

Display Screen Equipment

Health and Safety Guidance for Managers

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Manager's Responsibilities

What are your responsibilities as a manager?

To ensure that you: -

- Provide adequate Display Screen Equipment (DSE) workstations that conform to the minimum legal requirements so your staff are able to work comfortably and safely.
- Plan work activities so that staff do not use DSE for continuous, long periods without adequate breaks or changes of activity.
- Provide adequate information and training to staff on how to set up their DSE workstation correctly and on the health and safety issues relating to working with display screen equipment.
- Give a copy of the DSE Workstation Assessment Checklist form to **all staff** that work with DSE and ask them to complete it for their workstation. For flexible/mobile workers it may be more appropriate to complete the DSE Assessment for Flexible Workers. (NB. Where portable computer equipment is in lengthy or repeated use in the same location, the employee should complete the DSE Workstation Assessment Checklist). Discuss the completed checklist(s) with the individual and take action to resolve any problems identified.
- Record action taken and/or the action required to resolve these issues. Where you cannot easily resolve an issue, you should complete a full risk assessment.
- Ensure your staff re-assess their workstation regularly, or sooner if there is a significant change, e.g. new software, new work routine, changes to the layout or position of the workstation.
- Arrange DSE training for all staff that use it and keep adequate written records. Refresh this training periodically. A DSE e-learning package is available on Bradford Council's Evolve training website.
- Encourage staff to report any problems that they feel are related to their DSE work, as soon as possible, and take reasonable steps to resolve them. If you are unable to resolve a problem, you should request advice from the Occupational Safety Team. Referral to the Employee Health and Wellbeing Team may be appropriate if an employee has a medical condition or would be likely to come under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).
- Ensure that where staff use portable computers (laptop) they are also subject to the same requirements of the DSE Regulations and you must assess their use and take reasonable action to reduce the risks.
- Assess staff requests for a DSE Eye tests paid for by the employer to ensure they are eligible as a DSE user as described on page 7 of this document.

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Health and Safety information and guidance can be found on the Occupational Safety Website <http://www.bradford.gov.uk/hands/>

1. Introduction

The aim of this document is to help Managers manage the risks associated to Display Screen Equipment (DSE). It provides information and guidance to help managers ensure that their staff can work safely and comfortably, and reduce the number and severity of ill health incidents related to DSE use.

The use of DSE is widespread throughout the Council and there are recognised health risks associated with its use. These include:-

- upper limb disorders
- visual fatigue
- back and neck problems
- stress related symptoms

The health and safety legislation requires that:-

- all workstations are of a suitable standard. (See Appendix 1 – Minimum Requirements for Workstations). This includes workstations provided for agency staff.
- all workstations are assessed for suitability for each individual who uses it
- suitable information, instruction and training is provided to all staff who use DSE regarding the risks involved and the controls introduced to reduce the risks
- managers organise workloads and work routines so staff take periodic breaks from DSE work
- where a member of staff requests a DSE eye test, the manager makes an assessment of their eligibility (see specified criteria in section 7- page 7) and, if they are eligible, pays for the eye test
- where the optician specifies that spectacles are needed for DSE use at work, the manager makes appropriate payment/contribution to the cost (see section 7)
- portable computers (laptops) in prolonged use are subject to the DSE Regulations and managers must assess their use and take reasonable action to reduce the risks. For additional information read *Laptops and other Portable Computing Device, Health & Safety Guidance for Managers and Using Portable Computing Devices: Advice for Staff*.

2. Minimum Requirements

All Workstations

The law requires that **all employee workstations accommodating Display Screen Equipment must meet the minimum requirements**, see Appendix 1.

DSE workstations used by agency staff working for the Council must also comply with the minimum requirements, however if “special” adjustments are needed their employer should pay for these.

Shared Workstations/Hotdesking

In addition to meeting the minimum requirements, where workstations are shared, or if a “hotdesking” system is in operation, the furniture and equipment must be suitable to allow each user to adjust the workstation reasonably quickly, to allow them to work safely and comfortably. Individual staff may have additional specialist equipment which they are responsible for. As examples, chair, keyboard, footrest, wrist rest, adjustable Lap top/monitor stand, suitable document holder, headset etc.

Where a workstation is used by more than one person it should be assessed in relation to all those who are likely to use it.

3. Workstation Assessments

Managers are required to make sure all DSE workstations are adequately assessed for the staff working at them to ensure that they can work comfortably and safely.

To help achieve this give a copy of the [DSE Workstation Assessment Checklist](#) (Occupational Safety Website) to each member of staff to complete (staff with additional needs may benefit from assistance with this process) . For flexible/mobile workers it may be more appropriate to complete the DSE Assessment for Flexible Workers. (NB. Where portable computer equipment is in lengthy or repeated use in the same location, the employee should complete the DSE Workstation Assessment Checklist). Review the completed Checklists and take appropriate action, as quickly as possible, to resolve any problems highlighted.

For advice on troubleshooting DSE workstation problems, see Appendix 3.

Record any decisions / action taken. Where problems cannot be resolved easily, complete a full risk assessment.

How often should DSE Workstation Assessments be done?

It is good practice to have staff re-assess their workstation annually, but an assessment must be repeated if there's a significant change, e.g. new software, new work routine, changes to the layout or position of the workstation. Assessments should also be repeated if there is a reason to suspect they may no longer be valid e.g. if a member of staff starts complaining of pain or discomfort.

New staff – assessment of DSE workstation must be done promptly, certainly within 6 weeks of a person starting, and any actions required from this done within 6 weeks of the assessment date.

4. Information, Instruction and Training

All staff that work with DSE must receive suitable information, instruction and training which should include:-

- legal aspects of DSE use
- how to assess their workstation
- health & safety risks of working with DSE and the control measures put in place to minimise the risks
- methods of adjusting workstations to minimize risks e.g. how to adjust their chair
- procedure to follow if they experience problems
- arrangements for eye tests

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Managers should keep written records of staff training and arrange refresher training periodically.

A DSE e-learning package is available on Bradford Council Evolve training website.

5. Reporting Problems

Encourage staff to report any problems that they feel are related to their DSE work as soon as possible. Managers should then take reasonable action to address the problems and reduce the risks as far as reasonably practicable. See Appendix 3 – Troubleshooting, for advice on specific problems.

If Managers cannot resolve health & safety problems they can request help and advice from the Occupational Safety Team and Employee Health and Wellbeing team.

Referral to the Employee Health and Wellbeing Team may be appropriate for employees who;

- have a diagnosed medical condition.
- are likely to come under the Equality Act and or the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and require reasonable adjustments.
- require a full workstation assessment following identified issues arising from the self assessment.

A referral to the Employee Health and Wellbeing Team may also be appropriate if a manager requires confirmation of a diagnosis, or professional medical advice in order to manage a situation/employee effectively.

The Employee Health and Wellbeing Team can, if necessary, arrange a specific ergonomic assessment from a trained specialist. The cost of this will be met from the Managers budget.

6. Work Routines

The law requires that managers organise workloads, work routines, plan activities for staff so that there are periodic breaks from DSE work (e.g. changes of activity such as filing or Printing scanning photocopying). This is to prevent staff fatigue.

DSE breaks should allow staff to vary their posture and visual focus. Even better if it allows staff to get up from their workstation and move around.

General guidance:-

- DSE breaks should be taken before the onset of fatigue.
- DSE breaks/activity changes should be included in the normal working time.
- Short, frequent DSE breaks are more desirable. A 5-10 minute DSE break every hour of continuous DSE use is better than a 20 minute break every 2 hours.
- Where practicable, staff should be given discretion over when to take breaks and the nature and pace of work. Where staff do not take DSE breaks despite being trained, it may be necessary for managers to lay down minimum requirements for breaks from DSE work.

7. Eye Tests and Spectacles

Purpose of Eye tests – to enhance comfort and efficiency by identifying and correcting defects in vision.

There's no evidence that working with DSE causes any permanent damage to eyes or eyesight, but it may make users with pre-existing vision defects more aware of them. Uncorrected vision defects can make DSE work more tiring or stressful than it should be, leading to headaches, sore eyes, eyestrain, visual fatigue.

