



# LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

## HR POLICY – MENOPAUSE

# Menopause Policy

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## Appendix 1: Menopause Risk Assessment

Version No	Purpose/Change	Author	Implementation Date	Approved by	Last review date	Next review date
1	New policy building upon existing guidance	Shola Adejonwo	July 2023	TU/SLT/GB	NA	July 2024

If you have any queries regarding the content of this policy and procedure, please contact HR on [HR@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:HR@walthamforest.gov.uk) the HR team will be able to give advice and practical guidance on this process as required



## 1.0 Introduction

This policy is intended to raise awareness of menopause and provide information and support for all employees, whether affected directly or indirectly.

The policy aims to:

- foster an environment in which colleagues can comfortably initiate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause.
- encourage individuals to feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and to ask for support so they can continue to carry out their work.
- provide information and guidance to managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support staff at work.
- reduce absence levels due to menopausal symptoms.

It is recognised that staff may need additional consideration, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause (the stages of the perimenopause, menopause then post menopause). The Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment and will work proactively to make adjustments, where necessary to support those experiencing the menopause.

Although menopause is strongly associated with women and female reproductive health, it is also acknowledged that those who do not identify as female may experience menopause. The menopause is a very individual experience, and each person can be affected in different ways and to differing degrees, therefore varying levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.

## 2.0 Definitions

The following outlines the definitions related to menopause:

### 2.1. What is menopause?

The menopause is a natural part of aging for women and denotes a biological stage of life in which a person stops menstruating and experiences hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. Usually, menopause is defined as having occurred when a person has not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for women reaching the menopause naturally). It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts for a number of years. Every experience will be different and menopausal symptoms can sometimes begin before the age of 40.

Although for many this is a natural life change, for some employees the menopause may be medically induced which means that this employee may have had extensive health concerns before their medically induced menopause. Surgery such as a hysterectomy and or chemotherapy can affect those in younger age groups, creating severe symptoms. So, for some it is not a 'natural life change' or transition and this makes the psychological aspect of this more important to consider given both the impact of the medical condition and then that of the menopause. It is therefore a very personal transitional phase in an individuals' life.





It is important to be aware that the menopause is a temporary or transitional stage in an individual's life and that not all individuals experience significant symptoms. However, for some employees they will have experienced peri menopause symptoms for many years prior to being formally diagnosed with menopause.

- **Menopause** - A biological stage marking the absence of a menstrual period for 12 consecutive months. This is a stage when an individual can experience intermittent physical and / or psychological symptoms of varying degrees which can last for several years.
- **Perimenopause** - The time leading up to the end of menstruation when changes start to happen. Symptoms typically begin about four years before the last period. Most individuals start to notice perimenopause symptoms in their forties however for some individual's symptoms can start much earlier.
- **Premature menopause** - Can happen naturally, or because of illness or surgery.
- **Post menopause** is the time beyond menopause.

### 3.0 Legislative Compliance

Perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms can cause a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an employee's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The effects could be seen as a long term physical or mental impairment and therefore could potentially be regarded as a disability within the Equality Act 2010. Please click [here](#) to view the Equal Opportunity Policy Statement and Equality Act 2010 guidance .

Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council, as an employer, should not discriminate against employees on the basis of 'protected characteristics' such as age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. It is important to note that some conditions linked to the menopause may be considered an underlying medical condition and may meet the definition of an 'impairment' and a 'disabled person' under the Equality Act 2010 depending on the duration and nature of the condition. Such a person may require reasonable adjustments. Employers and managers must consider reasonable adjustments to remove or minimise disadvantages to those with a disability.

Please refer to the Managing Sickness Procedure available [here](#) which will apply to menopause related sickness absences. Managers should however use their discretion when considering such absences and the point at which formal action is taken when the employee reaches the sickness trigger points.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), employers are required to carry out risk assessments under the Management Regulations which should include specific risk assessments for individuals experiencing menopausal symptoms, if they are employed. Please refer to section 5.4 Risk Assessment below for more detail.

