

# Menopause at Work Policy

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## Policy Checklist

<b>Policy name:</b>	Menopause at Work policy
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<b>Director responsible for Policy:</b>	Vivienne Toal
<b>Directorate responsible for Policy:</b>	HR & Organisational Development
<b>Equality Screened by:</b>	<b>Lynne Smart</b>
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## Version Control

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<b>Version</b>	<b>Notes on revisions/modifications and who document was circulated or presented to</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lead Policy Author</b>
Version 2_0	Language amended in 1.2 and throughout policy to reflect that people of diverse gender expressions and identities experience menopause and it is therefore not just an issue for female staff  Detail added on stages of the menopause in 1.3 and in guidance notes  Guidance notes updated	<b>March 2023</b>	Lynne Smart and Angela Higgins
<i>Eg Version 2_0</i>	Click here to enter text	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text



## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The SHSCT has a legal duty of care to our staff and is committed to providing inclusive and supportive working environments for all. This policy has been developed, in line with Trust key principles for policy development, to ensure that there is a supportive working environment and a consistent approach provided for staff experiencing adverse menopause symptoms at work. Managing the effects of the menopause at work is important for the health, wellbeing and retention of staff at work.

1.2 The menopause is part of the natural ageing process, usually occurring between the ages of 45-55 years and in the UK the average is 51 years. Family history, surgery and medical conditions can affect the age the menopause occurs.

As of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022, 85.1 % of the SHSCT workforce identifies as female and the Trust recognises that 21.8 % of staff aged 45-54 years may be working through the menopause and well beyond, the menopause. People of diverse gender expressions and identities experience menopause and it is therefore not just an issue for female staff. Transgender, non-binary and intersex staff may experience the menopause, either due to age related hormonal changes or hormone treatments and surgeries.

1.3 There are 3 different stages to the menopause: perimenopause; menopause and post menopause. Menopause refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months. After a person has not had a period for a year, this is considered to be 'post-menopausal'.

1.4 The peri-menopause is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause usually commencing in the mid 40's and can start earlier and extend until 12 months after the final period or longer. The commonest symptoms are changes in periods, hot flushes, anxiety and mood swings. Symptoms can have a big impact on people's lives, including on relationships and work. See guidance notes for more detail.

1.5 For many people, the onset of menopause also comes at a time of competing demands on their time and energy such as the need to care for elderly parents or relatives and often taking on a sizeable share of domestic responsibilities. This can have an impact on emotional wellbeing and lead to excessive levels of stress.

1.6 It is estimated that 80% of those experiencing menopause in the UK report noticeable changes, whilst 25% experience more debilitating symptoms. A broad range of physical and psychological symptoms can be experienced during the menopause, associated with changes in the body's production of hormones. Symptoms on average continue for four years from the last period, and 1 in 10 can experience symptoms for up to 12 years. These symptoms can adversely affect the quality of both personal and working life.

## **2.0 Purpose and Aims**

This policy aims to ensure that the Trust provides supportive working environments and a consistent approach to supporting staff experiencing adverse peri-menopause/ menopause related symptoms at work.

## **3.0 Objectives of this Policy**

3.1 To provide guidance to increase staff and managers awareness about the menopause, related symptoms and the potential impact for women at work

3.2 To provide guidance on facilitating supportive conversations between managers and staff about menopause related symptoms impacting on health, wellbeing and capacity at work.

## **4.0 Policy Statement**

4.1 The Trust recognises that some staff may need additional consideration and support during the peri-menopause and menopause. Whilst the menopause is part of the natural ageing process, severe menopausal symptoms can have a substantial adverse impact on daily functioning for some staff. If this impact on daily functioning has lasted, or is likely to last for 12 months or more, then disability legislation can potentially apply and reasonable adjustments should be considered in the workplace.

4.2 Self-management of lifestyle and medical guidance can help to reduce some menopause symptoms. The Trust encourages staff to consider any positive changes they can make to their lifestyle and to seek medical guidance if required to help manage any symptoms.

4.3 Supportive conversations between managers and staff are encouraged regarding the menopause and the impact it may be having on staff health, wellbeing and capacity at work.

4.4 This policy is supported by guidance notes for both managers and staff which should be read in conjunction with this policy (see Appendix 1 and 2).

## **5.0 Scope of this Policy**

This policy applies to all employees of the SHSCT. The policy takes account of all relevant legislation requirements, Trust Policies and terms and conditions of employment. The policy and guidance also took account of trade union guidance on Menopause at work.

