

Appendix 3 Menopause Guidance

1. Introduction

The Council is committed to developing, maintaining and supporting a culture of equality and diversity in employment, including fostering an age and gender inclusive workforce.

Women now make up almost half the UK workforce and there are an estimated 4.4 million women over the age of 50 currently in work (ONS 2019). At the Council just over half of our employees are women; well over half of whom are over 50.

For some women, going through the menopause may be uneventful and may not impact on their work but for others it may become difficult to function effectively at work and their working conditions may exacerbate their symptoms. Research shows that the majority of women are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, nor ask for the support or adjustments that they may need.

As an organisation, we have a duty of care for the health and safety of our employees. Legally, we must ensure we comply with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the workplace to risks to the health and safety of our employees.

We also need to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, where we have a duty not to discriminate and employees should be treated with respect in terms of their age and gender. Any detrimental treatment of a woman related to the menopause could represent direct or indirect sex discrimination. If symptoms amount to a mental or physical impairment which has a 'substantial and long-term adverse effect on the individuals ability to carry out day-to-day activities', this could be classified as a disability under the Equality Act and failure to make reasonable adjustments could lead to a discrimination claim.

This guidance will help employees and managers by:

- Ensuring everyone understands what menopause is and are clear on internal policies, guidance and practices (supported by Human Resources and the Policy Team)
- Helping to create an environment in which everyone can openly and comfortably start conversations, or engage in discussions about menopause
- Ensuring that women experiencing menopause symptoms feel able to discuss it and ask for support and any reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles and that women in the menopause or approaching the menopause know that it will be accommodated by their employer

2. Definitions

Menopause

Menopause is a natural stage of life when a woman's oestrogen levels decline and she stops having periods. It is best described as a 'transition' as menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years. For most women it happens between the ages of 45 and 55.

Perimenopause

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before the actual menopause.

Premature Ovarian Insufficiency

Premature Ovarian Insufficiency is when the menopause occurs under the age of 40. There is no clear cause for the early onset of menopause, but it can be as a result of surgery, illness or medical treatments.

3. Symptoms

Symptoms may include:

- Hot flushes and night sweats
- Intimate body problems e.g. dryness
- Difficulty sleeping or increased tiredness
- Low mood, mood swings and irritability
- Anxiety
- Heart palpitations
- Poor concentration and memory loss
- Reduced sex drive
- Irregular and/or heavy periods
- Muscular aches and/or joint pains
- Headaches
- Weight gain
- Urinary tract infections

4. Responsibilities

All members of staff are responsible for:

- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their own health
- Being open and honest in conversations with managers/HR
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues

The Council will:

- Ensure that the menopause is highlighted in health and wellbeing practices so all staff know that the Council has a positive attitude to the issue
- Ensure guidance on the menopause is freely available in the workplace
- Ensure that line managers attend awareness training and have access to resources to understand how the menopause can affect employees at work and what adjustments may be necessary to support women who are experiencing the menopause
- Provide wider menopause awareness sessions open to all employees
- Where appropriate, carry out risk assessments to consider the specific needs of menopausal women and ensure that the working environment will not exacerbate their symptoms

All line managers should:

- Treat every employee as an individual, as the symptoms of the menopause can vary a lot; do not make assumptions
- Have regular conversations with employees
- Be able to have open but sensitive discussions about the menopause, respecting the personal nature of the conversation and confidentiality

- Keep a record of agreed support to ensure that the support/adjustments are provided and review as required
- Ensure that reasonable consideration is given to the potential impact of menopausal symptoms when looking at sickness absence or performance issues
- Be aware that workplace stress can worsen menopausal symptoms
- Consider flexible working arrangements that meet the needs of menopausal women *and* the business
- Consider symptom support/reasonable adjustments

5. Symptom Support/Suggested Adjustments

Some examples of symptom support to consider:

Hot flushes

- Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk, moving near a window, or away from a heat source
- Easy access to cold drinking water
- Have access to a bathroom or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush

Heavy/light periods

- Have access to bathroom facilities
- Allowance for more frequent bathroom visits
- Ensure sanitary products are available in bathrooms

Brain fog/poor concentration

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse and adjust working pattern/practice if possible
- Review workload
- Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment
- Offer quiet space to work

Additional support

Support can also be accessed over the phone through the employee assistance programme (EAP), which is able to provide 24 hour employee rights and emotional support information, as well as guidance for managers. If appropriate, occupational health support could also be arranged.

6. Relevant policies, legislation & further information

Policies

Equal Opportunity Policy

Flexible Working Policy

Sickness Absence Policy

Health & Safety Policies

Dignity at Work Policy

Equality Strategy

Legislation

Employment Rights Act 1996

Flexible Working Regulations 2014

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 &
Management Regulations 1999

Equality Act 2010

Data Protection Act 2018 & General Data Protection
Regulation 2016

Further information

The [CIPD](#) website provides guidance on the menopause at work for people professionals

The [ACAS](#) website provides information for workers, colleagues and managers on the menopause

[Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;

The [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency; and

The [Menopause Café](#), which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause.