

# Safe use of Computers and ICT equipment

## Comfort

Users should be positioned comfortably with easy access to equipment. Users should be able to adjust position, in relation to the equipment. Users should take short breaks from computer work throughout the day, such as a 10-minute break every hour, to allow eyes to re-adjust.

## Space

Each workstation should have enough space for peripherals such as papers, books or other materials. Gangways and emergency exits should be kept clear. Workstations should be located away from doorways, corners, and radiators.

## Seating

Chair height should be adjustable, allowing good posture when operating computer equipment. The height & tilt of the back of the chair should be adjustable. Lower arms should be roughly horizontal when working & knees should fit comfortably under the desk. Footrests should be available as necessary. Change posture frequently and take short breaks away from the computer to stretch.

## Monitors

Monitors should tilt & swivel to meet individual needs. Screens should be sited to reduce glare from lights and windows. The top of the screen should be roughly at eye level. Users should be able to control brightness. Regulations require employers to assess and reduce risk, to plan work to allow breaks or changes of activity, to provide information and training, and to provide eye tests on request.

## Keyboards

Keyboard may be flat or tilted, and able to be moved to suit users. Wrist-rests may also help between periods of typing. Do not bend hands up at the wrists when typing. Repetitive strain injury (RSI) is a potential risk for anyone typing with only one or two fingers.

## Noise

All ICT equipment create background noise if the power is switched on, even when it is not in use. Many software packages also feature sound as part of their operation. If headphones are used, it is sensible to consider how these will be stored or 'hung' onto the monitor. In-ear headphones are not recommended for hygiene reasons. Printers are noisy when in the process of printing. If these are located in busy areas, try to conduct large print runs wherever possible.

## Heat and light

Ideally, the temperature should be between 18° and 24° degrees. Almost all ICT equipment gives off heat. In many cases, this can build up during the day and become quite oppressive for users, and it is not good for the equipment. A thermometer in the room is useful for monitoring the temperature. Ensure the room is well ventilated. Ideally, blinds should be provided to ensure that users do not suffer from glare. If glare is unavoidable, glare guards should be used. Clean screens give better visibility and reduce glare. They should therefore be cleaned regularly using appropriate cleaning materials.

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## MasterBank Factsheet : Health & Safety – Working with Computers

### Personal safety

When using equipment such as photocopiers, remember that clothing, jewellery and hair can become trapped in fast-moving parts. Photocopiers should be located in well-ventilated areas and handling toners and inks or attempting to repair any faults should only be undertaken by designated staff. Dangerous parts should be guarded, and guards must be kept in position when the machine is in use.

As always, part of the responsibility for health and safety lies with the individual, but instruction and training where possible will minimise risks.

### Electrical safety

All electrical equipment should be maintained regularly. Always leave technical repairs to the experts. Ensure that you have the necessary CO2 fire extinguishers positioned near any ICT equipment. The location of electrical equipment depends on the length of cables and the availability of sockets for telephones, TV aerials and power. It is essential that the location of the equipment does not increase the risk of danger to equipment or users.

Particular issues to be aware of are as follows:

- Cover and secure trailing power cables.
- Replace frayed leads or damaged plugs.
- Do not overload circuits, particularly when using long extension leads, as power surging can occur if too many computers are connected to a circuit, or when electrical floor cleaning equipment is plugged in.
- Avoid coiled cables, as the heat generated within them could be sufficient to start a fire.
- Be aware of accidental damage, in particular any cuts to power cable insulation, and also damage from dust, spilt liquid.
- Ensure that the correct fuse rating is fitted.

Ensure that keyboard and mouse connecting cables do not hang over the front of the computer workstation. Trailing loops of cable at the rear of machines should be tidied to allow easy access to equipment for maintenance & to prevent equipment from being dragged accidentally from the workstation. A system in place for regular visual checks of plugs, leads & other electrical equipment.

### Hazardous substances

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations cover this area, and risk assessment is necessary for toners, printing inks and cleaning materials. Careful handling required the use of gloves and special waste disposal. Inhalation should be avoided, as should contact with skin. It is important to check the manufacturer's instructions. Fluids used for cleaning and in some reprographic processes are flammable. Always handle these with care and store in minimum quantities, preferably in metal containers, away from heat. Other substances, such as solvents, are dangerous to inhale. Care should always be taken to re-seal lids securely and store in upright containers. They should not be used in confined spaces, and adequate ventilation should be maintained.

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