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Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

# Access to Work: Official Statistics

January 2016

# Executive summary

28,620 individuals were helped through Access to Work between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

36,800 individuals were helped through Access to Work in the 2014/15 financial year (1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015).

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Access to Work

### 1.1.1 Summary

This summary contains figures on Access to Work in Great Britain from April 2007, up to and including September 2015. Annex A provides more detailed breakdowns. Due to the data being extracted from a live operating system which is constantly updated (e.g. backdated claims being added to the system), some of the figures previously published (particularly for more recent months) may be subject to revision as more complete data becomes available.

Coverage: Great Britain

Next release date: April 2016

### 1.1.2 Background

Access to Work began in 1994. The purpose of Access to Work is to help pay towards the equipment an individual needs at work; a communicator at job interviews, adapting premises to meet an individual's needs, or paying a support worker. It can also pay towards the cost of getting to work if an individual cannot use public transport.

### 1.1.3 Methodology

The Access to Work figures in this publication are derived from the DiSC3 (Disability Service Client) database. Access to Work advisors enter information relating to a person and their claim onto DiSC. The resulting data is extracted from the system and sent to DWP analysts to measure aspects of the programme's performance.

### 1.1.4 Commentary around trends and changes to Access to Work

Operational changes implemented in April 2010 required large employers to contribute more towards their employees who required Special Aids and Equipment / Adaptations to Premises. This change resulted in more resources being available to help smaller employers and to fund longer term support through Access to Work. In December 2010, an operational change resulted in more specific guidance being

issued to clarify what could not be funded through Access to Work as it was regarded as standard for employers to provide.

The net effect of these changes was a drop in the number of new customers helped by the programme in the 2011/12 financial year, mainly individuals with Special Aids and Equipment / Adaptations to Premises awards. This in turn had a knock on effect to the number of customers continuing to benefit from Access to Work Special Aids and Equipment support in 2012/13 and subsequent years. Individuals mainly affected were those with physical problems affecting areas such as arms / hands / back / neck / legs / feet.

However from 2012/13 the number of customers helped by Access to Work and the number of new customer starts began to increase again. This has mainly been seen with individuals with Support Worker and / or Special Aids and Equipment awards. Individuals with Mental Health conditions have seen the largest increase in numbers supported. There have also been increases in the number of people helped who have a primary medical condition recorded as Dyslexia or Deaf and hard of hearing.

#### **1.1.5 Quality of data**

Data published within these statistics are subject to a series of process, guidance and checking procedures. There are 3 points at which a new DiSC record for customers is completed and validated by separate Access to Work staff:

- new customers have a DiSC record created by the Telephony First Contact team in Network Service Delivery (NSD)
- an advisor then contacts customers and establishes that the details held are correct and progresses a decision on support
- a Maintenance team advisor concludes the customer record and enables the customer account for payment.

Existing customers have a change of circumstances at a rate of about 1 in 3.

An annual review for on-going support gives a further opportunity to validate details held on customers and confirm they are correct.

The basic integrity of amounts paid to customers via DiSC, and the numbers of customers within the live data is maintained to enable correct administration of the customer awards. Estimates of official error are low (<0.02%), and give assurance that core details are correct.

Although the programme has been in operation since 1994, an operating system change occurred in April 2007 where data was migrated across from the previous legacy system, meaning not all supporting fields within DiSC are populated or maintained. As a result, reliable programme performance data is only available as far back as April 2007.

There are some limitations to the data. It cannot be used to identify the proportion of applicants who are successfully awarded Access to Work. Information relating to a person's employer or the amount their employer contributes towards an Access to Work award is also not of a publishable standard.

Quality assurance checks are carried out comparing current figures to those included in the previous publication to help ensure there are no erroneous increases or decreases in the figures. Other quality assurance is carried out to check for:

- duplicate, missing or contradictory information
- consistency with management information
- trends and variation in characteristic, time series and geographical breakdowns.

DWP quality guidelines are published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dwp-statistics-policies-and-procedures>

#### **1.1.6 User feedback**

Comments or suggestions are welcomed from users of these statistics, on additional information you would like to see included in this publication. If you are interested in engaging with us to help us improve this statistical publication, please contact us via the e-mail address on page 2 of this publication.

