### What is Access to Work?

Access to work is a government funded scheme and forms an important part of supporting your learning needs, helping you to achieve your full potential throughout your training and will fund important IT equipment and other individual requirements.

Access to Work can help you stay in work if you have a physical or mental health condition or disability.

The support you get will depend on your needs. Through Access to Work, you can apply for:

* A grant to help pay for practical support with your work.
* Support with managing your mental health at work.
* Money to pay for communication support at job interviews.

You may also be supported through the Access to Work process to develop a bespoke workplace support plan, sometimes alongside your employer on suggested reasonable adjustments your employer could make.

Examples of common assistance from Access to Work to develop a support plan include:

* Flexible working patterns to accommodate changes in mood and impact of medication.
* Providing a mentor to give additional support at work.
* Arranging additional time to complete certain tasks.
* Providing additional training.
* Regular meetings between you and your employee to talk about your concerns.
* Changes to your workloads, such as reduced hours or less days.

### What can an Access to Work grant fund?

Access to Work could give you a grant to help pay for things like:

* BSL interpreters, lip speakers or note takers.
* Neurodiversity specific coaching.
* Adaptations to your vehicle so you can get to work.
* Taxi fares to work or a support worker if you cannot use public transport.
* A support worker or job coach to help you in your workplace.
* Your workplace can include your home if you work from there some or all of the time.

It does not matter how much you earn. If you get an Access to Work grant, it will not affect any other benefits you get and you will not have to pay it back.

It is important to note that Access to Work provides a grant and doesn’t provide the support directly but may instead work with your employer or a 3rd party service provider and covers the costs (your employer may be asked to contribute towards some of the costs). You or your employer may need to pay some costs up front and claim them back later.

### What cannot be funded by Access to Work?

Access to Work will not pay for reasonable adjustments. These are the changes your employer must legally make to support you to do your job.

However, Access to Work can advise your employer if changes should be made as reasonable adjustments.

Employers must make reasonable adjustments to make sure workers with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions, are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs. This applies to all workers, including trainees, apprentices, contract workers and business partners.

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 their equipment, for instance providing a special keyboard if they have arthritis.
* Allowing employees who become disabled to make a phased return to work, including flexible hours or part-time working.
* Offering employees training opportunities, recreation and refreshment facilities.

### How much funding can Access to Work provide?

The level of the funding you may be granted depends on:

* Your employment status.
* How long you have been in your job.
* The type of help you need.

Access to Work will normally pay all the applicable cost if any of these apply to you:

* You have been in a job for less than 6 weeks.
* You need funding for a support worker, travel to work or interviews, communication support at interviews.

If you apply for Access to Work after you have been in your training post for more than six weeks, your employing trust may need to contribute towards the cost of things paid for by Access to Work.

### How do I know if I am eligible for Access to Work?

For a full and up to date list of eligibility criteria, please see the [Access to Work website](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/eligibility).

### Can I apply for Access to Work if I am out of training?

You can still apply for an Access to Work assessment if you are out of training for any reason, including is you are on sick leave or parental leave. However, you will need to ask your employing trust to approve the assessment.

### Who do I need to notify if I plan on making an application?

Access to Work may need to visit your workplace to understand your workplace environment so please ensure your Educational Supervisor and Training Programme Director are aware.

Your employing trust’s HR Workforce Advisor should help facilitate the Access to Work process in line with local trust employment guidelines.

Sharing information about your disability or condition and advocating for your support can be a daunting prospect. There is no right or wrong way of approaching it because it will depend on the nature of your disability, your relationship with your employer, the reason for support, and many other factors.

If it helps, you can show your employer this [Access to Work eligibility letter](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/632895/Access-to-Work-eligibility-letter.pdf) to outline what Access to Work is and what might be required of them in the process.

If you are still worried, we would recommend viewing Diversity and Ability’s [NHS video series,](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLo5iLf3OQ5iuUgQMk8X6yyRXCLnX31Al5) where they talk through all things disclosure and discuss how useful accessing the support can be.

### How do I apply for Access to Work?

The application process is completed online, via the [Access to Work website](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/apply).

