

BRIEFING NOTE

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ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A SENSORY IMPAIRMENT IN APPRENTICESHIPS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The government plans to create 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020. Within this number, we should expect to see at least 4,000 more young people with sensory impairment in apprenticeships.
- 1.2 This document sets out the arrangements for providing additional funding to support young people with a sensory impairment who are apprentices. Its main purpose is to ensure professionals involved in planning and supporting the transitions of young people with sensory impairment from school are aware of the additional funding available to help ensure a successful start to an apprenticeship and its successful completion.
- 1.3 There are two sources of additional funding to support the participation of young people with a sensory impairment :
 - a) Access to Work¹ (AtW) from the Department of Work and Pensions to fund access to the work element of the funding
 - b) Additional learner support funding from the Skills Funding Agency² to support the training element of the apprenticeship

2. Funding access to work

Access to work grant for disabled people

Eligibility for AtW

- 2.1 AtW funding is paid by the Department of Work and Pensions to help disabled people start working and remain in work. To be eligible the disability must either:
 - affect the person's ability to do the job or
 - mean that there are additional work related costs e.g. special equipment, communication support, implications of inability to use public transport
- 2.2 An application for AtW funding can be made if the young person:
 - has an interview for an apprenticeship
 - has secured an apprenticeship
 - is already in an apprenticeship
- 2.3 Many young people with a sensory impairment should be eligible for AtW.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/skills-funding-agency/about>

Use of AtW and level of funding

- 2.4 The level of AtW grant depends on circumstances. The amount of funding is capped at £40,800 pa. Examples of what the grant can be used for include:
- Equipment, software or adaptations to equipment used
 - Training in the use of equipment or software
 - Fares to work if the person cannot use public transport
 - Support workers (e.g. communication support)
 - Disability awareness training for work colleagues
 - Job coaches to help disabled people with transition to employment
- 2.5 AtW can cover all of the agreed costs for anyone starting a new apprenticeship. For anyone who has been employed for six weeks or more, the employer may have to help pay some of these costs. How much they pay depends on the size of the company.³ AtW will not pay for the insurance or repair of equipment.

Applying for AtW⁴

- 2.6 Unlike traineeships⁵ or supported internships where a teacher or careers adviser can make the application, the young apprentice is required to make the application him or herself.
- The application can be made once the young person has secured an apprenticeship. It is probable that in many circumstances, the young person will need support from a professional supporting their transition to do this. The young person would need to contact their Access to Work contact centre.⁶ The young person will be sent an application form. They may require assistance in completing it.
- 2.7 If the young person requires communication support at an interview for an apprenticeship, they can apply to AtW when they have secured an interview date. They may need to show proof that they have got an interview (i.e. letter or email confirming interview date). Once the initial assessment has been completed (see §2.11 below) and the AtW adviser has agreed that communication support can be paid for, the young person should liaise with the adviser regarding how the support should be booked and paid for. No funding is available for other forms of support or equipment at interviews.
- 2.8 It is possible for a young person to download an AtW *eligibility letter*⁷ which they can pass on to their employer at an interview. This document explains that the young person is probably eligible for AtW funding and what it can pay for.

³ For more details see the RNIB's briefing on AtW at <http://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-work-and-employment-practical-support/access-work-scheme>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/how-to-claim>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traineeships-programme>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/how-to-claim>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-eligibility-letter-for-employees-and-employers>

AtW Assessment

- 2.9 On receipt of the application, an AtW adviser will contact the young person. An initial assessment is undertaken on the phone, although for young people with a hearing impairment it is possible for the assessment questions to be answered by email. It is important that the young person is supported in thinking about the job, the work and tasks to be undertaken and how their sensory impairment may impact on them. It is likely that the young person will require support during the phone conversation or with the email exchange to ensure their support needs are fully articulated.
- 2.10 Sometimes, the AtW adviser will seek advice from a specialist assessor who will visit the young person and their workplace to be able to fully assess the support requirements. Young people with a sensory impairment will require specialist inputs, and the AtW adviser can use contractors such as the RNIB⁸, Action for Blind People⁹ or Action on Hearing Loss¹⁰ to undertake the assessment. The specialist will provide a confidential written report to the AtW adviser which the young person is able to see.

