

# Menopause at Work Policy

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### Accessibility

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## Introduction

The Council is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees and ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

The menopause is a natural process and for many can be positively managed through lifestyle adjustments. However, the Council recognises that for some the menopause is not always an easy transition. Some employees may need additional considerations to support and improve their experience at work.

The menopause can also directly and indirectly affect others both within the workplace and at home. This can include colleagues, family members, same sex partnerships, those going through gender reassignment and those with disabilities.

With this in mind, this policy is designed to raise awareness of menopause transition and provide information and support for those who are directly or indirectly affected. It therefore contains information relevant to employees, their managers and other colleagues.

This policy is part of the Council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, to create a workplace that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination and harassment. This policy seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance and enhance the reputation of Dacorum Borough Council as an employer of choice.

The Council recognises that many of the changes to workplace culture and adjustments offered here may not only be of benefit to workers experiencing the menopause, but to all staff.

This Policy is inclusive of all gender identities including Trans and non-binary employees.

## Legislative Drivers

[The Health and Safety at work act \(1974\)](#) requires employers to ensure the health safety and welfare of all workers. Employers are to carry out risk assessments under the Management Regulations which should include any specific risks to menopausal employees if they are employed.

Risk assessments should consider the specific needs of menopausal employees and ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. Issues that need looking at include temperature, ventilation, toilet facilities and access to cold water. It is important that workplace stress is also considered.

While menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the [Equality Act 2010](#), in accordance with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), "if an employee is disadvantaged and treated less favourably in any way because of their menopause symptoms this could be viewed as discrimination if related to a protected characteristic, for example, age, disability, gender reassignment or sex".

## Aims

The aim of this policy is to:

- Support employees to remain at work.
- Raise awareness of menopause, the related issues and how this can affect employees.
- Break the stigma and taboo surrounding the menopause at work and to promote an environment in which employees feel confident in discussing menopausal issues and ask for support and adjustments, if required.
- Provide guidance and direction on how to support employees who raise menopausal issues not only for the individuals experiencing the menopause but also those who may be affected indirectly which may include managers, colleagues, partners and family members.
- Inform managers of the potential symptoms of menopause, how this can affect employees and what can be done to support individuals including workplace/reasonable adjustments.

## Scope

This Policy applies to all employees and workers of Dacorum Borough Council. It includes permanent and fixed-term employees

## Definitions

*Menopause* – The menopause is a natural part of ageing and refers to the time in life when periods stop and the natural reproductive cycle ends. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 with the average age being 51.

*Premature ovarian insufficiency (premature menopause)* – Approximately 1 in 100 affected people will experience menopause before 40 years of age (naturally or as an effect of a medical condition or treatment).

*Peri-menopause* – the time leading up to menopause when menopausal symptoms can be experienced. Symptoms can start a few months or even years before periods stop.

*Post-menopause* – The time after the last period.

*Andropause* - The Male Menopause. *(Note the Andropause is not covered in this guidance).*  
Symptoms of Menopause

According to the National Institute for Health Care and Excellence (NICE) the most reported symptoms of menopause (hot flushes and night sweats) can occur in approximately 75% of cases with 25% being severely affected.

Symptoms are associated to a decrease in the body's production of the hormone oestrogen. Other factors such as diet and exercise, lifestyle and medication can also influence the symptoms.

Below are the most common symptoms, however, this is not a fully exhaustive list. It is important to note that not everyone will notice symptoms or need help and support. Symptoms can vary overtime and between individuals, here are examples:

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Sleep disruption
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating/memory problems/loss of confidence
- Mood disturbances including anxiety and depression
- Headaches
- Irregular periods/heavy bleeding
- Bone and Joint problems

Symptoms can last over a number of years and in some cases cause lifelong changes. The nature of symptoms will vary from mild to severe. These symptoms can have a significant adverse impact on the quality of both personal and working life.

It is also important to note that the onset of menopause symptoms can also coincide with other health issues as well as potential caring responsibilities for elderly parents/relatives/children.

### **Support for those experiencing the Menopause**

The Council is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and will work to positively support staff experiencing the menopause.

