

## Appendix 3

# Menopause in the Workplace

February 2022

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## **1.0 Introduction**

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

The changing age of the UK's workforce means that between 75% and 80% of menopausal individuals are at work.

The Menopause is a natural cycle of life, although the transition is not always easy and these symptoms can adversely affect personal and working life quality.

Individuals can experience both physical and psychological effects of menopause. Some experience mild or no symptoms, whilst others can have severe symptoms that can be debilitating.

It may also negatively impact their lives and mental wellbeing, which can affect their experiences at work affecting sickness absence, productivity, and career development. Supporting women with symptoms may improve their experience at work.

Menopause should not be a taboo or 'hidden' subject. We want everyone to understand what menopause is and be able to talk about it openly. Research shows that most people are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager or ask for support or any adjustments they may need.

## **2.0 Purpose & Scope**

Haringey Council is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here and is intended to make a difference in enabling all employees, whether permanent, temporary or agency staff to achieve their full potential.

Any information you provide to us about your health will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. We recognise that such data is sensitive and will handle it in a confidential manner

This policy applies to all Council employees with the exception of teachers directly employed by the council and all staff appointed by schools operating under local management of schools, which have their own policy. The policy does not apply to agency workers or contractors working in the Council.

The policy is created to provide support for all employees, non-binary, transgender and intersex staff who are experiencing symptoms of menopause and help line managers and colleagues understand how they can support employees experiencing such symptoms.

This policy aims to:

- Create an environment where people feel confident enough to raise symptoms and ask for support and adjustments as detailed below.
- Increase managers and colleagues' awareness of menopause, and how it can impact employees, and encourage Managers to have open and supportive conversations.
- Promote a greater understanding of menopause, building a supportive and inclusive workplace.

### 3.0 Key Terms and Definitions

**Pre-Menopausal:** A time when some symptoms begin.

**Peri-Menopause:** is the phase leading up to menopause when the hormone balance starts to change and when individuals may begin to experience menopausal symptoms. For some this can start as early as their twenties or as late as their late forties.

**Menopause:** the point at which a person's oestrogen levels decline, and they stop having periods. Menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years so it's best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event.

**Post-Menopause:** is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a person has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

*Appendix 1* provides more information about the four stages of menopause and the treatment options available.

#### 3.1 Symptoms

It is important to note that not every person will notice every symptom or need help or support. However, 75% of individuals experience some symptoms and 25% of these symptoms could be classified as severe. Listed below are the physical and psychological symptoms of menopause, please note this list is not exhaustive:

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- difficulty sleeping
- mood changes, low moods, anxiety or panic attacks
- aches and pains including muscle and joint stiffness
- noticeable heartbeats
- feelings of depression
- struggling to remember things, concentrate and focus
- headaches including migraines
- fatigue
- skin irritation, dry eyes
- irregular or heavy periods, urinary problems

## **4.0 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **4.1 Line Managers**

- Familiarise themselves with this Policy and related information regarding menopause.
- Have open and frank discussions about menopause and how they can support their employees. Ensure they listen to the needs of each employee, ensuring confidentiality as appropriate. (see below *Appendix 2: Guideline for Management Conversations*).
- Ensure all team members are aware of the Menopause policy and where to find information and seek support.
- Complete a risk assessment (see link below) to ensure an employee's symptoms are not being exacerbated by their job.
- Agree on support and adjustments (see below *Appendix 3: Examples of Possible Support and Adjustments*).
- Record support and adjustments that have been agreed and actions to be implemented.
- Work together and regularly review with the employee to ensure that the right support is needed and make any necessary changes to the support.
- Discuss, if appropriate, a referral to Occupational Health or Employee Assistance Programme for further advice and support.
- For further advice and guidance contact Human Resources.

### **4.2 Employees / Colleagues**

- Can research any information about the menopause themselves and become familiar with this Policy.
- Should try to be open and honest with their line manager. Work together to consider options and adjustments to support their working environment.
- Keep their line manager informed and take part in review meetings to ensure support remains appropriate.
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues.
- Understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.
- If they feel unable to discuss with their line manager, they can discuss with HR, another manager, or another appropriate person who can offer support.

### **4.3 Human Resources**

- Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this Policy.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this Policy.
- Listen and work with employees and staff network groups to support and drive change about the menopause.

#### **4.4 Occupational Health (OH) & Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

- OH to carry out a consultation with a view to providing guidance and support to the line manager and HR in recommending any support and adjustments that may be required.
- EAP to provide additional signposting where required.