A summary on the uses and users of Access to Work statistics can be found via the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/access-to-work-official-statistics-uses-and-users>

### 1.1.7 Useful links and information

Government and business - working together to increase disability employment.

[Disability Confident](#) - make it your business. Guidance for employing disabled people and people with health conditions

How to apply for Access to Work:

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

Telephone: 0345 or 0845 268 8489

Textphone: 0345 or 0845 608 8753

Email: [Atwosu.london@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Atwosu.london@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

Jobcentre Plus

Access to Work Operational Support Unit

Harrow Jobcentre

Mail Opening Site A

Wolverhampton

WV98 1JE

Fulfilling Potential – Working together to empower disabled people. An analysis of the number of disabled people in the UK, the way disability affects lives and the barriers disabled people face:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fulfilling-potential-understanding-disability>

Disability and Health Employment Strategy. The government's proposals for improving employment support for disabled people and those with health conditions:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-disability-and-health-employment-strategy-the-discussion-so-far>

Sayce review (“Getting in, staying in and getting on”). Disability employment support fit for the future:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/49779/sayce-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49779/sayce-report.pdf)

Ad-hoc statistical releases on Access to Work can be found via the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ad-hoc-statistical-publications-list>

Work Choice quarterly official statistics can be found via the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/work-choice-statistics-number-of-starts-and-referrals--2>

Work Programme quarterly official statistics can be found via the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/work-programme-statistics--2>

Work and Pension Select Committee (WPSC) report into Access to Work:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmworpen/481/48104.htm#a3>

Numbers of working age disabled people by economic status are published on a quarterly basis by ONS at the link below:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?newquery=a08>

## 2 Headline Statistics

These statistics are figures for all Access to Work customers in Great Britain in the current financial year.

### 2.1 Numbers Helped and Continuing to Benefit from Access to Work

#### 2.1.1 Numbers helped (April 2015 to September 2015)

28,620 individuals helped, of which:

- 22,870 were existing customers
- 5,750 were new customers

#### 2.1.2 Further numbers continuing to benefit from Access to Work (April 2015 to September 2015)

- 7,690 individuals continuing to benefit from Access to Work<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Number of individuals who are not counted within the numbers helped, but for whom there is a Special Aids and Equipment element where approval has been made (including nil cost) and the element was available within the previous two years, and the individual is deemed to still be benefiting from this.

# 3 Access to Work process

## 3.1 The key aspects of the Access to Work process

The first point of contact for a customer is an Access to Work Operational Support Unit (OSU). There are 3 OSU's across Great Britain in London, Cardiff and Glasgow. Applications can be made via telephone, e-mail or post and are routed through to one of the three OSU's. The case will then be allocated to an Access to Work adviser. After the initial contact, customers can nominate an advocate to take forward the application on their behalf if required.

An individual may be able to get Access to Work if they are:

- in a paid job
- unemployed and about to start a job
- unemployed and about to start a Work Trial
- unemployed and about to start a Work Experience placement through the Youth Contract (from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012)
- self-employed

and their disability or health condition stops them from being able to do parts of their job.

An individual's disability or health condition may not have a big effect on what they do each day, but may have a long-term effect on how well they can do their job.

The amount of help which an individual may receive from Access to Work will vary depending on how long they have been employed, what support they need and whether they are self-employed.

Access to Work can pay up to 100 per cent of the approved costs if an individual is:

- unemployed and starting a new job
- self-employed
- working for an employer and has been in the job for less than six weeks

Whatever an individual's employment status, Access to Work will also pay up to 100 per cent of the approved costs of help with:

- Support workers
- Fares to work
- Communicator support at interview

Access to Work pays a proportion of the costs of support if all of the following apply to an individual:

- they're working for an employer
- they've been in the job for six weeks or more
- they need special equipment or adaptations to premises

The precise level of cost sharing is agreed between the employer and the Access to Work adviser.

After between one and three years, Access to Work will review an individual's circumstances and the support they're receiving.

In December 2011, Access to Work introduced a new Mental Health Support Service. This service is delivered on Access to Work's behalf by Remploy and offers support for those with mental ill health moving into work or needing help to retain their current employment.

