

ADULT AUTISM IN DAILY LIFE · 9.2

Access to Work for Autistic Adults: What You Can Actually Get

Access to Work is a UK government scheme that funds support for disabled employees and self-employed people. For autistic adults it can pay for support worker hours, communication support, sensory equipment and specialist coaching. The shape of awards often differs from the ADHD picture.

FOR

Autistic adults at work

AUDIENCE AGE

18+

REVIEWED

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PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

Access to Work for Autistic Adults: What You Can Actually Get

What the scheme is

- **Government-funded support for disabled people at work.** Run by the Department for Work and Pensions. Open to employees, self-employed people, apprentices, those starting a new job and those moving into work from unemployment. Not means-tested; income does not affect eligibility.
- **Autism is an explicit qualifying condition.** A formal diagnosis is required for most awards. A diagnostic report or letter from your assessor is the usual evidence. Self-identification is not normally sufficient.
- **The grant goes to providers, not to you.** DWP pays support workers, equipment suppliers and coaches directly, based on a recommendation report from an Access to Work assessor. Employers may contribute a small share for larger awards.

What gets funded for autistic adults

- **Support worker hours.** A defined number of hours per week or month for travel, complex meetings, transitions, or structured help with specific parts of the job. Less commonly funded for ADHD; more central in the autism picture. Quality varies; ask about autism experience specifically.
- **Communication support.** For interviews, induction periods, training events or specific meetings where social communication is genuinely difficult. A communication professional, a job coach, or structured assistance with the meeting itself.
- **Sensory equipment.** Noise-cancelling headphones, ear defenders, weighted lap pads, daylight bulbs, keyboard or mouse adaptations, additional monitors. Standard office furniture is an employer duty under DSE, not Access to Work.
- **Autism-informed coaching and workplace assessment.** Coaching exists but is less central than the ADHD coaching market. An Access to Work assessment can also include a workplace assessment that recommends environmental and process changes; this sits alongside the employer's Equality Act 2010 duty.

How to apply

- **Apply online or by phone via gov.uk.** No application fee. An assessor (usually external to DWP) is appointed and produces a recommendation report after a meeting with you, sometimes with the employer. The recommendation goes to DWP for a funding decision.
- **Be specific and bring concrete examples.** 'Six hours of support worker time per week, primarily for travel to and within client meetings' is stronger than 'support with social situations'. Bring recent situations where the job has been difficult and what helped or did not.
- **Name masking and the sensory environment openly.** Many autistic adults perform well in interviews and assessments. The assessor needs to understand the cost of that performance. The Hull et al. 2017 masking research is the kind of background that can usefully be referenced.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to your GP if work is being significantly affected and autism has not been formally assessed; an Access to Work application generally requires a confirmed diagnosis. Private adult autism assessment with a CQC-registered provider is a legitimate parallel route where the NHS wait is not workable. For application support, the National Autistic Society and Citizens Advice both offer free help. Seek urgent help via 111, 999 or A&E for any acute mental health crisis or significant safety concern.

SOURCES

DWP Access to Work guidance and statistics; Equality Act 2010; NICE CG142; National Autistic Society

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
CQC-registered. Bedford Consulting Rooms, 4 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3NF.

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