**Access to Work – Lead Employer**

[**Access to Work is a UK Government initiative**](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work) that aims to support people with disabilities get jobs and stay in work. It does this by providing employers with grants for specific support for a named disabled employee or candidate. Access to Work does not arrange or supply the support directly.

Access to Work also conducts workplace assessments as part of this process, to work out what barriers the employee or candidate is facing and what will help address them. They also offer a Mental Health Support Service.

**What help is available?**

**Grants** - Access to Work can provide grants to fund support and adjustments should you need it during your training programmes.

What will be provided depends on when the application is made and the needs of the person, and Access to Work then make the decision about what they provide.

Examples of common ways Access to Work can help employees and employers are:

* Providing financial support to pay for aids and equipment, such as specialist furniture or assistive software.
* Funding towards travel-to-work costs. For example, paying for taxis if the person cannot use where public transport.

**How much does the grant cover?**

Access to Work will not pay for anything under £1000: this includes, chairs, modified keyboards, software, headsets.

They will generally cover between 80-100 per cent of the costs of any adjustments, support, or equipment above that which an employer would typically provide. For example, they will not cover the costs of supplying a standard chair. They will advise in writing what they are prepared to fund and what is to be ‘cost shared’ with the employer.

In general, the earlier an employee contacts Access to Work, the more of the costs are likely to be covered. In many cases, this will be 100 per cent of the costs for:

* Employees who have been working for less than six weeks when they apply
* Employees applying to the Mental Health Support Service
* Those who need support workers such as sight guides or sign language interpreters
* Employees who have additional travel-to-work and travel-in-work costs
* candidates who need communication support at interviews such as sign language interpreters.

The financial value of the grant will depend on:

* How long the employee has been employed?
* The type of help they need
* Cost sharing - how does it work?

If the employee has been working for their employer for longer than six weeks, then the employer will have to share a portion of the cost.

For Access to Work to fund an adjustment for this organisation the employer would pay:

* 100% of costs up to £1,000
* 20% of the costs between £1000 and £10,000

**Who contacts Access to Work?**

Access to Work will only accept applications from the employee. Any application should only be made after a discussion between the employer and the individual. An application to Access to Work can be made at any time.

Contact **lead.employer@sthk.nhs.uk** in the first instance if you are considering making an application.

**Contacting Access to Work**

In England, Scotland and Wales, applications can be made online through the [**Government’s website**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet/access-to-work-factsheet-for-customers)

The individual can also apply through Jobcentre Plus:

* Telephone: 0800 121 7479
* Textphone: 0800 121 7579

Applicants will need to submit certain information as part of the process, including:

* The impact of their condition on their work or ability to get to work
* Any help they’re already receiving
* Any other support that could help

**What happens after the application has been submitted?**

Access to Work should contact both the employee and the employer to discuss the application and what help may be needed.

If an employee knows what they need, a decision can usually be made quickly about the package of support and grant amount. For example, a person may know the specific type of software that will help them because they have used it successfully previously elsewhere.

**Workplace assessments**

If an employee is not sure what they will need, a more detailed workplace assessment will be required. A specialist service will often do this. For example, an employee with a new visual impairment may not know what is potentially available for them. Access to Work may request an assessor specialising in this area.

Prior to COVID-19, this would often result in a site visit by the specialist to look at all aspects of the employee’s role, including access into and out of a building if that is required. Depending on COVID-19 restrictions, these assessments may be carried out by phone or online if sign language interpretation is needed.