## **Responsibilities**

### **6.1 Staff:**

- In line with the HSC values staff are expected to be sensitive, caring and respectful to those we care for and our colleagues. Staff are expected to display respectful behaviours at work, including those that relate to gender, age and disability;
- Staff are encouraged to look after their health and wellbeing and consider positive lifestyle behaviours that can help manage peri-menopause and menopause related symptoms. Further information is available from the U-matter website and additional resources as detailed in the appendices;
- Staff are encouraged to discuss work related difficulties associated with symptoms of peri- menopause/menopause with their line manager;
- If a member of staff feels unable to speak to their line manager about menopause related issues they can speak to Occupational Health, Human Resources or their Trade Union;
- If work based actions/adjustments are agreed employees should be aware that they can be temporary in nature and subject to review, within an agreed time frame (e.g 3 months).

### **6.2 Managers**

Managers are not expected to be experts on the menopause but should have a level of knowledge and understanding around how they can support staff, including how to have a supportive conversation.

All line managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and Guidance;
- Be able to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Refer to the guidance (see Appendix 1 and 2) to support the conversation. Complete the Confidential Discussion and Actions template (see Appendix 3) and agree with the individual how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required;
- Agree a review date, to review the assessment and adjustments on a regular basis (e.g 3 monthly);
- If required, seek further health related advice from the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Department.

### **6.3 Trade Union Side Representatives**

Trade Union Side representatives have a responsibility to support and advise their members. Many of the Unions including UNISON, Royal College Nursing, NIPSA and the BMA have produced guidance for their members on Menopause and work.

### **6.4 Occupational Health**

The Occupational Health and Wellbeing Service is available as a resource for advice, support and guidance to managers and employees.

### **6.5 Human Resources**

The Human Resources Department is responsible for providing relevant advice and guidance to managers and employees.

### **7.0 Legislative Compliance, Relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidance**

In addition to the relevant term and conditions of employment this policy should be read in conjunction with the following trust Policies and Guidelines:

- Flexible Working Policy
- Time Off work policy
- Sickness absence policy
- Policy on employment of people with Disabilities
- Reasonable adjustment Guidelines for Managers

### **8.0 Equality and Human Rights**

This policy has been screened for equality implications as required by section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) which requires the Trust to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. Using the Equality Commission's screening criteria no significant equality implications have been identified. The policy is therefore not subject to full equality impact assessment.

Similarly the policy has been considered under the terms of the Human Rights Act (1998) and was deemed compatible with the European Convention Rights contained in the act.

## 8.0 Sources of advice and further information

The Policy Author, responsible Assistant Director as detailed on the policy title page can be contacted with regard to any queries on the content of this policy. Further information on the menopause is listed in appendix 3 and is accessible online on the U-matter website

<b>For Further Help</b>
<b>Employee Relations Team:</b> 028 3756 4218 / 028 3756 4200
<b>Occupational Health and Wellbeing Service:</b> 028 3756 4800
<b>Psychology support Line</b> 028 3756 2600
<b>Staff Physiotherapy service:</b> <a href="#">OH003 Occupational Health Physiotherapy- Self referral form NEW 3.2.2021.doc</a>
<b>Staff health and wellbeing website U Matter</b>  <a href="https://u-matter.org.uk/service/menopause">https://u-matter.org.uk/service/menopause</a>  <a href="#">UMatter Menopause at Work Policy &amp; Toolkit</a>
<b>INSPIRE</b>  Free, Confidential counselling service for staff dealing with work or personal issues and access to information and tools to help care for your wellbeing needs.  <b>Helpline</b> – 0808 800 0002 available 24/ 7, 365 days a year  <b>INSPIRE Support Hub</b>  To register visit <a href="http://www.inspiresupporthub.org">www.inspiresupporthub.org</a> and click the sign up button top right  use the SHSCT unique Organisational PINCode: <b>SHSC2019</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• this will create a randomly generated user name for you to save and use each time you login</li><li>• Create a password with 8 characters - one upper and one lower case, one number and one special character ? !</li><li>• Confirm your password and click sign up</li><li>• On the log in page enter your noted username and password and click the login button</li><li>• Start using the INSPIRE hub.</li></ul>

## Appendix 1 Menopause Guidance Notes for staff

### What is the menopause?

Menopause is a natural part of life and ageing for those with a menstrual cycle and is defined as the point in time when menstruation has ceased for 12 consecutive months and usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 years. In Northern Ireland the average age of menopause is 51 years.

