

Access to Work

An Employee's Guide

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Access to Work

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Access to Work: an overview

What is Access to Work?

Access to Work is a specialist scheme, run by Jobcentre Plus, which helps people with a physical, learning or mental health impairment to find and stay in work.

If you are eligible and have a paid job, you can apply for Access to Work. It does not matter whether you work full-time, part-time, permanent or temporary.

Access to Work **does not** replace NHSGGC's normal responsibilities to provide reasonable adjustments.

The scheme **does** provide practical help for you and your manager, and offers grants to help towards any support, aids, equipment or adaptations you may require.

How can Access to Work help me?

Access to Work funding helps to remove environmental barriers in the workplace, providing fair access for all employees.

The funding can help if your impairment affects the way that you do your job. If you need a support worker, specialist equipment, work plans or alternative travel if you cannot use public transport, Access to Work can provide grants towards these costs.

Access to Work regularly engages with employees, and works closely with specialist private and third sector organisations (such as RNIB and Action on Hearing Loss) to provide the best service for you.

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Eligibility

Eligibility overview

To get help from Access to Work, there are certain criteria you must meet:

- you must be 16 or over and in full-time, part-time or temporary work – voluntary or unpaid work does not count; **and**
- you must have a mental or physical impairment or health condition that is likely to last for 12 months or more; **and**
- the impairment or condition must affect your ability to do a job, start a job, stay in work, or mean you have to pay work-related costs (e.g. travel costs if you cannot use public transport).

Eligibility exceptions

You may not qualify for Access to Work even if you are defined as disabled if you receive any of the following benefits:

- Employment Support Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- National Insurance Credits

However, if you have an interview or a certain type of work experience placement, support can be funded by

Definition of 'disability' or 'impairment'

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disability as 'a physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

- 'Substantial' means more than minor or trivial, e.g. taking much longer to complete a daily task like getting dressed.
- 'Long-term' means 12 months or more, including, for example, a breathing condition that develops out of a lung infection.

People with progressive conditions can also be covered under the Equality Act; an individual automatically meets the disability definition under the Equality Act 2010 from the day they are diagnosed with HIV infection or AIDS, cancer or Multiple Sclerosis.

Some conditions are not covered by the disability definition. These include addiction to non-prescribed drugs or alcohol.

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Access to Work even if you are currently unemployed. Support can also be provided through the Higher Permitted Work scheme, but will only be provided over the 52 week period.

If you change to a job which is not essentially the same within or outside the department, you are no longer eligible for Access to Work under your old job. You must re-apply for Access to Work, as Jobcentre Plus classes this as a new post.

Please contact Access to Work for more information.

Support

Access to Work does not provide support itself, but provides a grant to reimburse NHSGGC of the cost of the support that you need. This section details the various types of support that Access to Work can fund.

Support overview

Access to Work can provide grants towards 6 categories of support:

- Specialist Aids and Equipment (SAE) e.g. specialist IT hardware and software, powered chair, quill mouse;
- adaptations to premises and equipment e.g. doorways, access ramps, automatic doors with pad;
- support worker e.g. job interview support, transport escort or work driver, assistance in the workplace;
- Communication Support at Interview (CSI) e.g. interpreter or communicator if you are hearing impaired;

Reasonable adjustments

Access to Work is provided where an employee requires support or adaptations **beyond** the reasonable adjustments which NHSGGC is legally obliged to provide under the Equality Act 2010. Any alterations or standard equipment classed as **reasonable adjustments will NOT be covered by Access to Work** – these are covered 100% by NHSGGC. Some examples of reasonable adjustment include:

- Making adjustments to the premises
- Job sharing
- Flexible working
- Buying or modifying standard equipment and/or furniture
- Changing instructions and information manuals
- Modifying procedures for testing or assessment

Speak to your manager to arrange a work station assessment. For further guidance, please contact Access to Work.

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- travel to work e.g. taxi/alternative transport; and
- miscellaneous e.g. one off items of support.