You can also apply by telephone or request a copy of the application form in an alternative format, by contacting the [Access to Work Helpline](#_How_do_I).

### What information do I need to hand when I am applying for Access to Work?

When you apply for Access to Work you will need to provide the following information:

* Your contact details.
* Your employing trust’s workplace address and postcode.
* The name of a workplace contact who can confirm you work there, who will not be contacted without your permission. You will also need to provide their email address or work phone number. To see the workplace contact you should use for your employing trust, please see the [section below](#_Who_do_I).
* Information about how your condition affects your work and what support you think you need.

For further supportive guidance on submitting an application, we provide a list of recommended sources [further in this document](#_Where_can_I). This includes resources that provide a list of the Access to Work application questions and guidance on their completion. We would encourage you to review this guidance in advance of submitting your application.

### Who should I put down as my workplace contact?

Please see [Appendix I](#_Appendix_I_–_1) for the contact name and email address for your employing trust that you should provide in the application form when asked for a workplace contact.

### Will I need to provide supporting evidence?

In most cases, Access to Work will not ask to see evidence to support your claim. However, in some cases they may do so. For example, if you are disabled or have a disability, learning difference or health condition (including the long-term effects of COVID-19 and/or a mental health condition) and experience barriers in travelling to work, Access to Work may ask for a letter from your doctor or consultant to decide if you are eligible for Travel to Work support. This can happen after you’ve submitted your application as part of the assessment process.

### What happens after I submit my application?

Someone from Access to Work will contact you to talk about your application.

If phone calls are difficult for you (for example, because you’re deaf or hard of hearing), you can ask for all communication to be by email instead.

The person who contacts you may ask:

* For more information about your work and/or your condition.
* For permission to speak to your employer.
* To arrange for an assessor to call you or view your workplace by video call or in person - to find out what changes might help.
* You’ll get a letter with a decision and explanation. It will tell you how much your grant will be and what it should pay for.

Your application should be a treated as a priority if you are due to start a new training programme in the next 4 weeks. If this scenario applies to you and you have not received a response to your application within one week of applying, please call the [Access to Work Helpline.](#_How_do_I)

If you are already in a training post, please be aware that it can take up to 12 weeks to get an assessment.

Access to Work grants are time limited. You will need to [renew your Access to Work grant](#_How_do_I_1) before it ends if you use it to pay for ongoing support (for example, a support worker).

### How will I be assessed for support?

Once Access to Work have all your evidence and information, they will authorise a workplace needs assessment, also known as a holistic workplace assessment.

This involves an assessor either visiting you in the workplace or speaking with you over the phone, depending on your needs.

The assessor will ask you lots of questions to help them establish the barriers you face and the types of support that could enable you in the workplace. They will then create a report of all their recommendations for you. This will be called your needs assessment report, or holistic workplace assessment report. Your assessor will send this back to your Access to Work advisor for evaluation.

You and your employer will then receive a letter which states what funding you will be awarded.

### What will happen during the assessment?

Your assessment isn’t a test or exam for you; it’s about working out what support will work best for you.

It will be confidential and conducted in a relaxed, informal and supportive environment by assessors with specialist experience supporting disabled people in the workplace. You will have the opportunity to talk through your needs, your past experiences, and any strategies you’ve developed to address challenges.

Once your assessor has identified the challenges you face, they will propose the support that could benefit you.

The challenges may include, but are not limited to:

* Reading printed material
* Writing, such as writing emails or longer written work
* Taking notes in meetings or appointments
* Speaking such as using a phone, face-to-face or in groups
* Hearing
* Practical aspects of your job
* Accessing essential resources such as reference documents or case reports
* Communication
* Social situations

Assessments may take up to two hours but are often completed sooner.

### Do I need to bring anything to the assessment?

The assessment will either take place by phone or in your workplace. It may be helpful to make a short list of things you find challenging, so you remember to discuss them during your assessment.

You might want to consider:

* What kind of support did you receive at university? If you receive(d) DSA support, it may be helpful to look through your DSA needs assessment report and have it with you.
* Is there something you’ve struggled with in the past but never had addressed?
* Are there aspects of your training or clinical role that are new to you, or you might struggle with?
* What kind of work do you do on a daily basis? What do you find takes you a long time, or makes you feel stressed?
* If your assessment is held face-to-face, your assessor may ask to see your working set-up such as your desk, chair and office environment.

