

## Relevant Legislation

*Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992*  
*Disability Discrimination Act 1995*  
*Equality Act 2010*

## PART 1

### General

The regulations require the employer to consider the following:

- Whether their members of staff regularly use DSE as a significant part of their day.
- Whether they use a keyboard, mouse or other input device.
- Whether they complain of discomfort, aches and pains.

### Definition of a 'User'

The regulations specify that a 'user' is an employee who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of his/her normal work.

The need for a definition stems from the fact that possible risks associated with display screen equipment use are those leading to:

- musculoskeletal problems
- visual fatigue
- stress

The likelihood of experiencing these is related to the duration and pace of continuous use of the display screen equipment, coupled with the amount of discretion the person has about its use.

Where use of display screen equipment is more or less continuous on most days, employees should be classified as 'users'.

Managers need to consider how the DSE/eye test requirements of third parties, such as agency workers, are met.

Pupils and students are not classified as 'users'.

## Exclusions

The following equipment would not normally be included when assessing who is a user:

- drivers' cabs or control cabs for vehicles or machinery
- computer systems on board a means of transport
- computer systems mainly intended for public use
- portable systems not in prolonged use at the workstation
- calculators, cash registers or any equipment having a small data or measurement display required for direct use of the equipment
- window typewriters

## Portable Equipment

By and large, portable display screen equipment (such as lap top computers, Blackberry's etc) should be excluded when assessing who is a user **unless the equipment is in prolonged use**. Whilst there are no hard and fast rules, portable equipment in use at a workstation for a prolonged period of time, say, more than two or three hours on most working days, should be included when assessing who is a user. This proviso also applies to employees working at a workstation at home.

Where portable display screen equipment is in prolonged use it will be subject to the same requirements of assessments as for fixed workstations. If the portable equipment is being used at a fixed workstation it should be engaged in a suitable docking arrangement with a separate screen, mouse and keyboard which allows the correct focal height and distance to be achieved.

## Training

All DSE 'Users' are required to complete a mandatory DSE e-training course which is available via the Council's Learning Together e-learning system. This course provides the user with the information they need to ensure their workstation is set up correctly and assist them in completing their own documented workstation assessment. Such training will cover:

- desirability of postural change.
- use of adjustment mechanisms or equipment.

- use and arrangement of workstation components to facilitate good posture and prevent overreaching and glare.

## Risk Assessment

The regulations require that a formal assessment of DSE workstations be made in order to identify any risks to health as a result of use of the workstation itself. It is also a requirement that subsequent action to reduce risks is identified.

The risks to be considered include upper limb pains and discomfort, adverse effects on the eye and eyesight, together with general fatigue and stress.

Any risks identified must be reduced to the lowest extent reasonably practicable, which may include one or more of the following steps:

Issue	Possible Solution
<b>Postural Problems</b>	Repositioning of equipment, or adjustment of chair Provision of new chair or workstation to comply with current standards Provision of footrest or document holder
<b>Visual Problems</b>	Repositioning of screen Cleaning of screen Provision of window blinds or modification of lighting
<b>Fatigue and Stress</b>	Variation of the task to include other duties Matching staffing to work volumes Involvement of users in work planning Introduction of planned breaks, the minimum being five minutes every hour.

The assessment of a workstation should be carried out by the DSE “user” after they have completed the DSE module of the Council’s Learning Together e-training package. On completion, the assessment must be counter-signed by the line manager or a trained DSE Advisor, once they have checked the workstation in question. If any concerns are raised or equipment required the assessment should be passed to the individual’s Line Manager for action.

## Risk Assessments to Accommodate Flexible Working

When the assessment is being undertaken the work patterns and type of worker should be taken into account. These are described in some detail below:

### *Individual Workstations for Office-based Employees*

A workstation used solely by an individual and not shared by other workers should be assessed annually as previously described in “Risk Assessment” section.

## ***Workstations for Employees Working from Home***

The DSE risk assessment (attached at the end of this section) has been modified to include all of the relevant factors relating to home working. The employee or “user” must complete the DSE e-training module to enable them to set up their workstation and assist them in completing the initial workstation assessment. On completion, the assessment must be counter-signed by the line manager or a trained DSE Advisor, once they have checked the workstation in question. If any concerns are raised or equipment required the assessment should be passed to the individual’s Line Manager for action.

