



BIS | Department for Business
Innovation & Skills

FUELLING POTENTIAL

A blueprint for skills accounts
and the adult advancement and
careers service

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Introduction

1. There are under five months to go until the adult advancement and careers service becomes operational and skills accounts are rolled out across England, in August 2010.
2. The adult advancement and careers service will be a next generation service providing expert and impartial careers and skills advice to adults in England. It will supersede the current Careers Advice Service telephone service (formerly *learndirect* advice) and local *nextstep* face to face services, by creating a single, national service available online, by telephone, or face to face. It will provide access to better information about the labour market and new tools to help adults plan their career development; a new professional development framework for careers advisers; and a new brand to raise the service's appeal to the public.
3. The adult advancement and careers service will be at the heart of a transformation of local service delivery in the provision of advice to adults. We want to encourage the establishment of local networks of advice providers that provide a joined-up service to customers, helping them tackle the barriers they face in moving forward in work and life.
4. Skills accounts will enable adults to take control of their skills and career development by providing a personalised online record of their qualifications, personal information on public funding entitlements for skills and a record of the funding the Government has invested in their training. They will be part of a single online channel with the tools we are developing for the adult advancement and careers service.
5. Contracts for the face to face and telephone channels of the adult advancement and careers service are being agreed. From April, the Skills Funding Agency will work with successful contractors to ensure the core of the new service is in place for August. The Learning and Skills Council is currently building the online systems and tools that customers and advisers will use. External reviews of workforce and quality arrangements for careers advice are nearing completion. And trials of skills accounts with adults and learning providers are progressing well across the country.
6. It is important that everybody with an interest in these developments – careers advice professionals, their employers, professional bodies, Jobcentre Plus and other national, regional and local organisations – understands how they will work, and what we are doing between now and August to deliver them.
7. Since the publication of "Shaping the Future: an adult advancement and careers service for England" in October 2008, much work has been done. We have consulted the sector, its professional bodies and other key national organisations on the design for the adult advancement and careers service. We have built and tested some of the new tools the service will use. And ten "prototypes" have brought together local partners to explore the ways in which advancement networks – linking careers advice to wider sources of advice and support on removing barriers to learning – can be established.

8. The economic climate of recent times has been difficult. Current careers advice services have expanded their capacity and capability to help more people during the recession. And there is an even stronger premium on efficiency in public services. The case for skills accounts and the adult advancement and careers service is, if anything, now even stronger.
9. We have also seen recent policy announcements which bear on the new services:
 - in November 2009, “**Skills for Growth: the national skills strategy**”; set out that “skills are a key part of our plan for economic recovery and, as such, an urgent challenge”. There was a strong commitment in the strategy to empowering all adults to equip themselves for future jobs, using skills accounts to help them find the information they need; and the adult advancement and careers service to provide professional advice and guidance on careers and skills; and
 - in December 2009, “**Building Britain’s Recovery: Achieving Full Employment**” pledged more support to people who are out of work to help them make informed decisions about training that help them move into sustainable employment.
10. This document sets out our plans for establishing the adult advancement and careers service and skills accounts by August this year: the core principles that will underpin the operation of the policies, how they will work, and our plans for implementation.

Summary

11. Our vision is for millions of people to enjoy more rewarding lives. We want to create a culture where career development and acquiring new skills is the norm. This will improve individuals’ lives, society as a whole and in turn increase productivity and boost the economy.
12. The adult advancement and careers service and skills accounts 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.
13. We want adults of working age to be more informed and empowered consumers in the market for learning and skills, by giving them the information they need. We want them to make the best choices about their future, informed by the latest labour market data. And we want everyone that needs it to have access to professional advice and guidance on careers, particularly those farthest from the labour market.
14. Over time, we will use the service as the catalyst for wider change. We want services that provide advice and support to adults to work better together to help people break down the barriers that stop them from moving forward. By building strong networks, rooted in communities, we can provide more effective ways of helping people improve their lives.

Core principles

15. A number of core principles will underpin operation of the adult advancement and careers service and skills accounts. They will be built into the process of implementing the service once contracts have been agreed.

One service, one brand

16. The three channels of the adult advancement and careers service (online, telephone, face to face) will work together as a single service. We will make the single service as simple as possible for people to understand and use. The adult advancement and careers service and skills accounts will be brought together under one brand. A skills account will give people access to the online tools we are creating for the adult advancement and careers service, and provide a secure personal space (accessed via login and password) to help them manage their learning. There will be a single customer relationship management system for the three channels of the adult advancement and careers service; common workforce standards across the telephone and face to face channels; and ongoing analysis of customer insight which will be used as a learning tool for continuous improvement.

Universal and inclusive

17. The new service will be available to all adults in England. It will provide information, advice and resources for those with higher skills – for example, those seeking to change career – as well as for the low skilled. It will also be an inclusive service. We will work to overcome barriers to access for all adults – including those with low skills, those with learning difficulties or disabilities, those at a distance from the labour market, those from ethnic minority groups, women, and older people – and ensure that the service provides the help and support they need.

Customer-centred

18. The new service will provide personalised support responding to individual need and advisers in the service will take responsibility for each customer's journey so that it is fully supported. This will involve:
 - responsibility for diagnosing individual need, ensuring an individual has access to appropriate services (whether delivered by the adviser or not), and providing continuity and support for any transition between services in the case of referral;
 - arranging 'warm handovers' where possible and sharing customer information and history to help track and support customer journeys where allowable and appropriate; and
 - the agreement of protocols between contractors in the new service, and partners, that specify how customer referrals and information sharing will take place.