Some staff may experience early or premature menopause for reasons such as Premature Ovarian Syndrome, genetic conditions, cancer treatment and damage to the ovaries or as a result of surgery to remove the ovaries or uterus.

There are 3 different stages to the menopause: perimenopause; menopause and post menopause.

- **Perimenopause** is the first stage of this transition, during which the reproductive hormone levels fluctuate, rising and falling unevenly. Whilst the body adapts, people may experience significant and unpleasant side effects, such as hot flashes, brain fog, or perimenopause anxiety. Periods may continue to be regular, become lighter or heavier, and as a result many people do not always realise that they are experiencing the peri-menopause. This can be a barrier to accessing support.
- **Menopause** is confirmed as the time when periods have ceased for 12 months. The ovaries stop releasing eggs, and a person can no longer become pregnant. For most people in the UK the average is 51 years.
- **Postmenopause** is the menopausal transition's final phase, from 12 months after an individual's last period to the end of their life. Some people have less intense or fewer symptoms at this stage, whilst others continue to experience symptoms.

The experience of the menopause can vary significantly between staff; some experience hardly any symptoms whereas others can experience more severe symptoms. It is important to recognise that variance exists in age of onset of symptoms and the severity and longevity of symptoms experienced. In many cases it is an individual experience, not comparable with colleagues of the same age or stage of menopause. Symptoms can last for a long period of time but can differ over that timeframe.

There may be occasions in which severe menopausal symptoms can have such a substantial adverse impact on daily functioning and have lasted or are likely to last for 12 months or more that the disability legislation could potentially apply and reasonable adjustments should be considered in the workplace.

## Range of symptoms experienced:

An extensive but not exhaustive list of potential menopausal symptoms exists including:

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- sleep disturbance
- insomnia
- fatigue/tiredness
- poor concentration
- reduced confidence
- poor memory
- brain fog\*
- Headache
- joint pains
- skin irritation
- dry eyes
- urinary problems
- hair loss
- loss of libido
- Menopause related mood disturbance, can include low mood, anxiety, depression, panic attacks, irritability and mood swings

*\*Brain Fog: Involves feelings of confusion and disorientation. Brain fog can make a person feel as if the processes of thinking, understanding and remembering are not working as they should. It can affect memory, including the ability to store and recall information as well as the use and understanding of language.*

**Self -help measures for symptoms of the menopause to support health & wellbeing.**



## **Appendix 2     Guidance for managers**

### **2.1 Supportive conversations**

As a line manager you are the first point of contact for a staff member to discuss their health and wellbeing concerns and this includes staff experiencing menopausal symptoms. We recognise that everyone's experience of the menopause is different, with a diverse range of possible symptoms felt to varying degrees that may impact on staff wellbeing and capacity at work.

It can be daunting for staff to discuss their menopause experience with their manager. Staff may not want to discuss their experience for a variety of reasons including:

- feel it's a private or a personal matter
- feel their symptoms might be embarrassing to share with others
- do not know their line manager well enough
- are not sure if their line manager will be sympathetic
- feel they will not be taken seriously
- are worried about confidentiality
- think they will be seen to be less able to do their job
- are worried that job security or promotion opportunities may be adversely affected
- are worried about outing themselves as a trans person, non-binary person or a person with variations of sex development

Adopt a supportive management style and actively promote staff health and wellbeing in teams which enables staff to be more open about any difficulties they are experiencing. Offering supportive conversations with staff can help them to manage their wellbeing and discuss any symptoms they may be having and agree possible solutions and actions to address these.

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

It is important to acknowledge that the staff member may not wish to discuss their menopause experience with you and alternatively you should consider offering the support of another manager with whom they may feel more comfortable discussing menopause issues.

If a staff member does wish to speak about their menopausal symptoms please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation without interruptions;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage the employee to speak openly by asking open ended non-judgemental questions
- Treat the discussion sensitively and with compassion, listening attentively

- Maintain confidentiality and seek consent to share information, if necessary with others. For example a staff member may talk about their gender identity when discussing menopause symptoms and may not want this shared with colleagues;
- Jointly discuss symptoms, potential solutions and ways in which the employee can be supported (see Appendix 3 Confidential Discussion and Agreed Actions Template).
- Agree actions, and how to implement them (using the template at Appendix 3 to record the agreed actions), 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 stored securely in the line manager's staff folder in line with GDPR requirements.
- Agree a review date and ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting to review symptoms and actions.