### 4.0 Symptoms of the menopause.

Every person's experience of the menopause will vary and the list below is not exhaustive. Some of the most common symptoms that one may experience are:



Physical Symptoms	Description/Impact in the workplace	Possible support available, which can vary based on the employees need and that of the service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sleep Disruption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be caused by night sweats or hormonal changes, although can also be caused by anxiety felt during the menopause.</li> <li>Sleep loss can cause irritability or lack of concentration at work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration be given to adapting working hours for a later start and finish time to accommodate the sleep disruption</li> <li>Consideration of home working for more challenging episodes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty Concentrating/Reduced Cognitive function {brain fog}</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be caused by sleep disruption</li> <li>Can cause problems with memory and confidence. For example, doing presentations may become more difficult or it may cause problems meeting deadlines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take regular breaks</li> <li>Consideration being given to adapting the workload around worst episodes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Irregular/Heavy/Painful Periods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some periods may last longer.</li> </ul> <p>Most people will also experience irregular periods, which are harder to prepare for.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can cause embarrassment if they start periods unexpectedly or experience heavy sudden bleeding 'flooding' which can cause concern</li> <li>Periods may become more painful and other gynaecological issues could develop.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of home working for more challenging episodes</li> <li>Take regular breaks</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hot Flashes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downwards.</li> <li>Most flushes only last a few minutes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>eat a healthy diet</li> <li>maintaining a healthy weight</li> <li>exercise regularly,</li> <li>undertake relaxation methods like yoga, tai chi or meditation</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Severe flushes can cause sweat to soak through clothing and cause distress or embarrassment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>talk to other people going through menopause, like family, friends or colleagues</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tiredness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be caused by sleep disruption</li> <li>Can lead to headaches</li> <li>Poor concentration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of home working for more challenging episodes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urinary Problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is common to have an urgent need to pass urine or a need to pass it more often than normal.</li> <li>This may be difficult for staff who are part of long meetings or working shifts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring that meetings have regular comfort breaks</li> <li>That those working with customers/ frontline work force, have regular comfort breaks built into their shift patterns</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Migraines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Migraines and headaches are more common during the menopause and can be more severe.</li> <li>The individual may be bothered by light and may experience nausea.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of home working for more challenging episodes</li> </ul>
<b>Psychological Symptoms</b>		<b>List of general supportive actions that can be taken</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mood Swings/Emotional Disturbance</li> <li>Anxiety/Panic Attacks</li> <li>Palpitations</li> <li>Depression</li> <li>Lack of confidence</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>get plenty of rest, including keeping to regular sleep routines</li> <li>eat a healthy diet</li> <li>have calcium-rich food like milk, yoghurt and kale to keep bones healthy</li> <li>exercise regularly, try including weight-bearing activities where your feet and legs support your weight like walking, running or dancing</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do relaxing things like yoga, tai chi or meditation</li> <li>• talk to other people going through the same thing, like family, friends or colleagues</li> <li>• talk to a doctor before taking herbal supplements or complementary medicines</li> </ul>
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## 5.0 Workplace Support for employees experiencing menopause

It is recognised that the menopause is a very personal experience and different kinds of adjustments and levels of support may be needed for different individuals. Individuals are encouraged to speak to their line manager if they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are recognised as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health. Early notification will also help line managers to determine the most appropriate course of action to support an employee's individual needs.

### 5.1 Alternative points of contacts for support

Although all line managers are expected to take a positive and supportive approach towards discussions about the menopause, the Council understands that some individual employees who are affected may feel uncomfortable talking directly to their line manager if they are experiencing problems, especially if the line manager is male or much younger.

The Council understands this and for employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may wish to have an initial discussion with:

- A colleague they trust
- A HR Adviser
- Occupational health practitioner, click [here](#)
- Trade Union representative. Click [here](#) for Trade Union information.

