

Access to Work

What is Access to Work?

If you are thinking about recruiting a disabled person, you will know they have the skills and potential to do the work, but there may still be practical problems to overcome.

Access to Work (AtW) is available to help overcome the problems resulting from disability. It offers practical advice and help in a flexible way that can be tailored to suit the needs of an individual in a particular job. AtW does not replace the normal responsibilities of the employer to implement Health and Safety regulations or replace the responsibilities required by the Disability Discrimination Act.

How does it do this?

As well as giving advice and information to disabled people and employers, Jobcentre Plus pays a grant, through AtW, towards any extra employment costs that result from a person's disability.

How does the programme work?

AtW can offer a grant towards the approved costs that arise because of an individual's disability.

For people who are starting a job with you, the grant is up to 100% of the approved costs. For those who already work for you, the grant is up to 80% of the approved costs over the first £300.

If you have a disabled employee or if you want to recruit someone with a disability, contact your local Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) through your nearest Jobcentre Plus Office or Jobcentre. The DEA will put you in touch with an Access to Work Adviser who will discuss your particular circumstances with you.

What type of help can be provided through Access to Work?

AtW can help in a number of ways. For example, it can help pay for:

- communicator support at interview (CSI) which meets the full cost of hiring an interpreter to remove barriers to communication at interview;
- a support worker, which allows the applicant to use the services of a helper. Types of support might include reading to a visually impaired person, communicating for a hearing impaired person via sign language (other than at interview which is covered by CSI), providing specialist coaching for a person with learning difficulties or helping a person with care needs;
- special aids equipment to help a disabled person function in the work place;

- adaptation to premises or to existing equipment;
- help with the additional costs of travel to, or in, work for people who are unable to use public transport.

How are the disabled person’s particular needs assessed?

The AtW Adviser will normally speak to you and your employee to arrive at the most effective solution. In the majority of cases, this can be done over the telephone; however, a visit can be arranged if necessary. Sometimes specialist or technical advice may be needed, which the AtW Adviser will help arrange.

How long will it take to put the assistance in place?

We aim to get you the help that you need in the shortest possible time. However, if it is likely to take some time, the AtW Adviser will explore temporary alternatives with you, for example a support worker or reader, while the permanent solution is sorted out.

Who will purchase the help needed?

It is usually you, the employer, who arranges to purchase the agreed support and then you claim back the grant from AtW.

How much is the Access to Work grant?

Access to Work makes grants towards costs. If you take on an unemployed person or have recruited someone less than six weeks ago, the grant is up to 100% of the approved costs costs approved by the AtW Adviser.

Whatever the employment status of the applicant, **AtW pays up to 100% of the approved costs** of help with

- support workers and fares to work; and
- communicator support at interview.

AtW also pays additional travel costs incurred due to a disability. For people working for an employer, and who have been in the job for six weeks or more and need special equipment or adaptations to premises, **AtW pays a proportion of the costs of support**, as follows:

Approved Cost	Maximum Access to Work contribution
Less than £300	Nil
Between £300 and £10,000	80% of the cost over £300
Over £10, 000	80% of the cost between £300 and £10, 000 and 100% of the cost over £10,000

All help is for a maximum period of three years after which the AtW Business Centre will review the support and the circumstances. Access to Work may provide help for a further period if your employee continues to be eligible for help under the rules that then apply. Remember, Access to Work is available when additional costs are incurred because of a disability. It cannot be used to provide support usually provided by employers or required under legislation for all their employees. Access to Work solutions are individually tailored to meet

the disability needs of the disabled employee in the workplace. The Disability Act 1995 puts a duty on employers to take any steps that are reasonable to reduce or remove any substantial disadvantage that a physical feature of their premises or their employment arrangements causes a disabled employee or job applicant compared with a non-disabled person. This is known as 'reasonable adjustment'. Jobcentre Plus cannot give legal advice on this matter. **The fact that Jobcentre Plus is providing help for a disabled employee through Access to Work does not mean that you have satisfied this duty.**