

This document **briefly** introduces the particular view of AbilityNet on this complex and controversial subject and explains how the services we offer can help.

“RSI” and WRULD and contention

RSI is the term most commonly used in the UK to group together a variety of conditions associated with repeated activities. There are differing views on what causes it and, indeed, on whether it is a separately identifiable medical condition. Our main aim is not to participate in these debates but simply to help the people involved to positive outcomes. For the purpose of this factsheet we will use the term “RSI”.

The government's view of the importance of RSI is reflected in the Health and Safety Commissions Strategy and in the HSE publication HSG60 (rev) revised in 2002, “Upper Limb Disorders in the Workplace”.

AbilityNet and RSI - our perspective

When a case of RSI arises, a number of aspects can be considered.

1. Get round

A person with RSI may well be able to continue with some or all of their computer use activities using an alternative technique, while still following medical advice and continuing with treatment. We call this getting round the problem, and we have found it to be a very useful and under-used approach. Among the alternatives we work with are:

- Alternatives to a mouse.
- Small, light, standard-layout keyboards.
- Ergonomically designed keyboards.
- Voice input; now a reliable and highly developed technology.
- Alternative key input devices with radically different designs.

2. Treatment

Clearly if discomfort, pain or loss of function is experienced then this must be properly dealt with. We are not medical specialists but we may well be able to help by sharing our experiences of approaches to treatment that have worked for others.

3. Finding the causes.

Our aim in making suggestions in this area would be to prevent the problem happening again, when a person returns to normal activity, or in other people involved in similar activities.

4. Prevention and management.

Processes of work, computer systems and management processes can tend to *increase* the risks of RSI or work to *reduce* those risks. We can use our experience to help employers work towards the safest and most positive possible situation.

How we can help

Advice and information service

We are available, through this service, to anybody with a question or a concern. We can give factual information, explain our view or services, or simply discuss concerns.

Assessment

Our assessments integrate personal and technical considerations to arrive at sound and realistic suggestions, documented in a report. The process includes discussion, evaluation of all relevant circumstances and trial use of alternative devices.

We believe that individual attention is vital. Superficially similar cases may demand quite different approaches.

Awareness training and courses

AbilityNet offers training specifically directed at RSI or including RSI in a broader view, designed for professionals with interests and responsibilities in this area. We address prevention and management and effective DSE workstation assessment as well as individual cases.

Consultancy

We are frequently asked to work with employers to take a broad, long term view of computer system and work process design to help them to work towards safe, healthy and effective working procedures.

Useful References

Fit to Work

Leaflet about reducing computer related aches and pains. Available from:
The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 14 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4ED
Tel: 020 7306 6666
Web: www.csp.org.uk

HSE Publications

The following leaflets have information on making adjustments in line with the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992.

Available from:

HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6FS

Tel: 01787 881165

Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992

	L26	ISBN 0-7176-2582-6
DSE Work. Guidance on Regulations	L26	ISBN 0-7176-0410-1
VDUs. An Easy Guide to the Regulations	HS(G)90	ISBN 0-7176-0735-6
Working with VDUs	INDG36	ISBN 0-7176-1504-9

Health & Safety Executive public enquiry service

Tel: 08701 545500

Web: www.hse.gov.uk

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