



CORPORATE GUIDANCE

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

Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance note outlines the Council's policy on the use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and provides guidance on its implementation.
- 1.2 As an employer the Authority 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.
- 1.3 The DSE regulations also cover **portable DSE** (laptops, personal tablet computers, palm tops etc) if they are in prolonged use by staff for work purposes only. Health risks to users should be assessed and minimised in the same manner as for desktop equipment.
- 1.4 Working with DSE is not generally high risk, but intensive or prolonged DSE work is known to lead potential health problems such as musculoskeletal disorders, eye fatigue and mental stress.
- 1.5 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

2.1 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 work environment.

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT 'USER' / OPERATOR

- Any **employee** who habitually uses DSE as a significant part of their normal work is regarded as a **DSE User**.
- **Self employed people**, working at an employer's workstation and whose use of DSE is such that they would be users if employed are referred to as **DSE Operators**.

Identifying Users or Operators

3.1 Any manager of staff who uses DSE must in the first instance decide which of their staff are considered to be classified "users" within the terms of the regulations.

3.2 It is important to consider all employees as 'Users' this may include agency staff, part time workers or contractors employed by Merton who use DSE equipment (portable or at a fixed desktop) for work purposes.

Health Effects of DSE Use

4.1 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.

4.2 The risks to DSE users are considered to be 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.

4.3 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. Specialist occupational health advice is also available if necessary.

4.4 If you are pregnant you should inform your line manager, so that she/ he can take any necessary steps to minimise risks to health. 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.

(See also Corporate H+S policy on expectant and nursing mothers)

4.5 Full details of all associated health risks are covered in the DSE User Briefing course, which is online: http://intranet/dse_self_assessment

Further details can be obtained from the safety section (x3384)).

EYE AND EYESIGHT TESTS

5.1 All staff classified as users of DSE are entitled to eye and eyesight tests at the employer's expense. If required you will be provided with a pair of prescription glasses for DSE use only. Appointments are treated as a duty.

5.2 Human Resources are responsible for eye and eyesight tests and further information can be obtained from contacting the appropriate departmental HR Manager.

Workstation Assessment

Arrangements for DSE Assessments

- 6.1** The regulations require all workstations to undergo a workstation assessment, whether being used by “classified users” (employees, agency staff etc) or “Operators” (self employed) or not.
- 6.2** All staff classified, as “users” under the regulations must complete an online workstation self-assessment form. The online form is also found on the Health and safety and Emergency planning intranet homepage.

Arrangements for DSE Assessments (Cont'd)

- 6.3** Temporary staff must be included in the assessment arrangements however short their contracts.
- 6.4** The DSE assessment process follows the basic structure of a risk assessment, with the DSE assessment form taking the user through a series of questions relating to different aspects of the DSE set-up. The questions used reflect the requirements established in the Display Screen Equipment Regulations and address aspects of the workstation, the environment and the working practices of the DSE user.
- 6.5** A period of approximately 2 weeks should be allowed for this process to allow for changes over time (e.g. bright and dull days). This enables the user to provide their manager with accurate details about their current workstation environment.
- 6.6** 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.

6.7 Records of Workstation Assessments:

A record of the completed assessment should be held by the employee and their line manager up until such a time it is no longer valid.

6.8 PORTABLE COMPUTERS (Laptops/Tablets)

The Guidance to the Regulations (L26) does not specifically cover the requirements for the use of laptops, it does however, set out in the accompanying Schedule, the broad requirements for the equipment, software, workstations and training for designated ‘users’ of all forms of DSE

Please see separate guidance on these areas at the back of this guidance.

DSE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Form completed online by 'user'

Send copy to line manager

Manager deals with any actions or requirements raised by the user and emails user with results

User satisfied?

User NOT satisfied?

No further action required

Goes to safety section to resolve any conflict

The assessment is only complete once the classified user is satisfied with the outcome of the assessment having discussed any problems with their manager and/or the safety section

Review regularly!

Flexible Working Arrangements:

Increasingly, employees are dividing their working day (and DSE use) between the office, home or other workplaces which makes it more of a challenge to ensure they are working safely wherever they may be.

