

SPECSAVERS CORPORATE EYECARE

Guide to Display Screen Equipment regulations and eyecare





HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide relates to the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002. The aim of this guide is to steer the employer through the regulations, offering explanations and clarification.

Throughout, this guide references the HSE publication, 'Work with display screen equipment', which can be found on the HSE website (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l26.htm). The publication is available to buy from the HSE or from most good book shops: ISBN 978 0 7176 2582 6.

The HSE publication allocates a number to each paragraph of information and these numbers appear in ^{BLUE SUPERSCRIPT} throughout this guide, to enable the reader to refer to the appendix, where they will find further detail and the precise phraseology used by the HSE.

Context

Display Screen Equipment (DSE) became widely used in the workplace in the late 1980s and a real concern soon grew that radiation emitted from the screens could damage people's eyesight. Consequently, the government took steps to ensure employers took seriously the need to protect the eyesight of their employees.

The HSE itself states that medical evidence has since shown that DSE is not associated with permanent damage to the eyes or eyesight and that it does not make existing defects worse. According to the guidelines provided by the College of Optometrists, it may, however, make workers with pre-existing vision defects more aware of them. Due to its visually demanding nature, DSE work may precipitate asthenopic symptoms (eye strain, visual fatigue) that have not been apparent when the employee has been carrying out other work.

The HSE guidance follows that while the risks to individual users are often low, DSE workers are so numerous that the amount of ill health associated with such work is significant and that tackling it is important³. The DSE regulations remain in place to try and help to ensure that healthy eyesight is maintained in the workplace.

WHAT IS DSE?

With a few exceptions,²¹⁻²⁶ DSE refers to any alphanumeric or graphic display screen, regardless of the display process involved⁹. These are also traditionally referred to as Visual Display Units (VDUs).

The term DSE covers both conventional cathode-ray tube screens and modern varieties such as liquid crystal and plasma, used in flat screens and touchscreens⁹. The regulations also apply to any portable DSE in prolonged use. This may include laptops, handheld computers, digital personal assistant devices and portable communication devices²³. The definition of 'prolonged use' comes down to the explanation of 'habitual use in a significant part of normal work', as set out below under Who may be covered?¹⁵

This means mobile phones may often come under the DSE regulations, on the grounds that they may be in prolonged use to view the internet, compose text and read emails. The circumstances would have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis but the employer is clearly warned not to assume these devices are excluded purely because of their small screens²⁵.

DSE regulations do not apply to²⁰:

- Drivers' cabs or control cabs for vehicles or machinery
- Display screen equipment on board a means of transport
- Display screen equipment mainly intended for public operation
- Portable systems not in prolonged use
- Calculators, cash registers or any equipment having a small data or measurement display required for direct use of the equipment
- Window typewriters

Employers should bear in mind, however, that where DSE does not specifically meet with the criteria to come under the DSE eyecare regulations, the employees concerned will still be protected by the Health and Safety at Work Act.

WHO MAY BE COVERED?

The regulations refer to 'users' and 'operators' and any worker who fits these classifications is entitled to DSE eyecare, but who does this actually include?

Users are employees¹¹, and operators are self-employed¹². A worker is classified as a user/operator when he or she habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of their normal work¹⁰. Complications begin where use is less continuous or less frequent. The regulations state that other factors must then be taken into account¹⁵.

It will generally be appropriate to classify the person concerned as a user or operator if they:

- normally use DSE for continuous or near-continuous spells for up to an hour at a time; and
- use DSE in that way more or less daily; and
- have to transfer information quickly to or from the DSE

These factors must also be considered alongside whether there is a need for high levels of attention and concentration, or if they are highly dependent on DSE or need specific skills to use the DSE¹⁵.

Part-time workers should be assessed using the same criteria¹⁶.

With such a complex mix of factors and a subjective element involved, a policy of inclusion may often be the best option. Employers could spend far more time and money trying to exclude one person from their cover than it would take to include everyone in a blanket, low-cost scheme. This is, of course, a business decision and not a legal requirement.