Support workers

Check with your manager whether the job role can be shared or adjusted before applying for this support. If you need a support worker, inform your Access to Work adviser. Support workers are generally split into the following 3 groups.

- **Admin support, or job aide:** You may consider a job aide if you have problems with manual dexterity in your hands and need a job aide to do your filing. You would need to oversee the job aide while they are working. As a general rule, Access to Work can fund a job aide for up to 20% of your working hours.
- **Care support:** to support you with personal care in work only and would include help with meal breaks, toilet breaks, etc. The level and length of time of the support is assessed by your Access to Work adviser and is generally 100% funded by Access to Work.
- **Interpreting support:** If you need an interpreter, for example for British Sign Language (BSL), Access to Work can fund one. This support can either be for the whole working day, or for one-off/ad-hoc periods such as interviews. Access to Work will decide on the level of support after consultation with you.

Access to Work can also fund the following support workers, if you require them.

- **Driver:** If public transport and taxis are not an option to get to, from, and around work, you may be eligible for driver support. If the support worker drives your vehicle, you are responsible for their insurance cover.
- **Job Coach:** If you have mental ill health, this kind of support worker can provide work-focused support tailored to you. If you have a learning disability, you can also get support from a job coach.

There are different ways that a support worker can be recruited to assist you:

- use an agency worker (*this is the standard option*);
- Your manager could recruit a new employee;
- you could employ the support worker directly; or

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Support workers' travel costs

Access to Work will not accept claims for support workers' travel costs. If the support worker is employed on an hourly basis, all travelling costs including parking must be included in the rate agreed with the Access to Work adviser.

Support workers' hours

If a support worker is required full time (more than 30 hours a week), Access to Work will normally fund this on the basis of an annual salary rather than an agency worker employed on an hourly basis.

- your manager could add the support role to an existing employee's job. Please note that Access to Work cannot fund any more than an existing employee's normal salary.

You and your manager will need to decide how you want to recruit and employ the support worker, taking account of:

- the number of hours of support needed; and
- the skills the support worker must have.

The Access to Work adviser will be able to give you more information about agencies and professional associations who can help you find a support worker with appropriate skills and qualifications.

Mental Health Support Service

The Mental Health Support Service is provided by Remploy in partnership with Access to Work. At no cost to you, the service:

- gives advice and guidance to help employers understand mental ill health and how they can support employees, and
- offers eligible individuals an assessment to find out your needs at work and help to develop a support plan.

For more information about the Mental Health Support Service, contact Remploy:

0845 146 0501

vocationalrehabilitation@remploy.co.uk

Specialist equipment

Access to Work will **not** provide funding for equipment that is considered standard for your job or equipment that NHSGGC can reasonably provide. If this applies to your case, your Access to Work adviser will discuss this with you both.

Access to Work is able to provide funding towards special equipment which incurs **extra costs**.

If Access to Work can fund your specialist equipment, your manager is responsible for any on-going costs for that equipment. This includes the costs of consumables, such as batteries, as well as maintenance and insurance.

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Confirm with Access to Work that you will be trained to use any specialist equipment and that it is checked regularly to make sure that it is working correctly.

Travel

If you cannot use public transport, you may be eligible for funded taxis. You would pay the normal travel to work cost and Access to Work would pay the difference. Where it is work-related travel, NHSGGC would pay travel expenses in line with policy, and Access to Work would pay the balance.

It would be your responsibility to apply, access direct payments and organise their taxis to and from work.

If taxis are not an option, you may be eligible for a support worker who drives you to, from and/or within work. The arrangement would need to be discussed with Jobcentre Plus. If the support worker drives your vehicle, you are responsible for their insurance cover.

How to Apply

It is up to you to apply for your own Access to Work support. If you are unable to do this, Access to Work will accept an application from your manager.

It is advisable, however, to contact Occupational Health in the first instance. They will assess whether or not your needs can be fully met by NHSGGC and, if it is required, advise on the Access to Work referral system. They can also be contacted for assistance at any point throughout this process.

