

# Menopause Policy



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# 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Derbyshire County Council's policy is to outline the council's commitment to developing a supportive culture for all employees experiencing the peri menopause and menopause and to educate and inform managers of their responsibility to understand how the perimenopause / menopause can affect employees, and how they can support those experiencing the menopause at work. Specific support mechanisms include:-

- Promoting the fair treatment of employees by fostering an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about the perimenopause / menopause in a respectful and supportive manner.
  - Raising wider awareness and understanding amongst all colleagues about the perimenopause / menopause, so everyone can confidently have open and supportive conversations and are clear on this policy.
  - Enabling colleagues experiencing the perimenopause / menopause to continue to be effective in their jobs and reduce potential absenteeism / employees leaving the workforce caused by this phase of life.
  - Highlighting the support mechanisms in place for employees and to support to recruit and retain colleagues who are experiencing the perimenopause / menopause.
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## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all departments and all employees of Derbyshire County Council.

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### 3. Introduction

This policy is supported by the joint trade unions representing the employees at Derbyshire County Council and Joined Up Care Derbyshire (JUCD).

The council as part of JUCD recognises that the perimenopause / menopause can bring issues for individuals which can impact upon their work. Supporting colleagues through the menopause is one of the key deliverable actions in the council's wellbeing strategy and it is to the benefit of us all that the council as employer works with employees to support them in these circumstances to find mutually beneficial arrangements, maximising employee retention and wellbeing. This policy has been produced jointly and each organisation has adopted it and made minor adaptations it to suit their circumstances.

The council recognises that some colleagues experiencing the peri-menopause / menopause may find that related symptoms may impact on their health and wellbeing, and we aim to provide as much support as is reasonably practicable for individuals.

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

The council is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone and recognises that people experiencing the peri-menopause / menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments. With the right support and medical treatment for their symptoms, their experience should improve.

The council recognises that menopausal symptoms can also affect transgender people including non-binary people and is committed to developing a workplace culture that supports workers experiencing the menopause in order for them to feel

confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work.

At the date of publication of this policy (within Derbyshire County Council), the percentage of females aged 40 and above is 59% and within the changing age of the UK workforce this means that between 75% and 80% of menopausal people are in work. Which means this affects our entire workforce, whether it be the individual going through this phase of life, or colleagues who are supporting / managing their co-workers. Research shows that the majority of individuals affected are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, nor ask for support or adjustments that they may need.

This policy sets out the guidelines for employees and managers on providing the right support to individuals to help them manage symptoms at work. It is not contractual and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment.

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## 4. Roles and responsibilities

### **Corporate Management Team (CMT)**

- Will endorse and support the policy and ensure that sufficient resources are provided to ensure compliance with this policy.

### **Departmental Senior Management Team (SMT)**

- Will ensure that sufficient resources are provided to ensure compliance with this policy, tailored to the specific requirements of their department.

### **Head of Service (HoS)**

- Will ensure suitable and sufficient resources are provided to comply with the requirements of this policy.
- Provide local Union Safety Representatives with all information, relevant to this policy on request.

### **Line Manager**

- Is responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy and ensuring that their employees read and understand this policy.
- Listen to an employee who reaches out for support and ensure they are signposted to any additional support.
- Must demonstrate an understanding of the employee's situation and support them in an empathetic and equitable way.
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally. Ensuring that all information shared by the employee is treated in the strictest confidence and is not shared further without the employee's consent.
- Follow any menopause related guidance provided, seeking support from HR or Occupational Health, if necessary, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, or adjustments required.

- Record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented.
- Respect worker's right to privacy and confidentiality, ensure all information shared with colleagues, line managers and HR, regarding experiences of staff members is treated as confidential (special category data).
- Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates and ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.
- Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or symptoms are proving more problematic, the line manager will consult with HR , who may discuss a referral to Occupational Health.
- If consent is obtained, refer the employee to Occupational Health.
- Review Occupational Health advice and implement any recommendations where reasonably practical.

## **Employee**

- Must take a personal responsibility to look after their health.
- Approach someone in the workplace with whom they feel comfortable discussing issues with and who could support them in the conversation – e.g., line manager, a colleague, other manager or trade union representative.
- Are encouraged to seek support through their GP, HR, Occupational Health, and the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) as necessary.
- Consider recording and monitoring symptoms and / or their severity which may be helpful to understand how your wellbeing may be affected and how you can seek support.
- Consider proposing to your line manager a change in working hours or pattern or remote working if / when you are office based, if this is practicable within your role, or flexibility in a work location. Or propose that you could work from home more frequently or at short notice when your symptoms are bad.
- Discuss with your manager the potential for a reduction in travel, changes in comfort breaks and dialling into some meetings where possible.
- All employees have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and productive working environment, be willing to help and support their colleagues, and



understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving, as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

- Employees should report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause.