#### **4.5 Legislative Compliance**

The Council's policy complies with the following legal compliance;

- Equality Act 2010, requires the employer to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination; to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations.
- Section 2 of the Health and Safety At Work Act 1974, which requires employers to ensure "the health and safety and welfare at work" of all employees;
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, which place an overriding duty on employers to make workplaces suitable for the individual who work in them;
- The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999 require the employer to undertake a suitable and sufficient assessment of risks and take action to prevent risk exposure.

#### **4.6 Public Sector Equality Duty**

The Council understands its public sector equality duty which places its legal obligation on all public bodies to promote gender equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. To advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

### **5. References**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and other supportive mechanisms as listed below: -

Council's Data Protection Policy

[HARINGEY COUNCIL DATA PROTECTION POLICY](#)

Council's Equal Opportunities Policy

[Equal Opportunities Policy](#)

Sickness Absence Monitoring Policy and Management Guide

Support and Adjustments (see Appx 3, as well as Sickness Monitoring Policy)

[Sickness Absence Monitoring Policy](#)

[Sickness Absence Management Guidelines](#)

Reasonable Adjustments & Access to Work (New -January 2022)

[Reasonable Adjustments and Access to Work Guidance \(PDF, 232KB\)](#)

Dignity at Work Policy  
[Dignity at Work policy](#)  
[Dignity at Work Policy Practice Notes](#)

Flexible Working Scheme  
[Flexible Working Policy](#)  
[Flexible Working Practice Notes](#)

Risk Assessment  
[Risk Assessment Form](#)

Corporate Health and Safety and Wellbeing Policy  
[Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)

Desk Risk Assessment  
[Display Screen Equipment - Workstation Risk Assessment Form](#)

People at work (EAP) [People at work website \(external link\)](#)  
Further information and contact details can be found on the intranet and from your manager

Occupational Health [PHC Healthcare Ltd \(external link\)](#)  
Further information and contact details can be found on the intranet and from your manager

### **Sources of further advice**

NHS Guide to menopause: <https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/>  
British Menopause Society: <https://thebms.org.uk>  
Talking menopause: [www.talkingmenopause.co.uk](http://www.talkingmenopause.co.uk)  
Menopause support: <https://menopausesupport.co.uk>  
Menopause matters: <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>  
NICE Menopause: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23>  
Menopause Exchange: <https://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/>  
Henpecked: <https://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/>

**Staff and managers may also find the following external sources of information useful:**

CIPD menopause guidance for managers:  
<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being>

Women's Health Concern (the patient arm of the British Menopause Society)  
<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>

Support for premature menopause:  
<https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk/>

Menopause Café – 'gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss menopause'  
<http://www.menopausecafe.net/>

The Menopause Exchange

<https://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/>

The menopause matters

<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

## **Appendix 1: The Four Stages of Menopause**

### **What is Menopause?**

It's the ceasing of menstruation. There are four stages to the menopause.

**Stage one is called the Pre-Menopausal. This is time when some symptoms begin.**

- Cramps
- Anxiety
- Mood swings
- Irritability
- Nausea

**Stage two is called Peri-Menopause. This is a time when the symptoms of the actual transition begin.** The menstrual cycle starts to change.

- The symptoms tend to start a few years before the onset of menopause.
- This is when the levels of hormones produced from the ovaries fluctuates.

**There are as many as 30 different symptoms that can occur, here are just a few;**

- Hot flushes, causing blushing.
- Night sweats
- Mood swings
- Vaginal dryness and fluctuation of sexual desire
- Forgetfulness
- Trouble sleeping
- Tearful
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Muscle and joint stiffness
- Weight gain palpitations

**Stage three is called Menopause. This is the time when menstruation stops.**

- Typically, this starts at about 45 years of age to 55years of age but can occur much earlier, sometimes naturally, sometimes from medical intervention.
- It's a natural part of the aging process.
- It can be caused by surgical or medical treatments, such as:
  - Hysterectomy, fertility treatment, endometriosis or hormone therapy as part of someone's transition to a true gender, can bring about menopause symptoms.
- The change can affect a person's physical and psychological health and wellbeing.

**Stage four is called postmenopausal. This is the time when people are most at risk for certain conditions, here are a few;**

- Osteoporosis
- Coronary artery diseases
- Urinary tract disease

### **What treatment options are there?**

Not every person will need any assistance during the menopause. However, there are a variety of supports systems and treatments available.

