

JSCC Discussion Paper: Menopause at Work

Menopause is a natural stage of life, but its symptoms can affect people differently at work. These may include hot flushes, poor sleep, anxiety, headaches, fatigue and difficulty concentrating. For some employees, symptoms are mild; for others, they can affect attendance, performance, wellbeing and confidence.

Menopause is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, but how employers respond can raise risks linked to sex, age and disability discrimination. If symptoms have a substantial and long-term effect on day-to-day activities, they may amount to a disability, which could require reasonable adjustments. Employers should therefore consider menopause within health and wellbeing, equality, attendance and health and safety arrangements.

There is increasing expectation that employers take a practical and supportive approach to menopause. Acas, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, CIPD and GOV.UK all recognise menopause as a workplace issue linked to wellbeing, equality, absence, performance and staff retention, rather than simply a private health matter. Their guidance encourages employers to make support visible, equip managers to respond appropriately, consider reasonable adjustments where needed, and ensure workplace policies and processes are applied fairly and consistently.

Current guidance recommends personalised adjustments such as flexible working, rest areas, environmental changes and supportive manager conversations. NHS guidance also highlights the value of partnership working between employers, managers, staff and trade union representatives.

What the Council has already done

- Information for managers is available through the intranet and the HR team, helping managers understand menopause symptoms, hold supportive conversations and signpost staff to available support.
- Staff communications have been used to raise awareness of menopause as a workplace issue, promote available support and encourage an open and respectful culture.
- Menopause-related events and network activity have helped raise awareness, share experiences and encourage discussion of support needs in a constructive and inclusive way.
- A menopause information pack and intranet guidance provide staff and managers with practical information about symptoms, support options and sources of advice.
- Menopause support is linked to the Council's wider inclusion and wellbeing work, helping ensure it is considered alongside health, equality and staff experience.
- Occupational health support is available to help identify personalised workplace adjustments where appropriate, such as flexible hours, homeworking, breaks, temperature control, access to water, uniform flexibility or temporary changes to duties.
- The Council aims to take an inclusive approach, recognising that not everyone experiencing menopause will identify or disclose in the same way and that support should be responsive to individual needs.

- Flexible working and homeworking are already offered as standard in many roles, giving managers scope to support employees through practical adjustments that can help them manage symptoms and remain at work.
- The Council has built a good base of support overall, including access to an Employee Assistance Programme, occupational health and a GP helpline, alongside the information and awareness activity already in place.

Next steps

- Develop and publish a menopause action plan. Current guidance links this to employers with 250 or more employees and suggests it may become mandatory from spring 2027, subject to further legislation.
- Review visibility and awareness of support resources and update arrangements where necessary to ensure easy access to clear guidance and signposting.
- Consider training for managers on supportive conversations and continue to develop awareness to consider menopause when applying attendance, capability and performance processes.

Menopause is an important workplace issue linked to wellbeing, equality, inclusion and retention. Supporting employees well can help the Council create a workplace where people are able to contribute fully and give their best.