

Report to: Joint Consultative and Safety Committee

Subject: Menopause in the Workplace- policy draft

Date: 26 February 2019

Author: Service Manager- Organisational Development

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To close consultation on the development of a “Menopause in the Workplace” policy and to seek the committee’s views which will be reported to the Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee (ACSC) for consideration prior to policy implementation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Consultative and Safety Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Close consultation on the implementation of the proposed “Menopause in the Workplace” policy shown within Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Offer comment or recommendation to the Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee for consideration prior to adoption of final policy.

3. BACKGROUND

Following a suggestion made through the Suggestion Scheme and from interest raised by Unison, Senior Leadership Team asked that a draft “Menopause in the Workplace” policy be brought forward for consideration. This is that policy draft. The draft, shown within Appendix 1, is supported by Senior Leadership Team.

The draft policy has been the subject of ongoing consultation with Unison and GMB. No adverse comments or requests for amendments have been received. Unison has confirmed its support in principle for the policy and is supportive of the proposal to publicise the policy within the workforce through the Communications Team following its implementation through the ACSC. At the time of writing this report no formal comment has been received from GMB.

4. PROPOSALS

It is proposed that consultation on the draft “Menopause in the Workplace” policy be brought to a close at this committee and that the policy shown in the Senior Leadership Team report at Appendix 1 progresses to the Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee for implementation.

Once authorised for implementation by the ACSC the final version of the policy will be communicated to service managers for cascade briefing within their teams and will be more widely communicated direct to the workforce by the Communications Team.



Report to: Senior Leadership Team

Subject: Menopause in the Workplace- policy draft

Date: 8 January 2019

Author: Service Manager- Organisational Development

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek authority to begin consultation with trade unions on a "Menopause in the Workplace" policy and to progress the adoption of the policy through the relevant committees of the Council.

2. BACKGROUND

Following a suggestion made through the Suggestion Scheme and from interest raised by Unison, Senior Leadership Team asked that a draft "Menopause in the Workplace" policy be brought forward for consideration.

This is that policy draft.

3. PROPOSALS

It is proposed that Senior Leadership Team, subject to any required amendment authorises the Service Manager, Organisational Development to progress this policy for implementation as follows:

- Consultation with trade unions following SLT support
- Minor amendments to be agreed by the Service Manager, Organisational Development before progression to committee; more substantial changes or objections raised during consultation to be brought back to SLT.
- Progression to Joint Consultative and Safety Committee of 26/2/19 to close consultation
- Progression to the Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee of 3/4/19 for final policy adoption.
- Direct communication to service managers (by HR) and general communication within the workforce (by Comms).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

SLT is recommended to accept the draft report and endorse the commencement of the consultation and implementation process as described.

MENOPAUSE IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY

1. Purpose and Background

To provide managers and team members with information about what menopause is and identify how the organisation can respond in practical and positive ways to ensure women experiencing symptoms of menopause can be supported within the workplace.

2. Objectives

- To inform of causes and symptoms of menopause
- To identify specific roles of a manager to effectively support employees within their team who are experiencing the symptoms of menopause in order to foster an environment in which employees can openly and comfortably engage in discussions about menopause and to ensure that women suffering with menopause symptoms feel confident to ask for support and reasonable adjustments
- To identify links to other relevant local policies and organisational support that exist to help support women who are experiencing the menopause
- To identify channels of support

2.1 Causes and symptoms of menopause

- The menopause is a natural stage in a woman's life, usually happening between the ages of 45-55, marked by changes in hormones and the ending of menstruation. It can last from four to eight years, however there are exceptions. The years during which the oestrogen levels decline before a woman has her last period is called the perimenopause.
- An early menopause can also be triggered by women who are experiencing ill health or medical treatment. This can occur at a much younger age than normal menopause and may bring additional problems of ill-health including mental health issues.
- Peri-menopause is the period that leads to the menopause when many women may experience symptoms that begin the transition to the menopause. A woman can usually tell if she is experiencing symptoms characteristic of the peri-menopause because her menstrual periods start changing and they can become heavy and prolonged. The changes of the menopause transition (peri-menopause) typically begin several years before the natural menopause. This is a time when the levels of hormones produced by the ovaries fluctuate, leading to irregular menstrual patterns (irregularity in the length of the period, the time between periods and the level of flow) and hot flushes (a sudden warm feeling with blushing). Other changes associated with the peri-menopause and menopause include night sweats, mood swings, vaginal dryness, and fluctuation in sexual desire, forgetfulness, trouble sleeping, tearfulness and fatigue.
- Surgical and medical treatments, such as hysterectomy, fertility treatment, endometriosis and hormone therapy as part of someone's transition to a true gender can bring about menopause symptoms.
- Women can experience both physical and psychological effects of the menopause. Some experience few or no symptoms whilst others can have symptoms that can debilitate them. Some women can suffer such debilitating symptoms that it affects their work and the role that they do.

