

Access to Work factsheet for employers

Overview

Access to Work (AtW) is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support for people who have a disability or long term physical or mental health condition. Support can be provided where someone needs help or adaptations beyond reasonable adjustments.

An Access to Work grant can pay for practical support to help your employee stay in work, or to support you if you are self-employed. The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are not covered by Access to Work and there is a different service in Northern Ireland.

How can it help me?

Access to Work can help you:

- hire disabled people with the skills you need
- retain an employee who develops a disability or long term condition (keeping their valuable skills and saving both time and money recruiting a replacement)
- show that you value and will support your employees by having good employment policies and practices.

Your employee can get help paying for support they may need because of their disability or long term health condition, for example:

- aid and equipment in the workplace
- adapting equipment to make it easier for them to use
- travel to work
- travel in work
- communication support at interviews
- a wide variety of support workers, and
- the Mental Health Support Service
- other practical help at work, such as a job coach or a sign-language interpreter.

If your staff member has a mental health condition, they will be offered assistance to develop a support plan. This may include steps to support them remaining in or returning to work and suggestions for reasonable adjustments in the workplace. Some examples are shown on the next page.

Examples of assistance to develop a support plan:

- flexible working patterns to accommodate changes in mood and impact of medication
- providing a mentor to give additional support at work
- arranging additional time to complete certain tasks
- providing additional training
- regular meetings between you and your employee to talk about their concerns
- a phased return to work, such as reduced hours or less days.

Access to Work does not provide the support itself, but provides a grant to reimburse the cost of the support that is needed.

Mental Health Support Service

Through the Mental Health Support Service, Access to Work:

- gives advice and guidance to help employers understand mental ill health and how they can support employees, and
- offers eligible people an assessment to find out their needs at work and help to develop a support plan.

Who can get Access to Work

To be eligible for help, a person must:

- have a disability or long term health condition that has a negative effect on their ability to do their job
- have a mental health condition and need support in work
- be over 16 years old
- be in, or about to start, paid employment (including self-employment)
- normally live and work in Great Britain
- not be claiming Incapacity Benefit or Employment Support Allowance once they are in work.

However, they may get it for a limited time if they are doing certain types of 'permitted work' to help them move off benefits completely.

Their condition

Their disability or health condition must affect their ability to do the job or means they have to pay work-related costs.

For example, special computer equipment or travel costs because they can't use public transport.

If they have a mental health condition it must affect their ability to do the job. It must also mean they need support to:

- reduce absence from work
- stay in work.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a single benefit paid to those in or out of employment. If your employee is claiming Universal Credit and has a disability or health condition, they will be able to apply for Access to Work for any paid work they do.

Changing jobs

If an individual changes employers, they may be able to transfer equipment to their new employer, but they cannot automatically transfer awards for support workers or travel – they would need to contact the Access to Work team to discuss their new arrangements.

Working out of the country

If you have a member of staff whose job is normally based in Great Britain, but you ask them to travel out of the country as part of their duties, Access to Work support would be provided but may be limited.

European Union (EU) and outside the European Union

When your company is based in a EU country and you send you employee to Great Britain to work, they can apply for Access to Work (AtW) support.

Supported internships/traineeships

From 1st September 2013, young people who start a work placement with an employer as part of the Department for Education supported internship programme or a BIS traineeship will be able to apply for Access to Work support for the time of their work placement only.

Access to Work will fund additional travel, job coach and other support, including costs of equipment if appropriate, and promote the smooth transition into paid employment.

No other types of unpaid internships/traineeships will qualify for Access to Work support.

Members of the clergy

Applications from members of the clergy, no matter what their religious denomination is, can be accepted. However, they must be in paid employment, for example, Church of England clergy receive a salary or stipend whereas some other religious denominations work in a different way.

Company directors

Company Directors can apply to get Access to Work support. However, they must prove that the company is registered with Companies House in Cardiff.

How much will this cost me?

As an employer, you may have to share the cost with Access to Work if the person has been working for you for more than six weeks when they apply for Access to Work.

You will only have to share the cost for:

- special aids and equipment, and
- adaptations to premises or equipment.

Cost share does not apply to self-employed applicants or to the Mental Health Support Service.

How much will the grant be for?

Access to Work will consider paying grants of up to 100% for:

- self-employed people
- people who have been working for less than six weeks when they first apply for Access to Work.
- the Mental Health Support Service
- support workers
- additional travel to work and travel in work costs, or
- communication support at interviews.

The level of grant will depend on:

- whether the person is employed or self-employed
- how long they have been in their job, and
- the type of help required.

What will my share of the costs be?

When cost sharing applies, Access to Work will refund up to 80% of the approved costs between a threshold and £10,000. As the employer, you will contribute 100% of costs up to the threshold level and 20% of the costs between the threshold and £10,000.

The amount of the threshold is determined by the number of employees you have.

0 to 49 employees: nil

50 to 249 employees: £500

Over 250 employees: £1000

Any balance above £10,000 will normally be met by Access to Work.

If the support also provides a general business benefit, a contribution will be sought in addition to any compulsory cost share.

Maximum amount of grants

Access to Work grants awarded on or after 1 October 2015 are capped. The amount of the cap depends on when the grant was awarded or reviewed.

Grant awarded or reviewed	Amount of cap per year
1 October 2015 to 31 March 2016	£40,800
1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017	£41,400

Currently Access to Work grants awarded before 1 October 2015 are not capped. They will be capped from 1 April 2018.

How someone can claim

If your employee thinks they can get help from Access to Work, they should call or email the Access to Work team:

Access to Work: atwosu.london@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: **0345 268 8489**

Textphone: **0345 608 8753**

Calls to 0345 numbers cost no more than a standard geographic call, and count towards any free or inclusive minutes in your landline or mobile phone contract.

An adviser will then call you and your employee back. Your employee needs to tell them about the help and support they need.

When your employee contacts Access to Work, they may need:

- their National Insurance number
- the workplace address, including your postcode
- the name, email address and work phone number of a workplace contact, for example their manager or yourself
- a unique tax reference number (if self-employed)
- the name of their New Enterprise Allowance mentor (if they have one).

If you are unable to contact Access to Work by telephone

If you need an alternative way of contacting Access to Work to discuss your needs, you can use the contact details below to write to us:

Access to Work

Operational Support Unit

Harrow Jobcentre Plus

Mail Handling Site A

Wolverhampton WV98 1JE

Reconsideration, Review and Complaints Procedure

What if your employee does not agree with the level of their award?

Access to Work is decided on a case to case level and the amount awarded is based on discussions with you and with your employee. This means that it is not possible to appeal against the level of an award.

However, the Access to Work scheme does have a reconsideration policy. Everybody is entitled to **one** reconsideration of an award by a different Access to Work Adviser. Please ask your employee to use the contact details at the top of their award letter if they want to arrange this.

What if things change?

If your employee's job role has changed, they can ask for their award to be reviewed. This can take place as many times as their situation changes, and they will still be able to get their award looked at again if they do not agree with the level of the reviewed award.

How do I or my employee complain?

Not agreeing with the level of the award and the results of reconsideration does not, on its own, give enough reason for a complaint. However, if you or your employee have had poor customer service or think the Access to Work claim has not been handled correctly, a complaint can be made using our complaints procedure. More information can be found on our website at

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/complaints-procedure

This factsheet gives general information only and is not a complete and authoritative statement of the law.