SKILLS ACCOUNTS E-BULLETIN
SEPTEMBER 2009

Edition Fifteen
Welcome to the Skills Accounts e-bulletin.

Skills Accounts help individuals take control of their learning and working lives. By encouraging individuals to register for a Skills Account you can help them:

- Choose the right course
- Check how much funding may be available to support them
- Book an appointment with a trained careers adviser
- Create an action plan which records their skills and achievements on a secure site
- Share these achievements with others

On 1 August 2009, the second year of the Skills Accounts trials began. The objective is to introduce Skills Accounts into new regions and ensure that the service develops to support new groups of learners. The new trial regions are the South West and Yorkshire & the Humber. Meanwhile, we are significantly increasing the number of providers offering Skills Accounts across the South East and East Midlands. In the West Midlands, JCP customers will continue to be offered a Skills Accounts when they contact the nextstep service or enrol on an Employability Skills Programme.

This e-bulletin is one of the ways in which we update partners and stakeholders as the trials develop.

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

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1. YEAR TWO BEGINS
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As planned we are increasing the numbers of regions, providers and stakeholders who are able to offer Skills Accounts. Beginning in August, the trials were extended so that most FE providers in the East Midlands and South East regions became Strategic Learning Providers (SLPs). In addition, trials began in the South West and Yorkshire & the Humber. For more information, please refer to the August e-bulletin.

In October, adults in the North West and South West will be able to access the full service, whilst the West Midlands will extend the service to learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD). As the trial develops, SLPs in each of the five regions will have responsibility for targeting a specific audience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Region</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Income Families (Tax Credits)</td>
<td>North West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carers</td>
<td>South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLDD</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 3 learners</td>
<td>East Midlands and South East</td>
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</tbody>
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At the end of October, we will also launch an updated Skills Accounts website. We have been consulting with current and potential users to find out how it could be improved. The new site will be easier to navigate and be even more jargon-free, consistent, and as personalised as possible. The newly improved site will also feature some new functions:

- Access to a Skills Diagnostic Tool
- Repositioning the Skills Voucher under ‘Funding for Learning’ – see the August e-bulletin for further information
- Inclusion of Eligibility Checkers for Carers and individuals in receipt of Tax Credits
- Eligibility checkers for national Learner Support Programmes

We hope you agree that the new site looks great. If you have any feedback, please let us know by using the feedback form on the Skills Accounts website.

2. THE VOICE OF A SKILLS ACCOUNT LEARNER
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Faqraz Begum, age 37, arrived in the UK from Pakistan in 1998 knowing very little English and with few qualifications. “When I left school I had my family immediately, so I did not have any formal work experience or qualifications. When I arrived in the UK, it took a number of years to settle in. In 2005, I decided to go back to school to learn English and have been learning ever since.”

Fourteen weeks ago Jobcentre Plus advised Faqraz about the Employability Skills Programme (ESP). With the support of JHP Training, Faqraz has been improving her English and mathematics, whilst also working on the skills that will help her achieve her ambition of finding a job as a shop assistant. “I have spent many years making clothes so I would love to work in a shop”.
Faqraz was encouraged to open a Skills Account. “Our teacher told us about them at the beginning of the course so I decided to open one as I thought that it would help me to find a job that would suit.” Faqraz has found her Skills Account very useful, not only in terms of finding out about qualifications but it has also improved her computer literacy: “I do not have a computer at home and was not very confident about using them but I received a lot of support and encouragement from the teachers at school. They let me use the school computers so I have been able to find out much more about my skills and the qualifications that I need than I otherwise would.”

Faqraz has nearly finished her ESP and now plans to use her Skills Account to improve her chances of finding the right job. “I really like my Skills Account. It has really helped me to find out about further qualifications and what I need to do to improve my skills so that I can get a job. I like to find out things and my Skills Account allows me to do just that!”

3. THE NATIONAL LEARNING DIRECTORY (NLD) – THE EASY WAY TO REACH THOUSANDS OF NEW LEARNERS!

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Last year alone there were 21.5 million online searches of the NLD. If your course information is not on there – or up to date - you could be missing out!

It is vital that Skills Accounts provide learners with the most accurate information about the courses that are available. We would therefore ask that all providers ensure that the directory is regularly updated.

Organisations are responsible for keeping their course and contact information up-to-date. Learning providers can quickly and simply check and update their course data using the NLD Course Manager.

This month’s Skills Update features an article on how the Careers Advice Service (CAS) telephone advice line is supporting Skills Accounts. To find out more, please register, or log in to the Campaign Resources Site.

4. CAREERS ADVICE HITS THE STREETS OF NOTTINGHAM!

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The careers advice booth stopped in Nottingham at the end of August as part of the national Careers Advice Service Road Show. Advisers were located close to a popular location near Market Square and offered free information and advice to passers-by, raising awareness of the services offered by the Careers Advice Service and nextstep.

Skills Accounts were actively promoted during the day with hundreds of Skills Accounts leaflets handed out to passers-by, along with other careers advice postcards and information.

The day was hugely successful, attracting a large amount of interest from the public. In fact, fifty guidance sessions took place in the booth on the day. Many people including Robin Hood (who is considering a move from financial trading!) stopped at the booth to pick up information to pass on to friends, family or work colleagues.
The booth’s visit was covered by a number of regional media, including the Nottingham Evening Post, the Derby Evening Telegraph, BBC Radio Nottingham, and Heart 106, generating 1,009,301 ‘opportunities to see’ and 965,000 ‘opportunities to hear’. Indeed, some twenty percent of visitors to the booth said that they had decided to visit after hearing about it on BBC Radio Nottingham.

Jagdish Bagh, a Careers Advice Service (CAS) adviser said “It was a great day and definitely worth doing. It has been a really positive experience to work face to face with clients.” Indeed, this sentiment was echoed by Sarah Thompson, an adviser from nextstep, who said “It was a really good opportunity to engage with the public and make them aware of the services nextstep and CAS has to offer. We had a lot of general enquiries around the best place to look for jobs and people asking for CV advice.”

5. SUPPORTING MATERIALS & HELPLINE
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Do not forget that a wide range of Skills Accounts materials are available for you to download from the LSC Campaign Resources Site:

You can use these materials to support your own campaigns and communications. Once you have registered on the site you will have access to collateral and materials relating to all of the different LSC campaigns.

Supporting materials for Skills Accounts include:
- DL size leaflet for learners (LSC-P-NAT-090132)
- A3 posters (LSC-I-NAT-090156)
- Banner stands
- PowerPoint presentation templates
- Web and advertising copy

To order hard copies of the leaflets and posters please email lsc@granbymarketing.com quoting the publication number provided above, quantity required and delivery address.

Please contact your regional representative to order banner stands.

Helpline
The helpline offers support to all Skills Accounts stakeholders that would like further information or support. It can be contacted on 0207 413 3400.

6. CONTACT 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 30 October.