The workstation should then be assessed annually by the user. If the workstation is satisfactory and the worker has not experienced any problems in the intervening 12 months it will be sufficient to indicate that no changes are necessary and sign and date the existing assessment. If changes are made at any point to the home set-up, then a further assessment should be made. The user may benefit from refreshing their knowledge by reviewing the content of the DSE e-learning module.

In the case of “agile” workers who work one or two days a week (about 40% of their time) from home and three or four days in the office, the assessment should also identify any non-standard items of equipment in use whilst using the office hot desk.

## ***Shared Workstations***

For employees working from home or those who undertake mobile working (‘agile’ employees) there may be a requirement to ‘hot desk’ on those occasions when they are working in the office. Hot-desking requires employees to work at whichever desk and computer is available rather than at a personal workstation. Employees will be expected to use their laptop at any suitable workstation.

Where hot-desking takes place the workstation must have flexible design in order to accommodate the vast majority of requirements in relation to all those persons using it. Standard items such as a footrest or document holder should be held in a general store in the office and made available, if required. Each flexible workstation will be assessed on an annual basis by a trained DSE Advisor to verify its broad suitability. Additionally, all agile workers must have a valid assessment either relating to their home workstation or a hot-desk that they may use. This would highlight any non-standard equipment that they require, for example a special mouse or software. Appropriate adjustments will need to be made on an individual basis. More detailed information is given below.

## ***Mobile Employees***

Mobile employees are those personnel who spend a great deal of time travelling from site to site and use their home as a base rather than checking in and out of the office at the start and end of the working day. They may need to follow the guidance given above which covers ‘shared working’ and ‘working from home’, as appropriate.

## Special Issues

### *Gas Lift Chairs*

The HSE publication 'Seating at Work' (HSG57) indicates that nobody weighing more than 100 Kg (16 stone) should use a gas lift chair unless it has been specially designed to accommodate heavier people safely. This should be determined at the pre-employment stage and verified during re-assessment of the workstation arrangements.

A number of employees with particular conditions may require specialist equipment (for example, voice-activated software or an ergonomic mouse). Modern, fully adjustable furniture should accommodate many individual needs.

However, if specialist chairs or equipment are needed to allow flexible working to take place this may prove more problematic and the requirements of DDA may need to be considered.

## Eye and Eyesight Tests

The regulations also give display screen equipment 'users' an entitlement to eye and eyesight tests, by a competent person such as an optician:

- when they first become a user.
- at subsequent intervals recommended by the optician, usually every two years.
- on experiencing visual difficulties which may reasonably be considered as relating to display screen work.

Designated users of display screen equipment are entitled to reimbursement of costs relating to eye testing. The full cost of an eyesight test is to be reimbursed and, where necessary (and solely for DSE use) funding towards frames to a maximum amount of £25 must also be made, together with reimbursement for the cost of lenses. In the latter case, the lenses must be of a basic type, without tints or other embellishments. The County Council's policy does not authorise the refund of costs for bifocal or varifocal lenses. Only spectacles which are required solely for use with display screen equipment will be reimbursed. In general, only the costs of the eye test, which is normally less than £30.00, will have to be found. The cost of reimbursement is to be funded by the employing Group; schools will fund this from delegated budgets. The Line Manager should authorise reimbursement of costs by signing the eyesight test claim form.

A claim form and guidance is reproduced at the end of this section.

## PART 2

### Guidelines for Users of Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

The information below has been produced to assist users to achieve good working postures and to organise their workstations safely. If necessary, it can be separated from the main document and issued directly to them.

#### How to Achieve Good Working Postures

There is no such thing as one correct sitting posture, so varying the way you sit during the day will help to reduce aches and pains. Certain postures should be avoided and your sitting position influences the comfort of your entire body. It is most important to adjust your seat and DSE correctly.

#### Step 1 - Adjust Your Seat Height

Sit in front of your terminal and adjust the height of your seat so that your forearms are roughly horizontal and your wrists are straight when your hands are on the keyboard. If your feet are not comfortably on the floor, or there is pressure on the back of your thighs from the seat edge, then use a footrest.

If you sit too high or too low you will be forced to type with bent wrists or in a hunched or stooped position. This can cause discomfort in your wrists, arms, shoulders, neck or back and therefore it should be avoided.

#### Step 2 - Adjust Your Backrest

Make sure your bottom is towards the back of the seat and then adjust the height and angle of your backrest so that it supports your lower back. If you still need extra support put a cushion in the small of your back. If necessary, try altering the angle of the seat base so that it is tilted slightly forward. This makes it easier to maintain a comfortable upright posture.