Managers must inform staff about their entitlement to eye tests; who would qualify for a paid eye test; and the arrangements to provide eye tests to those who want them.

If an employee requests an eye test the manager must assess their entitlement using the following criteria.

Staff that

- *use display screen equipment for continuous or near continuous spells of an hour or more at a time AND*
 - *use it more or less every day, AND*
 - *are highly dependent on DSE; or have little choice about using it; or need special training or skills to use it; or have to transfer information quickly; or need to apply high levels of attention and concentration.*
- are legally entitled to have a DSE eye test paid for by the employer.*

Costs will be met from managers budgets.

The duty on employers is to **provide** a test where the user requests one. Managers should allow users to make their own arrangements with an optician/optometrist and reimburse the costs afterwards.

For **agency staff**, their own employer has this responsibility, not the Council.

Staff will be allowed to attend for the test during working hours and the Manager will need to give staff an Optician Form (Appendix 2 page 14 of this document – Optician Form for DSE Eye Tests) to take with them for the optician to fill in. The Optician may ask the member of staff to describe their DSE workstation (particularly the distance at which they view the screen), the general working environment and the nature of their work.

Managers should be guided by the judgement of the optician on the frequency of repeat testing. Opticians typically recommend an eye test to be carried out every two years, however they may specify a higher frequency, especially where a user has an existing medical condition. The individual's optician will normally write to them to remind them when their retest is due.

Employers are not responsible for any corrections of vision defects which are not related to DSE work.

The following notes apply to Bradford Council only

On the occasions where the optician specifies that spectacles are required for DSE use at work, the manager is required

- to meet the costs associated with providing a basic spectacle frame and the prescribed lenses when the optician ticks box c) on the Optician Form up to a maximum of £50.

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- to make a reasonable contribution towards the cost of the lenses to cover the DSE part of the prescription when the optician ticks box d) on the optician form. e.g. where bi-focal or vari-focal spectacles are prescribed up to a maximum of £50, including the cost above.

If users wish to choose more costly appliances e.g. designer frames or lenses with optional treatments, the manager can only contribute £50 towards the total cost equal to the cost of a basic spectacle frame and the prescribed lenses.

Managers must keep records of payments made and the completed optician forms.

NOTE - there is no central budget for eye tests or contributions towards lenses.

8. Portable Computers (Laptops)

For additional information read *Laptops and other Portable Computing Device, Health & Safety Guidance for Managers* and *Using Portable Computing Devices: Advice for Staff*.

Portable DSE, such as laptops notebook computers and tablets, is subject to the DSE Regulations if it is in **prolonged use**, and the requirements outlined above will apply.

Risk assessments for staff using portables can be a challenge – it's not possible to analyse each location - but one solution is to give portable DSE users (and their supervisors/managers) sufficient training and information to make their own risk assessments and ensure that measures are taken to control risks whenever and wherever they set up their portable. Staff need to be alerted to potential risks and where risks are identified managers need to take reasonable action to reduce and control them. Due to the nature of portable computer use, it may not be realistic to assess all possible situations, but it is important to consider any types of situation where significant, regular use is likely. Staff should be encouraged to report any health problems that they feel might be related to the use of a portable computer to their manager as soon as possible.

Where portable computer equipment is in lengthy or repeated use in the same location, the employee should complete the [DSE Workstation Assessment Checklist](#). For flexible/mobile workers it may be more appropriate to complete the DSE Assessment for Flexible Workers checklist.

Problems in Use

Portable computers are not designed for prolonged use. Compromises are made in their construction because of the need for portability i.e. smaller keyboard, a lack of keyboard/screen separation, integral mouse/trackball/track pad or touch screen navigation. This makes it more difficult to achieve a comfortable working posture. Due to the size and likely arrangement of the equipment, staff tend to work with their head and shoulders bent forward and awkward hand, wrist and arm positions may be adopted.

Portable equipment is often used in a wide range of environments, some of which poorly suited to DSE work e.g. train seats, meeting rooms, clients' homes also making it difficult to work comfortably.

