

SECTION 3(5)

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

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Introduction

This advice note is intended to provide guidance to Council employees who use Display Screen Equipment (Visual Display Units - VDUs), in order to use the equipment effectively and safely. It is introduced to meet the requirements of the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002. It applies to all employees.

Definition of Display Screen Equipment

Display Screen Equipment is any alphanumeric or graphic display screen, together with a keyboard and/or a mouse, regardless of the technical process used. Examples are VDUs, computer terminals, word processors, laptop and notebook computers, CAD workstations and microfiche readers.

Bracknell Forest Borough Council Policy Statement

The Council will endeavour to identify all those employees who meet the criteria as "Users" set out in the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992, as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002. Assessments of all workplaces will be made to ensure that they comply with the minimum safety and health requirements for work with The Use of Display Screen Equipment Regulations. Those identified as users will also be informed of their entitlement to an eyesight test and that the cost of such tests, and any resultant need for special corrective appliances, will be met (within the maximum limits specified at the time) by the Council.

This policy will be amended and/or updated in light of experience and/or change in Regulations.

Who is a "User"? (Regulation 1)

The DSE Regulations are for the protection of employees who habitually use DSE as a significant part of their normal work.

All of the following conditions should normally be met in order for a post-holder to be listed as a Display Screen "User":

1. The individual depends on the use of display screen equipment to do the job, as alternative means are not readily available for achieving the same results.
2. The individual has no discretion as to the use or non-use of the display screen equipment, and the line manager requires the work to be done by this method.
3. The job must be filled by an individual trained/skilled in the use of display screen equipment.
4. The individual normally uses display screen equipment for continuous spells of an hour or more at a time, or two hours' intermittent use in a day.
5. The individual uses display screen equipment in this way more or less daily.
6. Fast transfer of information between the user and the screen is an important requirement of the job.
7. The performance requirements of the system demand high levels of attention and concentration by the user, for example, where the consequences of error may be critical.

For the purposes of this document, "User" will mean someone who fits the above definition and who is therefore officially classed as a "User" in their current post. "Employee" will apply more broadly to all employees who may use a VDU to a lesser extent. Part-time workers should also be assessed using the same criteria.

Departmental HR Sections make the final decision of identifying and informing "Users".

The Use of Display Screen Equipment (Regulation 1)

DSE covers conventional (cathode ray tube) display screens, liquid crystal displays (LCDs), and other emerging technologies. It is not limited to VDUs but covers, for example, microfiche. Display screens mainly used to display line drawings, graphs, charts or computer-generated graphics are included, but screens showing television or film pictures are not, unless the main use is to display text, numbers and/or graphics.

Portable DSE (such as laptops and notebook computers) are subject to DSE regulations if in use for prolonged periods.

Analysis of Workstations to Assess and Resolve Risks (Regulation 2)

The Regulations recognise the following:

1. Musculoskeletal disorders arising from bad posture and causing upper limb disorders, neck and back pain.
2. Eyestrain (temporary visual fatigue) as the result of a combination of screen technology and the effects of lighting. It should be noted that there is no evidence for assuming that working with VDUs can cause permanent eye damage. It is more likely that undetected pre-existing conditions will be noticed.
3. Fatigue and stress brought about by a combination of the above, and also by environmental factors, such as noise, office conditions, and poor job design.

Other risks have from time to time been linked with working with DSE, namely:

Epilepsy - working with DSE does not cause epilepsy, and sufferers should not be barred from using it. However, sufferers of photo-sensitive epilepsy, a very rare condition, may be susceptible to flickering lights and striped patterns. Known sufferers should be advised to consult their General Practitioner prior to employment on VDUs.

Facial dermatitis - complaints have been rare and limited evidence suggests they may be due to environmental factors, such as low relative humidity. Simple remedies, such as the presence of pot plants in the office have been known to solve this problem where it arises.

Radiation - extensive study has concluded that emission levels are well below those for occupational exposure. Radiation from VDUs is much less than that received from the environment, such as the sun, and therefore poses no additional risk to users.

