



Menopause

Workplace Policy



Let's

Talk



2023



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My Menopause Story

I experienced Perimenopause starting from around age of 42. I can now recognise this to have been the case through better education and awareness of the symptoms as I had chalked up my symptoms to stress & anxiety due to life events occurring during that time.

symptoms - Hot flushes, change to mood, fatigue, insomnia and sleep disturbance, mild concerns with memory leading to impact on self-confidence.

I was fortunate to have had a line manager who recognised the small changes in my demeanour and personality. I felt very confident and able to be open and honest about my symptoms and felt understood, this helped me greatly. Whilst I may not have required consideration to reasonable adjustments, however it was the small things which made a difference ie good ventilation and being close to an open window. Colleagues who understood and were tolerant of the need for the open window at times when it was very cold outside. Good access to toilets and cold drinking water.

I felt my manager and colleagues had a good recognition and understanding if I were experiencing a hot flush or “Tropical Moment”, as I liked to call them!, they would pass & I would be fine.

Looking back I was extremely hesitant to consider medical intervention, however with good GP Support and HRT Treatment, I found this greatly relieved my symptoms and enabled me to get on with all my daily activities.

My own experience showed it is good to talk and to

“ seek appropriate medical support, coupled with good line management & colleague’s support proved vital in supporting me through what was a “transition” over almost 10 year period.

My menopause was brought on early at the age of 46 as a result of a total hysterectomy. Having this procedure puts you into surgical menopause and unlike natural menopause, surgically induced menopause causes an immediate decline in progesterone, estrogen, and testosterone

years. The result was I felt a dramatic change in my body as I experienced rapid hormonal decline.

I was not prepared for menopause as I thought I had a few years to mentally prepare but circumstances meant I had no choice but to embrace what was happening to me.

Hot flushes, mood changes and sleeping problems were some of the symptoms I experienced. I choose to use natural remedies rather than HRT and I found this personally worked great for me.

My manager who was male was very understanding and had even researched ways that he could help me such as a seat near the window and a fan which really helped. Hot flushes I would say caused me the most problem but thankfully all my symptoms are behind me.

Being open and honest as to how I felt helped me cope as I quickly realised that once you raise people’s awareness as to why you suddenly seem not quite yourself it takes away a lot of your stress and worry.

I am now well out the other end and to be perfectly honest it was not as bad as I had thought it would be.



1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This document sets out the Education Authority's (EA) commitment to supporting women in the workplace. This Policy recognises that women may need additional consideration, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause. The development of this Policy was committed to as part of the EA Gender Action Plan 2019-2022.

The Education Authority is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. It is also committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all our colleagues. We understand that others may experience menopause-type symptoms, while we use the words woman/she/her throughout this document, this support is designed for all our colleagues.

The menopause is part of the natural ageing process for women, it refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months and a woman has reached the end of her reproductive life. It usually happens between 45 and

55 years of age, although can happen any time up until a woman's mid 60s or a premature menopause can occur in women before the age of 45.

The perimenopause, which is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause, can often last for four to five years although for some women it may continue for many more years or for others last just a few months. During the time of the perimenopause women may begin to experience symptoms due to changes in their hormone levels. These symptoms may vary in degree between different individuals from mild to very significant.

The EA employs approx. 40,000 staff of which approx. 26,500 are women and, of those women approx. 19,000 are of the age affected by menopause. The Education Authority values the contributions all our employees make to delivering better outcomes for children and young people. EA will support staff in work by having a positive attitude to the menopause, working proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support women experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not unintentionally make their symptoms worse.

**Let's Talk
Menopause**



1.2 Purpose

Through adopting a workforce policy EA can ensure women continue in employment throughout the menopause with their needs taken into account. This should have a positive impact on the levels of absenteeism and confidence for the women in this age group.

