

ACCESS TO WORK

INFORMATION FOR CWU MEMBERS



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. 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, 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.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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:

Access to Work
Operational Support Unit
Harrow Jobcentre Plus
Mail Handling Site A
Wolverhampton
WV98 1JE

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

The CWU welcomes and supports this initiative. If you want to learn more specific information you can contact Access to Work using the details given above. You can also contact the CWU Equality, Education & Development Department if you have any questions or queries on this or any other matter or speak to the Disability Lead in your branch.

SOURCE

www.gov.uk website