FUNDING DSE EYECARE

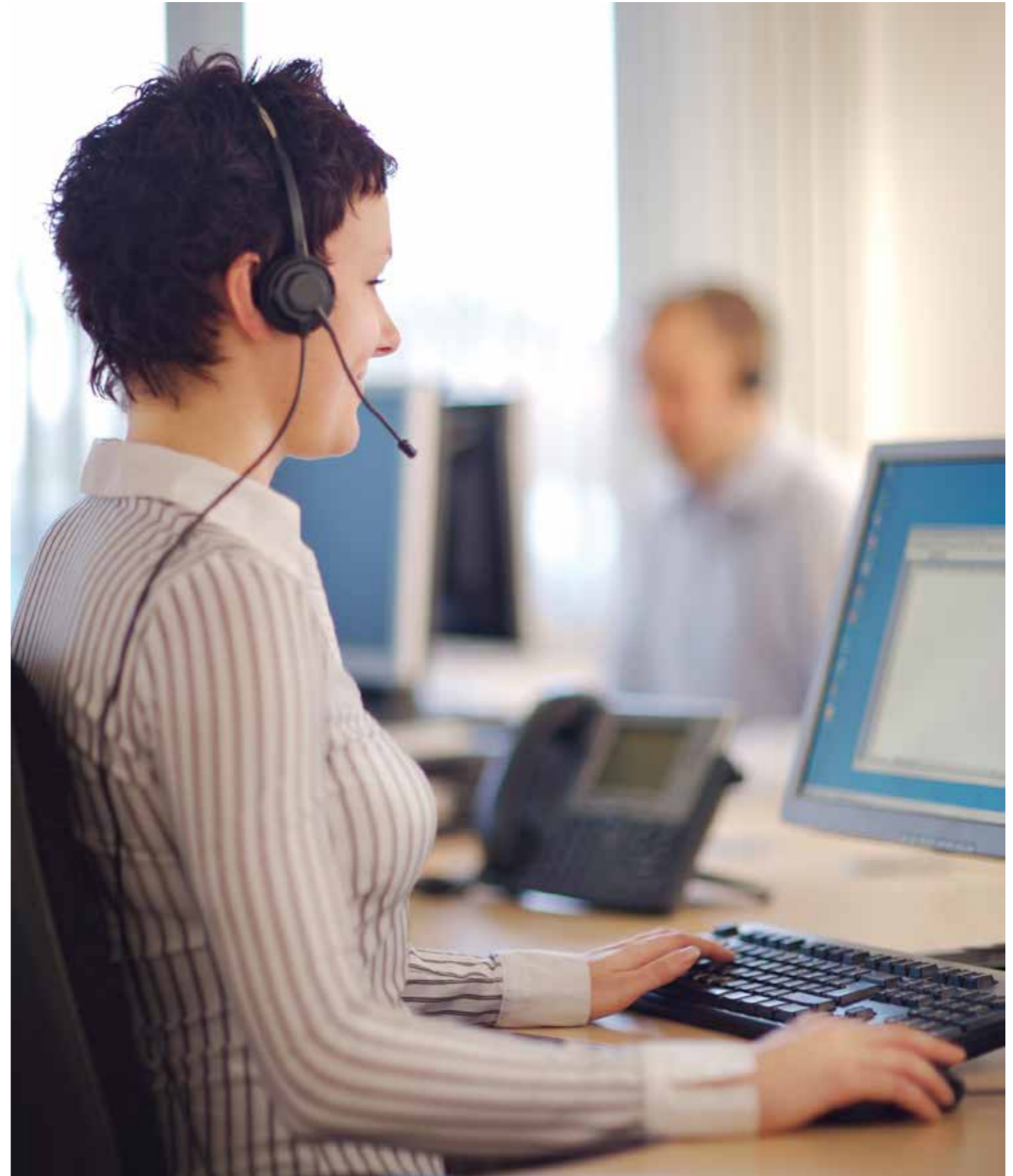
It is the prerogative of the employer to appoint their chosen optician⁸⁶. While they are at liberty to allow employees to select their own optician, this could prove a costly option. Enrolling all staff with the same eyecare provider – just as they would all sign up to the same medical-insurance scheme – might help the company to better control costs. The cost differences between providers can be enormous and no employer wants to be presented with an unexpected expenses claim for high-priced eyecare.

