

Menopause at Work Policy and Guidance

Version 1
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Haringey Council is committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment where everyone can feel valued, respected and be able to thrive throughout every stage of their working life. The purpose of this policy is to ensure all employees, non-binary, transgender and intersex employees are effectively supported when experiencing significant hormonal changes.
- 1.2 It is important to acknowledge and support colleagues who may be affected by menopause, recognising its potential impact on wellbeing and working life.
- 1.3 Menopause is a natural stage of life, however for some, the transition and associated symptoms can have a significant impact. The Council acknowledges that Menopause can impact an employee's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and is committed to raising awareness, eliminating stigma and ensuring reasonable adjustments are available to support affected employees.

2 Principles

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Council employees except for teachers directly employed by the council and all employees 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.
- 2.2 The policy provides support for all employees, non-binary, transgender and intersex employees who are experiencing symptoms of menopause and help line managers and colleagues understand how they can support employees experiencing such symptoms.
- 2.3 This policy aims to:
 - Promote a greater understanding of menopause, building a supportive and inclusive workplace.
 - Create an environment where people feel confident enough to raise symptoms, ask for support and where appropriate, discuss reasonable adjustments.
 - Increase managers and colleagues' awareness of the support mechanisms available.

3 The Law on Menopause

- 3.1 **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974:**

- 3.1.1 Section two of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health and safety and welfare at work of all employees which places a duty on employers to make workplaces suitable for all employees.

3.2 The Equality Act 2010:

- 3.2.1 The Equality Act 2010 provides employees with protection against discrimination related to protected characteristics.
- 3.2.2 Whilst menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, if an employee is put at a disadvantage and treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms, this could be discrimination if related to a protected characteristic, e.g., age, sex, disability or gender reassignment.
- 3.2.3 This means that employers have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments and ensure that employees experiencing menopause are not subjected to discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

3.3 The Employment Rights Bill 2024:

- 3.3.1 The Employment Rights Bill 2024 has strengthened workplace protections by requiring large employers to publish Equality Action Plans showing the steps employers are taking in relation to gender equality matters, of which support for employees going through the menopause is specifically required.
- 3.3.2 This provision aims to promote a more inclusive and supportive work environment for employees experiencing menopause-related issues.

4 Definitions

4.1 Pre-menopause

- 4.1.1 The stage before any noticeable menopausal changes occur. Hormone levels are generally stable, and menstrual cycles are regular, though some early symptoms may begin to appear.

4.2 Peri-menopause

- 4.2.1 Peri-menopause is the transitional phase leading up to menopause, during which hormone levels begin to fluctuate. This stage can begin at different points in a person's life and is often when individuals first experience menopausal symptoms. The nature and timing of peri-menopause vary widely, and recognising this diversity is important in providing appropriate support.

4.3 Menopause

- 4.3.1 Defined as the point in time when a person has not had a menstrual period for twelve (12) consecutive months due to the decline in oestrogen levels. Menopause, and associated symptoms, is best understood as a transition rather than a single event, as symptoms often begin before and continue after this point.

4.4 **Post-menopause**

- 4.4.1 This is the stage following menopause, begins one year after the final menstrual period and continues for the rest of an individual's life. During this phase menopausal symptoms may ease or persist, there is an increased risk of certain health issues such as osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease.

4.5 Early, Surgical or Medically induced Menopause

- 4.5.1 Some people may experience menopause earlier than average or as a result of medical treatment (such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy) or surgical intervention (such as hysterectomy). These forms of menopause can happen at any age and may bring additional challenges, the Council recognises the need for sensitive and tailored support in these circumstances.

5 **Symptoms of Menopause**

- 5.1 Menopause affects everyone differently. While some may experience few or no symptoms, others can have symptoms that have a significant effect on them.

- 5.2 A list of common symptoms includes, but not limited to:

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Difficulty sleeping
- Mood changes, low moods, anxiety or panic attacks
- Muscle and joint stiffness
- Feelings of depression
- Struggling to remember things, concentrate or focus
- Headaches including migraines
- Skin irritation or dry eyes
- Irregular or heavy periods

Further information on menopause, symptoms and treatment options can be found at appendix B.

- 5.3 Symptoms last on average for seven (7) years and can be both physical and psychological. Some people may experience longer-term symptoms beyond seven (7) years.

