**Health and safety risk from the use of laptops**

**Laptop safety guidance**

Many of KCC staff work flexibly, meaning their desk top computers have been replaced with laptops and docking stations; allowing them to work from any office, community venue or in the home. However, in some cases a docking station is not always available and staff work directly from laptops.

The following are examples of the poor design features of a laptop:

* lack of keyboard and screen separation
* difficulty maintaining the correct working posture
* they can be used in poorly suited environments and locations such as vehicles or on a coffee table for example.

Working for a short period of time directly from your laptop is unlikely to cause you problems but when you are working for longer periods the neck, shoulders and back may be affected.

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| **Tips for using your laptop safely** |  |
| Position the laptop on the desk in front of you so that you can see the screen without bending your neck. This can be achieved by elevating the laptop off the desk surface using a monitor riser or laptop stand so that the screen height is appropriately raised.  If your laptop is attached to a docking station a monitor riser may be the most stable way to raise it. When viewing the screen ensure that your natural eye-line is resting within the top third of the screen. Please note that varifocal users may need to slightly lower their screen or tilt the angle of the screen slightly backwards to ensure that the head remains in the correct neutral viewing position when reading the screen.  Ensure the correct laptop viewing distance is achieved by placing your arm at an arms length away from the laptop when placed on the desk/work surface and position your chair so that you are sitting close into your desk/work surface. | [Slim Cool Laptop Stand in use](http://www.posturite.co.uk/media/catalog/product/cache/4/image/600x600/063e3547c4534b98f6796d4b1c9b0220/s/l/slim-cool-laptop-stand_03.jpg) |
| Always use a separate keyboard and mouse by connecting the leads to the USB ports in your laptop. | Lightweight Laptop Package |
| Wherever you are sitting, your chair must be at the correct height to ensure that your elbows are level with the top of the desk/work surface and at right angles to the floor. If you are at home and sitting on a dining room chair, you may need to sit on a cushion(s) to achieve this position. Please note if your feet are unable to be placed flat on the floor after you have adjusted your chair height, you may require the use of a footrest (or you can use cushions if working at home if you do not have a footrest). | Picture of a lady sitting at her work desk showing the correct positioning of her elbows in relation to the desk height. |
| Consider any manual handling issues when transporting your laptop, keyboard and mouse by using a backpack to evenly distribute the load or use a laptop trolley. |  |

**Tips for using your mouse and keyboard safely**

**Mouse –** hold the mouse gently to move it over the desk or mouse mat. Keep the mouse close into your keyboard to keep your movements small to avoid over-stretching the arm and shoulder. Mouse movements should be made using the elbow as the pivot point, not the wrist.

**Keyboard** – When using the keyboard, the wrist should be free of surface pressure contact. If you wish to use a gel wrist rest in front of the keyboard, ensure you rest gently without adding pressure to the soft tissue of the wrist. Putting too much pressure to the wrist may cause Carpel Tunnel Syndrome.

**Aches and Pains** – If you are experiencing aches and pains, alert your manager. A Display Screen Equipment self-assessment must be carried out where difficulties have been identified. You will find the DSE self-assessment form on KNET/KELSI under the A-Z health and safety guidance index. Contact the Health and Safety Team for further advice on the different types of equipment available to aid your comfort.

**Checklist to see that you are sitting correctly**

* is your chair at the right height to ensure correct posture?
* does your chair provide you with good lumbar support?
* do your eyes naturally rest within the top third of the screen? (If you wear varifocal lenses you may need the screen to be set slightly lower and tilt the angle if required)
* do your feet rest firmly on the floor or on a footrest?
* is your keyboard and mouse in the correct position to prevent over stretching?
* are you using a document holder set between the keyboard and monitor to reduce bending and twisting your neck?
* are you taking regular short breaks away from your computer screen?

picture of lady sitting in the correct ergonomic sitting position when using her computer at her work desk.

**Further Advice**

For further advice and guidance contact the Health and Safety Team by emailing us at [healthandsafety@kent.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@kent.gov.uk) or ring our Advice Line on 03000 418456