



Menopause Policy

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Due for next Review: May 2027

1. Introduction

1.1 Menopause is the time in a menstruator's life when menstruation periods permanently stop. The purpose of this policy is to help create an open workplace where managers and employees can discuss any issues associated with the menopause, and to make sure the necessary support is known and offered to employees when they need it.

1.2 ACAS advise that:

'Employers should make sure they have steps, procedures and support in place to help staff affected by the menopause.'

Having regular conversations with staff and listening to their concerns might help resolve issues early on before any potential legal action is taken.

Employers should make sure they know how the menopause relates to the law, including the:

- *Equality Act 2010, which protects workers against discrimination.*
- *Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, which says an employer must, where reasonably practical, ensure everyone's health, safety and welfare at work.*

The menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. But if an employee or worker is put at a disadvantage and treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms, this could be discrimination if related to a protected characteristic, for example:

- *Age;*
- *Disability;*
- *Gender reassignment;*
- *Sex.*

2. Effects of Menopause

2.1 Physical symptoms of the menopause can include but are not limited to:

- Hot flushes;
- Insomnia;
- Fatigue;
- Poor concentration;
- Headaches;
- Skin irritation;
- Bone and joint problems.

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

- Depression;
- Anxiety;
- Panic attacks;
- Mood swings;
- Irritability;
- Problems with memory;
- Loss of confidence.

2.3 It is also commonly acknowledged that Hormone Replacement Therapy, medication which is often prescribed for menopause, can have side effects which can cause problems at work. These can include but are not limited to nausea, headaches and leg cramps.

3. Communication

3.1 It is important that employees prioritise personal health and wellbeing. If employees are struggling with any aspect of their role because of symptoms associated with the menopause, they should report any concerns they may have to their manager, who will treat the matter with complete confidence. To make sure the Council can give employees the best support possible, the Council encourage employees to be open and honest in these conversations.

3.2 Alternatively, the employee's manager may start a discussion with them if they notice a change in their behaviour or performance.

3.3 The Council understand that employees may feel uncomfortable talking about personal information with their manager. If this is the case, employees are encouraged to discuss their situation with any other senior member of staff.

3.4 During any discussions, their manager will consider the individuals situation and evaluate if adjustments can be made. The individual needs of employees will be addressed sensitively, and everything will remain confidential.

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

4. Making adjustments to roles

4.1 To assist employees in their daily duties, a manager will explore making reasonable adjustments to the employee's role or working environment with the aim of reducing the effect that the menopause is having on them. Risk assessments will be consulted to identify potential issues, but the Council acknowledge that menopause affects individuals in different ways so no adjustment will be made without fully discussing it with the employee first.

4.1.1 Example of adjustments might include:

- Changing the working location so employees 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 normal rules on work wear.
- Implementing further temperature control, such as access to a fan or working in cooler parts of the building.
- Assessing how work is allocated and whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day.
- Allowing additional rest breaks.
- Considering flexible working hours or allowing employees to work from home.

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

5. Training

5.1 The Council will offer training to all levels of management 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 in order to remove or lessen any effects the employee is experiencing.

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

5.3 The Council maintain a zero-tolerance approach to bullying or harassment, due to menopausal related matter or any other circumstance, and will treat all complaints seriously. If an employee feels that they, or any other employee, has been mistreated in any way by a colleague because of matters related to the menopause, please make these concerns known to the Executive Officer.