

COLWICH PARISH COUNCIL



PD302 DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

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DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

Display Screen Equipment – PD302

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DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

Contents

1	Introduction.....	4
2	Legal Requirements	4
3	Definitions.....	4
4	Administration of the DSE procedure	5
5	Eye & Eyesight fees	7
	APPENDIX A – FAQs.....	8
	APPENDIX B – REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKSTATIONS.....	11
	APPENDIX C – ‘ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY’ GUIDE.....	12
	Further guidance.....	13

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

1 Introduction

- 1.1** The main risks that may arise from working with display screen equipment (DSE) are musculoskeletal disorders such as back pain or upper limb disorders (known as Work-related Upper Limb Disorders (WRULD)), visual fatigue, and mental stress. The impact of WRULD can be serious and includes long-term pain, time off work and the potential of disability. It can be avoided if good practice is followed.
- 1.2** This section of the Health and Safety Handbook provides advice and guidance on good practice for all officials who use DSE, and follows the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) publication L26, Work with display screen equipment. It also sets out the specific procedures that must be followed by officials, including managers, in order to help Colwich Parish Council (CPC) comply with its duties under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992.

2 Legal Requirements

- 2.1** The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992, as amended, require Colwich Parish Council, as the employer, to:
- ensure that 'workstations' meet specified requirements;
 - assess 'workstations' used by 'users' to reduce risks;
 - ensure that the daily work routine of 'users' is periodically interrupted by breaks;
 - provide 'users' with an appropriate eye and eyesight test if they request one;
 - provide 'users' with adequate health and safety training in the use of any 'workstation' upon which they may be required to work; and
 - provide 'users' with adequate information on all aspects of health and safety related to DSE work and the requirements of the Regulations.

3 Definitions

3.1 Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

DSE means any alphanumeric or graphic display screen, regardless of the display process involved. This definition covers both conventional cathode-ray tube (CRT) display screens and other types such as liquid crystal or plasma displays used in flat-panel screens, touch screens and other emerging technologies. Display screens used to display computer-generated graphics and those used in work with television or film pictures are also covered. However, it does not include the following:

- DSE mainly intended for public operation;
- portable systems not in prolonged use (but see paragraph 3.2 below regarding laptops and similar devices);
- calculators, cash registers or any equipment having a small data or measurement display required for the direct use of the equipment;
- window typewriters; or
- drivers' cabs or control cabs for vehicles or machinery; or DSE on board a means of transport.

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

3.2 Laptops, Notebooks, Palmtops and Similar Devices

Users of laptops, notebooks, palmtops or similar devices will not normally have to carry out workstation assessments as such equipment should only be used on a casual basis. This equipment should not be used continuously for periods of longer than an hour. If an official has a workload necessitating regular and frequent use of a laptop, notebook, palmtop or similar device, then the situation must be reviewed, an assessment carried out and appropriate equipment identified and procured.

3.3 Workstation

A 'workstation' is defined as an assembly comprising:

- the DSE, keyboard, mouse or any other input device;
- any optional accessories to the DSE;
- any disk drive, telephone, modem, printer, document holder, work chair, work desk, work surface or other peripheral item; and
- the immediate work environment around the DSE.

3.4 User

A 'user' means an employee who habitually uses DSE as a significant part of his/her normal work. This generally means someone who:

- normally uses DSE for continuous or near-continuous spells of an hour or more at a time; and
- uses DSE in this way more or less daily; and
- has to transfer information quickly to or from the DSE;

and also needs to apply high levels of attention and concentration; or is highly dependent on DSE; or has little choice about using it; or needs special training or skills to use it

4 Administration of the DSE procedure

4.1 The Clerk and Employment Committee

The Clerk, together with the Employment Committee, on behalf of CPC, must ensure that compliance with the Display Screen Equipment Regulations is achieved within CPC by:

4.1.1 Identifying all DSE 'users' (see paragraph 3.4 above), including any officials who work on DSE at home. If officials are expected to work on DSE at work and at home, two assessments must be completed.

4.1.2 Ensuring that all 'users' have training on:

- the risks of working with DSE;
- how to work safely with DSE;
- how to complete a self-assessment checklist; and
- on these DSE procedures

