

## S7 – Opening Statement

### Display Screen Equipment

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Display screen equipment has been in use for many years and is now a common feature in the workplace. The terms DSE, VDU, VDT and monitor are all used to apply to a display screen, usually forming part of a computer, which shows text, numbers or graphics. The DSE Procedure is a guide to DSE usage at work covering several aspects such as risk assessment, control measures and compliance with regulations.

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations came into effect in January 1993; some small changes, however, were made in 2002. Employers have a duty to protect their staff from adverse health effects which range from headaches to ongoing muscle pain in the neck, arms or shoulders. Additionally, RSIs and back strain are among the most common reasons for staff absence and this is a factor that continues to cost less proactive businesses dearly.



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### What is this?

This is a written procedure which covers all aspects of display screen equipment use and provides guidance on complying with the associated regulations.

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### The person responsible for implementing this procedure is:

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### What do we need to do?

The person responsible for implementing this procedure must ensure that:

- All persons identified as user under the regulations are subject to a display screen equipment assessment;
  - A competent person undertakes the assessment;
  - All identified issues are placed within an action plan and dates are set for the corrective action to be completed;
  - Employees are consulted on any changes relevant to the findings of the risk assessment;
  - Suitable display screen equipment training is provided for all identified users;
  - Users are reimbursed any monies that are paid for eye examinations and eyesight tests.
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### What is a user?

A user is an individual who normally uses a VDU for continuous or near continuous spells of an hour or more at a time, and uses it in this way more or less daily.

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### Display screen equipment assessment

A display screen equipment assessment should cover the following items:

- Environment (noise, lighting, temperature, ventilation)
- Equipment (brightness, contrast, easy to use)
- Workstation (space, chair, table, monitor, keyboard)
- Procedural (training, eye tests, rest breaks, provision of water)

**Note:** The assessment should be undertaken during the first week of employment and reviewed periodically, or after changes to the workstation.

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### Occupational health

#### Control measures

Through a risk assessment the following control measures should be considered to minimise ill health effects:

- Reviewing the layout of the workstation and ensuring that all equipment is positioned in such a way that it does not pose a potential risk;



- Ensuring that suitable DSE training has been provided by a competent person;
- Ensuring regular rest breaks are being taken away from the workstation;
- Providing plenty of drinking water for employees;
- Referring the person to an occupational nurse for guidance on how to minimise the risk of work-related upper limb disorders;
- Maximising the use of natural daylight. If this is not possible, replace existing light bulbs with 'daylight' bulbs;
- Allowing employees to receive an eye and eyesight test (paid for by the company);
- Improving the ventilation within the office environment (ideally natural airflow).

The use of a visual display unit **does not**:

- Cause bad eyesight;
- Damage an unborn child; or
- Result in facial dermatitis.

If not controlled, excessive use may result in:

- Repetitive strain injuries (RSI);
- Headaches;
- Focusing difficulties; and
- Work-related upper limb disorders.

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## Working from home

**Q.** Do the regulations apply if I work from home?

**A.** Yes, the regulations apply if you are an employee working from home, and habitually using a VDU for a significant part of your normal work.

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## Portable equipment and laptops

**Q.** I use a laptop. Are there any precautions I should take?

**A.** It is advisable to avoid using laptops on their own if full sized equipment is available, eg docking station with a separate monitor. Continuous use of laptops may increase the risk of developing occupational ill health symptoms.

**Note:** If it is not feasible to avoid the use of laptops then consideration should be given to allowing more frequent rest breaks.

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## Legislation

- Display Screen Equipment Regulations 2002

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## Associated documentation

- Display screen equipment assessment H&SDSE01

