

# Display screen equipment

**Your guide to working safely**

# Display screen equipment: your guide to working safely

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## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 The Council has a legal obligation to manage the risks from working with display screen equipment (DSE).
- 1.2 This guidance applies to all employees working for the Council who work with display screen equipment, including those that may as part of their normal working day be required to work from home. It also covers the use of laptops, notebooks and tablets.

## 2. Definitions

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### 2.1 DSE

Display screen equipment is a device or equipment that has an alphanumeric or graphic display screen, regardless of the display process involved; it includes both conventional display screens, laptops, touch-screens and other similar devices.

### 2.2 Workstation

Any item of computer-related equipment including the computer, portable display screen equipment eg laptop, display, keyboard, mouse, desk and chair can be considered part of the DSE work station. This includes workstations out with the normal working environment where you would still be a DSE user eg non-Council properties or home working. [See 5.4 Council, Home working Factsheet].

### 2.3 User

If you normally use your DSE for a significant part of your work, you will be a DSE user if:

- you depend on the DSE to work from and there are no alternatives available
- you require training and/or particular skills to use the DSE
- your DSE is used for continuous spells of an hour or more at a time
- your DSE is used in this way more or less daily
- your use of the system requires a high level of concentration.

If there are still doubts whether you are an approved DSE user, then seek further guidance from the Corporate Health and Safety Team.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

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- 3.1 The Council: has responsibility to ensure adequate funding and resources are provided in line with the implementation of the Council Health and Safety Policy and related Guidance.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive: is the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) member with ultimate responsibility for ensuring health and safety risks are managed effectively.
- 3.3 Senior managers: demonstrate support and commitment to health and safety, including those risks identified in the use of DSE.
- 3.4 Line managers/team leaders/supervisors: have a responsibility to make sure:
- that this guidance is understood and followed by their direct reports and others under their control as set out in the Council Health and Safety Policy
  - guidance is used to adequately control the risks related to the use of DSE
  - all risks identified related to DSE users are assessed and controlled with specialist input being requested from H&S Advisers and others including Occupational Health where required.
- 3.5 Employees (including agency workers): have a responsibility:
- to report immediately any problem associated with working with DSE/VDU equipment, which includes any health-related effects, defective or unsuitable equipment or working environment.
  - for their own health and safety and not to misuse or alter any equipment provided for DSE work, to follow any advice provided in regards to safe DSE working eg taking reasonable care, following procedures, reporting problems.

## 4. Risk assessment

### 4.1 Risks of using DSE

Poorly designed workstations and/or environmental factors can cause problems. Some users may experience fatigue, eye strain, upper limb problems and backache from improper or over use of the DSE.

The council workstation assessment checklist [appendix 1] is available on the Orb and has been developed in line with HSE guidance as a suitable and sufficient analysis of individual workstations.

This tool is a self-assessment and provides a list of controls to consider ensuring the workstation set up is to suit your needs and can help in reducing the risk of potential health problems associated with using the DSE.

The checklist considers risk factors as described in the regulations:

- display screens eg characters readable, text size, images, glare and reflections
- keyboards eg tilt, separate from screen, comfortable keying position
- Mouse, trackball etc eg suitable for task, positioning
- software eg suitable for the task
- furniture eg work surface, chair
- environment eg adequate lighting, noise, ventilation.

The assessment must be carried out by every user who is working with DSE and a record held by the Manager of actions taken. Where actions are required and cannot be directly managed within the remit of the workstation assessment checklist then this should be escalated and a referral to the Occupational Health provider may be required. Further advice should be sought from the Corporate Health and Safety Team. See figure 1 for a picture of an workstation set up.