Legislation applicable to the policy:

- The **Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978** (Amended 1998) requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Order, employers are required to do risk assessments under the Management Regulations which should include specific risks to menopausal women if they are employed.
- The **Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976** as amended prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of sex.
- **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995** as amended prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of disability. It is also important to note that conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the DDA and require reasonable adjustments.
- **Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006** prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of age.
- **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998** places a duty on EA to consider positive action through paying due regard, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations, EA also have a duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

1.3 Objectives

The aim of this policy is to make managers aware of their responsibility to understand the menopause and related issues and how they can affect staff. It also aims to raise wider awareness and understanding amongst employees and to outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available.

EA want to create an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work, if necessary. EA are committed to ensuring that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place, where necessary. The EA takes a pro-active stance, will promote a greater understanding of the menopause and seek to eradicate any exclusionary or discriminatory practices. This Policy is intended to provide clarity and direction on how staff should deal with menopause related issues, either for individual colleagues experiencing the menopause or those who are affected indirectly for example partners, colleagues or line managers.

The policy will also support women who experience induced menopause due to conditions such as endometriosis or having a hysterectomy.



2 Scope of the Policy

The policy is aimed to support all women working for the Education Authority although we understand that others may experience menopause-type symptoms, while we use the words women/she/her throughout this document, this support is designed for all our colleagues.

The policy is a guide for managers and the reasonable adjustments guidance will also support managers in managing menopause within their team.

The definition of the menopause is the period in a woman's life (typically between the ages of 45 and 50) when menstruation ceases. But it is important to note that women can suffer from menopause symptoms at both a younger and an older age and therefore it is key to be mindful of the circumstances of the staff member themselves.

Although this guide aims to be of use to women in the workplace who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause, reading this guide may also help better understand family or friends who are experiencing difficult symptoms regardless of their perceived gender.

3 Roles/Responsibilities

Line managers should make themselves aware of this policy and the symptoms. Staff should approach their line manager if they need a reasonable adjustment due to menopause symptoms, the supporting template is there as a guide only. Some may feel uncomfortable using the template and therefore it is not compulsory that it is used. Line managers are duty bound to then explore a reasonable adjustment.



4 Key Principles

It is recognised that **the menopause is a very individual experience** and that people can be affected in different ways and to different degrees, therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.

As menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years, it will be treated as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event.

Appropriate information/support will be provided to all staff with regards to the menopause. Employees experiencing issues due to the menopause can be supported through the Health and Wellbeing Team or our dedicated reasonable adjustments experts who advise on reasonable adjustments. They may also wish to talk to a GP or Occupational Health or external groups such as NICE.

As part of this policy we will also aim to build a group of women who have already experienced menopause to support other women. This can enable those affected by the menopause to access peer

support and share knowledge and information. Those employees can also be involved in the development and review of relevant workplace policies that may have an impact on menopausal women going forward.

The EA will consult with Trade Unions and those affected, to review working conditions, practices and policies that may have to be adjusted to take account of the difficulties that some women experience during the menopause.

A personal menopause assessment template is included with the policy and can be carried out by a member of staff before approaching their line manager about adjustments to working conditions but does not have to be shared. Any adjustments will be considered and acted on appropriately within an appropriate timescale. Awareness raising sessions will be provided for line managers and staff. A confidential point of contact/support will be provided the **Equality & Diversity Unit**.



Women may experience only some or all of these symptoms (the list is not exhaustive).

- Hot flushes;
- Changes to mood;
- Fatigue;
- Problems with memory;
- Palpitations;
- Loss of confidence.
- Night sweats;
- Joint aches;
- Insomnia and sleep disturbances;
- Dry skin and skin irritation;
- Headaches;
- Vaginal dryness, itching and discomfort;
- Irregular and/ or heavy, painful periods, clots and flooding;
- Increased perspiration during the day;
- Depression;
- Dry eyes;
- Anxiety;
- Hair loss;
- Panic attacks;
- Urinary problems;
- Poor concentration;

Symptoms can begin months or even years before a woman's period stop and last around four years after the last period, although some women experience them for longer and can need medication to alleviate the symptoms.

