

MENOPAUSE GUIDANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

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Version Control

The first draft of the guidance should be labelled '**Draft version 0.1**' and dated. Further draft versions should be labelled '**Draft version 0.2, 0.3**' etc. and dated.

The final original version of the policy approved by EAC will be labelled '**Final Version 1.0**' and dated.

If amendments are necessary following EAC then subsequent versions of the policy may be labelled '**Draft Version 1.1, 1.2**' whilst being drafted and reviewed and the version re-submitted for approval should be labelled '**Final Version 2.0**' and dated.

If revisions are required subsequently and following implementation of policy, version should be labelled as follows:

Example

Final Version 2.1 – reason for change (e.g., legal update)

Version Control

Version	Author	Date	Changes
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Version Control

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Menopause in the Workplace

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guidance is to assist Slough Borough Council staff and managers with creating an open and menopause friendly workplace where managers and those experiencing menopause feel comfortable discussing any issues associated with this, and to ensure the necessary help is known about and offered to those affected.

This guidance applies to everyone in Slough Borough Council including employees, workers, contractors, volunteers, apprentices and agency workers.

What is the Menopause?

Menopause happens when the ovaries stop producing a hormone called oestrogen and no longer release eggs. When you have not had a period for 12 months, you are said to have reached menopause. However, for some time before this (it could be for a few months or for several years), periods become less regular as the oestrogen levels fall - this is called "perimenopause." You can also experience symptoms for some time after your last period, therefore the term, "menopausal" includes those in both perimenopause and post-menopause phase.

Menopause affects everyone differently but it usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55. However, it can sometimes happen earlier. In addition there are some medical circumstances that will create an immediate menopause, whatever the woman's age, such as a medically induced menopause to shrink fibroids or when the ovaries are damaged by specific interventions such as treatment for cancer, or when a woman's ovaries are removed as part of a hysterectomy. This is known as a medical or surgical menopause. Whenever it occurs, menopause can have a big impact on your life and work for a number of years.

Effects of Menopause

Physical symptoms of the menopause can include the following:

- hot flushes
- insomnia
- fatigue
- poor concentration
- headaches
- skin irritation
- urinary problems.

As a result of the above, or as an extension of the hormone imbalance, individuals going through the menopause can also experience psychological difficulties, including:

- depression
- anxiety
- panic attacks
- mood swings
- irritability
- problems with memory
- loss of confidence

It is also commonly acknowledged that Hormone Replacement Therapy, medication which is often prescribed for menopause, can have side effects which cause problems at work. These include nausea, headaches, and leg cramps.

Menopause and Transgender Employees

Currently there is not much data on the experiences of menopause amongst Trans people. However, anyone with a female reproductive system who identifies as a man, but hasn't undergone any medical interventions, is likely to go through menopause eventually. Most Trans people who start their transition at pre-menopausal age are unlikely to ever go through menopause in terms of the hormonal depletion effects. This is because gender affirming hormones are typically given for life. For Trans women taking oestrogen, there is no medical need to withdraw oestrogen treatment at any particular age to induce menopause. However, it is of course important to recognise that everyone is individual and may have different circumstances relating to hormone treatments. The council is committed to ensuring that Trans staff are supported in the workplace and are able to talk confidentially to their manager, a member of HR, occupational health or employee assistance counsellors, should they need help and advice.

2. COMMUNICATION

We aim to normalise conversations about menopause in the workplace and remove any stigma. Menopause should not be a taboo subject. We encourage employees to have discussions about the menopause and be supportive of each other.

It is important that, as an employee, you prioritise your personal health and wellbeing. If you are struggling with any aspect of your role because of symptoms associated with the menopause, you should tell your manager in the first instance, who will treat the matter with complete confidence. So that SBC can give you the best support possible we encourage you to be open and honest in these conversations.

Alternatively, your manager may talk to you if they notice a change in your behaviour or performance.

We understand that you may feel uncomfortable discussing personal information with your manager. If this is the case, we encourage you to talk to another senior member of staff, a member of HR or Occupational health and/or the Employee Assistance Service. You may also feel more comfortable speaking to a female member of staff – if this is the case and you have any concerns, please contact HR who will be able to assist. We are also exploring how we can offer more peer-led practical support, via our SBC Women's Network.

During any discussions, your manager will consider your individual situation and evaluate if any adjustments can be made. Your individual needs will be addressed sensitively, and confidentiality will be maintained.

Managers will also arrange follow up sessions to review the effectiveness of any adjustments put in place.

3. MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO YOUR ROLE

To help you in your daily duties, your manager will explore making adjustments relevant to your role or working environment with the aim of reducing the effect that the menopause is having on you. Risk assessments will be consulted to identify potential issues. We acknowledge that the menopause affects each individual in different ways so no adjustment will be made without fully discussing it with you first.

Examples of adjustments include:

- changing your working location so you are closer to toilet facilities, away from hot and cold spots around the office or to ensure greater access to natural light
- allowing changes to our normal rules on work wear where this is relevant
- implementing further temperature control, such as access to a fan
- assessing how work is allocated and whether you are affected at points of the day
- providing a quiet place to work or relax
- allowing additional rest breaks
- providing sanitary products in toilet and shower facilities
- changing start and finish times
- considering flexible working hours or allowing you to work from home where this is appropriate

Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect or still needed.

Menopause is a normal transition in life. It is not a disability, however, some people may find that their symptoms are so severe and prolonged that they meet the definition of disability under the Equality Act (2010): that is any physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. It is also possible that for some employees with existing conditions, symptoms of menopause may exacerbate these further. Under the Act, we must make reasonable adjustments to an employee's role or working conditions so that they are not placed at a disadvantage when performing their role. By having open and supportive conversations, we can ensure that we are able to uphold these obligations to staff. For more information on reasonable adjustments in the workplace, please look at the following guide and you can also speak to a member of the HR team for more specific advice:

<https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers>

You may also be entitled to make a flexible working request. Please read our flexible working policy if you would like more details.

If you are unwell due to menopausal symptoms

If you are unwell, you should tell your line manager and follow our usual sickness reporting procedure.

4. TRAINING AND BEHAVIOUR

Training

We intend to provide training to all our staff on menopause and how they can ask for help or support their colleagues.

We ensure that all levels of management are trained on the effects of menopause, how to hold discussions with employees who are experiencing menopause and adjustments that can be made to an employee's role to remove or lessen any effects the employee is experiencing.

Behaviour of others

There is an expectation on all employees to conduct themselves in a helpful and open-minded manner towards colleagues.

In line with our Dignity at Work Code of Conduct, Slough Borough Council will maintain a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment and will treat any and all complaints seriously. If you feel that you have been subject to inappropriate behaviour in any way by a colleague because of matters related to the menopause, please discuss with your line manager in the first instance. If you are unable to approach your manager, please contact a member of HR.

5. OTHER SUPPORT ([Appendix 3 & 4](#))

Our employees have access to a confidential counselling telephone service who can provide advice and guidance for employees who would like support during the menopause. More details can be found [[Appendix 3 & 4](#)].

Other external sources of help for those experiencing menopause can be found on [Appendix 4](#) Guidance for employees.

Appendix 1 – Checklist

Checklist for supporting an employee through menopause

USING THE GUIDANCE EFFECTIVELY	
Meet with the employee	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange meeting to discuss welfare and impact – confirm with employee who they would like meeting with HR / Line manager / Designated staff network member
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure manager dealing with this is trained to support the employee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Look at your environment, are you fully supporting your employee and making them feel as comfortable as possible?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepare your questions so you know the key areas you want to discuss with the employee.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Think about how the meeting will be recorded – do you want to take written notes as you go? Will you type them on a laptop? Will you do an audio/ recording? Make sure you get your employees consent for this.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep an open mind – the purpose of the interview is to get honest feedback so positive changes can be made. Try not to be defensive as this can take away the meeting's value.
Opening the interview	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thank the interviewee for agreeing to speak to you.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm the purpose of the meeting – to discuss any concerns they have and establish an action plan for supporting them through the menopause
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm how the information gathered will be stored and used.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm what you hope to achieve from this meeting and when the employee can expect an outcome
<input type="checkbox"/>	Explain that you will be taking notes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reassure the employee that you are meeting with them to find out how the organisation can best support them, so to be open and honest with their answers.