Try changing the angle of the backrest during the day to vary your sitting position. Avoid slouching or perching on the edge of your seat as you will not get any support from the backrest if you do. Also, the slouched 'C' shape posture is damaging to your back - discs, muscles and ligaments are stressed in this posture.

You may feel uncomfortable at first, but this is because you have to 'unlearn' bad posture habits reinforced over many years.

Do take the time and effort to achieve good posture - it is well worth it!

## Step 3 - Adjust Your Screen Position

The height and angle of your screen influences the position of your head and neck. If the angle is wrong you may suffer from neck and shoulder pain. Usually the most comfortable position is looking slightly down (at an angle of approximately 10-15 degrees).

If your screen is too low you will not be able to maintain an upright posture or your neck may be bent too far forwards - try using proprietary screen raisers to overcome this. Ideally, the screen should be positioned so that the central part of the screen is at eye level.

**Touch typist** - make sure you are sitting in the correct position, with your hands in your normal typing position. Without moving your head you should just be able to look over the top of the screen; then lower your eyes to the middle of the screen; adjust the screen height to achieve this.

**Non-touch typist** - again make sure you are sitting correctly with your hands resting on the keyboard. Start by looking at the keyboard, then raise your eyes (not your head) and look at the middle of the screen; adjust screen height to achieve this.

## Step 4 - Screen/Seat Position

The ideal position is one where the screen is in front of you, to allow your body to remain in a neutral position (not twisted).

For some people this means the screen is in, or near, the middle of the desk; for others it may be offset in which case you must swivel your chair so that your whole body is parallel with the screen.

## Step 5 – Keyboard and Mouse

If necessary, support the wrists with a wrist-rest when using the keyboard. When using the mouse, try to support the whole forearm on the desk or use a mouse mat to support the wrist and forearm. Also, if you do a lot of repetitive mouse movements, try to reduce the amount of time spent using the mouse by:

- using the keyboard controls.
- training yourself to use the mouse with either your left or right hand.
- taking frequent breaks, rather than continually operating the mouse.

## Additional Points

### Make Sure You Can Read the Screen Comfortably

Tired eyes and headaches at the end of the working day may be the result of difficulty reading your screen. This could be due to a number of factors, such as:

## ***Dirty Screens***

Screens quickly attract dust and then text becomes difficult to read, so it is important to clean screens regularly with proprietary cleaner. If you use a filter, remember to clean the screen behind the filter as well. Working with a dirty screen means your eyes have to work even harder.

## ***Vision***

DSE work, like any other close work, requires good or corrected vision. Ideally, you should have your eyesight checked on a regular basis. If you feel that DSE work is affecting your eyesight or causing discomfort, then inform your manager. You are entitled to have your eyes screened every two years, free of charge, or more frequently, if you experience discomfort.

## **Reflections and Glare**

Reflections and glare from windows or artificial lights make the screen difficult to read. There are several things which will help:

- try moving your screen to a different angle.
- avoid sitting with windows or light directly in front of or behind your screen.
- if possible, sit at right angles to light coming through windows.
- use window blinds.
- if lighting levels are too high, try selectively turning off lights or use task lighting.
- adjust the brightness and contrast controls on the monitor to suit the lighting conditions.
- if you still have problems see your DSE Advisor or manager.

## **Organise Your Work Area**

How you organise your work area will influence the way you sit. The best arrangement will depend on the tasks involved in your job.

If your work area is badly arranged so that you have to sit in a bent or twisted position, then back or neck ache is likely to result. This can be avoided if you think carefully about the requirements of your job and arrange your work area accordingly.



## Document Holders

Do you spend most of your time reading from source documents, or looking at your screen? Many people assume that the screen should be placed directly in front of them. If you are reading mainly from hard copy documents the best solution could be to move the screen to one side and use a copy holder to raise documents to a comfortable height. The important thing to remember is to keep the document holder level with the screen. The idea is to minimise head and neck movement and also to reduce the need for your eyes to keep refocusing.

Try to place your screen in a position where background distractions from such things as moving people, shiny surfaces or wall notices are not visible on the screen.

## Take a Break

The human body is designed for movement and it does not like prolonged periods of static posture. Whenever possible, try to break up any long periods of DSE work with other activities such as photocopying or telephoning. The aim is to move around and change your posture, so that your eyes and body get a rest from DSE work.

If it is not possible to build in these natural breaks then aim to take a 5 minute break every hour. Be sensible about taking breaks - do not be a martyr.