See also the Council policy on Flexible working and hot desk arrangements.

http://intranet/flexible_working_home_working_policy_final.pdf

Some of the more common flexible working arrangements and requirements for ensuring staff are working safely are discussed below:

6.9 SHARED OR MULTI-USER WORKSTATIONS

For employees working from home or those who undertake mobile working, there will be a requirement to 'hot desk' on occasions when they are working in the office.

In addition to meeting the general requirements of the DSE regulations, workstations used by more than one employee and the associated equipment must be capable of suitable adjustment to meet the vast majority of the needs of different users.

Employees must have a valid assessment either relating to their home workstation or a hot desk that they then use when making the necessary ad hoc adjustments to their workstation, this should highlight any non-standard equipment that they require.

Managers should allow staff sufficient time to make the necessary adjustments to their workstation before they start work.

Remember!

- ✓ If you work at a desk that is also used by others at different times, it is important to use all the adjustments available to make yourself comfortable.
- ✓ The settings on the chair will be different each time you arrive at the desk, so you should spend some time at the start of your work adjusting the chair to suit you. You should also ask for a footrest if you need one.
- ✓ Also take time to position items appropriately on the desk.
- ✓ If the standard equipment provided does not suit you, talk to your line manager and/ or health and safety representative.
- ✓ If you are using a laptop at the hot desk, you should use a docking station or equivalent (see guidance at end)

6.10 HOME WORKING

The employer has responsibilities for employees working at home in that the same regulations apply for people working at home as in the office.

Should staff be required to work from home, the manager should ensure that their workstation is suitable, if it is not, they should look at what reasonable adjustments can be made to ensure it meets each user's individual requirements.

All employees should have an assessment of their workstation and follow the advice set out in this guidance. Employees must also be made aware of Merton's policy covering working from home.

See also the HR policy on Home Working <http://intranet/homeworkingpolicy.pdf>

6.11 MOBILE EMPLOYEES

Employees who spend a great deal of time travelling from site to site and use their home as a base rather than checking in and out of the office at the start and end of the working day, should follow the guidance given above which covers 'shared working' and 'working from home', as appropriate.

6.12 EMPLOYEES BASED IN OTHER WORKPLACES

Where employees are required to routinely visit other workplaces and use their laptops on site, or are permanently based within other premises, there needs to be a clear agreement with the service manager at that premise that suitable facilities will be provided for them - either to set up their laptops correctly or for the use of a correctly setup workstation. This will need to be assessed for suitability by the employee's manager before the employee commences work at that site or on commencement of that work.

6.13 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, such as 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 are 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 walk 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 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:

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

7.1 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

7.2 Users Actions

- Inform line manager of any problems or suspected problems immediately;
- Consider consulting own GP or seek help from the LBM Occupational Health department.

7.3 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 have the workstation assessment reviewed
- Take any actions necessary to address issues arising from the assessment
- If symptoms persist, 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.
- Seek advice from occupational health and the safety section with regard to continued use of the DSE
- Advise the employee of proposed action to minimise further risk or to rectify the problem identified.

7.4 Special Issues

As a result of a DSE assessment, employees may require specialist equipment or adjustments to their workstation to be made for example an ergonomic mouse or a raised desk.

Should specialist equipment or adjustments be required and the individual concerned is 'hot desking' this may prove more problematic and the requirements of DDA may need to be considered.

Managers who receive such a request must refer the employee to Occupational Health as early as possible so they can carry out an assessment of the individual's specific needs.

Managers should exercise discretion in relation to ensuring reasonable adjustments and the needs of disabled employees are considered as part of the working arrangements

Whilst 'hot desking' may be fine for the majority of employees, it may not be suitable for all employees with a disability as it is likely to be harder if not impossible depending on their particular requirements for a disabled employee to make the necessary adjustments to their workstation every time they have to sit at a different desk.

Should an employee be provided with a specially adapted workstation that meets their particular set of needs then it may be wise to exclude them from hot desking so long as they are in agreement and this isn't putting them at an unfair disadvantage in the workplace.

Training

7.5. Managers Actions:

All DSE users (desk top or portable) must be provided with training relevant to their computer use and the type of equipment in question i.e. portables, desktops, docking stations etc so they can work in a safe and healthy way.

7.6

DSE USER BRIEFING:

The manager must ensure staff that habitually use DSE, even in cases where they are not strictly speaking classified as a DSE 'user', complete the online DSE User training tutorial: http://intranet/dse_self_assessment

Staff must complete DSE USER BRIEFING training when:

- The user takes up their post
- At regular refresher intervals after initial training.

