

Menopause Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Cotswold District Council (CDC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

CDC is committed to creating an open and supportive culture. We want you to feel comfortable speaking about how menopause-related symptoms may be affecting you at work and be able to ask for the support that you need to help you manage your symptoms.

This policy sets out the rights of employees experiencing menopausal symptoms and explains the support available to them.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to anyone working for us. This includes employees, contractors, volunteers, interns and apprentices.

In this policy, where we refer to the menopause, we also **include** the perimenopause **and postmenopausal stages**

What is Menopause

The menopause is a natural event during which **oestrogen levels decrease and** a person stops having periods. **Menopausal stages are;**

- **Perimenopause** - the transition phase leading up to menopause during which someone experiences menopausal symptoms, but their periods have not stopped),
- **Menopause** – define as 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period
- **Postmenopause** - the years following menopause, which can last for the rest of the individuals' life. While some symptoms may ease shortly after menopause, others can continue for several years.

Menopause usually occurs naturally between the ages of 45 and 55, typically lasting between four and eight years, although menopausal symptoms can occasionally begin before the age of 40 depending on various factors, and can last up to 12 years.

While the majority of people experiencing menopause will be women, it's important to recognize they are not the only ones who can have menopausal symptoms, and employees and line managers should avoid making assumptions.

It is also important to recognise that menopause is a unique experience for each individual with a range of interconnected physical and psychological symptoms which manifest differently at various stages of menopause.

Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause. A person may start to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause.

Menopause may also be brought on by medical interventions, surgery or treatments, such as;

- Removal of ovaries or womb - A procedure called oophorectomy can cause immediate menopause because it stops the production of hormones by the ovaries
- Cancer treatments and endometriosis treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy in the pelvic area, which can affect ovarian function.
- Primary Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) - A condition where the ovaries stop functioning properly before the age of 40.
- Family history can play a role in determining the age at which menopause occurs.
- Certain autoimmune diseases or other health conditions can impact ovarian function and lead to early menopause.

Although menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, if an employee is disadvantaged and treated less favourably as a result of menopausal symptoms, this could be seen as discrimination relating to protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment and sex.

We are committed to promoting a working environment based on dignity, trust and respect, and one that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation. This policy should therefore also be followed in conjunction with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Procedure.

Symptoms of Menopause

Symptoms **can** vary greatly and can be both physical and psychological **with one causing the other**. For around a quarter of women, and trans and non-binary people, they are severely debilitating.

Symptoms include:

Physical:

- Hot flushes
- Sleep disturbances including night sweats
- Dizziness and fatigue
- Headaches
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Heavy bleeding and irregular periods

Psychological

- Depression and anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Memory loss of brain fog
- Loss of concentration
- Mood disturbance

Each person will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time. Menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues as well.

Psychological symptoms, which cannot be seen, impact the individual's work life and support must therefore be provided to avoid any negative impact on the employee, their colleagues and the Council.

Employees experiencing symptoms at any stage of menopause are encouraged to speak openly with their line manager, the Menopause Champion, or HR for tailored support and reasonable adjustments.

Our Commitment to You

We are committed to the health, safety and welfare of all employees at work, where reasonably possible in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

This policy details measures designed to support staff affected by the symptoms of menopause, and create an inclusive work environment. We promote open conversations within the Council, teams and with line managers, to remove stigma and increase knowledge and understanding.

Such measures include;

- Providing training for all line managers and Directors so they are able to support individuals experiencing adverse menopausal symptoms.
- Introducing a Menopause Champion role to provide dedicated, unbiased and confidential support to employees affected by menopause and associated symptoms.
- Extending the scope and training of the Wellbeing Advocate role to include menopause support, complementing the work of the Menopause Champion.
- Provide additional support and resources such provision of emergency sanitary products, menopause awareness posters, and the provision of a break room for emotional wellbeing.

It is also the responsibility of everyone throughout the business to familiarise themselves with this policy and to play a part to ensure its successful implementation.

Requesting Support

The Menopause Champion Role:

If you are finding it difficult to cope at work because of menopausal symptoms, you are encouraged to speak to your line manager or a Director. At Cotswold District Council however, we understand the importance of having dedicated support for those experiencing menopause and have introduced a Menopause Champion role.

The Menopause Champion is available to provide additional support and guidance, promote awareness, and help foster a more inclusive environment.

Employees are encouraged to reach out to the Menopause Champion for confidential support, advice, or to discuss their needs in relation to menopause.

By adding this role, we aim to ensure that every employee feels supported, and has access to the resources and assistance they need. We urge you to be as open as possible about any particular issues that you are experiencing or adjustments that you need to ensure that you are provided with the right level of support.

