



# Access to Work: Guidance for Employees

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## Overview

This document has been created to provide guidance for disabled people about the Access to Work scheme. It has been co-produced with:

- Occupational Therapists.
- Peer Advocates.
- People with disabilities or long-term health conditions.
- People who are neurodivergent.
- Employers.

It aims to help you understand what Access to Work is, what to expect from the process, and what we've learned from the lived experiences of colleagues and other disabled people who've gone through it.

While this information is based on official government guidance, we also know from real experiences that the process can sometimes take longer, and that navigating it can feel complicated. We hope this guide helps you feel more informed, prepared, and supported.

Some information in this guide is based on official guidance from the UK Government and Disability Rights UK. Links are provided at the end for further detail.

## What is Access to Work?

Access to Work is a government-funded scheme designed to help remove barriers to employment for disabled people or those with physical or mental health conditions. It can provide financial support and practical help so that you can start or stay in work.

Support can include things like:

- Specialist equipment or assistive technology.
- Travel-to-work support if you can't use public transport.
- Communication support (e.g. BSL interpreter).
- A job coach or mental health support.
- Workplace adjustments not covered by your employer.

You can apply whether you are:

- About to start a job or apprenticeship.
- Already working.
- Self-employed.

## Is there a long waiting list?

The government suggests that most people should hear back from Access to Work within 12 weeks. However, we know from people with lived experience that waiting times can be much longer.

Many employees have found the waiting period frustrating, especially when trying to access support that is essential to do their job. Applying as early as possible, particularly before starting a new role, can reduce delays.

## What we know from lived experience

- People with complex needs often experience longer delays.
- Once your case is assigned to an adviser, things usually move along more smoothly.
- It is the employee's responsibility to submit claims and respond to queries which can be time consuming.
- Keeping detailed notes of every phone call and email can be helpful, especially if you need to challenge a decision.

## What if I don't agree with my assessment outcome?

If you receive your Access to Work decision and don't agree with it, you have the right to ask for it to be reconsidered.

### Step 1: Ask for a Reconsideration

- You must do this **within 28 calendar days** of the date on your decision letter.
- You can ask for a reconsideration in writing or by phone. However, it's best to do it in writing so you have a record.
- Include details about why you disagree and any extra evidence that might help your case. For example:

*"I believe the recommended equipment doesn't meet my needs because... I would like my case to be reconsidered based on this information."*

### Step 2: Making a Complaint

- If you are still unhappy after reconsideration, you can make a formal complaint about how your case was handled.
- Complaints must be made within six months of the issue you're complaining about.
- Contact the Access to Work Complaints Team.
- If you remain dissatisfied, you can escalate your complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman via your MP.
- You can find your local MP and their contact details on the [UK Parliament website](#).

**Note:** The complaint process can be emotionally and mentally challenging. Consider getting support from your manager, HR team, trade union, or disability employment adviser to help you through it.

## What to do if your condition changes

Sometimes your health, disability, or mental health condition may change. It might improve, worsen, or affect you in new ways. If so, it is important to let Access to Work know, because your support might need to be updated.

### Steps to follow:

1. Contact the Access to Work helpline as soon as possible.
  - a. Telephone: 0800 121 7479.
  - b. [Relay UK \(if you cannot hear or speak on the phone\)](#) 18001 then 0800 121 7479.
  - c. [British Sign Language \(BSL\) video relay service](#) if you're on a computer. [Find out how to use this service on a mobile or tablet.](#)
2. Explain what has changed and how it affects your ability to do your job.
3. Provide updated medical or professional information if available (e.g. doctor's note, occupational health report).
4. Request a review or reassessment of your support. Access to Work can adjust your funding, equipment, or support arrangements if needed.
5. Keep records of all communication, as you would with applications or complaints.

**Tip:** Changes to your condition do not mean you will automatically get extra support. The adviser will need evidence and may reassess your needs. Acting promptly helps prevent delays in receiving adjustments.

## Top tips from people who have been through it

- Apply as soon as possible, even before your first day of work if possible.
- Keep a record of all emails, letters, and call logs.
- Agree with your employer what adjustments can be made whilst waiting for Access to Work support.
- Sharing letters from health professionals or services your use can help support your claim.
- Chase politely but consistently.
- Contact your MP or disability employment adviser if you are not happy with the Access to Work service.

## How to apply

You can apply online or by phone.

Online: [Apply for an Access to Work grant – UK Government](#)

Phone: 0800 121 7479.

Textphone: 0800 121 7579.

You'll need basic details about your job, your employer, and your condition. After applying, an adviser may contact you for an assessment. This can be by phone, video, or in person.

## Useful links

[Access to Work website](#)

[Access to Work complaints procedure](#)

[Information about Access to Work from Disability Rights UK](#)

[A plain English guide about Access to Work for neurodivergent people in the UK](#)