Claimants on Permitted Work Higher Limit, Supported Permitted Work and Permitted Work Limited Capability for Work Related Activity are eligible for Access to Work support but are limited to a maximum of 52 weeks in line with Permitted Work Higher Limit time rules. After a 52 week break, claimants can re apply for Access to Work support for a further 52 weeks. Further information around Permitted Work can be found via the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/eligibility>

Claimants who are on the Work Programme are eligible for some support through the programme, although there are restrictions on some elements. The programme can provide:

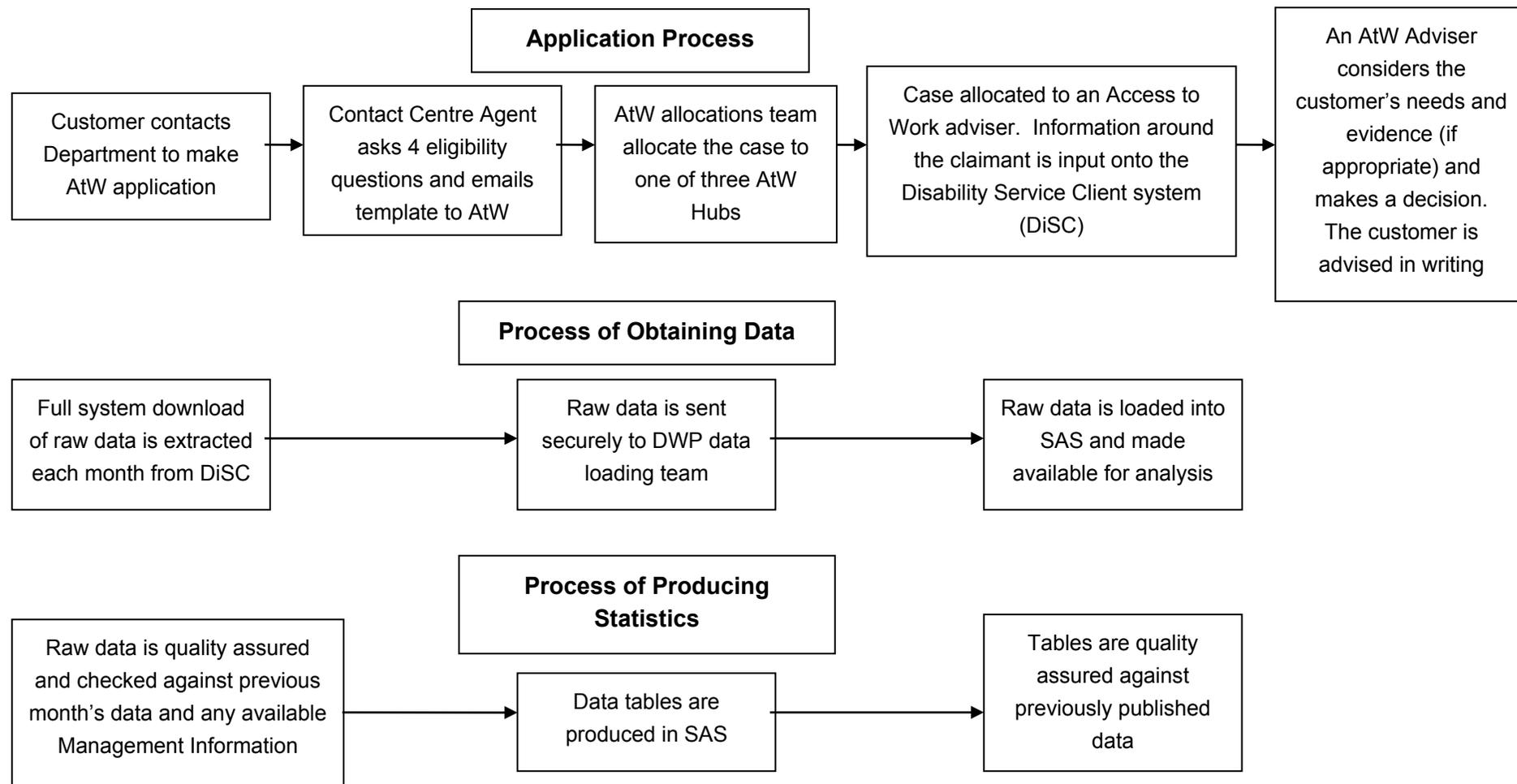
- Special Aids & Equipment to enable a disabled person to do their job.
- Adaptations to equipment to make it accessible.
- Additional costs of travel to work for people who are unable to use public transport because of their disability or health condition.
- Travel in Work
- Support Worker in the workplace, such as:
  - a reader for a visually impaired person.
  - an interpreter for someone with hearing difficulties.

