Access to Work

What is Access to Work?

Access to Work can give you a grant of money to buy equipment or services that will help you get into or stay in work if you are a disabled person, or someone with a long term mental or physical health condition.

Who Can Apply for Access to Work?

You may be eligible if you:

- are disabled, have a mental health condition or have a long-term health condition that impacts on your ability to work;
- are aged 16 or over; and
- live in England, Scotland or Wales

Access to Work can be available for disabled people who are:

- in paid employment
- self-employed
- apprentices
- trainees
- supported interns
- doing self-directed work experience
- on Jobcentre Plus promoted work trials
- going to a job interview

You can also apply if you have:

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

How To Apply & What Do I Need to Get Started?

You can apply online via this web link: Check if you are eligible – Access to Work – GOV.UK (get-disability-work-support.service.gov.uk)

Before you start you will need:

- your contact details
- your workplace address and postcode
- Information about how your condition affects your work and what support you think you need
- details of a workplace contact who can confirm you work there, if you're employed (they will not be contacted without your permission)
- your Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR) number, if you're self-employed

What Questions Will the Form Ask?

The form will ask you for your basic information, and will then ask you what support you are looking for. Below are the types of support available from Access to Work. It is not an exhaustive list, but can give you an idea of what they offer.

Specialist Equipment: Software on your computer, specialist equipment for a home office, adapted equipment to support a physical disability.

Support with your mental health: Counselling sessions, therapy, a mentor, a personalised support plan.

A Support Worker: A Job Coach, Personal Assistant, Neurodivergent Specialised Coach, mentor, BSL interpreter, communicator, or advocate.

Help getting to and from work: A taxi to work rather than taking public transport or driving.

Help travelling during work: If you work on multiple sites you can request taxis to get you from one place to another

Changes or adaptations to your workplace: A lift or ramps at your building.

Adaptations to a vehicle: Changes to a vehicle you drive for work or to work.

How Do I Answer the Questions?

It can be helpful to link your condition to the difficulty you have.

When structuring your answer, it might be helpful to assume the person reading your application form has never heard of your condition. It is likely they will have some experience with understanding the basics of most conditions, but you are the expert of you.

If you state that you have a condition – but don't speak to how that condition affects you- it may make it more difficult or impossible for the Access to Work assessor to know what support you might need or be entitled to. One way you can structure you answers is:

"Because of my [name the condition], I struggle with [xyz] the effect of this is [xyz]."

Example:

"Because of my anxiety I find it incredibly difficult to use public transport. I have to take the tube to work 4 days a week, twice a day. The level of anxiety I feel exhausts me – meaning by the time I get to work I am tired, sweaty, feel physically unwell, and am unable to carry out my role effectively. By the time I get home each night all I can do is go to bed. I have to take a two hour nap each evening, which has an impact on my personal relationships and means I am spending all evening recovering, rather than doing anything I want to or even need to do – such as life admin or cleaning."

Example 2:

"I am autistic. I have communication differences which can have an impact on my interpersonal relationships at work. I will sometimes struggle to know when people are joking and can feel rejection or perceived rejection in a big way. If I think I have "failed" or gotten something wrong, whether in my work or with others I mix with, it can make me feel highly anxious or depressed. I would like some support navigating the social side of work – it would be helpful for me to have someone I could meet with regularly who could support me to work through social or personal conflicts, improve my confidence, and be a sounding board for I am not sure about an interaction."

If you're not sure what you want/ need have a look online at these guides, as the Access to Work team may not tell you all the things you might be able to get support with:

Access to Work | Disability Rights UK

Consider:

- Do you find it hard to get to work?
- Do you need someone to talk to regularly?
- Do you need support learning coping strategies for your conditions?
- Do you need support on the computer with a reading, writing, or learning difference?
- Do you have sensory differences (e.g. sensitivity to light or sound etc)?
- Do you need equipment for a physical difference?
- Do you need someone to help you to learn how to prioritise or organise?
- Do you need someone to support with your paperwork?

What Happens After I've Submitted My Application?

Once you have submitted your application a member of the Access to Work team will get in touch with you, usually within 12 weeks.

Based on your application form, and the support you have requested, they will be able to tell you what support you can be offered.

The team may say how many hours of support per week you have been granted or give you an indication of how much money you have to get equipment.

You will need to find and pick your own support worker.

If you request a Support Worker, Job Coach, or Specialist Mentor you will need to find someone to work with you. There are many support workers, coaches, or mentors that specifically advertise they are "Access to Work friendly".

You may need to find your own equipment.

If you need specialised equipment, you will likely have to find this and request it yourself. This is to make sure that the equipment you get works for you.

Your Access to Work assessor / Advisor will give you information on where these requests need to be submitted to, but it is often over email.