Training/workshops offering further information and guidance will be available to all staff so that they are able to better understand the effects of the menopause and be comfortable about discussing and addressing the impact that it can have on employees in carrying out their roles.

Employees may find it beneficial to research the menopause or discuss it with family or friends. Additional sources of support can be found on appendix 3, as well as on the intranet (DENNIS) within the [Health & Wellbeing Hub](#).

If symptoms are causing problems at work, employees are encouraged to speak to their line manager and/or HR so that the appropriate support can be provided. If required, a support plan can be created for the employee which can include details of agreed adjustments (if applicable) in line with the Council's Workplace and Reasonable Adjustment Guidance (see section 8 and 12).

## **Workplace/Reasonable Adjustments & Flexible Working**

The Council not only has a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees, but also aims to facilitate an open, understanding, working environment.

As symptoms associated with menopause can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work, the Council is committed to ensuring that adjustments and additional support are available for those experiencing menopausal symptoms or for those supporting individuals with menopausal symptoms.

Adjustments can be made to the workplace following the Workplace/Reasonable Adjustments Guidance and/or on employees' ways of working, following the Flexible Working Policy (policies are listed on section 12 of the employment handbook).

Below are suggested adjustments to consider for the most common symptoms, however, this is not a fully exhaustive list:

*Hot Flushes* – Can result in employees feeling uncomfortable and less tolerant of workplace temperatures.

- Review control of workplace temperature and ventilation – consider desktop fan in an office or locate desk closer to an opening window or away from a heat source.
- Access to drinking water.
- Access to washroom facilities (take into consideration employees who travel or work in multiple locations).
- Avoid tight fitting uniforms.
- For staff who are not required to wear uniforms recommend loose fitting layers and cotton fabrics rather than manmade fibres.
- Access to a rest area/room for breaks if work involves prolonged periods of standing or sitting.
- Access to a quiet room/area for a short break to manage a severe hot flush.

*Night Sweats/Sleep disruption* – Can result in increased tiredness and fatigue.

- Consider flexible working hours or temporary shift changes to accommodate difficulties
- Difficulty concentrating/Memory problems – Performance may be affected
- Regular supervision/review with manager for additional support, if required
- Review task allocation and workload
- Consider flexibility in working pattern or shift pattern; for example if concentration is better or worse at certain times of the day.
- Offer quiet place to work (if feasible, for example in office environments)

*Low mood/Depression/anxiety/panic attacks/loss of confidence* – Can make work tasks more difficult to carry out and performance may be affected.

- Provide opportunity to openly discuss any concerns/difficulties
- Regular supervision/review with manager for additional support, if required
- Access to a quiet area for a short break if required (allowing time for simple relaxation and mindfulness techniques)
- Encourage the employee to discuss symptoms with their GP practice
- Signpost to sources of support including Employee Assistance Programme (see appendix 2 for contact details)
- Consider referral to Occupational Health (see appendix 2 for contact details)

#### *Headaches*

- Access to drinking water
- Access to quiet space or area for short break and to take medication if required.

#### *Irregular/heavy bleeding*

- Access to toilet and washroom facilities
- May require more frequent short breaks

*Bone and Joint problems* – certain moving and handling tasks may be more uncomfortable

- Local risk assessments and moving and handling assessments, if required.
- Consider temporary adjustments or modifications to work tasks

#### *Personal/intimate issues*

- Advise to attend GP practice for advice
- Signpost to Menopause information from the Menopause Service NHS which can be accessed via the link <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

The Council will seek to be flexible and to support requests wherever possible, and to this end will work proactively with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working group and staff members to better understand people's experiences with menopause.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### *Employees*

Each employee should take responsibility and care for their own health and wellbeing and seek medical advice from their GP if there are any concerns (see appendix 1 and 3 for sources of information and support).

Inform their line manager of any circumstances or conditions that might affect their ability to perform their work and/or that could put themselves or others at risk. If for any reason they feel unable to speak to their manager they can also speak to Human Resources or their trade union. Follow the risk assessments and reasonable adjustments in place and inform their line manager of any changes to their health.