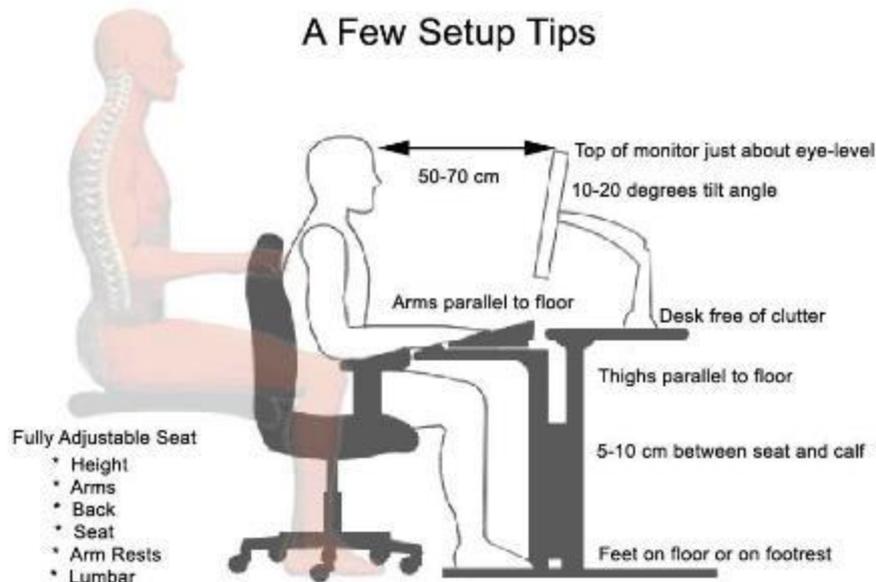


Figure 1: an example of a workstation set up

### 4.2 Touchdown Desks/alternative workstations

Where touchdown desks are used, the 'user' should assess the workspace to ensure it is suitable to their needs.

### 4.3 Disability

Where there are any health and disability issues with an employee using DSE equipment (including laptops, notebooks, iPads and tablets) this must be taken into account during the assessment process. Necessary

reasonable adjustments may be required to all the employee to carry out their work without affecting their health and safety.

Depending on circumstances, an [access to work](#) grant can pay for [practical support](#) eg adaptations to the equipment used, special equipment where an employee has a disability.

## 5. Control measures

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### 5.1 Information, instruction and training

At local induction, all new employees should be briefed on work station set up and the requirement to take regular natural breaks from the display screen equipment, to move about and change posture.

A DSE e-learning module is available through the council's CeCiL portal.

All DSE users should complete this learning module.

If additional learning or DSE information is required, contact the Corporate Health and Safety Team.

### 5.2 General safety

Good housekeeping and a tidy workstation is encouraged. Food and drinks should be kept away from the keyboard, screen and other electrical equipment.

Mobile telephones, tablets or other IT equipment that are in prolonged use to compose and edit text, view images or connect to the Internet should be individually assessed as their usage may make them subject to the DSE Regulations.

### 5.3 Ill Health Reporting

All employees are encouraged to report any signs of ill health arising from the use of their DSE equipment, or to notify their line manager/team leader/supervisor of any other ill health (including non-work), which may impact on their continued safe use of the DSE.

Persistent ill health or recurring issues from working with DSE should be highlighted and reported. These may include:

- persistent aches and pains in wrists, arms, shoulders and neck
- numbness in the fingers or a tingling sensation
- backache
- persistent tired, dry or sore eyes.

### 5.4 Eyesight tests and glasses for DSE work

An eyesight test is available for all 'users' from a qualified approved optician as uncorrected vision defects can make DSE work more tiring or stressful. Correcting defects can improve comfort, job satisfaction and performance.

The council has a contract with Optical Express for this service. There are several Optical Express \_ where you may have your eyes tested. The council is invoiced directly by Optical Express. The basic service is therefore free. If you choose anything additional to the basic service (eg designer frames, tinted lenses) you must pay the cost for this. You will not be reimbursed for costs if you do not use the council's approved optician.

If glasses are required solely for DSE work, the council will reimburse costs up to **£50.00**; only where the Display Screen Equipment Examination, Referral and Report Form has been approved by the Head of Department and submitted by the employee.

### 5.5 Natural breaks

The daily work routine of users should be planned to allow their work on DSE to be periodically interrupted by breaks or changes in activities.

All employees should be encouraged to change position and take regular breaks for a period of five to ten minutes away from the workstation.

## 6. Portable computers

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The DSE regulations apply to portable computers such as laptops and notebooks. Where there is prolonged use and wherever possible a docking station should be used as this reduces the risks.

Where this is not possible, use of the laptop should be limited.

An example of a set up arrangement for a laptop and use of laptop stand is shown in figure 2.

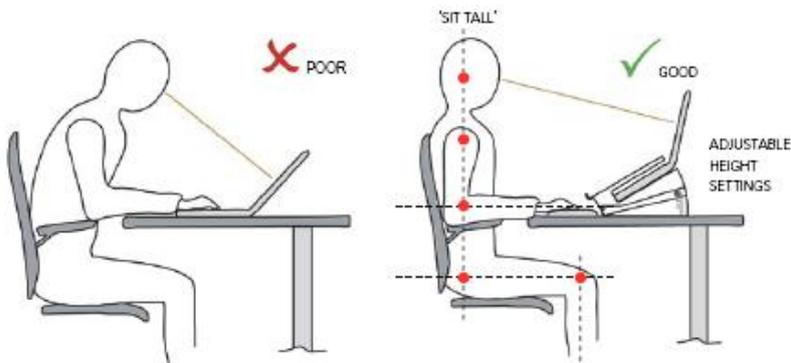


Figure 2: Example of set up arrangement for a laptop.