Effects on pregnant women - there has been considerable concern about high levels of miscarriage and birth defects reported among groups of VDU users. However, reliable studies have been unable to demonstrate any link between them and VDUs. But to avoid problems caused by anxiety, those concerned should be advised to talk to their General Practitioner.

Managers' Obligations

To help managers meet the requirements of the Regulations, a comprehensive guide/checklist is attached as **Appendix 1**

Assess and Reduce Risks to Users (Regulation 2)

Managers must analyse workstations to assess the risk to users. Having made the assessment, any risks identified must be reduced to the lowest extent that is reasonably practicable.

Requirements for Workstations (Regulation 3)

Managers must ensure that any workstation conforms to the requirements laid down in the Schedule to the Regulations (not just those used by users).

The subjects covered by the Schedule include: the screen, software and task design, work desk or work surface, keyboard, work chair, footrest, document holder, and the general working environment. All of these areas are covered in the checklist at **Appendix 1**

Daily Work Routine of Users (Regulation 4)

Managers will have to ensure that the work activities of "Users" are planned so that they are periodically interrupted by breaks or changes in activity. If possible, the work should be designed to include both DSE and non-DSE work. If this is not possible, plan for breaks that are taken before fatigue sets in, ensure they are short and frequent, are away from the screen, and allow some element of "User" discretion.

Eyesight Tests (Regulation 5)

"Users" are entitled to an appropriate eyesight test by a competent person when they are recruited to become a "User", at regular intervals thereafter, and if they experience visual difficulties. The optician will decide when further examinations are required.

"Users" who wish to exercise their entitlement to a full eyesight test should contact their HR Team.

Corrective appliances - the employer must ensure that those employees who require them are provided with "special corrective appliances" (spectacles) for the distance at which the screen is viewed. However, this only applies where the eye test shows they are needed and normal ones cannot be used.

Costs - the employer must meet the cost of: "any eye and eyesight tests that need to be carried out, and for any special corrective appliances specifically for VDU work, of functionally adequate quality".

Provision of Training (Regulation 6)

Managers must ensure that "Users" are given health, safety and welfare information if they are newly recruited or before they become "Users" and at any time after should the organisation of their work or workstation be modified. Training sessions can be organised by the Human Resources Section in Corporate Services & Resources Department for this purpose.

Provision of Information (Regulation 7)

Managers must provide information to all operators and “Users” on the measures taken under the Regulations to protect them from or reduce any risks. “Users” will also need to know what provision has been made with regard to breaks and changes of activity. The “Users” entitlement to eye and eyesight tests will also need to be brought to their attention.

Information and Training

The Council will provide all employees who are “Users” with sufficient information, instruction and training as is necessary to ensure the health and safety of all such employees. Newly recruited users, and existing employees whose duties are changing in a way that will make them become users, should be given training when they start work that will make them a user.

All appointed departmental assessors will receive appropriate training and instruction. Managers responsible for “Users” of display screen equipment are required to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge to assist employees to use such equipment effectively and safely.

When assessors and line managers are unable to assist or further information is required, the Environment and Leisure Department will provide advice and information on request.

Requirements for Workstations

The Council has undertaken to ensure that in addition to the legal obligation for new workstations first put into service after 1993, all workstations will meet the statutory requirements, not just those allocated to users. No workstation is to be created or modified if this would contravene the legal requirements.

Arrangements for Assessing Workstations

The Council undertakes to carry out an assessment of every workstation taking into account the display screen equipment, the furniture, the working environment and the employee. The assessments will be carried out by appointed departmental assessors or other competent persons. The assessments will be carried out in respect of all new workstations around the time of installation and reviewed as required, eg: if there is reason to suspect it is no longer valid or there has been a significant change in the workstation. The initial assessments will also include completion of a self-assessment questionnaire.

The Council will endeavour as its first option to make it possible for the “User” to change job tasks periodically throughout the working day to prevent intensive periods of on-screen activity. Alternatively, the line manager will be expected to reassess work activities in the job to provide breaks from on-screen activity.

Arrangements for Eyesight Tests

The Council acknowledges its responsibility to provide designated “Users” with eyesight assessments appropriate for the use of display screen equipment. Eyesight assessments should be provided as soon as practicable after the request. Employers should be guided by the clinical judgement of the optician on the frequency of repeat testing.

Employees whose present post designates them as a “User” and new employees taking up such posts will be given the opportunity of an eyesight test. The Council will meet the cost of the tests through use of a voucher.

Users should contact the Human Resources Section for an eye care voucher.

The voucher is for use at any Specsavers branch. On completion of the eye examination, should it be identified that glasses are required solely and specifically for VDU use, the employee will be able to select a pair of glasses from a specific range in Specsavers. Alternatively, if the employee wishes to upgrade their glasses (eg by choosing more expensive frames) the voucher may be used for part payment. If an employee chooses to use their preferred optician, the voucher is not transferrable to their optician and therefore the employee will bear the whole cost themselves.

The purpose of providing eye tests for users is to enhance comfort and efficiency by identifying and correcting vision defects, helping to prevent temporary eyestrain and fatigue. There is no reliable evidence that work with DSE causes any permanent damage to eyesight, but it may make users with pre-existing vision defects more aware of them.

Advice on Health Risks

Upper Limb Disorder

The term Upper Limb Disorder, also known as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), refers to a variety of injuries which mainly affect the fingers, wrists, arms, shoulders and neck. These injuries occur when certain muscles are repeatedly strained and are normally only temporary, being cured by rest. In very extreme cases they can however lead to disability.

It must be stressed that in those cases where disability has occurred, the user's job involved using a display screen extremely intensively for very long periods of time. As part of the assessment of risk programme, the Council seeks to identify those jobs that involve sufficiently intensive screen use to warrant concern and will take steps to minimise the risk.

Most jobs involving the use of display screen equipment provide a variety of alternative tasks, such as delivering and collecting work or answering telephones, which the "Users" must use to provide natural breaks from screen-based work and so minimise the risks.

Symptoms of the early stages of RSI include numbness in the fingers, hands or forearms, "pins and needles" and aches or pains in joints, particularly the wrists, and particularly towards the end of the day. In the event of a user experiencing such symptoms or other physical conditions which they believe relate to the use of Display Screen Equipment, they should notify their line manager immediately and if necessary they will be referred to Occupational Health via Human Resources.

Screen Usage and Vision

Visual Fatigue

The Council recognises that intensive use of Display Screen Equipment can cause temporary visual fatigue with symptoms such as tired eyes, headaches and, in extreme cases, blurred or double vision. It also recognises that poor workstation design, particularly lighting, can contribute to such problems. The Council believes that, by identifying and where practicable, correcting these deficiencies and by providing appropriate training to all "Users", it is taking all necessary steps to eliminate these problems.

Eye Defects

It must be stressed that all medical and scientific evidence shows that the use of the display screen equipment will not damage eyesight. However, where an eye deficiency already exists, it is possible that intensive use may highlight the problem and lead to the symptoms of visual fatigue described above.

Pregnancy and VDU Usage

The HSE is aware that anxiety about radiation emissions from display screen equipment and possible effects on pregnant women used to be widespread. However, there is substantial evidence that these concerns are unfounded. If managers require further information it is available in the following link: [Working with VDU's](#)

Procedures for Dealing with Health and Safety Issues

Where an employee raises a matter relating to a Health and Safety aspect of display screen equipment usage, the Council will review the matter and where appropriate take action to correct it. The line manager should be approached in the first instance.

It is the responsibility of all employees to bring to their line manager's attention any problems arising out of the use of display screen equipment. Where training and information are provided to employees, it is the employees' responsibility to make use of such training and information.

