

Personnel Committee – 24 January 2022

Menopause Policy

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To gain Personnel Committee approval for the new Menopause Policy (Appendix 1) endorsed by CMT at their meeting of 06 January 2022.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Personnel Committee is recommended to approve the Menopause Policy (Appendix 1) endorsed by CMT (06 January 2022).

3. Background Information

Aim

- 3.1 The new Menopause Policy aims to raise awareness of the menopause across the council, ensure employees and managers understand what the menopause is and how to provide support to those experiencing menopausal symptoms. Providing support and guidance to those experiencing menopause is an important aspect of our overall commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion as well as ensuring we are fulfilling our duty of care to employees by looking after their physical and psychological health and wellbeing at work.
- 3.2 It is envisioned that this policy will help foster a supportive environment, where employees and managers are encouraged to have open conversations about the menopause without embarrassment and fear of shame or stigma. The policy provides employees and managers with information and techniques to assist with such discussions, as well as providing information on a range of internal and external support services available.
- 3.3 Supporting employees positively through the menopause stages of their life is not only beneficial for the individual but also has wide ranging business benefits. Research suggests that as many as one in five people leave the workplace due to menopause and their employers are not told the underlying reasons why. Many women, particularly those that are in senior roles, either suffer in silence or end up leaving their jobs. It is therefore important for the council to support those experiencing menopausal symptoms, to help; retain valuable skills, including senior talent; maintain diversity representation particularly at senior levels; reduce sickness absence and employee stress; improve staff morale and productivity. By 2030, the Department for Work and Pensions estimates that 50 per cent of adults in the UK will be aged 50 or over. With more women in the workplace about to transition into perimenopause it is more important than ever that we know how best to support our colleagues.

- 3.4 This policy has been designed to align to PROUD and the council's aim and priorities, as well as reinforcing the council's standards and behavioural Framework.

Know

- 3.5 The main elements contained in the new Menopause Policy include;

- Definitions of menopause, perimenopause, premature menopause, postmenopause and andropause;
- Menopausal symptoms including how people can be affected, how this can vary in nature, severity and length;
- Encouragement of open and honest work place discussions regarding menopause in general, as well as specific advice and guidance for managers who are required to support employees, including hints and tips for managing such sensitive conversations;
- Several practical steps that managers are advised to take / consider when supporting employees going through the menopause, including risk assessments, the introduction of a menopause support form and suggestions for adjustments that might be relevant to consider;
- The proposal of a new menopause category on One Source for recording sickness absence relating specifically to menopausal symptoms so the level of sickness absence due to the menopause can be identified and monitored more effectively in the future;
- Reference made to the management of sickness absence due to the menopause and the link with the sickness absence policy (the guidance for which is being separately updated to reference menopause related absence);
- The provision of information, guidance and signposting for employees and managers to gain further advice and support from both internal and external sources;
- Clearly identified accountabilities.

- 3.6 Once approved it is proposed that the new Menopause Policy is launched with a dedicated promotional campaign and that this includes;

- Guest speakers for SMG at their session in February 2022.
- Trained menopause champions – it is proposed that this is picked up by Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) - where a framework already exists and who are already receiving menopause related queries/contact and potentially HR Advisors / trade union colleagues (with their agreement).
- E-learning offer, which is already developed and comprehensive.

Council corporate plan priorities

- 3.7 The policy is directly aligned to the internal focus priority within Our Council Plan, delivering services that are efficient and effective and supports the delivery of the council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan.

Response

- 3.8 Subject to approval, HR will finalise all associated guidance / forms (where applicable) and prepare a workforce communications and implementation plan ready for launch.
- 3.9 It is proposed that in mid-January 2022, a short survey is undertaken with SMG to ascertain a position statement in terms of how comfortable they are having conversations about menopause. This will be arranged through a procured third party and will inform a 30 minute presentation to SMG on 15 February 2022.
- 3.10 In early March 2022, the menopause champions (namely, the council's MHFAs / HR Advisors and trade unions will receive 2 x 2 hour training sessions one week apart).
- 3.11 For everyone else including line managers, there will be an elearning package that includes a variety of speakers, relevant legislation, medics and senior leader views.

Review

- 3.12 Employment policies will usually be reviewed on a three yearly cycle, unless legislation or internal organisational need prompt a review earlier.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Access to the elearning provision is approximately £4,000 per annum.
- 4.2 The initial training including the SMG sessions and 2 x 2 hours training sessions for the menopause champions is approximately £2,000 as a one-off cost.
- 4.3 This totals a cost in 2021/22 which can be consumed within the current years HR/R&T budget and has been confirmed by finance.
- 4.4 It is proposed that any ongoing annual cost of £4,000 from 2022/23 onwards be built into the learning and development base budget, which HR/L&D have committed to.
- 4.5 Resulting in no additional funding being required to support the launch and awareness campaign for the policy implementation.

5. Legal Considerations

- 5.1 There are no legal issues arising from this report. The Menopause Policy helps to ensure that the council are meeting its legal obligations by providing reasonable adjustments (as necessary) in accordance with the disability provisions of the Equality Act 2010. Severe menopausal symptoms may combine to have a substantial adverse effect on normal day to day activities and as such potentially meeting the legal definition of a disability under the Equality Act 2010.

6. Risk Management

- 6.1 An equality impact assessment is attached (Appendix 2).

7. People

- 7.1 The policy applies to all council employees including Directors, Executive Directors the Chief Executive and fixed term and temporary employees.

With the exception of;

- 7.1.1 Schools-based employees / workers where the governing body has delegated authority and for whom separate arrangements apply.
- 7.2 This policy does not apply to contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the council.
- 7.3 This policy does apply to casual workers and agency workers, although any reasonable adjustments required for agency workers will need to be discussed collaboratively with the agency.
- 7.4 There is no direct impact on our citizens as a result of this policy. The policy is however, part of the employment framework that helps to ensure that residents of Walsall get the best possible services from council employees.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The policy has been consulted upon with senior managers, stakeholders and trade union colleagues across the council between 19 October and 5 November 2021. There has been a high number of returns, which have included a number of positive comments about the appropriateness and comprehensiveness of the policy.
- 8.2 Consultation with HR, IG and Equalities colleagues has been ongoing throughout to ensure the draft policy and associated forms meet key stakeholders requirements.
- 8.3 Equalities and Trade union colleagues raised a concern regarding how the policy will be managed in relation to the Bradford Factor score and sickness absences as a result of menopausal symptoms. In response to this, the policy was amended to provide greater clarity, stating that sickness absences will be managed in line with the current sickness absence policy (including BFS) and menopause related sickness absences will be managed in the same way as other health conditions that are supported with reasonable adjustments. The policy references the sickness absence guidance document (where other absence management advice relating to disability and pregnancy is contained), and this will be revised to include specific advice on the menopause and managing related sickness absences.
- 8.4 CMT endorsed the policy at their meeting on 06 January 2022.

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