Claiming the funding

- 2.11 Following the assessment of the apprentice, the employer should receive a letter from the AtW adviser informing them of the approved level of specialist support and equipment and the grant available. The employer would normally arrange the support and be reimbursed by AtW. It is also possible for the Department of Work and Pensions to pay the provider of additional support directly (e.g. a payment directly to a BSL interpreter for supporting a deaf apprentice who requires signed support).
- 2.12 The funding is for a fixed period which can be for 1 year, 2 years or 3 years and then the young person must remember to renew the funding. They will not get a reminder.
- 2.13 If the annual budget allocated to the young person should run out, the young person can contact AtW to ask if the grant agreement can be reviewed to enable them to fully participate in work.

Timescales

- 2.14 There are no set timescales for an AtW assessment. The time taken may depend on circumstances. It is not uncommon for disabled employees to start at work without the level of grant or support being confirmed, so it is important to start the application as soon as the young person secures an interview. If there are delays, it should be possible for the AtW adviser to agree to interim arrangements.

⁸ <http://www.rnib.org.uk/services-we-offer-advice-professionals-employing-blind-or-partially-sighted-person/work-based>

⁹ <https://actionforblindpeople.org.uk/>

¹⁰ <https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/supporting-you/services-and-training-for-businesses/support-people-with-hearing-loss-at-work/communication-and-equipment-at-work/work-based-assessments.aspx>

Further information on Access to Work

2.15 Further information can be found at:

The RNIB's website:

<http://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-work-and-employment-practical-support/access-work-scheme>

Action on Hearing Loss:

<https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/supporting-you/access-to-work.aspx>

Department of Work and Pensions:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-eligibility-letter-for-employees-and-employers>

Disability Rights UK:

<http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/access-work>

Access to Work – Questions for professionals supporting a young person

1. Does the young person you support know about AtW?
2. What help does he or she need to make the application?
3. What information on the young person's needs is held by the service/education establishment which would be helpful to the AtW adviser?
4. What help does the young person need to accurately describe their needs to the AtW adviser?
5. Are young people given the opportunity to experience the communication support or equipment they would use in employment?
6. As part of transitions planning, is it possible to give the young person the opportunity to experience and test the equipment or communication support that they could use when in employment?
7. Could the sensory support service provide VI/MSI/deaf awareness training to the young person's work colleagues which could be funded by AtW, particularly where this is not already available?

3. Funding Education and training

Mainstream funding for all apprentices

3.1 The Skills Funding Agency provides funding to cover the cost of an apprentice's qualification. It is normally paid to the training organisation¹¹ such as an FE college, but also to employers who provide the formal programme of study. The level of funding paid to training providers by the Education Funding Agency is in accordance with the national funding formula developed by the Skills Funding Agency.

The amount of funding provided by the government depends on age:

- a) For apprentices aged 16 to 18, training providers receive all the course cost.¹² Apprenticeship funding supports individuals to progress to higher levels of learning. Individuals who already have a qualification at level 4 or above are only eligible for funding for a higher apprenticeship at level 5 or above. They are not eligible for funding for an intermediate level, advanced level or level 4 higher apprenticeship.
- b) For apprentices aged 19 to 24, training providers will receive half of the course cost from the government. Normally, employers would meet the cost of the other half of the course. Apprentices with high levels of need¹³ who have an EHC Plan or Learning Difficulty Assessment would still have their training funded at 100%.

Levels of apprenticeship

Level name	Level	Equivalent education level
Intermediate level	2	5 A*-C GCSEs
Advanced level	3	2 A level passes
Higher level	4,5,6,7	Foundation degree and above
Degree level	6,7	Bachelor's or Master's degree

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide>

¹¹ <http://findatrainingorganisation.nas.apprenticeships.org.uk/>

¹² The SFA will also fully fund 19- to 24-year-old apprentices starting an apprenticeship framework where the apprentice was: (i) not able to start an apprenticeship framework before their 19th birthday due to exceptional circumstances, including being in custody or having a serious illness or (ii) a former relevant child (care leaver) as defined by the Children Act 1989.

