



Menopause Policy and Guidance

23rd June 2022

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear statement on the Authority's commitment and approach to supporting staff through the menopause transition and by doing so create an open, inclusive and supportive culture so that women feel able to discuss the menopause and seek the support they need.

The aims are:

To ensure staff and managers understand:

- what the menopause is and how it can affect their colleagues
- how it affects everyone differently
- what support is available to staff affected by it.

While we predominantly talk about women in relation to the menopause in this guidance, we also recognise and appreciate that the menopause can impact trans and non-binary people who don't identify as women in the same manner. We recognise that 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.

2. What is Menopause and who does it affect?

2.1. The menopause is a natural part of ageing which affects around half of the population. It usually occurs for most women between the ages of 45-55, although some experience this change prior to reaching this age of 40. For many people, symptoms last about 4 years, but in some cases symptoms can last a lot longer.

2.2. Women will encounter hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels, and their periods will stop. This usually takes place over a period of four to eight years and will vary, dependant on the individual, but in some cases could last up to 12 years.

2.3. Some staff might also experience early menopause (before the age of 45) either naturally or as a result of a side effect from certain treatments or surgery.

2.4. All stages and types of the menopause are different and symptoms can vary from person to person, and range from mild to severe.

3. What are the symptoms of Menopause?

3.1. Women can go through a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms that can last several years. The symptoms can vary greatly (and this list is not exhaustive), but commonly include:

- psychological issues such as mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
- hot flushes – brief and sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck and chest
- sleep disturbance that can make people feel tired and irritable
- night sweats – hot flushes that happen during the night
- irregular periods and/or periods can become light or heavy
- muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs) including cystitis
- headaches
- weight gain
- palpitations – heartbeats that become more noticeable
- skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness)
- Reduced sex drive

3.2. Staff experiencing these symptoms, may have impacted work performance, increased absence periods and well-being issues. It may also affect the comfort of these employees in the workplace.

4. Guidance for Managers

4.1. The Authority appreciates the considerable benefits to the Authority of retaining the experience of an older female workforce, and recognises that it is vital that managers support staff through every stage of the menopause.

4.2. Much of the day to day responsibility for the ongoing welfare of their staff lies with managers, and there are lots of ways that they can be supportive in relation to Menopause. Very small changes on a practical level can make a huge difference to the quality of working life for staff experiencing the menopause.

4.3. [Risk Assessments:](#)

4.3.1. Managers should bear in mind that as part of their ongoing responsibilities outlined in the Authority Health and Safety Policy ([link](#)) managers should conduct a risk assessment to ensure symptoms are not made worse by workplace factors.

4.3.2. This Risk Assessment should include:

- temperature and ventilation of the workplace
- the material and the fit of the organisation's uniform, if there is one, and whether it might make staff going through the menopause feel too hot or worsen skin irritation
- whether there's somewhere suitable for staff to rest if needed, for example a quiet room
- whether toilet facilities are easily accessible
- whether cold drinking water is available
- whether managers and supervisors have been trained on health and safety issues relating to the menopause
- stress assessments to include depression, anxiety and stress

4.4. [Regular Meetings:](#)

4.4.1. Having early and regular conversations with staff to understand their needs can help make sure support and procedures are in place so they can continue to do their job effectively. Managers should ensure these meetings are held in private and in a location where they will not be disturbed.

4.4.2. Managers should respect the staff member's wishes for privacy and not disclose any information to other colleagues without their permission.

4.4.3. If the staff member wishes information about their menopause symptoms to be shared, the manager should let them decide i) what they want and do not want their colleagues to know and ii) who will be told and who will do the telling.

4.5. [Reasonable Adjustments in the workplace:](#)

4.5.1. It is important that managers remember that one woman's experience of the menopause transition can be entirely different from another's, so

managers are encouraged to use a tailored approach, where the focus is on providing individualised support as there is no uniform set of adjustments that any organisation can put in place.

4.5.2. Through discussions with your staff member, you can determine the adjustments that are appropriate (whether at the workplace or through flexibility of working pattern).

4.5.3. All agreed adjustments should be followed up in writing, and a copy kept in the staff member's personnel file. Managers should have follow-up conversations with staff to make sure the changes are working for both them and the Authority.

4.5.4. The frequency of follow-up conversations might differ from person to person, depending on how their symptoms and needs change. It's important to remember that the changes agreed at work might need to be reviewed as the person goes through the different stages of the menopause.

4.5.5. Staff should also be given a reasonable amount of time to adjust to any changes made.

4.5.6. Workplace adjustments to consider:

- reorganisation of seating arrangements so that the staff member can sit near a window which can be opened
- provision of a fan for individual use.
- providing a private area where they can rest to help manage their symptoms
- If concentration/memory/recall is proving challenging, consider whether there may be some jobs where temporary "adjustments" could be accommodated for any "time crucial/accuracy crucial/tight deadline" type of work.
- Consider with the staff member if any aids for concentration/memory may be of assistance i.e. lists, sticky notes, wipe board

- If mood is affected, managers should promote the EAP service as a support
- If symptoms are very severe and affecting work attendance or performance, then a referral to Occupational Health (for further medical support needs) may be considered
- Flexibility around additional medical appointments relating to the menopause may also be required

4.5.7. Changes to work patterns may include:

- being flexible where possible over start and finish times to help staff manage their symptoms
- allowing staff to take breaks, when needed
- rearranging formal meetings or presentations (if necessary)
- allowing staff to switch to different tasks on bad days
- allowing staff to work from home (when practical to do so)
- changing certain duties in their role (if appropriate)
- informal Flexible Working Requests through differing work pattern/hours

5. Managing sickness absence and job performance

5.1. Because the menopause is long term and affects everyone differently, managing absence from work should be handled sensitively.

5.2. Managers should keep talking with their staff and be prepared to:

- make changes to help staff continue to work
- take into consideration any performance issues which might be because of menopause symptoms

- 5.3. When a staff member is off sick because of the menopause, the manager should record these absences separately from other absences.
- 5.4. Sometimes it may not be appropriate to pursue formal procedures where an employee has long term issues around Menopause and may need additional medical referrals (seeking advice from the Authority's Human Resources Advisors as necessary as appropriate).
- 5.5. If a staff member believes a longer term change to their job would help them with their menopause symptoms they could flexible working request (link to flexible working code).

6. Additional external support available

- <https://menopausesupport.co.uk/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/treatment/>
- <https://www.managemymenopause.co.uk/>
- <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>