Individuals can also access confidential support through a variety of initiatives such as the council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) service, which offers expert advice and specialist counselling online or by telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Information about the EAP service can be found on Forest Hub via the link [here](#)

### 5.2 Support from Managers

If an employee chooses to disclose that the menopause may be impacting them at Work, managers are expected to:

- Educate themselves so that they understand how the menopause can affect their staff.



- Talk about it. Try to provide an environment that encourages an open discussion, for example, during one-to-ones or the 'return to work' meeting following any sickness absence.
- Listen carefully and ask appropriate questions with a view to coming up with ways of providing support for the employee. Note that each employee's needs will be different.
- The conversation needs to remain practical at all times focusing on the support for the employee and impact on work rather than details of the symptoms they are experiencing. This will alleviate any embarrassment on both sides.
- Familiarise themselves with the menopause policy and be aware of the support measures available within the council. Issues around menopause may come up in other ways, for example, via a sickness absence; requests for flexible working; managing performance etc.
- Do not simply dismiss health issues with the assumption that they are associated with the menopause. Symptoms, whether as a result of the menopause or not, should be seen as medical conditions and investigated and managed as such.
- Do not provide medical advice. Rather, encourage the employee to visit their GP or an Occupational health referral. More details available [here](#)
- Managers must respect the employee's privacy and should ascertain how much information about their condition the employee will allow to be shared with their colleagues.
- Be mindful that in some cultures it is not common to openly discuss menopause. In particular some employees may not feel comfortable disclosing symptoms to male managers. You should therefore seek to minimise any discomfort.
- Be conscious that menopause may affect employees who do not identify as female.
- Record support agreed, actions to be implemented, and keep under review

### 5.3 Flexible Working

Some employees may find flexible working patterns helpful during the menopause. The council has a flexible working guidance available which can be found [here](#) and managers are encouraged to support staff with flexible working requests, where the business can reasonably accommodate this. Some employees may be able to start later or work from other locations (home or other buildings) if there are issues with sleep patterns and tiredness. For some staff, taking time off around menstruation or the ability to work from home when going through peri-menopause may be helpful.

It is recognised that some of the recommendations made within this policy may not be suitable or appropriate for all employees, teams or services. Therefore, serious consideration must be made based on the employee's needs, and that of the service with the key priority being that this is a matter that can be difficult and challenging for employees and that flexibility and understanding should be driving the need to assist employees. Managers should continue to discuss the employees needs with them and look at all alternative ways to support them at work. The key is for managers to enable flexibility as much as possible.

### 5.4 Risk Assessment

Managers should ensure risk assessments consider the specific requirements of menopausal staff and help ensure that the working environment is suitable and as far as practicable, should not aggravate symptoms. The risk assessment will help to identify any potential control measures which may be required.





You should carry out a risk assessment to consider the specific needs of employees going through the menopause and help identify control measures to take at work to minimise the impact of symptoms. Particular issues to consider include temperature, ventilation and the materials used in any uniform which is provided. Welfare issues (including toilet facilities and access to cold water) should also be considered. Please refer to Appendix 1 Menopause Risk Assessment to assist with identifying specific individual needs.

## 5.5 Practical Workplace Adjustments

Please note the following:

- **Workplace temperature and ventilation**  
Find a way of providing a temperature that suits your colleague. If office temperature cannot be adapted, consider if the employee is able to purchase a fan or re-locate their workstation in another part of the office or building that may be more comfortable.  
Staff are able to reserve fixed desks if they have a medical requirement. A sign will be placed on the desk noting that it is reserved on certain days of the week.
- **Access to cold drinking water**  
This should be provided in all work locations including off site venues.
- **Access to a bathroom**  
Ensure that staff have easy access to a bathroom at short notices at all sites.
- **Where uniforms are compulsory flexibility is helpful**  
This might include the use of thermally comfortable fabrics, optional layers and being allowed to remove neckties or jackets. There should also be changing facilities.  
Ensure that spare uniforms are available in various sizes in case individuals experience heavy sweating or flooding and need to change
- **Where work requires constant standing or prolonged sitting**  
Having access to a rest room or break area would be helpful as well as space for employees to move around in sedentary roles.
- **If concentration is an issue**  
Consider supplying noise reducing earphones to assist with concentration.
- **In customer/public facing roles**  
It may help to have access to a quiet room/rest room for a short break, for example, to manage a severe hot flush.
- **Medical Advice**  
A referral to the Occupational Health service may be required to obtain professional medical advice on the employee's health and what reasonable adjustments may be required to support them at work. Please see more details [here](#)