In cases where an employee believes that a health or medical condition has arisen as a result of display screen usage, the employee must bring their concerns to their line manager's attention and if necessary their manager will refer them to the Council's Occupational Health Service for advice.

Homeworking/Laptops/Hot-Desking

Portable Display Screen Equipment (DSE), such as laptops and notebooks, are subject to DSE regulations if in prolonged use.

Increasing numbers of people are using portable DSE as part of their work. Some aspects of using portable DSE are no worse than using full-size equipment. However, features such as small keyboards or lack of keyboard/screen separation may make it more difficult to achieve a comfortable working posture. Portable DSE is also used in a wider range of environments, some of which are poorly suited.

To reduce risks to portable DSE users, the following recommendations apply:

- If the DSE user is employed to work at home or other locations away from their main base, then the DSE Regulations apply. Further guidance on homeworking is available in the Human Resources Framework for New Ways of Working, available on the Intranet.
- As well as the risk common to both portables and DSE work, it is important to take into account manual handling risks when moving between locations and the risk of theft, possibly including an assault.
- Users should be aware that some design compromises that are inherent in portables can lead to postural or other problems. One way of tackling such risks is to avoid prolonged use and take more frequent breaks.

When selecting portable computers, the following should be taken into account:

- Look for as low a weight as possible and keep accessories as few and as light as possible.
- Choose as large and clear a screen as possible that can be used comfortably for the task to be done.

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- Where available, opt for a detachable or height-adjustable screen.
- Look for tilt adjustable keyboards on laptops.
- Choose portables capable of being used with a docking station and/or with a facility for attaching an external mouse and/or keyboard.

When planning tasks:

- Advise workers to set up their portable on a suitable workstation, eg: not on the user's lap.
- Use docking station or similar equipment when portable computers will be in lengthy or repeated use.

Further Information

[Display Screen Equipment](#)

Assessment Guide for Managers

This guide is set out in the form of a checklist giving practical steps in order to help managers carry out their obligations under Regulation 2. This calls for employers to identify “Users” and to analyse all workstations, and where risks are found to take appropriate remedial action.

Planning the Assessment

Familiarise yourself with the Regulations.

Since “Users” will need to be involved in the assessment, ensure that:

- they receive appropriate and relevant training and information;
- they receive information about your plans to assess workstations and take appropriate action to combat any risks found;
- they are informed about their entitlement to eye and eyesight tests; and
- they are informed about provision for breaks and changes of activity.

Carrying out the Assessment

The assessment of workstations can be carried out on the basis of a checklist completed by the member of staff, or by trained VDU assessors, in consultation with the staff. Those involved in making the assessment should have had sufficient training to understand the significance of the responses and what remedial action to take.

Workstation Assessment Questionnaire – for completion by all staff

These should be completed by a trained VDU assessor in conjunction with the member of staff. These are used to assess the workstation and provide recommendations for improvement. When complete, these forms should be returned to the line manager for action of recommendations, and a copy should be retained on the Departmental personnel file after all recommendations have been implemented.

Workstation Assessment Questionnaire

(Completion by Staff Member and VDU Assessor – Return to Line Manager for Action)

Name of person being assessed: Department:

Post Title: Post Number:

Location of Workstation: Asset Number of Terminal:

Approximate date of first use: Date of DSE training:

Please make any necessary comments

Risk Factors	Tick answer		Assessor's Comments
	Yes	No	
Chair			
Is it stable?			
Does it have a 5-star base configuration? With castors and glides?			
Are the seat pan depth and width satisfactory?			
Is the seat height adjustable?			
Is the back rest height adjustable?			
Does the back rest tilt?			
Are the mechanisms for adjustments easy to operate?			

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Risk Factors	Tick answer		Assessor's Comments
	Yes	No	
Desk			
Is there sufficient clearance from floor to underside of desk to allow comfortable working?			
Is the desk stable?			
Is it deep enough for the equipment and task?			
Is it wide enough for the equipment and task?			
Does it have a matt finish?			
Are the user's fingers level with the home keys when the elbows are at right angles?			
Is there space to stretch the legs whilst at the desk?			
Is there sufficient space to allow support of hands and wrists (5cm – 10cm in front of keyboard)			
Can the user reach all the equipment and papers they need?			