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

- 4.1.3 Ensuring that all officials identified as 'users' carry out a self- assessment of their workstations by completing the appropriate checklist. The completed checklist will then be assessed by the Clerk/Employment Committee who will provide advice and assistance to resolve any problems identified, and/or carry out a more formal assessment of the workstation if required.
- 4.1.4 Ensuring that actions and recommendations arising from DSE Assessments are implemented within a reasonable timescale.
- 4.1.5 Ensuring that the daily work routine of 'users' is periodically interrupted by such breaks or changes of activity so as to reduce their DSE workload (see paragraph 2 of Appendix B below.
- 4.1.6 Ensuring that all officials co-operate with the requirements of this DSE procedure and comply with any actions/recommendations arising from the assessment. (Where officials are experiencing any health problems which may be linked to using their DSE they should be asked to contact the Clerk/Employment Committee as soon as is practicably possible.)
- 4.1.7 Ensuring that each assessment is reviewed annually or where there have been significant changes, such as:
- a change of user;
 - a change of software;
 - a change to the hardware;
 - a change in workstation furniture, layout or immediate environment;
 - a substantial increase in the amount of time using DSE;
 - re-location of workstation; and
 - significant modification of lighting

4.2 Users

All officials identified as 'users' must comply with this procedure by:

- 4.2.1 Being trained on:
- the risks of working with DSE;
 - how to work safely with DSE; and
 - how to complete a self-assessment checklist.
- 4.2.2 Carrying out a self-assessment of their workstation(s) by completing a self-assessment checklist. This checklist can only be completed after the on-line training has been completed. The completed checklist will then be assessed by the HS&E Team who will provide advice and assistance to resolve any problems identified, or carry out a more formal assessment of the workstation if required.
- 4.2.3 Co-operating with the requirements of this DSE procedure and complying with any actions / recommendations arising from the assessment. (Where officials are experiencing any health problems which may be linked to using their DSE they should contact the Clerk/Employment Committee as soon as is practicably possible.)

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

5 Eye & Eyesight fees

5.1 Entitlement

Officials deemed to be 'users' under this procedure are entitled to an appropriate eye and eyesight test. Further tests will be provided at regular intervals, the interval to be determined at the initial test as this will vary between individuals. Any corrections for vision defects or eye complaints that are not related to work with DSE are not the responsibility of CPC but of the individual concerned.

5.2 Arrangements and cost for eye and eyesight tests

CPC will meet the cost of eye and eyesight tests. Officials should arrange a test and reclaim the cost from CPC.

5.3 Provision of glasses

Where an eye and eyesight test identifies that 'special' corrective appliances are necessary the official will be reimbursed for the purchase of a basic pair of glasses for DSE work. CPC is not obliged to pay for upgrades to more 'designer frames' or to provide lenses with optional treatments not necessary for the DSE work. Where an official's normal glasses are suitable for display screen work there is no requirement on CPC to provide 'special' corrective appliances as these are deemed to be 'normal' corrective appliances. For avoidance of doubt: 'Special' corrective appliances are those prescribed to correct vision defect at the viewing distance or distances used specially for display screen work. 'Normal' corrective appliances are those prescribed for any other purpose.

5.4 Care and replacement of glasses

'Users' are personally responsible for the safekeeping and maintenance of any 'special' glasses provided by CPC. It is a legal requirement not to interfere with, or misuse, anything provided in the interest of health and safety. Officials are expected to show the same degree of care for glasses as for any other item of CPC property.

5.5 Where there is change in a 'users' vision and this results in a change to prescription requirements, CPC will bear the cost of replacement subject to the procedures outlined above. Similarly, where glasses are damaged through normal wear and tear, and not negligence, CPC will also bear the cost of replacement.

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

APPENDIX A – FAQs

POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON HEALTH – THE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Display Screen Equipment (DSE) has been blamed - often wrongly - for a wide range of health problems. In fact, only a small proportion of users actually suffer ill health as a result of their work. Where problems do occur, they are generally caused by the way in which DSE is used, rather than the actual equipment. So, problems can be avoided by good workplace and job design, and by the way you use DSE.

Are aches and pains caused by using DSE? What about RSI?

Some users may get aches and pains in their hands, wrists, arms, neck, shoulders or back, especially after long periods of uninterrupted work on DSE. Repetitive strain injury (RSI) has become a popular term for these aches, pains and disorders, but can be misleading - it means different things to different people. A better medical name for this whole group of conditions is work-related upper limb disorders (WRULD). Usually these disorders do not last, but in a few cases, they may become persistent or even disabling.

How can I avoid these aches, pains and disorders?

Problems of this kind may have a physical cause, but may also be more likely if a user feels stressed by the work (see next question). If aches or pains are experienced the Clerk and/or Employment Committee should be informed. Problems can often be avoided by good workplace design, so that the user can work comfortably, and by good working practices (like taking frequent short breaks from working with DSE). Prevention is easiest if action is taken early, before the problem has become serious.

What can be done to reduce stress in my DSE work?

People who use DSE sometimes complain of stress, but this usually arises from increased pace of work or pressure to meet deadlines. Some users find stress reduced because the technology available (hardware and software) makes their job easier or more interesting, but for others stress becomes worse. This can happen when a system does not work well or when the user does not feel in control or competent to operate it. Stress can be overcome by providing the right training, and by designing systems and tasks to match the abilities of the people who work with them.