### **Health, Safety and Wellbeing Function (HSW)**

- Will provide support, advice and guidance on perimenopause/menopause.
- Provide the appropriate information so that employees are better able to understand the effect of the perimenopause / menopause and be comfortable about discussing and addressing the impact that it can have on colleagues.
- Seek assistance from specialist organisations when necessary.
- Ensure employees are supported by appropriate communications aimed at developing an understanding and supportive culture across the organisation by all colleagues.
- Support and attend appropriate training for employees and managers where required.
- Monitor the effectiveness of this policy.

## 5. Definitions and Symptoms

### Definition

The menopause is when an adult female stops having periods. This affects women, and people who identify in other ways including transgender and non-binary people. It occurs when the ovaries stop producing eggs and as a result, levels of hormones called oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone fall. The menopause is a natural transition stage but, for some it will be medically induced.

The average age for someone to reach menopause is 51, but hormonal changes in the perimenopause phase mean that many experience symptoms for around 10 years prior to this. One in 100 adult females enter the menopause under 45 years and one in 1000 before 40 years.

### There are four key stages:

1. Pre-menopause: the time in life before any menopausal symptoms occur.
2. Perimenopause: when menopausal symptoms occur due to hormone changes, but periods still happen (even if irregular).
3. Menopause: when there has been no period for 12 consecutive months.
4. Post-menopause: the time in life after 12 months with no periods.

NB - It should be noted that male colleagues may also experience symptoms through the Andropause phase of life. See Menopause support, information and training link at the end of this document for some reference information.

**Symptoms of Perimenopause and Menopause**

Menopause transition does not necessarily lead to reduced performance at work and may be managed with consideration, understanding and in some circumstances, with workplace flexibility. It is everyone's responsibility to treat people who have menopause symptoms fairly as well as with empathy.

Everyone will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues.

Symptoms are highly individual and can be either physical, psychological or a combination of both. They can be sensitive and cause embarrassment for some for varied lengths of time, so it is entirely understandable for colleagues to feel unable to share and explore sensitive and personal symptoms with their managers. Employees can often encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms.

Over 80% of women, including some transgender and non-binary people experience symptoms due to changes in hormone levels. 25% of these experience symptoms which could be classed as severe and have a significant impact on their daily life. Some trans women may experience pseudo-menopausal symptoms related to their hormone therapy treatment.

There are many symptoms including, but not exclusively, anxiety, brain fog, fatigue, hot flushes, trouble sleeping, poor concentration, headaches or migraine, heavy and painful periods and clots, aching and painful muscles and joints, and loss of confidence, low mood and self-esteem, night sweats, weight gain, hair loss, urinary problems and irritated skin.

These symptoms can impact on an individual's performance in terms of coping strategies, pressure of dealing with deadlines and especially where there are changing priorities. Managers need to consider if individuals could be entering this phase of life which is resulting in a potential drop in performance.

It is important to remember that reduced levels of oestrogen last for ever. This is not a phase that people go through and 'come out the other side'. Without replacing hormones, ongoing symptoms can occur for the rest of someone's life. Lack of oestrogen has a further effect on future health as it is linked with loss of bone density (leading to osteoporosis), heart disease, diabetes and dementia.

The menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work/menopause-and-the-law>).

But if an employee or worker is put at a disadvantage and treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms, this could be discrimination if related to a protected characteristic, for example:

- Sex
- age
- disability
- gender reassignment

The council and other workplaces across JUCD recognises that for many reasons, peoples' individual experiences of this phase of life may differ greatly.

### **Additional menopause support, information and training: -**

In order to help implement this policy there is additional supporting information available to managers and employees. This information includes

- **Menopause Symptoms and Support Suggestions** *which contains a form for employees to be able to list their symptoms and how they affect them to prompt discussions with managers and a guide for managers on adjustments they may wish to consider linked to key symptoms. It also contains links to a whole host of supporting documents.*
- **Menopause Training and access to the Vimeo platform** *access to a whole range of menopause general and specific training.*
- **Employee Menopause stories** *these are individual anonymised stories from employees outlining how the menopause has affected them. The aim is that it supports others going through the menopause.*

All the resources can be accessed at the following link.

[Menopause support, information and training](#)

Information from both Unison and Unite Trade Unions can also be found on the same link

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