

Adjusting DSE Chairs

Health and Safety Guidance for Managers and Staff

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Introduction

Employees who are sitting in badly set-up DSE chairs and adopting poor seated postures run the risk of developing problems such as general discomfort or aches and pains in the wrists, arms, shoulders, neck, back or legs.

If you work at a computer workstation, whether at a fixed desk location, 'hot desking' or working remotely, please make sure you are correctly using the equipment supplied. In particular, please pay attention to how you are using your chair - whether this is a standard DSE chair or specialist chair.

In the absence of any user instructions and/or demonstration, the following brief guidance will help you correctly set up your chair and feel confident to make minor adjustments as necessary.

Adjusting a DSE chair

If you are using a computer, or lap top, it is important that you have a suitable DSE chair to sit on, and are able to adjust it, so it is comfortable.

Chair height

- You should be able to adjust the height of your chair so that your forearms are approximately parallel to floor and your feet are on the floor (or on a footrest).
- If your feet don't reach the floor when your arms are in the correct position, use a footrest.
- Hips should be slightly higher than your knees, to help blood flow up your legs.

Back and pelvis support

- The chair should offer adequate support for your back and for your lumbar region (lower back).
- On some chairs you may also be able to adjust the tilt of the seat base in relation to the back support. This will help provide an open comfortable angle for your pelvis and hips in relation to your torso.
- On some chairs you will be able to move the seat base backwards and forwards so the depth of the seat can be adjusted to suit the length of your thighs.

Arms

- Chairs do not need to have arms fitted to be safe to use.
- Where arms are fitted, they should be adjustable.
- Chair arms that are in a fixed position tend to restrict your ability to sit close enough to the desk, leading to poor seated postures (prone or perching) and discomfort. If this is the case, it is advisable to remove the chair arms.

How to make adjustments

If in doubt, it is a good idea to do a full set-up of your chair, to make sure you don't miss anything important. This is especially important if you are frequently using different chairs, for example if you are 'hot desking.'

First of all look at the chair and explore all the possible adjustments and see what they do, and then, by using the tips below, set up the chair correctly to suit you.

Sit in the chair away from your desk - ensuring your back is against the chair back.

1. Set the height of the chair so your hips are slightly higher than your knees. (This helps the blood flow back up the legs.) Your feet should be still on the floor.
2. Set the angle of the chair back so it is upright, or slightly leaning backwards to no more than 10 degrees. (This encourages the user to relax into the chair.)
3. Adjust the height of the chair back so the lumbar section (lower, thicker cushioned section) of the chair back is in the lumbar region of your back (just above the hip line).
4. If the chair has an adjustable lumbar cushion, set the angle and height of the chair back first, then inflate or deflate the lumbar cushion to suit.
5. Where possible, adjust the depth of the seat pan, either by moving the seat pan or moving the chair back forwards or backwards.
To find the correct position, when sitting, your thighs should feel supported, but the front of the seat cushion should not rub or touch the back of your knees. There should be a small gap between the back of the knees and the front of seat base.
6. Now move the chair to the desk.
7. Check that when you are seated, your forearms are approximately parallel to the floor. It is important that your arms are in the correct position. If you need to raise the chair, and your feet no longer touch the floor, then use a foot rest.
8. If the chair is fitted with arms, **don't** rest your forearms on them while you are typing as this puts stress on your wrist joints.
9. Make sure the position of the chair arms allows you to sit close enough to the desk without having to reach or sit forward from the back support, if this is not possible it would be better to remove the arms.

You may need to continue to make minor adjustments to the chair until it feels comfortable. You may need to do this more than once during a working day.

If you have concerns regarding their workstation or working arrangements, please report them to your line manager in the first instance.

Additional advice and support is available from the Employee Health and Wellbeing team x4246 or the Occupational Safety team on x1007.