



NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS – SOUTH WEST REGION

ACCESS TO WORK

**Guidance on The Department for Work and Pensions'
Access to Work Scheme**

The Access to Work (ATW) scheme is a Government scheme designed to provide practical help to overcome the barriers that disabled people experience in the workplace. Through this scheme the Government will either pay for or make a substantial grant towards the costs of additional support needed as a result of disability. This is essential to enable many disabled people to find or stay in employment. This factsheet aims to give a broad overview of how the scheme works, the type of support available and the different stages involved in getting that support into place.

Support available

The following outlines the type of support available under the scheme:

- **Adaptations to premises and equipment:** this involves modifying the employer's premises or equipment to make it accessible for a disabled person.
- **Special aids to employment:** provision of aids and equipment to a disabled person which a non-disabled person doing the same job would not need.
- **Support workers:** help with the costs of employing personal support for a person with a disability at a job interview; on their journey to and from work or in the workplace. The support worker element of support is not available to people in supported employment.
- **Travel to work:** support when a disabled person incurs extra costs in travelling to and from work because of their disability. Beneficiaries are expected to contribute the usual costs of travelling to work by public transport.
- **Communication support at interview:** help with the cost of employing an interpreter or communicator to accompany a hearing impaired person, where there might be communication difficulties at a job interview with a prospective employer.
- **Miscellaneous:** this will pay for 'one-off' items of support that do not fall within other categories.

Funding available

Funding varies depending on your employment status as follows:

Unemployed people (Meaning unemployed people moving into new employment)

- 100% of identified costs of all elements

People changing jobs

- 100% of identified costs of all elements

Employed people

- Employers are required to make a one-off payment of the first £300 of ATW support. Above this sum the Government will pay 80% of agreed costs up to £10,000. The Government will then pay 100% of agreed costs above £10,000.

Travel to work

- 100% of identified costs irrespective of employment status.

Communicator support at interview

- 100% of identified costs irrespective of employment status.

The business benefit:

In some cases ATW solutions may incur a business benefit, for example if other members of staff use your specialist equipment as part of their own work. In these instances the business benefit costs will be estimated and deducted from the ATW costs. The Government will pay 80% of the remaining amount.

Time limit

All help is for a maximum period of 3 years after which Jobcentre Plus reviews the circumstances. Access to Work may provide help for a further period if you continue to be eligible for help under the rules that then apply.

Where to go for support

The Access to Work scheme is administered by the Government's Placement, Assessment and Counselling Teams (PAC Teams) who are based at job centres. Within these teams are disability specialists called Disablement Employment Advisers or DEAs. There may also be technical officers who have specialist knowledge of equipment and adaptations which can be obtained under the ATW scheme.

How to apply for support

1. Contacting your Disablement Employment Adviser

Applications for support are usually prompted by an initial request for help to your local PAC Team. If you are not familiar with the scheme it may be helpful for you (and your employer where appropriate) to have a meeting with your DEA to discuss the programme and consider your eligibility, funding arrangements (including employer charge) and the support options available to you. You can get your PAC Team's address and telephone number from your local job market.

2. The application form

You will then be asked to fill in an application form which gives details of your employment and states why you need this support. This enables the DEAs to make an initial assessment of eligibility and nature of disability, identify who in the company they need to contact and prepare for discussion about the support that is required.

3. Appraisal of needs

Once initial approval has been granted the Disablement Employment Adviser will make an appointment to visit your workplace (unless you specifically do not want your employer to be involved) to undertake a full appraisal of your needs. They will want to assess details of your job and the effects of your disability on doing your job. If support is easily identifiable, they will progress with arrangements to get support into place. If the type of help is not immediately obvious, particularly regarding adaptations or specialist equipment, a more detailed technical assessment may be recommended. This can be done by the PACT Team's Technical Consultants or through an external organisation such as RNIB.

4. Action plan

Following your assessment regardless of whether support is readily identifiable or further investigation is required, both you and your employer should receive a written action plan from the assessor. This will ensure that both you and your employer have time to consider the solution and are clear about what action the DEA will take next.

5. Exploring the options

The DEA will need to explore likely support systems and outline the costs of the options available. This may involve a technical assessment and work trials on different types of equipment until the best solution is found.

It is essential that adequate specialist installation and training are provided to enable users to become conversant with new equipment. This usually only amounts to a few days, but can be vital.

6. Approval of provision

Once the solution has been identified and associated cost obtained, the DEA will discuss these with you and your employer and agree any cost sharing (where appropriate). After this, the DEA will provide authority to commit expenditure. It is then generally the responsibility of the employer to purchase the agreed equipment, and then to claim the agreed amounts back from PACT on submission of relevant

invoices. Equipment provided in this way becomes the property of the employer, who will be responsible for insurance and maintenance.

7. Receipt of equipment or support

On receipt of equipment or support, it is important to ensure that you feel familiar with and confident in the use of whatever support is put in place. In some cases separate training will have been requested as part of the ATW application.

8. Follow up action

Once support has been put in place a follow-up visit or interview is arranged by your DEA. This is designed to ensure that the support systems originally identified are still right for your needs and it helps to identify difficulties for which further support is required. Follow up visits are then arranged periodically over the term that support has been made available.

Important information to note

If a member is turned down or is unhappy with support

If you are turned down or are unhappy with the support you receive under the ATW scheme then you can ask for that decision to be reviewed. This involves sending a written request to the PAC Team Manager outlining your reasons for requesting a review and setting out any further information to support your case. In all cases, the results of the review, and the reason for the decision, must be given in writing. If you are unhappy with the PAC Team Manager's decision, then you can take it to the next level which is regional Director.

If you experience unreasonable delays

In the majority of cases, Access to Work support is put in place in a relatively short space of time. However, sometimes the process can be quite complex and take much longer, especially if support systems are not immediately obvious. If you are experiencing difficulties because of long delays, it is important to contact your PAC Team and let them know about these problems. They may be able to provide interim solutions, such as the use of a support worker or loan equipment.

This advice draws heavily on information provided by the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) – their website can be found at: www.rnib.org.uk

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