

Access to Work

Access to Work is a scheme run by the Department for Work and Pensions. If your working life is affected by a disability or a health condition that is likely to last for 12 months or more you might be able to get help from Access to Work. Claire shares her experience of using the scheme:

Claire

“When I was 26 I prolapsed a disc in my lower back which left me with ongoing lower back pain. After about 18 months off work and still in pain my doctors told me that there was not going to be a ‘quick fix’ and that I should try to learn to adapt to my life with some pain in it. Although this was hard to hear it was a relief to know I didn’t have to be in limbo anymore. I could try to get on with things and get back to work. I missed seeing my colleagues, feeling part of the team.

But how could I possibly go back to work when I had to sit at a desk all day? My manager suggested talking to someone at Access to Work to see if we could work around my back problems. After speaking to them, an ergonomics expert came to see me in the office to see what my needs were. She asked me questions about my role in the office and the tasks I did. She measured my height and took other measurements that would help her to work out which chair and desk would be best for me. By asking questions about my role and the difficulties I had with sitting and standing she was able to make suggestions about equipment that could help me. She also made suggestions about how my employer could help, and the things that I could do to help myself at work, like not sitting through the pain, and changing position and stretching.

Access to Work helped my employer get me a height-adjustable desk so that I can do my work sitting down and standing up. I think that it has been the key to my return, without it I don’t think I would have managed to get back to my job. I’ve been back for about a year now. I am so pleased to be back. My back still hurts but I’ve learned about managing it, and I feel more like myself again because I can take part in life like I used to.”

Could Access to Work help you?

If you are in a job, about to start in a job, or are self-employed, you may be eligible for help from Access to Work. As well as giving advice and information to people with disabilities and employees, Access to Work pays a grant, through the Jobcentre Plus, towards any extra employment costs that result from a disability.

How are your needs assessed?

The first step in the process involves you contacting Access to Work directly. If you are eligible you will be sent a form requesting details about your job. Once the application form is received and reviewed an Access to Work advisor will call you and your employer to discuss the support you need or an assessor will visit your work place. To ensure you get the most out of any assessment think about all the aspects of your job beforehand. Sometimes it may be necessary to get specialist advice, as highlighted in our case study. If this is the case a confidential report will be sent to your advisor. A report will be sent to your employer outlining the results of the assessment and the assessor can produce a formal document, or you

can supply a letter if needed, containing the necessary information, for example, what you require, who manufactures it, how much it costs, etc. Once your needs have been assessed it is usually your employer (or you if you are self-employed) who will arrange to obtain the agreed support and then claim back the grant from Access to Work.

The scheme pays a percentage of the total cost of supporting you depending on how long you have been in employment, what support you need, and the nature of your employment.

How to apply

There are three regional contact centres that deal with claims for Access to Work. Alternatively you can speak to a Disability Employment Advisor at your local Jobcentre Plus.

Regional Contact Centres:

London

Manages claims from south east England, London, and the east of England

Jobcentre Plus

Access to Work Operational Support Unit

Nine Elms Lane

London SW95 9BH

Telephone: 020 8426 3110

Textphone: 020 8426 3133

Fax: 020 8426 3134

Email: atwosu.london@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

Cardiff

Manages claims from south west England, Wales, West Midlands, and East Midlands

Jobcentre Plus

Access to Work Operational Support Unit

Alexandra House

377 Cowbridge Road East

Cardiff CF5 1WU

Telephone: 02920 423 291

Textphone: 02920 644 886

Fax: 02920 423 342

Email: atwosu.cardiff@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

Glasgow

Manages claims from Scotland, north west England, north east England, Yorkshire and Humberside

Jobcentre Plus

Access to Work Operational Support Unit

Anniesland JCP

Baird Street

Glasgow G90 8AN

Telephone: 0141 950 5327

Textphone: 0845 6025850

Fax: 0141 950 5265

Email: atwosu.glasgow@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

For more information

visit: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Disabledpeople/Emplimentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG_4000347