The training will cover the following points: -

This short (2 hour) course provides operators with adequate information and instruction relating to DSE use and meets the requirements of the DSE Regulations.

- The health hazards associated with display screen work, how to recognize and avoid them
- The importance of workstation layout, good posture, regular rest breaks

- The entitlement to eye tests and corrective appliances
- The workstation assessment
- Hazard and problem reporting, importance and mechanisms.

7.7. **SAFE MANUAL HANDLING OF STATIC LOADS:**

Although not as obvious, there may be a need for **portable** DSE users to receive specific manual-handling training as Laptops and associated equipment can weigh a lot and potentially could lead back complaints or injuries to the shoulders, neck and arms.

Managers must identify which staff if any, are at increased risk of injury from manual handling and would benefit from manual handling training.

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.

Further Information

For assistance contact the Corporate Safety section on Tel: 0208 545 3384.

For Further reading:

- 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

ASSESSING WHO IS CLASSIFIED AS A USER?

It is the responsibility of Managers to decide the degree to which their staff are display screen users in order to determine whether they are covered by the regulations. In some cases it will be clear that use of display screen equipment is more or less continuous on most days and the individuals concerned should be regarded as users. This will include the majority of those jobs, which mainly involves use of a PC, for example, display screen based data input or processing. Where use is less continuous or frequent, other factors connected with the job must be assessed. It will generally be appropriate to classify the person concerned as a user or operator if most or all of the following criteria apply:

- (a) The individual depends on the use of display screen equipment to do the job, as alternative means are not readily available for achieving the same results;
- (b) the individual has no discretion in the use of display screen equipment;
- (c) the individual needs significant training and/or particular skills in the use of display screen equipment to do the job;
- (d) the individual normally uses display screen equipment for continuous spells of an hour or more at a time;
- (e) the individual uses display screen equipment in this way more or less daily;
- (f) fast transfer of information between the user and screen is an important requirement of the job;
- (g) The requirements of the system demand high levels of attention and concentration by the user, for example, where the consequences of error may be critical.

WHO IS A DISPLAY SCREEN USER?

This is **not** an exhaustive list of display screen jobs, but a list of examples chosen to illustrate the above criteria.

Definite Display Screen Users

Secretary or Typist who uses a dedicated word processing system and laser printer. Word processing of reports, memos, letters from manuscript and dictation, combined with electronic mail. Some variation in workload with a concomitant degree of control over scheduling throughout the day, typically around two or three hours daily.

Data Input Operator employed full-time on continuous processing of invoices. Predominantly numeric input using numeric keypad. Other keystroke monitoring with associated bonus system. Part-timers, or other staff temporarily assigned to this work to deal with peak workloads, would be definite 'users' while spending all or most of their working time on these duties.

Customer Complaints/Accounts Enquiry/Directory Enquiry Operator employed on mainly full-time display screen use while taking telephone enquiries from customers/public.

Possible Display Screen Users - (Depending on the Circumstances)

Customer Support Officer with shared use of office, desk and display screen workstation. Display screen equipment used during interviews with clients to interrogate database to obtain customer details, transactions etc.

Receptionist whose job involves frequent use of display screen equipment, for example to check or enter details of each visitor and/or provide them with information.

Definitely Not Screen Users

Senior Manager in a Large Organisation using display screen for occasional monitoring of state of budgets or other data, or more frequent but brief enquiries.

Senior Manager using display equipment at month end for generation/manipulation of financial statistics.

Receptionist if work is mainly concerned with customer/public interaction, with the possibilities of interrogating display screen occasionally for limited purposes such as obtaining details of the organisation (telephone numbers, location etc.)

This check off list may be used to analyse jobs within your department in determining whether they are 'classified' users:

JOB	C A T E G O R Y	(a) Dependency High Yes/No	(b) Discretion Low Yes/No	(c) Significant Training Required Yes/No	(d) Prolonged Spells > 1 hr Frequent Yes/No	(e) Daily use Yes/No	(f) Fast Information Transfer Yes/No	(g) High Criticality of errors Yes/No
Word Processing		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

IF THE ANSWER TO FOUR OR MORE OF THE ABOVE CRITERIA ARE YES, THE EMPLOYEE BECOMES 'CLASSIFIED'



Appendix A

GUIDANCE ON THE PROVISION OF EYESIGHT TESTS AND REPLACEMENT SPECTACLES IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATION 5 OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY (DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT) REGULATIONS 1992.

