Working with Portable DSE

Scope

1. This guidance applies to staff who work with portable DSE for prolonged periods and is supplementary to the standards which are described in Display Screen Equipment: managing the risks.

UCL Arrangements

2. UCL arrangements that apply to this guidance
   - Display Screen Equipment: managing the risks
   - Working at Home with DSE

Definitions

Portable display screen equipment: a display screen that is not separate from the keyboard or input device e.g. laptop, tablet device

Risks associated with working with portable DSE

Design features which make portable DSE compact enough to be portable have the potential to increase the risk of postural problems. These design features include the lack of screen and keyboard separation which is necessary for ensuring a comfortable working posture when used for prolonged periods. A comfortable working posture includes the ability to operate the keyboard and pointing device without extending the arms and positioning the screen at approximately arms length from the user. With portable DSE it’s possible to achieve one of these but not both.

Manual handling may be a significant factor if a portable computer is carried for long periods. It is important therefore that weight is considered when the equipment is purchased. In addition consideration should be given to the type of carrying case e.g. a backpack may be more appropriate than a carrying case.

Personal safety such as theft may be a risk factor. The level of risk will be determined by the way in which the equipment is incorporated into the work routine e.g. transporting between UCL and fieldwork locations and/or home.

Environments where portable DSE is used may not be suited to DSE work. In a UCL context that could be during fieldwork or at any other location where the most practical means of collecting, storing and transporting data is portable DSE. This can lead to poor posture and is one of the risk factors which must be considered during the risk assessment process.

Responsibilities

3. The Head of Department must ensure that the arrangements in place, to identify and control the risks arising from DSE work in their departments, include the provision of information about the risks associated with using portable DSE.

4. Line Managers must ensure that when staff work with portable DSE:
   - information is provided about the risks associated with portable DSE;
   - an assessment is carried out if the User works with portable DSE for prolonged periods.

5. DSE Assessors:
   - must issue a self-assessment, to Users who work with portable DSE for prolonged periods, when requested to do so by the Users manager;

6. DSE Users must:
   - follow the advice and guidance provided about workstation layout and correct posture when working with portable DSE.
**Assessing the risks**

7. If portable DSE is in prolonged use then it is subject to the same risk assessment requirements as fixed equipment.

**Managing the risks**

8. When used in the office environment the portable computer can be fitted with a separate **keyboard, pointing device** and **screen**. This will ensure that the user can achieve a comfortable working posture.

When used in the ‘field’ in a fixed location, raising the screen on a stable surface and the provision of a separate keyboard will overcome some of the postural problems. The provision of a conventional keyboard in these circumstances will increase the weight of the equipment being carried however, lightweight alternatives are available.

9. When **selecting** a portable computer ensure:
   - the screen is large enough for the task;
   - that a low weight portable computer is chosen;
   - longest battery life possible;
   - there is a facility for attaching mouse, keyboard and screen;
   - there is sufficient memory and speed for the software installed;
   - friction pads are fitted to prevent the portable device sliding across the worksurface.

10. When planning tasks consider **manual handling** and **personal safety**:
    - avoid carrying unnecessary items e.g. power cables may not be needed;
    - paperwork and manuals can be transported electronically or on disk;
    - provide lowest weight carrying case or rucksack ;
    - avoid branded carrying items to reduce risk of theft;
    - avoid areas where there is an increased risk of theft e.g. isolated or poorly lit routes.

11. Provide users of portable computers with **information** on:
    - how to set up and use the portable device in the locations where it’s to be used;
    - using the portable device with docking station equipment where appropriate;
    - how to report faults and raise health concerns;
    - how to access the UCL arrangements for eye and eyesight test
    - the importance of taking regular breaks;
    - reducing manual handling risks;
    - personal safety.

**Safety Services Reference(s):**

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<th>Working with Portable DSE</th>
<th>First Published</th>
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