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Access to Work scheme

Ian Lawther discusses what the Access to Work scheme is and how disabled workers have been affected by the withdrawal of funding to civil service departments.

Members may be aware of the Access to Work scheme, administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), that provided help for people to stay in work if they have a disability, illness or health condition that means they need support to do their job. However, since 1 April 2022, all government departments (some larger departments were already doing this) became responsible for arranging workplace assessments and adjustments for their employees (civil servants).

Depending on need, the employer can help people who have:

- a physical disability, for example if you're hard of hearing or use a wheelchair,
- a learning disability or related condition,
- 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.

You can get support to manage your mental health at work, which might include:

- a tailored plan to help you get or stay in work,

- one-to-one sessions with a mental health professional.

You do not need to be diagnosed with a condition to seek assistance and it does not matter how much you earn or if you receive most benefits.

Commonly, the Access to Work scheme was used by people to obtain help getting to and from home and their place of work where needed. e.g., by taxi. From 1 April 2022 all civil service departments have been required to fund this type of assistance.

The provision of equipment for disabled people covered by the duty, under the Equality Act 2010, to make reasonable adjustments has always been the employer's responsibility.

If assistance is needed, members should check their departmental guidance and speak with their manager or human resources (HR) team for advice in the first instance.

Members should consult their local PCS union representative for advice if necessary.