Display screen equipment

Typically, display screen equipment (DSE) is any computer, laptop, touch screen or similar device. Most premises may have very little in the way of this type of equipment. Larger premises may have offices where computers are commonly used. These days, it is also becoming increasingly common for staff to complete work using laptops at their own home.

Prolonged use of this equipment has been known to cause ill-health effects. These include fatigue, temporary eyestrain, headaches, backache and cramps. More disabling conditions can also occur in some circumstances.

The likelihood of experiencing these ill-health effects depends on a range of factors. These include the frequency and duration of use of the equipment; the intensity and pace of the work required; and if there are long spells of continuous use. Other factors, such as the amount of discretion a person has over the extent and methods of use can also contribute.

As some of these ill-health conditions can result from poor posture, consideration of the workstation as a whole is important to prevent them. The workstation includes the display screen itself, the keyboard, mouse, disk drive, telephone, modem, printer, desk, chair, document holder, work surface and the immediate work environment around it. In most cases, a few simple adjustments can make users more comfortable and the equipment easier to use.

Legal requirements

Generally, if someone is injured you may need to show that you have met your duty of care.

In addition to this, if you are an employer you must comply with more specific health and safety law as well. This includes the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations. These apply where employees (and volunteers if you are an employer) regularly uses DSE as a significant part of their normal work (i.e. daily, generally for continuous periods of an hour or more).

Here, you must:

- complete workstation risk assessments, reviewing these if there is a significant change or they are no longer valid
- implement adequate precautions to reduce any risks based upon the assessments made
- make sure that workstations meet specified standards
- plan work so that users can take suitable breaks or change their activity as appropriate
- provide eye and eyesight tests on request, and special spectacles if needed
- provide appropriate information and training.

Hazards to look out for

Typical hazards include:

- insufficient leg room or clearance
- lack of space
- incorrectly adjusted chairs or DSE equipment
- using laptops without additional equipment (for example, a separate screen)
- using equipment for a long period of time without a break
- inadequate space on desks
- glare and reflections on the screen
- inadequate lighting
- screens with unstable images, that are unreadable or can't be adjusted
- broken equipment that will no longer adjust properly e.g. keyboards, chairs or footrests
- problems with the software itself or which users do not understand how to use.*

*Note: this list is not exhaustive

Precautions you can take

Typical precautions include:

- making sure desks have sufficient space for equipment to be set up properly and for people to sit comfortably
- providing blinds at windows
- providing equipment that can be adjusted to suit the user e.g. chairs, tiltable keyboards, height-adjustable screens etc.
- encouraging users to take short, frequent breaks from the screen – a good rule of thumb is 5–10 minute breaks or a change in activity every hour
- providing additional accessories for use with laptops (especially if they are used for long periods of time) – such as a keyboard or screen
- keeping equipment in good repair, and replacing broken equipment promptly
- providing footrests where feet cannot rest comfortably on the floor
- providing a document holder where significant copy-typing is carried out
- checking home workers have an appropriate space at home in which to work
- providing appropriate software along with training and information on how to use it.*

*Note: this list is not exhaustive

Making a start

Action	Guidance
1. Identify those who might regularly use DSE as a significant part of their normal work.	This may include employees, employees of others and volunteers (where you are an employer). These are referred to as users. It will also include anyone who is self-employed and uses an employer's workstation in this way. These are referred to as operators.
	If you are an employer and need to complete formal risk assessments, these may help you identify users and operators.
	This will be those who:
	• normally use DSE for continuous or near-continuous spells of an hour or more at a time
	• use DSE in this way more or less daily
	• have to transfer information quickly to or from the DSE
	• have to apply high levels of attention and concentration
	• are highly dependent on DSE or have little choice about using it
	• need special training or skills to use the DSE.
	Although employers can decide which of their employees are users some may not want to analyse each job to do so. Here, an option is to simply decide that all staff who have access to DSE will be treated as users. This can save effort and allow resources to be directed at implementing suitable precautions.