### What do I do if I disagree with my application decision?

If you disagree with the decision, call the [Access to Work Helpline](#_How_do_I) to ask someone to reconsider your application.

You can also call the helpline if you’re unhappy with how your case has been handled or the service you’ve received.

### My application has been approved. How do I organise my support?

There are a few steps to take to ensure you receive all your Access to Work support.

Firstly, you will receive a letter from the Department of Work and Pensions. This will contain your Assessment Report, which details everything you discussed in your assessment, and a letter confirming your grant has been approved. Here’s an [example of that letter](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QSiCZc_mpGKSmV0cu2Uo5ymZbb0vy7eG/view?usp=sharing).

You will need to do the following:

* Keep a note of the support start and end dates, which is on the second page of your letter. Here’s an example of what that will look like. You need to make sure you order all of your equipment and organise your support before the end date listed on your letter. This will ensure your employer is able to claim the funding for your support from Access to Work.
* Wait until you or your employer receive a letter or email from Access to Work containing your claim forms. This is something for your employer to fill out, so you don’t need to worry too much about it, but it’s important you have these forms before you begin arranging your support.

It is then down to you and your employing trust (or other employer) to order/arrange the support. Your employer will need to purchase any equipment and arrange payment for any other support you have been awarded a grant for. You will probably need to liaise with your HR department or equivalent in your employing trust to get this arranged.

The recommendations in your needs assessment are exactly that, recommendations. If there is a product or service provider akin to the one budgeted for in your Access to Work grant, which you would prefer to use, your choice will usually be honoured. You may be able to use these funds towards the product/service of your choice. However, it is likely that you will need to “price-match” as the cost may not be reimbursed if it is above the original quote Access to Work agreed. It is always worth checking with Access to Work before purchasing anything.

### How is expenditure reclaimed from the grant?

Your employing trust will need to contact Access to Work for reimbursement of most of the costs, but they will be expected to make some contribution on your behalf:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Organisation Size** | **Expected Contribution** |
| 1-49 Employees | £0 |
| 50-249 Employees | First £500, then 20% of anything up to £10,000 |
| 250+ Employees | First £1,000, then 20% of anything up to £10,000 |

Any costs over £10,000 are covered by Access to Work. They will also reimburse your employer for some support in full, no matter the size of your organisation (for example, for strategy coaching and skills training).

Support is usually provided in the workplace so that it remains relevant to your work environment and your day-to-day tasks. You will be able to book sessions with your coach/trainer at times that suit you, whether that’s during the working day or after work.

### What happens if my employing trust changes?

You may at some point move between two NHS trusts, whether that is during your foundation years or your career. When moving between trusts, you can transfer your adjustments and/or equipment with you.

If you are in your F1 or F2 years and know you will be moving between trusts, you should discuss with your supervisor(s) and HR administrator(s) as soon as possible to put a strategy in place for navigating those transitions. Whilst any Access to Work support your trust paid for is their property, transferring the property between two NHS employers should be a common reasonable adjustment to support you in your training. Due to the tight timings during your F1 and F2 years, getting a strategy in place ahead of time will help ensure you do not face any challenges during your transition.

Please note that awards for support workers or travel support provided by Access to Work cannot automatically transfer between your employers, and you must contact Access to Work to discuss putting in new support arrangements.

### How do I renew my grant?

You will need to renew your Access to Work grant before it ends if you use it to pay for ongoing support (for example, a support worker).

Your initial decision letter will say when your grant ends. You can apply to renew it 12 weeks before this date.

You can apply to renew your grant [online](https://www.get-disability-work-support.service.gov.uk/renew/are-you-a-civil-servant) or by phone by contacting the [Access to Work Helpline](#_How_do_I).

Please ensure that you [check that you are still eligible](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/eligibility) for a grant before you apply for renewal.

You’ll need to give your unique reference number, if you know it.

If you need the renewal form in other formats, such as braille, large print or audio CD, call the [Access to Work Helpline](#_How_do_I).