The effects on a woman's physical and emotional health can significantly impact how she does her work and her relationships with colleagues. There are a number of varying treatment options for women ranging from natural remedies to medical intervention.

The EA recognises its responsibility to take into account difficulties women may experience during the menopause and to provide support and advice in this regard.

Reasonable Adjustments

Line managers should be supportive during this time and should be aware of symptoms and realise that it can be daunting or embarrassing for a woman to openly discuss their issues. As part of a regular one to one process, line managers should ensure that there is space for staff to discuss wider issues that may be impacting their work, including any health issues.

There is a range of reasonable adjustments that can be considered by managers, should a female member of staff seek support due to the menopause or a condition that can affect the onset of menopause such as a hysterectomy or endometriosis. It is important that any reasonable adjustment is tailored to the needs of the needs of the employee and no one size will fit all in this regard.

Any adjustment should be tailored to an individual's needs through discussion, It is essential that assumptions are not made regarding a woman's health and experience during menopause or the age at which she is displaying symptoms.

Any reasonable adjustments will have to be fully considered in line with the EA Reasonable Adjustments 'Guidelines for Managers'. Any barriers to a woman fulfilling her job because of the menopause should be removed where possible.

In certain circumstances, where a woman experiences extreme symptoms, it may be necessary for them to be referred to occupational health.

We ask that line managers try to remain as flexible as possible during this time.

The line manager could carry out an assessment to consider the specific requirements of menopausal women. The assessment could look at issues such as:

- Temperature and ventilation
- Restrictive uniforms or corporate clothing
- Access to toilet facilities and cold water.

The Health and Safety Executive's tools and templates for carrying out such assessments can be found at: bit.ly/hse-controlling-risks. The HSE also has tools to help carry out a stress risk assessment, if applicable, at: bit.ly/hse-stress-risk-assessment.

Further information can be sought from the EA Equality & Diversity Team at equality.unit@eani.org.uk or 028 9090 4213

Access to support

Although EA expect line managers to take a positive and supportive approach towards discussions about menopause, we know that individual staff members who are affected may still feel uncomfortable talking directly to their line manager.

In order to meet the needs of these individuals, staff can avail of dedicated support from the Equality & Diversity Unit, who have expertise in reasonable adjustments. Support can also be obtained from Health and Wellbeing.

Staff may also wish to talk to another colleague whom they trust or speak to their Trade Union representative for support.

Staff networks, such as the LGBT+ Friends Staff Network or EA Disability Staff Network can also be a point of contact for individuals; these networks are designed to be a safe space for staff and provide peer support.

Self-help measures, sign posting and further support can also be found in the EA staff Health and Wellbeing Hub/ Information Hub (including a dedicated menopause part to this site). A personal menopause assessment can also be found at the back of the policy document.

6 Implementation

This policy will be relevant to all women experiencing menopause symptoms. The policy will also give advice and guidance to line managers.

The policy should be used as guidance for line managers effective immediately.

The Equality & Diversity Unit can be contacted to discuss concerns with the policy.

The policy will be communicated through internal emails, lunch and learn sessions, staff networks, trade unions and the intranet.

The policy should also be included in staff briefings; inclusion in induction checklist for new staff; and be made available to those without access to computers in hard copy format.

There will be awareness raising sessions for staff and line managers. Best practice are short sessions throughout the calendar year, an organisation point of contact and a linkage with staff networks, leaflets and posters etc.

Peer support will also be developed over the lifetime of the policy. Training for staff and managers will be made available as part of the Staff Health and Wellbeing programme. A video will also be produced to accompany the policy rollout.

7 Monitoring

The policy will be revisited after a year for monitoring purposes. Line managers can feed any difficulties they have encountered with the policy to the Equality & Diversity Unit.