While most employers understand that they must pay for the DSE eye examination, it is the funding of the glasses that seems to cause most confusion.

The employer must fund the full costs of the eye examination and, if it is found that glasses are required solely for DSE use, then the employer must also fund the full cost of the glasses – the basic frame and the lenses. The regulations refer to ‘normal’ corrective appliances and ‘special corrective appliances’.

Normal appliances are day-to-day glasses, used for a variety of visual tasks. Special corrective appliances are those required purely and specifically for display screen work. The employer need only fund glasses that are required for DSE use alone and only if the employee’s own day-to-day glasses are not sufficient for the task⁸⁷.

The employer is only liable to pay for the basic appliance – in other words, glasses adequate for the user’s work. The employer may decide, however, to allow their employees to choose spectacles that perform a wider role than purely to view the DSE for their work. Under these circumstances, the employer needs to contribute the costs equivalent only to the basic appliance⁸⁸. In the same way, the employer may permit employees to choose more costly glasses, perhaps with designer frames or optional lens treatments, but they are obliged to pay only for the cost equal to the basic appliance⁸⁹.



WHAT MAY COUNT AS ‘DSE GLASSES’?

The typical distance for viewing DSE is between 33 and 60cm. It cannot be automatically assumed, however, that DSE glasses are those required for work at this distance. It is quite possible that the operator might, for example, be working with a projection screen at some distance or with a hand-held device. The critical criteria are, therefore, whether the appliances are prescribed to correct vision defects at the viewing distance or distances used specifically for the display screen work concerned, and whether this would be possible with the users’ uncorrected vision or by using glasses already required for general day-to-day use⁸¹.

Most people who need glasses for reading will also need glasses for viewing DSE. These reading glasses may be appropriate for screen use as well, but this can only be determined by the optometrist.

Frequency

It may be believed that eye tests must be carried out annually. The regulations actually state that tests must take place on request and then at intervals specified by the optometrist.

Eye and eyesight tests must be provided as soon as practicable after a user has made a request. Or, for new users who have requested an eye test, before the employee becomes a user. After this first test, employers are advised to be guided by the clinical judgement of the optometrist on the frequency of repeat testing. Employees are also entitled to claim eye tests at any time if they experience visual difficulties, feel their eyes have been strained or if they have suffered headaches, reasonably thought to be as a consequence of DSE work⁷⁹.

What test should be provided?

Under the DSE regulations, the eye ‘test’ is actually a test of vision and an examination of the eye, designed to find eye defects, injury and diseases that may not result in visual disturbances⁷¹. Vision-screening tests do not, therefore, satisfy the regulations and should be offered only as an extra. If the full examination of the health of the eyes detects any indicators of illnesses or health conditions, the employee will be referred to an NHS practitioner for further help.

VARIFOCALS AND CONTACT LENSES

One of the most misunderstood areas of the regulations concerns bifocals and varifocals. It is warned that these lenses can be unsuitable for DSE work due to the continual adjustments of the head and neck or the awkward positioning that may be necessary to look through the appropriate part of the lens⁸³. While it is unlikely, therefore, that multifocal lenses would be prescribed, there are some circumstances in which the user might, for example, have to mix DSE tasks with other tasks, like dealing with people. Under such circumstances, multifocals may provide the best solution. The decision is ultimately left with the optometrist. If such lenses are prescribed, the employer is required to meet the associated costs⁸⁷.

There is no requirement for firms to pay for contact lenses for DSE work and employers do not have an obligation to provide ‘anti-glare screens’ or any other devices that claim to protect the eyes⁸⁴.

Communication

With DSE eyecare being employer-funded and available for most employees, it is important that staff are fully aware of their entitlement, not only so that they claim it but also so that it is achieved cost-effectively. It is a requirement of the regulations that employers should tell users they employ about the arrangements they have made to provide eye tests to those who want them⁷⁵.

Materials explaining to employees what they are entitled to and how the process works are very important. All supporting documents should be written in plain English and communicated in a way that is clear, concise and easy to understand.



WIDER BENEFITS AND PREVENTATIVE CARE

While the rules regarding the provision of DSE eyecare are centred on the individual's ability to comfortably focus on any screen used for work purposes, the benefits of eyecare can be much wider reaching.

