



# Menopause Policy

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The menopause is something that we are all affected by, either directly or indirectly. We want you to understand what the menopause is and how it might affect people. We want to remove any stigma associated with the menopause. This is the best way of making sure that everyone impacted by it feels supported and understood.
- 1.2. This Policy:
  - a Sets out what the menopause is.
  - b Explains how it might affect people, both directly and indirectly.
  - c Provides a clear explanation of the support networks in place across our Authority to help those who may need support on this issue.
  - d Sets out expected conduct and behaviour towards colleagues who are affected, directly or indirectly, by the menopause.
- 1.3. Please note that this Policy does not form part of your contract with us. We reserve the right to amend or remove this Policy.
- 1.4. This Policy applies to all employees, contractors, agency workers, casual workers and volunteers working for us.

## 2. What is the menopause?

- 2.1. Menopause occurs when a woman stops having menstrual periods. It is triggered by a reduction in the production of the hormone oestrogen. Menopause usually occurs between 45 and 55 years old. However, the timing and symptoms are different for everyone.
- 2.2. It's not only those who identify as women who will experience menopause. Some transgender men, non-binary people and intersex people or people with variations in sex characteristics may also experience menopause. In this Policy, reference to a specific gender should be taken to include all genders.
- 2.3. The menopause is split into perimenopause and postmenopause. Perimenopause marks the start of menopausal symptoms and may last several years. Postmenopause is the time after a woman experiences her last period.

### 3. What are the common symptoms of the menopause?

- 3.1. The menopause affects each person differently. Three out of four women will have symptoms and one out of four women will have severe symptoms. Symptoms are both physical and psychological in nature and can change over time.
- 3.2. Common symptoms include:
  - a Hot flushes
  - b Headaches
  - c Poor concentration
  - d Dry eyes
  - e Anxiety
  - f Low mood
  - g Lack of confidence
  - h Panic attacks
  - i Poor sleep
  - j Weight gain
  - k Fatigue
  - l Poor memory
  - m Joint and muscle pain

### 4. The role of managers

- 4.1. We are committed to supporting you through the menopause. This process starts with creating an environment where discussion about the menopause isn't taboo – it is out in the open and understood. We do not want our employees to feel embarrassed or awkward.
- 4.2. For managers, recognising the symptoms of the menopause is vital to treating an affected employee fairly. It can explain certain behaviours that you might otherwise put down to a bad attitude or poor performance.
- 4.3. We will give managers specific training in handling all menopause-related issues sensitively and with confidence. This is not just about legal compliance; good support at work leads to happier and better-performing employees who have valuable skills and experience. If you are a manager and think that someone who reports to you may be going through the menopause and it is affecting their performance, if you're not sure what to do, please contact the Business Services Manager. Women who don't get the right support can lose confidence in their ability to do their job (some even decide to leave) and may find that their mental health suffers.

### 5. Support through the menopause

5.1. We know that the menopause is a very personal matter, so we will not raise it with you even if we think you are displaying symptoms. We might ask how you are, in general terms. You can then decide whether to talk to us about the menopause or not. We encourage you to do so because we want to support you.

5.2. We have a four-step procedure that applies to discussions around the menopause and the action we'll take.

#### 5.3. Step 1

- a You could start by speaking with your GP or medical specialist about your menopause-related concerns.
- b You could also talk to a member of HR, or you could go straight to your Line Manager (see Step 2) if you feel comfortable doing that.

#### 5.4. Step 2

- a Meet with your Line Manager. All managers will be trained in understanding and helping employees through the menopause. You should expect to be able to have a private, friendly, honest and constructive conversation.
- b We will discuss with you ideas that could make things easier for you. Adjustments will depend on different factors, but things you could ask us to consider include:
  - Giving you a desk fan.
  - Making a room available for rest.
  - Allowing you more frequent breaks.
  - Extending deadlines.
  - Altering some aspects of your duties.
- c Your conversation with your Line Manager will be confidential. They will probably need to discuss issues and possible solutions with others, including HR/Occupational Health. Those people are subject to duties of confidentiality.
- d We will work hard to balance your needs with those of your colleagues; however, on occasions, we may not be able to find a solution that works for everyone.
- e We will keep notes of the things we discuss and will comply with our data protection responsibilities in respect of the information that passes between us, in line with our Data Protection Policy.
- f After your initial meeting with your Line Manager, and periodically after that, we may carry out health and safety risk assessments and/or seek advice from occupational health.

#### 5.5. Step 3

- a Taking account of any specialist advice, we will agree with you the adjustments that we will make.
- b We will meet with you to make sure that the adjustments are working for you and us. If any modifications are needed, or if anything new needs to be put in place, we will discuss that with you.

### 5.6. Step 4

- a We will meet with you on an ongoing basis to check that your symptoms are being managed effectively.
  - b You may find that your symptoms change over time. Please tell us if that happens, so that we can look at making further or alternative adjustments. Once your symptoms pass, we expect you to tell us, and we may discuss with you removing the adjustments in place.
- 5.7. We may need to consult with Occupational Health/your GP at various points to make sure everything is being done that should be done.
- 5.8. We are aware that you may be indirectly affected by the menopause. It may directly affect a loved one or family member, and this may cause concern or distress. We are committed to supporting you too. We urge you to talk to a member of HR so we can discuss how we might best support you.

## 6. Our expectations of our staff

- 6.1. We may not be able to tell you about any menopause-related issues that a particular colleague is experiencing. We need you to accept that and respect their privacy.
- 6.2. Employees must treat each other fairly. Any unfavourable treatment, harassment, teasing or inappropriate comments in relation to the menopause or a colleague's symptoms could constitute age, disability or sex discrimination. You are expected to treat each other with respect and compassion. We have a zero-tolerance policy on bullying and harassment (please see our Bullying & Harassment Policy for more information).
- 6.3. If you treat a colleague badly (including making unwanted comments or jokes) because of their menopause symptoms, you could be disciplined.

## 7. Useful links and contacts

- 7.1. The following internal policies contain additional information and guidance:
- a Disciplinary Procedure
  - b Agile Working Policy
  - c Equal Opportunities Policy
  - d Bullying & Harassment Policy
  - e Data Protection Policy

## 13 Appendix 2

7.2. There are lots of web-based resources where you can find support and information. Examples include:

- a <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause>
- b <https://www.themenopausecharity.org>

### 8. Administration of the Menopause Policy

8.1. The Business Services Manager is responsible for the administration of the Menopause Policy. Should you have any feedback, please contact Jane Nolan.