

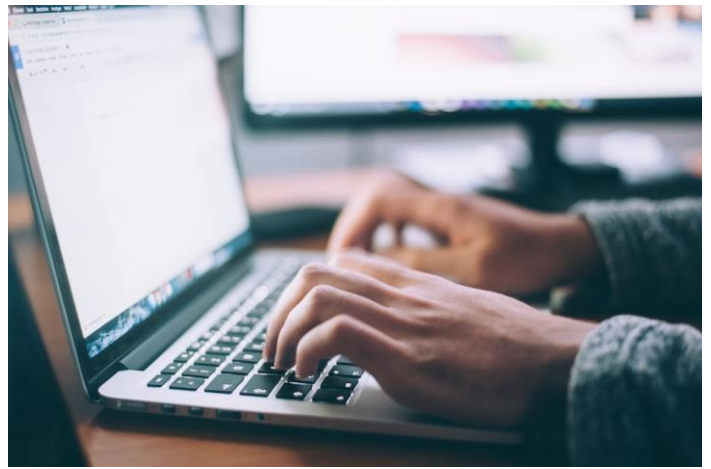


Nathan Whitbread
The Neurodivergent Coach

Welcome to the Neurodivergent Coaches' guide to getting what you need from Access to Work.

Neurodivergent individuals have processing differences, and will often have been coping with work without having accessed any specialist guidance and support.

The good news is that an increasing number of employers are now taking a more proactive approach to implement tailored adjustments, regardless of whether there is a documented 'disability', as they realise this supportive approach is likely to result in increased wellbeing and effectiveness at work.



Applying for government funding (Access to Work) and Reasonable Adjustments from your employer

Key Myth Busted!

You don't need to have been diagnosed with a neurodivergent condition to access support at work. The Equality Act 2010 requires employers to be flexible and make 'reasonable adjustments' for people with disabilities and long-term health conditions to enable them to do their jobs. Further reading can be found [here](#).

This is written from my own experience of the process and others whom I have worked with and advised. The following information will help guide you on how to prepare yourself to apply for an Access to Work grant.

Read on to find out more.

What Is Access to Work

*Access to Work can help you get or stay in work if you have a physical, mental health condition or disability, (this includes neurodivergent conditions like ADHD, ASC and Dyslexia).

The support you'll receive depends on your needs. Through Access to Work, you can apply for:

- a grant to help pay for practical support with your work
- support with managing your mental health at work
- money to pay for communication support at job interviews

* [Source](#)



How to navigate Access to Work?

You have to approach the government department through their website, but first you need to prepare and do your homework.

Think about what would be useful to you.

- Then write down tasks you can do well.
- Think about and then write down tasks you find more difficult, and you can't do on your own – (*stop the press*), those are the tasks that you'd like support around.
- Find out what other people are using both inside and outside your organisation?
- Reach out to any support networks within your organisation.

Help could include coaching in time management or organisational skills, assistive technology to allow you to dictate your reports and emails, or glasses that read the screen to you.

There are loads of tools and tactics that can help. What is important is that they either remove barriers or amplify your strengths. What they must **NOT** do is make life more difficult.

When you contact Access to Work, first they'll conduct a short interview with a claims assessor, around 30 minutes over the telephone. You must be prepared for this and be able to make a case for the type of support you need.

Next is the Workplace Needs Assessment that will be carried out at a later date, usually over the phone, which takes about an hour. You will also have the opportunity to apply for additional help from a support worker during this call, see pages 5-7 for further information.



You will need to inform your employer about your Access to Work application. The process in your organisation will determine who to talk to.

Ideally, this person will support you with your application and any ongoing paperwork.

Note: Once you start the process, there is a significant delay, sometimes between 3-6 months, so don't expect any change to happen immediately. The Workplace Needs Assessment is often happening over the phone, so your assessor doesn't have much time to get to know you and your difficulties or make suggestions you can implement immediately.

The Workplace Needs Assessment is often happening over the phone, so your assessor doesn't have much time to get to know you and your difficulties or make suggestions you can implement immediately. Also, Sometimes information can be missed, the support you are offered may not fit your current organisation's processes, and some assistive technology suggestions may not be communicated.

One option is having a private Workplace Needs Assessment before you contact Access to Work

Conducting a private Workplace Needs Assessment will allow you to go through your strengths and difficulties providing you with a written document as a gateway to support.

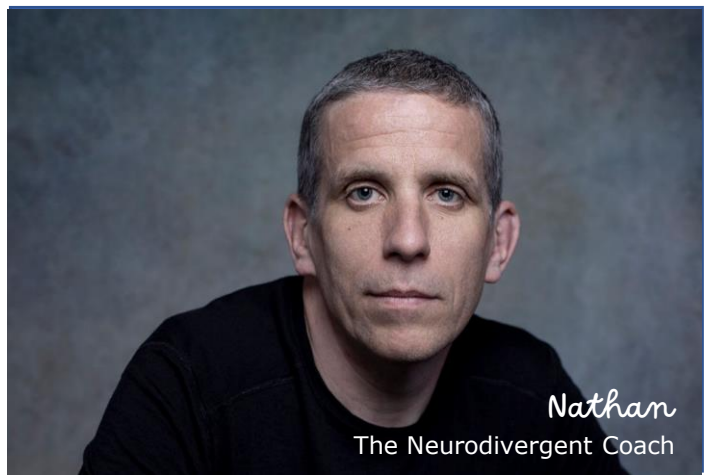
In addition, we can also talk about other ideas to implement immediately to improve your work environment and personal effectiveness.