A full eye examination by a qualified optometrist may detect a huge range of ocular conditions (conditions of the eye):

- Cataract
- Glaucoma
- Age-related macular degeneration (dry and wet)
- Retinal detachment
- Uveitis
- Strabismus
- Amblyopia (lazy eye)
- Conjunctivitis
- Keratitis
- Corneal thinning e.g. keratoconus
- Optic neuritis
- Eyelid skin cancers
- Ocular tumours
- Dry eye
- Macular hole

Furthermore, the process enables the optometrist to monitor the whole body and may detect systemic conditions that would not seem to most people to have any connection with the eyes.

Examples of these systemic conditions include:

- Diabetes
- Raised blood pressure
- Raised cholesterol
- Cardiovascular disease
- Brain tumours
- Pituitary tumour
- Cranial nerve palsies
- Cerebrovascular accidents
- Brain aneurysms
- Temporal arteritis
- Arthritis
- Thyroid problems
- Migraine
- Multiple sclerosis

EYECARE MANAGEMENT

The management and administration of eyecare should not be an onerous task. Specsavers Corporate Eyecare runs an eVoucher system for DSE eyecare, which makes the process quick and straightforward for employers, allowing them to provide and manage their employee eyecare policy completely online.

Employers are able to place orders, allocate vouchers to relevant members of staff, and review real-time redemption reports online for all vouchers, including DSE, driver eyecare and safety eyewear. The entire process can be completely paperless if employers wish: allocated vouchers can be emailed directly from the system to the employee, who can redeem their voucher at any Specsavers store to obtain their eyecare entitlement. Employees can even use their smartphone to do so.

While the management of eyecare can all be handled in minutes, online, the eyecare itself is still centred on the human element, with the highest-quality care being the top priority. Specsavers Corporate Eyecare has worked hard to realise the two different ends of the scale. The aim has been to make the procurement and delivery of eyecare as quick and efficient as possible, while maintaining a comprehensive, personal and expert service in terms of the eyecare itself.

eVouchers are designed to meet the different requirements in the workplace, such as DSE eyecare, safety eyewear and driver eyecare.

There is no extra cost for the eVouchers or the supporting management system. There are, however, likely to be significant savings for employers in terms of time, cost and efficiency. The system is user-friendly, flexible and offers the ability to track redemption of vouchers and log employees' requirements and the date of their next scheduled examination. It is even possible to generate automatically populated invoices from the system, which can be printed, or emailed directly to the finance department. Employers can make a minimum order of just five vouchers.



HOW OTHER COMPANIES AND ORGANISATIONS ARE BENEFITTING

Press release:

Enhanced eyecare benefits for Registers of Scotland from Specsavers Corporate Eyecare

Scotland's official land and property registry - Registers of Scotland - has appointed Specsavers Corporate Eyecare to supply eyecare to its staff, via the recently launched eVoucher system.

Further, Specsavers Corporate Eyecare has developed a specially enhanced optical care voucher to meet Registers of Scotland's specific requirements. The voucher includes an eye test and, where glasses are required, £65 towards glasses, and £35-worth of store vouchers. This goes beyond the minimum requirement to fulfil their legal obligations and offers highly-valued, additional benefits to all staff.

Registers of Scotland was looking for good value for money and ease of use for both the company and its staff. The eVoucher system fulfils all those requirements in that the whole process of ordering and redemption of vouchers is implemented electronically.

Dona McLafferty, Corporate Account Manager for Scotland, is on hand to offer a face-to-face single point of contact. She said: 'Registers of Scotland has very specific requirements in how they want to implement their eyecare, going over and above the basic legislative requirements and offering eyecare to all their staff. We were delighted to be able to combine a number of our vouchers into one single voucher to give them exactly what they were looking for. Our new eVoucher system is also proving incredibly popular with both their management and staff.'

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Press release:

Network Rail awards significant eyecare contract to Specsavers

Network Rail has awarded a significant new contract to Specsavers Corporate Eyecare.

Network Rail employs more than 35,000 people and offers eyecare to all DSE users, to meet with health and safety regulations. Specsavers Corporate Eyecare will be providing eye examinations and glasses for Network Rail employees under its DSE voucher scheme.