For claimants on the Work Programme, Access to Work cannot support the provision of:

- Job Aide, Job Coach, Counsellor or Travel Buddy
- Communication Support at Interview.

Access to Work is not normally available to people doing voluntary unpaid work, though with the exception of those undertaking a voluntary Work Experience placement through the Youth Contract.

### 3.2 Access to Work process flow chart



# Annex A: Access to Work Breakdowns

See section 1.1.4 for commentary around trends. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Totals may not sum due to rounding or missing values. Financial years followed by the letter “R” are those which have had their totals for the year revised following the last publication. Revisions are generally less than + or - 1%. See Annex B for definitions used in tables below and explanation of revisions (also section 1.1.1).

Table 1: Number of individuals helped each financial year, by whether an existing customer or a new customer helped.

<b>Customer Type</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15 R</b>	<b>Q1 and Q2 2015-16</b>	<b>Total numbers helped since April 2007</b>
Existing customer	15,450	18,120	20,730	22,480	20,760	20,670	22,850	24,720	22,870	-
New customer	12,270	14,010	16,540	13,330	10,020	10,830	12,710	12,090	5,750	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,720</b>	<b>32,130</b>	<b>37,270</b>	<b>35,810</b>	<b>30,780</b>	<b>31,500</b>	<b>35,560</b>	<b>36,800</b>	<b>28,620</b>	<b>129,930</b>

Table 2 – Numbers helped each financial year, by primary medical condition

Primary Medical Condition	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 R	Q1 and Q2 2015-16
Missing/Unknown	20	30	20	10	10	20	10	10	10
Arms or hands	1,510	2,000	2,360	2,180	1,590	1,560	1,720	1,610	950
Legs or feet	1,560	2,110	2,570	2,580	2,140	2,320	2,690	2,610	2,090
Back or neck	4,560	5,820	7,070	5,720	3,740	3,530	4,240	4,510	2,730
Stomach, liver, kidney or digestion	70	70	120	120	100	100	110	130	110
Heart, blood, blood pressure or circulation	170	220	280	280	230	240	270	240	180
Chest or breathing	100	120	160	150	120	140	170	180	160
Skin conditions and severe disfigurement	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	10
Deaf and hard of hearing	4,470	4,940	5,470	5,320	4,990	5,290	5,650	5,570	4,680
Difficulty in seeing	4,580	4,970	5,320	5,320	4,840	4,890	5,140	5,230	4,530
Difficulty in speaking	60	70	90	90	70	70	90	90	60
Learning disability	1,660	1,670	1,690	1,730	1,550	1,550	1,770	2,020	1,800
Progressive illness	1,890	2,060	2,360	2,290	2,000	1,920	2,020	1,960	1,580
Dyslexia	1,220	1,910	2,890	3,200	3,340	3,530	4,290	4,560	3,200
Epilepsy	910	1,040	1,130	1,140	1,040	1,100	1,180	1,160	990
Diabetes	70	110	180	220	180	180	180	160	130
Mental health condition	200	250	430	540	700	910	1,410	1,630	1,250
Cerebral Palsy	330	400	450	490	460	450	480	530	460
Spina Bifida	110	120	140	130	110	110	100	110	80
Other <sup>2</sup>	4,200	4,200	4,530	4,280	3,570	3,570	4,040	4,500	3,610
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,720</b>	<b>32,130</b>	<b>37,270</b>	<b>35,810</b>	<b>30,780</b>	<b>31,500</b>	<b>35,560</b>	<b>36,800</b>	<b>28,620</b>

<sup>2</sup> Includes conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis, Myalgic Encephalopathy ME (chronic fatigue syndrome), Fibromyalgia, Arthritis (Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid), Paraplegic, Tetraplegia, Vertigo, Asperger's Syndrome - Autism, ADHD, Alzheimer's, Ankylosingspondylitis, Renal Failure, Scoliosis

