
NON-EXEMPT

EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL/HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT HR COMMITTEE

23rd March 2021

Menopause Policy

FOR DECISION

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Lulu Bowerman Cabinet Lead and Cllr Nick Drew Portfolio Holder

Key Decision: No

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This paper is submitted to Joint HR Committee for agreement to introduce a policy which effectively supports employees experiencing menopausal symptoms in the workplace.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Joint HR Committee are asked to approve:
- a) The menopause policy for each Council which is set out at Appendix A.
 - b) The management guidance as set out at Appendix B.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1. The Councils do not currently have a policy in place which specifically sets out our approach in supporting employees who are experiencing menopausal symptoms. Previous known instances of poor performance caused by menopausal symptoms have been dealt with through the Managing Sickness Absence and Capability procedures. This has created difficulties in the way the cases have been managed, due to a lack of clarity in the approach taken when supporting employees who are experiencing problems of this nature.

¹ <https://www.forthwithlife.co.uk/blog/menopause-in-the-workplace/#:~:text=Experiencing%20Menopause%20Symptoms%20At%20Work&text=73%25%20of%20women%20reported%20having,had%20trouble%20with%20their%20memory.>

² <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/voices/comment/stigma-around-menopause>

³ <https://menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk/articles/menopause-and-the-health-and-safety-issue/>

- 3.2. As menopausal symptoms can have a major effect on an employee's life, it is essential that we have a policy in place which specifically sets out our approach to managing these types of issues in the workplace. Menopausal symptoms can result in ill-health and underperformance. There are varying statistics on the percentage of UK employees who have experienced these issues, but a recent survey of the impact of menopause on working life indicated that 63% of menopausal women had been negatively impacted by their symptoms and more than 58% of women continued to experience negative impacts of the menopause such as poor concentration, forgetfulness (increasing error rates) and loss of interest in their role¹.
- 3.3 Whilst menopausal symptoms mainly affect women, men can also experience these. The male menopause known as the 'andropause' can also cause a range of psychological and physical symptoms. These can impact on the working life for men too. Symptoms can include poor memory, irritability, poor concentration and fatigue. Whilst the male menopause is not as common as the female menopause, the approach in supporting employees who are affected does not vary and the principles of the policy apply to all.
- 3.4 The profile of the councils, (comprising 226 employees over the age of 40) would suggest that there may be up to 33% of employees at any one point in time who could be experiencing menopausal symptoms. Whilst the HR team are not aware of any cases, it is essential that we have a policy in place which effectively deals with these types of issues. In the last year there have been no known employee relations cases in the councils where menopausal symptoms have been cited. This could possibly be due to the stigma surrounding sharing issues of this kind².

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- 3.5 The development of this policy supports our duty of care under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its staff, where reasonably practicable. This includes taking all reasonable steps to support employees with problems that are known within the workplace. The policy applies to all staff, many of whom will have characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act 2010, in which no employee should suffer detriment as a result – thus making a supportive policy framework important in avoiding risks of tribunal claims³.

4 Additional Budgetary Implications

- 4.1 None

5 Background and relationship to Corporate Strategy and/or Business Plans

- 5.1 This policy has been developed to promote the wellbeing of all employees and the councils are committed to providing confidential support and help where necessary. The policy supports each Council's pledge to make high quality information and interventions concerning health and wellbeing, offering both internal and external facilities and resources available to all employees.

6 Resource Implications

- 6.1 Financial Implications

None identified.

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S151 Officer comments

Date: 3.2.2021

Deputy S151 has reviewed the paper. No further comments to add.

6.2 Human Resources Implications

There are no direct HR implications. This policy will be updated in the suite of HR policies and will ensure that staff have an appropriate route to raise any issues and HR/Management/Safety and EP will have the appropriate tools to deal with the matter fairly and swiftly.

6.3 Information Governance Implications

None identified.

Other resource implications

There will be a requirement for communications support to implement the policy across the Councils. This has been factored into current resource levels.

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² <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/voices/comment/stigma-around-menopause>

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7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. Under the Equality Act 2010, no employee should suffer detriment as a result of any protected characteristic(s). Although menopause itself isn't a protected characteristic, if a worker is treated unfairly because of the menopause, this may amount to discrimination which may link to one the protected characteristics under the Equality Act, and therefore give protection.

Monitoring Officer comments

Date: 29.1.2021

Legal have reviewed the paper and policy and provided information at 7.1

8 Risks

As detailed above, there are risks of challenges under the above legislative Acts in addition to the Health, Safety and Welfare of employees.