If you are starting a new job, your support can be 100% funded by Access to Work **if you apply for Access to Work in their first 6 weeks.**

The average timescale for a claim to be processed can depend on the equipment needed and how quickly it can be procured. Complex or bespoke adjustments can take longer.

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Application process

1. Discuss your requirements with your manager and refer them to **Access to Work: A Manager's Guide**. Your support will depend on you, your job and what is considered reasonable in the circumstances.
2. Contact Access to Work directly - have your national insurance number and your manager's contact details to hand. Access to Work then sends a written assessment to your manager to check, sign and return. **Remember - all applications must bear your manager's signature.**
3. An Access to Work adviser will either phone or visit you to assess your needs and circumstances.
4. The Access to Work adviser will provide you with two copies of the report which outline findings, recommendations and quotes/supplier for the equipment or support you require.
5. If you are satisfied with the report, pass one copy on to your manager.
6. It is then your manager's responsibility to order the equipment or adaptation you need. If you require a support worker or taxis, you will need to discuss the arrangement with Access to Work.

Applications are live for three years. An Access to Work adviser will review your support once a year. Your manager should discuss your support with you at regular one-to-one meetings. After three years, your claim expires and you must make a new claim.

Funding

Funding overview

There is no set amount for an Access to Work grant; it depends on your circumstances, including how long you have been working for NHSGGC and what support you need.

Anyone who purchases goods or services outside of the scheme protocol **will not be awarded retrospective payments by Access to Work.**

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Access to Work claims are funded for up to 3 years – after this, you must make a new claim.

How much can Access to Work pay?

Access to Work can fund up to 100% of the costs of:

- support workers
- additional costs for travel in work, and
- support where the employee has been working for **less than 6 weeks** when they first apply for Access to Work.

What does NHSGGC pay?

NHSGGC pays any costs associated with reasonable adjustments, but it also shares costs in certain circumstances with Access to Work. NHSGGC will only have to share the costs if you have been working for more than 6 weeks when you apply for Access to Work, and you need specialist equipment or adaptations. Any cost under £1,000 is met by NHSGGC; any cost between £1,000 and £10,000 is cost-shared between NHSGGC and Access to Work; and any cost over £10,000 is usually met by Access to Work.

NHS equipment

If equipment is available through the NHS free of charge, you should obtain your equipment through this route as Access to Work will not fund this type of equipment. An example is over-ear hearing aids – as these are obtainable free through the NHS, Access to Work cannot fund them.

If you feel that the equipment/support provided by the NHS is not appropriate, you must obtain a letter from the NHS confirming what can/cannot be provided. Access to Work will only provide equipment if the NHS provision does not fulfil your work requirements.

Will I have to pay anything?

Usually, you will not have to pay anything towards your support. However, in certain situations you may have to contribute

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Employee contribution example

John Smith works 37 hours a week over 5 days and he requires a piece of equipment costing a one-off payment of £1,000.

- VAT on the equipment is reclaimed from the taxman, so £1,000 - 20% VAT = £800
- £800 ÷ 7 (days in the week) = £114.29 per day
- Council contributes towards John's 5 working days, so 5 x £114.29 = £571.43
- John contributes towards 2 personal use days, so 2 x £114.29 = £228.57

The total cost to John Smith is £228.57, for the 2 days per week he will use the equipment outside of work.

towards the cost of your equipment, depending on how many days you work. This is mainly applicable in cases where you would benefit from the equipment that is being purchased in your personal or social life rather than being only a work-based requirement.

If this applies to you, you should pay your contribution directly to NHSGGC. If the equipment costs more than £1,000, the costs will be shared between NHSGGC and Access to Work.

If you have any questions regarding funding, please contact Access to Work.

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Useful contacts

Access to Work Glasgow

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Mental Health Support Service (Remploy)

0845 146 0501

vocationalrehabilitation@remploy.co.uk

Acknowledgement

Re-produced for NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde by kind permission of Access to Work and Leeds Council.

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