DSE Assessment Requirements: Protecting Office and Home Workers

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The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992, as amended, place clear duties on employers whose staff regularly use computers, laptops or other display screen equipment (DSE). The duties themselves are not new, but the shift to hybrid working has changed where they apply. An employer's responsibility for a workstation does not stop at the office door; it

extends to the spare room, kitchen table or home office where staff now spend a significant part of their week.

This article sets out who the rules cover, what a genuinely compliant DSE process looks like, and where employers most often go wrong.

Who Counts as a DSE User

Not everyone who touches a keyboard is a "DSE user" in the legal sense. The regulations apply to people who habitually use DSE as a significant part of their normal work, typically continuous or near-continuous use for an hour or more at a time, more or less daily. Someone who checks email for ten minutes between other duties is not a DSE user; an administrator or customer service agent almost certainly is, and a teacher completing records or a care home manager doing rotas may be, depending on screen time.

Getting this classification right matters because it determines who receives a formal assessment, who is entitled to eye tests on request, and who must be included in your DSE training. Employers in sectors such as schools and education often underestimate how many support staff, not just teachers, meet the threshold once admin, finance and pastoral work is counted.

Employer Duties Under the Regulations

For every DSE user, the employer must:

- Carry out a suitable workstation assessment and act on the risks it identifies
- Ensure workstations, wherever located, meet the minimum requirements in the regulations
- Plan work so that it includes regular breaks or changes of activity away from the screen
- Provide eyesight tests on request, and pay for glasses if they are needed specifically for DSE work
- Provide information and training so users understand how to use their equipment safely

The duty to assess sits with the employer, not the individual worker, although most organisations ask staff to complete a self-assessment checklist that a manager or competent person then reviews. That review step is where many employers fall short: a self-assessment form filed away unread is not an assessment that has been acted upon.

What a Compliant Workstation Assessment Looks Like

A proper DSE assessment is not a tick-box form. It should look at the individual, their equipment and their working environment together, and it should result in actions with an owner and a date. For office staff this usually means a manager or trained assessor checking the workstation in person; for home workers it is more often a guided self-assessment supported by photographs or a video call, followed up where problems are flagged.

Repeat assessments when the user changes role, moves desk or home location, reports discomfort, or when equipment changes significantly, such as moving from a desktop monitor to a laptop. The

regulations do not set a fixed interval, but an annual review is sensible even where nothing has obviously changed, because posture and habits drift. Keep a simple record of who has been assessed, when, what was found and what was done; this is your evidence if a musculoskeletal complaint is ever raised.

Workstation Equipment Standards

The regulations set minimum standards for the key elements of a workstation, and these apply equally at home and in the office.

Display Screen

- Clear, well-defined, adequately sized characters
- Adjustable brightness and contrast
- A position that avoids reflections and glare

Keyboard and Input Devices

- A separate, tiltable keyboard for anyone working for extended periods, rather than relying on a laptop's built-in keyboard
- Legible symbols and enough space in front for the hands and wrists to rest

Work Surface and Chair

- A surface large enough for a flexible arrangement of screen, keyboard and paperwork
- Low reflectance surfaces and a document holder where needed
- A stable chair with adjustable seat height and back, and a footrest for any user who wants one

Home and Hybrid Working Considerations

The law does not distinguish between a desk in an office and a desk at home; the same duties apply to both. What changes is how the employer gathers the information needed to assess the risk, since they cannot simply walk over and look.

For home and hybrid workers, a proportionate approach is to issue a structured self-assessment questionnaire, review the answers, and follow up directly with anyone reporting discomfort or an obviously unsuitable setup, such as a laptop balanced on a sofa arm for most of the week. Employers should also expect to provide, or reimburse, basic equipment where it is genuinely needed, such as a separate monitor, keyboard or adjustable chair.

- Send a DSE self-assessment to every home or hybrid worker in their first week working from that location
- Provide short written or video guidance on adjusting chair height, screen position and lighting
- Keep a record of what equipment has been supplied to whom, and when

- Repeat the self-assessment annually, and whenever the home setup changes

This applies just as much to care organisations and voluntary bodies that employ staff as to office-based businesses. A care home with managers doing admin from home, or a church or place of worship with employed administrators working from a laptop at the kitchen table, has the same DSE duties towards those staff as a city-centre office.

Common Problems and Their Health Effects

Across office and home settings, the same issues come up repeatedly: screens positioned too high or too low, laptops used for hours without an external keyboard or monitor, glare from a window, insufficient desk space, and chairs that cannot be adjusted properly or have never been adjusted at all. Lack of movement matters as much as posture; sitting still at a well-set-up workstation for hours without a break causes its own problems.

Left unaddressed, these issues contribute to musculoskeletal disorders affecting the back, neck, shoulders, wrists and arms, along with eye strain, headaches and fatigue. They are a common and preventable cause of sickness absence, and fixing a chair or moving a monitor costs far less than long-term injury or extended sick leave.

Responsibilities, Review and Record Keeping

Overall responsibility for DSE compliance sits with the employer, but it works best when shared sensibly. Line managers are usually best placed to spot problems day to day and to make sure self-assessments are reviewed rather than filed. A designated competent person, whether an in-house lead or an external adviser, should own the DSE process, check that assessments are completed properly, and report gaps to senior management.

Keep records of completed assessments, equipment provided, training delivered and follow-up actions, and review the whole arrangement annually, or sooner after any reorganisation, office move or shift in home working patterns. Regular auditing and inspections of a sample of home and office workstations will show whether your paper process matches reality. Where managers need a better grounding in spotting and managing risks like these, a course such as IOSH Managing Safely builds general risk assessment skills that make DSE reviews more effective.

Integral Safety, based in Coalville and working across the East Midlands, helps employers build DSE assessment processes that hold up to scrutiny, from self-assessment design to review of the results and periodic audit. We also deliver DSE training in person at your premises for managers and staff; book a session to find out more. If you need a second opinion on your current arrangements, get in touch via our East Midlands health and safety consultancy page.

Talk to Integral Safety Ltd

We are health and safety consultants based in Coalville, Leicestershire, working with businesses across the East Midlands. If anything in this guide applies to your workplace, we can help.

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This guide is general information about UK health and safety law and practice, correct as at 11 November 2026. It is not advice on your particular circumstances. The latest version is at https://integralsafetyltd.co.uk/blog/dse-assessments-protecting-office-workers.