- **Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT).** It replaces oestrogen and progesterone that your body no longer produces. There are a number of different types of HRT that can be prescribed and can be taken in different forms such as tablets, gel or patches.
- **Alternative medications.** Anti-depressants or other medication to ease the symptoms of depression and headaches, and hot sweats.
- **Natural treatments.** There are a number of natural health stores and products available.
- **Healthier lifestyle.** Eating a balanced diet, exercise, reducing or stopping smoking and drinking alcohol can all aid the changes the body is undergoing and can even assist with sleeplessness and stress and anxiety.
- **Self-help alternatives.** Using available assistance such as mindfulness and relaxation techniques, walking, swimming, cycling or any other activity. Workplace lunchtime walking groups and cycling groups can be very useful as staff can then meet and support other staff that may be going through the same issues.

### **Other self-help measures**

- Consulting with a GP on the management of the menopause and to ensure that any symptoms are not due to any other causes
- 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 – some women find chilled water helpful
- Exercising regularly – exercise can help to reduce hot flushes and improve sleep. It can also help boost mood and maintain strong bones
- Not smoking
- Be aware of caffeine and alcohol intake

## Appendix 2: Manager Guidance for Colleague Discussions

We recognise that everyone has different experiences of menopause and these guidelines set out some ideas about how to discuss menopause with staff members.

Flexibility should be exercised in approaching the topic of menopause; as a manager, being flexible in how adjustments are implemented and reviewed will make a positive difference to how your staff feel supported and valued. The important thing is to listen to what the individual is telling you and not to make assumptions about what they may, or may not, need.

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, talk about how they are feeling, or if a colleague wishes to speak about a family member and the impact this is having on them in the workplace, it is recommended that you: -

- Speak calmly and maintain good eye contact.
- Show empathy and understanding.
- Allow adequate time to have the conversation and ensure it is at an appropriate location, or if happening remotely, that it is a confidential setting.
- Avoid interruptions – whether you're meeting in person or remotely, make sure that phones are switched off or on silent and that you can't easily be disturbed.
- Try not to feel embarrassed or awkward by the subject matter
- Keep in mind that the employee might be embarrassed to discuss a personal matter with their manager, and they may be worrying about the implications for their career. Menopause may affect performance, but it's not a performance issue.
- Ask simple, open, non-judgmental questions that will help you to understand more about the situation so that you are better placed to discuss appropriate solutions.
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly
- Listen actively and carefully: encourage the employee to talk, giving them the time to explain the situation in their own words. Be patient – this may be difficult (even distressing) for the employee and you should be prepared for possible silences.
- Be sensitive towards the employee
- Suggest practical ways in which they can be supported
- Agree on actions and/or support and adjustments and how to implement them. If equipment is to be ordered, arrange this
- Keep a confidential record of the meeting, so that all parties agree on what has been discussed and the next steps.
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed and by whom
- Ensure that time is allowed for follow-up meetings and reviews

It is important to remember that not all employees want to discuss this health matter with their manager and similar symptoms may be caused by something else.

## **Appendix 3: Examples of Possible Support and Adjustments**

The Council's Flexible Working Policy should be considered, along with the requirements of the role, when thinking about what supportive mechanisms can be put in place for employees experiencing menopausal symptoms, along with practical interventions such as:

### **Hot Flushes**

- Ability to control temperature for their work area, such as a fan on their desk or moving near a window, or away from heating
- Have access to a restroom for breaks if their work involves extended periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush
- Easy access to drinking water.
- Adapt uniforms to improve comfort

### **Heavy/light Periods**

- Have permanent access to washroom facilities
- Ensure storage space is available for a change of clothing.
- Allow someone to temporarily work from home if they have very heavy bleeding
- Make it easy to request extra uniforms if needed
- Be prepared that an employee may need to go home unexpectedly

### **Difficulty Sleeping / Night Sweats**

- Agree that someone can work from home on an ad-hoc basis if they had a difficult night of symptoms.
- Recognise that someone may need to start work later if they've had a difficult night or take more short-term absence if symptoms persist.
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts temporarily.

### **Headaches**

- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water to stay hydrated and take medication
- Offer a quiet space to work
- Noise-reducing earphones for open-plan offices

### **Muscular aches, and bone and joint pain**

- Make any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules
- Allow to move around, or stay mobile if that helps

### **Panic Attacks**

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission

- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques or undertake mindfulness activities, or go for a walk

### **Low Mood**

- Time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission
- Identify a buddy for the colleague to talk to outside of work
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to
- Remember to discuss the services of EAP

### **Loss of Confidence**

- Ensure there are regular personal development discussions
- Have regular time with their manager to discuss any issues
- Remember to discuss the services of EAP

Alternatively, both employer and individual might discuss and agree other changes such as:

- Changing certain duties in their role
- Moving to a more suitable role in the circumstances
- Reviewing or reducing working hours for a short or sustained period.
- Switching to a job share

## Document Control

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