With Network Rail operating nationally, having a provider with equally wide coverage was an important consideration. Network Rail purchases eyecare vouchers as and when required and simply distributes those to relevant employees, who can redeem their vouchers at any convenient Specsavers store.

The contract is set to run for three years, with the possibility of an extension. This represents a significant commitment to employee health and well-being, with nearly 300 vouchers being distributed in the first month alone.

Laura Butler, Key Accounts Manager for Specsavers Corporate Eyecare, says: 'We have been working closely with the health and safety team at Network Rail. It is a forward-thinking company and they recognise not only that DSE eyecare is required to meet with regulations but also that there are much wider benefits to eyecare, such as potentially detecting and monitoring serious health conditions and illnesses.'

Premium Club vouchers are also being made available to all employees, at no additional cost to Network Rail. Each employee is entitled to three Premium Club vouchers a year: one for themselves and two for members of their family. These provide discounts on glasses and represent a valued extra benefit.

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Press release:

Universities go to Specsavers

Specsavers Corporate Eyecare now provides optical care for a number of the UK's 115 universities.

The University of Kent is the latest to join a list of eminent educational clients, which includes the universities of York, Manchester, Sheffield, London Metropolitan, Newport, Stirling and Dublin.

Bernard Angus, Director of Safety, Health and Environment at the University of Kent, says: 'We have more than 3,000 staff and, under the display-screen equipment regulations, pretty much all of them need to be provided with DSE eyecare.'

The University of Kent has received many additional benefits through its agreement with Specsavers Corporate Eyecare. For example, qualified optometrists attended the university's well-being event this year to provide employees with further information and advice regarding eyecare.

Mr Angus continues: 'The large range of frames and the portable vision screener proved very successful at our recent well-being event. We receive a professional service from Specsavers and the scheme saves the university a great deal of money.'

Suzanne Randall, Corporate Account Manager at Specsavers Corporate Eyecare, comments: 'Particularly in the last couple of years, when budgets have been so tight, cost has been very important to our education-sector clients. Our voucher systems also save on administration time, while still providing a clear audit trail and the ability to easily monitor costs.'

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Press release:

Specsavers celebrates long-term relationship with Allianz

Specsavers Corporate Eyecare is celebrating its long-term working relationship with Allianz Insurance Plc, having provided eyecare to its employees since 2008.

One of the largest general insurers in the UK, Allianz employs more than 4,000 people across a network of 20 offices in the UK. Specsavers Corporate Eyecare provides Allianz with eyecare voucher schemes and services, to cover specific requirements like DSE and driver related eyecare.

Alyna Jones, Occupational Health and Safety Manager at Allianz Insurance Plc, says: 'Under health and safety regulations, all our employees who use display screens are entitled to company-funded eye tests and, if appropriate, glasses for DSE use. Allianz purchases DSE vouchers from Specsavers that are specifically designed to meet the precise requirements of the regulations. We have recently also begun to highlight driver eyecare and are keen to promote the importance of this matter among our employees.'

Suzanne Randall, Corporate Account Manager at Specsavers Corporate Eyecare, comments: 'We listen carefully to the views and needs of our clients. Regular review meetings are held and feedback is constantly monitored. I believe this, along with a simple and cost-effective product, is why we have continued to work with Allianz for so long. We are now in our sixth year of working with them and looking forward to continuing the good relationship in the future.'

Implementation and communication

The DSE and Driver Eyecare vouchers are purchased directly in multiples of five and then simply handed out to employees as required. Each employee receives the same, high standard of care, at a low, set cost to the employer.

Specsavers Corporate Eyecare holds roadshows at the different offices of Allianz Insurance. These events for eyes are attended by local Specsavers opticians, who provide advice and even some on-site vision screening. Employees are given information about eye health, the wider benefits of eyecare in helping to detect serious illnesses and the importance of eyecare for drivers. These events help to communicate to employees the value of eyecare.

