**QUICK GUIDE**

**ACCESS TO WORK**

**What is Access to Work?**

Access to Work is a government funded programme delivered by Jobcentre Plus which aims to help disabled people start or stay in work. The programme offers advice and guidance and provides grants towards the cost of funding workplace adjustments for disabled workers to remove or reduce the barriers they face at work.

**Who is eligible for Access to Work?**

Access to Work offers support to people over 16 living in Great Britain (there is a different system in Northern Ireland) who are in or about to start paid employment and who have a disability or long term physical or mental health condition that has a negative effect on their ability to do their job or means they must pay work related costs that non-disabled people don’t pay. Apprentices, trainees and self employed people are all eligible, as are those on internships and some forms of work trials or work experience. Job applicants can also apply for Access to Work support.

**Are there any exceptions?**

You may not be able to apply for Access to Work if you are in work and receiving Incapacity Benefit or Employment Support Allowance. Voluntary work is not eligible for Access to Work support.

**What kind of workplace adjustments will Access to Work fund?**

There is no one size fits all approach and each worker will be assessed based on their needs. However examples of the kind of support Access to Work can fund include:

* Aids and equipment such as speech to text software
* Vehicle adaptations or taxis for those unable to use public transport
* British Sign Language interpreter
* A personal assistant, support worker or job coach
* Mental Health Support Service – delivered by Maximus or Able Futures who will develop a support plan which can include flexible working, mentoring, training and adjustments to work targets.

**When can you apply?**

You can apply at any time if you are already in a job, or when you have a job offer or start date for a new job, or a letter confirming an interview if you are a job applicant. You do not have to have been disabled at the time you started your job. Many people only become disabled later in life so you can apply to Access to Work once you start to notice your health condition is having a negative effect on your ability to do your job.

**How do you make a claim?**

Apply online at [www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply) or phone JobCentre Plus on 0800 121 7479 or 0800 121 7579 (Textphone). You will need to provide your National Insurance Number and details of your employer.

**How does the process work?**

Once you’ve applied an Access to Work adviser will contact you to discuss the barriers you face. They will also contact your employer for more information and may decide to do a workplace assessment. They will then produce a report with recommendations and confirmation of any funding.

**Is there a maximum amount for an Access to Work award?**

Yes, there is a cap on the amount that Access to Work will award for an individual worker. The current cap is £66,000 per annum.

**During Covid 19 Can Access to Work help me work from home?**

Yes. Key workers are being prioritised for help at this time but you should still apply as soon as you can. If you already get Access to Work help, let them know that you need similar help in your home. If you are a new applicant they will discuss working from home with you and your employer to understand what support is needed.

**Is there anything Access to Work won’t fund?**

Yes, they won’t fund reasonable adjustments that the employer should provide by law or items which are regarded as standard equipment such as anything that a non-disabled person would also need to do the job.

**What if I disagree with my award?**

You can have your award reconsidered by a different Access to Work adviser if you disagree with your award. Awards are reviewed every three years or you can apply for a review if your role or employer changes.

**What do employers have to pay?**

Depending on the size of the organisation, Access to Work will pay up to 100% of the costs for small employers and up to 80% for larger employers. Employers only need to contribute to the costs of special aids and equipment and adaptations to premises and equipment and only if the employee has been in post for 6 weeks or more. They also do not need to contribute to the cost of the Mental Health Support Service.

**What if my employer refuses to provide reasonable adjustments?**

If an employer says no to a reasonable adjustment request, the first thing a member should do is speak to their UNISON rep. They will be able to explain that they must comply with their legal duty. If legal action is required there is a deadline of 3 months less one day so speak to your UNISON rep at the earliest opportunity.

**Where can I find more information?**

UNISON’s [Proving Disability and Reasonable Adjustments Guide](https://shop.unison.site/product/proving-disability-and-reasonable-adjustments/)

Access to Work - [www.gov.uk/access-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)

Maximus Mental Health Support Service - <https://atw.maximusuk.co.uk/mentalhealthsupport/>

Able Futures Mental Health Support - <https://able-futures.co.uk/>