
Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	19 November 2019
Report By:	Head of Organisational Development, Policy & Communications	Report No:	HR/18/19BMcQ
Contact Officer:	Barbara McQuarrie	Contact No:	2845
Subject:	Menopause Policy and Guidance		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Policy and Resources Committee on the development of a Menopause Policy and seek its approval to implement the attached Policy. The Policy and Guidance will sit within the provisions of the current Supporting Employee Attendance Policy.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 A wide range of organisations have been reporting the need for greater guidance on personal and professional issues faced by women relating to the menopause. These include the Government, NHS employers, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and many trade union organisations. It is a health issue which will affect all women. In 2017 a government report – [Menopause transition: effects on women's economic participation](#) – highlighted not only that significant numbers of women experience problems at work from their symptoms and consider leaving as a result, but also that there is no uniform experience.
- 2.2 It is important that the Council understands the difficulties and anxieties which are faced by women going through this change and that it manages these issues by raising awareness, offering support measures where practicable, and providing training and development for line managers. Women in the workplace should be given information on how they may get support for issues that arise as a result of the menopause, creating a confidence in the employee to raise issues about their symptoms and request reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that The Policy and Resources Committee:
- Approves the Menopause Policy attached at Appendix 1.

Steven McNab
Head of Organisational Development,
Policy and Communications

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as a woman's oestrogen levels decline. In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach the menopause is 51. However, around 1 in 100 women experience the menopause before 40 years of age. The menopause generally lasts from four to eight years, with up to 60 per cent of women experiencing physical or psychological symptoms. These can include hot flushes, night sweats, sleep disruption, fatigue and difficulty concentrating.

4.2 Many organisations have introduced a Menopause Policy in order to ensure employees know their employer has a positive attitude to the issue and that it is not something women should feel embarrassed about discussing. More than 76 per cent of Inverclyde Council's employees are female, while the average age of workers is 47, meaning the menopause could be a daily part of life for a large section of the workforce.

4.3 Inverclyde Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. The Council is committed to improving the well-being of its employees and as an employer has a duty to manage related issues effectively.

4.4 The Inverclyde Council Menopause Policy aims to:

- Ensure all line managers are aware and understand how the menopause can affect their employees at work, enabling them to provide guidance and support, where practicable, to those affected and ensure reasonable adjustments are considered where possible to support those women who are experiencing the menopause;
- Ensure all women in the workplace are given information on how they can request support for any issues that arise as a result of the menopause, creating a confidence in the employee to raise issues about their symptoms and seek any reasonable adjustments that may assist;
- Assist line managers in considering such reasonable support where necessary and enable employees to remain at work where previously they may have reported absent and promote guidance for those affected indirectly, for example, colleagues.

4.5 Measures of Support

Specific advice is already contained in the Council's Supporting Attendance Policy Guidance for managers. This highlights examples of reasonable adjustments which may be requested and/or considered by managers including flexible working, adjusting working times, providing the flexibility to take breaks during the working day to accommodate personal need, more comfortable clothing allowed if uniforms normally worn (it may be appropriate to issue more uniforms, particularly if the uniform is made from synthetic fibres which is less comfortable than natural fibres), adjusting the office environment, for example, in relation to temperature particularly through the issue of things such as personal fans that do not have a substantial impact on the comfort of others in the office, or offering a quiet space where possible to work at particular times of day or week.

Flexible working may assist with sleeping difficulties and low mood. Anxiety and panic attacks may be addressed through employee counselling and mindfulness and meditation.

Support will be considered on an individual basis based on reasonableness, cost, size of team, operational exigencies etc. Particular issues may need to be considered in respect of front line employees or those who work outdoors.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

5.1 N/A

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

Legal

5.2 Legislation

The Equality Act 2010 protects women against workplace discrimination on the basis of sex or age, whilst other pieces of legislation place a general duty on employers around Health and Safety and welfare for workers.

