

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0 GENERAL STATEMENT .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3.0 ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4.0 DEFINITIONS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5.0 REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKSTATIONS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>6.0 HOMEWORKING .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>7.0 WORKSTATION ASSESSMENTS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>8.0 LAPTOP COMPUTERS AND PORTABLE DEVICES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>9.0 WORK ROUTINE/REST BREAKS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>10.0 EYE/EYESIGHT TESTS / CORRECTIVE APPLIANCES .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>11.0 INFORMATION AND TRAINING .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>12.0 MONITORING &amp; REVIEW .....</b>	<b>6</b>

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The principal risks relate to physical (musculoskeletal) problems, visual fatigue and mental stress. These are not unique to DSE work nor an inevitable consequence of it, and indeed there is some evidence that the risk to the individual user from typical DSE work is low if appropriate precautions are taken, however, in DSE work as in other types of work, ill health can result from poor equipment or furniture, work organisation, working environment, job design and posture, and from inappropriate working methods.

## **2.0 GENERAL STATEMENT**

Lancaster City Council acknowledges that health and safety hazards may arise from the use of this equipment. It is therefore the company's policy to ensure that any risks are reduced to a minimum. Whilst it is generally recognised that the use of DSE can be undertaken without undue risks to health, it is appreciated that some employees may have genuine reservations and concerns. The company will seek to give information and training to enable a fuller understanding of these issues.

Lancaster City Council (the organisation) is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees and recognises that the use of computer workstations, tablets and laptops may lead to muscular-skeletal disorders, visual disorders, fatigue, and stress.

This Policy applies to staff who 'habitually use display screen equipment as a significant part of their normal work'.

**Scope:** This policy applies to DSE Users in the Company and follows the obligations under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992. Lancaster City Council will minimise risks to DSE Users, so far as is reasonably practicable.

**Implementation:** It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that staff members are aware of and understand this policy and any subsequent revisions.

**Compliance:** This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation.

### **3.0 ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

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Whilst it is neither possible nor desirable to fully define responsibilities, the following give the main responsibilities in relation to this policy:

#### **Chief Executive Officer**

- The Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Company meets its statutory obligations and that effective arrangements for the management of health and safety are put in place.
- The Chief Executive Officer executive responsibility to manage Health and Safety including compliance with Health and Safety at Work Act, etc. 1974 and other relevant legislation, best practice guidance and Company policies to meet legal and organisational requirements.

#### **Senior Leadership Team**

- To ensure effective health and safety management structure.
- To ensure that key posts are filled by competent individuals and the requirements of these posts are being met.
- To ensure that the Senior Management Team gives matters of health and safety equal importance as other key business functions.
- To ensure that the Senior Management Team provides as far as is reasonably practicable the resources deemed necessary, to fulfil the requirements determined by statute.
- Review safety performance of the Company with the Senior Management Team.

#### **Line Managers**

Have direct responsibility for health and safety matters relating to premises under their control and for persons reporting directly to them and are therefore responsible for the implementation of the provisions of this policy for the homes/departments under their jurisdiction by:

- Consulting employees on DSE work.
- Ensuring all DSE assessments are carried out for staff in their area of responsibility.
- Carrying out and implementing suitable and sufficient risk assessments.
- Implementing measures to reduce the risk.
- Authorising eye and eyesight tests to employees who have been identified as DSE Users.
- Where actions are identified ensure that they are adequately addressed and resolved in a timely manner.

#### **The Health and Safety Team**

- The Health and Safety Team have overall responsibility for providing advice and assistance the implementation of this policy within their respective services.
- Undertake and complete Level 2 assessments, providing a report and recommending necessary actions, where required.

#### **Health and Safety Representatives / Trade Union Representatives**

Health and Safety / Trade Union Representatives have certain responsibilities and duties and are able to audit and complete inspections where required.

A health and safety representative is a fellow worker who represents other union members to look after the health and safety at work of people they work with.

Health and Safety Representatives have the right to:

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- Take an active part in workplace risk assessments.
- Investigate potential hazards and 'dangerous occurrences' and examine the accident data.
- Investigate members' complaints.
- Carry out inspections of the workplace in work time, at least every three months.
- Be consulted on new working practices and new technology.
- Receive safety information from their employer (such as inspectors' reports, hygiene surveys and risk assessments).

## **Employees**

Employees are responsible for co-operating with Managers to enable them to provide a safe working environment and ensure legal compliance, namely by:

- Completion of the online training package, initially as part of the induction process, and thereafter as required or as part of the refresher training process.
- Undertake the DSE Self-Assessment, initially as part of the induction process, and again as part of the review process.
- Seek advice from line managers (and the health and safety team where required) to resolve any issues arising from a DSE Assessment.
- Repeat self-assessments as required e.g. if there are any significant changes to work equipment or environment, or as advised by line managers or health and safety Manager.
- Set up workstations in accordance with the guidance provided by the DSE Regulations.
- Report any health problems which may be related to computer work, to their Line Manager.

## **4.0 DEFINITIONS**

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### **Display Screen Equipment (DSE and Visual Display Units (VDU)**

Means any alphanumeric or graphic display screen, regardless of the display process involved e.g. display screens, desk top computers, laptops, iPads, tablets, other touch screens, microfiche and other similar devices.

### **User/Operator**

A User means an employee who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of his/her normal work.

The HSE guidance states: It will generally be appropriate to classify the person concerned as a "User" or "Operator" if they:

- Use DSE for continuous or near continuous spells of one hour or more at a time.
- Use DSE in this way daily.
- Have to transfer information quickly to and from the DSE.

### **Use**

means use for or in connection with work.

### **Workstation**

means an assembly comprising –

- display screen equipment (whether provided with software determining the interface between the equipment and its operator or user, a keyboard or any other input device),
- any optional accessories to the display screen equipment,
- any disk drive, telephone, modem, printer, document holder, work chair, work desk, work surface or other item peripheral to the display screen equipment, and
- the immediate work environment around the display screen equipment.

## **5.0 REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKSTATIONS**

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Minimum requirements for display screen workstations, covering the equipment, the working environment, and the interface (for example software) between the computer and the user or operator are set out in Schedule 1 to the Regulations and are covered within the workstation assessment checklist.

## **6.0 HOMEWORKING**

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For details relating to home working see Homeworking policy and guidance.

## **7.0 WORKSTATION ASSESSMENTS**

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Workstation self-assessments shall be carried out by all employees who use DSE, using the workstation assessment checklist which is located on My Compliance and the Intranet. The results of this assessment will then be reviewed where necessary by the Line Manager, who will help resolve any outstanding problems.

A more formal one-to-one assessment may be carried out by the Health and Safety Team if required e.g. if the Line Manager has specific concerns about the individual or workstation or the employee is experiencing health issues related to the use of the workstation.

The assessment shall be repeated/reviewed if major changes are made to equipment or furniture, if workstations are relocated, if the nature of the work changes or if the health of the user changes.

## **8.0 LAPTOP COMPUTERS AND PORTABLE DEVICES**

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Laptops must comply with the full regulations when they are used for continuous periods of more than one hour per day, on most days. Ideally the keyboard and screen should be separate, and there are several options to achieve this:

- Use with a docking station (preferred).
- Use with a separate monitor.
- Use with a separate keyboard and mouse.

All laptops and their accessories should be as light as possible and should be carried in suitable laptop bags/carriers especially if a laptop is to be carried frequently.

## **9.0 WORK ROUTINE/REST BREAKS**

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In many tasks, natural breaks or pauses occur because of the inherent organisation of the work. Whenever possible, jobs using DSE should be designed to consist of a mix of screen-based and non-screen-based work to prevent fatigue and to vary visual and mental demands. Where the job unavoidably contains spells of intensive DSE work (whether using the keyboard or input device, reading the screen, or a mixture of the two),

these should be broken up by periods of non-intensive, non-DSE work. Where work cannot be so organised, for example in jobs requiring only data or text entry or screen monitoring requiring sustained attention and concentration, deliberate breaks or pauses must be introduced.

Breaking up long spells of DSE work helps to prevent fatigue, eyestrain, upper limb disorders and backache. Most employees will have some control over their own working arrangements and will be able to organise their work to take this into account.

