

Version	4
Last Revision Date	August 2016



HS 11

Display Screen Equipment Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

POLICY NAME	Display Screen Equipment Policy
Department	Human Resources
Telephone Number	01443 425536
Initial Policy Launch Date	September 1996
Reviewing Officer	Mike Murphy
Review Date	August 2018
Date of Equality Impact Assessment	2008

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revised By
September 1996	Gerwyn Hogben
March 2005	Gerwyn Hogben
July 2010	Mike Murphy
August 2012	Mike Murphy
August 2016	Mike Murphy

DOCUMENT APPROVAL

This document has received approval from:	Date of Approval
HR Senior Management Team	September 1996
Corporate Management Team	September 1996
Cabinet	September 1996

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy has been produced in response to the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations, which require the Council, as an employer, to ensure the health and safety of its employees and others who use display screen equipment (DSE) for the purpose of its undertaking.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 All reasonable steps will be taken by the Council to ensure the health and safety of employees (whether full or part time) and others (e.g. agency workers working for the Council) who work with DSE.
- 2.2 The Council acknowledges that health and safety hazards may arise from the use of the DSE equipment. It is the intention of the Council to ensure that any risks are reduced to a minimum.
- 2.3 Whilst it is generally recognised that the use of DSE can be undertaken without risks, it is appreciated that some employees may have genuine reservations and concerns. The Council will seek to give information and training to enable a further understanding of these issues.
- 2.4 Specific guidance on managing working with DSE is attached to this policy statement.
- 2.5 The responsibility for implementing the requirements of this policy and for the preparation of an implementation strategy rests with each Director or Head of Service.

POLICY GUIDANCE

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 'Display screen equipment' (DSE) means any alphanumeric or graphic display screen, regardless of the display process involved. It also includes screens used in work with television or film pictures, e.g. CCTV.

3.2 'Workstation' means an assembly comprising:

- DSE (whether provided with software determining the interface between the equipment and its operator or 'user', a keyboard or any other input device);
- any optional accessories to the DSE;
- any disk drive, telephone, modem, printer, document holder, work chair, work desk, work surface, or other item peripheral to the DSE; and
- the immediate work environment around the DSE.

3.3 'User' means an employee, or an agency worker, who habitually uses DSE for the purpose of the Council's undertaking as a significant part of his/her normal work. It will generally be appropriate to classify the person as a user if they:

- normally use DSE for **continuous or near continuous spells of an hour or more** at a time and use DSE in this way **more or less daily**;
- have to **transfer information quickly** to or from the DSE;
- they **also** need to apply a high level of **attention and concentration**; or are **highly dependant on DSE** or have **little choice** about using it; or need **special training or skills** to use the DSE.

It is essential that all 'users' be identified in order to determine those employees that are covered by this policy. Where the use of a workstation does not fall within the scope of this policy (i.e. the employee or agency worker is not a 'user'), then the health and safety of those engaged in such activities will be covered by other general duties of the Council, e.g. a risk assessment is required to be carried out under regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. Please refer to Policy HS6 - Management of Health and Safety at Work.

There is a checklist to assist managers to determine who is a user incorporated in the Council's document DSE User and Workstation Assessment Checklists, copies of which can be obtained on the RCT Source or from the Health and Safety Team.

- 3.4 'Operator' means a self-employed person who works at a Council workstation and habitually uses DSE for the purpose of the Council's undertaking as a significant part of his/her normal work and whose use of DSE is such that they would be classified as a user if they were employed.

4. ASSESSMENT OF WORKSTATIONS

- 4.1 A suitable and sufficient risk assessment of the workstation to identify any hazards and to evaluate risks and their extent must be carried out.

There is a checklist to assist managers to undertake DSE workstation assessments incorporated in the Council's document DSE User and Workstation Assessment Checklists.

Further guidance is available in the Council's document DSE – Setting Up Your Workstation, copies of which can be obtained on the RCT Source or from the Health and Safety Team.

The procedure to be followed when undertaking a DSE workstation assessment is detailed in the Council's document DSE Workstation Assessment Procedure, copies of which can also be obtained on the RCT Source or from the Health and Safety Team.

Guidance on the minimum requirements of a workstation is provided in Appendix A.

