

Appendix 1

Menopause Policy



Walsall Council

Version Control

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Owner	Human Resources	Status	Draft
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Purpose	To provide information about the symptoms of the menopause, provide advice and guidance for employees / workers and managers in helping manage the symptoms of the menopause and signposting to additional sources of support and information.		

This policy links to:

- Our Council Plan
- Walsall Proud
- Agile/Blended Working Policy
- Equality and Diversity Protocol
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Performance & Ill Health Capability
- Gender Reassignment Guidance
- Right to Request Flexible Working Policy
- Workforce Strategy
- Behaviour & Standards Framework
- Sickness Absence Policy
- Sickness Absence Guidance
- Health and Safety Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Collective Grievance Policy
- Flexi-time Scheme

This list is not exhaustive.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Walsall Council is PROUD. We are proud of our past, our present and for our future. The council is committed to reducing inequalities and ensuring all potential is maximised and its employment policies, procedures and guidelines are designed to support this vision and deliver the council's priorities.
- 1.2 The council is committed to creating an environment that provides opportunities for all individuals and communities to fulfil their potential. This policy provides a framework in which employees will be supported to deliver the council's priorities in line with the council's expected behaviours and values; professionalism; leadership; accountability; transparency and ethical.
- 1.3 The council's values and behaviours will be at the core of everything the council deliver and through a culture of continuous improvement, the council will increase performance, efficiency and champion the design of services to meet the needs of customers. As a digital by design council, employees will be empowered to deliver new ways of thinking and new ways of working, encouraging innovation and creativity in a learning environment. The council is committed to technological investment to deliver transformation in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its services, both internally and externally.
- 1.4 This policy framework promotes the council's strategic priority of internal focus ensuring all council services are effective and efficient and helps embed the behaviours and values expected of all employees as part of the Behaviour and Standards Framework.
- 1.5 The council is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all its employees. This policy aims to raise awareness of menopause, ensure employees / workers and managers understand what the menopause is and to provide support to those experiencing menopausal symptoms. Providing support and guidance to those experiencing the menopause is an important aspect of our overall commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion as well as looking after the physical and psychological health and general well-being of all our employees / workers.
- 1.6 This policy is intended to foster a supportive environment, where employees / workers and managers are knowledgeable and encouraged to be comfortable enough to have open conversations about menopause without embarrassment and fear of shame or stigma. It includes suggestions for self-management, signposts to relevant sources of advice, information and support, and provides guidance on reasonable adjustments that should be considered (where appropriate).
- 1.7 Where this policy refers to menopause and / or menopausal symptoms it should be noted that it also includes perimenopause and /or perimenopausal symptoms and postmenopause and / or postmenopausal symptoms.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all council employees (including Directors, Executive Directors, the Chief Executive and fixed term and temporary employees);
- 2.2 With the exception of;
 - 2.2.1 School-based employees / workers where the governing body has delegated authority and for whom separate arrangements apply.
- 2.3 This policy does not apply to contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the council.
- 2.4 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.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 Menopause

- 3.1.1 A biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating as a result of a significant change in hormone levels that can dramatically affect physical changes, mental health and physiological wellbeing. Usually considered as having occurred when someone has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for people reaching menopause naturally). The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45-55 years of age, although can happen earlier or later than this (when menopause happens before the age of 45 it is normally known as early menopause). The menopause is not usually an abrupt occurrence and symptoms can last for several years either side of the menopause.

3.2 Perimenopause

- 3.2.1 The time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience fluctuating hormone levels which can affect physical, emotional and cognitive function. Perimenopausal symptoms can be severe for many years, lasting on average seven years before reaching the menopause stage.

3.3 Premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency

- 3.3.1 When the menopause occurs before the age of 40 years, it is normally known as 'premature menopause' or 'premature ovarian insufficiency'. Some individuals experience the menopause naturally early and others temporarily, when it is medically induced (e.g. as part of a treatment plan for gynecological conditions). In some cases, menopause may be abrupt and permanent as a result of surgery, or treatment for some medical conditions (e.g. breast cancer).

3.4 Postmenopause

- 3.4.1 The time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months. Although the menopause has ceased, symptoms can persist for several years.

3.5 Andropause (menopause type symptoms experienced by men)

- 3.5.1 Whilst women have a significant drop in hormone levels that usually result in the menopause, their male counter parts may also be struggling with a range of symptoms that some men may experience in their late 40's / early 50's, these can include; mood swings / irritability; depression; loss of muscle mass / reduced ability to exercise; insomnia / increased tiredness; poor concentration and short-term memory; lack of libido and erectile dysfunction. The NHS suggests a number of reasons for these symptoms, that are not necessarily or unlikely to be hormone related as normally testosterone levels only drop slightly, often due to age (whereas oestrogen levels drop drastically during the female menopause).

