

ESSEX PARTNERSHIP UNIVERSITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

YOUR HEALTH AND DSE WORK – for DSE Users

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Display Screen Equipment (DSE) is common throughout the workplace. Their introduction has led to many benefits, making tasks quicker and easier to perform. However, their use can lead to DSE operators spending long periods sitting at the DSE, looking at the screen and using the keyboard. If care is not taken with the design of the workstation and the DSE tasks, some DSE users can experience problems such as headaches, eye strain and muscle pain. If you spend a significant part of your working day using the DSE the Trust must provide the correct equipment and conditions to ensure your comfort. It is also important that you know how to adjust your workstation for your comfort. Many of the problems associated with the use of the DSE can be overcome by good working practice which is under your control.
- 1.2 This guidance note is designed to apprise you of the potential health risk that can arise if good working practices are not followed.

2.0 WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- 2.1 **Work Related Upper limb disorders (WRULD)**
This term covers a wide range of conditions from simple aches and pains in the back and neck to conditions such as repetitive strain injuries (RSI). WRULD's can be caused by long periods of rapid, repetitive actions, or prolonged static positions, particularly in uncomfortable or unnatural positions. Usually aches and pains do not last, but in a few cases they may become persistent or even disabling. Following the advice in this guidance can help prevent WRULD's.
- 2.2 It is important that you report any regular discomfort in your hands, wrists, neck or shoulders to your line manager so that they can take appropriate action. Symptoms can include aches, pains and sensory loss (tingling or pin and needles). Your manager will need to consider a number of factors which could contribute to upper limb disorders such as the furniture layout, training, work load and task design.
- 2.3 If symptoms continue after you have finished DSE work you should seek medical advice promptly.
- 2.4 It should be considered that WRULD's may not be caused by DSE work, although such work may exacerbate the condition. For instance Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a wrist condition. Other conditions such as tennis elbow may be associated with hobbies.

3.0 VISUAL PROBLEMS

- 3.1 Working with DSE **cannot** damage your eyesight. It can however highlight an existing problem and prolonged periods at the DSE can lead to symptoms of visual fatigue. Problems can include eye discomfort such as dry, itchy, aching or tired eyes; or difficulties with focusing or perception of the image. Postural problems may also result from visual difficulties if the user adopts an unnatural position in order to see the screen more easily.
- 3.2 Visual problems can occur if you stay in the same position and concentrate for a long time; if your workstation is badly positioned; if lighting conditions are poor; or if the image quality is unsatisfactory. The side effects from some medications may also mimic the symptoms of visual fatigue.
- 3.3 Visual problems could be due to a defect with your vision. Some people have difficulty focusing at the visual distance of the screen and there are also some rare eye conditions which may only become apparent when doing DSE work which tends to be visually demanding. If you are a DSE user you are entitled to have an eye and eye sight test. Please refer to Appendix 3 for further information.

4.0 FATIGUE & STRESS

- 4.1 The risks of DSE workers experiencing physical fatigue and stress can be minimised by the careful design and selection of DSE. This needs to be augmented with good design of the workplace, environment, task and ensuring training is carried out and risk assessments are conducted involving the user.

5.0 OTHER POSSIBLE CONCERNS

- 5.1 **Pregnancy**
In the light of scientific evidence, pregnant women do not need to stop working with DSE. However, to avoid problems caused by stress and anxiety, women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant and are worried about working with DSE should discuss this with their manager.
- 5.2 **Photosensitive Epilepsy**
Is a *relatively rare* condition where the sufferer reacts adversely to flickering lights and patterns. The majority of those who are likely to suffer an attack will have done so before the age of 20 years. Only a very small proportion of those who suffer from photosensitive epilepsy are likely to be affected by working with DSE. For the majority of people, you should still be able to work successfully with DSE. If you are concerned you can seek further advice from the Occupational Health Department, your own GP in the first instance.

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT (DSE) PROCEDURE - RMPG07 APPENDIX 5 (August 2017)

5.3 Radiation

Emissions from DSE do not put users at risk. Extensive studies have found that the levels of radiation given off by DSE are well below the safe levels set out in the international recommendations and for some radiation below natural background levels. There is therefore no need for special screens, aprons, spectacles etc.

5.4 Posture

Below are some images to assist you with setting up your Chair/Monitor/Desk.