In accordance with above regulations, all staff designated as classified users under the Regulations, are entitled to an eyesight test carried out by an Optometrist.

The manager should ensure that the individual is a 'classified' user in the terms of the Regulations. If this is not clear you should refer to Appendix A to determine whether or not the individual would qualify for assistance. It should be noted that only classified users qualify for free eyesight tests and up to £55 towards corrective glasses

The employee can claim for an eyesight test providing Form DSE1 is completed along with a receipt for the test form the optician. The maximum currently provided by the Council for an eyesight test is £19.95.

Where the optician issues or revises a prescription for glasses (contact lenses are not applicable under the regulations) for DSE use and ticks either box C or D in Form DSE1 (Appendix C) then there is a further entitlement of £55 towards the cost of the glasses. A receipt is required for management authorisation through I-Trent.

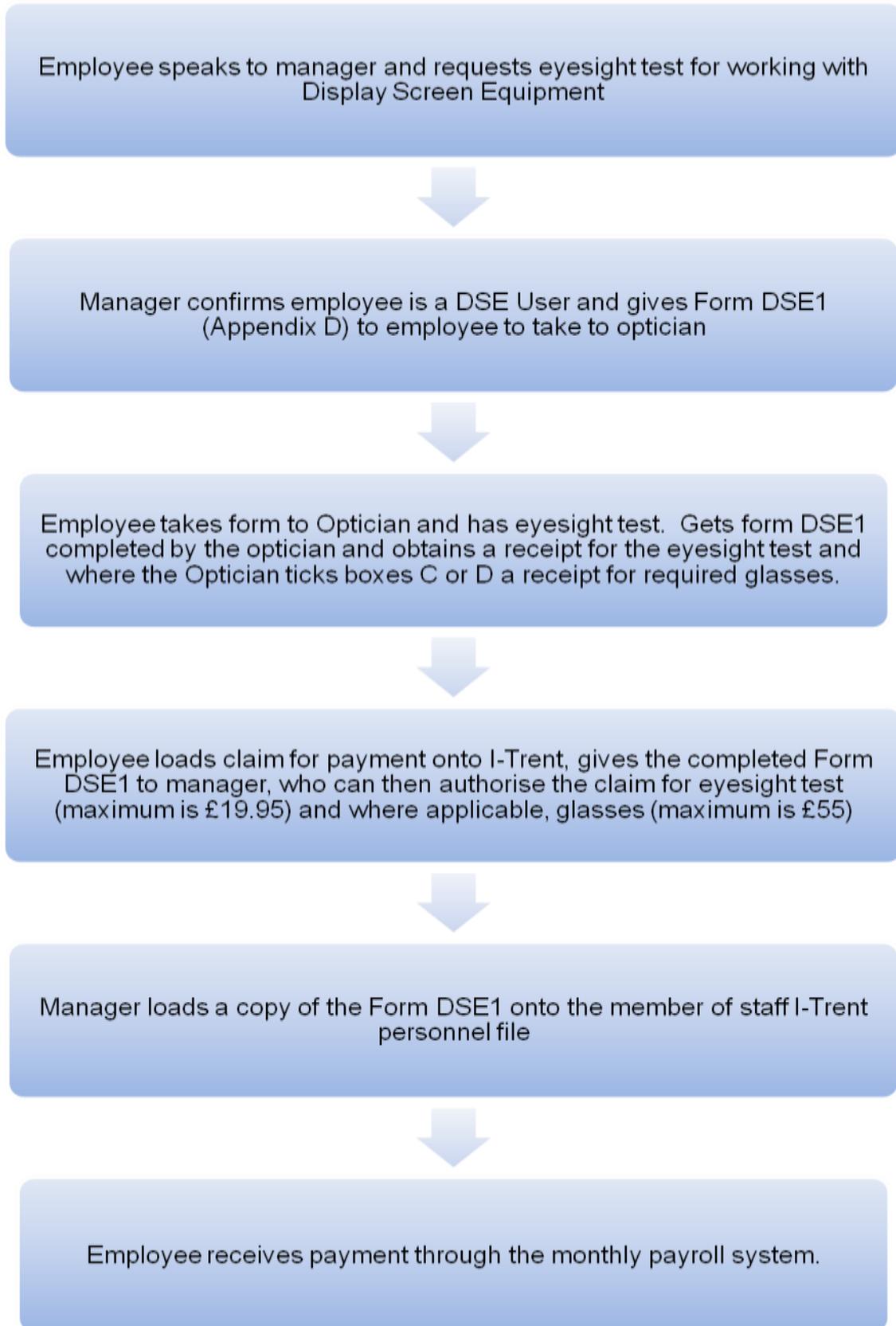
The frequency of eye sight tests is set by the optician on Form DSE1, please ensure this section is complete on the form, otherwise this would normally be every two years. Where a member of staff is concerned about their middle distance eyesight (when using VDU) they should bring this to the attention of their manager who may authorise an earlier eyesight test.

