INTRODUCTION

Where a member of staff is provided with a mobile device, it is intended for use as a stand-alone solution for mobile/transient work only (e.g. periods of an hour or less). This guidance is primarily for when the mobile device is used in an interactive touch screen manner, but will also include some guidance on using a mobile device in a desktop situation. The aim of the guidance is to avoid injury and ill-health of employees.

DEFINITION

- A mobile device is a small computing device, typically small enough to be handheld, having a display screen with touch input and/or a miniature keyboard and weighing less than 2 pounds (0.91 kg).
- The device may or may not also have an additional input device, and can be operated with one or two hands. It is likely to be held in one hand while being operated with the other.
- Touch screens allow the user to interact with images on the display, and can be useful for navigating through software. This can be done using either the finger or a stylus.
- Mobile devices are not designed for extended use and are likely to be used in a range of different working environments outside of the normal office environment.

- A tablet, has a display screen and keyboard not separate from each other, with the screen measuring between 2.5 inches (63.5mm) and 10.9 inches (277mm), measured across the diagonal.

THE EFFECTS OF WORKING WITH MOBILE DEVICES

The effects associated with the use of mobile devices, include:

- **Work, Related Upper Limb Disorders**
  This refers to a variety of symptoms or conditions, which can affect the fingers, hands, wrists, arms, elbows, shoulders or neck. The principal causes of injury are:
  - Staying in one position for too long, or using a mobile device in a stand-alone way for extended periods.
  - Awkward positioning of the hands or wrists, eg. sideways use and motion.
  - Seating or standing in awkward or uncomfortable positions.

- **Visual Discomfort**
  This may include dry, running or burning eyes, blurred sight, drowsiness, headaches, difficulties with contact lenses etc. The principal causes are:
  - Extended use of a mobile device.
  - Poorly maintained equipment - because characters on the screen may be blurred requiring constant adjustment of the eye muscles.
  - Incorrect brightness or contrast adjustment can also lead to visual fatigue.
  - Using the mobile device in direct sunlight.
- **Stress Symptoms**
  
  The principal causes are:
  - Slow response times
  - Connectivity problems
  - Unfamiliar software
  - Extended use for routine operations/data entry
  - Inadvertently making incorrect selections/pressing the wrong button on the screen.

**Guidance on the Safe Use of Mobile devices**

When using a mobile device, some points to remember in order to achieve best practice include:

- Whenever working with Display Screen Equipment (DSE), particularly for a mobile device, it is important to adopt good posture, particularly your neck and shoulders.
  - If using mobile equipment continuously/prolonged for over an hour at any one time, a peripheral keyboard, mouse and stand is to be used. Where you think you may be using your mobile device for an extended period, consider connecting to all peripherals before you start.
  - If using a mobile device as a desktop device in an office/home situation, a docking station and/or peripheral keyboard, mouse and stand or separate screen is to be used to ensure the screen is at eye level.

- If mobile devices are to be used hand-held, in a standing position for an extended period, eg. when training, the use of podiums is recommended.
- Users are encouraged to take regular micro breaks (brief breaks away from the mobile device, long enough to rest your eyes and correct your posture - the “rule of thumb” is for 10 minutes in every hour away from the screen). Ensure that you vary your posture and undertake a variety of different work tasks. Managers should ensure that users of mobile devices are encouraged to take regular breaks from the screen.
- Write short messages/emails - be succinct. If extended use is expected, the use of separate keyboard, mouse and stand is recommended.
  - Try to keep your wrists straight and relaxed when holding and using the device.
  - The use of hand e-holders can help if a Tablet is to be used hand-held for extended periods.
  - Support the hand that is interacting with the screen (e.g. rest the hand on the base of the device), so that fine movements can be made by the finger.
- Touch screens may be difficult for those with larger fingers to use precisely - a stylus may be more effective as inadvertently pressing the wrong button could be a stressor.
- Use any equipment provided correctly to manufacturer’s instructions.
- Follow any ‘Corporate’ or local policies, procedures, guidance and instruction.

**Note:** Please discuss your equipment needs with your manager.
The Screen
- Glare and reflected light should be avoided as it can affect screen clarity. Do not sit with your back facing a window.
- Sit with the Mobile device screen directly in front of you.
- Regularly clean your screen and report damage, eg. scratches/cracks to the screen.
- Adjust screen brightness, icon size and colours to suit surrounding light levels and for your viewing comfort.
- Place any separate keyboard used in a position so that a comfortable viewing distance can be achieved.

Working with a Mobile device in a Car or Other Setting
- Never use your mobile device when driving.
- Sit in the passenger seat and adjust the seat to provide plenty of legroom
- If you have a briefcase, book or cushion, put it under the to raise it slightly. This will improve posture for your neck and wrists.
- Do not use a laptop when lying on the bed. This causes strain to the neck and back.
- Reclining seats on planes limits space and will therefore inhibit a beneficial posture.
- If you do need to use your mobile device on a plane, request a bulkhead (compartment wall) seat with additional space that will provide a little more room to achieve a comfortable working position.
- When on a train, avoid working in seats with tables attached to the rear of seats in front of you. Try to use the more spacious communal tables. Place the laptop away from the edge of the table in order to achieve a more comfortable position.
- Limit the time you use the Mobile device to a maximum of 30 minutes in cramped conditions, eg. cars, trains & airplanes.

Manual Handling
- Always try to reduce the amount of weight of items you are carrying.
- Do not carry equipment or papers unless they are really likely to be needed.
- Minimise the hard copy documents you take. Store them electronically on the laptop or on a disk, or consider sending them in advance (by post or e-mail) to your destination.
- Consider using a backpack/rucksack to cut down strain on arms and distribute loads evenly across the body. This is also less conspicuous for personal safety reasons. Alternatively, use wheeled luggage where possible and appropriate.

Personal Safety/Security
Always be conscious of your personal safety when carrying or using your Mobile device. Take sensible precautions such as:
- Planning your tasks to avoid situations where theft is likely or advise your manager if you consider the situation to be unavoidable.
- Never leave your Mobile device unattended.
- Take extra care in public places, where the risk of theft may be greater.
- Be conscious of the vicinity of others, particularly in relation to login details.
- Always be conscious of vehicle security when transporting your Mobile device. Never leave it on view in an unattended vehicle and never leave it overnight in an unattended vehicle.

**Other Useful General Guidance**

- Use the mains power point to extend the life of your batteries.
- At the end of the day, shut down the Mobile device correctly using the manufacturer’s instructions, rather than simply turning it off.
- Always make sure you have sufficient cable length when using telephony or internet sockets.

**Other Forms/Guidance:**

- PCC - [Casual Homeworkers Checklist](#)
- PCC - [Mobile Worker’s Checklist](#)
- PCC - [Mobile Working – Dyslexia Guidance](#)
- DSE Good Practice Guide
- PCC Health & Safety Performance Standard – Display Screen Equipment
- DSE User Self-Assessment Form
- HSE guidance leaflet [Working with VDU’s (INDG36)](#)