## 6.0 Self-Help measures.

Current health promotion advice to women highlights the importance of lifestyle choices before, during and after the menopause and the benefits of:

- Consulting with a GP on the management of the menopause and to ensure that any symptoms are not due to any other causes
- If you are experiencing difficulties with memory, consider having a notepad with you and writing down anything important



- Having access to natural light
- Getting adequate rest and relaxation
- Wearing natural fibres
- Eating healthily and regularly – research has shown that a balanced diet can help alleviate some symptoms and help keep bones healthy
- Drinking plenty of water – some women find chilled water helpful
- Exercising regularly – exercise can help to reduce hot flushes and improve sleep. It can also help boost mood and maintain strong bones
- Not smoking
- Be aware of your caffeine and alcohol intake

## 7.0 Resources/Further Information

- Employee Assistance Programme
- Occupational Health Service
- Health & Safety
- The Women of Waltham Forest network
- The LGBTQI+ (Out in the Forest) network
- The British Menopause Society
- NHS menopause pages
- NHS information on HRT
- ACAS

## 7.1 Useful Links

- Henpicked - <https://henpicked.net/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause/>
- [NHS Choices – menopause](#)
- <http://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>
- The Daisy Network – <https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/>
- Healthtalk.org – <http://www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/late-life/menopause/topics>
- Women’s Health Concerns – <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/focus-series/menopause/>
- The Menopause Exchange – <http://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/>
- [Wellbeing of Women – the menopause](#)
- NICE Menopause: diagnosis and management – <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23>
- [Supporting Working Women Through the Menopause – Guidance for Union Reps \(TUC\)](#)
- [Guidance on Menopause and the Workplace – Faculty of Occupational Medicine \(Royal College of Physicians\)](#)



## Appendix 1 – Menopause Risk Assessment

<b>Assessment Subject:</b>			
<b>Directorate/Division:</b>		<b>Assessor:</b>	
<b>Date of Assessment:</b>		<b>Date to Review:</b>	

Issues Identified (anything which may cause harm)	Considerations	Existing Control Measures  (current action to deal with issues)	Risk Rating = Severity X Likelihood  High/Med/Low	Additional Control Measures  (eliminate or further limit risk)	Remaining Risk  High/Med/Low	Action by Who	Action by when
Sickness reporting	Can employee report sick initially to alternative manager (e.g. female) if they have menopausal symptoms?						
Stress	Is there an opportunity to switch to alternative duties on a temporary basis? What arrangements and support is available to help the employee manage their workload?						

Work Station	Do work stations or locations have easy access to toilet and rest facilities?						
Temperature	Is ventilation available and is it regularly maintained? Is additional ventilation provided if necessary? E.g. Desk Fan, ability to open windows? Is the air conditioning / humidifier functioning normally. Do uniforms and PPE equipment reflect the needs of the individual? Is the employee aware of what additional uniform can be provided and how to get this?						
Physical nature of duties	Does the role impact on fatigue (mental and physical)? Does the role result in fatigue from						

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	<p>standing? Is employee able to move freely / adjust posture etc.? Have workstation risk assessments been reviewed to take menopause into account?</p> <p>Are there opportunities to switch temporarily to lighter or different duties?</p>						
Flexible work arrangements	<p>Are there flexible arrangements in place in relation to breaks? Can start and finish times be adjusted as part of a flexible working approach. Can aspects of the job be done remotely/from home?</p>						
<a href="#">Other?</a>							

