

Employing a disabled person will not cost you any extra if you use the government funded Access to Work scheme. Have you ever thought of offering a job to a disabled person but been put off by the extra costs involved?

The Access to Work scheme is there to create a 'level playing field' which enables disabled people to compete with non-disabled people in the employment market by meeting all the additional costs associated with employing a disabled person. Here's what you need to know:

What does Access to Work cover?

- Travel to and from work
- Travel needs within work
- Support workers/communicators/readers
- Equipment
- Adaptations to the working environment

Who is eligible for help?

Any disabled person who:

- is in paid employment
- is unemployed and needing support with job interviews
- has a confirmed start date for a new job

The person must be a UK resident and the job must be in the UK. Note that employees of central government departments and employees of the Department for Work and Pensions cannot get funding through Access to Work, but can still request advice. Adjustments should then be funded through your department's running costs.

How does it work?

The Disability Employment Adviser at your local Job Centre will be able to put you in touch with the Access to Work team. The team can also be contacted directly at the details below. The employee will need to contact Access to Work themselves.

New applications for Access to Work support and ongoing payments are now dealt with by the Glasgow office. They are on tel: 0141 950 5327, minicom 0845 602 5850, or email atwosu.glasgow@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk.

A form will be sent out for the employee to fill in and return, including details of the employee's line manager or other appropriate contact within the business. If necessary Access to Work will arrange for an assessment of the employee's needs. The required support is costed and agreed. At this point the required support, equipment or adaptations can be bought in by you and the costs claimed back from Access to Work.

Meet Jane

Jane works as a manager at Breakthrough UK, a small business employing 38 people.

"I have a visual impairment. Access to Work has funded a large computer monitor, magnification software, an adapted keyboard and a video magnifier (CCTV) which helps me read standard print. Because I don't drive due to my impairment, Access to Work refunds the cost of taxis when I need to go out and about as part of my job. I also get taxis to and from the train station each working day and these costs are refunded. Access to Work has enabled me to do my job and it hasn't cost my employers a penny!"



Top tips

Don't delay or you might have to pay! - All additional costs are funded for new posts. Once an employee has been in post for more than 6 weeks the rules change and you may have to pay something towards equipment and adaptations. Support workers and travel are always fully funded.

Start the ball rolling as soon as you agree a start date.- Some support and adjustments can take a bit of time to put in place so don't wait until your employee has started work.

Set up a financial mechanism – You need to establish a way to meet the costs up front without arguing over budgets. Access to Work refunds claims promptly so it shouldn't affect your cash flow. If money is an issue, negotiating with Access to Work may mean they can pay some costs directly to the supplier.

Finding it difficult to get good workers?

Only about 50% of working age disabled people are in employment compared to 81% of non-disabled people. Many disabled people have valuable skills and experience to offer. They just need to be given a chance to show what they can do. So, why not reach out to all that untapped talent and let the government take the financial strain?

For more information on Access to Work and other issues relating to employing disabled people, please contact the Independent Employment Advocacy Centre on:
Tel: **0161 273 5412** (voice), **0161 273 5727** (answerphone minicom),
Email advocacy@breakthrough-uk-co.uk.

Further good practice information is available online at
www.breakthrough-uk.co.uk.