See next page for a flowchart of the procedure.



Appendix B

EYESIGHT TEST PROCEDURE



Appendix C

Eyesight Screening For Visual Display Screen Users: **Form Dse1**

Dear Sir/Madam

Name:

The above-named employee is employed by the London Borough of Merton and is required, as part of their job, to regularly use display screen equipment.

I should be grateful if you would complete the information in the table below to certify that you have examined our employee in line with the requirements of the Display Screen Equipment Regulations and to confirm your recommendation.

I CONFIRM THAT I HAVE EXAMINED THE ABOVE PATIENT'S EYES AND RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING (<i>Tick one only from A to E</i>)							
A	Spectacle are not required / No change in current prescription required						
B	Spectacles are required for general use						
C	Spectacles are required for general use, incorporating a special prescription for VDU use						
D	Spectacles are required solely for VDU use						
E	Spectacles are needed for safety purposes						
Type of spectacles, if needed		Single vision		Bifocals		Mutlifocals	
Recommend the above named person has an eyesight retest in					Years		Months
Additional information and comments							
Signed				Company Stamp			
Company Name							
Address							
Date							

Once completed, please hand the form to our employee, who will return it to their manager for uploading onto their I-Trent personnel file.

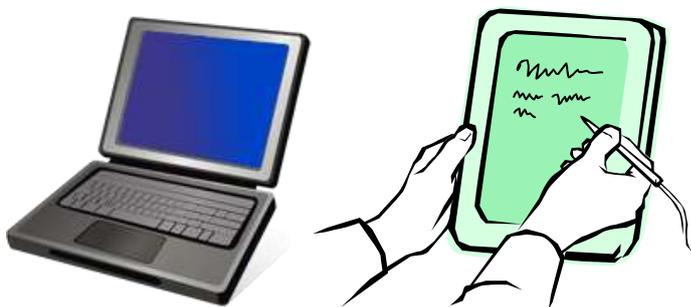
Thank you for your assistance. **Carol Graham, Employee Wellbeing Consultant**

Portable Computers / Tablet devices

Introduction

- 8.1. 'Flexible working' has seen a rise in the number of employees using 'portable computers'; either laptops or hand held tablet computers and even mobile phones instead of traditional 'desktop' PC's and these can pose their own potential health risks to users.
- 8.2. The design of portable DSE often results in poor body posture to be adopted when using these devices; leading to discomfort especially in the neck, back, and wrists; mainly due to the fact that the screen and the keyboard cannot be separated but also being portable (i.e. small and compact) they can be used anywhere, some of which may be poorly suited to DSE work e.g. in cars, perched on lap on public transport etc.

In common with all DSE, prolonged use of portable DSE is likely to increase the risk of injury to the user.



- 8.3. Whilst the desk top workstation set up in the office is regulated, existing standards and regulations do not apply to tablets. Workstation guidelines within the 'Display screen equipment regulations' 1992 are mainly limited to a desk, however, Portable DSE (laptops and notebook computers) are subject to the DSE Regulations if they are in prolonged use (i.e. portable equipment that is habitually in use for a significant part of normal work should be regarded as covered by the DSE regulations)
- 8.4. The guidance below addresses the common health risks to the operator and some fairly simple steps to reduce the potential for injury or ill health.

