

## INSTRUCTION 7

### DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT (DSE)

References:

- A. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- B. Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations (as amended)

#### Introduction

7.1 The use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE)/Visual Display Unit (VDU) is widespread throughout the organisations. Working with DSE is not generally high risk and most associated health problems do not arise directly from the display screens themselves, but from the way in which they are used. These problems can be overcome by good ergonomic design of equipment, furniture, the working environment and the tasks performed. Although the Health and Safety (DSE) Regulations apply to "USERS" the following guidance and best practice should be adopted by all staff that uses DSE.

#### Definition of a "USER"

7.2 A "user" is an employee who habitually uses DSE for a significant part of their job. For those whose use of DSE is less than continuous, managers should apply the following questions. A score of 4 yes's or more confirms that the employee concerned is a "USER".

- Does the individual depend upon the use of a DSE to do the job?
- Is it true that the individual has no discretion as to whether or not he/she uses a DSE?
- Does the individual need significant training or particular skills in the use of DSE to do the job?
- Does the individual normally use a DSE for continuous spells of an hour or more at a time?
- Does the individual use a DSE in this way every day?
- Is the rapid entry of data into the computer system an important part of the job?
- Are high levels of concentration required when entering data, because of the necessity to avoid errors?

#### Hazards Associated with DSE Work - Muscular Discomfort

7.3 Muscular discomfort can take the form of pain, stiffness or numbness, particularly in the neck, arm, shoulders or wrists. Users of keyboards who are not trained typists are more susceptible to such problems.

#### Eye strain

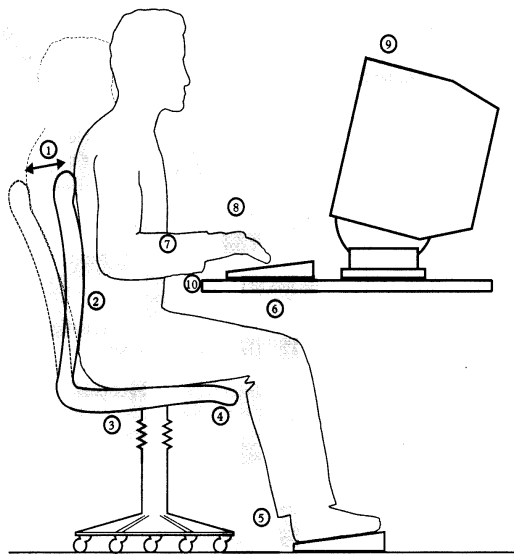
7.4 Evidence indicates that using display screen equipment is not associated with damage to the eyes or eyesight although uncorrected defects can increase the stress of working with such equipment. The most common adverse effect of working with display screen equipment is temporary and can loosely be called "eye strain" or "visual discomfort". The signs of this include painful eyes with a burning or gritty sensation, blurring of the visual image and twitching of eye muscles. Eyestrain is particularly likely to occur after a long unbroken period of work on the equipment.

#### Fatigue and Stress

7.5 These may be secondary to visual or muscular problems but may also be caused by such factors as poor job design or work organisation, high-speed repetitive working and lack of control of work by the user.

## How to reduce the risks - Avoidance of muscular discomfort

7.6 Good ergonomically designed seating arrangements and posture when using the keyboard or mouse (see fig. 1 below). Frequent breaks either resting the fingers and wrists or carrying out alternative work provided it does not involve the joints in a manner similar to keyboard use.



1. *Seat Back - Adjustability.*
2. *Good Lumbar Supports.*
3. *Seat Height adjustability.*
4. *No excess pressure on underside of thighs and backs of knees.*
5. *Foot support if needed.*
6. *Space for postural change, no obstacles under desk.*
7. *Forearms approximately horizontal.*
8. *Minimal extensions Flexion or deviation of wrists.*
9. *Screen height and angle should allow comfortable head position.*
10. *Space in front of keyboard to support hand wrists during pauses in keying.*

Fig 1.

## Eyestrain

7.7 If defective vision is suspected, users are entitled to an eyesight test. If prescribed for DSE work the Council will contribute towards a basic pair of spectacles.

7.8 Taking appropriate rest breaks will also reduce the risk of eyestrain (further advice on rest breaks is given below).

## Fatigue and Stress

7.9 The avoidance of long periods of unbroken work with DSE will reduce the risk of eyestrain, headaches and muscular discomfort. The types of work undertaken with DSE are so varied that it is difficult to recommend time limits, which could be generally suitable.

7.10 As a guide short frequent breaks are more satisfactory than occasional, longer breaks: e.g. 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.

7.11 Informal breaks, that is time spent not viewing the screen (e.g. on other tasks) appear from study evidence to be more effective in relieving visual fatigue than formal rest breaks.

## Correct positioning of the DSE in relation to windows

7.12 The DSE screens should not be placed with a window immediately in front or behind them. The screen should be situated at right angles to windows or placed next to windows. In some cases it may be necessary to provide blinds or curtains to shield DSE from light reflections.

## **Provision of payment towards eye testing and special equipment**

7.13 Under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations the provision of eyesight tests and special equipment e.g. spectacles for display screen work, are at the expense of the employer.

7.14 The above applies only to those members of staff who have been assessed as being a "USER". Staff should also find out from their Manager the recommended opticians and current allowances.

7.15 Staff should pay for the service provided and obtain a receipt. Reimbursement should be made by way of the Expenses Claim Form.

7.16 Staff may, if they wish go to their own optician, but reimbursement will be at the agreed rate.

7.17 If staff wish to order more expensive frames, special coatings etc. they may do so at their own expense, but reimbursement will be limited to the agreed rate.

7.18 A contribution by the Council towards glasses will only be paid if the glasses are prescribed for the distance at which the screen is viewed, and normal ones cannot be used.

7.19 The Council will not contribute towards the cost of glasses which staff would still require even if they were not a DSE "USER".

7.20 The optician must provide the Council with a certificate or report detailing what corrective equipment is required, stating that the glasses are for "VDU work only".

## **Workstation Assessments**

7.21 Employers have a duty to undertake suitable and sufficient analysis of "USERS" workstations for the purpose of assessing the health and safety risks to which they may be exposed.

7.22 All staff that are classed as DSE Users are required to complete the DSE awareness training and risk assessment modules that are located on the Council's intranet site. Managers/supervisors are to ensure that their staff complete this at induction and then annually.

## **Laptops and Tablets**

7.23 These devices are designed for work of a short duration (no longer than 30 minutes), if you wish to use your device longer than this, you must connect you're the device to the monitor, keyboard and mouse with the leads provided. If you are using your device as a second monitor then it should be placed on the stand provided.

7.24 Further advice and guidance on workstations can be found in the HSE publication "Working with Visual Display Units (VDUs)" available from the Health and Safety Team.

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