The best way to break up work is to alternate sedentary work with more active tasks, such as filing, photocopying etc. Where this is not possible, more formal breaks may be necessary.

There is no prescribed frequency or duration of breaks from display screen work, however short, frequent breaks are more satisfactory than occasional, longer breaks: for example, a 5-10 minute break after 50-60 minutes continuous screen and/ or keyboard work is likely to be better than a 15-20 minute break every 2 hours.

Where possible, employees will be given the discretion to decide the timing and extent of off screen tasks. Employees who believe that their workload does not permit adequate breaks should bring this to the attention of management.

Changes of activity (time spent doing other tasks not using the DSE) appear from study evidence to be more effective than formal rest breaks in relieving visual fatigue.

If possible, breaks should be taken away from the DSE workstation, and allow the user to stand up, move about and/or change posture.

Users of display screen equipment are encouraged, and will be expected to, take the opportunities for breaks.

## **10.0 EYE/EYESIGHT TESTS / CORRECTIVE APPLIANCES**

Under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1991 as amended, the organisation has a duty to provide 'users' **who so request it**, with an appropriate eye and eyesight test. In Great Britain an 'appropriate eye and eyesight test' means a 'sight test' as defined in the Opticians Act legislation.

The definition of a 'user' is those people that use a computer for most of their working hours and could not do without a computer to do their work.

If an Employee and/or new recruit is defined as a 'user', the company will cover the cost of an eye/eyesight test (costs as detailed below)

If the test shows that the user needs glasses, **specifically for their VDU work**, the company will pay for the cost of a basic pair of frames and single distance lenses solely and specifically for DSE use only (costs as detailed below). However, this does not apply if normal glasses used for other purposes are adequate for VDU work.

Referrals should be accompanied by appropriate written evidence signed by a qualified Optician, please refer to the HR Policy or contact the HR team for more information.

Not all glasses are supplied free of charge. If the 'user' already wears glasses and these are adequate for normal work, including work with DSE, there is no duty for the employer to pay for or towards glasses.

Additional costs over the limit and all costs associated with the staff member's choice above a basic pair of frames and lenses (e.g. designer frames, tinted lenses etc.) cannot be claimed by the employee.

### **Frequency of testing**

Eye and eyesight tests should be provided:

- as soon as practicable after display screen users have made a request.
- for recruits or employees who are to become users and have made a request. In such cases the test must be carried out before the employee becomes a user.
- for users at regular intervals after the first test, provided they want the tests. Intervals for repeat testing will be as recommended by the clinical judgement of the optician. The frequency of repeat testing needed will vary between individuals, according to factors such as age.  
The company is not responsible for any corrections for vision defects or examinations for eye complaints which are not related to display screen work which may become necessary within the period. These are the responsibility of the individual concerned.
- for users experiencing visual difficulties which may reasonably be related to the display screen work, for example visual symptoms such as eyestrain or focusing difficulties.

Repeat eye tests are usually required every two years. More frequent eye tests will only be paid for if prior arrangements have been made.

Users, or those about to become users, can request an eye test, for which reimbursement will be made up to the maximum costs stated. Higher payments for tests conducted privately will not be made.

### **Care and Replacement of Spectacles**

The employee is personally responsible for the safekeeping of spectacles. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act, etc. 1974 it is an offence to interfere with, or misuse, anything provided in the interest of health and safety. Employees are expected to demonstrate the same degree of care for spectacles as for any other item of company property.

Users are entitled to claim payment for repeat NHS eye tests as recommended by a qualified optician. Payment for further changes will be restricted to the cost of new lenses, due to changes in eyesight. Further contributions to the replacement of frames within the overall limit will only be made where the frames are no longer fit for purpose.

## **11.0 INFORMATION AND TRAINING**

All employees who use display screen equipment will be given training to enable them to work without risk to health.

Further advice & information is available from the HSE website and free to download:

- [INDG36 – Working with VDU's](#)

## **12.0 MONITORING & REVIEW**

The ongoing implementation of the Display Screen Equipment policy will be monitored through the supervision and the company H&S Audit process.

Any member of staff with a health concern regarding use of VDU's should ensure that it is discussed with their supervisor / manager.