Welcome to this extraordinary 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 all 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. STOP PRESS! THE SKILLS ACCOUNTS WEBSITE LAUNCHES

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On 18 December 2008, the Skills Accounts website was officially launched at www.direct.gov.uk/skillsaccounts. Through this site, adults will be able to open and manage their own Skills Accounts, helping them to take control of their learning and working life.

Skills Accounts are currently trialling in two regions – the East Midlands and the South East. Learners in these regions who have opened a Skills Account will, if eligible, be able to produce a Skills Voucher which they can use towards the cost of a course at an accredited learning provider of their choice. This function will eventually become accessible to all adults in England as the trials roll-out but in the meantime, adults elsewhere in England will still be able to open a Skills Accounts and utilise the site's other functionalities.

Learners who have already opened a Skills Account through one of the strategic partners in the trial regions will receive a letter to notify them of the website’s launch and ask them to complete the registration process in order to activate their account.

Individuals are able to open their Skills Account individually through the website. However for those who do not have internet access or need additional assistance, they can visit their local nextstep adviser or telephone the Careers Advice Service on 0800 100 900, where they will receive support to help them open and manage their Skills Account.

What do I get in a Skills Account?

For the first time, adults will be able to access a range of services in one place. Skills Accounts are designed to help learners improve their skills and working opportunities. The website offers the following functions:

- **Skills Voucher**
The Skills Voucher allows learners to see whether they are eligible for government funding towards the cost of learning. 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 trials regions.

- **Career Help**
Learners can identify the skills they need to help them manage their career, 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.

The NLD is the central source of learning information in the UK. The NLD holds information on all kinds of learning from short, community-based activities through to degrees and distance learning. A wide range of providers are registered on the directory: from further and higher education institutions through to small private and voluntary organisations. The NLD is accessed by over 80 different websites including directgov, the BBC, nextstep, Sector Skills Councils and the national Careers Advice Service (www.direct.gov.uk/careersadvice).
• 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.

Testing
As mentioned in previous e-bulletins, Skills Accounts’ services will grow and evolve as the trials roll-out, so please keep your eye out for new functionalities.

This is a long-term, ambitious project and we hope that you will provide us with feedback of your experiences of the website and how Skills Accounts are working for you through the help page on the Skills Accounts website.

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