- Symptoms associated with the menopause include hot flushes, palpitations, night sweats and sleep disturbance, fatigue, poor concentration, irritability, mood disturbance, skin irritation and dryness. Women can also experience urinary problems with recurrent infections or a need to pass urine more often and heavy, irregular periods for a time.
- There is information available from a wide variety of sources such as the simple guide offered by the Faculty of Occupational Medicine;
<http://www.fom.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Guidance-on-menopause-and-the-workplace-v6.pdf>

2.2 Managers' support for women experiencing menopause

As general guidance regular, informal conversations between manager and employee may enable discussion about changes in health, including issues relating to the menopause. It may be valuable simply to acknowledge this is a normal stage of life and to be able to confirm that adjustments to working practices can be properly discussed and accommodated where possible.

As some women will not want to have discussions about their experience of the menopause with their direct line manager, other ways to assist with communication should be explored; this might include a work colleague speaking on a team member's behalf, asking for help from someone from HR or using our occupational health service.

In addition to any regular formal or informal conversations that take place between a line manager and team members, it is good practice at least once a year to have a formal discussion about workplace matters through the Performance and Development review meeting. If a conversation isn't already in train, this is the ideal opportunity to discuss general health and any adaptations that might be appropriate for each team member. Managers will need to maintain confidentiality in handling health information relating to the menopause as with any other health condition.

As an organisation we expect line managers to:

- Be supportive of needs that might arise through menopausal symptoms so that women do not feel embarrassed to approach them and discuss how the menopause is affecting their health.
- Exhibit respectful behaviours at work including those that relate to gender and age.
- Create an environment in which employees can discuss health matters or concerns including those relating to menopause.
- Implement appropriate changes to the workplace or working practices to assist employees experiencing the symptoms of menopause. Subject to limitations of the business need and recognising that each woman is different and will experience different symptom, these might include, but are not limited to:
 - Adjusting working times (flexible or agile working)
 - Providing the flexibility to take breaks during the working day to accommodate personal needs. Longer breaks in a working day could, for example, be built in with time taken as flexi leave.

- Adjusting the office environment, for example, in relation to temperature particularly through the issue of things such as personal fans that do not have a substantial impact on the comfort of others in the office.
- Flexibility in terms of work clothing standards to ensure comfort. This may be particularly relevant if a uniform is required. It may be appropriate to issue more uniforms, particularly if the uniform is made from synthetic fibres which is less comfortable than natural fibres.
- Carry out a risk assessment of all relevant tasks undertaken by a woman experiencing the menopause including a display screen equipment test review if their job requires regular or sustained use of a computer screen or similar.

2.3 Policy application and organisational support

There are a number of other local employment policies and arrangements that have a relevance to the support of those experiencing the menopause.

- The Attendance Management Policy in the Employee Handbook excludes absences relating to symptoms of the menopause from the application of normal “trigger points”. Section 2.9.3 states, “If the absence is recognised as a disability under the Equality Act, relates to a gynaecological condition, or it is pregnancy or maternity-related, then it will not be taken account of for the purposes of determining whether a trigger point has been reached or not.
- The flexitime scheme is constructed in a way that, subject to the business need being met, hours and times of work can be varied easily. In certain jobs methods of agile or home working can also be successfully applied without detriment to service delivery. The idea of flexible working more generally is supported by the council where the job allows it and requests can be made to service managers.
- Toilets and changing facilities; these are available at all of the civic centre campus sites including the depot and at leisure centres. Employees working at locations where good facilities are not available should be allowed the flexibility to return to these sites or other suitable location if necessary. In these circumstances reasonable time would be allowed.
- The council offers access to an Employee Assistance Programme through the Gedling Lifestyle platform. This is open to all employees for advice about health matters.
- Rest rooms and spaces are available at most sites. Although not provided or designed for recuperation, the spaces are made available to all employees and can be used at any times during a working day. Drinking water is available at all sites; at the Civic Centre chilled water is supplied.
- The council has access to an occupational health service that can give advice to managers to help make informed decisions about suitable adaptations in the workplace. This service may be of particular use where an employee feels uncomfortable about discussing health matters with a manager.

2.4. Channels of support

There are many channels of information and support for managers and employees experiencing the menopause. The list below is not exhaustive.

- Line manager or other senior manager in your team
- HR
- Trade union (local Rep or Regional Office)
- Work colleagues or friends
- Employee Assistance Programme (Gedling Lifestyle)
- Occupational Health Service (through referral made by HR)
- G.P.; medical advice and signposting to other services
- On-line advice. Many sources of advice and guidance are available targeted towards both employee and employer/ manager.

3. Compliance with legislation

Although much of this policy is themed towards best practice and local policy; the things that make up the organisation's culture, there is also legislative compliance that needs to be observed. Legislation relevant to this policy is shown below:

- Section 2 of the Health and Safety At Work Act 1974 requires employers to ensure "the health and safety and welfare at work" of all employees;
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 place an overriding duty on employers to make workplaces suitable for the individual who work in them;
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require the employer to undertake a suitable and sufficient assessment of risks and take action to prevent exposure to risks; and
- The public sector equality duty places a legal obligation on all public bodies to promote gender equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.