The discussion	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide them with a copy of the menopause guidance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask probing questions to get as much detail as possible – it's better to have fewer full answers than multiple answers that don't have any real substance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give the employee time to ask questions or raise concerns
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make sure you are actively listening – engagement is key!
<input type="checkbox"/>	Highlight support available and how to access it (including EAP, support groups, 3rd party support services)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Conduct a risk assessment to better understand the obstacles they face
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss required adjustments and / or medical advice
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss if there is any need for medical or occupational health report to better support them
Closing the interview	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask an open question – does the employee have anything further to add or anything else they want to raise?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Explain the next steps of the process – what the next steps are and when you will get back to them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Close the meeting and thank the individual for their time.
Follow-up actions	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Write out to confirm what was discussed in the meeting
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send any consent forms for an occupational health report /referral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Meet to discuss outcome of any medical reports before finalising adjustments
<input type="checkbox"/>	Update the risk assessment regularly
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange regular catch ups or follow up meetings

Appendix 2 – Adjustments for Menopause Action Plan

Employee Name:	
RES ID:	
Manager Name:	
Job Role:	
Directorate /Department:	
Date of Plan:	

Reasonable adjustment action plan				
Identify workplace barriers caused by the menopause (include any barriers caused by fluctuations in health)				
Identify any advice or guidance provided by bodies e.g., GP, Occupational Health, Access to Work, etc.				
Identify any adjustments agreed between the employee and their manager	Adjustment type agreed:	Date agreed:	Name of approving manager:	Date implemented:

Identify any adjustments agreed between the employee and their manager	Adjustment type agreed:	Date agreed:	Name of approving manager:	Date implemented:
Additional employer comments				
Additional employee comments				
Date of review meeting:				
Signed: Date:	(Manager)			
Signed: Date:	(Employee)			

Appendix 3 – Additional Resources

Infographic from Primary Care Women’s Health Forum, based on NICE guidelines:

[HRT-Myths-Uncovered \(2\).pdf](#)



RockMyMenopause factsheet dealing with mental health and the menopause, HRT - facts vs myths:

[Fact sheet about the menopause.pdf](#)



LINKS

[Managemymenopause.co.uk](#) : A new website developed by the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital (NNUH) and supported by the British Menopause Society provides tailored, unbiased and accurate menopausal advice for women, provided by experts.

[Menopausematters.co.uk](#) : An award winning, independent website providing up-to-date, accurate information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options.

The Primary Care Women's Health Forum has a patient-facing group called Rock My Menopause, lots of resources on there for women going through perimenopause and menopause:

<https://rockmymenopause.com/resources/>

See the British Menopause Society factsheet (below) which provides a ‘how-to’ guide for employers and relevant staff within organisations that are considering writing their own guidance on the menopause:

[BMS -Menopause-and-the-workplace-APR2020.pdf](#)



Menopause awareness posters, are freely available for download in a variety of languages at:

www.pausitivity.co.uk

Managers should signpost employees to sources of advice and support and encourage them to see their GP, who can support them to make informed decisions about their treatment.

- [Employee Assistance Programme](#) - this offers free advice and support, and you can access it for free at any time.
- **How the Employee Assistance Programme can help you**

The Employee Assistance Helpline offers you and your family access to information, advice and counselling on a variety of personal and workplace issues. The service is paid for by Slough Borough Council and is provided by Wellbeing Solutions Ltd.

We all have problems from time to time. Talking to a sympathetic counsellor or expert advisor can help us make a tough decision, try a different approach or sometimes just learn how to cope with a situation we cannot change.

The Employee Assistance team of counsellors and advisors can help with a wide range of problems including:

Work-related issues	Personal & family issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Coping with workplace change · Balancing work and home life · Managing work-related pressures · Bullying & workplace relationships · Support after traumatic incidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Debt and money worries · Relationships, separation & divorce · Legal advice on personal matters · Depression and anxiety · Bereavement and loss

It is a confidential service. Only in the most extreme circumstances would your confidentiality and anonymity ever be broken, for example, if a counsellor considered that you may be a significant danger to yourself or others.

How to contact the Employee Assistance Service

You and any family member (aged over 16 who lives with you at your address) can contact the helpline, 24-hours a day. The friendly team will ask where you live, the name of your employer and sometimes what department you work in. You'll need to give us a telephone number (preferably your mobile) and a convenient time for one of the counsellors, lawyers or advisors to call you back.

Telephone

For confidential counselling support, information and advice, call free on **0800 328 1437**

From a UK mobile: **0800 328 1437**

From outside UK: **+44 (0) 1482 661 814**

Minicom: **01482 661 911**

Online

- Visit [Employee Assistance](#) Online
- Access code: **sloughbc**

- [Employee Wellbeing](#) page - details of lots more useful resources to support you with resilience and wellbeing. Please see the council page on Well-being and below:

East Berkshire CCG '[Coping guides](#)' for different age groups - details of self-help apps and websites together with a range of resources, including helplines, to support mental health.

[Access to work](#) - can provide advice and an assessment of workplace needs for individuals with disabilities or long-term health conditions, who are already in work or about to start.

