

# Guidance on Desk Set-Up When Working Remotely



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## Introduction

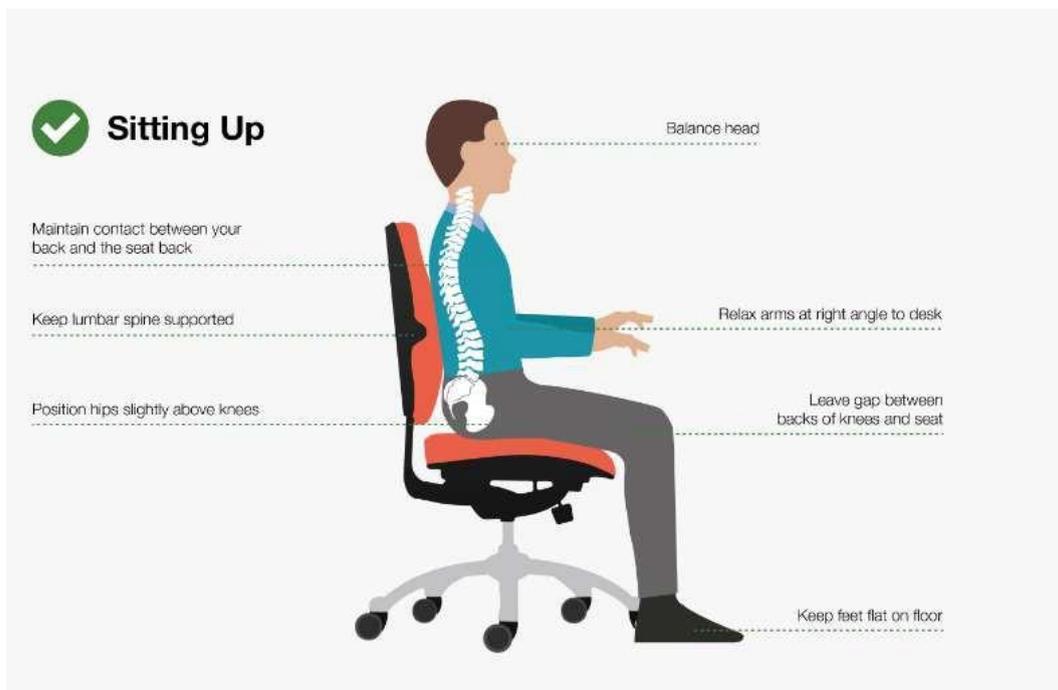
During the COVID-19 pandemic the majority of us are working from home. This document provides some advice to enable you to achieve the best possible workstation set up and look after your musculoskeletal health.

Currently, parent company DSE training and assessment relates to your workplace set-up, so, an interim measure, we ask you to follow this guidance document and that afterwards you complete the remote working DSE checklist (please see, Appendix A)

## I will be working from a home office

If you have a home office with a desk, computer chair and personal computer, please try and follow [Posturite's 'The Art of Sitting'](#) as far as you possibly can and try and achieve the ideal sitting position (see image below). If you cannot achieve this, you could try implementing some of the measures suggested in the rest of this document, where relevant.

### GOOD POSTURE



## I will be working from a kitchen/dining table with a laptop/tablet

### Location

Use a table and chair rather than your sofa or bed.

### Sitting position

Have a look at the ideal sitting position image above. Try and mimic this as far as you can.



### Chair

Try and keep your knees below your hips and an open 100-degree hip angle. If you do not have an adjustable chair, you can try to get into an ideal sitting position using a cushion or pillow (folded in half) to sit on and a rolled-up towel against your lower back for lumbar support. These measures will help to take the strain and load off your spine but only use them if they feel comfortable. Make sure that your feet are planted on the floor. If you are unable to do this, use a biscuit tin, plastic container or something similar, as a footrest.

If you have previously had a DSE assessment where it was identified that you required a specialist chair, please contact your Line Manager to discuss arranging for the provision of one.

### Screen Height

If you have a laptop or tablet stand, use this to raise your screen. If you do not have one of these, raise your laptop/tablet up using books, biscuit tins etc. as best you can, checking for its stability. You may not achieve the ideal position but aim to raise your laptop/tablet by a minimum of 15 cm. Your eyes should naturally hit the top third of your screen when you are looking straight ahead. Even a small height adjustment should help. The goal is to avoid dropping your head as much as possible to try and avoid neck and shoulder strain.

### Mouse and Keyboard

If you are raising up your laptop/tablet, use an external keyboard and mouse so that you are not working with your arms too high. Please contact your line Manager to discuss your options in acquiring these pieces of equipment and also, inform them if you have previously had a DSE assessment, where it was identified that you required specialist equipment which was provided for you, e.g. an ergonomic mouse or keyboard. Make sure that you have enough USB ports to connect these. Your elbows should be at a 90-degree angle, tucked closely to your body, and your wrists should be in a neutral position. This posture helps keep you from rounding your shoulders and pulling your neck muscles.

If you are unable to attach an external mouse and keyboard, leave your laptop in place on the table rather than raising it up but you must take more breaks. Try and move every 15 minutes (more on taking breaks and exercises below).

