

Access to Work: factsheet for customers



Changes to Access to Work during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Read about [changes to Access to Work during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#).

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 does not 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

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- 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, for example 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.

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 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
1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020	£59,200
1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021	£60,700

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.

Claiming Access to Work during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, you can still get help from Access to Work if you have a disability or a physical or mental health condition that makes it hard for you to do your job and you need to work from home.

You cannot claim help from Access to Work if you are no longer working. If you already have an Access to Work award, you can start using it again when you start working.

DWP is prioritising making grants for new claims from critical workers and people due to start work within four weeks.

If your support needs change

If the support you need changes, for example because you have started to work from home, you need to tell Access to Work.

To report a change, contact the [Access to Work helpline](#).

An Access to Work adviser will discuss working from home with you and your employer to understand what support is needed. If they cannot identify the support you need, they will put you in touch with a workplace assessor. They will work with you and your employer to recommend how to overcome the barriers you face.

If you have started to work from home, but your support needs are the same, you do not need to report this.

You need to report any changes to your circumstances during and after the coronavirus outbreak as they may affect the amount of your award.

If you need extra support but have reached or have nearly reached the maximum amount of your award, speak to your Access to Work adviser. You can continue to get a grant of up to £60,700 a year. If you have not yet spent all the award, your adviser can work with you to agree how to spend the rest of the money.

Assessments

After you apply for Access to Work, an adviser will contact you to discuss what help you could get. You may need an assessment of your workplace to assess your needs.

If you know what support you need, you do not need to have an assessment. An Access to Work adviser will discuss the award with you and develop a tailored package of support.

If you need to have an assessment, it will be carried out by telephone during the coronavirus outbreak.

If you cannot use the telephone, contact the organisation that is arranging the assessment to agree another way to have the assessment. This could be through an online British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting service or an online video service.

If you need to rearrange or cancel an assessment, contact the organisation that has arranged the assessment with you.

Support workers

You can continue to use your existing support worker while working from home.

If you need to cancel a support worker at short notice and are charged a fee, you may be able to claim that money.

Interpreters

If you use a BSL interpreter and they cannot visit your home, Access to Work could help pay for an online BSL interpreting service.

You need to tell Access to Work if you change the type of support you are using. For example, if you start using an online interpreting service instead of a BSL support worker.

If your interpreter can provide interpreting services online, they can still be paid for this. Access to Work will not be able to pay for any travel time, if they are not travelling to support you.

If your support worker cannot support you at the moment

If your support worker cannot support you because they are sick, you may still be able to claim payment for them. Your Access to Work award will need to include payment for your support worker while they are off sick.

You cannot get help from Access to Work to pay for your support worker if they are sick but payment for their sickness is not included in your Access to Work award. They may be able to claim [Statutory Sick Pay](#), [Employment and Support Allowance](#) or [Universal Credit](#).

Travel costs

Access to Work can only pay towards travel costs needed because of your disability or health condition.

If you are no longer travelling to work, you should not claim for any travel support. You can start receiving support towards travel when you start travelling to work again.

You do not need to get evidence to support your claim for travel expenses during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Claiming for costs

You have nine months to claim for costs. This has increased from six months because of coronavirus (COVID-19).

If you cannot get your employer or your support worker to sign your claim for costs, you can ask them to send you an email instead. The email should confirm that the costs you are claiming are correct. You will need to print the email and send it to Access to Work with your claim.

If you cannot leave home or ask someone else to post your claim for costs, contact your Access to Work adviser and ask if you can send your claim by email. They will tell you what you need to do. You can also send the email from your employer or your support worker by email.

If you have a question about your payments, contact the [Access to Work helpline](#). Someone will arrange to call you back within seven days.

If you are on a Department for Education supported internship, Access to Work can continue to help towards any work-related support you need. It cannot help with your educational support.

Renewals

Access to Work will contact you 12 weeks before your support is due to end. If you would like your support to continue, you will need to [apply to renew it](#).

If your award includes costs for a support worker and your circumstances have not changed, the award will be extended for 6 months because of coronavirus. You will still need to apply to renew your award.

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