[Business in the Community](#) - is a network that provides toolkits to help employers support the mental health and wellbeing of employees.

[Mind](#) - is a leading mental health charity. It provides information and support on how to improve mental health.

[NHS choices](#) - has a website that offers information and practical advice for anyone experiencing mental ill health.

[Remploy](#) - offers a free and confidential Workplace Mental Health Support Service for anyone absent from work or finding work difficult because of a mental health condition. It aims to help people remain in, or return to, their role.

[Rethink Mental Illness](#) - is a voluntary sector provider of mental health services offering support groups, advice and information on mental health and problems?

ACAS - [Promoting positive mental health in the workplace](#)

ACAS - [Managing staff experiencing mental ill health](#)

[Thrive](#) - online resource for health, wellbeing and happiness.

Communicating Health Issues

The health impacts of the menopause on a woman's physiological and physical wellbeing can affect how they work, their relationships with colleagues and productivity. More specifically, menopausal symptoms such as night sweats, insomnia, lack of concentration, forgetfulness, difficulties in making decisions and decreased confidence, can make work more challenging for women experiencing these symptoms, so excellent line-management and a supportive and understanding culture is key.

However, managers need to be mindful that the menopause is still seen as a private issue. For some, discussing the menopause is a difficult subject to be open about.

Some of the findings from a national survey in 2017 are depicted in the infographic below: a survey was conducted online, interviewing 1,000 adults in the UK (698 women and 302 men) who were aged 45+ and either peri-menopausal, menopausal, or post-menopausal or their partners, who were also nationally representative of the online population in terms of regional spread.

A woman's relationship with the menopause is complicated...

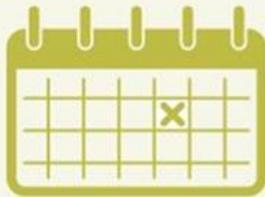


Three quarters of women* in the United Kingdom say that the menopause has caused them to change their life and more than half say it has had a negative impact on their lives.**

Work can be a struggle

45%

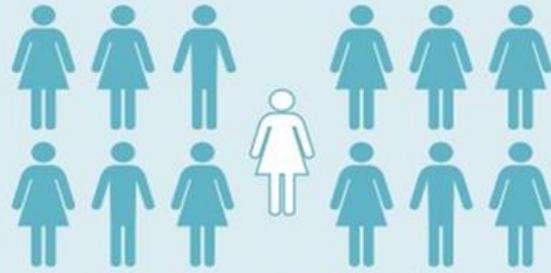
of women say they feel their menopause symptoms have had a negative impact on their work



47%

who have needed to take a day off work due to menopause symptoms say they wouldn't tell their employer the real reason

Social lives can take a back seat



Over **33%** of women feel less outgoing in social situations

32% of women feel they are no longer good company

23% of women feel more isolated

DRAFT

Appendix 4 – Advice for Employees

Managing your Menopause at Work

Treating the symptoms of Menopause

Green climacteric scale

The Greene Climacteric Scale (GCS) is a tool GPs use to help identify where you are on your menopause journey - while there are limitations, it's a verified measurement tool used by practitioners worldwide, to understand the symptoms you are experiencing at a given point in time.

NICE guidelines: Menopause Health Advice for Employees

The NICE Guideline: Diagnosis and Management of the Menopause was published on 12th November 2015 (updated Dec 2019) and plays an important role in raising awareness of all menopausal symptoms and in encouraging women to consider lifestyle changes to improve later health.

The “Information for Patients” version (published Nov 2015) is available at:

[nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/informationforpublic](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/informationforpublic)

Communicating the benefits & risks of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

Media reports about HRT have not always been accurate, so providing healthcare professionals and women with a robust source of information is vital.¹ Before publication of the NICE guideline there was no consensus about the long-term benefits and risks of HRT. Although the Women's Health Initiative found that HRT prevented osteoporotic fractures and colon cancer, it initially reported that HRT increased the risk of having a cardiovascular event as well as the incidence of breast cancer. However, the association between HRT and cardiovascular disease has since been disputed and the results show that the risk varies in accordance with individual factors.

There is a need to improve knowledge about the long-term benefits and risks of HRT. No other treatment has been shown to be as effective as HRT for menopausal symptoms, though the balance of risks and benefits varies among women and should be considered on an individual basis in discussion with your GP or Health Professional.

¹ Menopause: diagnosis and management – NICE guideline (NG23) Published: 12 November 2015
Last updated: 05 December 2019