### *Human Resources*

Human Resources will offer support to managers and employees on the interpretation and implementation of this and all related policies.

Promote awareness-raising activities including mandatory training and education for managers.

### *Line Managers*

Although menopause usually affects people between the ages of 40 and 60; it can impact younger people, partners and families, and those who are transitioning. Managers have a duty of care to support anyone affected by the menopause in the workplace, directly or indirectly, and to recognise the potential impact of menopausal symptoms on the performance of employees experiencing the menopause as well as those who support people with menopause.

Menopause can challenge both physical and mental wellbeing. When notified by the employee of any concerns or changes in their health, it is the line manager's responsibility to have a supportive conversation with the employee (following guidelines on appendix 2), and where appropriate, outline and signpost them to the support available, such as Occupational Health and the Employee Assistance Programme.

When an employee discloses menopause-related concerns, managers must gain an understanding of their employee's likely support needs, using the information in this policy, as well as their own research using the links on appendix 3.

The line manager with the employee must review the current risk assessment(s) in place to keep staff and others safe. Where the control currently in place are not sufficient for that individual, the risk assessment must be amended or ensure that a workplace/reasonable adjustment form is in place to be used to list the additional controls required for that employee.

When completing a workplace/reasonable adjustments form (template can be found on appendix 4) managers must ensure that any adjustments agreed are recorded and a copy is provided to the employee (see section 12).

Managers must agree a review period with the employee and a follow up meeting should be diarised with both the manager and employee, to ensure it takes place at the agreed time.

If there is an additional need for sickness absence by employees in order to manage their menopausal symptoms, managers must consider such absence as an ongoing condition requiring the consideration of reasonable adjustments and flexibility in absence procedure triggers. These absences should be recorded on iTrent as sickness absences related to symptoms of menopause.

Managers must assess each case on its own merit, as every individual's issues are unique.

All information shared by the employee must be treated sensitively, professionally and in the strictest confidence, not being shared further without their consent.

Managers must refer to the relevant HR policy when dealing with requests for special leave, being mindful of the importance of being supportive of attendance at appointments.

Managers must ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and understand their own and the employer's responsibilities.

Managers will consider all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and will not discriminate against those employees who are experiencing the menopause, and put in place the required support or adjustments where possible in a timely manner. All employees must be treated fairly and consistently. Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up any support available to employees experiencing the menopause.

### **Reporting Issues**

Workplace 'banter' can be upsetting and could be interpreted as harassment. Employees should report any instances of harassment, bullying, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause (see section 12 for related policies).

### **Data Confidentiality**

We will process any personal data collected in accordance with our data protection policy. Data collected is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

### **Links to other policies**

It may be appropriate for an employee to be supported using the Council's Flexible Working or Absence Management policies, but as support needs will vary according to individual circumstances, managers should liaise with HR to ensure fairness and consistency.

The below policies may be relevant depending on individual circumstances.

[Flexible Working](#)

[Sickness Absence Management](#)

[Workplace/Reasonable Adjustment Guidance](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Harassment](#)

[Data Protection](#)

### **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

This policy will be applied consistently and fairly and will not discriminate against anyone based on any relevant characteristics, including those set out in the Equality Act 2010. The menopause primarily affects women and those who have transitioned as women. However anyone experiencing menopause symptoms or supporting individuals who are experiencing symptoms will be supported through this policy, regardless of gender identity.

### **Review and monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if there is a specific legislative, regulatory or service requirement or change in guidance, law or practice, including recommendations from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working group and trade unions.

## Appendix 1 – Self-management for staff experiencing the Menopause

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged not to suffer in silence, but to consider:

- Seeking medical advice from their GP;
- Discussing symptoms with line manager or another colleague and/or trade union rep and requesting appropriate workplace adjustments. If unsure how to start the conversation with their manager, something as follows can be suggested:

*'Thanks for meeting with me. I recently read the Council's 'Menopause at Work' policy and wondered if I could have a chat with you about how the menopause is impacting on my daily life and my work, so that some additional support could be put in place?'*

- Discussing symptoms with Occupational Health;
- Contacting the Employee Assistance Provider.

