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# Menopause in the Workplace Policy

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# Contents

- 01 Introduction
- 02 Aims and objectives
- 03 Definition
- 04 Symptoms
- 05 Support in the Workplace
- 06 Guidance for Managers
- 07 Risk Assessment
- 08 Menopause and other Policies
- 09 Self-Help Measures
- 10 Signposting and Support

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of our commitment to advocate menopause within the workplace, we are seeking to provide a supportive and inclusive working environment for all.
- 1.2 The Council recognises that employees experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments. The menopause can have an impact on any individual's physical and mental health.
- 1.3 The Council aims to ensure everyone understands what the menopause is and enable staff to instigate and foster positive conversations with colleagues and managers in a comfortable and open environment.
- 1.4 This policy demonstrates the Councils commitment to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all the workforce.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to provide advice and guidance to those both directly and indirectly affected by the menopause allowing those experiencing symptoms of the menopause to continue to be effective in their jobs.
- 2.2 To improve line manager's awareness of how menopause can affect employees and help managers to understand how they can support those experiencing menopausal symptoms at work.
- 2.3 The Council is seeking to raise awareness and understanding among all employees about menopause.

## 3. Definitions

- 3.1 What is the menopause? The menopause is a natural phase of life when individuals stop having periods and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically last for a number of years which is why it is best described as a transition rather than a one-off event.
- 3.2 Every experience will be different and menopausal symptoms can begin before the age of 40, this can be caused by premature menopause or surgery.
- 3.3 Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins before the menopause.
- 3.4 Perimenopause is the phase leading up to the menopause when an individuals' hormone balance starts to change, and when they may begin to experience menopausal symptoms. For some, this can start as early as their twenties or as late as their forties.

## 4. Symptoms

- 4.1 Symptoms of menopause can manifest both physically and psychologically and can be different for everyone; and for a quarter of individuals, they are severely debilitating.

- 4.2 Symptoms can have a huge effect on an individual's comfort and performance when working.
- 4.3 Symptoms vary greatly, and commonly include (but aren't limited to):
- hot flushes
  - palpitations
  - night sweats
  - insomnia and sleep disturbances
  - dizziness
  - fatigue
  - headaches
  - recurrent urinary tract infections
  - joint stiffness, aches and pains
  - irregular or heavy, painful periods
  - dry skin, eyes and hair loss
- 4.4 There may also be associated psychological symptoms including:
- depression
  - anxiety and panic attacks
  - reduced concentration
  - changes to mood
  - memory loss
  - loss of confidence
- 4.4 Individuals may experience only some or all of these symptoms (as well as some other less common symptoms which are not listed). Most will experience some symptoms, whilst others may not experience any noticeable symptoms.
- 4.5 On average, individuals continue to experience symptoms for four years after their last period, but around 10% continue to experience symptoms up to 12 years after their last period.
- 4.6 Beyond the menopause, due to lower levels of certain hormones, post-menopausal individuals can be at an increased risk of certain conditions such as developing osteoporosis ('brittle bones') and heart disease. These risks increase for those who have an early or premature menopause.
- 4.7 Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that for many reasons, people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.
- 4.8 Some individuals seek medical advice and treatment for the symptoms of perimenopause and menopause. A common form of treatment is known as hormone replacement therapy (HRT).
- 4.9 Many find these treatments helpful for alleviating symptoms, but HRT may not be suitable or appropriate for all.
- 4.10 Some individuals taking HRT may experience side effects which may also require adjustments in the workplace.

## 5. Support in the workplace

- 5.1 It is recognised that the menopause is a very personal experience, and different adjustments and levels of support may be needed for different individuals.
- 5.2 Individuals are encouraged to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are recognised as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health.
- 5.3 Early notification will also help line managers to work with the individual in assessing the most appropriate support to meet their needs.
- 5.4 Although all line managers are expected to take a positive and supportive approach towards discussions about the menopause, the Council understands that some individual staff members who are affected may feel uncomfortable talking directly to their line manager if they are experiencing problems, particularly if the line manager is male or much younger than they are (although these are broad assumptions and will not necessarily be the case).
- 5.5 The Council understands this and those who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may wish to have a discussion with:
  - a colleague
  - contact the Employee Assistant Programme provider
  - member of the HR Team
  - UNISON representative
  - Attend the Menopause Café
- 5.6 The Council also recognises that some staff may be indirectly impacted by someone they know experiencing issues related to the menopause. One example of this could be a staff member may have a partner or close family member who is experiencing severe menopausal symptoms and may require additional support.
- 5.7 Employee Assistance Programme – Health Assured. Individuals can access confidential support through our EAP via the online chat service and a wealth of tips, support and information via the app.
- 5.8 Further information on accessing support via Health Assured can be found on Staff Net: [Employee Wellbeing and Support \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
- 5.9 Menopause Café is a bi-monthly informal support group established to provide an inclusive forum for individuals to share ideas, discuss concerns and provide a safe space for open and comfortable conversations. Further information can be found on Staff Net.
- 5.10 For individuals who may require additional support in the workplace, following a discussion with their line manager and HR, it may be appropriate to refer them to Occupational Health.

## 6. Guidance for Managers

- 6.1 The Council encourages all managers to take responsibility to familiarise themselves with the menopause policy and guidance and be ready and willing to have an open discussion about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally.
- 6.2 Line managers are not expected to be experts or act as healthcare professionals when discussing the

menopause.