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Staff that use laptops and or tablets should try to adopt a sitting posture as close as possible to that recommended for the use of desktop machines. It is also important to ensure that working positions are varied and frequent breaks are taken from the computer work.

It is recommended that staff do not use laptops or tablets for more than half an hour at a time and where possible, adapt the working arrangement to make it safer and more comfortable to use, e.g. use of a laptop stand, separate mouse and keyboard.

A laptop or tablet should not be used where a standard DSE workstation set up can be reasonably provided.

For information on specific hazards and guidance on selecting portable computers see *Laptops and other Portable Computing Device, Health & Safety Guidance for Managers* and *Using Portable Computing Devices: Advice for Staff* on the Occupational Safety website <http://www.bradford.gov.uk/hands/>

9. DSE for Public Operation

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations do not apply for DSE mainly intended for public operation (someone who is not an employee or self employed person). However, managers should still ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of those using the equipment are not put at risk. The general duties on managers under the Health and Safety at Work Act, and other general health and safety legislation, are still applicable and particular attention should be paid to ergonomics in this context.

Where DSE workstations are provided for pupils/students, it is good practice to provide workstations that meet the minimum requirements and to train pupils/students to set up and use DSE equipment/workstations in a way that minimises the risks. Further guidance for schools/colleges has been produced by BECTA (British Educational Communications & Technology Agency).

10. Glossary

Assessment

A critical examination of something, judging it against set criteria

DSE - Display Screen Equipment

This includes any type of screen based equipment that is in prolonged use, e.g. computer, laptop, CCTV monitors, microfiche etc. It does not cover screens whose main use is to show TV/films.

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DSE Workstation

This is an assembly comprising:-

- Display Screen Equipment
- any optional DSE accessories
- any disk drive, telephone, modem, printer or document holder
- any chair or work surface on which the DSE is used
- the immediate work environment around the DSE

Portables

Computers that can run on battery power and be carried from place to place, e.g. laptops, tablet pc's, etc

Law

The law governing Display Screen Equipment is the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002. This guidance was taken from the HSE publication L26 Work with Display Screen Equipment which is an approved code of practice for these regulations.

Useful Internet Links

HSE - <http://www.hse.gov.uk>

Appendix 1 - Minimum Requirements for Workstations

In specialist applications, compliance with particular requirements may be inappropriate e.g. in some control rooms where a screen is used from a standing position and without reference to documents a work surface and chair may be unnecessary.

For disabled people the needs of the individual should have priority over rigid compliance.

Equipment

The use of the equipment must not be a source of risk for staff.

Display Screen

The characters on the screen should be well defined and clearly formed, of adequate size and with adequate spacing between the characters and lines.

The image on the screen should be stable, with no flickering or other forms of instability.

The brightness and the contrast between the characters and the background should be easily adjustable by staff, and also be easily adjustable to ambient conditions.

The screen must swivel and tilt easily and freely to suit the needs of staff.

It should be possible to use a separate, adjustable base for the screen to adjust the screen height.

The screen should be free from reflective glare and reflections liable to cause discomfort to staff.

Keyboard

The keyboard should be separate from the screen, with tilt option, to allow staff to find a comfortable working position, avoiding fatigue in the arms or hands.

The space in front of the keyboard should be sufficient to provide support for the staff member's hands and arms.

The keyboard should have a matt surface to avoid reflective glare.

The arrangement of the keyboard and the characteristics of the keys should facilitate the use of the keyboard.

The symbols on the keys should be adequately contrasted and legible from the working position.

Work Desk or Work Surface

The work desk or work surface should be sufficiently large with a low reflectance surface and allow a flexible arrangement of the screen, keyboard, documents and related equipment.

The height of the desk/work surface should be suitable for the work and for the individual.

If a document holder is required, it should be suitable for the task, stable and adjustable and should be positioned to minimise the need for uncomfortable head and eye

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movements.

There should be adequate space both on top of the desk and underneath it for staff to find a comfortable and safe working position.