### What do I do if my circumstances change?

You must tell Access to Work by [calling the Helpline](#_How_do_I) if your circumstances change.

This could be if, for example:

* Your name, address, contact details or workplace address changes.
* You change jobs or your employing trust changes.
* Your disability, illness or health condition changes.

### How do I contact the Access to Work Helpline?

The Access to Work helpline is open on Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm and can be contacted via the following methods:

* Telephone: 0800 121 7479
* Textphone: 0800 121 7579
* [Relay UK](https://www.relayuk.bt.com/) (if you cannot hear or speak on the phone): 18001 then 0800 121 7479
* British Sign Language (BSL) [video relay service](https://connect.interpreterslive.co.uk/vrs?ilc=DWP) if you’re on a computer - find out how to [use the service on mobile or tablet](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oELNMfAvDxw)

Please see the GOV.UK website to [find out about call charges](https://www.gov.uk/call-charges).

### Where can I get further information about Access to Work?

You can find more information about the Access to Work scheme by viewing the [Access to Work factsheet for customers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet/access-to-work-factsheet-for-customers).

You may find the following organisations’ application guidance helpful:

* [Disability Arts](https://disabilityarts.online/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Access-to-Work-Online-Application-Guide.pdf)
* [Diversity and Ability](https://diversityandability.com/nhs-toolkit/health-professionals-atw/)

The following organisations also provide specific advice and guidance for certain conditions, which may be applicable to you and useful to review in advance of applying:

* [ADHD UK](https://adhduk.co.uk/access-to-work/)

## Appendix I – Employing Trust Workplace Contacts for Access to Work Applications

| **Trust** | **Name** | **Email Address** | **Role** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Airedale NHS Foundation Trust | Sally Davis | Sally.davis22@nhs.net | Postgraduate Placement Manager |
| Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust | Becky Turner | b.turner5@nhs.net | Medical Staffing Manager |
| Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust | Elizabeth Hall | elizabeth.hall@bdct.nhs.uk  | Medical Training and Medical Education Manager |
| Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust | Becky Colwill | becky.colwill@cht.nhs.uk | Medical Education Manager |
| Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust | Jenny Blackman | jennifer.blackman2@nhs.net | Medical Education Supervisor |
| Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust | Philippa Croft | Philippa.croft@nhs.net | Deputy Medical Education Manager |
| Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust | Laura Jardine | laura.jardine2@nhs.net | HR Manager |
| Humber NHS Foundation Trust | Lisa Arnold | lisa.arnold2@nhs.net | Medical Workforce Lead |
| Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust | Dr Alex Bailey  | alex.bailey@nhs.net | Director Postgraduate Medical Education (DPGME) - Operations Lead |
| Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust | Leanne Wilson | l.wilson11@nhs.net | Head of Medical Education and Revalidation |
| Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust | Laura McKenna | laura.mckenna11@nhs.net | Professional Support and Wellbeing Team service manager |
| Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust | Vicky Consterdine | vicky.consterdine@nhs.net | Medical Staffing Manager |
| Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust | Andy Jackson | andy.jackson11@nhs.net | HR Business Partner |
| Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust | Duncan Marr | Duncan.Marr1@nhs.net  | Medical Directorate and Medical Education Manager |
| Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust | Amanda Feast | amanda.feast@nhs.net | HR Advisor |
| Sheffield Health & Social Care NHS Foundation Trust | Jo Wilson | Jo.Wilson@shsc.nhs.uk | Medical Education and Staffing Manager |
| Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust | Lisa Dransfield | lisa.dransfield1@nhs.net | Medical Education Manager |
| South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust | Caroline Brown | caroline.brown59@nhs.net  | Medical Staffing Officer |
| South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust | Helen Cherry | helen.cherry@swyt.nhs.uk  | Medical Staffing Manager  |
| Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust | Dimitra Papakosta  | dimitrapapakosta@nhs.net  | Medical Staffing Manager |
| The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust | Medical Workforce Team | rgh-tr.medical.staffing@nhs.net  | N/A |
| York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust | York Education Team | yhs-tr.mecyork@nhs.net  | N/A |
| Scarborough Education Team | yhs-tr.pgme.scarborough@nhs.net | N/A |