

Access

Guidance Notes



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Please read these guidance notes carefully before sending in your application for Access funding

Need help to get work? Or with recruitment and training?

The answer is **Access.**

Access

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How can Access help you into Employment?

The Access Programme is funded by the Welsh Government and is offered in collaboration with a wide range of support from the Welsh Government and our partner organisations such as Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus. There are three parts to the scheme:

- Part A A vocational training grant for people who need to update their skills to enter work.
- Part B An extra support grant to help remove any barriers to vocational training.
- Part C A contribution towards wages and help with training costs for recruiting employers.

Please note that support cannot be provided under part A and part C at the same time. Support under part B is only available to people receiving support under part A.

This booklet provides you with an overview of the Access Programme's eligibility criteria. Each application is assessed individually against the overall requirements and aims of the Access Programme and final approval is at the discretion of the Welsh Government.

Access – Who is eligible?

Access support is available if you:

- Live within the Unitary Authorities listed within the Valleys Task Force Area (Swansea, Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Caerphilly, Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend, Carmarthenshire)
AND
- Are aged 18 and over
AND
- Are not eligible for this support from any other available provision including ESF funded programmes.
AND
- Have been unemployed for 24 months or less and are registered with Jobcentre Plus (this includes those claiming benefits or those claiming credits only), or are included in a spouse or partner's claim for benefits
AND
- Have a lack of current, relevant or transferable work experience but are considered work focused
AND
- Have a reasonable chance of being ready for employment as a result of engaging with the Programme (within 6 months)

A Careers Wales adviser will confirm if your situation meets the above criteria and whether you are eligible for the Access Programme and endorse your application with a Careers Wales Action Plan.

Important: Attending training courses may affect your entitlement to certain benefits. You should always seek advice relating to entitlement to benefits from Jobcentre Plus and not from the Skills Gateway for Adults/Careers Adviser.

The application process

The Access programme uses an application and claims process for each of the three parts outlined above. This means that you must apply for a grant and obtain our approval before you start your training, job or incur any costs. Public funding regulations mean that we have no discretion in applying this rule and applications which do not comply cannot be considered.

Once your application has been approved, you can start training/work. You will receive a letter informing you of our decision. If you do not start within 30 days of the agreed start date identified on your application form, the offer of a grant may be withdrawn and a letter will be sent notifying you of this. Your training provider/employer is required to notify us that you have started by completing an Access start form. At the end of your training, or every three months of your employment, your training provider/employer will ask you to countersign and date a claim form so that we can pay the grant. You should check the details entered on this form carefully and only sign it if they are correct.

Claim forms should only be signed after the period of training has ended, or your employment has reached the relevant date entered on the claim form. Please notify us immediately if you are asked to sign the claim form before the end of your training or before the relevant employment date entered on the form. We will need copies of any certificates which have been awarded as a result of your training. By accepting our offer of an Access grant you acknowledge that we will make payment directly to your training provider or employer.

Common problems that will delay your application

Any incomplete or unanswered questions will delay the consideration of your grant application. All errors should be crossed out and the correct information entered above. Please enter your initials alongside any corrections to show that you are aware that they have been made.

We regret that we cannot accept application forms where correction fluid has been used to amend the details entered on the form. In order for us to consider your application you must include any supporting documentation requested on the form.

Don't forget...

We must approve your application before you start training or employment. We will be unable to pay for training or employment which has started before your application has been considered and approved. We are also unable to reimburse any costs incurred prior to the approval of applications. Failure to comply with the funding conditions that support Access means that we will be unable to consider your application.

Submitting your application

Once you have completed your Vocational Training application Form 1 and Training Plan Form 2, or the Employer Recruitment Form 3 in conjunction with your prospective employer, please return to your Careers Wales adviser with the required evidence. Your adviser will check your forms and submit them to the Welsh Government Access administration team. Please do not submit anything directly to the Welsh Government unless you are asked to do so by the Access administration team.

Please allow 10 working days for the Access administration team to process your application.

Form 1 – Vocational Training Application Form

We can provide a contribution towards the cost of vocational training courses to provide you with the new skills identified by Careers Wales as necessary to improve your chance of finding employment. We can provide a contribution towards agreed training of up to 100% of training costs, to a maximum of £1,500. We will consider factors such as the cost, duration and location of the course and whether it is relevant to the local economy. Where possible, training should result in work relevant qualifications which sit within the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales (CQFW). We consider each application individually.