The leg space underneath should not be cluttered with boxes, bags or anything else that would prevent staff from adopting a comfortable and safe working position.

Work Chair

The work chair should:-

- have a swivel action
- have a stable base with 5 castors
- have a rounded front edge
- have small or no arm rests
- have seat height adjustment that is easy to operate
- have a back rest that is adjustable for both height and tilt
- provide good lumbar support
- be suitable, stable and in good repair
- allow staff freedom of movement
- allow staff to adopt a comfortable working position
- be compatible with the individual and the desk/work surface, e.g. if the chair has arms, they should not prevent the individual getting close enough to the workstation
- have a weight limit that is suitable for the individual(s) using it

If, when seated, the individual cannot place their feet flat on the floor when the chair is at the correct working height, a footrest should be made available to them.

Environment

Space Requirements

The workstation should be designed to provide sufficient space for the tasks being carried out and to allow staff to change position and vary movements.

Lighting

Any room lighting or task lighting provided should be adequate (300-500 lux) and give an appropriate contrast between the screen and the background environment, taking into account the type of work and the vision requirements of staff.

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Reflections and Glare

Prevent glare and reflections on the screen, or other equipment, by co-ordinating workstation layout with the positioning and technical characteristics of the artificial light sources and windows. Windows should be fitted with a suitable system of adjustable covering, e.g. blinds, to enable staff to control reflections and glare on the screen.

The effectiveness of antiglare screens is limited and they also reduce screen resolution and clarity with potential to create further problems. If selected to control reflections and glare on screen, obtain on approval before purchasing to assess suitability.

Noise

Noise emitted by the workstation equipment should be taken into account when setting up a workstation to ensure staff are not distracted and speech is not disturbed.

Heat

Equipment belonging to any workstation should not produce excess heat that could cause discomfort to staff.

Humidity

An adequate level of humidity should be established and maintained.

Software

Software, if badly applied, can present a source of stress and risk to staff. To avoid this, software should:-

- be suitable for the task - software should enable staff to complete the task efficiently, without presenting unnecessary problems or obstacles
- be easy to use and adaptable - the system should be appropriate for the worker's ability and, where appropriate, software should enable staff to adapt the user interface to suit their ability level and preferences, for example by adjusting mouse speed and sensitivity
- give appropriate feedback, e.g. error messages, at the right time and in a suitable style and format
- have an appropriate speed of response to commands and instruction, taking into account the task and staff abilities
- allow staff to work at a speed that is comfortable for them and allow adequate breaks to be taken
- Staff should receive appropriate training in the use of the software.

Appendix 2 – Optician Form for DSE Eye Tests

The **EMPLOYEE** will need to describe the DSE workstation and the general working environment (particularly the distance at which they view the screen).

Name	Work Location

I CONFIRM THAT I HAVE EXAMINED THE ABOVE PERSONS EYES AND RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING

(Please tick one)

- a) Spectacles are not required
- b) Spectacles are required for general use
- c) Spectacles are required solely for DSE use
- d) Spectacles are required for a complex prescription, where part of that prescription is for DSE use

Comments

OPTICIAN'S OFFICIAL STAMP

SIGNED _____ DATE _____

OPTICIAN NAME _____ (please print)

Appendix 3 – Troubleshooting DSE Workstations

The following are common problems with DSE workstations with some solutions for Managers to consider **before** seeking further advice from a Safety Adviser or Occupational Health Adviser. In all cases, make sure all components in the workstation meet the minimum requirements first.

