

Homeworking DSE Assessment Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Do the Display Screen Equipment Regulations apply to homeworkers?

Yes – they apply whether or not the workstation is provided in whole or in part by the employer

Q2. Does my employer need to send someone out to my home conduct a risk assessment?

It is not practicable to send someone out to employee's homes, so PKC provides training via e-learning, this enables employees to carry out their own assessments.

Advice is also available from PKC Corporate H & S team In some cases PKC will use an external provider to carry out specialist DSE assessments when required.

Q2. If I use a laptop, do I need to use a separate mouse, keyboard, and monitor?

YES - The use of a laptop without a separate mouse, keyboard and monitor is not recommended for prolonged use* as it heightens the risk of musculoskeletal disorders.

Prolonged use* 'no more than an hour', this doesn't mean use it for hour then take a break, then use it for another hour. The expectation is that home workers have a suitable workstation set-up.

As a minimum you must use a separate keyboard and mouse, the top of the monitor must be at approx. eye level. It is recommended that any employee working permanently at home should have separate screen/s that are height adjustable.

Q4. Can I work off my dining table?

Yes - so long as it is suitable for the tasks you are performing, and the equipment you are using e.g. monitors, docking station where applicable, mouse, phone, paperwork

NB You should be able to sit comfortably. Desks will be provided if requested.

Q5. Can I have a sit-stand desk at home?

If you use a sit-stand desk in the office, then you should speak to your manager about the practicalities of having a sit-stand desk at home.

NB Sit-stand desks are usually provided to employees that have a medical condition and then only if they have had a specialist DSE assessment carried out and that the provision of sit-stand desk is a recommendation.

Q6. Can I use my dining chair?

No - the seat of the chair should be adjustable in height (relative to the ground) and the seat back adjustable in height (also relative to the ground) and **tilt**.

Provided the chair design meets these requirements and **allows the user to achieve a comfortable posture**, it is not necessary for the height or tilt of the seat back to be adjustable independently of the seat, the chair should also have a 5-star base with wheels or castors.

Q7. Can I use my own ergonomic chair?

If employees are using an ergonomic chair that they have purchased themselves then the chair must meet the requirements above i.e. chair should be adjustable in height (relative to the ground) and the seat back adjustable in height (also relative to the ground) and **tilt**.

It must offer adequate lumbar support.

Q8. If I have been using a specialist ergonomic chair in the office that was ordered specifically for my use, do I need a specialist ergonomic chair for my home workstation?

Yes - If you are Hybrid working, then you should have a similar chair in both locations.

If you are only working from home then the chair can be delivered to your home, or you can collect it yourself (Premises Management can advise)

Q9. After spending prolonged periods of time at my workstation, I now suffer from lower back pain, neck pain, wrist pain, lower arm pain, elbow pain and shoulder pain. What can I do to prevent this worsening?

If you spend prolonged periods of time working with computers and your workstation isn't set up correctly then you may experience some of the issues above. To avoid these issues, ensure your workstation is set-up correctly, take regular breaks away from your workstation: get up and walk around for a few minutes every hour, do light stretching exercises. Plan work to include regular breaks and activity changes.

You may need a specialist DSE assessment- the Corporate Health and Safety team can advise.

Report any issues to your line manager who can make a referral to Occupational Health, also contact your own GP for advice.

Q10. My workstation chair is wearing my carpet out, it also doesn't move smoothly is there anything I can use to prevent this?

Carpet Protector Chair Mats are available – your line manager would need to order one of these for you.

Q11 Do I need to use a headset when attending meetings via Microsoft teams?

The wearing of headsets is not mandatory but advisory.

Headsets can cause ear wax build up, ear infections, hearing loss and impairment if not used correctly, below are a few tips to keep you safe:

Tips:

Cleaning - Ideally it would be sensible to try to change the sponge or rubber cover of your headphones for reasons of hygiene from time to time.

If your headphones do not have a cover then you can sanitise them using an antibacterial wipe, or just water and a sponge/cotton ball to clean the area; this is especially important if there is any visible dirt or debris in the earpiece.

Sharing - It's important to never share your headphones with others as it's an easy way to spread bacteria and introduce possible infection into your ears. If someone else does use your headphones it would be sensible to thoroughly clean them before you use them again.

