

Guidance for Flexible Worker using WCC portable Display Screen Equipment (DSE) on ad hoc/occasional basis when working at home

1. Introduction

As the name suggests portable DSE covers items such as laptops, notebook computers, tablets, smart phones, as these items have been designed to be used 'on the move' and may therefore be used in a wide range of locations.. However, laptops can normally be used for longer periods within your own home with some sensible adaptations/guidance.

Risk assessment for users of portable [DSE](#) for home working can sometimes be a challenge, and it is clearly not practicable to use an independent assessor to analyse each home location.

This information relates only to the flexible worker who occasionally works at home e.g someone who works at home on an **ad hoc or occasional or informal basis** during their normal working hours e.g. to write a specific report and not for those who work regularly at home in accordance with a flexible working agreement.

If portable DSE is to be used only for very short periods of time or on ad-hoc basis, then staff should have already completed the DSE modules on WILMa training for their normal workstation and will therefore have sufficient information to make their own dynamic risk assessments. This will ensure that measures are taken to control risks wherever staff set up their laptop/tablet (for example, setting up the seating and work surface to prevent awkward/poor posture). This dynamic assessment is not written down, but it is the thought process you go through when considering what activity you are about to undertake, what equipment you are going to use, how you are going to use it, and how you are going to set it up within a given environment. To help you with this dynamic risk assessment, please follow the advice given in section 2.1.

Staff should remember that breaks or changes of activity are particularly important for portable DSE/own desktop pc users as staff may need more frequent breaks or changes of activity to compensate for poorer working environments, which can impact particularly on posture.

2. Using portable DSE

The design features of portable [DSE](#) (such as smaller keyboards, smaller screen, lack of screen/keyboard separation) may make it more difficult for you to achieve a comfortable and ergonomic working posture, as they usually lead you to work with your head and shoulders bent forward, and thus adopting awkward arm, wrist and hand postures.

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2.1 If you use portable DSE on ad hoc or occasionally at home you should:

1. Find a suitable place to work. **Sitting on the edge of the sofa or armchair is not suitable because of the posture it causes you to adopt.**
2. Sit comfortably and ergonomically
3. Use the laptop on a firm surface at the right height for keying (**don't use on your lap**).
4. Angle the screen so that it can be seen easily with no/minimal reflections and at a good viewing distance that is comfortable. Do not sit forward in a hunched up position and avoid slouching.
5. Wherever possible use an adjustable chair, so that the lower part of your back is supported by the back rest. Where this is not possible, a non-adjustable chair can be used with a cushion or pillow to support your back.
6. The chair height is also important because your forearm should be horizontal when the hands are on the keyboard. Again, cushions can be used to vary the seat height. Sitting either too high or too low will lead to your wrists being in a bent/ awkward position.
7. If the laptop mouse is to be used make sure your hand is kept flat and the fingers are relaxed when using the trackball/ glide pad. If using a laptop for any **prolonged use, a separate mouse should always be used. A separate keyboard is also advisable.**
8. Take frequent breaks - it is important to take breaks and change posture to prevent symptoms of discomfort!
9. Take care not to have trailing cables particularly across walkways
10. Be mindful of others in the household e.g. Adults, pets, etc.

3. Further advice

Further advice is available under flexible working guidance on the Staff, Partners & Practitioner site on the Internet or from healthandsafety@warwickshire.gov.uk.

If you are a flexible worker who has agreement to **regularly work at home e.g one day per week** you will need to agree with your manager how you intend to set up your portable DSE when working at home and detail this as part of your flexible working agreement. You must also complete an additional DSE Self Assessment for your home as well as your normal office base. You may do this as part of the package for Defined DSE Users which includes e-learning and self-assessment form on [WILMa](#). You will also need to complete the Home Working Risk Assessment.

If you are currently experiencing ill-health symptoms, which you associate with the use of DSE (see WCC DSE Policy) speak to your supervisor/line manager immediately.

Further information on Health and Safety policies and procedures can be found on the Intranet/Helping You Work/HR/Health, Safety and Workforce Wellbeing/Health & Safety/Health & Safety Topics A-Z [Link](#).

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