

Using DSE Out of the Office

General Advice for SCC Employees



Employers have the same health and safety responsibilities for those working from home as any other worker.

SCC employees who use display screen equipment (DSE) outside of their main office base are still subject to the policies and procedures of the authority. This document gives the necessary guidance and information to work safely and reduce the risks associated with that DSE work.

All users of DSE equipment must receive training and information relating to how to use their equipment and how to reduce the risks from musculoskeletal problems, fatigue and stress.

All DSE users are required to have an assessment of the risks associated with their work conducted in order that the risks are reduced to as low a level as is reasonably practicable.

Home worker and working from home

An employee will be considered a home worker if:

- their job requires them to spend, on average, in excess of two hours per day working from home
- they have no choice but to work from home (i.e. they are not provided with an office from which to work)
- the work activities they carry out at home could not reasonably be expected to be completed while working away from home (e.g. client visit admin)
- they need to keep extensive records or other work related materials at home
- they use their home for business meetings (staff, suppliers, clients etc).

If an employee does not meet the criteria listed above, then they are not considered to be a "Home Worker" but may be classed as "working from home".

Employees who are classed officially as 'Home Workers' are required to complete a [Risk Assessment \(Contracted Homeworker\)](#) before any home working is undertaken and after they have received DSE training and information.

Where employees work from home regularly as part of Smart Ways of Working or other reasons, this is termed 'flexible' homeworking and a [Risk Assessment \(Flexible Working\)](#) should be completed.

All risk assessments should be reviewed with managers and where necessary actions assigned and completed.

Employees who work from home 'flexibly' should try to avoid using DSE for long periods where possible, especially over several consecutive days. However, there may be exceptional circumstances when this is not possible. If only working from home occasionally for short periods, even if over consecutive days, no special equipment is required as DSE risks are considered to be low.

However, if working from home for longer periods over an extended period of time, ways to reduce risks need to be considered. This should include the provision of ancillary equipment such as a separate keyboard and mouse and a laptop riser as a minimum. If necessary, it may be possible for these to be borrowed from the office and if this is the case, arrangements as to how this can be achieved should be discussed between the employee and their line manager.

Where working from home for extended periods is an absolute necessity, it may also be possible for screens to be borrowed from the office and again how best to do this should be discussed between the employee and their line manager. Further information on equipment being available [on loan](#) from the Council can be found on Staff Stuff.

Where specialist equipment has been provided for an employee through an occupational health or similar referral (Posturite or Access to Work for example) it may be possible for this to also be made available at home if the employee has suitable space available. Again, arrangements for this should be discussed and agreed with the employee and their line manager.

All equipment remains the property of Southampton City Council and must be returned to the office when the extended working from home period ends.

If an employee needs to work from home for an extended period of time due to exceptional circumstances, consideration needs to be given to ensuring appropriate work breaks are included throughout the day to avoid sitting for long periods using DSE equipment.

With the introduction of more and more meetings being held via Teams or Zoom, it is important to limit these to no more than an 1 hour at a time, where possible and to ensure a minimum break of 15 minutes between meetings to allow employees to get up and take a walk, ensuring they stretch their limbs and focus their eyes away from the screen.

Further guidance on working from home or away from the office is available on the Health and Safety [DSE Microsite](#).

Mobile Worker

A mobile worker is an employee who typically visits various different locations as part of their normal schedule of work. This could include employees making home visits, employees visiting different sites or buildings and employees carrying out DSE related tasks away from their normal base of operations.

Portable devices (i.e. laptops, notebook computers, Blackberry's, Palmtops, Tablets or Smartphones) are subject to the DSE Regulations if they are used for prolonged periods of

an hour or more. Adequate training must be provided to the users of such equipment, including how to assess the risks when setting up a portable device away from the office. Any such risk assessment should consider potential risks associated with manual handling, if portable computer users are also required to carry heavy equipment or other items.

Potential risks from violent theft in conjunction with the normal risks associated with ordinary display screen work should be considered.

Design features of some portable devices can lead to postural and other problems for users. To avoid such risks, users should take more frequent breaks and avoid using portables in locations where space is restricted, i.e. the car.

Whenever practicable, portable equipment such as laptops, should be used at a suitable desk or table with a separate full-sized keyboard and mouse plugged in and a laptop riser in place; the latter will allow the height and position of the screen to be adjusted and along with the position of the keyboard and mouse being flexible, should allow the user to achieve a comfortable, neutral keying position, reducing the risk of a user suffering from musculoskeletal disorders which can be exacerbated through prolonged use of portable DSE in unsuitable conditions.

Where portable equipment is continuously used in the same location a DSE risk assessment must be completed. However, where the user's task may only last for periods of less than an hour from location to location, there is no need for the risk assessment to be written down, instead the user should undertake a "dynamic" risk assessment, which will take into account local environmental conditions and user/device interface.

As there is potential for users having to manage and operate in changing working conditions when using portable DSE, it is essential that they take more frequent and slightly longer breaks away from the DSE task, or to plan their work in such a way as to avoid using it for prolonged period.

Remote Worker

Remote workers are SCC employees who may work in buildings or locations belonging to another employer. In these cases, SCC still hold responsibility for its workers and therefore their DSE processes and procedures will apply