Aspiration

19. The new service will promote aspiration, by seeking to empower people to improve their skills and, through that, their lives. It will provide information, and expert advice. But the service will not just seek solutions to specific issues. It will encourage and support the customer to help themselves, and help them remove the barriers that stand in their way. Customers of the adult advancement and careers service will, at the appropriate point in their journey, be encouraged to open skills accounts as an important tool in helping them take control of their journey towards better skills.

And the new, single brand for the service will communicate a motivational public message: directing people to a new source of support and conveying a positive sense of what could be possible.

Expert and impartial

20. Careers advisers, professionally qualified and operating to clear quality and service standards, will deliver an expert and impartial service. The profession of careers advice will have a visible identity through the new brand for the service; and information, advice and guidance professionals will feel more confident and empowered as part of this expert community. Overseen by a national management group, the adult advancement and careers service will forge strategic links with regional and local partners so that its expertise is allocated where it is most required. Partnership will be essential for the service to realise its vision. The service will also be expert in labour market information, essential for helping customers to make the best career choices. That information will be drawn from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, Sector Skills Councils, and Regional Development Agencies, who will also help inform regional and local service priorities.

Evolving

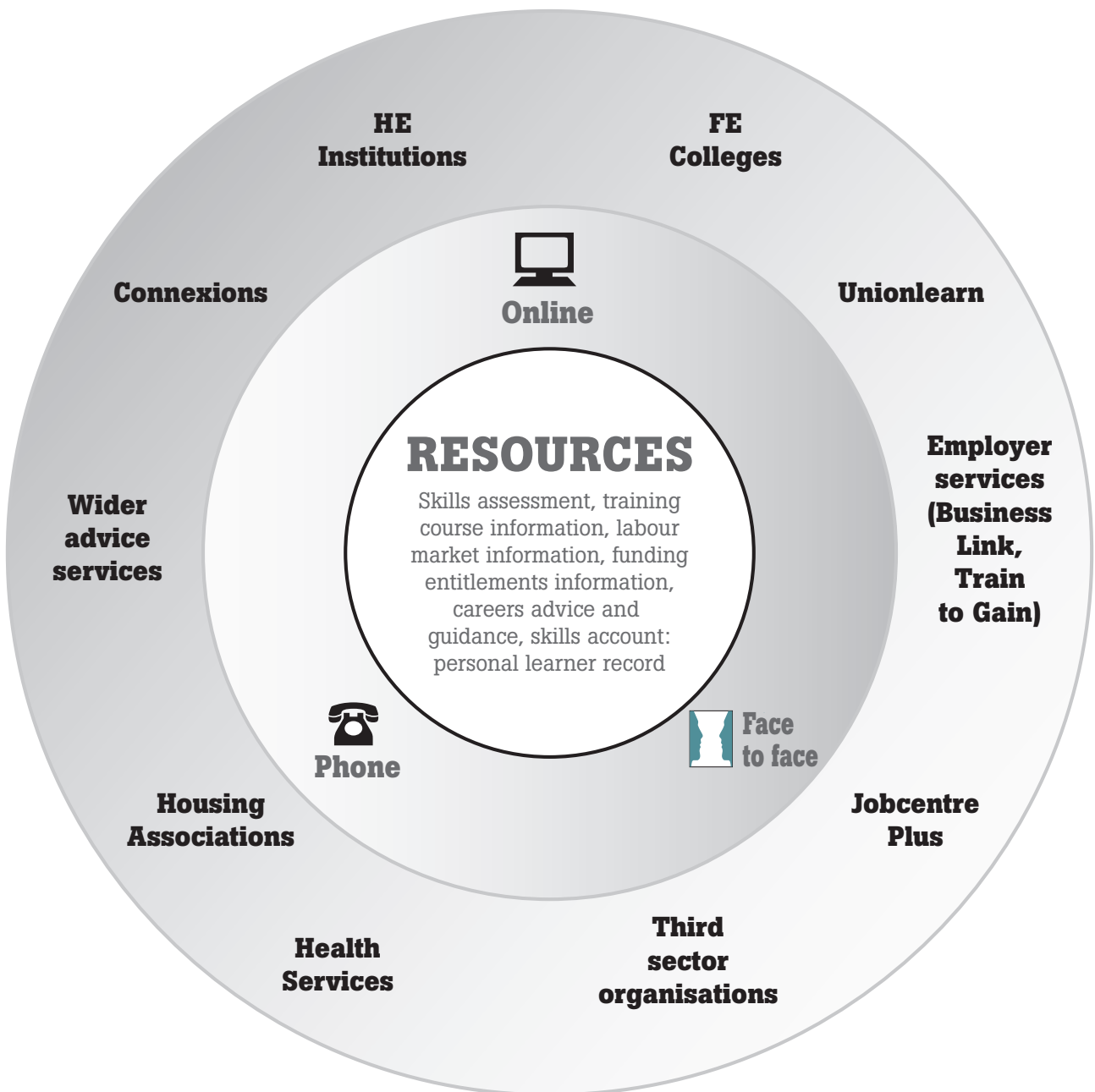
21. The ten advancement network prototypes have broken new ground in exploring how advice services can join up around the needs of the individual. Partnerships and ways of joining up services have been explored that have not been tried before. We have a developing body of evidence showing which innovations have worked well. And there remains strong commitment to the network principle, not just amongst the prototypes, but in many other areas where regional and local partners are embracing the vision of joined up advice services, and across other Government Departments, in particular the Department for Communities and Local Government. We expect the adult advancement and careers service to evolve, as similar networks are established in every area of England. This will not be an overnight “big bang”; but an evolutionary process. We will provide advocacy, networking and direct support where required to enable as many areas as possible to establish networks by August 2011, twelve months after the core service becomes operational.