Human Resources

5.3 As outlined in the Report and Policy.

Equalities

5.4 Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

- To follow.** The Menopause Policy will positively impact on the female workforce with supports being introduced. Male employees may be affected as a result of their partner and the impact assessment recognises the supports contained in the policy for such instances.
- NO**

Repopulation

5.5 N/A.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.1 The Women's Forum have previously highlighted this issue and are supportive of this policy. The trades unions have been involved in the development of this policy and guidance and are also fully supportive its implementation.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Appendix 1 – Menopause Policy

Inverclyde Council Menopause Policy



**INVERCLYDE COUNCIL IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER
THIS POLICY BOOKLET IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST, IN LARGE PRINT,
BRAILLE, ON AUDIOTAPE, OR CD.**

Inverclyde Council Menopause Policy

1. Introduction

Inverclyde Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. The Council is also committed to improving the well-being of its people and as an employer has a duty to manage related issues effectively.

The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as a woman's oestrogen levels decline generally lasts from four to eight years, with up to 60 per cent of women experiencing physical or psychological symptoms. These can include hot flushes, night sweats, sleep disruption, fatigue and difficulty concentrating.

More than 76 per cent of Inverclyde Council's employees are female, while the average age of workers is 47, meaning the menopause could be a daily part of life for a large section of our workforce.

In this regard, the Council will provide appropriate support, where practicable, and where operational exigencies allow, to women who are experiencing symptoms associated with the menopause, whilst supporting line managers by providing guidance. The Council will encourage managers to consider reasonable adjustments where possible e.g. to the working environment and working times to assist employees experiencing the symptoms.

It is important that the Council understands the difficulties and anxieties of women currently going through this change and that we manage this issue by raising awareness, and providing guidance for all line management and colleagues.

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1. The aim of the policy and supporting guidance is to make managers aware of menopause related issues and how they can affect their employees by;

- Creating an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and seek any reasonable adjustments at work that may assist.
- Promoting the guidance which will provide direction and clarity on how to support women who raise menopause related issues, either for individuals experiencing this or those who are affected indirectly, for example, line managers, and colleagues.
- Informing managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, what the consequences can be and what they can do to support women at work including considering reasonable adjustments where possible.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.

2.2 Inverclyde Council recognise that staff may need additional consideration during this transitional time before, during and after the menopause and will ensure that staff are treated according to their circumstances and needs, recognising that the menopause is a very

individual experience and that people can be affected in different ways and to different degrees, and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed. Support will be considered on an individual basis based on reasonableness, cost, size of team, operational exigencies etc. Particular issues may need to be considered in respect of front line employees or those who work outdoors.

This policy is supported by employee guidance attached and should be read in conjunction with this. The Policy and Guidance will sit within the provisions of the current Supporting Employee Attendance Policy.

3. Scope

3.1. This policy applies to all employees of the Council. People from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of the menopause may be different for those within these communities. Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that for many reasons; peoples' individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.

4. Definitions

4.1. The menopause is part of the natural ageing process for women, although it can be brought on as a result of other medical conditions or certain surgical interventions. It refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months. The menopause is sometimes known as the 'change of life'. The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons. In the UK, around 1 in 100 women experience the menopause before 40 years of age. The menopause generally lasts from four to eight years and as a result of these hormonal changes, many women experience both physical and psychological emotional symptoms.

4.2. Peri-menopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

4.3. Post-menopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

5. Symptoms of Menopause

5.1. Whilst 75% of women do experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe, it is important to note that not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support.

5.2. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, hot flushes, sweats, poor concentration, joint pain, insomnia, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, and loss of confidence. Some women also experience difficulty sleeping. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/symptoms/>

5.3 Some people seek medical advice and treatment for the symptoms of the perimenopause, and menopause. For example, for irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms a common form of treatment is known as hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Many women find these treatments helpful for alleviating symptoms, but HRT is not suitable or appropriate for all women.

Some people using HRT may experience side effects which may require consideration being given to reasonable adjustments in the workplace where possible.

6. Legislative setting

6.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require employers to assess risks to employees to which they are exposed whilst at work. Consideration should be made, where required, of any specific risks relevant to menopausal women if they are employed.

