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

Skills Accounts will help individuals take control of their learning and working life. The ambition is that Skills Accounts will be a personalised service that allows learners to access a range of careers advice and 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.

The aim of this e-bulletin is to provide our partners with the latest information on Skills Accounts and 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 SKILLS ACCOUNTS WEBSITE HAS NEW FUNCTIONALITY!
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On 18 December 2008, the Skills Accounts website launched at www.direct.gov.uk/skillsaccounts. Through this site, adults are able to open and manage their own Skills Accounts, helping them to take control of their learning and working life.

Since its launch in December, several enhancements have been made to the website as a result of your feedback. These enhancements are due to go live at the beginning of February and include:

- **A Skills Voucher History Page**
  The Skills Voucher History page provides account holders with a record of how many Vouchers have been issued, the Voucher’s date of creation, the level of the qualification and the subject. This allows Skills Account holders to easily keep up to date with their Skills Voucher history.

- **A Feedback Form**
  We have added a Feedback Form to the website to make it easier for users to provide us with any type of feedback – regarding communication techniques, website functionality etc.

- **The Careers Advice Service’s Telephone Number**
  The Skills Voucher now clearly includes the telephone number for the Careers Advice Service (0800 100 900) so that Skills Account holders can easily access advice and assistance.

**What do I get in a Skills Account?**
Skills Accounts are designed to help and motivate learners to improve their skills and working opportunities. The website currently offers the following tools:

- **Career Help**
  Learners can identify the skills they need to help them manage their careers, through the Skills and Interest Assessment Tool. Their responses to a series of simple, step-by-step questions, based on their current skills and interests, will generate a list of jobs that match their skills and interests.

- **Course Finder**
  The Skills Account Course Finder is a free-to-all, government-funded database of learning opportunities. It is an extract of the National Learning Directory (NLD), holding information on most kinds of learning which is available to learners through their Skills Account. The LSC works with course providers to ensure the NLD is accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date. So whether you are an adviser, an employer or a learner, you have got the information you need to choose the right course. (See section 3 for more information on the NLD.)

- **Careers Advice Job Profiles**
  The Job Profiles section is an online database providing detailed profiles for over 700 occupations. Learners can search a range of categories to access specific information about the types of occupation they are interested in, including hours, income, training and environment.

- **Skills Voucher**
  The Skills Voucher allows learners to see whether they are eligible for government funding towards the cost of learning. For eligible learners, this Skills Voucher can then be taken and
redeemed against a course of their choice at an accredited provider. At present Skills Vouchers are only available in the two trial regions.

2. ACCESS TO SKILLS ACCOUNTS THROUGH NEXTSTEP AND THE CAREERS ADVICE SERVICE

To coincide with the launch of the Skills Account website, nextstep and the Careers Advice Service within the trial areas began offering Skills Accounts to their clients. They are providing advice, support and guidance about how their clients within these areas can open a Skills Account.

Training sessions have been held, provider guidelines and supporting information have been distributed to nextstep and Careers Advice Service colleagues to ensure that they have all the information and tools needed to deliver Skills Accounts to their clients.

3. PROVIDERS – BENEFITING FROM SKILLS ACCOUNTS

We want all providers in the trial regions to benefit from Skills Accounts. Twenty strategic partners volunteered to trial the system in the East Midlands and the South East but all providers need to be aware that they may encounter learners with a Skills Voucher who wish to study at their institution. These learners will already have opened a Skills Account and should therefore be taken through normal enrolment processes.

The NLD – a crucial resource

For the 2008/09 Skills Accounts Trials, the National Learning Directory (NLD) is being used to provide information for learners through their Skills Account, so it is essential that all providers, in the trial areas especially, ensure that their course information is accurate and actively maintained on the National Learning Directory. The NLD is a free service for providers to market their courses to as wide an audience as possible. In 2007/08, the NLD generated over 13.5 million searches to over 80 websites accessing the database, which means free advertising for providers, courses getting noticed by more people and ultimately more people into learning. Providers can upload and maintain their details using Course Manager:

http://www.learning-directory.co.uk/pls/cgi-bin-data/page_pls_cp_login?s_type=LD

Course Manager is the technical system within the NLD, which all providers need to use in order to update and maintain their course information. Course Manager is a tool designed for learning providers to expand and increase their marketing reach. It enables providers to add, update and archive courses online quickly and easily, and at a time that suits. Whenever information is updated in Course Manager, it is loaded into the National Learning Directory. By ensuring that this information is as complete as possible, through their Skills Account learners will be able to accurately search for relevant courses offered by all providers, and not just those strategic partners involved in the trials.

More information is available from:

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

“Advice resources” is also the location where providers can obtain information on what they should do to get their data uploaded onto the NLD: http://www.advice-resources.co.uk
4. SUPPORTING MATERIALS & HELPLINE
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Supporting materials for Skills Accounts include a new DL learner leaflet, an A5 leaflet, 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.

5. 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 27 February 2009.