



Health and Safety with ICT

(Extracts taken from ©Becta website)

Introduction

Health and safety with ICT equipment requires both an awareness of the legislation governing this area and a common sense approach.

Whilst students and teachers are not specifically mentioned under the health and safety regulations regarding ICT, the regulations can generally be interpreted to include many teachers who use computers in their work. Since a large proportion of clients at the Centre can spend in excess of two hours using computers during the day (This includes discrete ICT, cross curricular lessons and after school computer usage for schools), it is important that we promote good practice.

Over the last few years, there have been several issues that have caused concern over the use of ICT equipment. These include Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), eye strain and related problems caused by stress and working with VDUs.

- Students, teachers, CLC staff and other clients should be encouraged to take breaks after prolonged ICT work. A water cooler is provided in the Reception - to be used in a controlled area away from the computers.

Ergonomics or good design of the working environment can help to overcome the above issues.

- All clients should be encouraged to adopt the correct posture whilst working at a computer workstation:
 - a) Knees should be at a 90⁰ angle with feet flat on the floor.
 - b) Elbows should be at a 90⁰ angle when using the keyboard and keyboards should be adjustable.
 - c) Users should be able to adjust the brightness of the screen.
 - d) Users should not have to strain their neck to see the monitor, the top of the screen should be roughly at eye level.

CLC staff have all been provided with keyboard/mouse wrist and foot supports.

- All computer workstations are equipped with an adjustable office chair and these **must** be used at all times.
- All CLC staff computers are equipped with paper management stands.
- All benching must be at the correct height and depth (Min 75cm for a computers base unit and keyboard). Depths in the CLC vary from 750mm to 1000mm.



Health and Safety Legislation and ICT

The regulations require employers to assess and reduce risk, plan work to allow breaks or changes in activity, provide information and training and provide eye tests on request.

The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 requires all electrical systems and equipment to be constructed and maintained in a safe condition. There are certain standards relating to the safety of ICT equipment, eg **Specification for Safety of ICT Equipment including electrical business equipment – IEC/EN 60 950/BS 7002**.

- The Centre's electrical equipment is checked regularly in accordance with Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council's policy.
- The Centre's technical team regularly checks, maintains and cleans ICT equipment.
- A CO₂ fire extinguisher should be positioned near to any ICT equipment.

Health and Safety and ICT in The Centre

The Technical Manager has overall responsibility for the day-to-day running of the equipment and faults or concerns should be reported in accordance with the Centre guidelines.

- The Technical Manager checks equipment daily.
- **All PC users** should **always** seek the assistance of a member of the Technical staff, **under no circumstances** should anyone attempt to connect, unplug or tamper with ICT equipment.

The following list includes areas that all need consideration with regard to health and safety:

- **Electrical Safety** – Within the usual restrictions of locating electrical equipment such as socket availability and length of cables, it is important that the location of the equipment does not increase the risk of danger to equipment or users. The ICT areas are arranged to ensure safe use of ICT, therefore, therefore it is essential that furniture and equipment is **not** moved around with consulting a member of the Technical staff.

Particular issues to look for are:

- a) Stray leads – All leads are secured with cable ties, any loose cables should be reported immediately.
- b) Trailing Flexes – These are all covered as per regulations. Any loose trunking should be reported immediately.



- c) Frayed leads – Leads are replaced regularly if they are sub standard.
 - d) Damaged plugs – All plugs are sealed and should not be tampered with. Seek advice from the Technical staff.
 - e) Overloading\power surging – This can occur when running long extension leads. Only surge protected extension leads should be used with ICT equipment. Advice must be sought from the technical staff before using any extension leads for ICT equipment.
 - f) Coiled cables – where the heat generated could be sufficient to start a fire.
 - g) Accidental damage – in particular any cuts to flex insulation but also damage from dust, spilt liquid etc.
 - h) Fuses – correct rating fitted. **Under no circumstances** should anyone change fuses to ICT equipment. Assistance is available from the technical staff.
- **Heat** – Most ICT equipment gives off heat and this can build up during the course of the day and become quite oppressive for users and it not good for the equipment to be in temperatures over 30⁰C. Whilst most areas in the Centre are air conditioned, please take the following precautions to reduce the temperature in the rooms:
 - a) Lights and air conditioning are switched off when the rooms are not in use.
 - b) Peripheral equipment should be switched off when not in use.
 - c) Air conditioning should be activated as necessary.
 - d) Clients should be encouraged to use the water cooler and take drinks away from the computer equipment in a controlled area.
 - **Light** – Monitors should be positioned to reduce reflections and glare from lights and windows (blinds have been fitted in all PC areas and should be used). Clean screens get better visibility and reduce glare.
 - a) Screens should **never** be cleaned without the use of the proper materials. The Technical Manager carries out regular cleaning duties.
 - **Noise** – Most ICT equipment emits background noise, however, any excessive noises should be reported to the Technical Manager using the ‘ICT Fault System’. Many software programs feature noise, therefore, it is recommended that clients use the headphones provided.

When using headphones it is essential that the volume is not too loud. Hygiene should also be considered when using headphones.

- **Software** – You should be aware that health and safety legislation covers this area in relation to stress and:
 - a) Ease of use



- b) Sufficient training
 - c) Appropriate to task
- **Space** – Around a workstation there should be enough space for papers, books and other materials. Peripherals are attached to the network via print servers and are therefore accessible by all and usually located centrally.

Related Health and Safety Considerations

- **Hazardous substances** – Toner used in laser printers is a fine dust. Careful handling is required when changing printer cartridges and should only be carried by a member of the technical staff.

Fluids used for cleaning are in some instances flammable. These should always be handled with care and only stored in small quantities. These fluids should not be used in confined spaces and always in well ventilated rooms. It is essential that this type of cleaning is carried out when the ICT rooms are not in use.

- **Manual Handling** – ICT equipment is often heavy and bulky. All technical staff should take a Health and Safety Course.
- **Personal safety** – When changing cartridges, repairing peripherals or other ICT equipment, clothing, hair, jewellery etc should be secured. The correct tools should be used for repairing and maintaining equipment.