6.2 The Equality Act (2010) prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. It is also important to note that conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and might require reasonable adjustments where possible.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Employees:

All employees are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility to look after their health;
- Being open and honest in conversations with line managers. If a member of staff feels unable to speak to their line manager they can speak to HR, self-refer to the Occupational health Self Appointment Clinic, or contact their trade union.
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues.

6.2. Line Managers

Line managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and Guidance;
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Use the Managers' Guidance, before agreeing with the employee how best they can be supported, and giving consideration to any reasonable adjustments required;
- Record reasonable adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented;
- Ensure ongoing conversations take place and set review dates, where necessary;
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, etc. the

Appendix 1

Line Manager may:

- Seek Advice from HR;
- Refer the employee to the Occupational Health Adviser;

6.3. Human Resources

Human Resources will:

- Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this Policy and Guidance
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in respect of related absence levels
- Process referrals to Occupational Health Services (for those services who cannot self refer)

7. Guidance and awareness

7.1 Further guidance for employees is appended to this Policy. All staff will be made aware of this policy upon commencement with the Council. Copies of the Policy and Guidance can be viewed on ICON the Councils Intranet.

8. Monitoring of Policy and Procedures

This policy will be reviewed and updated in line with any legislative changes and examples of best practice within the workplace.

Inverclyde Council Menopause – Employee Guidance

1. Definition of Menopause/Symptoms

The menopause is a natural part of ageing for women. The medical definition of the menopause is when a woman has her last period. It usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, although it can occur any time up to a woman's mid-60s.

A premature menopause can occur, with periods stopping before the age of 40, either naturally or as an effect of a medical condition or its treatment. Around 1 in 100 women will experience a premature menopause and this of course can be at a time when still planning to conceive.

Up to 60% of women experience intermittent physical and/or psychological symptoms during the menopause. These are associated with a decrease in the body's production of the hormone oestrogen

For some, symptoms include hot flushes, night sweats and related symptoms such as sleep disruption, fatigue and difficulty concentrating. Hot flushes are short, sudden feelings of heat, usually in the face, neck and chest, which can make the skin red and sweaty. Severe flushes can cause sweat to soak through clothing. Mood disturbances, joint pain, anxiety and depression are also reported.

Symptoms on average continue for four years from the last period, and 1 in 10 women experience symptoms for up to 12 years

These symptoms can adversely affect the quality of both personal and working life. At work, they can cause embarrassment, diminish confidence and can be stressful to deal with. The menopause may be compounded by the development of other health conditions, as well as coinciding with caring responsibilities for ageing parents and relatives. Some women may also still have children living at home.

2. Why is the menopause a work place issue?

More than 76 per cent of Inverclyde Council's employees are female, while the average age of workers is 47, meaning the menopause could be a daily part of life for a large section of the workforce. This means that a significant number of staff may be going through the menopause or experiencing peri menopausal symptoms at any time. In addition, between 1% and 10% of women experience an early or premature menopause and so may be trying to deal with the same symptoms.

Sometimes going through the menopause can be uneventful, but for others it can impact on their working lives, with it becoming increasingly difficult to function effectively at work as a result of their symptoms. This can leave them feeling less confident, more susceptible to fatigue and stress at work. It has also been recognised that certain aspects of work, working conditions and environment may exacerbate menopause symptoms.

A lack of knowledge about the menopause may mean that someone can be misdiagnosed as constantly having health issues which restrict them from fulfilling their normal role and having time off work. In addition, symptoms may impact on their performance, leading potentially to capability or disciplinary proceedings.

They may be afraid to approach anyone for help and therefore suffer in silence, losing confidence and feeling isolated before leaving work altogether. It is therefore important that employers understand, address and manage these issues in order to protect the health and wellbeing of their workforce. Without effective support, employers risk losing key and valuable expertise and experience. The Menopause Policy and associated guidance sits within the provisions of the current Supporting Employee Attendance Policy.

3. Supporting an employee through the menopause

Menopause is a very personal experience and can affect people at work in various ways. This means that different levels of support and assistance may be needed at what can be a very difficult time. Support will be considered on an individual basis based on reasonableness, cost, size of team, operational exigencies etc. Particular issues may need to be considered in respect of front line employees or those who work outdoors. Attitudes can vary from empathy and understanding, through to insensitivity and “jokey”, to a complete lack of sympathy.