Using the latest technology

22. Independent, publicly-funded careers advice already helps well over a million people each year, through telephone and face to face services. But we want the adult advancement and careers service to go further and take its place on the map of services for every adult in England, handling increasing volumes of business, and identified by the new brand. Delivering information and advice using new technology is the most important way in which we will increase the reach of the service. A large proportion of adults in England will be comfortable accessing the adult advancement and careers service online, and we want to encourage them to do that: for example through the use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. And skills accounts will be an online service. The internet will be the first point of contact for a large number of people, and both services will therefore need to meet today’s highest standards for online capability. But advisers in the telephone and face to face channels of the adult advancement and careers service will also need to use new technology: both to enhance the customer experience, for example by accessing online sources of labour market information in real time; and to open up access to those who would not normally use careers advice services, for example, in rural areas where geographical coverage presents challenges.

Working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus

23. The new service has a large target market: all adults, with a particular focus on the 30 million of working age in England. But within that, it is vitally important that those seeking work receive a service from employment and skills organisations which gives them the best chance of success, and responds to their needs. We want to see close partnership working between the new service and Jobcentre Plus, based on a clear understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the two services, a shared commitment to supporting sustainable employment with progression, alignment of processes and systems and strong working relationships between adult advancement and careers service and Jobcentre Plus advisers and managers.



How the service will work

24. The following specification sets out how the adult advancement and careers service and skills accounts will work from August this year and how the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Skills Funding Agency will work to implement these policies.

The adult advancement and careers service offer

25. The adult advancement and 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. 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.
26. The adult advancement and careers service will provide a core offer of labour-market focused careers and skills information and advice accessed face-to-face, by telephone, or online (with access to information and advice through email, web forums and text messaging). The adult advancement and careers service 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.
27. The adult advancement and careers service 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;
 - support in opening a skills account;
 - access to up to date information on courses, and links to wider information, for example on Informal Adult Learning opportunities;
 - more detailed careers information and advice, such as information about the qualifications and skills required for roles, advice on funding options, advice on returning to work, and advice on childcare;

- support to enable individuals to manage their own careers and help them get on in learning, work and life;
- 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.

28. In addition, through the face-to-face channel, individuals in specified national priority groups (see Box A) will also be able to access an intensive, ongoing offer comprising additional sessions with face-to-face advisers, free of charge. These could include:

- identification of personal goals and targets;
- a skills and career action plan, drawing on skills assessment, that is agreed by the customer and focuses on progress and outcomes in the short, medium and longer term;
- agreement with customers on one or more interventions and/or referrals to learning and skills provision, specialist provision, other support to help overcome barriers to entering learning, entering sustainable employment and progressing in life;
- support for learning brokerage, career progression and/or jobsearch, either through the service or through managed referrals to other services and organisations.

Box A

The national priority groups for the intensive and ongoing face to face offer are:

- 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).

Skills accounts and the online offer

29. Skills accounts and the tools we are developing for the adult advancement and careers service will be within a single online channel. This will, from August 2010, subsume the current websites for the Careers Advice Service, *nextstep*, and skills accounts. The online channel will help individuals to set their career and life goals and aspirations, understand their starting point in terms of the skills and personal attributes they have, and what they need to do to meet their needs and ambitions. It will provide open access to the following tools and services:
- a skills diagnostic tool, using psychometric techniques to enable individuals to assess their skills, abilities, personal attributes and preferences, and career and work objectives;
 - a CV builder, providing a template for effective CV structure and headings, with guidance in completing a CV;
 - labour market information, including:
 - sector information provided by Sector Skills Councils, and updated on a quarterly basis;
 - Local job vacancies from 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 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;
 - an 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, web chat and forum facilities; text, video and audio information on careers and jobs; and the latest news and articles on relevant work and skills issues; and
 - the ability to open a skills account.
30. As set out in Skills for Growth, skills accounts will empower individuals to take control of their learning, by making them more informed customers of the learning and skills system. A skills account will give people access to the online tools and services we are creating for the adult advancement and careers service, and provide a secure personal space (accessed via login and password) to help them manage their learning, with access to:
- a personalised, verified record of the qualifications an individual has gained (the Managing Information Across Partners learner record);
 - a learner statement, providing a verified record of the funding the Government has invested in their training;
 - the ability to store personal action plans generated after using the skills diagnostic tool; store careers advice provided online; save data searches (courses information, labour market information); and store CVs; and

- a facility to book a session with an adult advancement and careers service adviser.
31. Skills accounts and the adult advancement and careers service will promote individual aspiration. Customers of the adult advancement and careers service will, at the appropriate point in their journey, be encouraged to open skills accounts as an important tool in helping them take control of their journey towards better skills.
 32. From August 2010, all Skills Funding Agency accredited providers who access funding for individual learning from the Adult Learner Responsive budget will be asked to make adult learners on their programmes aware of skills accounts and the adult advancement and careers service and the benefits of opening a skills account, using material provided by the Skills Funding Agency. We will also encourage these providers to go further if they can in helping people open accounts, but that will not be a requirement. We will continue to extend the number of providers who will be able to open accounts on behalf of their learners, ensuring they can embed accounts into their arrangements for supporting learners. Separately, we are discussing with the Department for Children, Schools and Families the best ways to enable young people to find out about skills accounts and the adult advancement and careers service from August 2010 .
 33. For most customers the online channel will be the first point of contact with the adult advancement and careers service and skills accounts. It is therefore important that they have a good experience. The online channel will operate as a *virtual careers adviser*, so that the individual customer journey will aim to replicate the offer available through the telephone and face to face channels. The system will respond to the information individuals provide, by tailoring the information and resources offered to them. It will meet industry standards for data protection and identity assurance; and it will meet the needs of adults with learning difficulties or disabilities.
 34. There will also be a secure intranet for advisers in the face-to-face and telephone channels of the adult advancement and careers service, drawing together all the information and resources and tools they need, including those set out above. This intranet system will also allow the collection and sharing of customer information, using the new customer relationship management system described later in this document.
 35. Building on the commitments in “Skills for Growth” (November 2009), the online system will continue to evolve in future years – for example, to introduce information on the quality and labour market value of individual courses, and to allow learners to signal where their demands have not been met.

