

Access to Work

## **What is Access to Work?**

(details adapted from Job centre Plus web site)

<http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/cms.asp?Page=/Home/Customers/HelpForDisabledPeople/AccessToWork>

Access to work is a programme offered by the government to support disabled people in the workplace. It is designed to provide resources which allow a disabled person to obtain a job and to remain in work. Ideally, it should ensure that, together with the employer contributions and adaptations under the Disability Discrimination Act, the disabled person is not disadvantaged in comparison to able bodied people. It applies to Deaf people where the provision of sign language interpreters is a major feature.

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. This is specific to that person and so, in the case, of a Deaf person, evaluation of needs is carried out and a package prepared for that person in that workplace.

## **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, the grant is up to 100% of the approved costs. For those who are already in work, the grant is up to 80% of the approved costs over the first £300.

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

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

After assessing the Deaf person in the workplace, the DEA/AtW adviser can help in a number of ways. For example, AtW can help pay for:

- communicator support at interview (CSI) which meets the full cost of hiring a sign language interpreter to remove barriers to communication at interview;
- a support worker. Types of support might include communicating with the Deaf person via sign language (other than at interview which is covered by CSI), providing specialist coaching for a person with additional learning difficulties, helping a person with care needs, providing a guide to allow the person who is Deafblind to travel backwards and forwards to work;
- special aids equipment to help a disabled person function in the work place such as computers, textphones, videophones, video cameras;
- 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 the employer and the employee to arrive at the most effective solution. In the majority of cases, this will be done with a visit to the Deaf employee as telephone discussions may be difficult. 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?**

Ideally, the process is relatively quick. However, if it is likely to take some time eg if the equipment is unavailable immediately, the AtW Adviser will explore temporary alternatives, for example a support worker or reader, while the permanent solution is sorted out.

### **Who will purchase the help needed?**

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

### **How much is the Access to Work grant?**

Access to Work makes grants towards costs. If the employer takes on a new unemployed person or has recruited someone less than six weeks previously, the grant is up to 100% of the 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:

<b>Approved Cost</b>	<b>Maximum Access to Work contribution</b>
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 the employee continues to be eligible for help under the rules that then apply.

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 Discrimination 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'. It is important to note that using the Access to Work programme does not necessarily satisfy all the conditions for the employer in regard to the Disability Discrimination Act.