Can DSE work affect eyesight?

Extensive research has found no evidence that work with DSE can cause disease or permanent damage to eyes. But long periods of DSE work can lead to tired eyes and discomfort. Also, by giving eyes more demanding tasks, it might make the user aware of an eyesight problem they had not noticed before. A user can help their eyes by ensuring their screen is kept clean, is well positioned and properly adjusted, and that the workplace lighting is suitable.

What about problems with my contact lenses or bifocals?

The heat generated by older types of DSE (CRT monitors not flat screens) can make the air seem drier, and some contact lens wearers find this uncomfortable. If you have this problem but don't want to change to spectacles, you can try blinking more often or using tear-substitute drops. Where the air is dry, employers can help by taking steps to increase the humidity. People with bifocal/varifocal spectacles may find them less than ideal for DSE work. It is important to be able to see the screen easily without

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

having to raise or lower your head. If you can't work comfortably with multifocal lenses you may need a different type of spectacles.

Can DSE work cause headaches?

Headaches may result from several things that occur with DSE work, such as:

- screen glare;
- poor image quality;
- a need for different spectacles;
- stress from the pace of work;
- anxiety about new technology;
- reading the screen for long periods without a break;
- poor posture; or
- a combination of these.

Many of these things can easily be put right once the cause of the problem has been found.

Does DSE give out harmful radiation?

No. DSE gives out both visible light, which enables us to see the screen, and other forms of electromagnetic radiation which can be harmful above certain levels. However, the levels of electromagnetic radiation emitted from DSE is well below the safe levels set out in international recommendations. So, your employer doesn't have to check radiation levels from your DSE, and you do not need any special devices such as spectacles, screens or aprons when using it.

What should I do if I'm pregnant?

You don't need to stop working with DSE. Past concern, about reports of miscarriages and birth defects among some groups of DSE workers, has not been borne out by more recent research. Many scientific studies have now been carried out and, taken as a whole, these do not show any link between miscarriages or birth defects and working with DSE. If you are anxious about working with DSE or about work generally during pregnancy, you should talk to your doctor. Or you could talk to someone who is well informed about current scientific information and advice on DSE.

Can working with DSE cause skin disorders?

This is rare. A few people have experienced irritation, rashes or other skin problems when working with DSE. The exact cause is not known, but it seems possible that a combination of dry air, static electricity and individual susceptibility may be involved. If this is the case, increasing the humidity or allowing more fresh air into the room may help

Can work with DSE trigger epileptic fits?

Most people with epilepsy are unaffected by DSE. A few who suffer from photo-sensitive epilepsy and are susceptible to flickering lights and striped patterns may be affected in some circumstances. But even they can often work successfully with DSE without provoking an attack.

Is it true that using a mouse can cause problems?

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

Intensive use of a mouse, trackball, or similar pointing device may give rise to aches and pains in the fingers, hands, wrists, arms or shoulders. This can also happen with a keyboard, but mouse work concentrates activity on one hand and arm (and one or two fingers), and this may make problems more likely. Adopting a good posture and technique can reduce risks. It is really important to take breaks from intensive mouse work - even short pauses can help, as can spells of non-DSE work. If you use a mouse a lot, you can try changing from right to left-handed use (and vice-versa) from time to time. It can also help to take your hand off the mouse during short pauses and let your mouse arm hang straight down from your shoulder in a relaxed fashion. Try rolling your shoulders backwards and forwards and turning your neck from right to left and up and down. These exercises may help to relieve any tension that may have built up through concentration. If you find gripping your mouse awkward, you could try a different shaped or sized one. The HS&E Team can advise on what is currently available.

Where can I find out more information?

Further information on working with Display Screen Equipment can be found on the Health and Safety Executive's website at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/index.htm>

APPENDIX B – REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKSTATIONS

1. Minimum Standard for Workstations

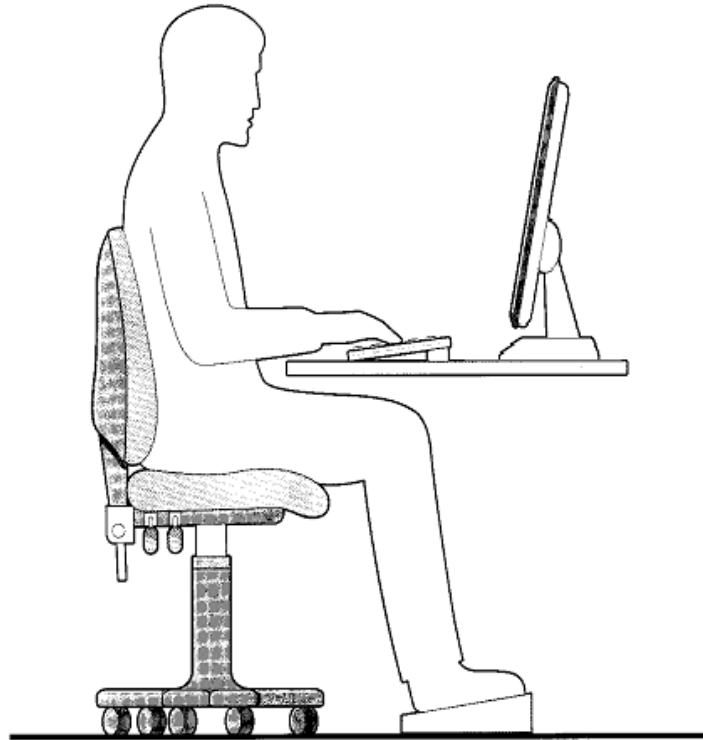
- a) Adequate lighting, temperature and ventilation.
- b) No glare or distracting reflections in the screen.
- c) Distracting noise minimised.
- d) Sufficient leg room, to allow postural changes.
- e) Blinds or similar on windows to reduce glare.
- f) Keyboard adjustable and legible.
- g) Work chair adjustable, backrest with lumbar support and height adjustment, with a 5 castor base.
- h) Footrest and document holder if required.
- i) Work surface which has enough space for the task and is glare free.
- j) Software appropriate to the task.
- k) Software must be easy to use and adaptable to the level of knowledge or experience of the operator or user.
- l) Monitoring of performance of DSE work may not be done without the knowledge of the operator or user.
- m) Systems must display information in a format and at a pace which are adapted to operators or users.

2. Breaks from DSE Work

Breaking up long periods of DSE work helps to prevent fatigue and upper limb problems. As a general guide, individuals should not work for more than an hour without taking time away from the screen for approximately five to ten minutes. Frequent short breaks are better than longer, less frequent ones. Changes of activity (doing other tasks not using DSE) are more effective than formal rest breaks in relieving visual fatigue.

APPENDIX C – ‘ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY’ GUIDE

Helpful Tips for Display Screen Equipment Users



- Is the back adjustable?
- Is there good lumbar support?
- Is the seat adjustable?
- Avoid excessive pressure on the backs of your legs and knees.
- Use a foot support if needed.
- Is there space for postural change?
- When keying your forearms should be parallel to the floor and your elbow level with the middle row of your keyboard.
- Use a soft touch on the keys and do not overstretch your fingers. Position your mouse within easy reach so it can be used with a straight wrist. Sit well supported and close to desk so that you do not have to work with your arm outstretched and do not grip the mouse too tightly. Use a mouse rest if necessary.
- Make sure that your eyes are level with the top of the screen and approximately an arm's length away. If necessary use a document holder to prevent twisting of the neck and upper body.
- Make sure that there is space in front of the keyboard to support your hands and wrists

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

Further guidance

1. Organise your workload to avoid sitting in the same position for too long. Take regular breaks, at least 5 minutes every hour but approximately 10 minutes if possible. Change your posture as often as practicable. Rather than working in a single posture, find your “comfort zone”. Your “comfort zone” is a range of positions which is generally appropriate and comfortable for your particular work situation.
2. Pay particular attention to modifying your posture in the afternoon when you may tend to get more fatigued. Avoid slouching forward and do not lean back too far.
3. Make sure you have enough space around you to take whatever documents you need. Remember to adjust your screen to the correct height; it may need a stand to obtain this. The screen could be put on a desk top flat box computer (as opposed to a tower computer).
4. Try to arrange your desk and screen so that bright lights are not reflected in the screen. It is not advisable to face windows directly. Adjust curtains/blinds to prevent unwanted light.
5. Make sure there is enough space underneath your desk to move your legs freely. Move obstacles out of the way, but remember, do not leave combustibles near electric sockets.
6. When keying try to use the CTRL and character keys or ‘F’ /shortcut keys.
7. If you work from home on a computer remember that these tips apply there as well. If you are undertaking work at home for the University it is a requirement that you complete a DSE assessment. If you are keying regularly for long intervals do not use a laptop, notebook or palmtop or other portable device.
8. Make sure you have the correct software for the job. Check the brightness, colour, font type and font size etc on your screen. Ensure that there is adequate spacing between characters and between lines.
9. Avoid having an excessive number of windows open on the screen at the same time.
10. Avoid browsing files on the screen which are best saved onto appropriate electronic media and printed versions produced.
11. If you suffer from any eye problems when using your DSE, please contact the Clerk and/or the Employment Committee.

SIGNED	
COUNCILLOR WENDY PLANT, PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN	