

**Report to:** Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee

**Subject:** Review of policy: Menopause in the Workplace

**Date:** 12 June 2020

**Author:** Service Manager- Organisational Development

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To report back to committee on the continued effectiveness of the Menopause in the Workplace Policy.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee is recommended to accept the proposals to:

- 2.1 Reaffirm the application of the existing Menopause in the Workplace Policy
- 2.2 Re-publicise the existence of the policy to staff through normal internal communication channels

## **3. BACKGROUND**

The Menopause in the Workplace Policy was adopted by this committee in April 2019 after normal consultation and consideration by the Joint Consultative and Safety Committee. A copy of the current policy is shown at Appendix 1.

The policy was the first of its kind in the County and since its adoption several other local authorities (both inside and out of the County) have shown interest in the policy and some have used it as the basis of their own work.

When this committee approved the implementation of the policy in April 2019, the committee also asked that a report be brought back in a year's time to confirm that the policy was working well. Consequently union views were sought (Appendix 2). UNISON responded to confirm that they would not wish for any changes to the policy to be applied but did ask that the existence of the policy was again publicised to employees. This request has been included in the report recommendations.

## **4. PROPOSALS**

It is proposed that the policy adopted in April 2019 be reaffirmed and that its existence is again publicised to employees.

## **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

The alternative options identified are:

- 5.1 To not reaffirm the policy and to formally withdraw the policy from employees' terms and conditions.
- 5.2 Modify the content of the existing policy. No modifications have been suggested or proposed by either trade unions or officers.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

The original report offers positive support to women in the workplace and as such has strong and clear positive equality impact in terms of gender. Although Menopause can effect women at any age, proportionately the symptoms are experienced by women aged 45-55 and consequently there is also a positive equality impact in respect to age.

No negative equality impact is identified in the policy.

## **9. CARBON REDUCTION/ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **10. APPENDICES**

10.1 Appendix 1; Current Menopause in the Workplace Policy

10.2 Appendix 2; Views received from UNISON

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are no background papers

### **Statutory Officer approval**

<b>Approved by:</b>	Assistant Director; Finance
<b>Date:</b>	04 June 2020
<b>On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer</b>	

<b>Approved by:</b>	Deputy Monitoring Officer
<b>Date:</b>	04 June 2020
<b>On behalf of the Monitoring Officer</b>	

## APPENDIX 40 - 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.
- Perimenopause 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 perimenopause because her menstrual periods start changing and they can become heavy and prolonged. The changes of the menopause transition (perimenopause) 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 perimenopause 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.

## Comments received from UNISON

Hi David

We have no further comments or amendments to the current policy. We would like to see, if possible, that once the review has taken place that a reminder of the policy is advertised on the intranet, to show it has been reviewed after a year.

Kind Regards

*Alison*

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<https://joining.unison.org.uk/join-unison-today/>

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**Subject:** Menopause policy

Good morning

In April we will have had the workplace Menopause Policy in place for around a year. I was asked to review the policy at around this time to find out if there were any additions or amendments that needed to take place.

The only comments that I have had have been positive. I am aware of at least two other councils using our document as the basis of their own work.

Could you let me know please if you have any comments about the policy or if you would want to see any material changes to the document?

Many thanks

David

**David Archer**

**Service Manager - Organisational Development**

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