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Risk Factors	Tick answer		Assessor's Comments
	Yes	No	
Working Posture			
Is the distance between the screen and the forehead approx 35cm – 70cm?			
Are the eyes cast down at an angle of approx 15-20°?			
Display Screen			
Is there a screen cleaning kit provided?			
Is the image: clear?			
stable?			
free from flicker?			
Are there brightness/contrast controls?			
Are they suitably adjusted?			
Does the screen tilt/swivel?			
Is the screen specification suitable for its intended use, eg: large enough?			
Is the text size comfortable to read?			

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Risk Factors	Tick answer		Assessor's Comments
	Yes	No	
Mouse			
Is the mouse or mouse substitute positioned to avoid stretching the arm?			
Is the mouse pointer motion appropriate to the tasks performed?			
Is there support for the device user's wrist and forearm?			
Does the device work smoothly at a speed that suits the user?			
Keyboard			
Is it separate from the screen?			
Does it tilt?			
Does it have: a matt surround?			
non-reflective keys?			
legible symbols?			
a separate numeric key-set if the work demands keying large number of figures?			
Does it feel comfortable to use?			
Does the user have good keyboard techniques?			

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Risk Factors	Tick answer		Assessor's Comments
	Yes	No	
Document Holder			
If it is necessary, is one provided?			
Is it adjustable in: height?			
tilt?			
Layout			
Is the space in the work area as a whole sufficient for the number of people and amount of furniture and equipment?			
Does the layout allow easy escape in an emergency situation?			
Does the user feel they have sufficient space to work in?			
Lighting			
Is the lighting satisfactory: in the workplace generally?			
at the desk?			
If required, is there additional lighting at the desk?			
If there are no blinds or curtains at the window, is this satisfactory?			
Can the screen be positioned so that glare or reflection from the window or lights is eliminated?			

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Risk Factors	Tick answer		Assessor's Comments
	Yes	No	
Noise			
Is the user able to work without being disturbed by background noise?			
Is the user able to hold telephone or work-related conversations without being interrupted by background noise?			
Software			
Is the software suitable for the task?			
Is it user friendly and does it minimise stress?			
Does it protect from the consequences of error, eg: by appropriate warnings and retrieval of lost data wherever practicable?			
Has appropriate training been provided in using the software?			
Does the software respond quickly and clearly with appropriate feedback messages?			
Foot Rest			
If the user's feet do not touch the ground when seated at the screen, is a foot rest provided?			
If so, is it adjustable?			

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Risk Factors	Tick answer		Assessor's Comments
	Yes	No	
Heating and Ventilation			
Is there sufficient space for the dissipation of heat from equipment and people?			
Is heating and ventilation adequate within the working environment?			
General			
Does the equipment have in-date electrical test labels?			
Is the floor free from trailing cables?			
Are all cables tidy and in a good state of repair?			
Does the user take regular breaks from the VDU?			
Does the user have any health concerns or any other problems that they believe are related to using DSE?			
If Yes , have these concerns been reported to the Supervisor/Manager?			
Have you been advised of your entitlement to eyesight testing?			

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User's Comments Only	Yes	No	User's Comments
Do you wish to expand on any of the above questions you have previously answered, or make any further comments? (Continue on separate sheet if necessary.)			

Signed:..... **Date:**

Assessor's Use Only	Yes	No	Assessor's Comments
Do you intend to recommend any changes to, or a further investigation of, this workstation?			If Yes , please record the details in the column below 'Recommended actions to take'.
Recommended actions to take			

Name of assessor:..... **Signed:** **Date:**

LINE MANAGER USE ONLY:

I agree to ensure that the above recommendations are implemented and that a copy of this assessment is retained on the individual's personnel file when completed.

Name of line manager:..... **Signed:** **Date:**