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**Access to Work Grant Guidance Notes**

**What is it?**

The Access to Work Grant is for residents of the Winchester District, who have been unemployed for at least two months immediately prior to application and are receiving benefits. It is a one-off grant of up to £1,000, for the sole benefit of the job seeker, and is designed to remove any practical barriers which might prevent them taking on a role. The grant can be applied for at any time during the financial year using a short application form. Grants are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, and will be judged on the criteria below.

**What can it be spent on?**

The grant is intended for items required to allow you to fulfil your role, which are not otherwise supplied by the employer, such as:

* Transport costs to the workplace for the first month of employment (could include the [Wheels to Work](http://www.winchester.gov.uk/business/employment/wheels-work/) scheme)
* Appropriate clothes for the workplace
* Essential equipment (e.g. tools, personal protective equipment (PPE))
* A training item, licence or affordable transportation which would increase your chances of being offered a job or allow you to accept one if offered

This list is not exhaustive. The grant can potentially be used for any cost of returning to work, which is not reasonably met by your wages, benefits, training provider, employer or other grants applied for.

Please note that the grant **cannot be used for items that have already been purchased or ordered**, for items that your employer should be providing or for living costs such as rent and household goods and bills. The Head of Economy and Arts at Winchester City Council will make the final decision over the eligibility of the application.

**What criteria are used to assess the application?**

You must:

* Submit a completed, signed application form
* Have been offered a permanent job **OR** be prevented from being offered a job due to the lack of a training item, licence, or affordable transportation (e.g. a Door Supervisor Training Course, Security Industry Authority licence, or Wheels to Work)
* Have been unemployed for more than two months prior to being offered a job, and have been or are receiving Universal Credit, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, or Income Support (we will contact JobCentrePlus to confirm this)
* Specify what the grant will be used for and its cost (evidenced by, for example, a link to webpage)
* Explain why the grant is needed (you may need to include supporting evidence as to why the items cannot be funded elsewhere)

If your application is successful, you may be asked to take part in general publicity for the grant scheme, such as providing quotes or photos for press releases, and to assist in the evaluation of the scheme. You must also remain in employment for 13 weeks and will need to repay the grant if you leave before this.

**How do I apply?**

An application form is available to download from [our website](http://www.winchester.gov.uk/business/business-grants/access-work-job-seekers-grant/). Please email the completed and signed application form to businessgrants@winchester.gov.uk

Alternatively it can be posted to: Business Grants, Economy and Arts, Winchester City Council, Colebrook Street, Winchester, SO23 9LJ. Please mark your application as Private and Confidential.

**It is extremely important that you do not spend prior to formal notification of grant approval.**

**What happens next?**

Once we receive your completed application, we will contact you to ask for your date of birth. We do not ask for this on the application form for data protection reasons, but need it to be able to confirm with JobCentrePlus that you have been out of work and receiving benefits for at least two months. If applicable, we will also contact your employer to confirm you have now been offered a job.

The application will be scored against the criteria and assessed by the grants panel. If successful, you will be formally notified of this and sent a funding agreement to sign and return to us. Again, it is extremely important that you do not spend before receiving this formal notification of approval.

The grant is usually paid retrospectively, which means that the items will be paid for by yourself, and then reimbursed once you send us proof of purchase and payment in the form of receipts. In special circumstances the grants panel may be able to purchase items or on your behalf, so the grant would be given in specific items required, vouchers or travel tickets.

In order to reimburse you for your expenditure, our Finance department will contact you to obtain your bank details in order to set you up as a creditor. Once this has been done and we have received your proof of purchase and payment, the grant will be paid via direct bank payment.

**Winchester City Council audit checks**

Winchester City Council reserves the right to investigate to check grant purchases have been made in accordance with the Access to Work Grant criteria, application form and funding agreement. You will be required to repay any grant which has been paid as a result of any false statement by you, or where the grant has not been used for the specified purpose as set out in the funding agreement, or if you do not remain in employment for at least 13 weeks.

**Notes to applicants**

Winchester City Council has allocated funds to support jobseekers in this financial year and this may not be available in future years. Applications will only be approved where there is sufficient budget to fund the grant.

Where a grant is awarded, the items must be purchased and reimbursement must be claimed no later than three months after the signing of the funding agreement.

If your application is successful, you may be asked to take part in general publicity regarding the scheme, such as photo calls, providing quotes for press releases and to assist in the evaluation of the scheme.

**For help and advice in completing your application please contact:**

Carol Hussey or Zoe Sipsma (Economy & Arts Support Officers)

Tel: 01962 848 196 or 01962 848 303

Email: businessgrants@winchester.gov.uk