9 Consultation

- 9.1 Unison will be consulted on the policy in line with the usual consultation processes.

10 Communication

- 10.1 The policy will be communicated to all members of staff via internal channels.

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11 Appendices

Appendix A – Menopause Policy

Appendix B – Management Guidance

12 Background papers

12.1 None

Agreed and signed off by:

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Drew 12.03.2021 Cllr. Bowerman 15.03.2021

Director: Lydia Morrison - 17.12.2020

Monitoring Officer: Daniel Toohey – 29.01.2021

Section 151 Officer: Matthew Tiller – 11.03.2021

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¹ <https://www.forthwithlife.co.uk/blog/menopause-in-the-workplace/#:~:text=Experiencing%20Menopause%20Symptoms%20At%20Work&text=73%25%20of%20women%20reported%20having,had%20trouble%20with%20their%20memory.>

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Appendix A – Menopause Policy

Policy Date	March 2021
Review Date <i>when under review, this policy should continue to be used</i>	March 2024
Author	HR Dept
Version This policy may be amended prior to the review date to comply with any new, relevant legislation or organisational change that affects how this policy is used	1
Related Policies	Managing Sickness Absence Flexible Working Health & Safety

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out the approach to supporting employees experiencing menopausal symptoms.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees.

3. Principles

The council is committed to:

- 3.1 Ensuring that no employee suffers a detriment because of menopausal symptoms.
- 3.2 Recognising the menopause as a health matter and supporting employees in the same way as any other health condition.
- 3.3 Supporting and educating line managers in respect of the menopause, symptoms and their duty of care of employees.
- 3.4 Encouraging flexible working arrangements to meet the needs of those experiencing menopausal symptoms.
- 3.5 Ensuring that individuals feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms and asking for support and adjustments in order to continue with their role within the organisation.
- 3.6 Ensuring that operating conditions in the workplace do not exacerbate menopausal symptoms and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place.
- 3.7 Ensuring that in cases where underperformance is related to menopausal symptoms the capability process may be used after all other routes of support have been exhausted.
- 3.8 Ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment.

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4. Definitions

Menopause

Is defined as a biological stage in a female's life and occurs when they stop menstruating and reach the end of their natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when someone has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for those reaching menopause naturally). The average age for this is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

Perimenopause

Is the time leading up to menopause when an individual may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be some years before menopause.

Postmenopause

Is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when an individual has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

Andropause

This is sometimes known as a 'male menopause' in which some people develop depression, loss of sex drive, erectile dysfunction, and other physical and emotional symptoms when they reach their late 40's to early 50's. Other common symptoms are mood swings and irritability, loss of muscle mass and reduced ability to exercise, fat redistribution (gynaecomastia), a general lack of enthusiasm or energy, difficulty sleeping (insomnia) or increased tiredness, poor concentration and short-term memory.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 All employees, regardless of whether they are experiencing menopausal symptoms or not, should:

- Take personal responsibility to look after their personal health and wellbeing
- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy
- Contribute to a respectful and productive working environment
- Be willing to help and support their colleagues.

5.2 The menopause affects employees in different ways and can be a challenging and unsettling time. Employees experiencing menopausal symptoms are encouraged to:

- Inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage. Early notification will help line managers to discuss an appropriate way

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of supporting an employee's individual needs. Employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague or another manager in the first instance.

- Be open and honest in conversations with managers and Occupational Health.

5.3 All line managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause policy and manager's guidance (section 7)
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions with staff, treating any discussions sensitively and professionally and appreciating the personal nature of these discussions
- Treat menopause symptoms as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health.
- Ensure that strict confidentiality and discretion are maintained
- Bear in mind that staff may prefer to speak to a colleague of the same gender, and be willing to facilitate this if appropriate
- Review and agree with the individual how they can best be supported, and any adjustments they may require
- Record what support and adjustments have been agreed and any actions to be implemented
- Ensure ongoing dialogue with the employee.

If adjustments are unsuccessful or if symptoms are proving more problematic the line manager may discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice.

6. Available support

6.1 A variety of initiatives such as the council's Employee Assistance Programme Health Assured and mental health first aiders are on offer, information of which is available on the council's intranet.

