

Employers' guide to ergonomic home working



Ergonomics guide: employers' responsibilities for the ergonomics of home working

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The fundamental components of ergonomic office work

This guidance is intended for employers with staff working from home using laptops or computers.

It is accompanied by a separate guide for users of laptops and computers on how to optimise their home working environment. Employers should issue the user's guide to their staff.



The information and equipment employers should provide

The equipment employers should provide for an employee depends upon the extent of home working they do. Employees might need to work at home with very short notice, perhaps due to an emergency. Alternatively, they might work at home for a limited period or always.

Employers should provide employees with information about how to work with their laptop or computer as safely and comfortably as possible. FIRA has produced a user's guide that gives this information for three likely scenarios based on the types of equipment employees have available at home, which is linked to the extent of home working. Employers should give this guide to their employees.

The employer's responsibility in each of these three scenarios is explained on the next page.

Scenario One

Scenario One reflects the early COVID-19 situation or other emergencies where the suddenness of being asked to work at home leads to some employees being given only a laptop. In such situations, the minimum the employer should do is to provide the employee with the user's guide which helps them to select from their own tables, surfaces and chairs and adapt them. The guide also explains where to place the laptop and how to avoid becoming fatigued and too uncomfortable.



Scenario Two

Scenario Two reflects situations where employees work at home for limited periods or on an ad hoc basis. In such cases, employers should provide the following ergonomic aids: a keyboard and a mouse, accompanied by a laptop holder/riser and/or a monitor. The employer should also provide the employee with the user's guide which helps them to select from their own tables, surfaces and chairs and adapt them. The guide also explains how to lay out their equipment and how to avoid becoming fatigued and too uncomfortable. Further ergonomic improvements can be achieved by providing a footrest or a height-adjustable chair.



Scenario Three

Scenario Three reflects situations where employees work at home on a long-term basis, either for regular periods or permanently. In such cases, the whole workstation (desk, chair, laptop/computer and accessories) should be provided by the employer. The employer should also provide the employee with the user's guide which helps them to set up their workstation. Providing necessary equipment will help employees work more efficiently and psychologically help employees to believe that their employers care about their wellbeing which can in turn increase employees' productivity.



The guide also explains the need to vary posture and take mini breaks to increase alertness.

Meeting Display Screen Equipment Regulations

Any computing equipment or accessories and any furniture that the employer provides for an employee to use at home must meet the minimum requirements of the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) states in its [guidance document](#) to the DSE Regulations that ergonomic requirements for the use of visual display units in office tasks are contained in BS EN ISO 9241. It also states that any computing equipment or accessories and any desk and chair satisfying BS EN ISO 9241 would meet the minimum requirements of the DSE Regulations. When sourcing such products, employers should seek those that comply with BS EN ISO 9241 and product safety standards.

The HSE has provided a [brief guide](#) to working with display screen equipment.

Meeting the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (amended 1989, 1993 & 2010)

Any upholstered furniture in use in the home environment must comply with the flammability requirements of these regulations. Guidance can be found in [FIRA's Flammability Guide](#).

Workstation assessments

The HSE have [published](#) updated advice regarding the use of display screen equipment to take into account working arrangements during COVID-19. They have clarified that employers have the same health and safety responsibilities for home workers as for any other workers, the guidance states that:

As any period of temporary home working extends, employers should have regular discussions with workers to assess whether additional steps are needed, for example where they report:

- aches, pains or discomfort related to their temporary DSE arrangements
- adverse effects of working in isolation, on remote IT systems
- working longer hours without adequate rest and recovery breaks

'For those people who are working at home on a long-term basis, the risks associated with [using DSE](#) must be controlled. This includes doing home workstation assessments.'

Where employers decide to make working from home arrangements permanent, they should explain how to carry out full workstation assessments and provide workers with appropriate equipment and advice on control measures. If employees are provided with a budget to buy their own equipment, this should not be done without proper guidance on how to select appropriate furniture and accessories to support their needs.

Further information

If you have any questions email info@fira.co.uk