



Dyslexia Assessment and Consultancy

Email: info@workingwithdyslexia.com Telephone: 020 7582 6117

ACCESS TO WORK

The purpose of the scheme and how it works in practice

Katherine Kindersley

Access to Work is a government scheme which provides advice and practical assistance to disabled people who experience difficulties in the workplace. The scheme covers self-employed people as well as those in full-time or part-time work.

According to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), a person is regarded as 'disabled' if they have everyday (not workplace-specific) difficulties with, for example:

- memory or the ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- physical co-ordination

Consequently, both dyslexic and dyspraxic people are covered by the scheme. Everyday difficulties which these groups could encounter include:

- understanding spoken or written instructions
- reading text or numbers accurately
- writing a cheque or a letter
- organising thoughts
- planning a course of action and carrying it out
- driving a car

The DDA recognises that a person's coping strategies may break down under stress and that they may become inefficient if, for example, they have to work to a tight deadline.

The Access to Work scheme offers a grant towards any extra employment costs which are incurred because of a person's disability. These could include cost of IT equipment and specialist training. The support supplements the normal responsibilities of the employer to make 'reasonable adjustments' as required by the Disability Discrimination Act.

To be eligible for the scheme you normally need to provide evidence of your dyslexia and/or dyspraxia, in the form of an assessment report. Access to Work will not pay for this initial diagnostic assessment, but your employer may be willing to do so.

The second step is to arrange a workplace needs assessment (WNA). You can do this in two ways: either through your local Access to Work Centre, (which charges no fee) or through a private dyslexia organisation which specializes in workplace consultancy. In either case, the resulting report can be used to apply for Access to Work grants for equipment and training.

The application is made by you personally, not by your employer. If you are unsure about how to fill in the application form, you can get detailed advice on this either from your assessor or from the Access to Work Centre.

Once Access to Work has agreed the recommendations made in the Workplace Needs Assessment, they will write to the employee and the employer. The employer would then purchase the equipment and the necessary training and claim the agreed amount back from Access to Work.

The WNA should specify your needs as regards:

- adjustments your employer should make in workplace practice
- IT equipment
- IT training
- a detailed workplace skills and job coaching programme (typically about 30 hours) to be carried out by a specialist in adult dyslexia over a period of several months

Cautionary notes

- If your WNA report does NOT include the last of these points (the detailed job skills training programme), contact Access to Work and request that they fund a supplementary assessment with an adult dyslexia specialist who can devise such a programme. It is an essential part of any support package.
- The training programme needs to be orientated towards the workplace skills needed in the specific job, as Access to Work will not fund general literacy tuition. It could include, for example, help with writing letters and reports, filling in time sheets, taking Minutes at meetings, contributing to meetings, organising a work schedule.
- Sometimes IT training is delivered in one session lasting three or four hours. Many dyslexic people are not able to profit from training delivered in this intensive way. If you feel you have not properly understood the instruction you have been given regarding IT equipment or assistive software, contact Access to Work to request further training.

Contact details of the local Access to Work teams are to be found on the front page of the link below.

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG_4000347

See 'Training Manuals for Assistive Software' for details of our illustrated training manuals to accompany assistive software training.

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katherine@workingwithdyslexia.com