4.0 Principles

- 4.1 It is important to recognise that menopause is a very individual experience and that people can be affected in different ways and to different degrees. Not everyone will have menopausal symptoms. Symptoms will vary in type, amount and severity, therefore different and varying levels of support and adjustments may be needed. 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 requiring reasonable adjustments. It is important to note that the menopause is not automatically classed as a disability; it depends on how it affects the individual at that stage in their life.
- 4.2 Whilst menopause is often thought of as a female condition, this policy is aimed at all those individuals who in some form or another may experience menopausal symptoms, including those individuals from non-binary and transgender communities.
- 4.3 Andropause symptoms experienced by men in their late 40's / early 50's, refer to 3.5 above, can include; mood swings / irritability; depression; loss of muscle mass / reduced ability to exercise; insomnia / increased tiredness; poor concentration and short-term memory; lack of libido and erectile dysfunction. In order to support all employees / workers with their health and wellbeing and ensure attendance and productivity at work is maintained; the principles of encouraging open communication, a supportive work environment, access to support mechanisms and where applicable reasonable adjustments, should still apply to all.
- 4.4 Any absence relating to menopausal symptoms will be managed sensitively in accordance with the sickness absence policy, including the use of reasonable

adjustments where applicable. For further information, please see the sickness absence guidance found on the HR intranet pages.

- 4.5 Where an employee is absent due to known menopausal symptoms (including perimenopausal and postmenopausal symptoms), these should be recorded using the specific category on One Source (e.g. rather than using gynecological condition, migraine etc.)
- 4.6 Where symptoms are severe enough to be impacting on the individual's health and well-being at work and affecting their capability to carry out their role, managers should refer to HR for further advice. It may ultimately be appropriate to consider managing the situation through an alternative policy, such as performance and ill health capability where, in line with OH advice, redeployment may be considered. This will only be in cases where, due to the service requirements, it is not possible to make adjustments or where reasonable adjustments implemented through this policy have not achieved the required and / or sustained outcomes.
- 4.7 Employees / workers are encouraged to discuss their menopausal symptoms with their line manager in the first instance as they are best placed to provide support, review risk assessments and consider any adjustments required. However, where an employee / worker feels uncomfortable to have this conversation with their manager, they can contact a representative such as an alternative manager, liaise with their trade union or contact HR who can facilitate a discussion either with their manager or an alternative manager (if they prefer to discuss the topic with a female or male manager or a manager similar in age etc.). Employees / workers should note that where reasonable adjustments are required the employee / worker with the support of the representative will need to liaise with the respective line manager to agree to such workplace adjustments taking into account service area needs. Employees / workers should however note that all managers are required to familiarise themselves with this policy and have access to training on the menopause. In addition, employees / workers can contact one of the council's Mental Health First Aiders who have all undertaken menopause training.

5.0 Accountabilities

- 5.1 Managers are accountable for the following;
 - Applying this policy consistently, fairly and objectively in accordance with the council's vision and purpose and clearly demonstrating the council's management behaviours and values, seeking further advice and guidance from HR where necessary;
 - Having an awareness and understanding of menopause, its symptoms and how it can affect individuals in the work place;
 - Providing a safe place to allow individuals to speak openly and honestly, ensuring strict confidentiality and discretion are maintained;
 - Providing support to those experiencing menopausal symptoms, as outlined in this policy including taking a prompt, proactive and supportive

approach to discussing symptoms, reviewing working conditions, risk assessments and considering reasonable adjustments as necessary;

- Completing the menopause support form (where relevant) with the employee / worker;
- Signposting employees / workers to other appropriate sources of help and advice.

5.2 Employees are accountable for the following;

- All employees / workers should support the delivery of the council's vision and purpose, clearly demonstrating the council's behaviours and values;
- Actively engage in employment practices and processes in which they are involved and ensure they understand this policy, seeking further advice and guidance from managers where necessary;
- Taking personal responsibility to look after their own health and wellbeing, seeking support as necessary;
- Contributing to and helping foster an inclusive, respectful, and supportive working environment, ensuring that the subject of menopause is treated and discussed with respect and individual confidentiality is maintained;
- Being open and honest in conversations with their line manager or appropriate representative (see 4.7) at the earliest opportunity in order to seek guidance and support;
- Keeping their line manager up to date with any relevant changes in health;
- Ensuring awareness of, accessing and utilising the support mechanisms available and identified within this policy (as relevant), including EAP (Employee Assistance Programme), Occupational Health (OH), Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs), HR, Trade Union colleagues, external resources and self-management strategies to alleviate symptoms;
- Completing the menopause support form (where relevant) with management;
- Being willing to help and support colleagues as appropriate;
- Understanding, accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments their colleagues request or are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms;
- Complying with the requirements of this policy.