6.2 External sources of help and support for employees include:

- Menopause matters, which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- NHS website
- Male menopause, which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options.
- Healthtalk.org – <http://www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/late-life/menopause/topics>

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- Women's Health Concerns – <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/focus-series/menopause/>
- The Menopause Exchange – <http://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/>
- NICE Menopause: diagnosis and management – <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23>

¹ <https://www.forthwithlife.co.uk/blog/menopause-in-the-workplace/#:~:text=Experiencing%20Menopause%20Symptoms%20At%20Work&text=73%25%20of%20women%20reported%20having,had%20trouble%20with%20their%20memory.>

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Appendix B - Managers' Guidance

- 1.1 The council recognises that the menopause is a very individual experience, that people can be affected in different ways and to different degrees and different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed. It is therefore not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines.
- 1.2 The menopause can cause a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms that can last for several years.
- 1.3 The majority of menopausal female's experience symptoms, but everyone is different. Symptoms can fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees. Some of the most typical symptoms of the menopause include:
 - psychological issues such as mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
 - hot flushes (brief and sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck, chest)
 - sleep disturbance that can make people feel tired and irritable
 - night sweats (hot flushes that happen during the night)
 - irregular periods and/or periods can become light or heavy
 - muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
 - recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs) including cystitis
 - headaches
 - palpitations (heartbeats that become more noticeable)
 - skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness)
- 1.4 Menopause symptoms can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work. The council has a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees and therefore commits to ensuring that adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing menopausal symptoms.
- 1.5 The impacts of menopausal symptoms on performance may include, but not limited to; reduced speed of work, reduced quality of work, loss of concentration or focus, reduced decision-making ability, higher absenteeism.
- 1.6 If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms or just to talk about how they are feeling, please ensure that you:
 - Allow adequate time to have the conversation
 - Find an appropriate room to allow confidentiality
 - Avoid interruptions – switch off phones, ensure colleagues can't walk in and interrupt
 - Encourage them to speak openly and honestly and show empathy and understanding.

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- Ask simple, open, non-judgemental questions and avoid judgemental or patronising responses
- Listen actively and carefully
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms support below)
- Agree actions, and how to implement them, keep a record and ensure they are treated as confidential and stored securely
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed and by whom
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting

1.7 Managers support function via Health Assured

Managers can use the managers support function from Health Assured, the Councils Employee Assistance Provider if they would like to talk through how to approach a conversation with a member of staff.

1.8 Symptoms Support

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including, but not exhaustively or exclusively; support for those experiencing these symptoms should be considered as detailed below:

Sleep disruption and/or night sweats

- Recognise someone may take more short-term absence if they've had a difficult night.
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts on a temporary basis
- Offer a flexible working arrangement, for example a later start and finish time.
- Allow someone to work from home on an ad hoc basis if they've had a rough night.

Hot flushes and/or daytime sweats

- Look at ways to cool the working environment, for example provide a fan, move a desk close to a window or adjust the air conditioning
- Provide easy access to cold drinking water and washrooms.

Heavy or irregular periods

- Allow someone to move around or stay mobile, if that helps.
- Provide easy access to washroom and toilet facilities.
- Allow for more frequent breaks to go to the toilet.
- Allow someone to temporarily work from home if they have very heavy bleeding.

Headaches and fatigue

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- Consider a temporary adjustment to someone's work duties.
- Provide a quiet area to work.
- Provide access to a rest room.
- Offer easy access to drinking water.
- Allow regular breaks and opportunities to take medication.

Muscular aches, and bone and joint pain

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

Psychological issues (for example loss of confidence, poor concentration, anxiety, etc)

- Encourage employees to discuss concerns at one-to-one meetings with you and/or occupational health.
- Discuss possible adjustments to tasks and duties that are proving a challenge.
- Offer closer supervision or a temporary redeployment into another role if operationally possible.
- Address work-related stress by carrying out a stress risk assessment
- Signpost employee to the Councils Employee Assistance Programme. Health Assured 0800 0305182 / <https://healthassured.eap.co.uk/>
- Identify a supportive colleague to talk to away from the office or work area, such as a well-being champion.
- Allow time out from others when needed, to have some quiet time or undertake relaxation or mindfulness activities.
- Provide access to a quiet space to work or the opportunity to work from home.
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.
- Discuss whether it would be helpful for the employee to visit their GP, if they haven't already. Or Occupational Health.
- Consistent with other policies, e.g. Fair treatment, supportive, as with other underlying health conditions.

- 1.9 Whilst the 'male menopause' (andropause) is not as common as the female menopause, the sympathetic fact-based approach in supporting employees who are affected does not vary and the principles of this policy apply to all.

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