

Display Screen Equipment (DSE).

Schools Safety Guide

Document information

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1. Introduction

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations requires employers to minimise the risks in DSE work by ensuring that workstations and jobs are well designed. The Regulations apply where staff members **habitually** use DSE as a significant part of their normal work. Other people, who use DSE only occasionally, are not covered by the requirements in the Regulations (apart from the workstation requirements). However, their employers still have general duties to protect them under other health & safety legislation.

2. What's the problem?

Computer workstations or equipment can be associated with neck, shoulder, back or arm pains, fatigue and eyestrain. These aches and pains are sometimes called upper limb disorders (ULDs) or repetitive strain injuries (RSI). Usually these disorders do not last, but in a few cases, they may become persistent or even disabling. These problems can be avoided by following good practice.

3. What is DSE?

For most of us, DSE simply refers to the computers/laptops we use at work. However, the definition is quite wide and includes handheld devices (e.g. tablets), microfiche and TV screens. The regulations cover the use of DSE when used for work purposes, wherever the work takes place (e.g. in school, at home or at other sites). Certain requirements may also apply to screens that form part of process control equipment, etc.

4. Habitual v occasional users

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) suggest that employees who use DSE for a significant part of their working day (i.e. **continuous periods of an hour or more** at a time), on a **daily basis** are likely to be classed as **users**.

Whilst other, "occasional", users of DSE aren't covered by the DSE regulations, the DSE workstations they use are; consequently, their workstations should be assessed.

5. DSE assessments

A DSE assessment should be carried out for each habitual user of DSE and their workstation(s); in addition, a generic assessment (included as part of the school's premise risk assessment) should be carried out for all other DSE workstations.

A [template DSE self-assessment form](#) is available via the PPS website to assess users/ workstations. Assessments look at issues including:

- Seating
- Work surface
- Display screen
- Environment
- Lighting
- Monitor
- Mouse and keyboard
- Software

Each school should have a competent person who reviews the self-assessments and ensures that any problems identified are followed up.

Assessments should be reviewed regularly (annually in schools where Sandwell is the employer) and/or whenever there are changes to the equipment, workstation or changes in individual capability.

6. Requirements for Workstations

The DSE Regulations state that workstations must meet the requirements laid down in the schedule to the Regulations. As a minimum, schools must ensure the workstations have:

- adequate lighting;
- adequate contrast, no glare or distracting reflections on the screen;
- distracting noise minimised;
- leg room and clearances to allow postural change;
- window coverings if needed to minimise glare;
- software: appropriate to task and adapted to the user;
- screen: stable image, adjustable, readable, glare/reflection-free;
- keyboard: usable, adjustable, detachable, legible;
- work surface: with space for flexible arrangement of equipment and documents, glare-free;
- chair: stable and adjustable; and
- footrest if user needs one.

7. Daily work routine of users

Users should be able to break up continued use of DSE with changes of activity, such as answering the phone, filing, using the printer etc. Where natural breaks do not occur during the use of DSE, users must ensure they introduce regular breaks to change posture and stretch periodically. The timing and length of changes in activity or breaks from DSE use is not set down in law and arrangements will vary depending on the situation. However, the general rule of thumb is to take more short and frequent postural breaks rather than take less frequent longer breaks to aid recovery.

8. Portable devices

Portable devices (e.g. laptops) and handheld devices (e.g. tablets) are also subject to the DSE Regulations if they are in prolonged use - e.g. are they used “habitually” as per HSE’s suggested classification?

Prior to using these devices, you must assess their suitability for the task along with any health & safety implications - remember these devices are designed for portability, rather than prolonged use. You may need to take additional steps to reduce the risk from portable DSE use e.g. if a laptop is used for prolonged periods

at a location, you should consider providing a laptop riser or docking station (with separate keyboard, mouse and/or monitor).

9. Eye and eyesight tests

Habitual users and those who are to become habitual users of DSE are entitled, **at their request**, to an eyesight test. Once requested, the employer (head teacher in schools) must ensure eyesight tests are provided as soon as possible and without charge to the employee. The head teacher will need to set up arrangements for eye and eyesight tests. For example, the employee will request an eye sight test with a specific optician/provider. On completion of eye tests employees will submit their receipts and forward the relevant forms see ([Eye Test Form](#)) onto the headteacher/leadership team for reimbursement.

If the examining optician prescribes corrective lenses specifically for DSE (middle distance) work, the school has a duty to provide them; however, employers only have to provide basic frames/prescription lenses. Employees can request more expensive frames/lenses, in which case they must pay the difference between the basic allowance and the cost of more expensive glasses, contact lenses or other corrective appliances.

10. Training

Employers should provide training to ensure employees can use their DSE and workstation safely and know how to make best use of it to avoid health problems - for example by adjusting the chair. A copy of the HSE leaflet “Working with VDUs” can be given to staff - this provides information and instruction on the safe use of DSE. The leaflet can be downloaded from the HSE website:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg36.pdf>

The HSE have also created a short video which gives basic advice on how to maintain good posture. The video is available from:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/home-working.htm>

[Appendix 1](#) also provides advice on individual seating and posture.

11. Further information

Further information on DSE is available on the HSE’s website:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/>

Appendix 1 - DSE General Advice on Individual Seating and Posture



1. **Elbows** – Above the desk at 90-110 degrees
2. **Shoulders** – Relaxed as opposed to hunched
3. **Wrists** – In line with forearms
4. **Hips, knees, and ankles** – At 90 degrees while seated
5. **Feet** – Flat on the ground or supported by a footrest
6. **Head** – Upright with ears aligned with shoulders
7. **Eyes** – Looking at the top third of the screen. Consider the use of a laptop raiser with your laptop
8. **Seat length** – Long enough to provide support beneath thighs
9. **Backrest** – Angled at 90-110 degrees with adequate lumbar support in line with lower back
10. **Keyboard and mouse** – The letters 'G' and 'H' of the keyboard aligned with your nose. Mouse gripped loosely
11. **Laptop** – Used with a riser, external keyboard, and external mouse (or docking station for extended use)