

# MENOPAUSE

## Guidance for Managers

### **Introduction**

The Council recognise that Menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and whilst it isn't always an easy process with the right support at work it can be much better. Although every woman does not go through the symptoms, putting support in place for those who do will improve their work life experience.

Menopause should not be classed as a 'taboo' subject and should be able to be spoken about openly with no embarrassment. It is an issue for men to understand as well as women.

### **The Council seeks to:**

- Encourage an environment of openness and transparency regarding the subject of menopause and help employees feel more comfortable talking to their line managers and colleagues about menopause.
- Raise awareness about menopause in the workplace and provide guidance for line managers to help them support employees experiencing systems of menopause.
- Ensure that employees are offered appropriate yet reasonable adjustments and support to help them manage the symptoms of menopause.

This guidance will assist managers in supporting employees who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

## Definitions

**Menopause:** is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when a woman ceases menstruation for 12 consecutive months. Typically occurring between the ages of 45-55. This is a natural part of the aging process for women.

**Perimenopause:** is defined as the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes due to fluctuating hormones. This can occur years before menopause begins.

**Postmenopause** is the time following the last period, and is usually defined as more than 12 months with no periods in someone with intact ovaries, or immediately following surgery if the ovaries have been removed.

## Symptoms

It is important to remember that not every woman experiences symptoms or those who do might not need any help or support.

Symptoms can be both physical and psychological and cover a wide range of issues. Some of these symptoms include; hot flushes, poor concentration, headaches, panic attacks/anxiety, heavy/light periods, night sweats, insomnia and changes in mood. These symptoms can typically last 4-8 years.

## Managers Responsibilities

It is important for Managers to recognise that every woman's experience with menopause is different and there is no typical way to deal with it. Those employees experiencing symptoms of the menopause will not all require the same level of support at work, however there are some common supports/adjustments that managers can consider as outlined below.

Whilst this guidance predominantly refers to women, managers must also recognise and appreciate that the menopause can impact Trans and non-binary people who don't identify as women in the same manner. Although unusual, menopause can still be experienced by a few Trans masculine and non-binary identified people whose female characteristics may persist at this stage of their lives. They require the same support and flexibility in the workplace as others with similar symptoms.

All managers are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with what menopause is and how it can affect women and the symptoms that can occur;
- Encouraging employees to feel comfortable about having open discussions about menopause, appreciating the nature of the topic and being sensitive but still professional;
- Ensuring confidentiality is maintained with any information they receive from an employee regarding health related issues;

- Providing support and reasonable adjustments as necessary to any employee experiencing symptoms of the menopause.
- Direct employees to the external advice and support available and encourage them to seek advice from a medical professional if required.

### **Available Support/Adjustments**

There are a number of existing policies that can provide support to an employee whose symptoms of the menopause are having an impact at work. Some of the support/adjustments that a manager can consider are:

- Flexibility around start and finish times, taking into account the needs of the service;
- Flexibility with breaks or increased breaks throughout the day; taking into account the needs of the service;
- Facilitating a more comfortable working environment, taking into account the temperature and lighting to help women manage their body temperature – i.e. desk fans, sitting at or near a window.
- Flexibility around time off for appointments. Some provision for this already exists within the Special Leave Policy but more may be required.
- Where an employee's symptoms are having a significant impact at work or on their ability to attend work advice should be sought from the Councils occupational health provider.

The Employee Counselling Service is also available to employees in these circumstances. Further information can be found here: <http://connect/index.aspx?articleid=3879>

### **Further information**

Menopause matters: [www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk)

Manage my menopause: [www.managemymenopause.co.uk](http://www.managemymenopause.co.uk)

Women's health concern: [www.womens-health-concern.org](http://www.womens-health-concern.org)

Menopause matters – The man shed: <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/manshed.php>

### **Related Policies/Procedures:**

Smarter Working Policy and Guidance: <http://connect/index.aspx?articleid=15647>

Special Leave Policy and Guidance: <http://connect/index.aspx?articleid=3966>

Managing Attendance Policy and Guidance: <http://connect/index.aspx?articleid=3944>