

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL



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HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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DSE Policy and Guidance

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 require employers to assess potential risks to the health of users of display screen equipment (DSE) and take appropriate action to control them.

This policy is intended to assist the identification of those employees at risk from the use of DSE – and is designed to reduce risks and protect the health of DSE users. It also provides a framework to identify, report and deal with identified problems. It will ensure that DSE use is monitored and will provide support to staff who report any health problems associated with the use of DSE. Whilst it is the Councils obligation to see that the assessment is done, in practice it is much better for employees to assess their own work stations with a trained DSE Assessor and then discuss their findings with their supervisor.

It is recognised the display screen equipment may cause, in some instances, adverse effects on health in some circumstances. It is the Councils responsibility for assisting staff and providing any necessary additional equipment to reduce any risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

2.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

In compiling this policy, the following documents have been referred to:

- Health and Safety At Work Act 1974 – Section 2
- Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992
- Management of Health and Safety At Work Regulations 1999 (amended by the Health Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002.
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 (as amended)
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (as amended)

3.0 DEFINITIONS

DSE (Display Screen Equipment) – any alphanumeric or graphic display screen includes microfiche viewers, computer monitors and laptop computers, but not calculators, cash registers or typewriter.

DSE User – an employee who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of his/her normal work. Including working at their base office workstation, home workstation or at another employee's workstation.

VDU – Visual Display Unit, an alternative name for Display Screen Equipment.

Workstation – the immediate work environment around DSE, including screen, disk drives, keyboard, mouse, telephone, printer, document holder, chair and desk/work surface.

Laptop – a laptop is a portable computer often used for working outside the routine office environment. The screen is attached to the keyboard, which often has an integrated mouse.

3.1 Defining DSE ‘user’

As a basic guide, a user is someone who uses a DSE on most days. I.e. intermittently for a total of more than three hours a day or continuously for periods of at least an hour.

Part-time workers should be assessed using the same criteria – e.g.: if an employee works only two days a week, but spends most of the time on DSE work, that person should definitely be considered a user.

Young persons are not classed as “users”, except when they are on work experience with an employer. For those who fall outside this definition, the employer still has a general obligation to ensure their health and safety so the issues discussed are relevant although specific requirements which relate to more intensive use e.g. eye tests are not required.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 The Elected Members, the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service of Redditch Borough Council recognise, and as far as is reasonably practicable, will fulfil their responsibilities to:

- Acknowledge the risks faced by its employees and provide a working environment and processes designed to minimise those risks. This may include risk assessments, monitoring and health surveillance.
- Ensure that suitable and sufficient DSE risk assessments are undertaken that, whenever possible, eliminate or, if not, reduce all identified risks to as low as is reasonably practicable.
- Provide sufficient resources to monitor and control use of DSE equipment
- Provide appropriate risk assessment training for all managers whose staff are likely to be affected by the use of Display Screen Equipment;
- Provide additional training for all managers whose staff are likely to use equipment and to ensure that they take appropriate action if health problems are identified, including follow up procedures and advice;

4.2 Managers Responsibilities

- Will ensure that employees under their supervision are conversant with relevant parts of the DSE policy and safe working practices in order that they may carry out their duties safely and without risk;
- Will ensure employees receive a workplace induction prior to starting work and adequate, appropriate information and training in safe use of equipment and will maintain adequate records of such information and training;
- Ensure that all necessary information, training and support to users and operators to enable them to understand and manage these risks is in place

- Will ensure that as part of a new starters induction that a DSE Assessment is undertaken of their workstation by a trained DSE Assessor
- Will periodically inspect workplaces and work-activities, in order to determine whether the DSE policy is being complied with and whether the highest standards of health, safety and welfare, which are reasonably practicable to attain, are being achieved;
- Will ensure that procedures for reporting of accidents, incidents and near-misses are being followed. Investigations into such reports are carried out and suitable remedial action, where necessary, is taken to prevent a recurrence.
- Ensuring that the results of assessments are discussed with employees.
- Arranging for further assessment if they are advised of a pre-existing health problem.
- Resolving any problems highlighted by the assessments as soon as possible with assistance from Occupational Health when required.

4.3 Employees

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act, all employees will:

- report any defects in equipment to their line manager supervisor and will not use any equipment that is deemed to be faulty or unsafe.
- Will follow the procedures and information given in training sessions or information supplied by the employer.
- Undertake a DSE Assessment with a qualified DSE Assessor for workstations at work (or at home if applicable) and submitting this to their Manager.
- Adopting good posture at their workstation.
- Organising their work in order to take suitable breaks from their DSE (which allow change of posture).
- Reporting any pain, discomfort or eyestrain to their Manager/Supervisor.
- Reporting any medical conditions, so that appropriate action can be taken.

