latest news and articles on relevant work and skills issues; and
- the ability to register with Next Step, their personal online space. This will be available through the Next Step service, across England, and will give people space in which they can store the outcomes from using these tools and services to help them manage their learning and career development.

Contracting and performance management

The Skills Funding Agency is responsible for the commissioning, contracting and performance management of Next Step. It is a clear requirement that all contractors operate as one service for the benefit of their customers, using shared branding, tools and IT infrastructure and facilitating signposting and referral between the telephone, face-to-face and web services in response to customer needs. It will also be important to understand how their personal online space (formerly known as skills accounts) are integrated within the Next Step service and support customers to manage their careers and skills development.

- **Face-to-face advice will be provided through 12** prime contractors delivering across the geographical areas:

Face to face	
Region	Contract awarded to:
East of England	Suffolk County Council
East Midlands	Guideline Careers Services
Greater London	Prospects
North East	Confederation of British Teachers (CfBT)
North West*	Economic Solutions and Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership
South East	Careers Enterprise Limited
South West	Careers South West Limited and Tribal
West Midlands	Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership (CSWP)
Yorkshire and the Humber	Careers Yorkshire and Humber
Telephone service	
National	BSS

- *one contract is still to be awarded in the NW region and an open and competitive tendering process will be announced shortly.

These Prime Contractors are responsible for the engagement of sub-contractors, ensuring that they deliver the brand values and service, and develop partnerships with agencies to provide access to advice in housing, health, finance and childcare for August 2011.

- **The telephone service** will be delivered through a single contract with BSS, delivering information and advice over the telephone, email and forums. The core service is delivered in English and eight minority languages, Farsi, French, Gujarati, Polish, Punjabi, Somali, Sylheti and Urdu.
- **Online.** The Skills Funding Agency will deliver the online element of the service which will integrate the current Careers Advice Service, nextstep and Skills Accounts websites into one single Next Step website.
- **Register for Next Step (formerly known as skills accounts).** The Skills Funding Agency will also be responsible for delivering skills accounts that will be fully integrated into the Next Step website. The Next Step service will provide the secure on-line space where customers of the service (on-line, face-to-face or telephone) can store their information and access it whenever they are making choices about their careers or skills development. The offer of a personal online

space will be available both through Next Step and a network of Strategic Learning Providers/providers, and individuals will also be able to access their personal space directly online.

Components of the Service

There are six major components of this service which are described below

Component	Description
Develop my career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and advice to help a customer choose or change career Providing up to date national, regional and local, sectoral labour market information Detailed careers information such as qualifications and skills required for roles
Improve my skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing personalised skills assessment and advice on how to find and access learning Advice to find and enrol on a course The ability to search for a course using Course Finder Access information on provider quality Support in opening a skills account
Job readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equipping customers to successfully apply for a job Example tools: CV builder / Interview advice / Local labour market information Links to JCP
Funding and eligibility advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and advice related to funding or eligibility for funding Information and advice on Learner Support programmes and Child Care and Career Development Loans
Advancement Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist help, advice and referrals to partners and specialist advice services e.g. returning to work, Citizens Advice Bureau, housing associations, Childcare, legal advice, debt advice etc.
Register for Next Step	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A secure personal on-line space where individuals can store and manage their own information from these services

Next Step Course Directory

The National Directory of Learning of Providers Provision (NDLPP), to be known as the Next Step Course Directory, is changing the way information about available learning opportunities will be collected and displayed. One of the aims of the service is to provide an authoritative source of information on learning options, which will be underpinned by a directory of course provision, as set out in “Fuelling Potential” (March 2010).

The new database will replace regional LSC databases of courses as well as the current National Directory of Learning of Providers Provision.

A series of workshops have taken place during May/June 2010 which shared the plans and vision for the Next Step Course Directory with Agency providers.

Capacity

The capacity to handle requests for information and advice has been increased in 2009-10 in response to the economic downturn, and increased demand for careers advice from adults at risk of redundancy or recently unemployed. We expect, in the current economic circumstances, to maintain the capacity in the face-to-face channel in 2010-11 at broadly its current target level, helping around **700,000** individuals and delivering **over 1 million** advice sessions. However, we aim to increase the capacity of the telephone channel so that the service can handle 1 million calls per annum and **250,000 emails** seeking advice. The online channel of the service will have capacity to handle up to 20 million sessions per annum.

We will set a benchmark for Next Step, that 50% of all customers who create an action plan with an adviser or through the online channel should enter training, get sustainable employment or progress in work.

Within that, the face-to-face channel of the service will operate to a set of national outcome targets/key performance indicators (KPIs). These will encourage the effective targeting of this constrained resource where it is most required and a focus on good outcomes for individual customers. The targets are:

- 40% of face-to-face service users to enter learning or training;
- 30% of face-to-face service users to enter sustainable employment;
- 15% of face-to-face service users to progress in work;
- 45% of face-to-face service users to become qualified to a higher level; and
- an expectation that at least 15% of face-to-face service users to have a learning difficulty or disability that could adversely affect their participation in work.

Stakeholder engagement

A stakeholder strategy, lead by BIS, has been developed to engage with key external stakeholders and promote the benefits of Next Step, allowing collaboration to build a better service for everyone. BIS policy will deliver the strategy and support continuous improvement.

Workforce engagement

A strategy has been developed to engage with the workforce of the Skills Funding Agency and the provider network, Next Step prime contractors, Jobcentre Plus staff, including IES providers, the YPLA and strategic partners. It will deliver a

communications toolkit and internal engagement programme to build awareness and support for the service amongst internal audiences. It will also enable providers to fully understand their relationship with the branded service.

External communications

External communications will primarily concentrate on reaching potential customers of the service, although it will inevitably touch on and inform both the stakeholder and workforce communications and potential channels to reach these customers. The plan will prioritise target audiences utilising customer research. A planning agency, Mindshare, has been appointed to recommend an external communications strategy but no further development can take place until budgets are approved.

Contact and further information email: nextstepcomms@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk