

CORPORATE GUIDANCE

Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Including the Use of Portable Computers & other devices

Introduction

This guidance note outlines the Council's policy on the use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and provides guidance on its implementation.

As an employer the Council has a duty, under The Health & Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992, as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous amendments) Regulations 2002 and interpreted by the Guidance on Regulations (L26), to assess computer workstations and the activities of DSE 'users' to ensure that risks associated with the use of DSE (including ill health) are reduced to the lowest extent reasonably practicable.

The DSE regulations also cover **portable devices**, which includes laptops, personal tablet computers, mobile phones and other handheld equipment etc.) in use by staff for work purposes only. The law requires employers to consider the health risks to users of portable DSE in the same manner as for desktop equipment.

Working with DSE is not generally high risk, but intensive or prolonged DSE work is known to potentially lead to health problems such as musculoskeletal disorders, eye fatigue and mental stress.

This document outlines the potential health risks associated with DSE; the responsibilities of managers to assess and minimise the risks; and, the rights of those staff who are classified as "users" in relation to their health and safety.

Definitions

For the purpose of this guidance:

Display Screen Equipment

- Any alphanumeric or graphic display screen, with the exception of screens showing mainly television or film pictures.

Workstations

- A workstation exists wherever there is DSE (including portable DSE e.g. laptop) and is defined as the assembly including the screen, keyboard, other parts of the computer and its accessories (such as the mouse or other input device), the desk, the chair and immediate working environment. Workstations can be fixed or temporary including working at home on non-standard equipment such as kitchen tables etc.

Display Screen Equipment “User / “Operator”

- Any employee who habitually uses DSE as part of their normal work is regarded as a DSE User.
- Self-employed people, contractors, temporary workers, working at a workstation on behalf of the council are also referred to as DSE Operators.
- Shared Services staff visiting multi borough locations as part of that service are also included as users. The host borough is responsible for managing the DSE requirements.

Identifying Users or Operators

Merton Council considers that all staff who use DSE equipment are classified “users”, or “operators” within the terms of the regulations.

This will include agency staff, part time workers or contractors employed by Merton who use DSE equipment (portable or at a fixed desktop) for work purposes on behalf of the Council.

Potential Health Effects of DSE Use

The main hazards associated with DSE fall in the following categories:

- Eye problems
- Postural problems
- Stress and tiredness

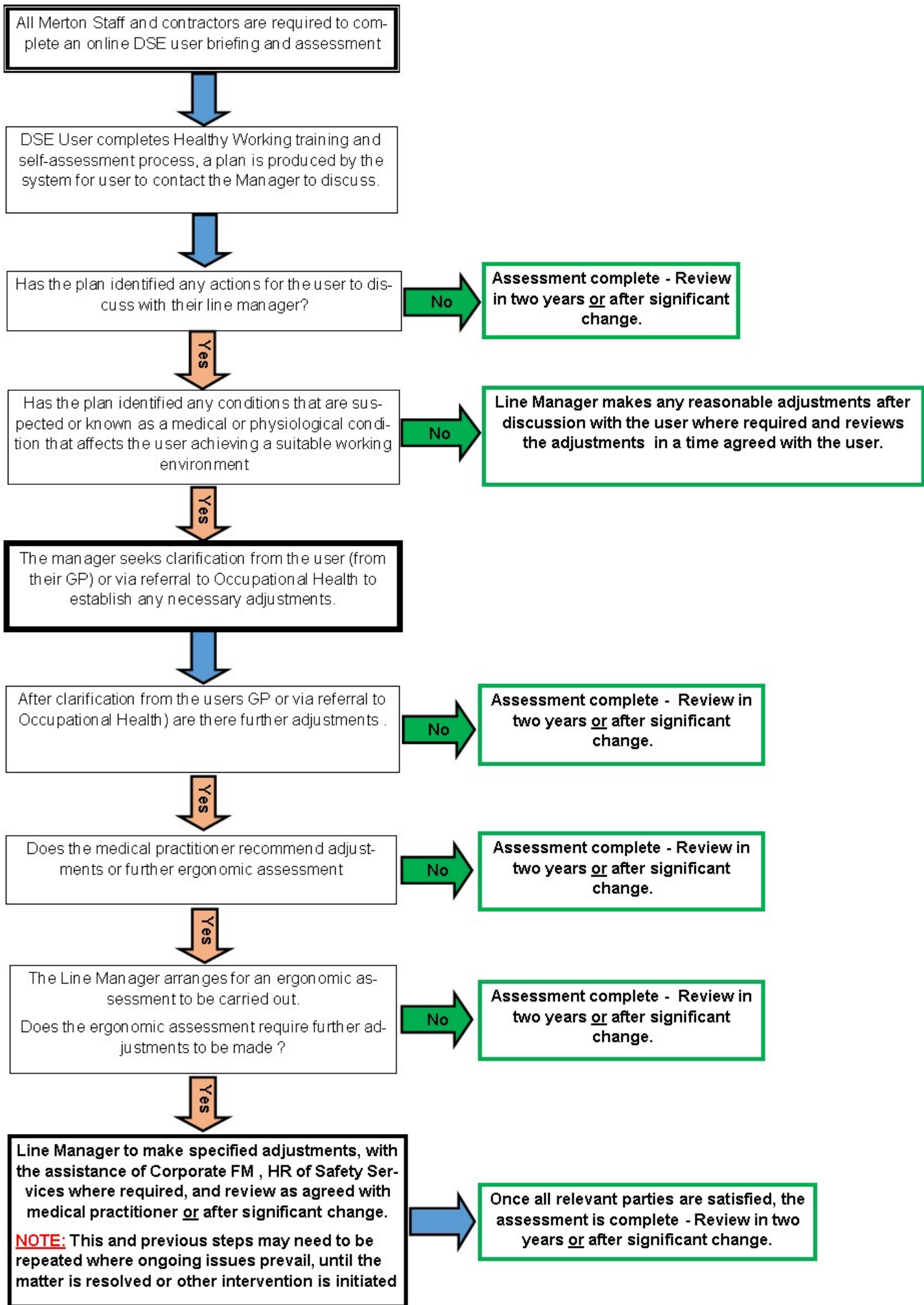
These are not unique to DSE users, nor are they an inevitable consequence of using DSE at work. The risks to DSE users can be considered low if the guidance in this document and that of the DSE Regulations are followed and good ergonomic principles are applied in the design, selection and use of equipment. Adequate consideration also needs to be given to the design of the workplace and the organisation of the work task in order to minimise the health risks associated with DSE.

Further information and guidance for users and managers in addressing health concerns arising out of DSE use can be found in the [‘Addressing Health Problems or Concerns’ section](#) on page 7.

Workstation Training & DSE Assessment

The following sections of this document provide practical information to staff and managers on controlling the risks arising out of DSE use.

Process



Training

All staff must complete the online Healthy Working DSE User training, which can be found using the following link:

[Healthy Working System](#)

The Healthy Working DSE User training must be completed when:

- The user takes up their post
- At regular refresher intervals after initial training.
- There is a significant change to the user's working arrangements.

In addition to DSE, managers must identify which staff if any, are at increased risk of injury from manual handling, such as the need to travel with portable DSE regularly, and would benefit from manual handling training and additional handling aids like a laptop bag. Staff may be particularly at risk if they spend a large amount of time moving between sites or regularly commute long distances with their equipment.

DSE Assessments

The regulations require all workstations to undergo a workstation assessment, All employees, including agency staff and contractors, whether they are based at home or in the office, must complete the training and DSE risk assessment form.

The Healthy Working program can be found by clicking the link in the section above.

A DSE risk assessment should be regarded as an on-going process. Assessments should be completed when:

- The user takes up their post;
- There is any significant change to the workstation or any of its equipment;
- There is any reason to believe the original assessment has changed; or at least every two years.

Records of Workstation Assessments:

A record of the completed assessment is generated when the user completes the training and assessment process within the Healthy Working program. This record is stored securely within the system and users can access this record at any time by logging into the Healthy working system and entering their details.

Multiple Places of Work

Increasingly, employees are dividing their working day (and DSE use) between the office, home and/or other workplaces which makes it more of a challenge to ensure they are working safely wherever they may be. The Council has embraced this concept and has drawn up arrangements for working under smarter working.

<https://mertonhub.merton.gov.uk/councilwide/Pages/Smarter-Working.aspx>

Employees working across multiple sites/locations will need to complete a DSE assessment for each of their allocated workstations, if they spend a significant amount of time at those locations. An assessment is not required if you are simply visiting a site for a meeting, or as an occasional place of work.

Workstations Used By Service Users

The DSE regulations do not apply to individuals not at work and using DSE equipment; for instance, IT rooms in a school used by school pupils or members of the public using a library computer.

However, Merton still has a duty of care under other legislation including the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, towards non-employees, such as children or the public, to ensure that anybody using our buildings or services is not exposed to increased risk e.g. from using DSE that is provided for their use.

Clearly, it would be impossible to risk assess every single person who could access a public computer nor is it necessary as the total amount of time they spend on the computer at any one time or on any one day is likely to fall well below that of a 'classified user' anyway.

However, it is not unreasonable to expect that managers of these services should be following the standards set out in the DSE Regulations at all times, this means that workstations should be generally adjustable and the working environment should be generally suitable for the majority of people as far as possible.

Service managers should document their arrangements for non-employees i.e. in a general risk assessment and in the site safety policy health & safety under arrangements for using DSE.

Addressing Health Problems or Concerns

Staff and managers should be alert to early symptoms of possible ill health and act quickly to prevent them becoming anything more serious.

Possible ill health symptoms to look out for include:

- Pains and discomfort in neck, shoulders, back, arms, wrists, hands, or legs
- Eye discomfort
- Headaches
- Fatigue or stress

Users Actions

- Complete an online DSE assessment using Healthy Working;
- Consider consulting own GP or seek help from other professional organisations or specialists;
- Inform line manager of any problems or suspected problems immediately after they become apparent.

As a DSE user, if you believe you are suffering any ill health effects, which may be caused or made worse by your use of DSE, then report these to your line manager as early as possible. In the first instance, you should seek advice from your GP, or other specialist as directed.

Where your GP or specialist advises consultation with the Council's occupational health provider, you must discuss this with your line manager, who will follow the relevant guidelines (see below).

If you are pregnant you should inform your line manager, so that they can take any necessary steps to minimise risks to health and complete the necessary risk assessments. There is no evidence that working with DSE while pregnant can do any harm but if you have any concerns discuss them with your manager, GP or midwife.

Further details and advice can be obtained from the Safety Section on 020 8545 3388 or health.andsafety@merton.gov.uk.

Managers Actions

Where staff raise concerns about the use of DSE or indicate that there may be a health problem associated with it, the manager must:

- Take immediate action to review the workstation assessment with the person concerned.
- Take any actions necessary to address issues arising from the assessment.
- Consider arranging for an ergonomic risk assessment to be carried out by contacting Human Resources.
- If symptoms persist, in consultation with HR, refer the 'user' to Occupational Health.
- Should a work related upper limb disorder be confirmed, the injury must be reported on the online Accident Reporting system in accordance with corporate procedure.

- Advise the employee of proposed action to minimise further risk or to rectify the problem identified.

Issues & Adjustments

As a result of a DSE assessment, employees may require additional standard equipment or adjustments to be made to their workstation for example an ergonomic mouse or a raised desk to enable them to work safely.

Some items can be acquired directly from Corporate Facilities Management (FM) at FM.helpdesk@merton.gov.uk or from the IT Team via the IT Self-service portal on the intranet: <http://supportworks/sw/selfservice/#/>. This includes things such as office-standard chairs, keyboards, mice, screens, etc. Please note that chairs must only be ordered by Corporate FM to ensure the correct standard is met.

Other items, not available through Facilities Management or IT, can be purchased by the manager through central contract agreements administered by Commercial Services Team. In cases where additional equipment is required, please contact Commercial Services at commercial.services@merton.gov.uk.

Where there is a requirement to make reasonable adjustments under The Equality Act, or arising out of an ergonomic assessment, Occupational Health or other specialist advice. The manager(s) will need to consult with HR, Safety Services or Corporate FM in order to procure the appropriate item from our suppliers.

Managers should exercise discretion in relation to ensuring reasonable adjustments and the needs of disabled employees are considered as part of the working arrangements. Any actions or adjustments posed should always be made in consultation with the individual and these adaptations must be added to the individual's personnel file.

Where an employee is provided with adaptations that meet their particular set of needs, then consideration must be given to where the employee works, i.e. multiple workstations, at home, or office location.

NOTE:

Any item of equipment purchased for use at work must meet the relevant standards for safety and quality. It is the responsibility of the purchasing Manager to only purchase items that meet the required standards.

For guidance on this see the [Schedule in the DSE Regulations](#).

Eye and Eyesight Tests

If you are a Merton employee designated as a DSE User, and have completed the DSE Self-Assessment process above, you are eligible to claim for an eye test up to £19.95 and up to £55 towards glasses that are required for DSE use.

You will need to ask your optician to fill out the [Eye Test Request Form](#). Once complete, submit the completed form along with the receipts for both the eye test and the glasses through iTrent expenses for approval by your line manager.

If you have any queries on how to claim, please contact Human Resources on 020 8545 4063 or 020 8545 3395.

Further Information

For assistance contact the Corporate Safety section on Tel: 0208 545 3388 or email health.andsafety@merton.gov.uk.

[Merton Health and Safety Web Page – DSE](#)

For further reading:

- [Health and Safety Executive DSE site](#)
- [The Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)
- [The Workplace \(Health, Safety and Welfare\) Regulations 1992](#)
- [The Health and Safety \(Display Screen Equipment\) Regulations 1992](#)