6 Making Supportive Adjustments During the Menopause

- 6.1 The type and level of support will depend on the severity of the symptoms and impact on the employee. Making adjustments is one way in which employees can be supported.
- 6.2 Employees are encouraged to speak directly with their line manager regarding any menopause-related concerns, as they are best positioned to provide appropriate support and facilitate any necessary workplace adjustments. However, if an individual feels uncomfortable doing so, they may seek guidance from a senior manager within their area, the Employee Relations team, Council's staff networks or Trade Unions. It is important to note that, in order to implement suitable adjustments and support measures, line managers will still need to be informed.

7 Types of Adjustments

7.1 Reasonable adjustments (legal duty)

These are changes employers must make under the Equality Act 2010 for disabled employees or applicants. They must be effective and feasible to be considered 'reasonable'. If the symptoms of menopause have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an employee's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, it could therefore be considered a disability under The Equality Act, this would fall within our legal duty to make reasonable adjustments. Further details on reasonable adjustments can be found on the [Reasonable Adjustments Hub](#).

7.2 Workplace adjustments

These are supportive changes we can make for employees who are not disabled but who are facing barriers or challenges at work. For example, bereavement, caring responsibilities, or employees experiencing less severe symptoms of menopause.

8 Discussing Adjustments

- 8.1 The council has created a '[Reasonable Adjustments and Wellbeing Passport](#)'. This is a tool to support productive conversations between employees and managers about any barriers or challenges they may be experiencing and to record any agreed outcomes.
- 8.2 Managers and employees should arrange a time to talk through the Reasonable Adjustments and Wellbeing Passport. Manager guidance on having supportive conversations can be found in [here](#).

9 When is an adjustment ‘reasonable’?

9.1 Managers must carefully consider, in each case, if the adjustment:

- will remove or reduce the disadvantage
- is practical to make
- is affordable
- could harm the health and safety of others if not implemented

Further information can be found in [here](#).

9.2 If unsure, managers should use the ‘[Deciding if an adjustment is reasonable](#)’ form which can be found on the [Reasonable Adjustments Hub](#).

10 Support During the Menopause

10.1 Haringey Council is committed to providing comprehensive support for employees who are experiencing the menopause. This support includes but is not limited to the following:

10.1.1 Occupational Health

In the event an employee is on long term sickness, a referral must be made to Occupational Health. If menopause is known to be contributing to the absence, this will be included in the referral document so that further advice can be given.

10.1.2 Employee Assistance Programme

Employees affected by menopause can access counselling services through our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). These services are provided by independent and trained counsellors and are strictly confidential between the counsellor and the member of staff. They also offer free and confidential legal advice to employees who need guidance on their rights and options during menopause.

10.1.3 Trade Union Support

Trade Unions can provide advice to employees experiencing symptoms or provide support during formal proceedings related to menopause. Further information can be found [here](#).

10.1.4 Staff Networks

These are groups of colleagues who can become a source of peer support. These networks offer a safe space for employees to share their experiences and receive support from their peers. Further information can be found [here](#).

11 Further Resources

- 11.1 CIPD's Menopause guidance for managers
www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/guides/menopause-people-manager-guidance/
- 11.2 Women's Health Concern
www.womens-health-concern.org/
- 11.3 British Menopause Society
www.thebms.org.uk
- 11.4 Henpecked
www.henpicked.net
- 11.5 NHS Menopause Guidance
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

12 Further References

Sickness Absence Policy
Flexible Working Policy
Annual Leave and Time Off Policy

Appendix A - Manager and Employee Responsibilities

No.	Manager Responsibility	Employee Responsibility
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1	Familiarise themselves with this policy and relevant information.	Familiarise themselves with this policy and relevant information.
2	Contribute to creating a supportive work environment and culture by having open, confidential conversations with employee.	Contribute to creating a supportive work environment and culture by having open, confidential conversations with manager.
3	Review the Reasonable Adjustments Hub to equip themselves with the skills and knowledge to support employees with adjustments if necessary.	Review the Reasonable Adjustments Hub to equip themselves with the knowledge to request adjustments if necessary.
4	Carefully consider any requests for reasonable adjustments, taking a flexible approach, following policies and guidance documents and consult with Employee Relations team or EDI Lead if necessary.	Work together with managers, Employee Relations team, and EDI to carefully consider reasonable adjustments to support the working environment.
5	Record support and adjustments that have been agreed and actions to be implemented. Review the agreed support regularly and store confidentially.	Agree any recorded support and adjustments. Be willing to have these reviewed regularly to ensure they are still effective and reasonable.
6	Signpost employees to internal and external support services.	Be willing to engage with internal and external support services to support and manage symptoms.