## 2.2 Factors to consider when undertaking a confidential discussion

Menopausal symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically. Some potential areas of support for staff to be considered include:

Factors to consider	Potential actions for consideration
Physical ie hot flushes and/or heavy periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider ordering lighter weight fabric uniform (145gsm) now available through contract for HSC professions or offer other reasonable adjustments regarding uniform e.g. larger sizes, additional sets of uniform. NB: The lighter weight option is available for all standard tunics – the only deviation is the white tunic, as the white lightweight tunic would be transparent – alternative is a smart scrub.</li> <li>• Facilitate a comfortable working temperature</li> <li>• Ensure easy access to toilet facilities or consider more frequent breaks if required</li> <li>• Access to a quiet area if needed to manage a severe flush</li> <li>• Ensure easy access to cold drinking water</li> </ul>
Psychological ie anxiety and/or loss of confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure there are regular one to one and Personal Development discussions;</li> <li>• Have time out with you as their manager to discuss any issues;</li> <li>• Consider flexible working or adjustment of duties on a temporary basis if required</li> <li>• Promote staff counselling service</li> <li>• Assess and address work related stress</li> </ul>
Workplace environmental factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review control of workplace temperature/ventilation.</li> <li>• Access to cold drinking water.</li> <li>• Availability of fans or window opening.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access arrangements for washroom and changing facilities.</li> <li>• Access to rest room or quiet space when required.</li> </ul>
Work pattern/routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration could be given, where practicable, to flexibility of work pattern or work routine. This may be subject to review.</li> <li>• Consider increased flexibility of working hours or working arrangements such as a reduction in hours, adjustments to start/finish times, flexible meal breaks, avoiding stretches of consecutive shifts, mid-week break, short rest breaks to manage symptoms or shift rotation (nights to days or days to nights) where practicable within the constraints of the service.</li> </ul>
Support available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest consultation with GP regarding specific symptom management or any symptom related concerns.</li> <li>• Consider Trust based sources of support including Inspire Wellbeing and online resources available on U-matter <a href="http://www.u-matter.org.uk/">www.u-matter.org.uk/</a>, (Promoting wellbeing Training Directory and Recovery College).</li> <li>• Signpost to Human Resources for guidance on related policy, including managing attendance protocol, flexible working policy.</li> <li>• Consider referral to Occupational Health and Wellbeing service if specific health related assessment/advice is required.</li> </ul>

### 2.3 Confidential Discussion and Agreed Actions Template

**Employee details:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours: \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Factors discussed: including symptoms experienced (physical & psychological)	Impact of symptoms experienced including effect on work (if any)	Agreed actions	Date of Review

Signed (Staff Member) .....

Signed (Manager).....

Date .....

### Appendix 3 Useful resources - A-Z Guide

- British Menopause Society short videos covering menopause care [BMS TV - British Menopause Society \(thebms.org.uk\)](https://www.thebms.org.uk)
- Faculty of Occupational Medicine – [www.fom.ac.uk/health-at-work-2/information-for-employersdealing-with-health-problems-in-the-workplace/advice-on-the-menopause](http://www.fom.ac.uk/health-at-work-2/information-for-employersdealing-with-health-problems-in-the-workplace/advice-on-the-menopause)
- Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health <https://www.fsrh.org/news/updated-clinical-guideline-published-contraception-for-women/>
- NHS England - Supporting our NHS Colleagues through menopause: a guidance for line managers and colleagues [NHS England » Supporting our NHS people through menopause: guidance for line managers and colleagues](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/)
- NHS guidance on menopause – [www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/)
- Menopause Exchange – [www.menopause-exchange.co.uk](http://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk)
- NICE Menopause Guidance [Overview | Menopause: diagnosis and management | Guidance | NICE](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG140)
- NIPSA Guidance on Menopause and the Workplace 2018 <https://nipso.org.uk/publications/GMW-1.pdf>
- RCN The Menopause and Work: guidance for RCN representatives [The Menopause and Work | Royal College of Nursing \(rcn.org.uk\)](https://www.rcn.org/clinical-and-research/the-menopause-and-work)
- Royal College Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Menopause and women's Health [Menopause and later life | RCOG](https://www.rcog.org.uk/clinical-and-research/menopause-and-later-life)
- UNISON The Menopause and work [The-menopause-and-work-A-UNISON-Guide.pdf](https://www.unison.org.uk/~/media/UNISON/Policy%20and%20Research/2018/20180620%20The%20menopause%20and%20work%20-%20A%20UNISON%20Guide.pdf)
- Women's Health Concern (the patient arm of the British Menopause Society) [www.womens-health-concern.org](http://www.womens-health-concern.org) British Menopause Society – <https://thebms.org.uk>