- 4.2 The risks identified by the assessment must be reduced to the lowest extent reasonably practicable. This means there must be a balance struck between the cost of preventing health risks and the consequences of not preventing these risks. It does not mean that improvements need not be made just because they cannot be afforded. Some of the health effects of display screen work can cause pain and permanent disability and cannot be ignored. The main hazards associated with DSE working relate to:

Physical (musculoskeletal):

Such as work related upper limb disorders (WRULDs), often referred to as RSI (repetitive strain injuries).

Eye and Eyesight Effects:

Working with DSE is not considered to cause permanent damage to eye or eyesight, nor does it make existing defects worse, but it can make anyone with an existing visual defect more aware of it. Some employees may however experience temporary visual fatigue leading to a range of symptoms, such as impaired visual performance (for example blurred vision), red or sore eyes and/or headaches.

Fatigue and Stress:

Arising from poorly designed tasks or working environment.

- 4.3 Participation of the user is essential to a successful DSE workstation assessment. Involvement of the individual worker is important because some of the required criteria are subjective, for example, in ascertaining the comfort of a chair. The user should have suitable information and training to enable constructive participation.
- 4.4 If a DSE user is required to work at home, whether or not the workstation is provided whole or in part by the Council, the risks must be assessed.
- 4.5 The risk assessment or relevant parts of it should be reviewed if there are reports of health problems, different users, changes in individual capability, or where there has been some significant change to the workstation, such as:
 - a major change to software;
 - a major change to any of the equipment (screen, keyboard, input devices, etc);
 - a major change in workstation furniture;
 - a substantial increase in the amount of time being spent using DSE;
 - a substantial change in other task requirements (for example, greater speed or accuracy);
 - if the workstation is relocated (even if all equipment and furniture stays the same);
 - if major features of the work environment, such as lighting, are significantly modified.
- 4.6 Reassessments should be carried out in the same way as the original assessment, consulting users and safety representatives, and should be done as soon as reasonably practicable after the need has been identified.

- 4.7 Where a workstation is used by more than one user, whether simultaneously or in shifts (a shared workstation), it should be risk assessed in relation to all those covered by the DSE Regulations. For example, if tall and short users are sharing a workstation, the person carrying out the assessment should check the chair has a wide range of adjustments to accommodate both of them, and that a footrest is available when required.

5. BREAKS OR CHANGES OF ACTIVITY

- 5.1 It is not appropriate to lay down specific requirements for breaks, which apply to all types of DSE work, as it is the nature and mix of demands of the job which determine the length of break necessary to prevent fatigue.

However some general guidance can be given:

- breaks should be taken when performance and productivity is at a maximum, before the user starts getting tired. This is better than taking a break to recover from fatigue. The timing of the break is more important than its length;
- breaks or changes of activity should be included in working time. They should reduce the workload at the screen, i.e. they should not result in a higher pace or intensity of work on account of their introduction;
- short frequent breaks are more satisfactory than occasional, longer breaks: for example, a 5-10 minute break after 50-60 minutes continuous screen and/or keyboard work is likely to be better than a 15 minute break every 2 hours;
- if possible, breaks should be taken away from the DSE workstation and allow the user to stand up, move about and/or change posture;
- informal breaks, that is time spent not viewing the screen but, for example, engaged on other tasks, appear from study evidence to be more effective in relieving visual fatigue than formal rest breaks;
- wherever practicable, users should be allowed some discretion as to how they carry out the task; individual control over the nature and pace of work allows optimal distribution of effort over the working day.

6. EYE AND EYESIGHT TESTS

6.1 Eye and eyesight tests must be provided, as follows:

- once users have made an initial request for a test – as soon as practicable after the request has been made;
- for new recruits or existing employees who are to become users and have made a request for a test – before they become users;
- for users – at regular intervals after the first test, provided they want the tests. For the purpose of this policy, the regular interval between having eye and eyesight tests will be two years (unless otherwise directed by the optician);
- at the request for a test by a user who is experiencing visual difficulties which may reasonably be considered to be related to DSE work, for example, visual symptoms such as eye strain or focusing difficulties – as soon as practicable after the request has been made.

6.2 The Council may not refuse to provide a test on the grounds that a new recruit has recently had one provided in any previous period of employment. However, it may not be of practical benefit to such a user to request a test if their new tasks and work environment are to be similar to those before the change of job.

6.3 All eye and eyesight tests must be carried out by a competent person. This will either be an optometrist or a doctor with ophthalmic qualifications.

