



Menopause Policy & Guidance for Managers

Policy 54

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1.0 Introduction

The Council is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works for Cuckfield Parish Council. Menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and it isn't always an easy transition.

With the right support, it can be much better. Whilst every woman does not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work. Menopause should not be taboo or "hidden". Cuckfield Parish Council wants everyone to understand what menopause is and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. This is not just an issue for women; men should be aware too.

The changing age of the UK's workforce means that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work. Research shows that the majority of women are unwilling to discuss menopausal-related health problems with their line manager, nor ask for the support or adaptations that they may need.

This policy sets out the guidelines for employees and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. It is not contractual and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment – however, if Cuckfield Parish Council wishes to amend the Menopause Policy, employees will be consulted on proposed changes.

2.0 Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Foster an environment in which employees can openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause.
- Ensure everyone understands what menopause is; can confidently have good conversations; and are clear on Cuckfield Parish Council policy and practices, supported by HR and Occupational Health when required.
- Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support women at work.
- Ensure that women suffering with menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss it and ask for support and any adaptations, so they can continue to be successful in their roles.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- Assure women that Cuckfield Parish Council is a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs during menopause.

3.0 Overview and Guidance for Managers and Employees

The menopause is a natural part of ageing for women, trans gender and non-binary people. 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 can be at a time when they are still planning to conceive. Around 30-60% 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 hormones, oestrogen. Symptoms can manifest themselves both physically and psychologically, including, but not exclusively as below:

4.0 Symptoms include:

- Hot flushes – these can be short, sudden feelings of heat, usually in the face, neck and chest, which can make the skin red and sweaty;
- Night sweats and sleep disturbance;
- Disruption, fatigue, problems with memory and difficulty concentrating;
- Severe flushes can cause sweat to soak through clothing;
- Mood disturbances;
- Anxiety and depression;
- Heavy, irregular and painful periods;
- Urinary problems.

Symptoms for many 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 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. There is good reason to consider the needs of this group of workers.

As an employer we have responsibilities for the health and safety of all employees, but there are also clear business reasons for proactivity managing an age-diverse workforce.

5.0 Manager Guidance for Employee Discussions

We recognize that every woman is different, and it is therefore, not feasible to set out a structure set of specific guidelines.

All advice is given, and written, in accordance with best practice. If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just talk about how they are feeling, or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that:

- Adequate time is allowed to have the conversation;
- An appropriate room is found to preserve confidentiality;
- Employees are encouraged to speak openly and honestly;
- Ways are suggested in which they can be supported;
- Actions and how to implement them are agreed (notes to be taken);
- Agreement is secured if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
- Designated time is allocated for a follow up meeting.

Where it is reasonable to do so, a list of measures to support employees going through the menopause are identified below:

- Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk or moving near a window, or away from a heat source;
- Easy access to drinking water;

- Have access to a rest room for breaks, or a quiet area if they need to manage their symptoms;
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices;
- If appropriate for the role, flexible working maybe considered, particularly if the employee is suffering from a lack of sleep;
- Ensure there are regular 121s;
- Offer reassurance about a person's value and worth in the organisation;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work;
- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly;
- Promote Counselling services.
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

Managers should discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.

If they have visited the GP and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.