Advancement networks

36. There is strong support for the wider principle of developing advancement networks as part of the vision for the adult advancement and careers service. We need to capitalise on that support, so that, building on the ten network “prototypes”, momentum in establishing networks is not lost.

37. The purpose of advancement networks is now well known across the careers guidance sector, but is worth repeating. We want professionals at local level who deliver advice to individuals to help them tackle specific barriers (housing, health, finance, disability, and others) to:
- widen their field of vision, so that the full range of needs an individual has can be identified, in the context of helping them move forwards in work by improving their skills;
 - proactively make and receive referrals to other professionals to help that individual remove the barriers they face to moving forwards; and
 - see “advancement” as a call to action behind which they, and other professionals, can unite.
38. As set out in the introduction, the ten prototypes we have supported have broken new ground in identifying ways in which networks can be developed. From April 2010, we will begin a programme of activity to support the establishment of networks across the country. This will draw on the evaluation of the prototypes: the interim evaluation report has been published on the LSC website at www.lsc.gov.uk. This shows that the prototypes have made significant progress by building on existing partnership networks; that they have developed a range of tools to support networks, ranging from an online adviser directory to innovative means of recording a customer’s progress; and that they have broadened and deepened relationships between local organisations. It also highlights clearly the challenges involved in establishing networks, which will be equally helpful as more areas of the country move in this direction.
39. With the Skills Funding Agency, we will consult a wide range of partners on the shape and scope of networks and our ambitions for improved service to individuals. This will include a “summit” to secure the support of leaders of key public sector organisations. We will also work with adult advancement and careers service contractors, the current prototypes and other regional and local organisations to explore the opportunities that advancement networks represent, the barriers that could stand in the way of realising them, and how these can be overcome. We will draw on the views of all these partners as we support the establishment of networks.
40. We will, by summer 2010:
- set out a list of principles that we think can help shape the establishment of networks, drawing on the experience of the prototypes. These are likely to include:
 - using Local or Multi Area Agreements as the basis for partnership when establishing networks;
 - exploring whether Local Authorities, with their strong commissioning role, can play a key part in either establishing or facilitating the establishment of networks;
 - considering the use of new tools to help advisers within networks share customer information, and track an individual’s progress;
 - considering carefully the way in which customer groups are targeted, as a way of shaping processes of engagement and integrated working; and
 - recognising the sustained effort and commitment required to establish an effective network;

- publish online a catalogue of innovative ideas and practice that have worked well in the prototypes; and
 - set up a national “advancement forum” allowing service professionals from across England to exchange ideas and experience, and offer mutual support.
41. We will advocate at regional and local level for the establishment of advancement networks. If possible, the Skills Funding Agency will also provide some pump priming funding, allocated in each region of England, to allow partners establishing networks to make initial investment in staffing and support. The availability of this funding will depend on future government spending plans, so cannot yet be confirmed. However, in line with the vision set out in “Shaping the future” in October 2008, our clear expectation is that networks quickly become self-sustaining.
42. We expect as many areas as possible in England to establish networks by August 2011, twelve months after the new service becomes operational.

Branding

43. The new service will operate under one brand. The brand will unite the three channels of the service under a common identity that represents the concept of “advancement” – moving forward in work and life regardless of personal situation and skills level. It will carry a set of values that will support careers advisers in understanding and communicating the purpose and benefits of the service. We will introduce the brand to the new contractors for the face to face and telephone channels of the adult advancement and careers service when contracts are finalised. The brand will then be launched to the public in August when the service becomes operational.

Contracting and performance management

44. From April, 2010 the Skills Funding Agency will become responsible for the commissioning, contracting and performance management of the adult advancement and careers service. This will build on the work done by the Learning and Skills Council. The Skills Funding Agency will also be responsible for skills accounts. There will be separate contracts for face to face, telephone and online content delivery. It will, however, be a clear requirement in all contracts that adult advancement and careers service contractors operate as one service for the benefit of their customers, using shared branding, tools and IT infrastructure.
45. The current *nextstep* and Careers Advice Service 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 capacity in the face to face channel in 2010-11 at broadly

its current target level, helping around 700,000 individuals by delivering over 1 million advice sessions. However, we aim to increase the capacity of the telephone channel so that the adult advancement and careers service can handle 1 million calls per annum and 250,000 emails seeking advice. The online channel of the service must also have the capacity to handle up to 20 million online sessions per annum.