4.4 DSE Assessors

Staff members have been trained to undertake DSE Assessments in support of the Health and Safety Team. They have been provided with suitable and sufficient training in order that they have the ability to:

- identify hazards and assess the risks from a workstation and the type of DSE work being undertaken;
- draw upon additional sources of information on risk as appropriate;
- identify steps to reduce risks;
- plan work activities to avoid prolonged periods of DSE use;
- make a clear record of the assessment and communicate the findings to those who need to take action, and the employee concerned;
- provide training to users.

Where complex issues are identified these can be referred to the Health and Safety Team for further assessment.

5. DSE AND HEALTH ISSUES

The following conditions have been associated with the use of display screen equipment:

- Musculoskeletal disorders such as back pain;
- Upper limb disorders such as pains and discomfort in hands, wrists, arms, neck, shoulders or back (also called Repetitive Strain Injury [RSI], which occurs especially after long periods of uninterrupted DSE work);
- Visual fatigue (including sore eyes, eye strain and headaches),
- Fatigue
- Mental stress
- Photo-sensitive epilepsy, where people may be susceptible to seizures from flickering screens

Early detection of health problems will allow the Council to tackle the cause and protect staff from permanent damage. Every option will be fully explored, in consultation with staff and the Councils Occupational Health provider.

Generally potential problems can be prevented by: -

- Adequate training, instruction and understanding
- Assessment of the workplace and work patterns
- Visual assessment (eye and eyesight tests) and appropriate action

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

Redditch Borough Council is required to assess all DSE workstations. In addition all new DSE workstations should be assessed prior to use for the first time and if the nature of the work changes significantly.

All existing workstations should be re-assessed when there is a significant change in matters such as software, hardware, furnishings, increased use time, task change, workstation re-location or if there are environmental changes e.g. lighting significantly modified. Any reported ill health associated with DSE use should also trigger a re-assessment. The Council's Health and Safety team are available to offer advice and assistance, but will not routinely undertake risk assessments.

The volume of work expected of the user will form part of the assessment and in any event regular breaks will be expected. For most tasks, natural breaks or pauses will occur as a consequence of the work and most 'users' will have some discretion over the organization of their work to introduce appropriate change in activity. Where this is not possible, with jobs such as data entry, then rest breaks should be introduced.

The Health and Safety Executive do not give detailed guidance on rest breaks, but suggest that shorter breaks taken more frequently e.g. five minutes after sixty minutes, are likely to have more beneficial effect than occasional longer breaks.

Like all risk assessments of workplace activities they should be subject to periodic review by a competent Assessor. The typical circumstances when DSE assessments need to be revised are when:

- major changes to the DSE, furniture or software are made;
- new users start work or users change workstation;
- workstations are re-sited;
- the nature of the work changes considerably;
- a user complains of discomfort or pain.

8. EYESIGHT TESTS

Sometimes, users can experience discomfort and fatigue whilst using DSE. Also it may make users with pre-existing vision defects more aware of them. If problems are experienced, it is important that simple physical causes are eliminated like draughts, very dry atmospheres and even staring at the screen – which tends to reduce the rate of blinking.

Employees wishing to take advantage of “free” optometrist tests and/or special correction (if this is required exclusively for DSE work), should make their request via Human Resources who will provide an Eye care voucher.

If spectacles are required solely for DSE use the Council will pay a contribution of £50.

The guidance to the regulations does allow the Council to select optometrists. This facilitates a good professional relationship between the optometrist and the Council.

The full eye test includes a check for disease and should certainly be taken up if an employee experiences symptoms such as persistent headaches and/or gritty eyes, which cannot be attributed to more general work problems like stress or draughts.

For those who need no correction initially, repeat tests or screening should be offered at regular intervals ideally every 2 years. If in the meantime should employees experience any difficulty they should raise the problem with the Health and Safety Team.

The screening and eyesight tests are entirely voluntary and employees cannot be required to have a test against their will. However, if an eye test is deemed appropriate and an employee refuses to have one this should be noted on their Personnel file.

9. MOBILE WORKING AND USE OF LAPTOPS

Portable DSE such as laptops and handheld devices are also subject to the Regulations if in prolonged use for work purposes. People who habitually use portable DSE should be trained in how to minimise risks, for example by sitting comfortably, angling the screen so it is easy to read and taking frequent breaks.

