

# Access to Work

**NOTE: This document currently under review – please contact [flourish@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:flourish@oxford.anglican.org) should you have any questions.**

Access to Work is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support if you have a disability or long term physical or mental health condition.

An Access to Work grant can pay for practical support to help you:

- start working
- stay in work
- move into self-employment or start a business

The rules of Access to Work are set by the Department for Work and Pensions. Any questions about the rules should be addressed to them - [Access to Work](#)

If you have any questions, contact the Access to Work helpline Telephone: 0800 121 7479

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## What is Access to Work?

[Access to Work](#) is a government funded employment scheme that provides individual financial support to ensure disabled people can start or stay in work.

The support you get will depend on your needs and ensure that all the reasonable adjustments you need to do your role to the best of your ability are in place.

Access to Work is not a benefit (and is not included in the benefits that someone receives) but is a grant paid to enable someone to work. It is not taxable; will not affect any other benefits and you will not have to pay it back.

## Who can get Access to Work (Eligibility)?

You can get help if you:

- have a disability or long-term health condition that means you need an aid, adaptation or financial or human support to do your job i.e.
  - a physical disability, for example if hard of hearing or using a wheelchair
  - a learning disability or related condition, for examples if you have Down's syndrome
  - a developmental condition, like autism spectrum disorder
  - learning difficulties or differences like ADHD or dyslexia
  - an illness such as diabetes or epilepsy
  - a temporary condition, like a broken leg
- have a mental health condition and need support in work i.e., anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder
- are aged 16 or over
- be in, or about to start, paid employment
- not be claiming Incapacity Benefits or Employment Support Allowance once you are in work; *and*
- be a resident in, and working in, England, Scotland or Wales - there's a different system in Northern Ireland

*'Disabled'* has the same meaning as in the Equality Act 2010. This defines disability as *'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [your] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'*.

Disabled can also include disabilities that only become apparent in the workplace. An example of this might be where you started work and found that your eyesight was affected by computer screens but had not noticed this problem before you started work.

Under the rules set by the Government, support is only available for ministers (ordained and lay) in paid roles (whether holding office or employed, or full or part time). Self-supporting ministers and volunteers are not eligible for Access to Work. Access to Work is not available while training for ordination as ordinands are not being paid or paying National Insurance Contributions. Disabled students should apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance via their TEI, if eligible.

## What help is available?

Access to Work support covers a wide range of interventions beyond '*reasonable adjustments*' associated with overcoming work-related barriers resulting from disability. The support package is agreed based on individual need.

Examples of the kind of help available through Access to Work are:

- A communicator, advocate or BSL interpreter for a job interview, if you are D/deaf or have communication difficulties.
- A support worker, such as a reader for somebody with a visual impairment; communicator for a D/deaf person; a specialist job coach for a person with a learning difficulty; or a helper for personal care needs at work.
- Specialist equipment (or alterations to existing equipment) to suit your particular need.
- Help towards the additional costs of taxi fares if you cannot use public transport to get to work.
- Disability awareness training for your colleagues.
- Support via Access to Work's dedicated Mental Health Support Service.

Access to Work will fund additional travel, job coach and other support, including costs of equipment if appropriate, and promote the smooth transition into paid employment.

Help available for people with long-term mental health conditions.

A free and confidential '[Mental Health Support Service](#)' is available to anyone with a mental health condition through Access to Work.

The scheme offers:

- Work-focused mental health support for up to nine months tailored to your needs
- An assessment of your needs to identify suitable coping strategies
- A personalised support plan, detailing the steps needed for you to remain in, or return to, work
- Ideas for adjustments in the workplace or of working practice

## What is not covered?

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on an employer to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees. Access to Work funding cannot be used to support these adjustments.

Access to work will also not fund items which are regarded as standard equipment, standard business costs or standard health and safety requirements. This means that any item which would normally be needed to do the job, whether a person is disabled or not, will not be paid for.

Reasonable adjustments include:

- changing the recruitment process so a candidate can be considered for a job;
- doing things another way, such as allowing someone with social anxiety disorder to have their own desk instead of hot-desking;
- making physical changes to the workplace, like installing a ramp for a wheelchair user or an audio-visual fire alarm for a Deaf person;

- letting a disabled person work somewhere else, such as on the ground floor for a wheelchair user;
- changing equipment, for instance providing a special keyboard if they have arthritis or repetitive strain injury;
- allowing employees who become disabled to make a phased return to work, including flexible hours or part-time working.

Access to Work may pay up to half of the cost of assistive technology which might include a Personal Computer (PC) or laptop. It may be necessary for the diocese or parish to meet the other half of the cost. Parishes have a duty to reimburse all authorised appropriate expenses, but sometimes the DBF may need to help in cases where parishes are having difficulty reimbursing expenses.

## How to apply?

The initial application to Access to Work is usually made by the person requiring assistance – the member of clergy or the employee. No-one can apply on your behalf, but you may find it helpful to consult the [Diocesan Disability Adviser](#) or the [HR Adviser \(Reward & Wellbeing\)](#).

