Working with Display Screen Equipment

Caredemy
Online Training Academy

CAREDEMY
ONLINE SKILLS FOR CARE

Course Name:
* *Working with Display Screen Equipment*

Course Description:
* *This course will give an overview of the health risks of working with display screen equipment and employer requirements.*

Course Learning Objectives:
At the end of this course, the learner will be able to:
* *Describe risks of working with display screen equipment*
* *List employer requirements to protect the health of workers' who use display screen equipment*
* *Describe best practices for minimising risks of working with display screen equipment*

Target Audience:
* *Health and social care workers*

Course Requirements:
* *Participants must complete all learning modules and pass the multiple-choice course assessment.*

Core Clinical Framework:
* *This course meets the outcomes of the framework.*

Introduction to Display Screen Equipment

Display screen equipment, or DSE, is equipment such as PCs, laptops, tablets, and smartphones. Employers are required by the Health and Safety Regulations to protect the health of workers who use DSE daily, for an hour or more at a time. These workers are described as 'DSE users'. DSE regulations do not apply to workers that use DSE infrequently or only use DSE for short periods of time.

Employer Requirements

By law, employers must:
- Complete a DSE workstation assessment
- Ensure workers take breaks from DSE work or do something different to reduce risks
- Provide an eye strain test if requested by a DSE user
- Provide training and information for DSE users

The law also applies if DSE users are:
- At a fixed workstation
- Mobile workers
- Home workers
- Hot-desking

Health Risks of Display Screen Equipment

Poorly designed workstations or work environments or incorrect use of DSE can cause pain in several areas of the body including:
- Neck
- Back
- Shoulders
- Arms
- Wrists
- Hands

DSE use may also cause fatigue and eye strain.

Assessments & Workstations

If a worker uses DSE daily as part of their normal tasks, continuously for an hour a more, the employer is required to do a workstation assessment. Assessments should be completed when a new workstation is set up, a new user starts work, a change is made to an existing workstation, or users complain about pain or discomfort. During the assessment, employers should look at:
- The job being completed
- The workstation, including equipment, furniture, and working conditions
- Special requirements of the DSE user, such as a disability

Steps to reduce risks should be taken if any are found during the assessment.

DSE Assessment Software

Software packages exist that can help train users and help them take part in an assessment. The software is not an assessment on its own. A trained assessor must look at the user assessment results and resolve any doubtful points. Feedback should be provided to the DSE users to ensure problems are fixed.

Work Routine & Breaks

The law requires employers to plan work so that breaks or changes in activity are available to DSE users. Currently, there is no legal guidance for how often or how long breaks should be for DSE work. Often this is dependent on the type of work being completed. It is recommended to take short breaks often rather than longer breaks less often. DSE users should be able to choose when to take breaks if at all possible. Breaks or changes in activity should allow the user to get up from their workstation and move around, stretch, or change posture.

Eyes & Eyesight Testing

The law requires employers to arrange and pay for an eye test for DSE users if they request one. Additionally, employers must provide glasses if an employee needs them for only DSE use. While DSE work does not cause permanent damage to the eyes, long periods of DSE work can cause:
•   Discomfort
•   Headaches
•   Tired eyes
•   Temporary short-sightedness

The eye test should be a full eye and eyesight test by a doctor or optometrist, including an eye examination and vision test. Employers only have to pay for glasses for DSE work if the eye test shows the employee requires special glasses prescribed for the distance the screen is viewed at. The employer is not required to pay for glasses if the employee receives an ordinary prescription.

Steps to Improve DSE Work

Because DSE work is visually demanding, the work can make employees aware of eyesight problems they have never noticed, including those that happen with age. Employees can help their eyes by:
•   Ensuring lighting conditions are adequate
•   Taking regular breaks from DSE work
•   Ensuring the screen is properly adjusted and well positioned

Training & Information

Employers are required to provide health and safety training and information to DSE users. The training should cover the risks of DSE work and how risks can be avoided by safe working practices. Employers should inform DSE users of general arrangements that have been made for their health and safety, as well as how to apply for an eye test. Information and training should also cover:

- Arranging desk space
- Adjusting screens and lighting
- Adjusting chairs and furniture
- Good posture
- Importance of breaks or changes in activity
- Risk assessments
- How to report problems

Home Working

If an employee is working from home, the employer is still required to comply with DSE regulations. There are two types of home working to consider:

1. Temporary home working
2. Long-term home working

For temporary home working, there is no increased risks, so employers are not required to complete a home workstation assessment. However, employers should regularly discuss the health and safety of their employees if temporary home working affects their health adversely. For long-term home workers, the employer must explain how to carry out a full workstation assessment and provide workers appropriate equipment and advice on control measures.

Reviewing Arrangements

If a temporary home worker has their time at home extended, employers should have regular conversations with employees to assess if additional steps are needed. Employees should be encouraged to report:

- Working longer hours without breaks and adequate rest
- Adverse effects of working in isolation
- Adverse effects if unable access support systems provided at the workplace
- Aches, pains, or discomfort related to a temporary DSE arrangement

Specialised DSE Equipment

If a DSE users requires specialised DSE equipment, employers should try to meet those need if possible. This might include allowing employees to take equipment such as keyboards, a mouse, or a riser home with them. For larger items such as ergonomic chairs or adjustable desks, employees should be encouraged to create a comfortable working environment (e.g. supportive cushions).

Creating a Comfortable DSE Arrangement

DSE users should be encouraged to do the following to create a comfortable working environment:

- Keep forearms horizontal with eyes at the same height as the top of the screen
- Ensure there is enough space to accommodate for documents or other equipment
- Arrange the desk and screen to avoid reflections or glare
- Adjust curtains/blinds to prevent intrusive light
- Leave enough space under the desk to move legs
- Avoid excess pressure on the backs of the legs and knees

Setting Up a Workstation

1. Keyboards and typing
    - Leave space in front of the keyboard to rest hands and wrists when not typing
    - Try to keep wrists straight when typing
    - Use proper keyboard techniques
2. Using a mouse
    - Position the mouse within reach using a straight wrist
    - Sit upright and close to the desk to avoid using the mouse with an outstretched arm
    - Move the keyboard out of the way if not in use
    - Support the forearm on the desk
    - Do not grip the mouse tightly and rest fingers lightly on the buttons
3. Reading the screen
    - Ensure individual characters on the screen are sharp and in focus
    - Adjust the brightness and contrast controls to suit lighting conditions
    - Keep the screen surface clean
    - Choose text that is large enough to read if it can be adjusted
    - Select colours that are easy to read when possible

Changes in Activity

Breaking up DSE work helps to prevent eye strain, fatigue, and upper limb or back problems. Employees should have organised or scheduled rest breaks. DSE users should be able to:
- Stretch and change position
- Look into the distance occasionally
- Change activity before becoming tired
- Take short, frequent breaks instead of longer, infrequent breaks

Portable Computers

There are special considerations to reduce DSE risks when using a portable computer. The following may help to reduce the risk of fatigue and postural problems:

- Avoid manual handling if users must carry heavy equipment and papers
- Encourage the use of a docking station or firm surface, as well as a full-sized keyboard and mouse
- Screen height should be angled to the user is seated comfortably and reflection is minimised
- Use raiser blocks to adjust screen height if possible
- Consider more changes in activity if the user cannot minimise risks of prolonged use in an awkward posture