## 7. iPads and tablets

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A portable device such as an iPad or a tablet should primarily be used for short periods of time. Where work requires inputting of information this should be carried out at a properly set up workstation.

If you are using the tablet intensively for more than 10 to 20 minutes, take a short break to stretch your hands, shoulder, and neck, look into the distance to relax your eyes. If you are using the on-screen keyboard for extended periods, consider using a separate keyboard.

When using the screen, use a light touch. When typing or touching the screen regularly place the tablet flat or only slightly angled to ensure wrists are not in an awkward position.

Whenever possible, place the tablet on a surface rather than holding the device. A stand or tilt for the tablet should be used when reading to reduce the need to bend your head forward. Enlarge the image or text if you find you are leaning forwards to view the tablet.

The screen should be kept clean for good visibility.

## 8. Review

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A workstation assessment should be carried out annually.

If any 'user' experiences persistent ill health or recurring issues related to working with DSE when changes have been implemented, the workstation assessment should be reviewed.

# Appendix 1

## Display screen equipment: Risk assessment checklist



|  |  |                         |  |
|--|--|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Department</b>                                |  | <b>Unit/Section</b>     |  |
| <b>Date of assessment</b>                        |  | <b>Completed by</b>     |  |
| <b>Location of assessment</b>                    |  | <b>Name of employee</b> |  |
| <b>Job title</b>                                 |  | <b>Line manager</b>     |  |
| <b>Describe briefly the main work activities</b> |  |                         |  |

The completion of this checklist will enable you to carry out a self-assessment of your own workstation and should be completed with reference to the Council DSE guidance.

The objective is to ensure your comfort and safety at work. Therefore, work through the checklist, ticking either Yes, No or N/A in each column against each risk factor. Any actions required should be noted in the Action to Take column.

Managers should review completed assessments and take forward any actions, where this is not possible, advice should be sought from the Corporate Health and Safety Team, [healthandsafety@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@edinburgh.gov.uk).

| Risk Factors  | Tick answer |    |     | Things to consider   | Action to take |
|---|-------------|----|-----|--|----------------|
|   | Yes         | No | N/A |  |                |
| <b>1 Display Screens</b>  |             |    |     |  |                |
| Are the characters clear and readable?<br><br>  |             |    |     | Make sure the screen is clean and cleaning materials are made available. Check that the text and background colours work well together.  |                |
| Is the text size comfortable to read?   |             |    |     | Software settings may need adjusting to change text size.  |                |
| Is the image stable i.e. free of flicker and jitter?  |             |    |     | Try using different screen colours to reduce flicker e.g. darker background and lighter text.<br><br>If problems still exist, get the set-up checked.  |                |
| Is the screen's specification suitable for its intended use?  |             |    |     | For example, intensive graphic work or work requiring fine attention to small details may require large display screens.   |                |
| Are the brightness and/or contrast adjustable?  |             |    |     | Separate adjustment controls are not essential, provided the user can read the screen easily at all times.   |                |
| Does the screen swivel and tilt?<br><br>   |             |    |     | Swivel and tilt need not be built in, you can add a swivel and tilt mechanism.<br><br>However, you may need to replace the screen if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• swivel/tilt is absent or unsatisfactory</li> <li>• work is intensive; and/or</li> <li>• the user has problems getting the screen to a comfortable position</li> </ul> |                |

