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Information about what The Access to Work Scheme is, eligibility and how to apply for help

Under the Equality Act 2010, which incorporates the Disability Discrimination Act, an employer has a legal duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that a disabled person is not put at a disadvantage in the work environment or work practice. Under this legislation, it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against employees or those seeking employment who have a disability.

What is Access to Work?

This is a scheme that provides advice and financial support to people whose health or disability affects the way they do their job, and, if you are not able to use public transport, can pay towards the cost of getting to work. Support may also be available towards the cost of a support worker or the equipment you need at work, however, Access to Work **will 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.

Eligibility

If your disability or health condition stops you from being able to do parts of your job and you are aged 16 or over, are in paid employment or self-employment or have a confirmed start date, and live and work in England, Scotland or Wales, then you may be eligible for Access to Work. If you are seeking work and need a communicator at job interviews some or all of the costs may be paid by Access to Work.

Help through Access to Work is now available to disabled people on Traineeships, Supported Internships, Work Trials and Work Academies.

Those looking to set up their own business through the New Enterprise Allowance may also qualify for Access to Work funding.

You may not qualify for Access to Work if you receive any of the following benefits: -

- Universal Credit
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Income Support
- National Insurance Credits.
- Jobseeker's Allowance

Subject to your eligibility for Access to Work, you can obtain a confirmation letter to show to any potential employer. However, the letter is not itself an application for Access to Work. You can speak to the Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) at your local Jobcentre or contact Access to Work at:

Access to Work Operational Support Unit
Harrow Jobcentre Plus
Mail Handling Site A
Wolverhampton
WV98 1JE
Telephone: 0345 268 8489
Textphone: 0345 608 8753
Email: atwosu.london@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Application

Once your eligibility is confirmed, you will be asked to complete an application form and send it back. Following this, an Access to Work adviser will contact you and will speak to both you and your employer about the best support for you. If specialist advice is needed, this will be arranged by the adviser, who will then use the information to help them decide on the right level of support.

Applications can be made online at www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply

Employer's Responsibilities

Once your adviser has decided on the appropriate package of support, they will seek formal approval of the recommendations from Jobcentre Plus and you and your employer will be informed of the level of support and the grant available. It is the employer's responsibility - yours if you are self-employed, to arrange the agreed support and buy the necessary equipment. Your employer will be able to claim repayment of the approved costs from Access to Work.

The Amount of the Grant

The level of support which you may receive from Access to Work will be dependent upon how long you have been employed, what support you need and whether you are self-employed.

100 per cent of approved costs can be paid if you are:

- unemployed and starting a new job
- self-employed
- working for an employer and have been in the job for less than six weeks.

100 per cent of approved costs can be paid in all circumstances for help with:

- support worker or reader to provide help in the workplace
- Additional travel costs to work for those unable to use public transport
- communicator support at job interviews

A proportion of the costs of support can be paid by Access to Work if all the following apply to you:

- You're working for an employer
- You've been in the job for six weeks or more
- You need special equipment.

The share of costs to be borne by an employer is determined by the size of the workforce.

Annual Cap

Since the 1st October 2015 there is an annual cap for new claimants on the total amount of support that can be provided under Access to Work. The grant is capped at £59,200 per year. Existing claimants are exempt from the cap until April 2018.

Mental Health Support Service

You may be able to receive help from Access to Work if you have a mental health condition and need support in work. The support may be available if you are either going into work, absent from work because of your condition or are finding work difficult as a result of your mental health condition. The Workplace Mental Health Support Service is provided by Remploy and is accessed through Access to Work. The service provides a range of support for a period of 6 months including:

- Work-focussed mental health support
- An assessment of your needs to identify coping strategies
- A personalised support plan, detailing the steps needed for you to remain in, or return to work
- Identifying reasonable adjustments within the workplace or of working practice

For more detailed information contact your Access to Work contact centre.

If you would like further information on Access to Work, visit www.gov.uk/access-to-work.

We also produce a factsheet: '*Employment for People with Disabilities*', that includes further information about Work Schemes and Programmes.