Problem	Possible Solutions
Eyestrain/visual fatigue /headaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Position monitor at about an arms length away from body• Make sure glare or reflections from windows and lights are avoided or minimised• Avoid facing a window or bright area• Blinds on windows should be suitable for minimising glare• Ensure monitor is operating correctly without flickering• Ensure staff member takes adequate breaks away from screen (5-10 minutes every hour; more frequent, longer breaks when using laptops)• Adjust resolution of monitor to make menus and text appear bigger• Provide a desk lamp to illuminate documents to same brightness as screen• Ensure lighting levels are appropriate for the task
Dry eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact lens wearers need to blink often, but excessive staring at a screen reduces the blink reflex causing dry eye problems. Try to vary tasks to avoid having to stare at the screen for long periods• Ensure humidity levels within the work area are sufficient• Plants are good at increasing humidity levels, or provide a small room humidifier if necessary
Neck ache	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure correct adjustment of chair• Check monitor is positioned straight in front of the individual• Experiment with the screen at different heights – use an adjustable monitor stand or monitor arm.• Provide a suitable document holder, if the staff member needs one to work. Position it to avoid twisting, bending or over reaching which may all cause neck problems. There are many different styles to choose from.• Provide a phone headset so staff do not hold the phone in crook of neck whilst using computer at same time.

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Problem	Possible Solutions
Aches and pains in legs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chair should be suitable for the individual's size and build. Ensure individual sits fully to the back of the seat. The seat should not press into the back of the knees. Adjust backrest accordingly. Provide chair with shorter/longer seat depth if necessary.• Ensure correct adjustment of chair• Provide adjustable footrest to take pressure off back of legs if feet cannot be placed flat on floor when chair adjusted• Advise staff to avoid resting feet on castor base of chair or crossing ankles or legs
Aches and pains in shoulder and arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure correct adjustment of chair• Arrange workstation so individual faces forward as much as possible, avoiding twisting, over reaching and hunched shoulders• Set chair height so that shoulders and upper arms are relaxed, arms are close to the body, elbow joints are at right angles and lower arms rest lightly on workstation surface• Ensure correct positioning of mouse and keyboard. Place mouse as close as possible to side of keyboard to avoid stretching to reach it. Maintain correct arm posture.• Ensure keyboard and mouse have a long enough flex to allow individuals to position them correctly• Experiment with different styles of ergonomic mouse/trackball• Take frequent breaks away from the DSE work to allow a change of posture

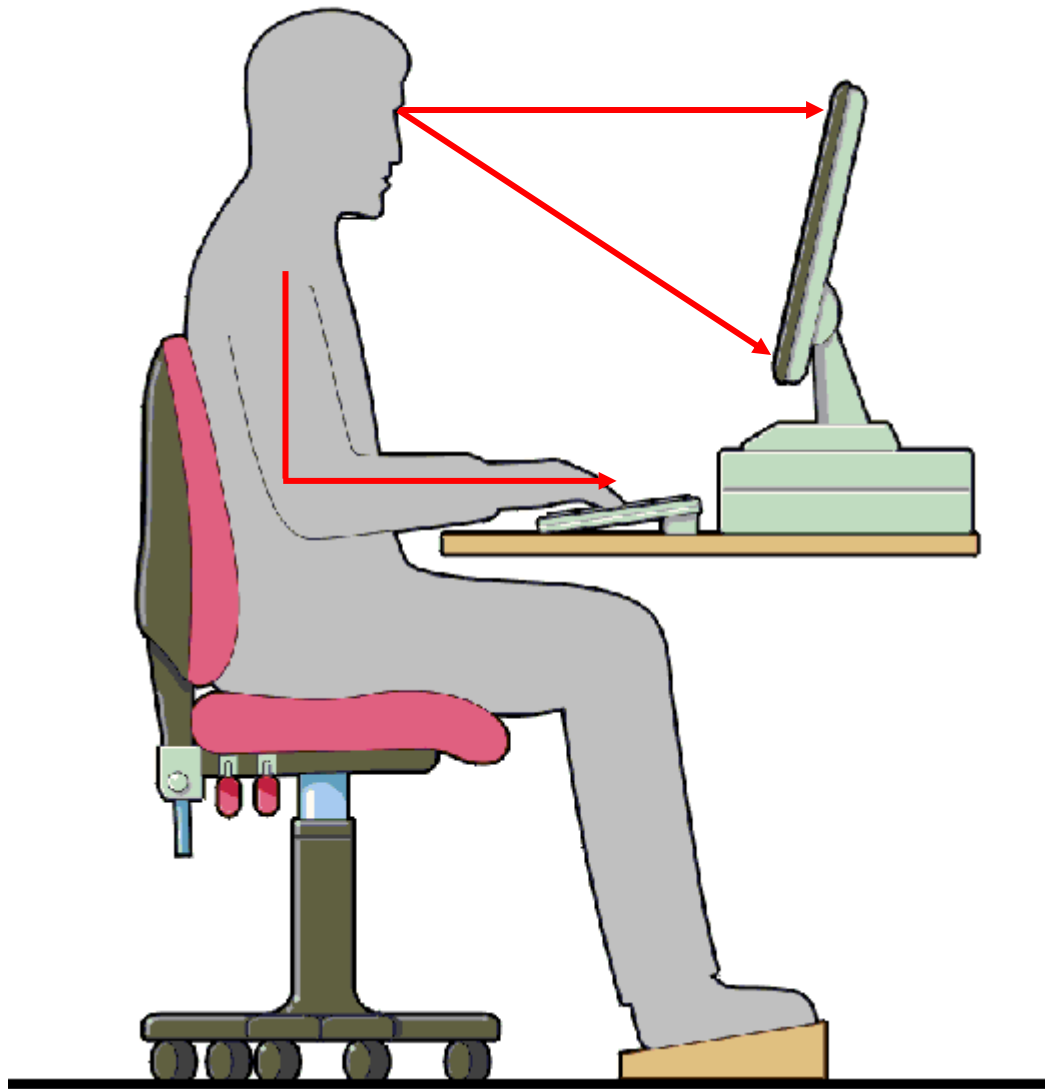
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Problem	Possible Solutions
Back ache	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure correct chair for size and build of individual• Taller staff may need their work surface to be higher than standard. Adjustable desk/tables are available for very tall/small individuals and can be particularly useful where workstations are shared• Ensure correct adjustment of chair• Make sure there is sufficient space for individual to work without being cramped• Arrange workstation so body is facing forwards as much as possible• Ensure individual sits upright with upper body against the backrest.• Ensure adequate breaks are taken to allow a change of posture• Provide a lumbar support to attach to existing chair• Provide a better, ergonomic chair if none of above are successful. A backrest with a shaped lumbar area encourages good spine posture.• Analyse work tasks to see if there is any excessive bending, stretching or over reaching needed to reach printers, phones etc