6.4 Reference must also be made to the Council's Scheme HS11A - Eye and Eyesight Tests and Special Corrective Appliances.

The Council will, in accordance with the guidelines set out in Scheme HS 11A, provide financial assistance to employees who are users towards the cost of eye and eyesight tests, and special corrective appliances where needed.

However it will not provide any such assistance to agency workers who are users (refer also to section 8), nor to self-employed people (operators).

7. WORK WITH PORTABLE DSE

- 7.1 Portable DSE, such as laptops, notebook computers and tablets, are also subject to the DSE regulations if they are in prolonged use. Detailed below are recommendations for managers to consider for those members of staff who use portable DSE.

Because of the impracticability to use an independent assessor to carry out a risk assessment at each location, particularly where work may take place as a user travels around with their portable DSE, sufficient training and information should be given to portable DSE users to enable he/she to carry out their own risk assessment.

Use of portable DSE should be kept to a minimum, as far as is reasonable, as the inherent design of the equipment increases many of the risks, for example, smaller keyboard, screen and keyboard attached, etc. Where laptops have to be used for extended periods of time, suitable 'docking stations' must be provided and used.

As well as the common risks to both portable and desktop DSE work, the following additional risks may be associated specifically with portable DSE work and need to be taken into account by managers:

- manual handling risks when moving between locations (bearing in mind that other equipment such as spare batteries, printers, or papers may add to the burden of the portable DSE itself);
- risks of theft, possibly involving an assault.

8. AGENCY WORKERS

- 8.1 Many temporary workers supplied by employment agencies will use DSE sufficiently to become users or, if self-employed, operators, and hence be subject to the DSE Regulations.

- 8.2 In such situations both the Council, as host employer, and the agency will have duties under the DSE Regulations. The following clarifies these responsibilities.

(a) The Council should:

- assess risks to agency workers (whether users or operators) using their workstations;
- ensure all workstations in their undertaking comply with minimum requirements;

- ensure activities are planned so that agency worker users can have breaks from DSE work;
- provide training to agency worker users when their workstations are being modified;
- provide information to agency worker users and operators about risks, risk assessment and risk reduction measures; and additionally to users about breaks, and training when their workstation is modified.

(b) Agencies should:

- on request, provide eye tests (and special corrective appliances, if required) to agency worker users who are their employees;
- provide health and safety training for such workers;
- provide information to such workers about eye tests and training;
- check that host employers carry out their duties (as described above) to:
 - conduct risk assessments of the workstations to be used;
 - ensure their workstations comply with the minimum requirements;
 - plan for breaks or changes of activity for users; and
 - provide information to agency workers, as specified above.

9. EFFECTS ON PREGNANT WOMEN

- 9.1 In light of current scientific evidence, pregnant women do not need to stop working with DSE. Many scientific studies have been carried out, but as a whole their results do not show a link between miscarriages or birth defects and working with DSE. Research and reviews of scientific evidence will continue to be undertaken.
- 9.2 However, to avoid stress and anxiety, women who are pregnant, are planning children, or are worried about working with DSE should discuss the matter with their GP or the Council's Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit.

10. WORK WITH MOUSE, TRACKBALL OR OTHER POINTING DEVICES

10.1 The majority of desktop computers are supplied with a computer mouse. In most situations the mouse will be an appropriate pointing device to use. However, there will be cases where an alternative device is more suitable or is preferred by the user. The mouse depends on having a suitable surface with enough space on which to use it. So, for example, where space is very limited or where an individual has limited mobility in their arm, an alternative such as the trackball or touchpad may be more suitable. These alternative devices are frequently found on portable computers.

10.2 In choosing a pointing device, there are a number of factors to consider:

The environment in which it will be used. Will the user be able to easily use the device at the workstation? Is there enough space? Can the user adopt a safe, comfortable working posture? Is there a suitable surface on which to use the device? Will other factors, such as a dirty working environment or vibration, affect its use?

Individual characteristics. Is the device the right size and shape for the user? Will right and left-handed users be able to use it? Will the device be usable if the individual has any physical limitations, for example, an existing upper limb disorder?

Task characteristics. Does the task demand a lot of use to be made of the pointing device? Is a lot of fast and accurate positioning of the cursor required? Some devices are better than others in terms of speed and accuracy, for example, the mouse tends to be more accurate but slightly slower than the trackball for fast, lone cursor movements.

11. SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR USERS

11.1 The following information must be provided for users:

- risks from DSE and workstations;
- risk assessment and measures to reduce the risks;
- breaks and activity changes;
- eye and eyesight tests;
- initial training;
- training when workstation is modified.

12. TRAINING

- 12.1 Adequate health and safety training in the use of a workstation must be provided for users and for those who are to become users.
- 12.2 Health and safety training must also be provided when a workstation is substantially modified. This training will be in addition to general training, for example, keyboard skills or use of a particular computer programme or word processing package.

Training should, for example, cover:

- recognition of hazards and risks, e.g. screen reflections and glare;
- explanation of health risks and causes, e.g. poor posture and lack of breaks;
- describing what users can do to minimise these risks, e.g. changing position, adjusting furniture and equipment, regular cleaning of screens, taking breaks and changing activity;
- reporting of problems or shortcomings in work patterns or workstations;
- giving information about eye and eyesight tests, rest pauses and standards for workstations;
- explaining how the user can contribute to assessments of workstations.

13. RECORD KEEPING

- 13.1 Records should be kept of the following:
- the results of workstation assessments;
 - actions taken as a result of workstation assessments;
 - eye and eyesight tests;
 - the supply of corrective appliances;
 - the provision of training;
 - information given to employees;
 - complaints of alleged or actual DSE-related ill health;
 - action taken in respect of such complaints.

14. ADVICE

- 14.1 Advice on the implementation of the policy can be obtained from the Health and Safety Team, Human Resources, Ty Elai, Williamstown, CF40 1NY, telephone 01443 425531.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS OF A WORKSTATION

INTRODUCTION

Set out below are the minimum requirements for DSE workstations. The term 'workstation' has many characteristics, i.e.:

The Display Screen:

- should have well defined characters of adequate size and spacing;
- the image must be stable and flicker free;
- brightness and contrast between the characters must be easily adjustable;
- the screen must swivel and tilt freely to suit employees needs;
- it must be possible to use a separate base for the screen or an adjustable table;
- the screen must be free of reflections and glare that may cause discomfort.

The Keyboard:

- it must be separate from the screen and must be tiltable to enable a comfortable position to be found during use;
- the space in front of the keyboard must be sufficient to provide hand/arm support;
- the surface must be matt finish to avoid reflective glare;
- the arrangements of the keyboard and the function of the keys must facilitate its use;
- key symbols must be adequately contrasted and visible during normal use.

The Work desk and Work surface:

- should have low reflectance and be large enough for the task and to accommodate a flexible arrangement of all necessary equipment;
- any document holder must be stable and adjustable so as to minimise the need for awkward eye/hand movements;
- should have enough space to allow a comfortable working position to be achieved.

The Workchair:

- should be stable and allow easy freedom of movement and a comfortable position;
- the seat must be adjustable in height;
- the back rest must be adjustable in height and angle of tilt;
- a footrest should be provided if required.

The Environment:

- there must be sufficient space for workers to change position and to vary movements;
- lighting must ensure satisfactory conditions and appropriate contrast, taking into account the type of work and the needs of the worker (lighting level at the work surface should be between 300-500 lux for a combination of screen work and non-screen tasks);
- glare and reflections on the screen or other equipment that may cause disturbance must be prevented. Prevention must be achieved by co-ordinating the layout of the workstation with that of the lighting;
- noise emitted by workstation equipment must be considered when the workstation is being equipped;
- workstation equipment must not produce excess heat liable to cause discomfort;
- an adequate level of humidity must be maintained (40% - 60% RH).

MANAGERS CHECKLIST

	✓ As Appropriate		
	N/A	Yes	No
• Has an assessment been carried out to determine if an individual is regarded as a display screen 'user'?			
• Has a workstation risk assessment been carried out to identify the hazards and risks present?			
• Has action been taken as a result of the assessment?			
• Are regular work breaks being taken?			
• Is appropriate training being given to all 'users'?			
• Are appropriate records kept?			
• Are monitoring procedures in place to ensure that the requirements of the policy are being met?			

Completed by: _____
(Signature)

Confirmed by: _____
(Signature)

Name: _____
(Print)

Name: _____
(Print)

Designation: _____

Designation: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____