Availability

Specsavers Corporate Eyecare is able to take orders from the various different safety champions at the different Allianz office sites across the UK. This gives Allianz the flexibility for each location to control its own programme and budget. As Specsavers has more than 600 stores across the UK, it is simple for employees to find an optician within easy travelling distance. There is also a large range of frame options and various offers that can be used in conjunction with the vouchers to provide additional benefits for the employee.

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Legal disclaimer

Please note that this is only a guide and nothing contained herein shall constitute or be deemed to constitute legal advice and therefore should not be relied upon. Specsavers shall bear no responsibility or liability for the contents, their accuracy or any errors and/or omissions accordingly. It remains the reader's responsibility to seek their own, independent legal advice.

Further reading

Work with display screen equipment. (Health and Safety [Display Screen Equipment] Regulations 1992, as amended by the Health and Safety [Miscellaneous Amendments] Regulations 2002. Guidance on Regulations). Available via hse.gov.uk

Corporate Eyecare

Specsavers Optical Superstores Ltd
Cirrus House
10 Experian Way
Nottingham
NG2 1EP
T 0115 933 0800
F 0115 986 1983
E uk.corporateeyecare@specsavers.com
W specsavers.co.uk/corporate



APPENDIX

The numbered paragraphs below relate to information in the HSE publication: 'Work with display screen equipment. Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002 Guidance on Regulations'. These are referenced throughout the above guide using [BLUE SUPERScript](#). The publication can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l26.htm.

3 The main risks that may arise in work with DSE are musculoskeletal disorders such as back pain or upper limb disorders (sometimes known as repetitive strain injury or RSI), visual fatigue, and mental stress. While the risks to individual users are often low (see paragraph 33), they can still be significant if good practice is not followed. DSE workers are also so numerous that the amount of ill health associated with such work is significant and tackling it is important. That is what the DSE Regulations set out to achieve. Appendix 2 gives further information on the health risks in DSE work, and explains how efforts to reduce these risks will link into the Health and Safety Commission's strategy for occupational health.

9 With a few exceptions (see paragraphs 21-26), the definition of DSE at regulation 1(2)(a) covers both conventional (cathode-ray tube) display screens and other types such as liquid crystal or plasma displays used in flat-panel screens, touchscreens and other emerging technologies. Display screens mainly used to display line drawings, graphs, charts or computer-generated graphics are included, as are screens used in work with television or film pictures (this point has been clarified in a case heard before the European Court of Justice, ECJ case C-11/99). The definition is not limited to typical office situations or computer screens but also covers, for example non-electronic display systems such as microfiche. DSE used in factories and other non-office workplaces is included (subject to the exceptions in paragraphs 21-26), although in some situations such as screens used for process control or closed-circuit television (CCTV), certain requirements may not apply (see paragraphs 55-57).

10 The DSE Regulations are for the protection of people - employees and self-employed - who habitually use DSE for the purposes of an employer's undertaking as a significant part of their normal work.

11 Regulation 1(2)(d) defines the employees who are covered as users. Regulations 2 to 7 apply to protect users, whether they are employed to work: (a) at their own employer's workstation; (b) at a workstation at home; or (c) at another employer's workstation. Further guidance on homeworkers, teleworkers and agency workers is given at paragraphs 27-31.

12 The protection afforded by regulations 2, 3 and 7 also extends to self-employed people who work at an employer's workstation and whose use of DSE is such that they would be users if employed. They are defined in regulation 1(2)(b) as operators for the purposes of the DSE Regulations.

15 Where it is clear that use of DSE is more or less continuous on most days, the individuals concerned should be regarded as users or operators. This will include the majority of those whose job mainly involves, for example DSE based data input or sales and order processing. Where use is less continuous or frequent, other factors connected with the job must be assessed. It will generally be appropriate to classify the person concerned as a user or operator if they: (a) normally use DSE for continuous or near-continuous spells of an hour or more at a time; and (b) use DSE in this way more or less daily; and (c) have to transfer information quickly to or from the DSE; and also need to apply high levels of attention and concentration; or are highly dependent on DSE or have little choice about using it; or need special training or skills to use the DSE.

16 Part-time workers should be assessed using the same criteria. For example if an employee works only two days a week but spends most of that time on DSE work, that person should definitely be considered a user.