Any health-related information disclosed by you during discussions with the Menopause Champion, your line manager or Director will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

Responsibilities of the Menopause Champion

- A Menopause Champion is a designated individual within the organisation who serves as a point of contact for employees experiencing menopausal symptoms. This person provides support, guidance, and information on available resources and helps foster an inclusive and understanding workplace environment. The Menopause Champion will offer confidential, non-judgmental support and guidance to employees who need to discuss their symptoms or seek advice.
- They will promote awareness about menopause within the organisation and advocate for necessary adjustments and accommodations.
- Provide information on internal and external resources, including health services, support groups, and educational materials.
- Act as a liaison between employees and management to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the menopause policy and suggest improvements.

Benefits of Having a Menopause Champion

- Encouraging open communication by helping to normalise conversations about menopause, thereby reducing stigma and promoting an open culture.
- Providing an enhanced support system, by being an additional layer of support beyond the line manager, Director and HR. Giving employees more options to seek help.
- Facilitating informed decision-making through insights gathered on the needs of those experiencing menopause, ensuring the organisation remains responsive and adaptive.

Training and Resources for the Menopause Champion

- The Menopause Champions receive specialised training to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to support colleagues effectively.
- Access is provided to up-to-date resources and information about menopause, to ensure they can provide current and comprehensive support.

How to Contact the Menopause Champion

The Menopause Champion is Carmel Togher, her contact details are carmel.togher@publicagroup.uk, telephone 01285 623482. For staff who need advice or someone to talk to initially, they can be assured of privacy and discretion.

Working Flexibly on a Temporary Basis

Employees who require a permanent change to working arrangements, can make a **flexible working** request through their manager. (see **Flexible Working Policy and Procedure**)

However, we recognise that for individuals affected by menopausal symptoms, the option to work flexibly on a temporary (rather than permanent) basis may be appropriate. For example, this could include working from home, changing your start and finish times, changes to your work allocation or taking more frequent breaks. This is not a definitive list.

If you feel that you would benefit from a temporary change to your working arrangement on an ad hoc basis, **due to** sleep deprivation or other symptoms that may be impacting on your performance, you should discuss and agree these with your line manager supported by the HR Business Partner.

We will try to facilitate temporary flexible working arrangements wherever this is possible and will continue to review these to ensure that they meet your needs.

Working Environment

If you feel that your working environment is exacerbating your menopausal symptoms, you should raise this with your line manager or director. **If not already in place, the manager should carry out a workplace Health and Safety Risk Assessment, which should consider the specific needs of people undergoing a menopause transition, to ensure the working environment does not aggravate symptoms.**

A range of practical adjustments can **be implemented** to make your working life easier, such as moving your workstation to a cooler area or providing you with a fan. If you are required to wear a uniform, we will allow flexibility where reasonable.

Quiet Place to Work

Recognising that menopausal symptoms can vary greatly and affect individuals differently, we are committed to providing a quiet, comfortable space where employees can take a break, manage their symptoms, or simply have a moment of privacy. This room will be equipped with comfortable seating, a calm environment, and amenities such as tissues, water, and other supplies to support well-being.

If you need time out to relax, a short break to manage any symptoms or take medication, or a quiet space to work, speak to your line manager **about making use of this facility.**

Sanitary Products

We will ensure all **employees have access to emergency sanitary products for those who may require them due to menopausal symptoms or any other reason in all toilet, shower and other restroom facilities across our premises, with regular checks to ensure that sanitary products are stocked and available in all.**

Employees are encouraged to notify the Facilities Management team if supplies are low or need replenishment.

Sickness

There is no expectation on you to work if you are unwell because of menopausal symptoms.

Unless otherwise set out in your contract, if you are sick and unable to work, you should follow the procedure set out in our **Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure.**

You do not have to disclose that your absence is related to the menopause if you wish to keep this private. However, we want you to feel that you can be open about the reason for your leave **and provide us the opportunity to support if reasonably possible.**

GP, Employee Wellbeing Programme (EAP) and Occupational Health

If you find you are experiencing symptoms that may relate to stages of menopause, it is recommended that you contact your general medical practitioner for advice in the first instance, as there may be a range of medical interventions they can advise you on.

In addition, you can also contact the CDC Employee Wellbeing Programme (EAP) provider for confidential and impartial information on managing menopausal symptoms or how to cope if anyone in your family is displaying similar symptoms.

In some cases, **with your consent**, we may refer you to occupational health so that they can advise on how your symptoms are impacted at work and make recommendations on the types of adjustments that may be appropriate. Occupational health may also signpost you to external sources of help and advice.

External Sources of Help

There are various organisations that provide help and support on the menopause, including:

- [Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options
- the [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for people experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency and
- the [Menopause Café](#), which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause.
- NHS information <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- My Menopause Doctor - empowering women, and trans and non-binary people with the necessary information to make informed decisions regarding the treatment options that are available. <https://www.menopausedoctor.co.uk>
- The Menopause Charity - a charity on a mission to bust myths, overcome ignorance and make menopause symptoms history. Supporting women, and trans and non-binary people and healthcare professionals with fact-based menopause research and access to the safest treatments. <https://www.themenopausecharity.org>

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