Volume - The NHS promote the 60:60 rule to reduce the risk of short term or permanent effects on your hearing: use headphones/sets at no more than 60% of the max volume for no longer than 60 minutes at any one time.

Background noise - Never turn up the volume to drown out background noise.

Taking regular breaks - it's important to take regular breaks from headphones/sets use to reduce any risk of permanent damage to our hearing and get some fresh air to our ears, and to help prevent earwax build up and infection. Take a break for at least 5 minutes every hour.

If employees feel their hearing is affected by the use of headset, then seek advice from your GP, but also raise it with their line manager.

Q12. Can I be reimbursed for glasses that are specifically and solely for DSE use?

Yes - PKC will contribute a fixed amount (£49) towards the cost of glasses if they are specifically and solely for DSE use. Evidence from the Optician will be required to support any claim for the additional contribution.

Q13. Will DSE work cause permanent damage to my eyes or eyesight?

There is no evidence to suggest that DSE work will cause permanent damage to eyes or eyesight (HSE), however, prolonged use can cause visual fatigue, headaches and mental stress.

If you haven't had a recent eyesight test, then please arrange with your optician to have one:

Current NHS guidance is annual eyesight tests for those aged under 16 years or 60 years and over.

Biennially for those aged between 16 years and 59 years.

Employee to contact optician to see if they can get an eyesight test if they fall out with the above guidance – explaining that they feel their eyesight is being impacted by DSE use.

Q14. There is glare on my screen, what can I do about it?

- Avoid placing your computer monitor directly below an overhead light fitting.
- Position your workstation so that it is relatively clear from direct sunlight.
- Sit at right angles to windows and at least 1m away from the window.
- Shade windows during peak sunlight times. (blinds/curtains)
- Keep your screen clean. Dust and fingerprints may make your monitor harder to read.
- Adjust your monitor's brightness.
- Try using supplementary desk lighting for reading and writing tasks.

Q15. Does electrical equipment provided by PKC need to be tested?

If homeworkers use electrical equipment provided by the employer as part of their work, the employer is responsible for its maintenance. **Employers are only responsible for the equipment they supply.** Electrical sockets and other parts of the homeworkers' domestic electrical system are **their own** responsibility.

It is a legal requirement that portable electrical equipment must be maintained to prevent danger, however, it is not a legal requirement to test all portable electrical equipment every year.

Portable Appliance Testing is ongoing where it is reasonably practicable.

Where you have a home office set-up with PKC equipment, please ensure that you carry out regular checks of equipment, power cables and connections to ensure that these are intact and show no signs of damage.

Listed below are simple steps that employees can take to prevent harm or injury when using electrical equipment in the home:

- Ensure electrical equipment is turned off before it is checked
- Check that plugs are not damaged
- Check that the outer covering of the cable or wire is gripped where it enters the plug or the equipment
- Check that the outer cover of the equipment is not damaged, for example look for loose parts or screws
- Check leads, wires or cables for damage to the outer covering
- Check for burn marks or staining that suggests overheating
- Check that there are no trailing wires; if there are, tuck them out of the way, for example under a desk or table, to prevent accidents
- Unplug electrical equipment when not in use

Any damaged / faulty electrical equipment **must not be used** – report any concerns regarding the condition of power supply cables to CDS Property Help Desk

PropertyHelpDesk@pkc.gov.uk

If equipment is damaged/faulty then report this to your line manager immediately.

Q16. What can I claim to reimburse me for the additional heating and lighting costs of me working from home?

You are able to claim tax relief from HMRC, for each week that you work from home. This [link](#) takes you to the HMRC web page that allows you to claim this tax relief. From 6 April 2020, you can claim £6.00 tax relief per week.

Q17. Can I claim for using my own printer cartridges?

Working from home has meant that the vast majority of paper has been replaced with digital transactions. Therefore, the Council would not expect you to need to use your own equipment to print any documents at home. If there is an essential need to print, then you are expected to use a printer in a Council office. Please contact your line manager to make those arrangements with Premises Management: premisesmanagement@pkc.gov.uk , prior to your visit to a Council office.