Appendix B - Information on Menopause

The Four Stages of Menopause

There are **four key stages** in the menopause journey:

1. Pre-menopause

The stage before any noticeable menopausal changes occur. Hormone levels are generally stable and menstrual cycles are regular, though some early symptoms may begin to appear.

Pre-menopausal symptoms may include:

- Cramps
- Anxiety
- Mood swings
- Irritability
- Nausea
- Breast tenderness

2. Peri-menopause

Perimenopause is when you have symptoms of menopause, but your periods have not stopped. Ovarian hormone production becomes erratic, leading to a wide range of symptoms:

- Irregular periods
- Hot flushes and night sweats
- Mood swings and tearfulness
- Vaginal dryness and changes in libido
- Sleep disturbances
- Fatigue
- Memory issues (“brain fog”)
- Headaches
- Joint and muscle stiffness
- Weight gain
- Palpitations

3. Menopause

Menopause is officially diagnosed when a person has gone 12 months without a period. The average age in the UK is around 51, but can often occur earlier due to:

- Natural aging
- Medical treatments (e.g., chemotherapy, radiotherapy)
- Surgical interventions (e.g., hysterectomy)
- Gender-affirming hormone therapy

4. Post-menopause

This stage begins the day after menopause and continues for the rest of life. While some symptoms may ease, others may persist, or new health risks may emerge due to low hormone levels:

- Osteoporosis
- Cardiovascular disease

- Urinary tract infections
- Vaginal atrophy
- Incontinence

Treatment and Support Options

Not everyone will need treatment, but support is available for those who do. The 2024 NICE guidelines emphasise individualised care and informed decision-making:

Medical Treatments:

- **Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT):** a treatment that replaces oestrogen and/or progesterone that your body no longer produces. It's available as tablets, patches, gels, sprays, or vaginal preparations. Benefits include symptom relief and protection against osteoporosis.
- **Non-Hormonal Medications:** such as antidepressants or other medications may help with hot flushes, mood changes, or sleep issues.
- **Vaginal Oestrogen:** can come in different forms such as creams, tablets, rings, or gels to treat dryness and discomfort, and can be used long-term, even with systemic HRT.
- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):** has been shown to reduce hot flushes, night sweats, anxiety, and sleep issues. It is often recommended as an alternative or complement to HRT.

Lifestyle and Self-Help Strategies

- **Healthy Diet:** Balanced nutrition supports bone health and energy levels.
- **Regular Exercise:** Helps with mood, sleep, weight, and bone strength.
- **Hydration:** Drinking water, especially chilled, may ease hot flushes.
- **Natural Fibres:** Wearing breathable clothing can help manage temperature changes.
- **Mindfulness & Relaxation:** Techniques like yoga, meditation, and walking can reduce stress.
- **Peer Support:** Workplace walking or cycling groups can foster connection and shared understanding.
- **Avoid Smoking & Limit Alcohol/Caffeine:** These can worsen symptoms.

Appendix C - Manager Guidance on Supportive Conversations

Managers play a vital role in fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace culture. This includes being prepared to have meaningful conversations with employees about their needs related to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), disability and wellbeing.

Supportive conversations should be conducted in a safe, private and respectful environment. Managers are encouraged to:

- actively listen
- show empathy
- avoid assumptions
- allow the employee to lead the discussion based on their experience
- remain open to learning about individual experiences and needs
- take a flexible approach to adjustments
- carefully consider all requests for adjustments

The Reasonable Adjustment and Wellbeing Passport can be used as a helpful framework to guide these discussions and document agreed-upon support measures. Managers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the passport, guidance documents and resources ahead of any conversation to ensure they are equipped to provide meaningful support.

When supporting employees experiencing menopause, it is important for managers to consider the intersectionality of other protected characteristics such as disability, ethnicity and gender reassignment. These overlapping personal characteristics can compound the impact of menopausal symptoms and influence how employees experience and access support in the workplace. For example, cultural beliefs, health disparities, or gender identity may affect how someone communicates their needs or engages with available resources. Taking an inclusive and person-centred approach helps ensure that all staff feel seen, supported, and respected.

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