Support from Line Managers

The most important and valuable thing a manager can do is listen and wherever practicable, respond sympathetically to any requests for reasonable adjustments at work.

People who are experiencing the menopause (whether directly or indirectly) may need sympathetic and appropriate support from their line manager. As with any longstanding health-related conditions, and in accordance with the provisions of the Supporting Employee Attendance Policy, this support can make a major difference to how they deal with the menopause, enabling them to continue working well and productively.

Managers can only be sympathetic and supportive though if they are aware that their member of staff is experiencing difficulties. Research has shown that people may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed approaching their manager to discuss any difficulties in managing their menopausal symptoms. This may be the case if their manager is younger than them or male and, as menopause can affect levels of confidence, if the person they are talking to has no idea about the menopause. This can be particularly true for trans staff, who are not ‘out’ to their colleagues or manager.

It is therefore important that as a manager, you are aware of the symptoms associated with the menopause and understand the issues affecting people going through it. This will help in fostering an environment where we are all more comfortable talking about the menopause, the symptoms and measures that could help in minimising these.

You will need to be sensitive to any feelings of discomfort, listen to concerns and complaints and consider what can reasonably be done to reduce and minimise the impact symptoms may be having on the staff member’s performance within the workplace - could adjustments reasonably be made to allow them to manage their symptoms better?

Remember:

- You will need to maintain confidentiality in handling health information about the menopause.
- Any specific needs identified (including reasonable adjustments that may be agreed) should be recorded and reviewed regularly.
- You should be aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance. If someone's performance suddenly dips, it is worth considering whether the menopause may be playing a part in this.
- Case law has shown the need to take medical information into account in capability situations where ill health has been raised by the employee – seeking advice from HR, the GP and/or occupational Health Practitioner.

Flexible working arrangements and workplace adjustments

There are various ways to consider whether working life may be made more flexible for women in transition and will depend on exigencies of service, cost, size of team and how long adjustments may be required. For example the following may be considered in specific circumstances:

- capacity to rearrange formal meetings or presentations if needed
- allowing the employee to switch to different tasks on bad days
- allowing the employee to take breaks where needed
- allowing the employee to work flexible hours and/ or at home, especially on bad days or when they have slept poorly if that is reasonably possible for the needs of the service

What employers may consider: changes to workplace environments

Changes to the physical working environment will be easier to make in a supportive workplace where the employee feels able to disclose their symptoms and how work might be making them worse. These changes could be identified by risk assessments around menopause transition

Examples of issues to be considered where reasonably possible include:

- access to fans, good ventilation including windows which open and blinds that can be drawn, to allow women to cope better with hot flushes
- ability to control temperature via air conditioning or heating, again to alleviate difficulties caused by hot flushes
- clean, well-equipped and comfortable toilet facilities near work stations,
- provision of cold drinking water, also to allow better management of hot flushes
- lighter, non-synthetic workplace clothing or uniforms, again to accommodate hot flushes
- quiet workplace areas
- being able to move if an office is small and confined, again in case of hot flushes
- access to natural light, which has been identified as having a positive effect on mood and the absorption of calcium during menopause transition, or light boxes if natural light is not easily
- a reduction of exposure to noise to help reduce fatigue

Where adjustments affect other colleagues – e.g. opening a window or lowering a thermostat - women need to be able to explain to colleagues in a shared work space why this is necessary. Again this reinforces the importance of a supportive organisational culture around menopause transition. Again any adjustments have to be reasonable and based on operational exigencies. Particular issues may need to be consideration for front line employees or where employees work outside.

Other Adjustments

These may include where possible:

- Flexibility to take breaks when reasonably needed rather than at pre-determined times – while undergoing the menopause employees may experience bouts of feeling unwell at work so a flexible and sympathetic approach to breaks is needed, including to take medication in a private space, to walk around and ease any pain.
- Consideration of phased return after sick leave in line with the Supporting Employee Attendance Policy for women suffering with particularly severe symptoms.

Whilst it is important to consider whether reasonable adjustments can be made where possible to help employees experiencing menopausal symptoms, many use self-help management or seek medical help to manage the symptoms themselves.

4. Menopause and the Law

Whilst there is no specific legislation addressing the impact of the menopause in the workplace, there are regulations of which employers should be aware.

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and subordinate legislation

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require employers to assess risks to employees to which they are exposed whilst at work. Consideration should be made of any specific risks relevant to menopausal women if they are employed. The Workplace (Health Safety and Welfare Regulations) stipulates general requirements on accommodation standards for nearly all workplaces, and while these will be adequate for most situations additional considerations may need to be made where possible in relation to workplace temperatures, toilet facilities and ventilation for employees going through the menopause.

Risk assessment should take account of gender issues, differences and inequalities. Work, its organisation and the equipment used should be designed to match people, not the other way round. As there are gender differences in a variety of broader issues relating to work circumstances, including the menopause, a holistic approach to risk prevention is needed. Another aim is to identify less obvious hazards and health problems that are more common for female workers going through the menopause. The risk assessment will assist in identifying any potential adjustments which may be required. Particular issues to consider include temperature, ventilation and the materials used in any uniform which is provided. Welfare issues (including toilet facilities and access to cold water) should also be considered.

The Equality Act (2010)

The Act protects people from discrimination in the workplace because of 'protected characteristics' and includes both direct and indirect discrimination and harassment.

The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- gender
- sexual orientation

Sex Discrimination

Employers should ensure they do not discriminate against employees on the grounds of sex. It is therefore important that female employees who are experiencing the menopause are properly supported and that reasonable adjustments are considered where appropriate.

Harassment

An example of harassment might be a manager commenting that there is no point promoting a menopausal employee because they are 'hormonal'. Even if not addressed directly at a particular employee, this could cause staff to be upset and to worry about their careers – which could be considered harassment.

Disability

Whilst the menopause is not in itself a disability, conditions arising from it may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act. As an example, depression or urinary problems linked to the menopause and which have a substantial and long term adverse effect on ability to carry out normal day to day activities, mean that the person concerned would be considered to have a disability under the Act. An employer is required to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled worker would be at a substantial disadvantage compared with a non-disabled colleague.

Case law has therefore shown the need to take medical information into account in capability situations where ill health has been raised by the employee – seeking advice from the GP and/or Occupational Health practitioner.

5. Guidance for women

For women who find their menopausal symptoms are affecting their wellbeing and their capacity to work, they should consider the following:

- Find out more about the menopause from available sources of information (see suggestions at the end of this guidance).
- See their GP for advice on available treatment options.

- Discuss their practical needs with their line manager, HR or another manager they feel comfortable talking to.
- Use technology where this is helpful, e.g. for reminders or note taking.
- Ask to be referred to Occupational Health to discuss support and possible work adjustments.
- If those they work with are supportive, this can make a big difference. Talk about their symptoms and solutions with colleagues, particularly those who are also experiencing symptoms, use humour to deflect embarrassment, and work out their preferred coping strategies
- Avoid hot flush triggers (such as hot food and drinks) especially before presentations or meetings.
- Consider relaxation techniques such as mindfulness as these can help reduce the impact of symptoms.
- Consider lifestyle changes such as weight reduction, smoking cessation and exercise.

6. Free sanitary products

Free sanitary products are available to collect from a number of venues across Inverclyde. Providing access to free sanitary products protects dignity and avoids anxiety, embarrassment and stigma. To find out where you can access these products, visit: My Inverclyde, insert your Postcode and proceed to the Access to free sanitary products section. For more information, please contact Inverclyde Council on 01475 717171 or email eds.enquiries@inverclyde.gov.uk.

7. Further Sources of Information

- <http://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>
- The Daisy Network – <https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/>
- Healthtalk.org – <http://www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/older-life/menopause/topics>
- Women's Health Concerns – <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/focus-series/menopause/>
- The Menopause Exchange – <http://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/>
- NICE Menopause: diagnosis and management – <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23>