6.0 Understanding the menopause

- 6.1 Everyone's experience of the menopause will be different. Many but not all will experience some form of physical and / or psychological menopause symptoms however, their duration and severity will vary. Some of these symptoms can be quite severe and have a significant impact on everyday activities, including working life.

The most common symptoms include (this list is not exhaustive):

- Hot flushes
- Headaches
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Palpitations
- Fatigue
- Low mood or anxiety
- Reduced concentration
- Mood disturbances
- Irregular periods / heavy periods and clots / light periods
- Weight gain and slowed metabolism
- Dizziness
- Night sweats
- Sleep disruption / insomnia
- Panic attacks
- Reduced libido
- Skin irritations (dryness / itchiness)
- Loss of confidence
- Depression
- Forgetfulness / memory loss
- Clarity of thought impaired
- Urinary problems
- Dry eyes
- Brain fog
- Irritability

- 6.2 These symptoms can adversely affect the quality of both an employee's / workers personal and working life. Each of these symptoms can affect an employee's / workers comfort and performance at work, causing embarrassment, effecting confidence and be stressful for them to deal with.
- 6.3 There are a number of ways to manage mental health, physical and psychologic symptoms, from the medical approach to natural remedies, including dietary and lifestyle changes. Refer to the appendices for self-management information and external sources of advice and guidance.
- 6.4 For advice on managing their symptoms, employees / workers are advised to make an appointment with their GP as they will be able to recommend what's right based on the individual's medical history and personal preference.
- 6.5 Many individuals report that the menopause can make existing health conditions worse, triggering and / or coinciding with, a flare up of physical and psychologic symptoms. Some reporting that the menopause seems to trigger and / or coincide with the onset of a new condition. Many symptoms can interconnect or overlap which can delay the identification / diagnosis of menopause in some cases.
- 6.6 If an employee / worker has an existing condition that is worsened by the menopause, they may need more time off for medical appointments or treatment for that condition and there may need to be a review, and possibly changes, to any reasonable adjustments that were previously in place. Conditions that are reported to be affected by the menopause (amongst others) include; arthritis, multiple sclerosis (MS), mental health conditions including depression and anxiety, skin disorders, diabetes, hyperthyroidism, chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia.
- 6.7 In addition, some forms of treatment for menopause (e.g. those based on hormone replacement) may induce side effects that may also require some form of workplace adjustment.

- 6.8 Menopause presents in many different forms, to varying degrees and can be a long-term and changeable health condition and therefore each situation will require an individual and reviewable response. Managers are therefore encouraged to take into account the whole range of support options available to them when considering solutions and support that can be put in place for employees / worker. Spotting early signs of ill health or distress, and initiating early intervention is fundamental to supporting employee / worker health and wellbeing in the work place.
- 6.9 Managers should complete the menopause support form (where relevant) with individuals effected by the menopause at the earliest opportunity to ensure any reasonable adjustments can be made if required. The form should be reviewed on a regular basis (such as during one to one meetings, supervision sessions, APC's or as and when otherwise required) with the individual to ensure that any adjustments made are still relevant and any new adjustments can be identified.
- 6.10 There are several practical steps that managers are advised to take / consider to support their employees / workers who are going through the menopause. These are outlined below;
- Creating an environment in which employees / workers can have open conversations about health matters or concerns including those relating to menopause and expect all staff and managers to be sensitive and supportive of colleagues who may be affected;
 - Listening to the employee / worker and understanding what symptoms they are experiencing. Acknowledging that they may find the menopause difficult to talk about – have the discussion somewhere private where it's easy to speak openly and confidentially, ensuring a supportive approach and adequate time for the conversation;
 - Discussing whether the employee / worker has visited their GP and is being supported by them and / or discuss making a referral to occupational health if this would be beneficial;
 - Signpost the employee / worker to external sources of information and self-management strategies, refer to the appendices;
 - Discuss and agree with the employee / worker what information (if any) they would like to share with team colleagues and how they would like to share this information;
 - Updating risk assessments for the individual where required can help to ensure that menopausal symptoms are not exacerbated by the employees / workers working conditions and can help to identify what additional support the employee / worker may need, taking into account their health and wellbeing. These should be reviewed regularly due to the changing nature of menopausal symptoms and the potential longevity of the condition;
 - Managers should discuss and agree any reasonable adjustments identified with the employee / worker, which would normally be considered on a temporary and reviewable basis. For example, these could include reasonable adjustments such as; flexible working hours, reduced hours, providing a desk fan, additional breaks and short notice leave (where