Table 3 – Number of individuals helped each financial year, by gender

Gender	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 R	Q1 and Q2 2015-16
Male	11,590	12,870	14,550	14,260	12,590	12,880	14,250	14,340	11,610
Female	16,040	19,170	22,660	21,520	18,170	18,600	21,230	22,220	16,790
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,720</b>	<b>32,130</b>	<b>37,270</b>	<b>35,810</b>	<b>30,780</b>	<b>31,500</b>	<b>35,560</b>	<b>36,800</b>	<b>28,620</b>

Table 4 – Number of individuals helped each financial year, by age group

Age	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 R	Q1 and Q2 2015-16
16 - 17	40	30	30	40	30	30	30	50	70
18 - 24	1,720	1,940	2,100	2,040	1,670	1,660	2,080	2,470	2,030
25 - 34	5,260	5,940	6,760	6,610	5,890	5,980	6,740	7,040	5,530
35 - 44	8,150	9,250	10,520	9,850	8,300	8,180	8,970	9,110	7,000
45 - 54	8,170	9,800	11,760	11,340	9,690	10,050	11,370	11,660	8,960
55 - 59	2,910	3,420	4,040	3,920	3,300	3,520	3,980	4,070	3,110
60 - 64	1,110	1,400	1,630	1,610	1,460	1,520	1,710	1,790	1,420
65 and over	220	290	380	380	410	540	610	540	450
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,720</b>	<b>32,130</b>	<b>37,270</b>	<b>35,810</b>	<b>30,780</b>	<b>31,500</b>	<b>35,560</b>	<b>36,800</b>	<b>28,620</b>

Table 5 – Further numbers who continue to benefit each financial year. This table shows the number of individuals who received special aids or equipment within the two years prior to the relevant reporting period and who are assumed to still be benefiting from the support.

2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11 R	2011-12 R	2012-13	2013-14 R	2014-15 R	Q1 and Q2 2015-16	Total who have continued to benefit since April 2007
12,980	11,560	13,030	16,810	15,770	8,250	4,880	6,780	7,690	<b>53,310</b>

Table 6 – Numbers of new starts on Access to Work programme each financial year. This table refers to the financial year in which customers first registered for Access to Work [as opposed to the financial year in which that help was received (tables 1 to 4).]

2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12 R	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 R	Q1 and Q2 2015-16	Total new starts since April 2007
11,150	13,620	16,240	13,070	9,780	10,490	12,250	11,720	5,550	<b>103,860</b>

Table 7 – Numbers of new starts on Access to Work programme each financial year, by primary medical condition

Primary Medical Condition	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12 R	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 R	Q1 and Q2 2015-16	Total new starts since April 2007
Missing/Unknown	10	30	10	0	10	20	10	10	0	90
Arms or hands	1,020	1,390	1,540	1,250	860	830	910	790	330	8,910
Legs or feet	740	1,010	1,230	960	680	960	1,050	810	390	7,830
Back or neck	3,360	4,210	4,960	3,430	2,220	2,010	2,430	2,580	1,130	26,330
Stomach, liver, kidney or digestion	20	30	60	50	40	30	30	40	30	330
Heart, blood, blood pressure or circulation	70	90	130	90	60	80	100	70	30	700
Chest or breathing	40	50	70	50	40	60	80	60	20	450
Skin conditions and severe disfigurement	10	0	10	10	10	10	0	10	0	50
Deaf and hard of hearing	1,130	1,320	1,500	1,180	930	1,140	1,150	1,050	530	9,930
Difficulty in seeing	1,080	1,120	1,130	1,010	760	860	920	860	420	8,160
Difficulty in speaking	50	60	60	50	30	40	50	40	20	380
Learning disability	390	370	360	370	280	310	460	560	260	3,350
Progressive illness	580	650	800	630	500	480	490	390	180	4,680
Dyslexia	930	1,380	1,960	1,830	1,580	1,600	1,900	1,920	920	14,000
Epilepsy	280	290	330	270	260	330	340	250	130	2,470
Diabetes	50	70	120	110	80	70	70	50	20	620
Mental health condition	90	110	240	250	340	440	800	620	400	3,260
Cerebral Palsy	120	120	120	100	80	70	90	100	50	850
Spina Bifida	50	30	40	30	20	20	10	30	10	230
Other	1,150	1,310	1,590	1,410	1,010	1,140	1,380	1,530	710	11,230
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,150</b>	<b>13,620</b>	<b>16,240</b>	<b>13,070</b>	<b>9,780</b>	<b>10,490</b>	<b>12,250</b>	<b>11,720</b>	<b>5,550</b>	<b>103,860</b>