## Report any Problems

If you start to experience any problems when working with your DSE you must tell your line manager and your designated DSE Advisor. If problems persist then you can arrange to see, or will be referred to, the Occupational Health Unit. The Occupational Health Advisor and Doctor are there to offer you professional advice but they cannot help if you do not tell them that you have a problem.

# Northumberland County Council DSE Workstation Risk Assessment

*This assessment should be completed by the DSE "user" following completion of the DSE e-training course. It should then be passed to your DSE Advisor for checking and counter-signature.*

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Establishment:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**VDU Model/Type:** \_\_\_\_\_

**If working from home, give details:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Type of Worker – Please Indicate (see main text for definitions)

Office-based

Full time working at home

40% working from home/60% in office (2 assessments needed)

Mobile working: mostly travelling - makes use of hot desks


***Please tick the appropriate box***

### Display

1. Is the screen display clear, with characters well defined?
2. Is the image stable, with no flickering or instability?
3. Is the brightness and contrast easily adjustable by the user?
4. Can the screen swivel and tilt?
5. Can the screen rest elsewhere other than on the processor?
6. Is the screen free from reflection and glare?
7. Is there a screen cleaning kit readily available?
8. Is the screen's specification suitable for its intended use?

	Yes	No

### Keyboard

1. Can the angle of the keyboard be adjusted; is it separate from the screen?
2. Is there adequate space in front of the keyboard to rest hands?
3. Is there a matt surface to avoid glare?
4. Is the layout and contour of keys on the keyboard comfortable to use?
5. Are the symbols on the keys easy to read?
6. For lap-top users is a docking station with separate keyboard, mouse and


screen provided?

### Mouse, Trackball etc

Yes

No

1. Is the mouse or trackball suitable for the tasks it is used for?
2. Is there support for the user's wrist and forearm?
3. Does the device work smoothly at a speed that suits the user?

  
  
  
  

### Software

1. Is the software suitable for the task?
2. Is specialist software required (for example, voice activated equipment)?

  
  

### Furniture

1. Is the work surface large enough to allow flexible arrangement of screen keyboard, documents etc.?
2. Are surfaces free from glare and reflectance?
3. Is there a need for a document holder?
4. Is there adequate space for users to find a comfortable position (for example, are there obstructions, is there adequate leg room)?
5. Does the chair have:  
Seat back height and tilt adjustment?  
Seat height adjustment?  
Swivel mechanism?  
Castors or glides?
6. Does the chair afford good posture?
7. Is the chair adjusted correctly while in use?
8. Will the chair accommodate the weight of the person using it? (Is he/she over 100 kg (16 stone) as indicated in HSG57?)

  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  

### Environment

1. Is there sufficient room for the user to change position?
2. Is there lighting suitable for the mix of work?
3. Is glare a problem?
4. Is there adequate contrast between screen and background?
5. Are there adjustable window coverings?
6. Are levels of heat/humidity comfortable?
7. Are levels of noise acceptable?

  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  

### Eyesight

1. Has an eye test been carried out?

**Other Considerations**

Yes                      No

- |    |   |                          |                          |
|----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | Does the user take regular breaks?                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | Does the user have personal choice about when to take breaks? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Overall Use of Work Station and Working Environment**

- |    |  |                          |                          |
|----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | Is the workstation generally satisfactory?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | Detail below any particular difficulties or discomforts (such as distracting background, trailing electrical leads). |                          |                          |

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3. Describe any particular health complaints which may be affecting the user.
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Is a referral to the Occupational Health Unit Required?

## Summary of Requirements

	Yes	No		Yes	No
1. New Table	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. New printer or Acoustic cover	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. New Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Screen Cleaning kit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Window Blinds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Mouse Mat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Anti-Glare Screen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Software	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Foot Stool	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Trackball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Document Holder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Other (specify below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Detail of Specific Requirements

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## Record of any Changes or Alterations to Workstation

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## Signing

I confirm that I have completed the DSE e-learning training course on the safe set up and use of my workstation. I will review my workstation assessment annually or when changes to my workstation occur. I undertake to inform my line manager if I experience any health problems which may be associated with the use of the workstation.

### DSE User

Name of user conducting assessment (*please print*): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of user: \_\_\_\_\_

Post held (*please print*): \_\_\_\_\_

Date assessment carried out \_\_\_\_\_ Re-assessment date (maximum 1 year) \_\_\_\_\_

### DSE Advisor

Name of DSE Advisor who has checked workstation (*please print*): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of DSE Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date workstation check carried out \_\_\_\_\_

If the user has reported any problems these should be raised with the relevant line manager.