Wherever possible, portable DSE should be placed on a firm surface at a comfortable height. Where portables are in prolonged use at the user's main place of work, additional steps can be taken to reduce risks, e.g. by using a docking station.

Increasingly staff are working with a laptop rather than a conventional PC, in such cases they should comply with guidance on workstation set up, as far as they can.

It is important to provide portable DSE users with sufficient training and information to make their own risk assessment. This training should also include advice on how to set up and use equipment in the locations where it is to be used.

Short periods of work or work where typing volume is not intensive should not cause any undue difficulty. However wherever possible and for lengthy or repeated use in the same location the laptop should be "docked" or supplied with separate keyboard, mouse and monitor riser/racking system, which will assist in reduction of repetitive strain injuries. This is appropriate when using a laptop in the base office or their home office. The use of laptops on without a proper workstation should be kept to a minimum.

Employees using laptops should be aware that some design compromises inherent in portable DSE equipment, can lead to postural or other problems. For example a bent neck or headaches arising from low, fixed position of the screen, for these reasons it is recommended to "dock" the portable DSE equipment wherever possible.

Employees with laptops who satisfy the criteria of 'users' must complete the DSE assessment and share their results with their Manager. The following practical points should also be considered when selecting portable computers:

- Low weight (less than 3kg if possible). Keep accessories as few and as light as possible.
- Largest screen possible. If possible, choose a detachable or height-adjustable screen.
- Purchase a lightweight carrying case with handle and shoulder straps. To reduce risk of theft or assault, avoid manufacturer-branded cases.
- Choose portables capable of being used with a docking station or at least a separate keyboard and mouse.

As well as the risks associated with the use of desktop computers, users of laptops need to take into account the risks due to manual handling when moving between locations. The risk assessment should also consider the risk of theft, possibly involving assault.

For equipment other than laptops i.e. notebooks and tablets, ensure that such hand held computers for prolonged use are carefully selected for ergonomic features, which match requirements of the tasks undertaken. For example

equipment to be used outdoors should be adequately waterproof, legible in bright sunlight and keyboards and screen should be large enough to be used comfortably.

10. HOT DESKING

The use of 'shared' workstations is becoming increasingly common within Council premises. Relevant health and safety issues associated with such arrangements include the following:-

- It is essential that the furniture and equipment used in a shared workstation are good quality and appropriate to meet the health and safety standards. It is foreseeable that the 'Hot Desk' could become the recipient of the unwanted, recycled and even damaged furniture etc. This will contravene the requirements of the Display Screen Equipment Regulations.
- Employees who are required to 'Hot Desk' should have received appropriate Training and instruction to enable them to arrange the workstation accordingly to reduce their risks to musculoskeletal disorders and upper limb disorders.
- They will also be required to complete a DSE Assessment for their main, or most frequently used, workstation.
- Extra hygiene precautions are required. Anti-Bacterial wipes should be available and used to wipe down telephones and desks where people are 'Hot Desking'.

11. REFERENCES

In compiling this policy, the following documents have been referenced:

- HSE information leaflet – INDG36 (rev2)
- HSE Guidance Notes – HSG90 – the law on VDU's, and easy guide
- HSE Guidance Notes – L26 – Work with Display Screen Equipment - Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (as amended 2002)

12. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy document shall be monitored, and reviewed as appropriate to evaluate its effectiveness. The document shall be revised as necessary, and in light of such evaluation.

TRAINING, INSTRUCTION AND UNDERSTANDING

All staff will be made aware of the DSE Policy and provided with the necessary training during staff Inductions. Managers/Supervisors will be responsible for ensuring that a DSE Assessment is undertaken of all new starters' workstations as part of their Induction process.

Users will get the best out of their equipment and working arrangements if they understand the principles behind good workstation layout and use. However, in particular, they should be able to:

1. Minimise glare by adjusting the position of the DSE in relation to room lighting sources and windows.
2. Arrange the optimum layout and relative heights of keyboard, screen and seating.
3. Recognise correct posture: limb joints neutral, e.g. back of wrist in line with the forearm, head in line with spine, not bent unnaturally backward or forward.
4. Forearms and thighs parallel to the floor.
5. Appreciate the key role of the chair (and footrest if necessary) in permitting the user to adjust seat height and back rest to permit correct posture irrespective of the desk height.
6. Position work material; document holders and papers to avoid undue twisting from side to side.
7. Realise the importance of changing position regularly and relaxing, to avoid holding fixed positions for long periods.
8. Understand that periodically changing eye focus by looking away or even going away from the screen to do a different job helps to prevent fatigue.
9. Make use of an offer of an eye check.
10. Use simple mobility exercises to keep the body supple.