46. The current *nextstep* services are delivered through 10 prime contractors covering England. From 1 August 2010 the Skills Funding Agency will be managing up to 12 contracts for the adult advancement and careers service face to face channel. The changes are to reflect preferred models of delivery in the North West and South West. Our aim is that contracts are finalised quickly to allow contractors time to plan and prepare for the changes required to deliver the new single service, and identify and prepare the sub-contractors it will need.
47. The adult advancement and careers service will provide expert, impartial careers advice, responding to the needs of customers. But as an aspirational service, it will help customers move forwards in work and life. It is therefore important that the service is outcome focused, with a premium on good diagnosis of individual need. It is also important that the service plays a strong and well-defined role in regional and local partnerships, clearly positioned as a universal, expert resource working through referral, outreach, partnership and dedicated premises.
48. We will set a benchmark for the adult advancement and careers service that 50% of all customers who create an action plan with an adviser or through the on-line 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. 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 will have a learning difficulty or disability that could adversely affect their participation in work.
49. There will also be tailored regional Key Performance Indicators for each face to face contractor, which will be set by the Skills Funding Agency after taking advice from regional and sub-regional partners – such as RDAs and local authorities – to ensure that the targeting of marketing, outreach and activity by the face-to-face channel is in line with regional and sub-regional priorities.
50. A national adult advancement and careers service management group – including senior leaders in the Skills Funding Agency, heads of each prime contractor for the face to face channel, and the head of the telephone channel – will meet quarterly to review progress against these measures.
51. The Skills Funding Agency will fund face to face contractors to deliver up to three sessions of intensive and ongoing support to customers in the national priority groups set out in Box A above. Contractors will need to absorb the cost of further

sessions. Separately, individuals outside the priority groups may require and want to receive further support. They should have the choice of:

- paying for further face-to-face support (where the contracted provider offers a fee based service with the fee to the individual no more than the equivalent to the funding provided by Skills Funding Agency for each additional session for those in priority groups);
- accessing further fully funded support via the telephone channel of the service; or
- using another provider of their choice for further specific, face-to-face support with charges agreed between the individual and the provider.

52. This approach to charging will be reviewed after 12 months to look at its impact and effectiveness within the face-to-face channel and to consider the application of a charging policy for other aspects of the adult advancement and careers service offer.

53. There will be a single contract for the telephone channel of the adult advancement and careers service. The key features of this contract will include:

- for customers whose needs cannot be met in a single intervention because they require a skills assessment, additional interventions will be available. These interactions will be with a suitably qualified adviser and result in an agreed skills action plan. The adviser will arrange further follow-ups to see how they are progressing against their skills action plan and to provide further motivational support;
- core services should be available in minority languages in addition to English, The languages available will be Farsi, French, Gujarati, Polish, Punjabi, Somali, Sylheti and Urdu;
- translation support for advice calls via a 3-way conversation between language line adviser, English-speaking careers adviser and the caller;
- adequate text-phone facilities, to receive calls from the hard of hearing, who wish to use this medium, by calling 08000 568 865; alternatively, callers should be able to be connected via Type Talk (a BT/RNID service), where callers pre-fix 0800 100 900, with 18001, and then enter a 3-way call between the caller, and RNID Adviser, and an adult advancement and careers service adviser;
- information in Braille, or large print, or audiotape messages for enquirers with visual impairments who want information to be confirmed by post; and
- on-line careers forums, actively monitored and regularly updated by appropriately qualified advisers.

Customer relationship management system

54. The three channels of the adult advancement and careers service will use a single customer relationship management system to ensure that the customer experiences a seamless service. The system will be introduced with the new provider of the telephone channel and then rolled out to support the online and face-to-face channels from August 2010. The prime contractors for the face-to-face channel will therefore be required to ensure advisers have access to, and can use, this common CRM

system. It will track individuals' interaction with the service; record key contacts with advisers within the service; hold customer details and data; record outcomes including any referrals or signposting; and collect feedback on the service from customers. It will enable advisers to access information on customers; assemble management information for operational management and ongoing improvements in service; and facilitate data sharing with Jobcentre Plus.

Online tools and services

Skills diagnostic tool

55. Customers and advisers in the service will be able to use a new skills diagnostic tool from August 2010. This will be a key component of the online offer, helping individuals using the service by themselves to take a structured approach to assessing their skills, and giving advisers an additional tool which they can use as required. For Jobcentre Plus customers referred to the adult advancement and careers service, the skills diagnostic tool can be used as part of the "skills health check" within the Integrated Employment and Skills offer. The tool will be available online and suitable for use by anyone at any time and whatever their skill level. It will focus on the key areas which underpin success in work: skills, abilities, personal attributes, and career and work objectives. After completing the skills diagnostic the customer will receive a report of the assessment they have undertaken, which can help them create and store a skills action plan, either unaided or with an adviser.

Box B

The Skills Health Check diagnostic tool will explore:

- literacy (including IT literacy) language skills, and numeracy;
- intermediate and higher level skills: vocational or academic skill levels identified formally through the qualifications;
- workplace vocational skills: vocationally specific skills acquired through the workplace;
- employability skills: the skills needs often raised by employers as being important – communication skills, working as part of a team, flexibility, problem solving, all of which are more likely to be based on experience than on formally accredited learning;
- back to work/re-entering the labour market/progressing in the labour market: the knowledge or skills required to re-enter or progress in the labour market, e.g. may involve level of job search/job application skills as well as current levels of literacy, numeracy, IT literacy and employability skills; and
- generic career development skills: the ability of an individual to manage and develop their career progression through assessment of own areas of strengths and weaknesses; identification of goals and options; making decisions; taking action and achieving objectives.