The identification of the skills needed will be discussed, agreed and documented during a Guidance Interview with an adviser from Careers Wales, who will provide you with a written Action Plan.

Please note that the grant is intended to assist applicants in securing employment; it is not intended to aid career development once employment has been gained or to aid business development.

We must receive a fully completed and signed Vocational Training Application Form (Form 1) and approve the application before training starts. This must be accompanied by a Training Plan (Form 2), signed by your chosen training provider(s). Where your application applies to more than one training provider, a separate Training Plan should be completed and signed by each provider. The Training Plan(s) must show how the proposed training meets the requirements outlined in the Action Plan prepared for you by your Careers Wales adviser.

All applications for vocational training grants must include your Action Plan which clearly identifies all the training needed before an application for support can be considered for approval. We will take into account the relevance of the training to the job market and employment prospects when considering applications.

In some cases you will be required to provide evidence of existing qualifications, site safety cards or licences with your application. Your Careers Wales adviser will be able to advise you about this.

We will require evidence of your National Insurance number. Your Careers Wales adviser will be happy to copy documents for you.

In accepting the grant, you acknowledge that we will make payments directly to the training provider at the end of your training. Your training provider will be required to send us an itemised invoice and claim form, with evidence of the training completed and any qualifications gained.

You should check with your chosen training provider that they are prepared to accept the Welsh Government's payment terms. Some training providers may request payment from you before training starts. If you are asked to do this, please contact your Careers Wales Adviser for advice before paying any money or committing yourself to any training.

We will not provide a vocational training grant in support of distance learning courses. For further advice please contact your Careers Wales Adviser.

If you fail to attend a course without good reason, or cancel it without giving sufficient notice, then you may be liable for any costs incurred by your training provider. Access is unable to pay for any late cancellation or non-attendance fees.

Failure to attend an Access-funded training course will automatically disqualify you from receiving further support from the Programme.

As a government body, the Welsh Government is exempt from paying VAT on vocational training costs. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Notice 701/30 explains the rules on VAT and vocational training. You or your chosen training provider can get a copy of the Notice by visiting www.gov.uk/business-tax/vat.

Self-employment

Although Access funding cannot be used to pay for business start-up costs, the vocational training grant can be used to pay for any vocational course that will provide you with the skills needed for self-employment or starting up your own business.

For more information on the support available to help you set up your own business contact the Business Wales Helpline on **03000 6 03000** or visit business.wales.gov.uk.

Form 1 – Extra Support

We can provide funding to help you overcome particular barriers which might otherwise prevent you from taking part in training. This award is additional to the vocational training grant.

Extra support awards are available only in conjunction with vocational training grants. Applications must be made at the same time as your application for a vocational training grant. Please note that we will require full details of proposed costs at the time of application as any cost incurred which is not approved as part of the application cannot be reimbursed. The maximum grant available is £200. The following are examples of the support available.

Exceptional travel costs

We will contribute towards these costs if you need to make special arrangements to travel to the training location. Wherever possible, we would expect you to use a local training provider. In all cases, we will only reimburse the most cost-effective means of travel. We will also take into account the environmental impact of your journey and encourage the use of public transport wherever possible. Where you use your own transport, this will be reimbursed at 15p per mile and we will calculate the distance to be travelled using internet route planners.

Accommodation

You will be expected to select the most cost-effective accommodation. If you need to stay overnight to go on a course and daily travel is not realistic, or cost effective, we will pay a contribution towards reasonable accommodation costs. You will need to provide details of the accommodation available near the location of your training course when you make your application; we may ask you to use a different provider or accommodation if we are aware of a more cost-effective alternative. Please note that we are unable to pay for meals, drinks or other costs, such as telephone calls and Wi-Fi access.

Special equipment

If you have a disability or work-limiting health condition, we may be able to help you with the cost of special equipment which is essential to help you train. In most cases, we would expect your training provider to make any necessary adjustments to meet your needs. An application for a grant for special equipment can be considered only in conjunction with an application for an Access vocational training grant. You are advised to contact your Careers Wales Adviser for further advice.

Please remember that we use an application and claim system and we will require you to make an application for a grant **and** gain our approval before you incur any cost. You will be required to produce receipts for travel, accommodation etc when you are ready to claim payment of your approved grant as we are unable to reimburse you without them. Receipts must be submitted at the end of training with an Extra Support Claim Form, which will be sent to you if your application is approved. You do not need to keep petrol receipts when you use your own transport.

We must receive your claim for extra support within 30 days of completing the associated training or our grant approval could be withdrawn.

In addition to the extra support grants described above, you can also apply for the following costs if required.

Childcare

Childcare costs are paid at a maximum contribution of £12 per day for one child and £20 per day for two or more children. The total maximum amount that can be awarded is £2,600. You must make arrangements with a child minder, day nursery or crèche that is registered with the local authority. If you have any questions about registered childcare, you should contact your local social services department or the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW). You should send us written proof that the child minder, nursery or crèche is registered at the same time as you make your application for help with childcare costs.

Help us to help you

Please pay particular attention to the following when applying for support through Access.

1. Please consider these guidelines carefully before you complete your application. If in doubt, please contact your Careers Wales Adviser.
2. Please allow up to 10 working days from receipt of a complete set of paperwork for us to consider your application. Remember that an incomplete application will delay the application process. Your application will not be complete unless we receive:
 - your Vocational Training Application Form (Form 1)
 - your Training Plan(s) (Form 2)
 - your Access Action Plan
 - the necessary evidence to support your application
3. Please do not use correction fluid on Access forms. Please cross out any mistakes and write your initials next to them.

Please note: Your Careers Wales adviser will submit your application forms to the Welsh Government on your behalf.

Form 3 - Employer recruitment and training support Application

We can pay a contribution of up to £3,000 towards the costs of employing an eligible person for 25 hours a week or more.

Access – Who is eligible?

The Access programme can help businesses employ workers who meet the eligibility criteria on page 3 of these guidance notes. The application must be made by the business before the new recruit starts work. The job must be available as a result of business expansion, or the need to replace a member of staff who has left. Funding is not available for existing employees who are moving between internal posts. The following extra conditions apply. The job must:

- be for at least 16 hours a week
- not be supported by other public or European funds
- be expected to last for at least 12 months
- be paid at the National Minimum Wage Please be advised that wages must be made via BACS transfer. Unfortunately, this will preclude applications from businesses which pay their employees by cash or cheque
- be eligible for support under European State Aid regulations. This means that we cannot support jobs in certain sectors such as fishery, aquaculture and the production of some agricultural products. In addition, we cannot support jobs in the public sector. For further advice, please contact the Skills Gateway for Business on **03000 6 03000**.

At the time of application businesses who apply for Access support will be asked to provide details about any public funding awarded under the de minimis State Aid Regulation they have already received. This can be found in the approval letters of any grant funding received.

Employer recruitment support (contribution towards wages)

We can pay a contribution of up to £3,000 towards the costs of employing an eligible person for 25 hours or more per week. We pay the contribution in four stages when we receive a claim form confirming the new recruit's continued employment. We will need evidence of wages paid before we can make the payment. This should be in the form of a copy of the P11 (HMRC Deductions Working Sheet) and/or payslips for the whole period, with the employee's name clearly identified.

We will also require evidence of payment to the employee via BACS transfer in the form of bank statements and/or payroll run with the employee clearly identified. Unfortunately, this will preclude applications from businesses which pay their employees by cash or cheque. The four staged payments are as follows:

- £750 after 13 weeks in employment
- £750 after 26 weeks in employment
- £750 after 39 weeks in employment
- £750 after 52 weeks in employment.

Where the new employee is employed on a part-time basis for between 16 and 24 hours per week, the wage subsidy will be paid at a rate of 50% of that shown above.

Please note that if the new recruit's work pattern changes during the first year of employment, the contribution towards wages may be reduced to the 50% rate or withdrawn. Please contact the Skills Gateway for Business on **03000 6 03000** for further advice.

If the new employee works irregular hours each week and is expected to work for less than 25 hours during some weeks, we will provide a wage subsidy at the lower rate. Similarly, if circumstances change during the first year of employment and your new employee changes their work pattern so the time worked falls below 25 hours for one or more weeks, the grant approved will automatically fall to the lower rate for the remainder of the programme. If the hours worked in any week falls below 16 hours the grant will be withdrawn and you may be asked to repay any grant already paid. In such circumstances, any associated training subsidy grant approval will also be withdrawn. If claims are not received within one month of the relevant measurement date, approval could be withdrawn.