20 Under regulation 1(2)(e), a workstation exists wherever there is DSE (including portable DSE in prolonged use, see paragraph 23). For all DSE the workstation, as defined, is the assembly including the screen, keyboard, other parts of the computer and its accessories (such as the mouse or other input device), the desk, chair and the immediate work environment. Some of these items are specifically mentioned in the DSE Regulations, but anything else in the immediate work environment is also part of the workstation.

21 Where any of the exclusions in regulation 1(4) apply, none of the duties imposed by the DSE Regulations will apply to or in connection with the use of the equipment that is excluded. However, the proviso at paragraph 8 applies here too. Employers should still ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of those using the equipment are not put at risk. The general duties on employers and others under the HSW Act, and other general health and safety legislation (see paragraphs 6-8), are still applicable and particular attention should be paid to ergonomics in this context. Ergonomics⁷ is the science of making sure that work tasks, equipment, information and the working environment are suitable for every worker, so that work can be done safely and productively. Ergonomic factors relevant to DSE work are discussed further in Appendix 1.

22 The exclusion in regulation 1(4)(c) is for DSE mainly intended for public operation, such as cashpoint machines, and microfiche readers and computer terminals in public libraries, etc. 'Public operation' means operation by anyone who is not an employee or a self-employed person, hence the DSE Regulations do not apply to workstations provided for school pupils or students. (It is nevertheless good practice for students and pupils to be trained to set up and use DSE and workstations in a way that minimises the risks. Further guidance for schools/colleges about health and safety with information and communications technology has been produced by BECTA, see Appendix 6). The exclusion in regulation 1(4)(c) does not extend to DSE available for operation by the public but mainly intended for users or operators.

23 Regulation 1(4)(d) excludes only portable DSE that is not in prolonged use. So the DSE Regulations do apply to portable DSE in prolonged use - which can include laptop and handheld computers, personal digital assistant devices and some portable communications devices - but see also paragraph 25. While there are no hard-and-fast rules on what constitutes 'prolonged' use, portable equipment that is habitually in use by a DSE user for a significant part of his or her normal work, as explained in paragraph 15, should be regarded as covered by the DSE Regulations. While some of the specific minimum requirements in the Schedule may not be applicable to portables in prolonged use, employers should still ensure that such work is assessed and measures taken to control risks. Appendix 3 gives further guidance on practical steps to safeguard those using portables.

24 There is an exclusion in regulation 1(4)(e) for cash registers. This is intended to cover equipment whose function is to calculate/record money transactions at a point of sale. It is the way the equipment is used, rather than its physical characteristics, that determines whether it is covered by the exemption for cash registers. For example point-of-sale equipment that is used as a cash register but is also regularly used for other purposes would not be excluded from the scope of the DSE Regulations by regulation 1(4)(e). Examples of such other purposes might include the checking of seating plans when selling cinema tickets, or the calling up and examination of customer details when processing bank account transactions.

25 The exclusion in regulation 1(4)(e) for 'small data or measurement display' is there because such displays are usually not intensively monitored by workers for long continuous spells. This exclusion covers, for example much scientific and medical equipment, such as cardiac monitors, oscilloscopes, and instruments with small displays showing a series of digits. However, with the merging of information and communication technologies, small screens are increasingly used for a wider range of purposes. Examples are mobile phones and personal organisers that can be used to compose

and edit text, view images or connect to the Internet. Any prolonged use of such devices for work purposes will be subject to the DSE Regulations and the circumstances of such cases will need to be individually assessed. It cannot be assumed that such devices, having much of the functionality of full-sized DSE, are excluded because their screens are 'small'. However, mobile phones that are in prolonged use only for spoken conversation are excluded under regulation 1(4)(e) because their display screens are incidental to this kind of use.

26 The exclusion in regulation 1(4)(f) is for window typewriters having a small display showing no more than a few lines of text.

