

Access to Work for ITISS website

Edited translation – checked by Access to Work Team – 2009

For an interpreted dialogue showing all the information below click here X

What is Access to Work?

Access to Work – or ATW – is a service for people who have a job. Before, it was called PACT.

You may be able to take part in Access to Work if you are;

- in a paid job
- unemployed and about to start work,
- self-employed,

You get Access to Work (AtW) by going to a Jobcentre Plus office yourself, or you can apply online at www.Jobcentreplus.gov.uk

AtW will send you a form and will arrange for you to meet with them. They will agree a date with you and you can have an interpreter there.

They will discuss your job description with you. They will speak to your Line Manager and may ask them to attend the meeting.

The job description is a list of the things you need to do at work, on an every-day basis. They will ask you what your job involves, and how you do it. They will then agree with you how many hours of interpreter support you will be allowed at work. This called your AtW 'budget'

Do all BSL users get the same number of hours for interpreters at work?

No. not everyone has the same number of interpreter hours. It depends on what kind of job you do.

For example, some people go to a lot of meetings every week – they will need more interpreter hours than someone who only goes to a few meetings a month. Other jobs include lots of training days – interpreter support will be needed for these too. Always remember to keep AtW informed of changes.

Can I only use the ATW Budget for interpreters in my workplace?

Interpreter hours can be used inside the workplace (office, or on site) or can be used outside the workplace, if the situation is still linked to work (e.g. a training meeting in

a different town or site). You can also choose your own interpreters from elsewhere. If you prefer not to use the one at your workplace.

Booking of Interpreter(s)

You are usually responsible for booking your own interpreters. Sometimes an interpreter might be booked already, as part of a big event (e.g. at big conference that is open to many members of staff. It is worth checking if the interpreters will be available for workshop sessions, for this, you may want to bring your own interpreters for the workshop sessions. You should also let the conference organiser know that you will be bringing your own interpreters for the workshop sessions.

.Does my Line Manager / Boss know about all this?

AtW will send you a letter telling you what your budget is, based on the job description you showed AtW. Your Line Manager will get a copy of this letter. It will also confirm what your contract at work is. For example, your contract might be a 6-month temporary contract, or a permanent contract – your Budget will be based on this information. The budget might be agreed for 6 months (for a 6-month temporary contract) or for 2 or 3 years for a permanent contract. The application will be reviewed every year even if agreed for 2 or 3 years.

What if my work changes?

If you change job (even if still working for the same firm) or your job description changes, or your number of hours changes, it is your responsibility to let AtW know. It might mean you are allowed a bigger budget – or it might mean your budget gets smaller – but you must let them know. If you don't, you could get into trouble for fraud. If you leave and have a new job, it is important to inform Access to Work about the new job.

Who pays the Interpreter?

AtW will pay the interpreter. However, when you use an interpreter, and the job is finished, they (the interpreter) will send **you** the invoice. You must check it to make sure it is correct (e.g. the hours are right, the date is right etc)

AtW will send you a form (usually every month) and you send this with the interpreters invoice back to AtW. Sometimes you might have different invoices from different interpreters but you only need one AtW form. per month. It is much easier to work on a monthly basis.

Before the form is sent off, your Manager should sign the AtW form or stamp it with a work's stamp. This proves that you have used the interpreters for a work reason, and also it proves to AtW that you still work there. It is also important to remember not to sign any blank forms without seeing the details or information first.

The interpreters' invoices and the AtW form are then sent to AtW and the interpreters get paid into their bank accounts.

Why can't my Line Manager do all this paperwork?

Although your Line Manager has to sign the form, it is your responsibility to prepare it and send it off. The budget is agreed with **you**. It is your agreement with AtW.

This means you are in control of how your budget is used, and you decide when you use an interpreter, and for how many hours – not your Line Manager. For example one week you may use less interpreter support, the next more. In looking after your own budget allow you control of your budget. This also helps to avoid any mistake in double bookings or having to pay cancellation fees if the notice is short.

What if I have to go away for a weekend residential training, or another big meeting that could use up a lot of my budget in one go?

If you have an unusual big event, you can apply to AtW for an extra allowance for the one occasion. You will need to have the interpreter's costs for interpreting, accommodation and appropriate travel costs. If more than one interpreter is needed, this should be added too. Usually with a conference, there is plenty of notice, when you first find out about the conference, you should then get in touch with AtW as soon as possible to let them know and send them an estimate.

Sometimes another BSL user might be going to the same conference. Conferences usually need 2 or more interpreters working - so you might agree to 'share' interpreters.

But don't forget - you might prefer to take your own interpreters (this may come out of your budget) – then you can go to workshops of your own choice without splitting your interpreter support.

At the end of the day it comes down to having control and being able to make your own choices.