

Portable DSE user Guidance note

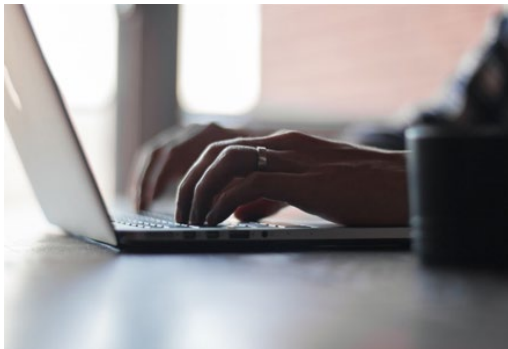
General Advice for SCC Employees



Technological advances mean that more people are able to work out of the office. Portable DSE has particular advantages and allows efficiency savings for SCC and offers greater flexibility for employees - but it is important to use the right tool for the job as it also raises different health and safety concerns and particular advice is required.

The DSE Regulations apply if mobile DSE equipment (i.e. laptops and handheld devices) are used regularly and for long periods. Due to the small sizes of keyboard or screens, and locations that the equipment maybe used such as home or site visits (which may not provide appropriate seating or desks), problems can occur. That doesn't mean that mobile DSE work is perilous - it isn't. Upper limb disorders can be avoided if users follow effective practice, and take breaks during prolonged use. By taking a few simple precautions, work with mobile DSE equipment can be more comfortable and productive.

Laptops



Laptops allow us to work with greater flexibility, but care in using them in an optimal way will help prevent discomfort through poor posture. While short periods of time in a poor posture is unlikely to cause significant health issues, if regularly repeated over a long period, discomfort or injury may occur.

Laptops do not have the screen and keyboard separated, meaning that the screen is often too low and close to allow comfortable viewing. Wherever possible (e.g. when at a workstation or when you have a table available) it is always best to use a separate keyboard, mouse, and screen (additionally, a laptop stand will enable the user to raise the height of the screen to a more comfortable height). A keyboard, mouse and laptop riser (e.g. mobility bundle) will enable you ensure that whatever desk you sit at you will have the equipment you need.



Try to avoid having to place the laptop on your knees. If you do have to place your laptop on your knee (e.g. home visit) you are advised to try to raise your laptop using books, or a briefcase etc. Just make sure that whatever you use is stable and does not block cooling vents. Raising the laptop in this way will help to adjust it to a suitable height for typing (your forearms should be parallel to avoid a v-shape in the

wrists when your fingers are on the keyboard). You should take regular breaks from this posture, and avoid working in this way for long periods.

Where an extended period of working from home is necessary due to exceptional circumstances, employers need to consider how they may be able to support the employee to work safely. Many employees will not have access to a separate screen, keyboard or mouse at home, therefore if it is intended for an employee to work from home for an extended period, employers may allow employees to borrow a separate keyboard and mouse from the office for the duration. Borrowing a screen may not be so easy but you can raise your laptop screen by placing it on something, which is sturdy and stable enough to support it. Avoid using soft surfaces to support the laptop, i.e. cushions or pillows, to ensure cooling vents are not blocked. The separate keyboard and mouse can then be plugged in and used as normal. In exceptional circumstances it may be possible to arrange for a separate screen to also be borrowed from the office and this should be discussed and arranged between the employer and the employee. Similarly, where specialist equipment has been supplied due to an occupational health or other similar referral (Posturite, Access to Work etc.) for example a special DSE chair, it may be possible for this to also be provided for use at home for an extended period of homeworking. Again, this should be discussed and arranged between the employer and the employee. All equipment should be returned to the office when working from home for the extended period is no longer necessary.

Advice points:

- Use a laptop riser, mouse and separate keyboard where possible.
- Choose a riser that can be adjusted to lift the top of your laptop screen to approximately the same height as your eyes level (if no riser is available, raise the laptop on a briefcase or books etc.).
- If your seat is adjustable, make changes so that your eyes are in line with top of screen; your elbows are 90 degrees when typing; and your legs are supported.
- If you are unable to avoid using it on your lap try to raise your laptop using books, or a briefcase etc. (make sure that whatever you use is stable and does not block cooling vents).
- Try using hotkeys and shortcuts
- Where ideal posture cannot be achieved take regular breaks (to stretch and change eye focus – and blink).
- Position screen to avoid glare (strong reflections) on the screen.
- Make regular posture checks – try to make posture checks a habit – don't let your shoulders slump, and keep your neck straight.
- For extended periods of homeworking, it might be appropriate to consider the possibility of borrowing equipment from the office for the duration.

IPads and tablets

Tablets and IPads are great portable devices to use for short periods of time but for longer periods or for work requiring the input of information, a correctly set up

workstation is the best option. Make sure you use the right tool for the job to ensure you are productive and working without compromising your health. Due to the screen and keyboard being in the same place on a tablet – either your head is angled down or your arms are being held up and therefore the body area at most risk from tablet use is our neck.



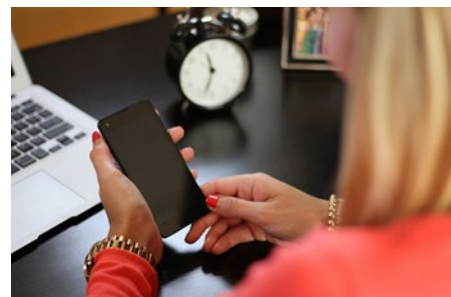
Most tablets aren't light enough to hold up like a book or magazine for extended periods, and so we tend to hold them lower, which results in a poor neck posture. Conversely, when they are on a table or desk we forget to prop our tablets up and use them flat or at a shallow angle which can also lead to poor neck posture.

Advice points:

- When reading, use a stand or tilt the tablet to reduce the need for you to bend your head forward to read.
- Whenever possible try to place the tablet on a surface rather than holding it. If you are using the on-screen keyboard for extended periods consider using a blue tooth external keyboard.
- Use a light touch when using the screen it will be more efficient as well as preventing problems.
- When typing or touching the screen regularly have the tablet flat or only slightly angled to ensure your wrists are not in awkward positions.
- If you find you are leaning forwards to view the tablet, enlarge the image or text.
- Remember movement is really important, if you find yourself using a tablet intensively for more than 10-20 mins take a short break, stretch your hands, shoulders and neck and look into the distance to relax your eyes.

PDA's

PDA's and smartphones allow you keep abreast of work developments when you are out of the office. However, they should not be your main work equipment. To reduce problems associated with PDA's, you should only use them for appropriate tasks as smart phones can lead to pain and discomfort due to the posture needed to use them.



Advice points:

- To reduce typing, consider calling instead.
- Hold device up to reduce bending of the neck.

- Look away from the screen regularly to relax eyes. Consider increasing font size.
- Avoid lengthy input periods. When large amounts of inputting is required - use a PC or laptop.
- Vary the fingers you use and stop frequently to stretch.
- Consider using an external keyboard.