71 Regulations 5(1) and 5(2) require employers to provide users who so request it with an appropriate eye and eyesight test. In Great Britain an 'appropriate eye and eyesight test' means a 'sight test' as defined in the Opticians Act legislation.* The test includes a test of vision and an examination of the eye. For the purpose of the DSE Regulations, the test should take account of the nature of the user's work, including the distance at which the screen is viewed. DSE users are not obliged to have such tests performed. Where users choose to exercise their entitlement, employers should offer an examination by a registered ophthalmic optician, or a registered medical practitioner with suitable qualifications (referred to as optometrist and doctor respectively in the rest of the guidance). (All registered medical practitioners, including those in company occupational health departments, are entitled to carry out sight tests but normally only those with an ophthalmic qualification do so.)

* Section 36(2) of the Opticians Act 1989 defines testing sight as 'testing sight with the object of determining whether there is any and, if so, what defect of sight and of correcting, remedying or relieving any such defect of an anatomical or physiological nature by means of an optical appliance prescribed on the basis of the determination'. Further information is given in the Sight Testing Examination and Prescription (No 2) Regulations 1989/1230, which require a doctor or optician to

perform specified examinations to detect injury, disease or abnormality when carrying out an eye test.

75 Employers should tell users they employ about the arrangements they have made to provide eye tests to those who want them (there is a requirement to provide this information under regulation 7; see paragraph 96 of the main guidance).

79 Regulation 5 requires that eye and eyesight tests are provided: (a) as soon as practicable after display screen users have made a request; (b) for recruits or employees who are to become users, and have made a request. In such cases the test must be carried out before the employee becomes a user; (c) for users at regular intervals after the first test, provided that they want the tests. Employers should be guided by the clinical judgement of the optometrist or doctor on the frequency of repeat testing. The frequency of repeat testing needed will vary between individuals, according to factors such as age. Employers are not responsible for any corrections for vision defects or examinations for eye complaints which are not related to display screen work which may become necessary within the period. These are the responsibility of the individual concerned; (d) for users experiencing visual difficulties which may reasonably be considered to be related to the display screen work, for example visual symptoms such as eyestrain or focusing difficulties.

81 'Special' corrective appliances (normally spectacles) provided to meet the requirements of the DSE Regulations will be those appliances prescribed to correct vision defects at the viewing distance or distances used specifically for the display screen work concerned. 'Normal' corrective appliances are spectacles prescribed for any other purpose. It should be noted that experience has shown that in most working populations only a minority (usually less than 10%) will need special corrective appliances for display screen work. Those who need special corrective appliances may include users who already wear spectacles or contact lenses, or others who have uncorrected vision defects.

83 However, caution is necessary in reaching a decision. There can be side effects associated with the use of multi-focal prescriptions for DSE work. The smaller size of each lens section can lead to the user having to make repeated adjustments to their neck/head position, or adopting an awkward position in order to look through the appropriate part of the lens. These disadvantages could prove to be more problematic than swapping spectacles, for instance by inducing neck pain. The decision on which is the most suitable solution is best taken in discussion with the optometrist; this will require information being provided about the nature of the work and the workstation and workplace layout.

84 Anti-glare screens, and so-called 'VDU spectacles' and other devices that purport to protect against radiation, are not special corrective appliances (see paragraphs 36-39 of Appendix 1 for advice on radiation).

86 The duty on employers is to provide a test where a user requests one. It is up to the employer to decide how to do this, whether by arranging for all their users to visit a particular optometrist or doctor nominated by the employer; by allowing users to make their own arrangements with optometrists and reimbursing the costs afterwards; by a voucher scheme; or any other means.

87 'Normal' corrective appliances are at the user's own expense, but users needing 'special' corrective appliances will be prescribed a special pair of spectacles for display screen work. Employers' liability for the cost of these is restricted to payment of the cost of a basic appliance, ie of a type and quality adequate for the user's work. Where bifocal or varifocal spectacles are prescribed as special corrective appliances (see caution at paragraph 83) the employer is required to meet the costs associated with providing a basic frame and the prescribed lenses.

88 If, however, users are permitted by their employers to choose spectacles to correct eye or vision defects for purposes which include the user's work but go wider than that, employers need contribute only the costs attributable to the requirements of the job.

89 If users wish to choose more costly appliances (for example with designer frames, or lenses with optional treatments not necessary for the work), the employer is not obliged to pay for these. In these circumstances employers may either provide a basic appliance as above, or may opt to contribute a portion of the total cost of a luxury appliance equal to the cost of a basic appliance.

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