

Support for employees



The aim of the **Access to Work Mental Health Support Service** is to help individuals learn ways to cope better with mental health challenges and move forward to a more enjoyable future.



Employees get support from a **Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant (VRC)** - a qualified mental health professional - who will spend time understanding any mental health issues that are affecting an employee's time at work.



Employees receive **advice, guidance, and information** about mental health at work. Their VRC can help dialogue between employee and employer and help with adjustments if that's what is needed.



The **Access to Work Mental Health Support Service** is fully funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, **so there is no cost to employees who want to access support.**



It is delivered via telephone or MS Teams (or similar platform) at a time to suit the employee (subject to availability) and it is **completely confidential.**

A plan for a more enjoyable future

Vocational Rehabilitation Consultants (VRCs) provide advice and guidance on how individuals can cope better with mental health issues that are affecting their time at work. And then, with their VRC, individuals create a **plan of action** that is tailored to their needs, with telephone catch-ups scheduled over nine months.

The **Support Plan** could include coping strategies such as:

- Communication skills
- Time management
- Problem solving skills
- Organisation and planning
- Dealing with stress and anxiety
- Coping with change
- Anger management
- Assertiveness
- Relaxation
- Mindfulness
- Developing a sleep routine
- Healthy eating and drinking
- Exercise and fitness
- Accessing therapies
- Financial management
- Reasonable adjustments
- Benefits advice

How Able Futures - the company who delivers the Access to Work Service - supports mental health at work



Confidential support, advice and guidance from a Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant who is a qualified mental health professional.



Nine months mental health support, at no cost to the people who access support.



Focus on building skills to maintain mental wellbeing and knowledge of how to access treatment, make adjustments, and cope with issues.

Eligibility Criteria

Individuals are eligible for support from this Programme if they are:

- ✓ Aged 16+ and in paid employment: self-employed, temporary or permanent, and apprentices.
- ✓ Attending work or off sick or have a start date for an offer of employment.
- ✓ Having problems managing their mental health, diagnosed or not.
- ✓ Experiencing issues that are having an impact at work – motivation, focus, punctuality, attendance, relationship with colleagues etc.
- ✓ They will benefit from monthly sessions, focused on sharing advice and guidance.
- ✓ They would benefit from early interventions to address mild or moderate issues that are affecting their mental health, particularly at work.

This Programme is not suitable for:

- ✗ Someone who needs more regular support or who needs therapy or counselling.
- ✗ Someone who is already accessing support from a psychiatrist, IAPT, counselling or a support worker service, as it may be overwhelming to add another service.
- ✗ Access to Work is not a crisis service and it is not suitable for individuals who have complex needs.

Once employees have applied:

- they will receive a call back to confirm eligibility.
- the application will be sent to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for approval.
- call back to arrange an initial appointment.
- initial appointment and support plan developed within 30 days.

FAQS

How do I know whether I am eligible for this programme?

In order for you to be considered for this programme, you must demonstrate that you are having difficulties managing your mental health, whether this is diagnosed or not, and which is affecting you at work i.e. impacting on productivity levels, moods, relationships with colleagues, absences etc.

Employees can currently be attending work, or off work due to sickness absence.

How do I make a referral?

There are two ways you can self-refer. You can either ring Able Futures on: 0800 321 3137 or apply online at: www.able-futures.co.uk

How long will it take to start accessing this scheme?

Your initial appointment and the creation of your support plan will be undertaken within 30 days of the Department for Works and Pensions approving your application.

What support will be available to me?

Working with your Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant (VRC) who is a qualified mental health professional, you will develop a Support Plan/Plan of Action which is tailored to your specific needs – pinpointing issues you wish to address. You will work on this plan with your VRC over the course of nine months. The Support Plan could include coping strategies covering such topics as: enhancing communication skills; problem solving; assertiveness; relaxation; dealing with stress and anxiety; coping with change; anger management; improving relationships; healthy eating and drinking etc. This list is in no way exhaustive and the onus is on tailoring support for **you** and helping **you** with your specific issues.

How will I access this support?

You can choose to speak to your VRC via telephone or if you wish to see your VRC on camera, you can do so via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Choose whichever format you are most comfortable with.

Can I access my session in work time?

You can access your coaching sessions during work time. We would encourage you, if you wish to take your appointment within work hours, to let your line manager know so that Able Futures can accommodate you as best they can.

Alternatively, if it is more convenient to access your sessions in your own time, support is available between the hours of 8.00am – 10.30pm Monday to Friday, subject to availability (pre-arrange a mutually convenient time with your VRC).

How frequently are my sessions and how long do they last for?

The frequency of your sessions will be agreed between yourself and your VRC. Each session lasts approximately an hour. Whilst we appreciate everyone is an individual with unique needs, the standard frequency of sessions is one session per month.

Do I have to pay anything towards the Access to Work Programme?

Access to Work is fully funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, so there is no cost to employees who want to access the support.

Is this programme confidential?

Confidentiality is of the upmost importance on this programme and your coaching sessions will remain confidential between yourself and your VRC. You do not have to discuss the programme, or your progress, with your line manager if you do not want to. We would encourage you, if you wish to take your appointment within work hours, to let your line manager know so Able Futures can accommodate you as best they can.

What happens if my application is declined?

The Department for Work and Pensions decides whether an application is successful: please see eligibility criteria to understand whether you are eligible to apply.

The Department for Work and Pensions will inform you of their decision.

If you need support with your mental health, there are other services within the Council available to support you, such as:

- NOSS counselling service (<http://staff.shropshire.gov.uk/how-do-i/hrpayroll/counselling-service-from-noss/>).
- Mental Health First Aiders (<https://staff.shropshire.gov.uk/how-do-i/health-and-wellbeing/mental-health-first-aiders/>)
- Signposting on the Wellbeing Pages to national and local organisations which specialise in mental health that can be of help, including TogetherAll, a 24 hour confidential on-line support community for those experiencing emotional distress and/or mental health issues.
<https://staff.shropshire.gov.uk/how-do-i/health-and-wellbeing/useful-resources/>

What happens if I only want a few sessions - do I have to attend the full nine months' programme?

The Access to Work programme is for a period of nine months and we encourage all participants to apply for the programme with the intention of finishing it so that you fully optimise the value of what the scheme offers i.e. VRC experience and knowledge, focus on all areas of mental health impact, individual resilience etc. If you believe you don't require a long-term programme and feel shorter sessions are appropriate, then we would suggest sourcing alternate initiatives on offer within the council such as our confidential counselling service NOSS.

What happens if I don't like my Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant?

You will be able to change your Consultant – it is important that you develop a positive working relationship with your Consultant. The main objective of this programme is for you to feel better equipped to cope with your mental health after you have finished the programme. Please contact Able Futures to discuss changing your VRC – they are here to help you get the most out of the programme.