Addressing Health Problems or Concerns:

- 9.1 It is important that whatever DSE is used is 'the right tool for the job' and should strike the right balance between workers productivity and health & safety.
- 9.2. The simplest way of reducing the risk of injury or ill health is to not use laptops or other portable DSE unless it is absolutely necessary (e.g. employees may require a laptop because they work remotely from the office)
- 9.3. Inevitably though as working practices continue to evolve, workers are likely to spend increasing amounts of time out of the office or working off a laptop in the workplace rather than sat at a fixed desk top PC.

Laptops & Notebooks:

- 10.1. If you are likely to need to work remotely on occasion or at various locations for most of the time, then you are likely to be provided with a laptop and not a desktop PC.
- 10.2. A laptop should not be used where a standard DSE workstation set up can be reasonably provided.
- 10.3. The decision to provide an individual member of staff with a laptop or desk top WYSE terminal is taken after the manager in consultation with IT **services/policy** has conducted a task analysis of the activities that the individual member of staff is most likely to undertake and match the purchase of equipment to those features that will be most useful for the tasks. This will help to identify whether a portable computer is the most appropriate piece of equipment.
- 10.4. It could be that after careful consideration a desktop computer is a better choice e.g. the individual is mainly office based and is not expected to work 'on the go'.
- 10.5. In line with IT policy, staff requiring a laptop will be expected to use it also as their desktop computer; staff won't generally have the option of a PC **and** a laptop.
- 10.6. However, where a member of staff is provided with a laptop computer, it is intended that it is to be used stand-alone for mobile/transient work only (E.g. periods of 30 minutes or less)
- 10.7. In any other situation e.g. prolonged office or home use, a docking station and separate monitor, separate keyboard and mouse must be provided for the member of staff to minimise ergonomic risks; this effectively changes the portable computer into a desktop machine.

10.8. **NOTE ABOUT RISK ASSESSMENT:**

If portable DSE is in prolonged use and significant risks are perceived then it is subject to the same risk assessment requirements as fixed equipment.

However, as the whole point of laptops is that they are portable and can be used in a variety of different locations a standard DSE risk assessment may not always be wholly suitable.

Given this, it is suggested, that rather than do an assessment for each and every occasion a laptop is used at these different locations, that this is done generically e.g. use on public transport or on location e.g. library, borrowed offices etc.

Managers must also assess any manual handling hazards that arise from carrying Laptops and associated equipment

L26 advises that:

"Portable users' risk assessments for, say, half an hour's work in a borrowed office can be quite informal and need not be written down

Where, however, a portable is in lengthy or repeated use in the same location, it would be appropriate for the user's risk assessment to be recorded."

10.9. To reduce risks to portable DSE users, when assessing your 'workstation' it is important you follow the general advice for all DSE work contained in the regulations (where applicable) and specific guidance on using portable equipment as set out below:

10.10. If it is likely that laptop will be in pro-longed use at the user's main place of work:

✓ As far as possible the users 'workstation' should be set up to recreate a traditional workstation i.e.:-

- Set the screen at a comfortable working height ideally at eye level (similar in height to a normal office PC).

Position the laptop on the desk in front of you, so that it is possible to view the screen without bending or rotating your neck.

One option is to get a second monitor that you can adjust the height of; however, this can be an expensive option and takes up extra space.

To raise the height of the screen a few inches above your desk use a monitor raiser or a laptop stand. Any other raised stable surface such as a phone book will also suffice. Ensure that your eyes are at the same height as the top of the screen.

Of course once you raise the height of the screen, the keyboard and mouse will now be too high.

Don't forget! Your shoulders and arms should be in a relaxed position, with your elbows at a 90° angle when typing.

- Use a docking station or an attachable keyboard and mouse that you can plug in to the laptop.

"Full" Docking stations should always be made available wherever staff work for long periods with portable computers and in all hot-desking environments.

If it is not possible to use a docking station, then an external, full-sized keyboard and mouse should be plugged into the laptop, when using a laptop for more than an hour and use this instead as if you were sat at a PC.

If you already suffer with an existing strain injury then you are advised to use a separate keyboard and mouse at all times.

No matter what kind of keyboard and pointing device you use, make sure they're positioned so that you can keep your back upright and your forearms and wrists straight when you're typing and using the mouse, and that you don't have to reach too far.