Directory of course provision

56. To provide an authoritative source of information on learning options, the service will be underpinned by a directory of course provision: a new database of courses offered by colleges, private and third sector providers. It will catalogue all Skills Funding Agency funded courses offered by Skills Funding Agency accredited providers in England from entry level to Level 4; courses commissioned by Jobcentre Plus; and will link through to UCAS data on Higher Education courses funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England.
57. The new database will replace regional LSC databases of courses as well as the current National Learning Directory. As well as providing higher quality, more up to date information from providers, the new directory of course provision will also include a user feedback mechanism similar to models already deployed in the HE sector; and provide access to information on provider quality drawn from the Framework for Excellence. From 2011, that information will also include course level information on quality and the labour market value of individual courses, as set out in "Skills for Growth" (November 2009).

Labour market information

58. The service will be underpinned by authoritative sources of national and regional labour market information, available online for customers and advisers. Making information and data on the labour market from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, Sector Skills Councils, RDAs (in their strengthened regional skills role), employers, and Jobcentre Plus accessible quickly and easily, through one point of contact, will be a critical function of the new service. This will help individuals make informed choices about skills and careers, based on whether a particular career path has prospects within the economy.
59. National and regional labour market intelligence will be provided on a sector by sector basis by Sector Skills Councils, and presented in a form that customers and advisers can easily use. This will be supported by forward-looking analysis from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills via their annual UK Skills Audit. Customers will be able to link through to live job vacancies for their local area provided by Jobcentre Plus systems. There will also be a range of static content available on the website, including job profiles and video/audio commentary on particular career paths. The online offer will allow:
 - easy navigation of labour market information, with clear signposting;
 - efficient searches both within and across sectors, and links to other sources of relevant information;
 - the use of understandable language, which is jargon free;
 - print friendly versions of downloadable documents (including high resolution images of charts); and
 - links to the Jobcentre Plus job opportunities site and the National Apprenticeship Service opportunities site.
60. In addition, advisers will need up to date regional and local labour market *intelligence* to inform interactions with customers. This will be collected and collated by face-to-face channel contractors and a dedicated team in the telephone channel (working with Jobcentre Plus, RDAs and other regional and local partners) so advisers have a full spectrum of information about the labour market at their disposal. This will be

tailored to meet local needs, focusing on employer recruitment requirements and local recruitment opportunities. The prime contractor will share this intelligence with its sub-contractors, and as appropriate with the telephone and online channels.

Aspiration, equality and diversity

61. The adult advancement and careers service will be an aspirational service. It will have open access for every adult in England, and will seek to promote positive steps for everyone to improve their skills. There should be no barriers to any specific group accessing the service. In line with this, as well as making sure the service is open to all:
- contractors delivering the service will develop strategies to encourage people from the identified priority groups to use the service;
 - there will be an expectation that contractors strive to ensure that their workforce is diverse and as far as possible reflects the communities they serve;
 - the language and branding used to position, deliver and promote the new service must be appropriate for the communities it is seeking to help and clearly communicate the message of universality – for example:
 - providing advice in a variety of languages and modes of delivery;
 - making sure that services can be understood and used by those with learning difficulties and disabilities;
 - making sure services can be accessed by those less familiar with or able to access web-based technology; and
 - that older people feel that the service is as much for them as for younger adults.
62. The Skills Funding Agency will monitor take-up of the service and the outcomes individuals achieve, against equality and diversity measures, and will act to improve both take up and outcomes as necessary.

Quality and standards

63. The service provided through the adult advancement and careers service needs to be of the highest professional quality. There are two ways in which we will ensure the delivery of a high quality service:
- by ensuring that information and data accessible through the service is high quality and up to date. We will put in place measures to check regularly the quality and accuracy of data made available through the service; and
 - by ensuring that advisers in the service are highly qualified professionals, operating to and striving to exceed industry benchmarks; and that contractors delivering the service are well-managed, high performing organisations.

64. Lifelong Learning UK is the sector skills council whose footprint covers adult careers guidance in England. It has undertaken extensive consultations on workforce issues to help prepare for the adult advancement and careers service. Full details of the frameworks, strategies and good practice guides will be available on the LLUK website (www.lluk.org/careers-guidance) from the end of March. The workforce requirements on contractors delivering the service will be consistent and mandatory across the core offer and in line with LLUK's sector qualification strategy. Workforce requirements will be a key driver for ensuring a high quality service and funding provided through Skills Funding Agency contracts will include resources for investment in the workforce by contractors. The requirements will include:
- a sector qualifications strategy (SQS) developed by LLUK and agreed with employers in the sector;
 - a requirement on contractors to ensure that all staff involved in front-line delivery of the core service hold, or are working towards, qualifications set out in the sector qualification strategy and appropriate to the role they are undertaking; and
 - requirements for continuous professional development (alongside an exemplar of CPD produced by LLUK).
65. The qualification and CPD requirements will be determined through the work LLUK is currently undertaking, which involves research and consultations with employers in the sector. We will not seek to impose additional requirements for qualifications (such as further professionalisation of the workforce) over and above those agreed as part of the LLUK SQS.
66. The timetable for implementation of the workforce standards will in part depend upon the degree of change required to meet the sector qualification strategy, and the characteristics of the workforce in place by August 2010. All staff appointed after 1 August 2010 will be expected to have, or be working towards obtaining appropriate qualifications within six months of being appointed, with the expectation that an appropriate qualification has been achieved within two years. Existing staff whose qualifications may not be part of the SQS would be expected to update their skills and qualifications within two years through CPD arrangements.
67. Providers will be expected to be implementing the new CPD requirements fully by August 2011.
68. In developing its workforce it must be clear to contractors that there is an expectation that they will do as much as possible to support the Government's procurement policies by recruiting and training as many Apprentices as possible.
69. The core service must also have consistent, national, fit for purpose quality standards which are externally validated. The key components of the quality assurance arrangements are:
- for the face-to-face and telephone offer (including on-line email advice and content), the *matrix* standard with external validation by approved assessors;
 - for the face-to-face and telephone offer, inspection by OfSTED using the Common Inspection Framework; and
 - for the on-line channel, level AA of the WSC Web Content Accessibility Guidelines as stated in the LSC's corporate wide accessibility policy (<https://newintranet.lsc.gov.uk/doccentre/National/Resources/IM/E-Comms/nat-accessibility-report-25sep2008v2.pdf>).