8 Evidence Base/References

Clear evidence for the need for a workplace policy on menopause was set out in the Irish Congress for Trade Unions survey report found at the following link
<https://www.ictuni.org/news/2018/09/12/launch-of-the-ictu-menopause-survey-report/>

Other sources used to develop the policy were: NIPSA Guidance on Menopause
<https://nipisa.org.uk/publications/GMW-1.pdf>

Nottinghamshire Police Force, Menopause guidelines for managers
<https://www.nottinghamshire.police.uk/document/menopause-managers-guide-pg50>
(this policy was well received and was offered awards in GB)

NHS Employers Website
<https://www.nhsemployers.org/retention-and-staff-experience/health-and-wellbeing/taking-a-targeted-approach/taking-a-targeted-approach/menopause-in-the-workplace>

PSNI Menopause Workplace Guide based on research by the Police Federation NI
<https://www.policfed-ni.org.uk/media/1296/052018-pfni-menopause-report-final.pdf>

UNISON Guidance - The Menopause is a Workplace Issue
<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2019/10/25831.pdf>

Personal Menopause Assessment *(optional)*

Below is a list of some of the key symptoms that you may experience during the menopause and which may hinder your ability to fulfil your day to day duties. The below list is not exhaustive but may help you consider what symptoms you are suffering and what you feel may assist you to undertake your role. NB You do not need to share this with your line manager unless you wish to do so.

Symptom	Location you have the symptom (if both tick both)		Severity of the symptom				How frequently do you experience the symptom					
	Home	Work	Mild	Moderate	Intense	Severe	Less than <small>monthly</small>	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Hourly	Constant
<i>Hot flushes</i>												
<i>Night Sweats</i>												
<i>Irregular Periods</i>												
<i>Mood Swings</i>												
<i>Fatigue</i>												
<i>Hair Loss</i>												
<i>Sleep Disorders</i>												
<i>Difficulty Concentrating</i>												
<i>Memory Lapses</i>												
<i>Dizziness</i>												
<i>Weight Gain</i>												
<i>Incontinence</i>												
<i>Bloating</i>												
<i>Allergies</i>												
<i>Brittle Nails</i>												
<i>Changes in Odour</i>												
<i>Irregular Heartbeat</i>												
<i>Depression</i>												
<i>Anxiety</i>												
<i>Irritability</i>												
<i>Panic Disorder/Attacks</i>												
<i>Breast Pain</i>												
<i>Headache</i>												
<i>Joint Pain</i>												
<i>Burning Tongue</i>												
<i>Electric Shocks</i>												
<i>Digestive Problems</i>												
<i>Gum Problems</i>												
<i>Muscle Tension</i>												
<i>Itchy Skin</i>												
<i>Tingling Extremities</i>												
<i>Osteoporosis</i>												

Other:

Please describe how the menopause affects you? How might your symptoms or the medication you need to take impact on your work? (you don't have to specify what medication you take)

What steps can you take? Is there anything we need to do to facilitate them?

Please can you state any triggers that might cause your health problem to affect you at work and any warning signs that your manager or colleagues might notice?

What support or adjustments could be put in place at work to minimise triggers or support you manage your symptoms at work? Is there anything within your daily duty that ideally should be avoided/exacerbate your symptoms?

Menopause Fact Sheet

The menopause is part of the natural ageing process. Commonly known as 'the change', it refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months and a person has reached the end of their reproductive life.

83%

of people employed at the EA could be affected by menopause at some stage in their life



19 000

The number of people who work for EA who fall within the age bracket affected by menopause currently



8%

The percentage of people in research studies that have felt the need to leave their job due to the effects of menopause



4-8

years

The length of time symptoms can last for



29%

Recent studies have shown that this is the amount of people going through the menopause that have significantly lost their self confidence at work



20-25%

The amount of people that research suggests will have hot flushes which adversely affect their perceived quality of personal and working life



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