The Access to Work (AtW) application and assessment processes, from the perspectives of employees and employers.

The adequacy of ongoing support, both in terms of the aids, adaptations and support workers provided through AtW, and the help and advice offered by DWP.

The effectiveness of AtW in supporting people with mental health conditions and learning disabilities.

AtW’s effectiveness in terms of helping disabled people to:

- Secure a job;
- Stay in employment; and
- Develop their careers

The steps taken so far by DWP to extend AtW, including its marketing and funding of the scheme.

1. The process is relatively quick from an employment support agency perspective, but we work with people with learning disabilities and as such, provide support (free of charge) to people in order to access this application process. Few people we support would have any idea of the programme if they weren’t connected with us as a specialist supported employment service and would not be able to access it as a process.

2. Other welfare related organisations including work programme primes do not have any real knowledge of Access to Work as a programme or how to access it. Likewise employers – we promote A to W everywhere we go and with people we support – through other providers and employers – 80% do not know about it and if so, don’t know how it works.

3. The problem is finding the support once the application is made from an employee and employer perspective. There are few agencies marketing themselves or able to sustain provision of support to meet this to meet this fluctuating need of delivery. It’s a resource nightmare and something you cannot plan for.

4. If the individual could navigate accessing, many times they are asked to get 3 quotes. We are also asked to do this, but it’s a conflict of interest as we are tendering for support and the individual is not often able to do this without someone’s support – this should be A to W, not an agency providing support for putting in application (free of charge!).

5. The support is often better done by an agency connected with the person, not go in cold – this would not work with many people we support so getting quotes is wrong. It’s not person centred and doesn’t work for consistency of support and getting it right.

6. Mixed messages from advisors since process gone national – different parameters in terms of decision, confusing answers. Inconsistency of decision making processes about applications and never same answer twice. We have done several ‘surveys of response and cannot get definitive decision – end up going to managers we met at BASE conference to get clarification – what
would employers think – we do this to take strain off process for them – they would not tolerate this process themselves. We are NOT funded to do this.

7. Many people we support have been referred into the work programme – the conflict of funding between A to W and work programme has led to people NOT being supported into work because the right level of support cannot be provided once employment is secured. This sets employers up, and leaves both the potential employee and employer with inappropriate levels of support for job sustainability – we believe this prohibits opportunities for work being taken up in the first instance.

8. The support, once accessed, is generally good and enough over depreciating support plan to work to support sustainability of work in long term and we welcome this funding.

9. Adaptations and equipment and the parameters around accessing this for employer (size and timing) is restricted and counterproductive to encouraging people with disabilities in the workforce. Despite health surveys post employment offer (officially), the possibility of adaptations and costs for employer prohibitive in current economic climate.

10. The relationship with local advisor and their intelligence about the different local providers helped in the promotion and understanding of A to W provision and accessing provision appropriately. This is a better way of gaining control locally.

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