10.11. If you're using a laptop for work away from the office:

- ✓ If you're planning to use your laptop for more than a few minutes, resist the temptation to work without back support

Don't slouch! You should avoid sitting slumped in your chair at the desk so why is working from home or on your travels any different?

Do not lie down when using the laptop - seated/standing postures are recommended.

Despite the name "laptop", avoid propping your laptop on top of your lap as this requires you to slouch down to see the screen and inevitably will put extra strain on your neck and shoulder muscles.

Where possible, position the laptop on a sufficiently large flat surface such as a kitchen table or worktop for example that will accommodate your keyboard, mouse and your laptop.

If you have to work on your lap, at least rest the laptop on top of your computer bag or other flat surface so you can raise it up slightly and avoid working in this position for extended periods of time without regular breaks.

- ✓ Control your working environment, don't let it control you!

- Pay attention to ambient lighting when you're deciding where to work.

If you have a choice, pick a spot where neither you nor the computer screen is directly facing a bright window or directly under bright sources of light.

Close shades and blinds to avoid bright outside light or turn off or dim down lights that could reflect on the screen.

Make the most of your on screen controls to reduce the brightness of the screen. Angle the screen away from direct light, but not so you will struggle to see the screen.

Avoid sitting at your laptop in the dark – this will invariably put increased strain on your eyes as they have to work harder to see the keys and repeatedly move between the contrasting bright light of your screen and the dim ambient light.

- Adjust the room climate to suit you:

Your working environment should be reasonably comfortable (i.e. aim for a constant room temperature between 16°C - 24°C) if the temperature varies too much from this then it can become a health and safety issue.

Where such a temperature is impractical, all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a temperature which is as close as possible to 'comfortable' this may mean introducing additional cooling or heating systems (e.g. a fan or portable heater where permitted)

Try to avoid significant fluctuations of temperature for example; position yourself so you're not sitting in a direct draft e.g. in front of open windows/doors, under an air conditioning unit or sat in a busy thoroughfare.

Laptops can get very hot so it is best to avoid resting them on your lap for long periods in hot weather as this will only increase your body temperature!

✓ Keep your work load light!

- Only carry on you what you can comfortably manage

Carrying portable computers and associated equipment, papers etc. can present a manual handling risk to employees, especially if you are always on the move.

Your manager should go through all available options during the initial assessment but don't be afraid to ask!; Just because you may spend a lot of time out of the office shouldn't mean 'out of sight and out of mind'!

Reduce the weight where you can. You may not always be able to do much about the weight of the laptop but where practical, reduce the amount of miscellaneous items such as leads, cases and paperwork you carry.

Plan ahead as much as possible. Employees can avoid carrying heavy papers by sending them in advance by email, or storing them electronically on the portable computer. Extra transformer/cable sets should be available wherever the laptop is to be used so you don't need to carry your own.

When carrying the weight make sure it is spread evenly on your body (e.g. both shoulders and the upper body).

Hand held Tablet computers & Smart Phones:

11.1. NOTE: Smart phones and tablets should not be used for extended computer work

11.2. A tablet or smart phone is designed to be used for short periods of time only when the user is away from their office and doesn't have easy access to a laptop or desk top PC.

11.3 Managers should ensure that no one habitually uses hand-held equipment for a significant part of their normal work. Such equipment has uses in the field or on the move, but the bulk of the daily DSE work should be carried out on a desktop computer, or using a laptop with suitable, additional equipment.

11.4. Tablet PCs are designed to be lightweight and carried in one hand. They are thus easier to use and handle than a laptop which normally requires a surface to set the computer down while in use. However, should a suitable hard surface and chair be available, the Tablet should be reconfigured and used as a Laptop if possible.

11.5. Employers are responsible for assessing and controlling the risks from using this equipment for work

11.6. Manager's need to look at how and when these devices are being used, this applies to devices supplied by them or owned by the employee, which the employer allows (and

encourages by supplying work-related applications) the employee to use for work purposes.

