

Health and safety for office-based staff

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WHAT ARE MY LEGAL OBLIGATIONS?

Under the [1974 Health and Safety Act](#) every employer has a duty of care to look after staff in their workplace whether that is a manufacturing site or office environment.

The legislation covers both employees' physical safety and mental health. How does this impact you? It means that **you are legally obliged to do everything reasonably practicable to care for your staff's mental and physical wellbeing.**

For employers with five or more employees, policies and risk assessments should be documented to show how you have achieved, and maintained, this level of care.

ASSESSING DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

Around 30% of work-related injuries are due to ergonomics – body posture or muscular injuries.

Having the right measures in place to assess the suitability of display screen equipment and the wider desk area helps to minimise this risk.

1. Look at how the chair is positioned at the desk; can it be adjusted?
2. Is there suitable room on the desk for staff to safely type without causing repetitive injuries or strain?
3. Are computer screens free from glare and fully adjustable to provide the correct working height?

Being aware of your workplace working environment, and using the correct office furniture, helps to prevent injuries.

COVID-19 SAFE WORKPLACES

As more and more people opt to benefit from the flexibility of working from home it is essential employees manage health and safety correctly. Whether an employee works from home or in the office it is the employer's responsibility to make sure that they have a suitable working environment. This can be difficult when you don't have full control over the area used. Training is one of the most important tools in helping to support staff who work in a home office. Check staff understand the importance of a good working environment and are aware of measures that can be put in place to prevent injury such as ergonomic chairs, wrist rests and glare free screens.

DEVELOPING A WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

A third of all working days lost due to illness or injury in the workplace are caused by stress, anxiety or depression. Figures from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) show it is one of the highest contributors for sick days in the UK.

Although it is not a legal requirement to have a Workplace Mental Health Policy in place **it is essential that you take care of your employees' mental health and having a document which looks at the necessary requirements and risks is a good way of doing that.**

Creating a happy working environment helps to protect staff and maintain office productivity and efficiency.

REFERENCES

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/dayslost.htm>

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-150961/Stress-pushes-sick-days-time-high.html>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress.pdf>

<https://www.ss-safety.co.uk/>

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