Introduction

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has recently announced changes to the Access to Work Scheme to give disabled people extra support more easily during the Covid-19 pandemic. These support measures include help with working from home, at the individual’s normal workplace, or a combination of both.

The inclusion of support for disabled colleagues, who now need to work from home due to Covid-19, broadens out the scope of the Government’s Access to Work Scheme and means that Access to Work Advisers will now also work with disabled individuals to assess what equipment and support may be required to help overcome any barriers to working from home.

Below is a summary of the other key changes/extension to provision. However, for more detail, please visit the relevant Government advice pages.

Travel costs

- If an employee cannot use public transport safely because of their disability, funding may be available for extra travel costs. The employee will require the support of their doctor or healthcare professional to access this support
- If an employee has previously been in receipt of funding for travel, which has stopped because they have not been traveling to work during the Covid-19 pandemic, they can start receiving support towards travel when they start travelling to work again

Support Worker

- An employee can continue to use their existing support worker while working from home
- If an employee employs their own support worker and has additional costs for personal protective equipment (PPE), Access to Work may be able to provide funding
- If an employee’s support worker cannot provide that support because they are sick, the employee may still be able to claim payment for them via Access to Work

BSL Interpreting Services

- If an employee uses a BSL interpreter who cannot visit their home, Access to Work can provide funding for remote support services, such as video remote interpreting or British Sign Language interpreting. Assessments
- If an employee needs to have an assessment, it will be carried out by telephone during the coronavirus outbreak. If the employee cannot use the telephone, the employee must contact the organisation arranging the assessment to agree another way to have the assessment

Claiming

- DWP is prioritising making grants for new claims from critical workers, those in the clinically extremely vulnerable group and people due to start work within 4 weeks
- An employee has 9 months to claim for costs. This has increased from 6 months because of coronavirus (Covid-19)
- If an employee cannot get their employer or support worker to sign their claim for costs, they can ask them to send you an email instead
Notifying the DWP of changes

- If an employee has any changes to their circumstances and support needs, during and after the coronavirus outbreak, they must report any changes to the Access to Work helpline.