Assistive Technology

This is an easy read version of 
The report by the Work and Pensions Committee.
April 2018
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Some words are in bold. We explain what these mean at the end of this report.
About this report

The House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee wrote this report.

We look at how the government spend money and make plans about work and pensions.

We have been looking how Assistive technology can help more disabled people have jobs.

Assistive technology helps you use computers, phones and gadgets to make it easier to do things.
Things are changing very quickly and **assistive technology** could help more disabled people work and earn money.

But employers, the government and disabled people need to understand how **assistive technology** can change people’s lives.

This report says:

- What we found out
- What we decided
- What we think should happen next.
What we found out

We looked at:

- How assistive technology can get rid of things that stop disabled people getting and keeping a job
- How the government can support assistive technology and what to think about first
- If Access to Work is the best way to pay for assistive technology for disabled people.

1. Disabled people do not always need special equipment

Assistive technology used to be special, equipment that cost a lot of money.
But now most computers and phones can help disabled people make phone calls, send texts and use the internet.

For example:

- Phones can speak texts for people who cannot read them
- People can use sign language in video calls
- People who cannot type or use a keypad can use switches or their voice to work a phone.
Many employers and disabled people still think they need special equipment.

2. The government could change things

The government can help people understand how easy it is to get and use assistive technology.

The government should also bring people together to share ideas. They could give money to businesses that are working on new technology like they do to other businesses.

3. Some people cannot afford it

Special equipment can be very expensive.
Even smart phones and computers are too expensive for some disabled people.

4. Employers and disabled people do not understand technology

Employers need to understand that using technology to help disabled people work for them need not be expensive. This technology means they can hire disabled people. This is good for business.

Disabled people need to know how assistive technology can help them use their skills and get a job. But many do not have the chance to see how this works for them.
5. The government could use technology better

The Department for Work and Pensions should show other employers how to use technology.

But many parts of the government have computers that do not work with assistive technology.

The government needs rules about buying technology that anyone can use. The Government should only buy technology that disabled workers can use.

6. People still need people to support them

Assistive technology can help disabled people do lots of things. But they still need people to support them 1:1 for some things.
This can cost a lot of money.

The **Department for Work and Pensions** planned to set a limit on how much **Access to Work** funding each person can get.

They will not do this now.

This means people should get funding if they need 1:1 support to do their job.

**7. Access to Work could do more**

**Access to Work** funding pays for equipment and support to help disabled people stay in work.
This money could be used better and not just used to pay for special equipment.

Assessors need to understand all the different technology people can use and make sure they know how to use it.
What we decided

The Department of Work and Pensions must show employers and disabled people how **assistive technology** can help.

Some people might still need special equipment. But things we use every day can help many disabled people be independent and have jobs.

Using **Access to Work** to pay for special equipment gives people less choice. Phones and computers that everyone uses, are much cheaper.

The government can show people how phones or computers with **assistive technology** help everyone work better.
They should think about this in all their plans to help people and businesses come up with new ideas.

Assistive technology is good for businesses as well as for disabled people. It helps everyone work better.

It makes it easier for companies to give jobs to disabled people and use all their skills.

But this will only happen if employers know about technology and disabled people know how to use it.
The government wants more disabled people to work in the **Civil Service**.

This will only happen if different parts of the government work together and use technology to support disabled people who work for them.

Disabled people might not know how technology could help them at work. This can stop them looking for jobs or telling an employer what they could do.

Jobcentre Plus could use **Flexible Support Fund** money to help disabled people who do not have a job.
Many disabled people cannot afford special equipment or even phones and computers that other people use.

This means they do not know how assistive technology could change their lives.

Personal Independence Payments (PIP) could help people pay for smart phones and computers like they do for cars.
What we think should happen next

- The government should have a Grand Challenge to support assistive technology

- The government should use the Disability Confident part of its website to show how people use low cost assistive technology at work and tell employers how assistive technology can help their business

- From April 2019, the Government should only be allowed to buy equipment that all workers can use. It should write a report each year to show how different parts of the government are doing with this

- Work Coaches at Jobcentre Plus should be training about different types of assistive technology. They should help disabled people to learn about using this technology to help them work
• People who get PIP to help with daily living should have advice about assistive technology. They should also have the chance to borrow money cheaply to pay for it.

• Assessors for Access to Work should have training about how phones and computers can be better than special equipment.

• Access to Work should offer training about assistive technology to disabled people. This could be for equipment people already have.

• The Department for Work and Pensions must make sure Access to Work looks at the best support for each person. This might be new ideas in technology and not expensive, special equipment.
They must also make sure employers and disabled people know assistive technology can help more disabled people work, earn money and help UK business.
What the words mean

Access to Work
The way the government pays for support or equipment to help disabled people get or keep jobs.

Assessor
Someone who works out what support or equipment you need.

Assistive technology
An item, gadget or device that helps disabled people do things they cannot do without it.

Civil Service
People that carry out the day-to-day work of the government. They are independent and do not change when a new government takes over.

Department for Work and Pensions
The part of the government that works on benefits and pensions.

Disability Confident
Information about how to support disabled workers and how their skills can help your business.

Flexible Support Fund
Money that Job Centre Plus can use to give people the support they need to get a job.
Grand Challenge
Things the government wants to work on to make sure the UK has strong businesses that will make people’s lives better and earn money for the country.

Pensions
Money you get each week or each month when you stop working because of your age or health.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
This is extra money from the government to help with everyday life if you have an illness, disability or mental health condition.
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