### Screen Glare

If you can avoid doing so, try not to put your laptop/tablet directly underneath a bright artificial light. Try and use natural light as much as possible. If glare persists, try lowering/closing blinds or curtains.

## Taking Breaks and Exercise

Regardless of your set up, the best way to look after your musculoskeletal health is to take regular breaks and to move around as much as possible. The more 'makeshift' your set-up, the more important it is for you to move. If you have a good home office set-up, take a break for 5-10 minutes every hour. For other set-ups take a break every 15-20 minutes.

Here are some tips to help you to move more:

- Stand up every time you use the phone
- Try and do more activities away from the screen e.g. reading paperwork
- Set up a reminder e.g. a timer on your phone.

Here are some workstation exercises you can do in your microbreaks.

<https://www.posturite.co.uk/help-advice/useful-resources/learning-guides/workstation-exercises>

## User Checks

Before using your equipment such as a computer/laptop provided for you, you should check the supply cables/chargers etc. for any defects, this should be carried out whilst the equipment is disconnected from the power supply. If you identify any defects, please do not use the equipment and inform your Line Manager.

## Webinar

We recommend that you watch this Webinar (YouTube), which discusses issues around working from home with computers and will help you to put this guidance into practice (NB the Q+A session at the end of the clip relates to pre-lockdown arrangements).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBFf1NZkJKE#action=share>

## Additional Help and Support

You can find more advice and guidance at:

DSE Assessment (HSE) <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf>

General Advice on posture <https://www.posturite.co.uk>

Exercise Videos <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DC78KtKfQ8Y>

Guidance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLwIP8cBaWA&t=3s>

## Temporary Homeworking Self-Assessment Checklist

The aim of this self-assessment is to help you set up a temporary workspace and meet health and safety requirements as far as reasonably practicable, during the COVID-19 crisis. Before you start:

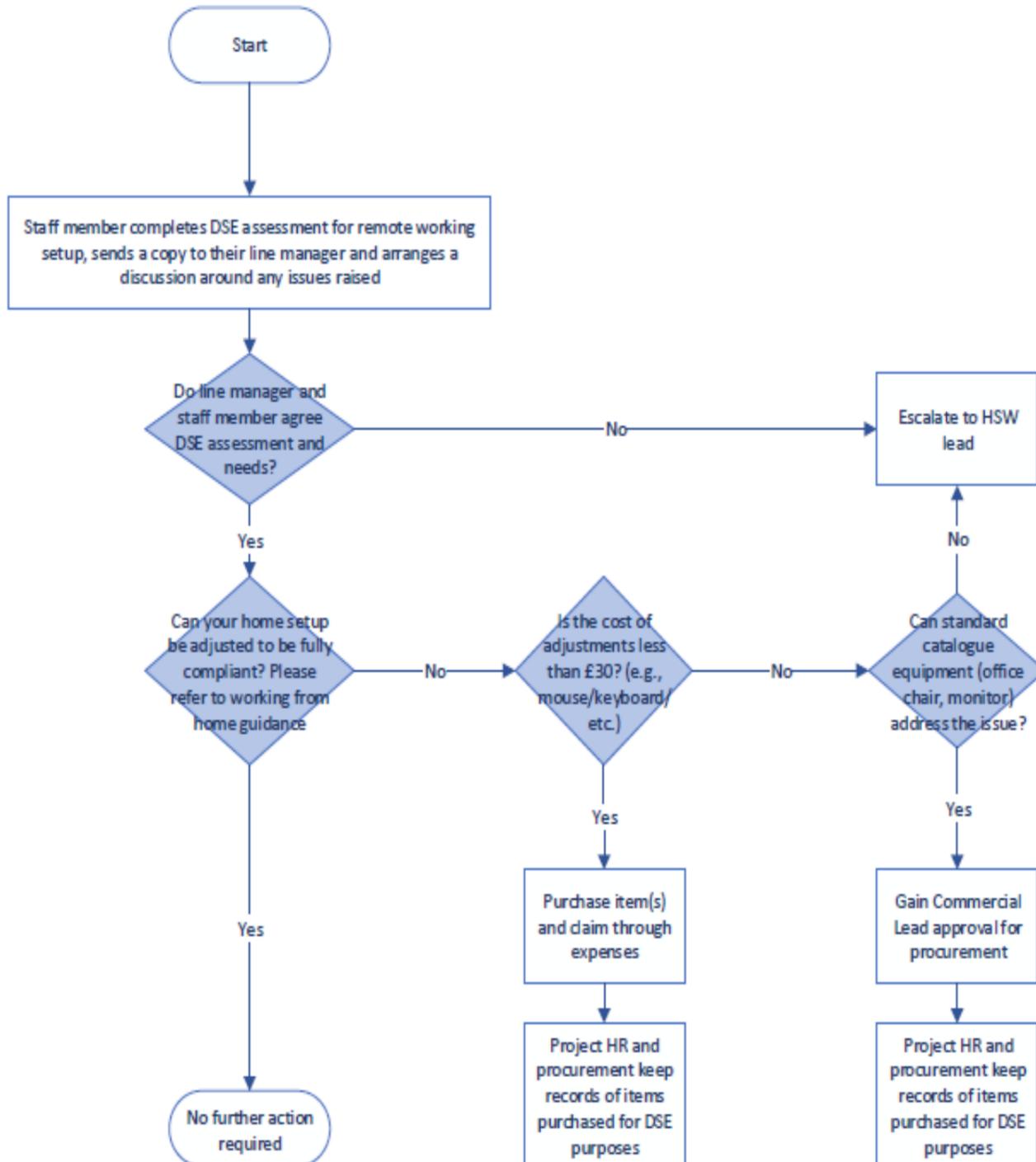
Please read the guidance above on 'Desk Set-up when Working Remotely'. Complete the checklist once you have read this document and followed the suggested actions.