- 11.7.** The possible risk factors associated with tablets & smart phones is mainly those leading to musculoskeletal problems (arising from the posture adopted when using such mobile devices), visual fatigue (caused by squinting to view the small screen) and stress (arising from the fact that the device is always on, so the user feels that he or she is always at work).
- 11.8.** The likelihood of experiencing these is related mainly to the frequency, duration, intensity and pace of spells of continuous use of the equipment; in conjunction with factors such as how much discretion the person has over the extent of their use.
- 11.9. Users of tablet PC's & smart phones should follow the advice above (for fixed and portable DSE equipment) so far as possible.**

Additional guidance on how to avoid or take steps to reduce hazards if you use a tablet or smart phone for work purposes is set out below:

TIP!

- If you're doing something that could be considered "content creation", such as answering emails, then treat your tablet like a Laptop or PC
- If you're using it for "content consumption" then you can treat it like a book.

11.10. Whenever working with Tablets or smart phones:

✓ Avoid poor posture:

- Sit down if possible!

Try not to get into the habit of working stood up as you're back is likely to have little or no support and because your hands are holding the device you will find yourself leaning further forward than you would normally do if you were sat at a table, especially during typing.

Working for long periods with the head slumped forward and the neck flexed can cause pain. Sit so you're back is properly supported and the weight of your trunk is supported properly by the backrest.

If held in the hand, work with the Tablet close to your body and at a comfortable reading /typing height (not too low or too high) so that the screen is roughly at eye level.

If you're sat on a chair whilst using a tablet, use the arm supports where they are available – elbows and arms should be resting on the arms of your chair, and not raised in the air or pointed down to your lap as this can cause discomfort in shoulders and wrists

- Where possible set up your tablet so it replicates full-sized DSE equipment:

Don't use your arms to hold the tablet if you don't have to. Use a table or flat surface where there is one.

When reading a tablet at a table; use a stand or tilt the tablet to reduce the need for you to bend your head forward to read. If using a Tablet whilst sitting on a sofa or easy chair, place a cushion on your lap to act as a platform.

Laptops have an adjustable screen that allows users to change the viewing angle. Tablets don't.

What they do have is a case that the tablet can be propped against. Most cases can only be set at two different angles. This doesn't give the full range of viewing positions that a laptop screen does, but it's still helpful.

Alternatively, use a docking station if one is available (and you have a suitable flat surface to put it down) or consider using a separate keyboard rather than the on-screen keyboard (as if you were sitting at a desk top PC).

✓ Don't be a slave to the screen!

- Take a break before you ache!

When away from traditional DSE equipment and using mobile equipment such as smart phones, users are advised to take more frequent 'micro-breaks to compensate for the ergonomic disadvantages inherent in the technology.

These devices are of a small design which can place strain on the thumbs if used frequently for prolonged periods of time.

Movement is really important. If you find yourself using a tablet or smart phone intensively for more than 10-20 minutes take a short break, stretch your hands, shoulders and neck and look into the distance to relax your eyes

- Limit the time you spend on your smart phone

The fact that a smart phone is likely to go wherever you go means there is always the temptation to do a bit of extra work outside of working hours. While doing a bit of extra work at home may seem like a good way of keeping up with your workload, if it becomes a regular part of your evening routine then it can increase the risk of associated health problems such as back and neck pain, as well as stress-related illness.

If you must make long phone calls, using a hands free device will reduce the likelihood of adopting awkward, static postures.

11.11.

NOTE ABOUT RISK ASSESSMENT:

Providing that this equipment is not used for “lengthy or repeated use in the same location” a recorded risk assessment is not necessary.

Line Managers must ensure that when staff work with portable DSE:

- Information is provided about the risks associated with portable DSE;
- An assessment is carried out if the User works with portable DSE for prolonged periods

Training on portable DSE

12.1. Managers should ensure employees receive adequate training by undertaking the online DSE training and instructing employees on the following things specific to using portable DSE:

- Advice on how to set up and use the equipment in the locations where it is to be used, to enable them to assess the risks when starting work in each location
- Guidance on setting up and using a docking station, and additional precautions if using a portable computer when a docking station is not available.
- Encouragement and advice on how to report promptly any discomfort that may be associated with their use of portable DSE, and where to get further advice and help
- A reminder to take regular breaks
- Advice on how to avoid unnecessary manual handling when carrying portable DSE (and associated equipment and/or paperwork), and how to reduce risk from any unavoidable manual handling
- Advice on how to minimise risks from theft or mugging.