Employees are also encouraged to make healthier lifestyle choices to help with some of the symptoms such as:

- Eating healthily and regularly – research has shown that a balanced diet can help in alleviating some symptoms, in keeping bones healthy and in not gaining weight;
- Drinking plenty of water;
- Exercising regularly - to reduce hot flushes, improve sleep, boost mood and maintain aerobic fitness levels;
- Not smoking – to help reduce hot flushes and the risk of developing serious conditions such as cancer, heart disease and stroke;
- Ensuring alcohol intake is within recommended levels and cutting down on caffeine and spicy food – all of which can trigger hot flushes;
- Having access to natural light;
- Staying cool at night – wearing loose clothes in a cool and well-ventilated room to help with hot flushes and night sweats;
- Ensuring adequate rest and relaxation – to reduce stress levels and improve mood (through, for example, activities such as mindfulness, yoga and tai chi);
- Trying vaginal lubricant or moisturizer to reduce the symptoms of vaginal dryness – available either on prescription or over the counter from pharmacies

## **Appendix 2 – Guidance for Managers Discussions with Employees**

Regular, informal conversations between manager and employee can enable discussions about issues related to menopause. One of the most valuable things a manager can do is listen and respond sympathetically if issues relating to menopause are reported. These conversations can assist the manager to fulfil their responsibilities outlined in the section 9.3 and to identify additional support at work that can make a real difference in the way employees cope with menopause. This may enable them to continue working well, productively and to remain at work.

It is important to note that employees experiencing menopausal issues (directly or indirectly) may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to approach their manager. However, if a manager is aware of the symptoms associated with the menopause and how this can affect a person, this can greatly assist in promoting an environment where employees feel more confident to approach their manager and seek support, if required.

If an employee wishes to talk about changes in health including symptoms of menopause it is important to:

- Encourage the employee to discuss any relevant health concerns with their GP practice.
- Maintain confidentiality when handling health information (seek a private room/office and ensure any records are stored in a safe and confidential manner).
- Allow for sufficient time to have the conversation and encourage the employee to be open and honest when discussing any difficulties they may be experiencing.
- Explore with them ways in which they can be supported, if required (see below for common symptoms and adjustments to consider).
- Agree an action plan, record the outcome of the discussion and agree a review timeframe (please see Appendix 4 for a discussion template).
- Provide details of support and external services available (appendix 1 and 3 )

## Appendix 3 - Sources of information/support

If an employee is experiencing troublesome menopausal symptoms they are encouraged to contact their GP practice in the first instance who will be able to discuss possible management options.

### *Employee Assistance Programme*

This service can be accessed through the helpline 0800 328 1437 or online at [www.employeeassistance.org.uk](http://www.employeeassistance.org.uk) using DBC1 for access.

### *Quiet space*

The Council has a medical and multi faith room that staff can use for time away from the officer, occupancy signs are located on the doors to enable privacy.

### External links

- Menopause Matters - <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>
- NHS Choices - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- The Daisy Network (support for early menopause/premature ovarian insufficiency) <https://www.daisynetwork.org/>
- The Menopause Exchange - <https://menopause-exchange.co.uk/>
- Women's Health concern - <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>
- Henpicked (community site for women over 40) - <https://henpicked.net/>
- The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/>
- The Hysterectomy Association (Insights into surgically induced menopause as a result of having a hysterectomy) <https://www.hysterectomy-association.org.uk>
- NICE - National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Explain how your GP will determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer you) <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-thisinformation>
- ACAS - Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Menopause and the law) <https://www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work/menopause-and-the-law>

### Appendix 4 – Workplace/Reasonable Adjustment Form

EMPLOYEE NAME:

MANAGER:

DATE:

REVIEW DATE:

To assist managers in considering adjustments to a job or the working environment.

Reason for Adjustment	
Type of Adjustment	
Effectiveness	
Practicability	
Extent of disruption to work activities	

Resource and cost implications	