Once this assessment has been completed it may be necessary to compile a report of outstanding requirements for consideration by senior management. Priorities should be identified based on the results of the assessments completed within the section.

**REMEMBER - KEEP THIS RECORD ACCESSIBLE AND UPDATE IT AS REQUIRED.**

## **Record of Equipment Purchases**

**Date:**

**Action:**

**Any outstanding requirements:**

## **Review of Workstation**

**Date:**

**Assessment changes:**

**Action:**

**Date:**

**Assessment changes:**

**Action:**

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
**Northumberland County Council**  
**Eye Examination for DSE Users**

**Part A: To be completed by the employee (see reverse)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Assignment Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Post: \_\_\_\_\_ Group/Dept: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of test: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part B: To be completed by the Optometrist**

*The above named employee of Northumberland County Council is required to use Display Screen Equipment in the course of their duties. The following information is required to determine whether, in appropriate cases, the Council is to pay for the cost of corrective spectacles **prescribed solely for use with DSE.***

Does the employee require spectacles to be provided with a special prescription SOLELY for use with DSE, for example mid distance? Yes  No

If the employee already has a pair of spectacles SOLELY for use with DSE, is a change in his/her current prescription required? Yes  No  N/A

Remarks:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

On \_\_\_\_\_ (date) I conducted an eye test on the above person in accordance with statutory requirements and the Association of Optometrists' recommendations.

Eyesight Test:	Cost:	£ .....
Spectacles required solely for DSE use: (See notes on amount payable overleaf)	Lenses:	£ .....
	Frames:	£ .....
	Total cost:	£ .....

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Practice: \_\_\_\_\_ GOC. Registration No \_\_\_\_\_

**Part C: To be completed by Line Manager (see reverse)**

I hereby authorise reimbursement of £..... to the above named employee which represents the cost of an eyesight test and/or spectacles required SOLELY for DSE use.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Notes on Completion of Form**

1. All appropriate sections must be completed before payment can be made.
2. The employing Group or school will refund the full cost of the eye test regardless of outcome.
3. The employing Group or school will refund the cost of the basic lenses and up to £25.00 towards the cost of frames
4. It is not the policy of the employing Group or school to refund the cost of varifocal or bifocal lenses.
5. The optometrist must sign the form and original receipts must be attached.
6. When completed, the form must be passed to the Line Manager to authorise payment.



## Arrangements within Each Group

The detailed arrangements within the Group to comply with the requirements are as follows:

Action	Responsibility
It will be the responsibility of each Chief Officer (via line managers) to establish and maintain a register of designated DSE users. The register should include the dates when employees had an eye examination and indicate if spectacles were purchased for DSE use.	Line Manager.
It will be responsibility of each Chief Officer (via line managers) to ensure that sufficient trained DSE Advisors are available within each service.	Line Manager
A new DSE Advisor must be nominated and trained if any existing ones move on.	Line manager
All employees must complete the DSE e-learning course and an individual workstation assessment.	All employees
On completion, a workstation assessment must be counter-signed by a trained DSE Advisor, once they have checked the workstation is set up correctly.  If any concerns are raised or equipment required, the assessment should be passed to the individual's Line Manager, for action, as soon as possible.  A copy of the completed assessment should also be filed on the employee's personal file.	DSE Advisor/Line Manager
Any outstanding actions shall be remedied as soon as possible.	Line Manager.
All assessments shall be updated annually or when office moves occur/other circumstances dictate the need for change.	Employee
Where an eyesight test has been carried out by an optician, employees will be eligible for reimbursement by submitting the appropriate form to their line manager.	Line Manager.

# Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

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<p>If supplied with occupational spectacles, the DSE user must endeavour to keep them in good repair and safe from damage. The cost of replacement spectacles will be reimbursed only where a clinical assessment alters the prescription, or where the spectacles come to the end of their natural life (not less than 5 years), whichever is the sooner. Employees will be responsible for replacing lost or damaged spectacles.</p>	<p>Employee.</p>
<p>Each employee will report any health concerns, which may be related to workstation use, to their line manager.</p> <p>The Line Manager will arrange for a review of the workstation assessment by a DSE Advisor.</p> <p>If problems persist then a referral to the Occupational Health Unit must be made.</p>	<p>Employee.</p> <p>Line Manager/DSE Advisor</p> <p>Line Manager.</p>