Access to Work will need the name and contact information for an 'employer contact', again this could be the Diocesan Disability Adviser or the HR Adviser (Reward & Wellbeing). Access to Work claims require a counter signature. This needs to be someone who knows what work is happening as they are agreeing to the hours and pattern of work carried out etc. This could be the Head of IME2, the area dean or the archdeacon, the HR Adviser (Reward & Wellbeing) or the Diocesan Disability Adviser.

The quickest and easiest way to [apply is online](#) but you can also apply by phone, text relay and video relay service:

Telephone: 0800 121 7479

Textphone: 0800 121 7579

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm [Find out about call charges](#)

British Sign Language (BSL) video relay service

To use this, you must:

- first [check you can use the service](#)
- [go to the video relay service](#)

Alternative formats

Call the Access to Work number to ask for alternative formats, such as braille, large print, or audio CD.

If you need an alternative way of contacting Access to Work to discuss your needs, you can email [atwsu.london@dpw.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:atwsu.london@dpw.gsi.gov.uk) or write to:

Access to Work  
Operational Support Unit  
Harrow Jobcentre Plus  
Mail Handling Site A  
Wolverhampton  
WV98 1JE

When you contact Access to Work you may need the following information at hand:

- your National Insurance number
- your workplace address, including your postcode
- the name, email address and work phone number of a workplace contact, e.g., your manager
- your unique tax reference number (if you're self-employed)
- the name of your New Enterprise Allowance mentor (if you have one)

Provide them with your contact details and an Access to Work Advisor will call you within 7 working days. The Access to Work Advisor will go through the eligibility criteria with you and have a "fact finding" discussion with you to establish what your barriers in the workplace are and what kind of support might be available.

#### Evidence

You will be asked to present evidence to support your claim. If you have a Specific Learning Disability you will need an up-to-date diagnostics report. If you don't have one already, unfortunately Access to Work do not help with the cost of having one, so you will either have to fund this independently, or you could ask your Archdeacon if financial support is available to support you with the cost. If you have a physical disability, long term health condition, or suffer from mental health issues then you will need to present a letter from your doctor or consultant.

#### Assessment

If Access to Work decide that you meet the eligibility criteria, they will authorise a workplace needs assessment (paid for by Access to Work). This usually takes place within a couple of weeks of the referral. An assessor will either visit you in the workplace or hold an over the phone assessment, depending on the "complexity" of your needs. The assessment will identify what your challenges are and what types of support will enable you to overcome them. The assessor will draw up a report of recommendations which will then be sent back to your Access to Work Advisor for evaluation. You will be sent two copies of this report, one for yourself and one for the Diocese. An approval letter detailing the awarded funding will be sent to both you and the Diocese explaining how to claim the money.

## Purchase, Reimbursement, Support

You or your employer might need to pay for the support you need at first. Your letter will tell you how to claim money back. Keep your invoices and receipts as evidence. For some services, Access to Work pays the provider directly. Your decision letter will explain how to set this up.

The Diocese agrees to purchase the agreed recommendations and then claim the grant back from Access to Work using the claim form sent with your award approval letter. The Diocese has 9 months to claim for the costs.

The Diocese, as the employer for Access to Work purposes, may have to share the cost with Access to Work where the claimant has been working for us for more than 6 weeks when they apply for the grant. We only have to share the cost for:

- special aids and equipment
- adaptations to premises or equipment

Access to Work will consider paying grants of up to 100% for:

- people who have been working for less than 6 weeks when they first apply for Access to Work
- the Mental Health Support Service
- support workers
- additional travel to work and travel in work costs
- communication support at interviews

The level of grant will depend on:

- how long they have been in their job
- the type of help required

When cost sharing applies, Access to Work will refund up to 80% of the approved costs between a threshold and £10,000. As the employer, the Diocese will contribute 100% of costs up to the threshold level and 20% of the costs between the threshold and £10,000.

The amount of the threshold is determined by the number of employees you have - for claims for members of clergy the threshold is £1,000.00, for claims for employees of ODBF the threshold is £500.00 and for ODBE is nil.

Any balance above £10,000 will normally be met by Access to Work. The maximum amount of grant awarded per claim is capped. For a grant awarded or reviewed in the 2022/2023 tax year, the cap is £65,180.00.

## **Review, renew and reconsider.**

After the first year, Access to Work will review your individual circumstances and the support you receive to assess if continued or further funding is needed. If you need the funding, you should continue to receive it.

Access to Work will contact you 12 weeks before your support is due to end. If you would like the support to continue you will need to [apply to renew your Access to Work application](#).

If your support requirements change you need to tell Access to Work so your award can be reviewed and updated. If your job role has changed, you can ask for your award to be reviewed. This can take place as many times as your situation changes.

If you change employers, you may be able to transfer equipment to your new employer. You cannot automatically transfer awards for support workers or travel. You would need to contact the Access to Work team to discuss your new arrangements.

If you do not agree with your Access to Work award you cannot appeal against the decision, but you can ask for it to be reconsidered by a different Access to Work Adviser. If you have a complaint about the service you have received from Access to Work staff, you can use the [DWP complaints procedure](#).