| Risk Factors   | Tick answer |    |     | Things to consider  | Action to take |
|--|-------------|----|-----|---|----------------|
|  | Yes         | No | N/A |   |                |
| <p>Is the screen free from glare and reflections?</p>           |             |    |     | <p>Use a mirror placed in front of the screen to check where reflections are coming from.</p> <p>You might need to move the screen or even the desk and/or shield the screen from the source of reflections.</p> <p>Screens that use dark characters on a light background are less prone to glare and reflections.</p> |                |
| <p>Are adjustable window coverings provided and in adequate condition?</p>   |             |    |     | <p>Check that blinds work. Blinds with vertical slats can be more suitable than horizontal ones.</p> <p>If these measures do not work, consider anti-glare screen filters as a last resort and seek specialist help.</p>  |                |
| <b>2 Keyboards</b>   |             |    |     |   |                |
| <p>Is it possible to find a comfortable keying position?</p>  |             |    |     | <p>Try pushing the display screen further back to create more room for the keyboard, hands, and wrists.</p> <p>Users of thick, raised keyboards may need a wrist rest.</p>  |                |
| <p>Does the user have good keyboard technique?</p>   |             |    |     | <p>Training can be used to prevent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hands bent up at wrist;</li> <li>• hitting the keys too hard;</li> <li>• overstretching the fingers.</li> </ul>  |                |

| Risk Factors   | Tick answer |    |     | Things to consider  | Action to take |
|--|-------------|----|-----|---|----------------|
|  | Yes         | No | N/A |   |                |
| Are the characters on the keys easily readable?  |             |    |     | Keyboards should be kept clean. If characters still can't be read, the keyboard may need modifying or replacing.<br><br>Use a keyboard with a matt finish to reduce glare and or/reflection.  |                |
| <b>3 Mouse, trackball etc</b>  |             |    |     |   |                |
| Is the device suitable for the tasks it is used for?   |             |    |     | If the user is having problems, try a different device. The mouse and trackball are general purpose devices suitable for many tasks, and available in a variety of shapes and sizes. Alternative devices such as touchscreens may be better for some tasks (but can be worse for others). |                |
| <b>3 Mouse, trackball etc (continued)</b>  |             |    |     |   |                |
| Is the device positioned close to the user?<br> |             |    |     | Most devices are best placed as close as possible eg right beside the keyboard.<br><br>Training may be needed to:<br>prevent arm overreaching;<br>tell users not to leave their hand on the device when it is not being used;<br>encourage a relaxed arm and straight wrist.              |                |
| Is there support for the device user's wrist and forearm?  |             |    |     | Support can be gained from, for example, the desk surface or arm of a chair. If not, a separate supporting device may help.<br><br>The user should be able to find a comfortable working position with the device.  |                |
| Does the device work smoothly at a speed that suits the user?  |             |    |     | See if cleaning is required (eg of mouse ball and rollers).<br><br>Check the work surface is suitable. A mouse mat may be needed.   |                |
| Can the user easily adjust software settings for speed and accuracy of pointer?  |             |    |     | Users may need training in how to adjust device settings.   |                |

| Risk Factors  | Tick answer |    |     | Things to consider  | Action to take |
|---|-------------|----|-----|---|----------------|
|   | Yes         | No | N/A |   |                |
| <b>4 Software</b>   |             |    |     |   |                |
| Is the software suitable for the task?  |             |    |     | <p>Software should help the user carry out the task, minimise stress and be user-friendly.</p> <p>Check users have had appropriate training in using the software.</p> <p>Software should respond quickly and clearly to user input, with adequate feedback, such as clear help messages.</p> |                |
| <b>5 Furniture</b>  |             |    |     |   |                |
| <p>Is the work surface large enough for all the necessary equipment, papers etc?</p>                                 |             |    |     | <p>Create more room by moving printers, reference materials etc. elsewhere.</p> <p>If necessary, consider providing new power and telecoms sockets, so equipment can be moved.</p> <p>There should be some scope for flexible rearrangement.</p>  |                |
| Can the user comfortably reach all the equipment and papers they need to use?   |             |    |     | <p>Rearrange equipment, papers etc. to bring frequently used things within easy reach.</p> <p>A document holder may be needed, positioned to minimise uncomfortable head and eye movements.</p>   |                |
| Are surfaces free from glare and reflection?  |             |    |     | Consider mats or blotters to reduce reflections and glare.  |                |
| <p>Is the chair suitable?</p> <p>Is the chair stable?</p> <p>Does the chair have a working:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seat back height and tilt adjustment?</li> <li>• seat height adjustment?</li> <li>• swivel mechanism?</li> <li>• castors or glides?</li> </ul> |             |    |     | <p>The chair may need repairing or replacing if the user is uncomfortable or cannot use the adjustment mechanisms.</p>  |                |