ansvar

Insuring the heart of your community

Action	Guidance
	In most instances, it will be fairly obvious if a person is a user. In larger organisations, it is likely to apply to jobs such as office administrators, and possibly the clergy or Vergers for church premises. It is highly unlikely a churchwarden would be classed as a user.
	If you are unsure, further guidance on working with DSE and identifying users and operators can be found at: **www.hse.gov.uk/pUbns/priced/l26.pdf**.
2. Complete more specific assessments of workstations provided for users and operators.	If you are an employer, you will need to complete these to assess any health and safety risks and identify any precautions that might be required. You will need to look at: • the whole workstation including any equipment, furniture, and the work environment • the job being done • any special needs of individual staff. Those completing the assessments should be competent to do so. You should make a record of the assessments made. You will also need to communicate the findings to those who need to take appropriate action and to the worker concerned. The HSE has produced a simple checklist you can use to help complete the assessments. This is available at: **www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf**
3. Check the precautions you have taken are adequate. If they are not, identify any additional ones that are needed and who will be responsible for taking them. Ensure that the precautions you have identified are taken and remain effective.	The checklist noted above, identifies a number of things to consider to make sure people can work comfortably and safely. Under the DSE Regulations, workstations must meet certain minimum requirements. These are covered in the checklist and includes those relating to: • lighting, contrast, glare and distracting reflections • distracting noise • leg room and clearances to allow postural changes • software • the screen • the keyboard • the work surface • the chair • the footrest (where one is needed). You should also plan activities so that users can interrupt prolonged use of DSE with changes of activity. The timing and length of changes in activity or breaks are not set down in law. As such, arrangements will vary depending on a particular situation. Employers are not responsible for providing breaks for the self-employed. Users are the best judge of how effective any precautions are. They should be encouraged to report any discomfort they are experiencing with their workstation. It is worth making a note of any checks made or feedback received. You should address any problems identified in good time.

ansvar

Insuring the heart of your community

Action	Guidance
4. Provide eye tests and any necessary spectacles for DSE work.	There is no evidence to suggest that DSE work will cause permanent damage to eyes or eyesight. Eye tests are provided to ensure users can comfortably see the screen and work effectively without visual fatigue. If a user (or a potential user) requests an eye test you must arrange for one to be provided. Where the test shows that the user needs glasses specifically for DSE work, you must pay for a basic pair of frames and lenses. Eye tests are not an entitlement for the self-employed. Users are entitled to further tests if DSE work is considered to cause them visual fatigue and at regular intervals after the first test.
5. Ensure that users know how to use DSE safely. Make a note of any information or training that is provided to individuals in these situations.	You must provide adequate information, instruction and training to users to help them identify risks and safe work practices. Broadly, this should consider: • the risks from DSE work and the precautions to be taken • how to adjust furniture • how to organise work areas to avoid awkward or frequently repeated stretching movements • how to clean the screen and mouse • who to contact for help and to report problems or symptoms; • how to use the HSE's DSE checklist if users are going to make their own assessment. You may need to retrain users if you make significant changes to their workstations.
6. Document your arrangements and responsibilities for using display screen equipment. Review these where necessary, particularly if you suspect that they are no longer valid. Keep the notes you have made in the steps above.	If you have prepared a health and safety policy, record your arrangements as part of it. You may also need to keep simple records of the checks you have made and actions you have taken for certain periods of time.

ansvar

Insuring the heart of your community

Want to know more?

Further useful resources are available at
www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/index.htm

Note: if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, then regional variations might apply. In this instance, you should check the guidance provided by the Enforcing Agency for your region. This will be freely available on their website.

Risk advice line

(provided by Ecclesiastical professionals or external specialists)

Phone: **0345 600 7531**
Email: **risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com**

Risk specialists are on hand to advise you on a range of topics, including:

- property protection, security, business continuity planning
- health and safety, food safety, environmental management
- construction safety, fire safety, occupational health, water safety or asbestos.

Available Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm (excluding public and bank holidays).

For further information speak to your insurance advisor or call us on **0345 60 20 999**

www.ansvar.co.uk

ansvar

Insuring the heart of your community

UW174(RM) 11/18 (DSE)