70. All providers involved in either direct, or sub-contracted, delivery of the core face-to-face and telephone offer will need to:
- hold and retain the *matrix* Standard; and
 - organisations involved in the delivery of sub-contracted services who have not yet achieved *matrix* accreditation must obtain a certificate of commitment within three months of the award of a contract and must commit to being fully assessed against the standard within six months from the commencement of the contract. All sub-contractors must have achieved *matrix* accreditation within six months of the start of their contract.
71. Following a recent review of quality assurance arrangements, enhancements to the *matrix* Standard will be introduced during the 2010/11 academic year. Transitional arrangements will be put in place for those organisations already accredited to the standard, requiring them to achieve the new Standard as part of re-accreditation when the existing *matrix* Standard expires.
72. The face-to-face and telephone offer must comply with the OFSTED Common Inspection Framework. The face-to-face channel of the adult advancement and careers service will be subject to inspection by OFSTED. Providers will be inspected between one and four years after securing their contract. This will require prime contractors to have in place sufficiently robust procedures to demonstrate and evidence organisational competence in the following areas:
- capacity to improve;
 - outcomes for customers;
 - the quality of provision;
 - leadership and management;
 - equality and diversity; and
 - safeguarding.
73. As well as complying with national workforce standards, and meeting national quality standards, contractors delivering the service will need to undertake continuous quality improvement as part of core business. It is vital that the service listens regularly to its customers and seeks ways to improve the service it delivers. To provide the platform for this activity, and to support contractors in fulfilling this aim, there will be:
- systematic national impact assessments of the service on at least a twice yearly basis;
 - a national evaluation of the integrated service against the aims and objectives set for the service; and
 - an expectation that providers will undertake regional/ local evaluations to establish the effectiveness of approaches and inform service developments.

Engagement and partnership

74. The adult advancement and careers service will engage with customers through referral from other services; by forging partnerships with other organisations that lead to signposting or co-location; through dedicated outreach; and through awareness raising and signposting to dedicated premises. To support these “routes to market”, the service must develop strong partnership working arrangements with key national, regional and local organisations. These partners include, but are not limited to:
- **young people’s IAG services (branded Connexions and those in schools):** to ensure that transitional arrangements for young people moving into adulthood are seamless, to reduce drop out rates and ensure continuity of service. This is in line with the Government’s commitment to the implementation of an all-age strategy for careers information and advice;
 - **services working with offenders:** to ensure that there are transitional arrangements for offenders moving from custody to community and for offenders in the community coming to the end of their sentence, through close collaboration with Probation and Prison Services (now amalgamated under the National offender Management Service – NOMS) and with Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) providers;
 - **Higher Education Institutions and services:** to draw on information, support and services provided by HE Institutions and Lifelong Learning Networks in delivering careers and skills advice, where this reflects the needs of the individual; and to build links and effective ways of working with specialist services and admissions staff in HE Institutions to ensure that signposting and information sharing between these services works effectively to support customers;
 - **Further Education Colleges and Work Based Learning providers:** to build links and effective ways of working with specialist services and admissions staff in FE Colleges and Work Based Learning providers to ensure signposting, information sharing and referrals between these services work effectively to support customers. The service will also need to work with, for example, Local Authority care providers and independent specialist colleges as part of an offer of wraparound career and progression pathways for those who have difficulties accessing services, and for those who need additional support; and
 - **wider employment and skills networks:** to ensure links are made with relevant employment, economic development and skills initiatives at regional and sub regional level, to ensure alignment of careers and skills advice with wider employment and skills policy and provision, including that relating to offenders.

Embedded services

75. Information, advice and guidance is also delivered by a range of other organisations, including Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions. We will expect contractors delivering the new service to make links, and where possible forge partnerships, with these organisations so that appropriate information is shared and referrals can take place smoothly when required. But we also want to

use our investment in the new service to encourage, as far as possible, the delivery of high quality information, advice and guidance that meets professional standards, wherever it is delivered.

76. Most Higher education institutions and over 80% of Further Education colleges' student support services already use the *matrix* Standard to accredit their student support and embedded information, advice and guidance services. We would like to see as many institutions as possible adopt this approach.

A seamless transition from young people's services

77. The Government remains committed to an all-age strategy for careers guidance, covering services for young people and adults. These groups have different needs which demand different solutions. But there should be a clear approach, working across services, to ensure that transitions are supported effectively, and that young people are not "dropped" when they make the transition to adulthood.
78. In "Quality, Choice and Aspiration", the strategy for young people's information, advice and guidance published by DCSF in 2009, the need for an all-age strategy was strongly reinforced, and the following commitments were made:
- from Autumn 2010, young people aged 19 (and unemployed 18 year olds) will be able to choose to access either Connexions or the adult advancement and careers service;
 - proposals on how we might adopt a "careers blueprint" model for primary, secondary, post-16 and adult learning providers have been commissioned, setting out a common core of outcomes for young people that embedded provision should seek to deliver; and
 - once the adult advancement and careers service has become established we will in 2011 consider the effectiveness of arrangements for joint working between Connexions, adult services and Jobcentre Plus and review whether any changes are needed.
79. Alongside these commitments, face to face contractors in the new service will be expected to develop partnerships with local Connexions services, agreeing ways of working that ensure that young people are supported to make an effective transition. As well as reviewing these partnership arrangements in 2011, we will consider the implications of the "careers blueprint" model for these ways of working.