Item	The Chair	YES	NO	NA	Suggested Actions
1	Can the height of the chair be adjusted?				Use pillows and or cushions to adjust your height whilst seated.
2	Are your feet fully supported by the floor when you are seated?				Use a box to support your feet.
3	Does your chair provide support for your lower back?				Roll a towel and place at the back to provide lumbar support.
Item	Keyboard and Mouse	YES	NO	NA	Suggested Actions
4	Are your keyboard, mouse and work surface/laptop at your elbow height?				Use pillows and/or cushions to help adjust your height whilst seated.
5	Are frequently used items within easy reach?				Rearrange the working area to ensure the most used items are closest to you.
6	Is the keyboard close to the front of the table allowing space for the wrist to rest on the desk surface?				Use a separate keyboard / mouse to achieve the correct position.
7	Is your mouse and keyboard next to each other?				Move the mouse closer to the keyboard.
Item	Workspace	YES	NO	NA	Suggested Actions
8	Do you have a dedicated workspace set-up i.e. not sitting on the sofa?				Set up your workspace each morning and shut down at the end of the day.
9	Is the screen (monitor) positioned directly in front of you?				Adjust height of the screen using books or a tin. Ensure the screen is at arm's length. Ensure screen height is slightly below eye level.
10	Is the monitor screen and work surface/laptop free from glare?				Draw curtains/blinds. Reduce brightness on screen.
11	Do you have sufficient light for reading or writing documents?				Turn on a light or desk lamp for additional lighting.
Item	Breaks	YES	NO	NA	Suggested Actions
12	Do you take micro-breaks for at least 3 mins every 20 minutes?				Set the phone clock alarm to help remind you to take reasonable breaks.

13	Do you take small break for at least 5 mins every hour?				Keep moving by doing desk exercises; get up to get a drink of water, keep hydrated, always break for lunch.
14	Do you take a break for lunch every day?				
15	Do you look away from the screen regularly to reduce eyestrain?				Look away from the screen every 20 mins. Focus on something in the distance.
16	Where relevant do you allow time for caring responsibilities?				Speak to your Line Manager about work/life balance and any additional flexibility that they may be able to provide with regards to working arrangements.
Item	Accessories	YES	NO	NA	Suggested Actions
17	If you have raised your laptop, are you using a separate keyboard and or mouse?				Speak to your Line Manager about the possibility of purchasing these items.
Item	Psychological Health and Safety	YES	NO	NA	Suggested Actions
18	Is the current temporary working from home affecting your mental wellbeing?				Seek support from your Line Manager. Speak to your buddy, family and/or friends or other services such as those on the <a href="#">working remotely expectations / support paper</a>
19	Are you able to seek support about your workload management and workplace work/life balance?				Speak to your Line Manager.
Item	Electrical Safety	YES	NO	NA	Suggested Actions
20	Do you check all electrical appliances and cords, power boards, before your start?				Do not use any defective appliances. Never overload power boards or sockets.
21	Do you turn off your computer/laptop after finishing your working day?				Turn off computers, laptops each night.
Item	Fire Safety	YES	NO	NA	Suggested Actions
22	If you have a smoke alarm, have you checked that it is working?				Press test button, if fitted, or check power light is illuminated.
Item	Slip, trips and falls	YES	NO	NA	Suggested Actions
23	Do you maintain good housekeeping?				Keep all floors clear and clean. Ensure cables are routed to minimise the risk of trips and falls to yourself and others.

Once completed please send a copy to your Line Manager for discussion/advice about any identified issues.

DSE Equipment Flow Chart



## User Checks

These should be carried out before most electrical equipment is used, with the equipment disconnected. Employees should look for:

- damage to the lead including fraying, cuts or heavy scuffing;
- damage to the plug, e.g. to the cover or bent pins;
- tape applied to the lead to join leads together;
- coloured wires visible where the lead joins the plug (the cable is not being gripped where it enters the plug);
- damage to the outer cover of the equipment itself, including loose parts or screws;
- signs of overheating, such as burn marks or staining on the plug, lead or piece of equipment;
- equipment that has been used or stored in unsuitable conditions, such as wet or dusty environments or where water spills are possible;  
and
- cables trapped under furniture or in floor boxes.