

**Derry City and Strabane District Council**

**Menopause Policy and Guidance**

# Menopause Policy and Guidance

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The Council is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all employees.
- 1.2. Menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and it isn't always an easy transition. With the right support, it can be much better. Whilst every woman does not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work.
- 1.3. Menopause should not be taboo or 'hidden'. We want everyone to understand what menopause is, and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. This is not just an issue for women, men should be aware too.
- 1.4. The changing age of the UK's workforce means that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work. Research shows that the majority of women are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, nor ask for the support or adjustments that they may need.
- 1.5. This policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. It is not contractual, and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment.

## **2. Aims**

- 2.1. The aims of this policy are to:
  - 2.1.1. Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about menopause.
  - 2.1.2. Ensure everyone understands what menopause is, can confidently have good conversations, and are clear on the Council's policy and practices, supported by Human Resources and Occupational Health.
  - 2.1.3. Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support women at work.
  - 2.1.4. Ensure that women suffering with menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss it and ask for support from a manager or HR who may recommend a referral to Occupational Health. Reasonable adjustments may also be discussed (see appendix 1 for Managers' Guidance).
  - 2.1.5. Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
  - 2.1.6. Assure women that we are a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs during menopause.

### 3. Scope

3.1. This policy applies to all Council employees.

### 4. Definitions

4.1 **Menopause** is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating, and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

4.2 **Perimenopause** is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

4.3 **Post menopause** is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

### 5. Symptoms of Menopause

5.1. It is important to note that not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support. However, 75% of women do experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe.

5.2. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, but not exclusively, hot flushes, poor concentration, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, and loss of confidence. Some women also experience difficulty sleeping.

### 6. Objectives

6.1 The Council developed this policy in line with good practise and has used guidance from the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) and National Health Service (NHS).

6.2. Self-management, with support from the Council, managers and colleagues, will help to manage symptoms. Appendix 1 details some recommendations to support symptomatic women and men, who may need advice and support. Appendix 1a is a template to assist you in recording conversations, and agreed actions and adjustments, with members of staff.

- 6.3. In accordance with NHS guidelines, women should be advised to seek medical advice from their GP in the first instance.

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

### 7.1. Members of staff:

#### 7.1.1. All staff are responsible for:

- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their health;
- Being open and honest in conversations with managers/HR and Occupational Health;
- If a member of staff is unable to speak to their line manager, or if their line manager is not supporting them, they can speak to HR, their trade union representative or the occupational health team
- In exceptional circumstances due to the sensitive nature, an employee may wish to speak with another manager of the same gender. The immediate manager should consider any request carefully and sympathetically.
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment;
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues;
- Understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

### 7.2. Line Managers (see Appendix 1 for Managers Guidance)

#### 7.2.1. All line managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and Guidance;
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Use the guidance in Appendices 1 and 2, signposting and reviewing together, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required;
- Record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented;
- Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates;
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Line Manager may:

- Liaise with Human Resources who may recommend a referral to Occupational Health.

- Review Occupational Health advice and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical;
- Update the action plan, and continue to review.

### 7.3. Occupational Health

#### 7.3.1. The role of Occupational Health is to:

- Carry out an holistic assessment of individuals as to whether or not menopause may be contributing to symptoms/wellbeing, providing advice and guidance in line with up-to-date research;
- Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice;
- Provide support and advice to HR and Line Managers in identifying reasonable adjustments, if required.

### 7.4. Human Resources (HR)

#### 7.4.1. HR will:

- Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this Policy and Guidance;
- Devise and develop briefing sessions, for staff;
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in respect of related absence levels and performance.

### 7.5. Employee Assistance Programme (Inspire)

#### 7.5.1. The Employee Assistance Programme will:

- Provide access to 24/7 telephone counselling and face-to-face counselling for all members of staff.

## 8. Links to other policies

This policy is linked to:

- Attendance Policy;
- Dignity at Work;
- Flexible working;
- Health and Safety Policy;

## 9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Managers’ Guidance for Colleague Discussions;  
Appendix 1a – Confidential Colleague Discussion Template;

## 10. External links

All colleagues can access **confidential 24/7, 365 counselling** by contacting **Inspire** the Employee Assistance Programme helpline on 0800 389 5362.

The **National Health Service** provides an overview of menopause. You can find more at <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx>.

**Chartered Institution of Personnel Development (CIPD)** offer interactive information to both Line Managers and Staff. Information can be found on Council's Online Learning Zone: <https://lgtg.learningpool.com/course/view.php?id=387>

**Menopause information.** The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists offer further information in a dedicated area of their website at: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/>.

**Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI)** information and support on very early menopause. You can find out more at <https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk>.

**Information on hysterectomy.** This provides an insight into surgically induced menopause as a result of having a hysterectomy. Further details can be found at <https://www.hysterectomy-association.org.uk>.

**Henpicked.** This site provides information on managing menopause, and an insight into women's stories (see <https://henpicked.net/menopause/>).

**Derry Well Women.** Offer a free Menopause Clinic. This clinic is by appointment only. It is open to any woman going through the menopause who wishes to discuss care or treatment. Please contact us for details of days/times and to book your appointment. 02871360777 or email [info@derrywellwoman.org](mailto:info@derrywellwoman.org)

## **Appendix 1**

## **Managers Guidance for colleague discussions**

We recognise that every woman is different, and it is, therefore, not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines.

All advice is given, and written, in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) recommendations and best practice.

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly;
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below)
- Agree actions, and how to implement them (you should use the template at Appendix 1a to record the meeting, so that all parties agree what has been discussed, and the next steps, before the meeting ends). Ensure that this record is treated as confidential, and is 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. Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor or break room.

### **Symptoms Support**

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

#### **Hot Flushes**

- Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk (where possible a USB connected desk fan to ensure environmentally friendly) or moving near a window, or away from a heat source;
- Easy access to drinking water;
- Be allowed to adapt prescribed uniform, such as by removing a jacket;
- Have access to a rest room for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush.

#### **Heavy/light Periods**

- Have permanent access to washroom facilities;
- Request an extra uniform;
- Ensure sanitary products are available in washrooms (as marked on a Council map)/key points across the Council, in order to obtain personal protection;



- Ensure storage space is available for a change of clothing.

### **Headaches**

- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water;
- Offer a quiet space to work;
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices;
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

### **Difficulty Sleeping**

- Ask to be considered for flexible working, particularly suffering from a lack of sleep.

### **Low Mood**

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of the work area;
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head';
- Contact the Council's **Inspire** the Employee Assistance Programme **confidential 24/7, 365 counselling helpline** on 0800 389 5362.

### **Loss of Confidence**

- Ensure there are regular Personal Development Discussions;
- Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

### **Poor Concentration**

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly;
- Review task allocation and workload;
- Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment;
- Offer quiet space to work;
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices;
- Reduce interruptions;
- Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having 'protected time', so that they are not disturbed;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

### **Anxiety**

- Contact the Council's **Inspire** the Employee Assistance Programme **confidential 24/7, 365 counselling helpline** on 0800 389 5362.
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk.

### **Panic Attacks**

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk.

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.

If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.

<b>Member of staff details:</b>			
<b>Name</b>		<b>Job Title</b>	
<b>Department/Section</b>		<b>Location (building/room number)</b>	

<b>Present at meeting (line manager name and position)</b>	
<b>Date of discussion</b>	

**Summary of Discussion:**

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**Agreed Actions/Adjustments:**

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Date of next review meeting .....

Signed (Employee) .....

Signed (Line Manager) .....