Table 8 – Numbers of awards each financial year, by element type

<b>Element Type</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09 R</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13 R</b>	<b>2013-14 R</b>	<b>2014-15 R</b>	<b>Q1 and Q2 2015-16</b>
Adaptation to Premises	160	200	280	230	40	40	40	20	0
Adaptation to Vehicles	290	270	270	220	200	200	210	160	60
Communication Support at Interview	350	330	320	280	250	320	280	220	140
Miscellaneous	530	150	100	70	50	100	70	60	20
Miscellaneous with Cost Share	120	80	70	40	10	10	20	20	10
Travel in Work	710	860	1,110	1,210	1,160	1,150	1,170	1,130	980
Special Aids and Equipment	7,790	9,940	12,320	7,880	3,270	4,250	5,770	4,640	1,730
Support Worker	7,460	8,370	9,810	11,210	11,690	12,730	14,860	15,560	13,050
Travel to Work	9,970	11,080	12,510	12,940	11,990	12,050	13,120	13,390	12,120
AtW Assessment <sup>3</sup>	8,750	11,620	13,780	11,760	8,600	8,230	9,350	10,920	5,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,130</b>	<b>42,890</b>	<b>50,580</b>	<b>45,830</b>	<b>37,260</b>	<b>39,090</b>	<b>44,880</b>	<b>46,120</b>	<b>33,390</b>

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<sup>3</sup> Not all AtW Assessments result in an AtW award for a person, but the assessment itself still results in a cost to the Department.

# Annex B: Technical Note

Headline statistics – section 2.1.2 - the numbers continuing to benefit for the current financial year may change as more up to date data on numbers helped becomes available. If an individual received a Special Aids and Equipment (SAE) award on 1st May 2007, they are classed as being helped in the 2007/08 financial year, and are classed as continuing to benefit from that SAE in the 2008/09 and 2009/10 financial years. However, when the numbers helped for the current financial year are updated, we may subsequently find that the individual received another SAE in the 2009/10 year. To avoid double counting this individual within the current year the individual is counted as being helped in the 2009/10 year from their new SAE award, but are removed from the numbers continuing to benefit. The individual will, however, be counted as continuing to benefit from their new SAE in the 2010/11 and 2011/12 years, provided they don't receive another SAE in either of those two years.

Tables 1 to 4 – Each individual is counted once in each financial year. This shows the number of individuals who have been assessed within the year or for whom there is an element where approval has been made (including nil cost) and the element has been made available within the year. If a person has been helped in more than one financial year, they are only counted once in the total numbers helped since April 2007 column. A person is classed as a new customer if it is the first time they have ever received Access to Work support. Once that first Access to Work award has ended, if they renew that award or begin a new award, they will then be counted as an existing customer from that point onwards. Numbers for more recent years are subject to revision in future publications due to late claims being added to the system. Primary medical condition recorded is based on a self-definition of an individual's medical condition, and the condition recorded reflects the barrier the customer faces in finding employment.

Table 5 – Further numbers who continue to benefit with receipt of Special Aids and Equipment (SAE) in previous two financial years. Each individual is counted once in each year. These are individuals for whom there is a SAE element where approval has been made (including nil cost) and the element was available within the previous two years, and the individual is deemed to still be benefiting from this. When comparing the same financial year between Tables 1 to 4 and 5, these individuals will be counted in Tables 1 to 4 in one or both of the previous two financial years, but are not counted as being helped in the same financial year. If a person has continued to benefit from a SAE element in more than one financial year, they are only counted once in the total who have continued to benefit since April 2007 column.

Table 6 and 7 – Each person is only counted once across all financial years. This measure differs from the numbers helped as it simply counts new customers who have received support in each period. Numbers for more recent years are subject to revision in future publications due to late claims being added to the system.

Table 8 – A person may receive more than one element. Therefore the sum of the awards is greater than the numbers helped in any given financial year. Numbers for more recent years are subject to revision in future publications due to late claims being added to the system.