Integrated employment and skills services

80. The adult advancement and careers service will work in close partnership with Jobcentre Plus and learning providers, as part of an integrated employment and

skills offer. The DWP White Paper "Building Britain's Recovery: Achieving Full Employment" in December 2009 confirmed the continuation of steps to align the services offered by Jobcentre Plus and the adult advancement and careers service so that close partnership between Jobcentre Plus, the adult advancement and careers service and learning providers becomes an embedded way of working for all. We want to see a clear understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of employment and skills services, a shared commitment to supporting sustainable employment with progression and strong working relationships between adult advancement and careers service and Jobcentre Plus advisers and managers .

81. The key components of the IES offer that will affect skills accounts and the adult advancement and careers service are as follows:
- assumptions about the proportion of Jobcentre Plus customers – JSA claimants initially, and other groups in due course – that will be referred to the adult advancement and careers service for professional careers advice, underpinned by a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities across Jobcentre Plus, the adult advancement and careers service and learning providers;
 - an expectation that Jobcentre Plus customers will be encouraged to open a skills account, a step towards them taking control of their learning, at an appropriate point in their interaction with Jobcentre Plus, learning providers and the adult advancement and careers service;
 - the development of electronic systems to allow the sharing of customer data between Jobcentre Plus, the adult advancement and careers service and learning providers, underpinned by the new regulations made in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009; and
 - a process of strengthening Jobcentre Plus adviser capacity and capability so that interventions with customers are focused on sustainable employment with progression, that customers are systematically screened for skills needs and that the need to improve skills is embedded into the Jobcentre Plus intervention, particularly where that triggers referral to the adult advancement and careers service or a learning provider.
82. In addition, adult advancement and careers service face to face contractors will be expected to provide support for the planning and co-ordination of an integrated employment and skills offer at local level, working with Jobcentre Plus district offices. This will involve:
- clear joint strategic planning for services to Jobcentre Plus customers in the district or region and participation in any relevant regional planning groups by agreement;
 - responding quickly and effectively to emerging needs such as large scale redundancies or inward investment opportunities;
 - developing innovative responses to reaching Jobcentre Plus customers through shared outreach provision and locations;
 - working with Connexions services and Jobcentre Plus to ensure a seamless careers and advice skills for unemployed or 18 and 19 year olds eligible for services through the IES offer. This will also include providing a seamless service to those 18 and 19 year olds leaving custody and under sentence in the community; and

- the co-location of adult advancement and careers service advisers where appropriate and possible, in Jobcentre Plus offices through planned arrangements for full, partial, peripatetic and outreach approaches based on customer need and geographical location.

Conclusion

83. This document has set out our plans for establishing the adult advancement and careers service and skills accounts by August this year, and how those plans work with the proposals set out in "Skills for Growth" (November 2009) and "Building Britain's Recovery" (December 2009). It has also set out our longer term ambitions for the establishment of advancement networks. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and the Skills Funding Agency, will work together to implement the adult advancement and careers service and skills accounts, and work with partners and stakeholders to ensure that everybody with an interest in the new services understands how they will work, and what they need to do to support implementation.
84. The final section of this document sets out a high level timetable for the work we will complete by August. Alongside this, BIS will continue to use the adult advancement and careers service National Stakeholder Group already established to engage with partners and stakeholders. Membership of the group is as follows:

Apprenticeships Ambassadors Network
 Association of Colleges
 Association of Graduate Careers Services (AGCAS)
 Association of Learning Providers (ALP)
 Association of Libraries
 BECTA
 British Chamber of Commerce (BCC)
 Careers Advice Service
 Careers England
 Eastleigh FE College
 Institute of Career Guidance (ICG)
 International Centre for Guidance Studies (ICeGS)
 Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
 Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)
 Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)
 NAEGA
 National Bureau for Students with Disabilities (SKILL)
 National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
 National Union of Students (NUS)
 Nextstep Prime Contractors

Skills Development Scotland
 The Age and Employment Network (TAEN)
 Trades Union Congress (TUC)
 UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES)
 UK Resource Centre for Women
 157 Group of Colleges

Annex A

Key Milestones	
National Stakeholder Group meets.	March 2010
New qualification framework, career progression framework, workforce development strategy, competency framework and good practice guide on assessing and supporting learners on work based programmes available via the LLUK website. Workforce career progression framework.	End March 2010
Brand shared with contractors.	April 2010
Face to face channel contracts with prime contractors signed.	May 2010
Providers make data available to populate directory of course provision.	May 2010
Training for telephone contact centre staff commences.	May 2010
Training for face to face staff starts.	May 2010
Branded materials to contractors.	July 2010
New matrix quality standards published.	July 2010
New telephone contact centre starts. New service wide CRM starts.	July 2010
Advancement network design principles published and first Advancement network identified.	Summer 2010
Adult advancement and careers service go live, including: new web channel with skills accounts; new face to face channel starts using service wide CRM; telephone channel already operational.	August 2010

Contact BIS Email: enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk
Phone: 020 7215 5000 Web: www.bis.gov.uk