

EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

31 MAY 2022

MENOPAUSE GUIDANCE

Report from: Sam Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Change Officer
Report Author: Nicola Trainor, Deputy Head of HR (Operations)

Summary

This paper is to inform and share with Members some newly developed guidance for managers to enable them to better support those employee's going through the menopause.

1. Budget and policy framework

1.1. This is not a policy so therefore it is not required to be presented to this Committee for a decision but is being shared for information.

2. Background

2.1. The effects of the menopause on women in the workplace has received a greater profile over the last year, with increased awareness raised across the UK from a variety of sources, not least central government's UK Menopause Taskforce.

2.2. Menopause is a not an illness or medical condition, it is a completely normal life event for women. However, the symptoms associated with the menopause are all too often under-recognised, undervalued and not taken seriously. Symptoms such as hot flushes, fatigue, mood changes and brain fog not only affect home life and relationships, but also careers.

2.3. Nine out of ten women say their menopausal or perimenopausal symptoms have a negative impact on their work - according to a survey of 1,132 women undertaken by [balance-menopause.com](https://www.balance-menopause.com). Other findings included:

- 9% had a disciplinary process, because of poor performance
- 51% of respondents reported having time off work due to their symptoms
- 51% had reduced their working hours
- 32% considered quitting their job altogether

- 2.4. This guidance (Appendix 1) has been drafted as an aid for managers and to increase awareness and understanding of the impact the menopause may have on women and the support that they may need within the workplace. There is also general guidance for all staff (Appendix 2.) This is a positive step to show our intention of being seen by our staff as a 'menopause friendly' employer whose workforce is predominantly female.
- 2.5. 'Menopause friendly' means being clear on how we support menopause in the workplace, creating an environment where menopause can be talked about easily and putting support in place for colleagues. The Local Government Association guide on managing the menopause at work (Appendix 3) states that experience has shown that there are three main elements to managing the menopause at work:
- Workplace culture
 - Workplace policies
 - Workplace environment
- 2.6. HR have worked with colleagues in Public Health to develop a joint awareness training session for managers to complement this guidance, along with a dedicated page on the intranet, Medspace, promoting awareness and the impact that the menopause may have and signposting to the menopause awareness video created by Public Health. Existing policies, like Our Ways of Working, could also support our employees experiencing the symptoms of menopause by applying flexible ways of working, for example.
- ### 3. Consultation
- 3.1 The guidance documents have been shared with staff forums, public health colleagues and the trade unions for comment.
- ### 4. Financial implications
- 4.1 There are no financial implications
- ### 5. Legal implications
- 5.1 Menopause, itself, is not a disability. However, severe symptoms of menopause may constitute disabilities, triggering the obligation to make reasonable adjustments and protection from less favourable treatment as per the Equality Act 2010. There could also be claims of sex discrimination.
- ### 6. Recommendation
- 6.1 That the Committee notes the report and the guidance documents as set out in appendices 1-3 to the report.

Lead officer contact

Nicola Trainor, Deputy Head of HR (Operations), Gun Wharf, 01634 334499,
nicola.trainor@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Guidance for Managers
- Appendix 2 Supporting someone during the menopause
- Appendix 3 Menopause at work guidance LGA

Background papers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nations-unite-to-tackle-menopause-taskforce>

<https://balance-menopause.com/uploads/2021/10/Lewis-Newson-BMS-poster-SCREEN-1-1.pdf>