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Problem	Possible Solutions
<p>Aches and pains in wrist , lower arm finger or hand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set chair height so that shoulders and upper arms are relaxed, arms are close to the body, elbow joints are at right angles and lower arms rest lightly on workstation surface, wrists are flat (not bent up or down) • Ensure sufficient space on workstation is available to allow comfortable set up of equipment and accessories • Ensure correct positioning of keyboard straight in front of individual. Hands and wrists should be in line with forearms • Ensure correct positioning of mouse so wrist is in line with forearm • Experiment with different styles of mouse • Wrist rests may be useful to help individuals maintain good wrist posture when using the keyboard and mouse, but bear in mind they can sometimes make the aches and pains worse • Provide individual with an ergonomic keyboard which minimises strain to wrists • Minimise the use of the mouse by using suitable keyboard shortcuts • Check software is suitable for the task and not forcing the pace of the work • Ensure adequate breaks are taken away from keyboard and mouse. Staff should not use breaks to play computer games, surf the internet, or write etc.
<p>Stress/Fatigue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress and fatigue may be alleviated by correcting obvious defects in the workstation, postural problems and visual problems and ensuring the software is appropriate to the task. Good design of the work task is also important and should provide staff with a degree of personal control over pace and nature of their tasks. Proper provision must be made for training and information on health & safety risks and on the use of software. • Work tasks should be designed to consist of a mix of screen-based and non screen-based work to prevent fatigue and to vary visual and mental demands. • The psychological response of individuals to work and workplace conditions can contribute to ill health, particularly musculoskeletal disorders. Psychosocial risk factors include the design, organisation and management of work and the overall social environment (the context of work) and also the specific elements of the job (the content of work). Greatest benefit is achieved when these are identified and controlled.

Optimum Seating and Posture for Typical Office Tasks



Taken from HSE publication L26 Work With Display Screen Equipment