

Accredited Employers and the ACC Partnership Programme: Treatment Providers' Most Frequently Asked Questions

What is the ACC Partnership Programme?

The ACC Partnership Programme is a risk-sharing option for larger employers that encourages them to take greater responsibility for their own workplace health and safety and allows them to take full responsibility for workplace injuries and work-related illnesses for their employees.

The ACC Partnership Programme is the brand name of the Accredited Employer Programme that is referred to in the ACC legislation. Once employers have been accepted into the Programme they're known as Accredited Employers.

How many Accredited Employers are in the ACC Partnership Programme?

Approximately 180 accredited employer groups, including some of New Zealand's largest public and private sector organisations, participate in the ACC Partnership Programme. Between them the accredited employers cover just over 25% of the full-time workforce.

Can any employer join the Programme?

Any employer, who is able to meet the stringent programme entry criteria and continue to maintain the standards annually, can be part of the Programme. However, it is more suitable for larger employers: generally defined as those who pay more than \$100,000 in their annual ACC levy.

Once the entry requirements have been met each Accredited Employer signs the ACC Partnership Programme contract that sets out the ongoing performance requirements including the need to be reviewed (or audited) annually for financial stability, safety management practices and injury management practices.

Do Accredited Employers make the cover decision on a claim?

Yes, Accredited Employers decide if they will accept or decline a claim in their role of "standing in the shoes of ACC" for all work-related injuries for their employees. Accredited employers are required to make cover decisions according to the legislation in the same way that ACC does.

It is important to note that third party administrators (such as Injury Management New Zealand, WorkAon, Care Advantage, CRM and Injury Prevention and Management Services) only make claim-related decisions on behalf of the Accredited Employers who have engaged them. The Accredited Employer remains ultimately responsible under a signed Agreement with ACC for all claim decisions and all claims management. Any concerns that providers may have about services provided by a third party administrator should be addressed directly with the Accredited Employer involved.

What services must Accredited Employers provide?

Accredited Employers are responsible for:

- claim and case management, including rehabilitation for their employees' work-related injuries (non-work-related injuries are not included)
- providing any entitlements, including the approval of treatment
- performing all obligations arising under ACC legislation and the ACC Code of Claimants' Rights .

Do the Accredited Employer's staff who approve or decline treatment have a clinical qualification to make these decisions?

As part of their contract, Accredited Employers must have a trained and/or experienced, person(s) to approve or decline treatment for work-related injuries. This person must have knowledge of the current legislation and no less than 12 months' claim management experience, or be under the close personal supervision of someone with at least this experience. Although many people making claim decisions may have clinical backgrounds, it is not a specific requirement. This is the same as for an ACC case manager in the branch who will have the training and/or experience to make the necessary decisions, but who may or may not have a clinical qualification. In both situations, Accredited Employer (or TPA) case managers, and ACC branch case managers, will have access to appropriate clinical advice where necessary.

Are Accredited Employers required to follow ACC Treatment Profile guidelines and trigger points?

Accredited Employers don't have to follow ACC policy except in specific instances, such as the assessment of lump sums. However, Accredited Employers have access to the ACC Treatment Profile guidelines via the ACC website.

Can Accredited Employers request prior approval for treatment?

Accredited Employers may request prior approval for further treatments as part of their injury management practices.

Can Accredited Employers request a report after six treatments when the ACC Treatment Profiles allow for extra treatments?

Accredited Employers may have their own trigger number or their own arrangement with their preferred providers. They can request a report from a provider.

Do Accredited Employers have to pay for reports?

If an Accredited Employer has requested a report they must pay for it.

However, if both a progress report and a completion report are part of a contract requirement (e.g. in an Activity Based Programme contract), then the Accredited Employer should be invoiced for the contract fee amount only.

If a treatment provider produces a report that the Accredited Employer has not requested they are not obliged to pay for it.

Some Accredited Employers are not giving their employees a choice of physiotherapy provider because it is cheaper to send them to a non-Endorsed Provider Network (EPN) practice. Can the employee choose their treatment provider?

Employees (claimants) can choose their physiotherapist or treatment provider, though their employer may encourage them to go to a particular provider. If employees go to an EPN physiotherapist, the Accredited Employer is required to pay the prices in the EPN contract.

For regulation-based payment physiotherapy practices, Accredited Employers are only required to pay the regulation amount. However, some Accredited Employers may choose to pay the surcharge for their employees.

Accredited Employers may also have their own service agreement with a treatment provider with agreed prices.

Can Accredited Employers' claimants be referred to ACC contracted services such as Activity Based Programme, Training for Independent Living or Vocational Rehabilitation?

Yes, if the claimant is assessed as needing further rehabilitation, the Accredited Employer will refer them to the most appropriate service, and this may well be an ACC contracted service. If an Accredited Employer uses an ACC contracted services they must follow the contract service specifications, including pricing.

However, if an Accredited Employer has a separate service agreement with a preferred provider, the service required for that claimant is delivered according to the separate agreement. The service requested may be similar to an ACC contracted service but it will have been individually tailored to meet the claimant's assessed needs.

Are Accredited Employers required to follow ACC procedures for gradual process claims?

Accredited Employers may choose to follow ACC policy and procedure but they aren't required to do so. However, Accredited Employers are bound by the same legislation as ACC and must properly investigate a claim (which will usually mean seeking specialist reports and other information) before determining cover.

Can an employee get acute treatment directly from any treatment provider? And can that treatment provider lodge a claim for them?

Employees can access specified treatment providers directly in the same way as any other person. Some accredited employers may have policies requiring their employees to go to a GP after a specified number of treatments. The requirements may vary amongst accredited employers.

The specified treatment providers can lodge claims in the usual way.

Must Accredited Employers pay treatment providers within a stipulated timeframe?

Accredited employers must pay invoices on the 20th of the month following receipt of the invoice.

For more information on the ACC Partnership Programme please visit www.acc.co.nz or 0800 222 776