| Risk Factors  | Tick answer |    |     | Things to consider  | Action to take |
|---|-------------|----|-----|---|----------------|
|   | Yes         | No | N/A |   |                |
| <b>5 Furniture (continued)</b>  |             |    |     |   |                |
| <p>Is the chair adjusted correctly?</p>  |             |    |     | <p>The user should be able to carry out their work sitting comfortably.</p> <p>Consider training the user in how to adopt suitable postures while working.</p> <p>The arms of chairs can stop the user getting close enough to use the equipment comfortably.</p> <p>Move any obstructions from under the desk.</p> |                |
| <p>Is the small of the back supported by the chair's backrest?</p>  |             |    |     | <p>The user should have a straight back, supported by the chair, with relaxed shoulders.</p>  |                |
| <p>Are forearms horizontal and eyes at roughly the same height as the top of the VDU?</p>                                 |             |    |     | <p>Adjust the chair height to get the user's arms in the right position, then adjust the VDU height, if necessary.</p>  |                |
| <p>Are feet flat on the floor, without too much pressure from the seat on the backs of the legs?</p>                      |             |    |     | <p>If not, a foot rest may be needed.</p>   |                |
| <b>6 Environment</b>  |             |    |     |   |                |
| <p>Is there enough room to change position and vary movement?</p>   |             |    |     | <p>Space is needed to move, stretch and fidget.</p> <p>Consider reorganising the office layout and check for obstructions.</p> <p>Cables should be tidy and not a trip or snag hazard.</p>  |                |

| Risk Factors  | Tick answer |    |     | Things to consider  | Action to take |
|---|-------------|----|-----|---|----------------|
|   | Yes         | No | N/A |   |                |
| <b>6 Environment (continued)</b>  |             |    |     |   |                |
| <p>Is the lighting suitable eg not too bright or too dim to work comfortably?</p>  |             |    |     | <p>Users should be able to control light levels eg by adjusting window blinds or light switches.</p> <p>Consider shading or repositioning light sources or providing local lighting eg desk lamps (but make sure lights don't cause glare by reflecting off walls or other surfaces).</p> |                |
| Does the air feel comfortable?  |             |    |     | <p>VDUs and other equipment may dry the air.</p> <p>Circulate fresh air if possible. Plants may help.</p> <p>Consider a humidifier if discomfort is severe.</p>   |                |
| Are levels of heat comfortable?   |             |    |     | <p>Can heating be better controlled? More ventilation or air-conditioning may be required if there is a lot of electronic equipment in the room. Or, can users be moved away from the heat source?</p>  |                |
| Are levels of noise comfortable?  |             |    |     | <p>Consider moving sources of noise eg printers away from the user. If not, consider soundproofing.</p>   |                |
| <b>7 Final questions to users ...</b>   |             |    |     |   |                |
| Have you experienced any discomfort or other symptoms which you attribute to working with your computer?  |             |    |     | <p>Examples include eye strain, neck, shoulder, back, arm or wrist pain.</p>  |                |
| Have you been advised of your entitlement to eye and eyesight testing?  |             |    |     | <p>Has the user had an eye and eyesight test within the past 2 years (or as advised by an optician?)</p>  |                |
| Do you have a disability or chronic health problem that affects your work at the workstation?   |             |    |     | <p>Users are not obliged to disclose any disability but it may help achieve a suitable outcome.</p>   |                |

| Risk Factors  | Tick answer |    |     | Things to consider   | Action to take |
|---|-------------|----|-----|--|----------------|
|   | Yes         | No | N/A |  |                |
| <b>7 Final questions to users ... (continued)</b>   |             |    |     |  |                |
| Do you take regular breaks working away from your workstation?                            |             |    |     | Break up long spells of work at the workstation (current guidance recommends that a 5-10-minute break from their screen every hour helps prevent fatigue, eye strain, upper limb problems and backache). |                |
| Do you know where you can find information sheets on workstation set-up and good posture? |             |    |     | Links to several different sources of information can be found on the Council DSE Guidance.  |                |
| Do you know how to adjust your chair and other equipment at your workstation?             |             |    |     | For those in Waverley Court, instructions on the standard G68 chair are on the Orb.  |                |
| Do you know what the potential risks are from the use of computers?                       |             |    |     | For further information, read the DSE Guidance.  |                |
| Has the checklist covered all problems you may have working with your VDU?                |             |    |     | Check the questionnaire to ensure all questions have been addressed.   |                |
| Write the detail of any problems here:  |             |    |     |  |                |
|   |             |    |     |  |                |

|                       |  |                               |  |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Manager's name</b> |  | <b>Signature</b>              |  |
| <b>Date</b>           |  | <b>Assessment review date</b> |  |