

Access to Work: factsheet for customers

Overview

Access to Work 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 if you have a disability or long term physical or mental health condition.

An Access to Work grant can pay for practical support to help you:

- start working
- stay in work
- move into self-employment or start a business

The grant is not for business start-up costs.

How much you get depends on your circumstances. The money doesn't have to be paid back and will not affect your other benefits. More information can be found on our website www.gov.uk/access-to-work/what-youll-get

Your employer may also be responsible for some of the costs of your claim. Access to Work can also give practical advice and guidance to employers, to help them understand physical and mental ill health and how they can support employees.

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 pay for support you may need because of your disability or long term health condition, for example:

- aid and equipment in your workplace
- adapting equipment to make it easier for you to use
- money towards any extra travel costs to and from work if you can't use available public transport, or if you need help to adapt your vehicle
- an interpreter or other support at a job interview if you have difficulty communicating
- other practical help at work, such as a job coach or a note taker or lip speaker

You may need to give us some proof of costs, eg for taxi fares.

If you have a mental health condition, you will be offered assistance to develop a support plan. This may include steps to support you going in to, 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 you additional support at work
- giving you additional time to complete certain tasks
- providing you with additional training
- regular meetings between you and your manager to talk about your concerns
- a phased return to work, such as reduced hours or fewer days

Access to Work partners will also work with your employer to advise them how best they can support you in the workplace.

Eligibility

You can apply for Access to Work if you:

- are normally resident in, and working in Great Britain
- have a disability or long term health condition that means you need an aid, adaptation or financial or human support to do your job (long term means lasting or likely to last for at least 12 months)
- have a mental health condition and need support in work
- are aged 16 or over

You must also:

- already be doing paid work
- be about to start work or become self-employed
- have an interview for a job
- be about to begin a work trial or start work experience under the Youth Contract arranged through Jobcentre Plus

You may also get it if you're getting New Enterprise Allowance. More information can be found on our website at www.gov.uk/new-enterprise-allowance

Your condition

To receive support from Access to Work you must have a disability or health condition that means you need an aid, adaptation or financial or human support to do a job. For example, special computer equipment or travel costs because you can't use public transport.

Your mental health condition must affect your ability to do a job. It must also mean you need support to:

- start a new job
- reduce absence from work
- stay in work

Universal Credit

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

Exceptions

You might not get Access to Work if you get any of these benefits:

- Incapacity Benefit
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Income Support
- National Insurance credits

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

Changing jobs

If you change employers you may be able to transfer equipment to your new employer. You cannot automatically transfer awards for support workers or travel. You would need to contact the Access to Work team to discuss your new arrangements.

Working out of the country

If your job is normally based in Great Britain but you are asked to travel out of the country as part of your 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 an EU country and you are sent to Great Britain to work, you can apply for Access to Work support.

If you are from a country not part of the EU, you need a visa to live and work here, which you will need to show if you apply for Access to Work.

A work permit or a leave to remain status also means you can apply for Access to Work support.

Supported internships and traineeships

From 1 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 and traineeships will qualify for Access to Work support.

Paid work (employment)

For Access to Work purposes, employment means:

- full or part-time paid work, whether permanent, casual or temporary;
- a Work Trial arranged by Jobcentre Plus;
- work in an unsupported or supported environment
- not volunteering
- some councillor and other elected official positions
- not training, except for training related to your current paid job and being done while you are in receipt of normal wages

To be eligible for support if you are employed, you must have a contract of employment and be paid at least the National Minimum Wage.

You can also apply if you have:

- a job offer letter
- a job start date
- a letter confirming your interview

Access to work can help provide you with someone to help at a job interview. If you are registered with an agency, you must have a job to start before you can be eligible for support.

Civil service and government agency employees

If you are employed by ministerial government departments, including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) or one of its agencies, your department will pay for your support.

Members of the clergy

If you are a member of the clergy, no matter what religious denomination, you must be in paid employment, for example, Church of England clergy receive a salary or stipend while some other religious denominations work in a different way.

Self-employment

For Access to Work purposes, self-employment is:

- operating a business either on your own account or in partnership, or working for an employer on a self-employed basis
- operating a franchised business on a self-employed basis
- possessing a Unique Tax Reference (UTR) number

You can apply for Access to Work support if you are over retirement age (and now do not have to pay National Insurance) but you will need to have accounts for established businesses or a business plan of a standard acceptable to a bank or other financial institution, for example for new businesses.

In the case of self-employed applicants such as entertainers who do not necessarily see themselves as being a business, then a UTR and CV would be appropriate. **This will help your adviser in determining whether the business is, or is likely to become, a viable business and therefore eligible for Access to Work support.**

Access to Work cannot pay for the costs of setting up a business or cover costs while the business is being formed, this includes but is not limited to:

- standard items of equipment
- support for fact-finding
- attending courses, seminars or similar events

Company Directors

If you are a Company Director, you can apply to get Access to Work support. However, you must prove that your company is registered with Companies House in Cardiff.

What you'll get

There is no set amount for an Access to Work grant. How much you get depends on your specific case. The grant will only cover the support needed to let you stay in work or self-employed.

The money can pay for things like:

- changes to the equipment you use
- special equipment
- fares to work if you can't use public transport
- a support worker or job coach to help you in your workplace
- a support service if you have a mental health condition and you're absent from work or finding it difficult to work
- disability awareness training for your colleagues
- someone to help you at a job interview
- the cost of moving your equipment if you change location or job

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 your grant was awarded or last 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
1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018	£42,100
1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019	£57,200

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

How to claim

The quickest and easiest way to apply is online at www.gov.uk/access-to-work

You can also apply by calling Jobcentre Plus on:

Telephone: 0800 121 7479

Textphone: 0800 121 7579

[Find out about call charges](#)

You will be asked what help and support you need when you apply. Access to Work will also contact your employer for more information.

When you contact the Access to Work team, you may need:

- your National Insurance number
- your workplace address, including your postcode
- the name, email address and work phone number of a workplace contact, for example your manager
- your unique tax reference number (if you're self-employed)
- the name of your New Enterprise Allowance mentor (if you 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 I do not agree with the level of my 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 employer. 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 use the contact details at the top of your award letter if you want to arrange this.

What if things change?

If you have had a change of employer or your job role has changed, you can ask for your award to be reviewed. This can take place as many times as your situation changes, and you will still be able to get your award looked at again if you do not agree with the level of your reviewed award.

How do I complain?

Not agreeing with the level of your award and the results of reconsideration does not, on its own, give reasons for a complaint. However, if you have had poor customer service or you think your Access to Work claim has not been handled correctly, you can complain 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.