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-25-young-people-with-high-needs-funding-principles-for-2015-to-2016#post-16-study-programmes>

Mainstream arrangements from April 2017

- 3.2 It should be noted that from April 2017, the government intends to change mainstream funding arrangements for new apprentices. This is set out in guidance issued by the Dept of Business Industry and Skills *Apprenticeship Levy: How it will work*¹⁴ (April 2016).
- 3.3 In summary, employers with a pay bill of more than £3 million per year will pay an apprenticeship levy of 0.5% of their annual pay bill. They will have a levy allowance of £15,000 per year to offset against the levy they pay (e.g. the levy sum for an employer with £5m annual pay bill is £25,000 (0.5%) minus the £15,000 levy allowance, which equals a levy payment of £10,000 per year).
- 3.4 Employers will be able to access funding for apprenticeships through a new digital apprenticeship service account, and use this to pay for training and assessment. The government will also provide a mainstream 10% top up.
- 3.5 The digital apprenticeship account would be used by the employer to pay for all of the mainstream training for 19-24 year olds. For 16-18 year olds, employers will pay for the training but receive an additional payment to help meet the extra costs of employing them. However, these changes to mainstream funding should not affect the arrangements for additional learning support described in the next section.
- 3.6 Employers who don't pay the levy won't need to use the digital apprenticeship service until at least 2018.

Additional funding for apprentices with a sensory impairment

- 3.7 The Skills Funding Agency provides additional learning support funding for apprentices to help with learning that affects their ability to continue and complete their apprenticeship. To meet the extra cost of meeting additional needs the provider receives a payment of £150 per month from the Education Funding Agency (EFA). This is for any apprentice who requires additional support from the EFA.
- 3.8 If identified needs cost more than the monthly rate, the provider can claim additional funding (up to £19,000) from the Skills Funding Agency on the *Earnings Adjustment Statement*.¹⁵ this means that the costs are fully funded at no cost to the provider and are met by the EFA.
- 3.9 Should costs exceed £19,000 then the provider can apply¹⁶ to the SFA for exceptional learning support. If agreed, the SFA meets these costs and these are paid to the provider via the EFA.
- 3.10 To obtain the funding the training provider must:
- carry out a thorough assessment to identify the support the apprentice needs
 - agree and record the outcome of the assessment in the learner file
 - deliver support to meet the apprentice's identified needs, and review progress and continuing needs, as appropriate
 - record all outcomes in the learner file and keep evidence of the assessment of the needs
 - report in the Individualised Learner Record¹⁷ that an apprentice has a learning support need associated with an identified learning aim

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/earnings-adjustment-statement-eas-2015-to-2016>

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-exceptional-learning-support-cost-form>

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/individualised-learner-record-ilr>

Further information on funding

Skills Funding Agency:

Common Funding Rules

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-common-funding-rules>

Apprenticeship Standards Funding Rules

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-funding-rules>

Apprenticeship Framework Funding Rules

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-framework-funding-rules>

Education Funding Agency:

16-25 High Needs Funding Principles – Post-16 Study Programmes section

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-25-young-people-with-high-needs-funding-principles-for-2015-to-2016#post-16-study-programmes>

Find an apprenticeship training provider:

<http://findatrainingorganisation.nas.apprenticeships.org.uk/>

Additional learning support funding – Questions for professionals supporting the young person

1. What information held by the service/education establishment needs to be passed to the training provider to enable them to submit a full and thorough assessment of the young person's needs?
2. What advice can be given to the training provider about the additional support and provision required to meet the young person's needs and achieve good outcomes so that the training provider can claim the appropriate level of additional funding?

4. General information on apprenticeships

Apprenticeships – Resources for teachers and advisers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeships-resources-for-teachers-and-advisers>

A parent's guide to apprenticeships

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-parents-guide-to-apprenticeships>

Into Apprenticeships – A Guide for Disabled People by Disability Rights UK

<http://ccskills.org.uk/supporters/advice-research/article/into-apprenticeships-a-guide-for-disabled-people>

The Further Education and Skills – Apprenticeships page on the gov.uk website gives a list of useful information sources

<https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>

SEND Code of Practice 0-25 Years – DfE January 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

- Para 4.46, 4.52 and 4.53 Apprenticeships and the Local Offer
- Para 8.10 Apprenticeships and review of EHC Plans
- Paras 8.31-8.38 Apprenticeships and pathways to employment
- Para 9.20 Apprenticeships and ceasing to maintain an EHC Plan

The NDCS Buzz website for young people who are deaf provides information on apprenticeships and includes young people talking about their experiences

<http://youngpeople.ndcsbuzz.org.uk/infoadvice/ref:I52CBE98DEA17C/>