- 6.3 Line managers should always advise employees to consult their GP for further support and be aware that further advice can also be sought from Occupational Health if their symptoms are impacting on them at work.
- 6.4 When an employee tells their line manager about their issues with menopause, the manager should seek to gain an understanding of what support the employee is likely to need in the workplace.
- 6.5 Line managers should be mindful that everyone has the right to feel respected and valued at work, and be confident in raising issues when they need to and remember that every individual's issues are unique to them, do not make assumptions.
- 6.7 Ensure that all information shared by the employee is treated in confidence and is not shared further without the employee's consent.
- 6.8 Listen to and gain an understanding of any concerns your employee has about their issues or symptoms, avoiding assumptions.
- 6.9 Discuss timescales and leave requirements if this has been raised as part of the discussion. It is worth noting that perimenopause and menopause symptoms do not have an indicative timeline for resolution.
- 6.10 Take account of both individual and business needs when dealing with requests for all types of leave, being mindful of the importance of being supportive of attendance at appointments.
- 6.11 Outline the support available to the employee, such as adjustments in the workplace, Employee Assistance Programme and consideration for an Occupational Health referral where appropriate.

## 7. Risk Assessments

- 7.1 Line managers should ensure risk assessments consider the specific requirements of the impacts of menopause and ensure that the working environment is suitable and will not exacerbate symptoms further.
- 7.2 The risk assessment will assist with identification of any potential adjustments which may be required.
- 7.3 Managers should use the risk assessment template [as found on staffnet] as a guide, but also take into account any additional issues raised by the individual affected.
- 7.4 Common physical issues that should be considered are workplace temperatures and ventilation, the addition of a desk fan, access to adequate toilet and washing facilities availability of somewhere suitable for rest breaks.

## 8. Menopause and Other Policies

- 8.1 The Council recognises that the effects of menopause should be taken into account when considering the implementation of other policies such as sickness absence, capability and performance, complaints and flexible working arrangements to ensure that individuals experiencing these symptoms are not unfairly treated or discriminated against.
- 8.2 Sickness absence related to menopause will be handled sensitively in line with the sickness absence

policy whilst trying to prevent action under the policy by improving or removing factors that may make it more difficult to manage symptoms of menopause while at work.

- 8.3 An Occupational Health referral may be useful in identifying reasonable adjustments that may support an employee to maintain their attendance at work.
- 8.4 Flexible working arrangements – the Council’s flexible working and time off policy may support an employee to manage the symptoms of menopause while at work. All employees have the right to request flexible working arrangements from day one of their employment.
- 8.5 Changes to working time arrangements should be considered where appropriate and in-line with the needs of the service, including adjustments to start/finish times, flexible working requests for reduced hours, home working and increasing the working day to allow additional breaks to support the individual in managing menopause symptoms.
- 8.7 Following any recommendations from occupational health, consideration should be given to whether any adjustment to the employee’s duties would support them to manage symptoms of menopause while at work.
- 8.8 Managers should work with employees and Human Resources to determine the right support for each individual.

## 9. Self-help Measures

- 9.1 Employees experiencing symptoms of menopause are advised to seek advice and support and are encouraged to consider:
  - seeking medical advice from your GP on the management of menopause symptoms
  - discussing symptoms with your line manager and requesting appropriate workplace adjustments
  - contacting the employee assistance programme
- 9.2 Current health promotion advice highlights the importance of lifestyle choices before, during and after the menopause and the benefits of:
  - having access to natural light
  - getting adequate rest and relaxation
  - wearing natural fibres
  - eating healthily and regularly – research has shown that a balanced diet can help alleviate some symptoms and help keep bones healthy
  - drinking plenty of water
  - exercising regularly – exercise can help to reduce hot flushes and improve sleep. It can also help to boost mood and maintain strong bones
  - not smoking
  - being aware of your caffeine and alcohol intake
  - staying cool at night by wearing loose clothes in a well-ventilated room
- 9.3 These measures can help with some symptoms of menopause and may also help reduce the risk of osteoporosis (brittle bones), diabetes and heart disease in later life.

## 10. Self-help Measures and advice

- 10.1 The Council's **Employee Assistance Programme** includes a 24/7 helpline designed to support you through any of life's issues or problems. Your call will be handled by an experienced therapist or advisor, who will offer support in a friendly manner.

You can 'freephone' 24/7 on 0800 028 0199 or visit <https://wisdom.healthassured.org/login> using our organisation code which is **MHA001610**

- 10.2 Recordings of the menopause awareness sessions held for staff can be found here under the section Menopause and Work:

[Employee Wellbeing and Support \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

- 10.3 All staff and manager's are encouraged to undertake this short e-learning course on the Council's e-learning system: [Menopause in the Workplace](#)

- 10.4 **External Links**

[Menopause Matters, menopausal symptoms, remedies, advice](#)

[British Menopause Society | For healthcare professionals and others specialising in post reproductive health \(thebms.org.uk\)](#)

[Menopause - Symptoms - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Hormone replacement therapy \(HRT\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Overview | Menopause: diagnosis and management | Guidance | NICE](#)

[Home - The Menopause Exchange \(menopause-exchange.co.uk\)](#)

[menopausesupport.co.uk – Supporting You Through Change](#)

[Charity for Women with POI | The Daisy Network](#)

Human Resources  
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