necessary) to help with the more debilitating symptoms as a result of the fluctuating changes in hormone levels. Refer to (section 7.0) for further examples of reasonable adjustments that could be relevant to support menopausal symptoms dependent on the employees condition and the service needs;

- Managers should keep a record of conversations, supportive actions implemented and reasonable adjustments agreed and review this support on an ongoing basis and when changes occur. Any adjustments should be proportionate and reasonable based on the individual and service needs;
- Managers should act promptly in addressing any menopausal issues to prevent undue additional stress to the employee and reduce the potential for related sickness absence. This includes conversations, providing information or facilitating OH referrals, considering requests for time off in accordance with the councils leave policies, conducted risk assessments and providing any reasonable adjustments agreed.

Hints and tips for Managers

- Be ready to have open discussions with employees / workers, treating any discussions sensitively and confidentially while appreciating the personal nature of these discussions.
- Simple changes to your management style can make a world of difference, build relationships based on trust, empathy and respect to make it easier for an employee / worker to feel comfortable raising a health issue like the menopause.
- Support someone with menopausal symptoms in a sensitive manner, the same way as an employee / worker with any other ongoing health condition.
- Hold regular and informal one-to-one's that include the opportunity to talk about employee / worker well-being and provide a forum for conversation about any changes to someone's health situation, including menopause. One-to-one's are an excellent opportunity to build trust and connect to encourage supportive conversations and should not solely focus on work / task priorities.
- Asking people how they are on a regular basis will help to create an open and inclusive culture, and encourage someone to raise any concerns.
- Don't make assumptions – remember everyone is different, so take the lead from the individual (ensuring that the opportunity and environment for the discussion is provided).
- If managers are told about someone's health condition, including menopausal symptoms, this should be treated as confidential. If people want information about their condition to be shared, consent must be explicit. Managers should discuss with the employee / worker who will be told and by whom, as well as what information they do or do not want to be shared.

7.0 Examples of possible adjustments that managers could consider

- 7.1 Reasonable adjustments should be made on a case-by-case basis. Many will be simple to put into place, and may vary in the time they are required.

During the meeting with your employee / worker, discuss what their symptoms are, how this is affecting them at work, what they are doing to manage their symptoms and how we can help.

- 7.2 Try not to make any assumptions in advance, be prepared to listen and be open to ideas, with a clear understanding of how this will work for the business as well as for the individual.
- 7.3 Remember that symptoms vary both in their nature, severity and how long they last for, so it is important to monitor their effectiveness by having regular review meetings.
- 7.4 Menopause symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically and can include the following - this list is not exhaustive and also contains suggestions for possible adjustments which managers will need to consider in the context of their service as to whether these are deemed reasonable:

Symptom	Possible Adjustment
Hot flushes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature control for their work area e.g. USB connected desk fan, moving closer to an open window • Easy access to fresh drinking water • Access to a quiet room for breaks if work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush • Opportunity to move away from a heat source • Consider blended / flexible working arrangements • Taking appropriate breaks • Adapt uniforms to improve comfort (if relevant) • Limit time needed to wear (PPE) such as face masks (if relevant)
Heavy / light periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to washroom facilities • Allow for more frequent breaks to go to the toilet • Make it easy to request extra uniforms if needed • Consider if home working would make this more comfortable
Headaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of access to fresh drinking water • Consider if there's a quieter place to work • Have time out to take medication if needed • Allow someone to move around / or stay mobile – if these help • Taking appropriate breaks • Consider having a VDU screen filters / protectors