Employer training support (training grant)

We can provide a job-related training grant of up to 50% of the cost of training, up to a maximum of £1,000. Please be aware that if your organisation is registered for VAT the maximum grant to support external, job-related training will amount to 50% of the cost net of VAT but will not exceed £1,000 as long as the recruit is still working after 26 weeks. Claims for payment can only be made once the training has been completed. The earliest this claim can be made is at the 26-week measurement stage but it can be made later where training has not been completed. Where training extends beyond the 52 weeks of Access support we will be able to provide a contribution towards the first 52 weeks of training. The amount we pay will be based on the costs an employer has paid for the training, in line with the following conditions:

- Training must be related to the job and approved by us, prior to incurring any costs and before the start of the training. Training should commence within one month of the start of employment.
- Wherever possible, the training should be at a minimum of CQFW Level 2 (or equivalent).
- The employer can choose the most suitable provider of training. We will only make payment where the training delivered aligns with that described on the application form and there is evidence of direct cost to the employer.
- We will not support in-house training costs.

We cannot fund lost production costs caused by attendance at training courses. At the claim stage for employer training support, we will require evidence of the time spent on training in the form of an attendance record signed by the training provider and the employee, an invoice from the training provider and evidence of payment. A template will be provided with the Employer Training Support Claim Form.

More information

Where an Access participant does not attend work for any reason and is not paid a wage, this period should be excluded when calculating the claim measurement date.

We will need to consider applications against any European State Aid regulations which may apply and we treat all wage subsidy payments as de minimis aid for State Aid purposes. For further advice please contact the Skills Gateway for Business on **03000 6 03000**.

In order to meet our obligations under public funding regulations, our Monitoring Team may visit participating employers to verify the information supplied to us during the application and claim process.

The Welsh Government is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all to employment opportunities and to preventing discrimination in the workplace and encourage employers to adopt or improve their equality and diversity strategies and monitoring systems.

Application forms can be obtained at **business.wales.gov.uk/skillsgateway** or by contacting **your local Careers Wales office**.

Don't forget...

- **The Welsh Government's Access Team must approve applications before your new employee starts work (we cannot consider applications which do not keep to this rule).**
- **We will ask an employer to repay any financial support received that does not comply with the rules of the Programme.**

Help us to help you

Please pay particular attention to the following when applying for support through Access:

1. Please consider these guidelines carefully before completing your application.
2. Allow up to 10 working days from receipt of a complete set of paperwork for us to consider your application. Please remember that incomplete paperwork will delay consideration of your application.
3. Please do not use correction fluid on Access forms. Please cross out any mistakes and write your initials next to them.

We promise to notify you in writing of the outcome of your application within 10 working days.

Submitting your application

Once you have completed the Employer Recruitment Form 3 in conjunction with your prospective employee, please return to your Careers Wales advisor.

Please allow 10 working days for the Access administration team to process your application.

Privacy Notice

In order for you to receive support from the Welsh Government-funded Access Programme the Welsh Government is required to collect information from you. All fields are mandatory unless otherwise stated. All information you provide will be stored and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Under the Data Protection Act, you have a right to access the data the Welsh Government holds about you and to correct the information in the future. For further information please e-mail accessprogramme@gov.wales.

For more detail on the above, please visit <http://gov.wales/about/civilservice/how-we-work/facts-figures/privacystatement>. This privacy notice sets out how the information will be used and who will have access to it.

The information collected will be used by the Welsh Government and in some instances parties working on their behalf, in the following ways:

- To monitor and report on the number of people taking part in projects and the number of people from different groups being supported (e.g. different ages, genders and ethnicities).
- By the Welsh Government and other public bodies, including Careers Wales, to carry out the funding, planning, monitoring and inspection of learning, and to produce statistical publications.
- By approved social research organisations, to carry out research, analysis or equal opportunities monitoring.
- By auditors.
- To link your records to other data sources for the purpose of evaluating the impact the project has had on the people who took part and for other research.

Research organisations will only contact a sample of individuals. If you are contacted to take part in any research/evaluation about your experience on the project the purpose of the interview or survey will be explained to you and you will be given the option to say yes or no to taking part.

Your contact details will only be used for approved research purposes and in accordance with, the Data Protection Act and the future General Data Protection Regulation post May 2018. The research organisations will delete your contact details once this approved research is complete.