This can be used as preparation before you contact Access to Work and will allow you / HR to create a plan immediately while you wait for additional funding from Access to Work. There can be a long delay in receiving the support you need so a private report can start the process of making changes immediately.

The way we do this at The Neurodivergent Coach is a 2-hour conversation over Zoom (with breaks if needed), plus a conversation with your line manager. We then produce a report for your reference outlining recommended reasonable adjustments along with the justification for you to review, before a final report is issued. Often some of these adjustments recommended can normally be implemented immediately.

There is a cost involved for a private Workplace Needs Assessment, and you will need to involve your HR department to get this signed off if you are an employee.

If you'd like to find out more contact me [here](#).



Why work with me?

I have delivered over 3,500 hours of coaching to neurodivergent individuals and leaders, have run my own business ([The Neurodivergent Coach](#)) providing consultancy, coaching and assistive technology training for neurodivergent individuals and teams for over seven years. I'm accredited by the British Dyslexia Association to provide Workplace Needs Assessments.

You can find out more about me here on [LinkedIn](#).

Testimonial

"I came into contact with Nathan through a Workplace Assessment. He was a kind, patient coach hearing my strengths and weaknesses and quickly helping me adapt to a high-pressure working environment. The help he provided has totally transformed the way I work, giving me total confidence in my ability to be organised – something that had been my area of weakness before. I am now able to keep up, while bringing my own approach thanks to my dyslexia's not always linear thought patterns!"

Rob, PR Account Manager



Note: You do not have to work with me; this is an additional option. You can contact Access to Work directly, but please prepare for your assessment or you may not get what you need.

Contact Access to work [here](#) through the government website.

Part 2: Applying for a support worker

You can apply for funding for a support worker, but you have to ask, and it's a different form that needs to be filled in which you have to ask for.

Note: This is not about seniority within your organisation; it's about your ability to conduct your job. This support is available to anyone. If you are an employee, your organisation will be able to claim the money back, and if you are self-employed, you will be able to claim the money back for yourself. You will need approximately 3 years of accounts and a business plan if you are self-employed.

If you need help with this the Princes Trust have a great template [here](#).

Prepare

No.	Task	✓
1	Keep a diary of the tasks you are doing.	
2.	Highlight the tasks you struggle with. These are the tasks you will want support with, for example, editing documents or planning and coordination.	
3.	Also look at the tasks you are doing less frequently and again go through the same process.	
4.	At this stage, you might want to reach out to a few support workers or Virtual Assistants to find rough costs and ask for quotes.	
5.	Make an estimation on how many hours of support you need around these tasks on a weekly basis. Now, my experience has shown it's worth multiplying this number by 1.5 as we all underestimate how long tasks will take.	

Note: Being clear on “why” helps build the case for your support worker. Treat this like a business case. You have to justify what you want and why you want it. For example, I have asked for support with:

- Editing reports because I have poor grammar and spelling.
- Checking tasks because I have poor short-term memory and I forget.
- Planning because I have poor organisational skills and awareness of time.
- Inputting information because of poor processing and executive function.

Talking to Access to Work for your support worker

- Ask for this when you first speak to an advisor and they will send you the form you need to fill in. I have attached an example form [here](#).
- Explain what is difficult and make it clear you need support.
- Make sure you multiply your hours estimation by x 2 to take into account any contingences.

Don't forget: Be really clear on why you are calling.



Finding your support worker

There are organisations that position themselves as specialist neurodiversity support workers. Additionally, you can find a Personal Assistant or a Virtual Assistant that you can build a good working relationship with.

Under Access to Work you can work with multiple providers, for example your Virtual Assistant can support you with diary and social media but doesn't offer proofreading. You can then find someone else to help you with proofreading. One provider does not have to supply all your support.

There is a real choice in how you work and this will be a collaborative relationship with your support worker. It will take time and effort but will be worth it when you can show up and be your best self at work.

Note: Every 3 years you can go back to Access to Work to reassess what you need. It might be a software update, more strategy coaching or something that is going to help you in a new role or if your role has significantly changed.

Your support worker package will also need renewing every 3 years.

Further information

If you have further questions on Access to Work contact me [here](#).

If you would like a private Workplace Needs Assessment, contact me [here](#).

I also offer **Awareness training** for organisations. This is delivered in a sensitive 'generic' way and is considered a 'reasonable adjustment'. There are many additional benefits to staff attending awareness training related to neurodivergence and neurodivergent 'conditions' in the workplace - including helping other employees build more effective coping strategies – thus improving performance. If this is of interest contact me [here](#).

You can find me on LinkedIn [here](#).

If anything in this document is broken or has changed let me know [here](#).

Wishing you every success on your journey and if you have any further questions do get in touch.

Nathan Whitbread
The Neurodivergent Coach