

# Access to work

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### Disability Rights UK Factsheet F27

#### 1. What is Access to Work?

If you want to work but have a disability that makes working a problem you may be able to get help from the Access to Work (AtW) scheme. This provides practical advice and support to help you overcome work-related obstacles. It can also give you grants towards extra employment costs.

Examples of the kind of help available through Access to Work are:

- A communicator, advocate or BSL interpreter for a job interview, if you're D/deaf or have communication difficulties.
- A support worker, such as a reader for somebody with a visual impairment; communicator for a D/deaf person; a specialist job coach for a person with a learning difficulty; or a helper for personal care needs at work.
- Specialist equipment (or alterations to existing equipment) to suit your particular needs.
- Alterations to premises or a working environment to make it more accessible
- Help towards the additional costs of taxi fares if you cannot use public transport to get to work.

#### 2. Who can get help?

You can get help if *all* of the following apply:

- you are disabled or have a health condition that impacts your ability to work
- you are aged 16 or over.
- you are living in Great Britain.

and *any* of the following apply:

- you are in need of help at a job interview with an employer
- you are about to start employment
- you are on Permitted Work Higher Level, Permitted Work PCA Exempt (for incapacity benefit claimants) or Supported Permitted Work
- you are about to start a Work Trial
- you are about to start a Department for Education supported internship or BIS traineeship
- you are about to start self-arranged work experience or young person's work experience
- you are in employment as an employed or self employed person

For more about permitted work see our [permitted work factsheet](#)

'Disabled' has the same meaning as in the Equality Act 2010. This defines disability as 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [your] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

Disabled can also include disabilities that only become apparent in the workplace. An example of this might be where you started work and found that your eyesight was affected by computer screens but had not noticed this problem before you started work.

For more information see our *Disability Rights Handbook*.

### **3. What help is available?**

Access to Work will pay 100 per cent of the approved costs, subject to a cap, for travel to work, a support worker/reader or a communicator for support at job interviews if you are;

- unemployed and starting a new job;
- working for an employer and have been in the job for less than six weeks;
- self-employed; or
- setting up your own business through the new enterprise allowance (NEA).

If you have been in your job for 6 weeks or more when you first apply for help, Access to Work will pay a proportion of the costs of support as follows:

- Employers with less than 50 staff – Access to Work can pay 100% of the approved costs.
- Employers with 50 to 249 staff – employer will have to pay the first £500 and Access to Work can then pay 80% of the approved costs up to £10,000.
- Large employers with 250 or more staff – employer will have to pay the first £1,000 and Access to Work can then pay 80% of the approved costs up to £10,000.

Access to work would normally cover all additional costs over £10,000, subject to any cap.

#### **The Access to Work cap**

Since 1 October 2015, if you make a new claim for help under the Access to Work Scheme you can only be paid a maximum yearly award limit of 1.5 times the national average salary – currently £41,400. This amount is updated annually every April.

If you were already getting Access to Work before the cap applied the level of your award will be protected until 1 April 2018 as long as your needs remain the same.

#### **What Access to work cannot cover**

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on an employer to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees. Access to Work funding cannot be used to support these adjustments.

Access to work will also not fund items which are regarded as standard equipment, standard business costs or standard health and safety requirements. This means that

any item which would normally be needed to do the job, whether a person is disabled or not, will not be paid for.

## **Help available for people with mental health conditions**

Remploy provide the Workplace Mental Health Support Service for Access to Work. The service provides a wide range of support for people with mental health conditions for a period of six months and includes:

- Work-focused mental health support tailored to the individual.
- Assessment of an individual's needs to identify coping strategies.
- Personalised support plan, detailing the steps needed to remain in, or return to work.
- Advice and guidance to enable employers to fully understand mental health and how they can support employees who have a mental health condition.
- Identifying reasonable adjustments within the workplace or within the confines of working practice.

## **4. Students**

If you're a graduate or about to graduate, you can get help through Access to Work in the same way as any disabled employee. If you need communication help for a job interview before graduation, you should be able to access this service, even though you're still studying.

## **5. Employers and Access to Work**

When you're applying for jobs, remember that Access to Work may be available to you. You should mention it to your potential employer, either at the application stage or in your interview. Jobcentre Plus has an Access to Work information leaflet for employers available at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-guide-for-employers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-guide-for-employers)

## **6. How do I claim?**

Contact the Access to Work by calling: 0345 268 8489 (Textphone: 0345 608 8753). Further details on the claim process can be found at: [www.gov.uk/access-to-work/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/how-to-claim)

You could also contact your local Jobcentre Plus office for advice and an application form.

You cannot get AtW support if you live in Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands. For information about the scheme in Northern Ireland, see [www.nidirect.gov.uk/access-to-work-practical-help-at-work](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/access-to-work-practical-help-at-work)

You may be able to claim whilst working abroad if your job is based in Great Britain. Workers posted to Great Britain by a company based in another European Community country are entitled to AtW support. Check with your AtW adviser or approving officer.

## **7. How long is Access to Work funding available for?**

Access to Work funding agreements can cover up to three years. Reviews normally take place annually to assess if continued or further funding is required. As long as you need the funding, you should continue to get it.

## **8. What if I disagree with an Access to Work decision?**

You cannot appeal against an Access to Work decision but you can ask for it to be reconsidered by a different Access to Work Adviser. To arrange this, use the contact details at the top of your award letter

or contact by email to [northeast.atw@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:northeast.atw@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

. If your application has been rejected you have 4 weeks to ask for a reconsideration. If you are unhappy with the decision for another reason you have one month to ask for a reconsideration.

If your circumstances change – such as if you change employer or your job role - you can ask for your award to be reviewed.

If you have a complaint about the service you have received from Access to Work staff you can use the DWP complaints procedure. For more about this see [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/complaints-procedure](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/complaints-procedure)

## **9. Where can I get more help or information?**

For general information on Access to Work go to [www.gov.uk/access-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)

See also DWP's Access to Work: factsheet for customers at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet)

You can view the DWP Access to Work Staff Guidance at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-staff-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-staff-guide)

For Access to Work statistics go to [www.gov.uk/government/collections/access-to-work-statistics-on-recipients--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/access-to-work-statistics-on-recipients--2)

To view Access to Work Provider Guidance go to [www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-dwp-provider-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-dwp-provider-guidance)

In-Work Support is a service run by Mind and supported through Access to Work to provide employees and self-employed individuals experiencing emotional issues or mental health problems with the solutions they require to do their role to the best of their ability.

It offers support with the following:

- Return to Work Plans
- Communication techniques
- Confidence building
- Implementing reasonable adjustments or actions
- Mediation between employer and employee

- Signposting to appropriate services such as counselling.

You can find out more at [www.inworksupport.org.uk](http://www.inworksupport.org.uk)

This factsheet is a basic overview of the access to work scheme. You can find out more detailed information in our *Disability Rights Handbook*. This and all our other publications are available from our shop at <https://crm.disabilityrightsuk.org/>. You can also place orders by [contacting Disability Rights UK](#).

You can get help and information at your local advice centre, such as a Citizens Advice Bureau. You can get more information about where to get personal advice from our *Factsheet F15 - Getting advice*. All our [factsheets](#) are free to download on our website at [disabilityrightsuk.org](http://disabilityrightsuk.org).

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