Heart palpitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signpost them to their GP • A few lifestyle changes such as reducing caffeine intake or other stimulants such as cigarettes and alcohol • Taking appropriate breaks
Difficulty sleeping and fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider flexible working options or informal arrangements for later start and finish times • Consider if working from home is an option
Loss of confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular one-to-one meetings • Have protected time to catch up with work • Consider whether additional or refresher training would help • Signpost to L&D team for coaching sessions / any relevant e-learning modules • Signpost to the Employee Assistance Programme
Poor concentration and forgetfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust working hours to fit times of the day when concentration is better • Review task allocation and workload – consider temporary amendments to duties that are proving challenging • Provide list books, note board or other memory-assisting equipment • Offer quieter space to work • Reduce interruptions if possible • Have protected time to catch up with work • Signpost to the Employee Assistance Programme
Low mood, anxiety, depression and panic attacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular one-to-one meetings • Taking appropriate breaks / time out • Direct them to the council's Mental Health First Aiders, where they can speak to a trained colleague (list of MHFA's can be found on the HR intranet pages) • Signpost to the Employee Assistance Programme for confidential counselling/advice • Signpost them to their GP

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Information and support

Internal sources of support can be found on Inside Walsall – HR intranet pages which include:

- **Occupational Health** - a source of specialist health care professionals (e.g. OH Nurses and Physicians) that provides organisational and individual advice on all aspects of health and work.
- **Employee Assistance Programme** – provided by Sodexo / Care first which offers independent and impartial advice and information: [Carefirst-lifestyle - menopause support link](#)
- **Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs)** - offer support to anyone experiencing emotional or mental health distress. All of our MHFAs have been competently trained and hold a recognised qualification by Mental Health First Aid England.

Below are external links and an App relating to support services and information about Menopause:

- British Menopause Society – provides information on menopause: <https://thebms.org.uk>
- CIPD practical guide for line managers ‘The menopause at work’: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/menopause/people-manager-guidance>
- Health talk website – provides information and support on menopause: <https://www.healthtalk.org/menopause>
- Henpicked – provides information on managing menopause: <https://henpicked.net/menopause/>
- Live better with menopause – provides advice and support: <https://menopause.livebetterwith.com>
- Menopausesupport.co.uk – provides information , advice and support: <https://menopausesupport.co.uk>
- Menopause Matters – provides information on menopause: <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk>
- National Health Service (NHS) – provides an overview of menopause: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause>

- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance – these explain how a GP will determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23>
- Simply Hormones – provides information, support and training: <https://simplyhormones.com>
- The Menopause Exchange – provides information and support on menopause: <https://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk>
- Women’s Health – provides information and support on menopause: <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-andadvice/factsheets/menopause>
- [“Balance” an App from Menopause Doctor which you can download onto your device - provides information, guidance and allows you to record and track your symptoms to aid discussions which your GP:](https://www.talkingmenopause.co.uk/news/2020/9/17/new-balance-app-from-menopause-doctor) <https://www.talkingmenopause.co.uk/news/2020/9/17/new-balance-app-from-menopause-doctor>

Below are external links relating to support services and information about Andopause / Male-menopause:

- Centre for Men’s Health – provides information and support about andropause / male menopause: <https://www.centreformenshealth.co.uk/mens-health-services/male-menopause>
- Gilmore Health News – provides information about causes, symptoms and treatments: <https://www.gilmorehealth.com/andropause-101-causes-symptoms-and-treatments/>
- National Health Service (NHS) – provides an overview of the ‘male menopause’: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/male-menopause/>

Appendix 2 – Self-management for employees experiencing menopausal symptoms

Employees / workers who are experiencing menopausal symptoms should consider the following:

- Visiting your GP for advice and guidance;
- Speaking to your line manager to ensure they are aware and can provide support including considering adjustments if needed;
- Finding out more about the menopause from available sources of information - contacting other support groups / individuals as detailed in Appendix 1;
- Use technology where this is helpful, e.g. to set reminders or making notes of your symptoms to share with your GP etc.;
- Accessing the Employee Assistance Programme for staff counselling / wellbeing advice etc.;
- Speaking to friends, family or colleagues who may be able to provide emotional support;
- Contacting a Mental Health First Aider.

A healthy lifestyle may also help with some symptoms, examples of healthy choices include:

- Eating a healthy, balanced diet;
- Drinking plenty of water;
- Exercising regularly – for both physical and mental health benefits;
- Ensuring adequate rest and relaxation;
- Stopping or reducing smoking;
- Having a good work life balance;
- Reducing known triggers to hot flushes – caffeine, alcohol and spicy food;
- Think about how you look after your skin – some people find keeping a soothing lotion in the work place helpful;
- Wear natural fibers – think about layering clothing so items can be easily undone / removed;
- Try to avoid hot flush triggers (such as hot food / drinks) at work, particularly before a big meeting or presentation;
- Practicing mindfulness activities.