

# Menopause Policy Guide

This document is designed to be used alongside the menopause policy template we have created. It sets out what the key things are for you, as an employer, to consider when creating a menopause policy. It also provides examples of what other companies have introduced and offers tips on how to roll out the policy to employees effectively.

## Why it's important to address menopause

51 is the average age for a UK woman to go through menopause and around 1 in 100 women experience menopause before age 40(i). With the biggest increases in employment rates over the last 30 years having been for women over 50(ii), it's sad that 50% of women experiencing menopausal symptoms feel there is a stigma around talking about the menopause and 44% have felt too embarrassed to ask for support in the workplace, rising to 66% of women aged 18-44(iii).

Two-thirds of women with menopause symptoms say it has impacted their work, so it surely makes sense to create a policy – and workplace culture – that aims to tackle such stigmas and support menopausal women as well as trans and non-binary employees affected by hormonal changes. It could be an important strategy for businesses trying to reduce their gender pay gap, increase diversity and inclusion and retain workers with crucial knowledge and skills.

## What are the key things to consider when implementing this policy?

- Make sure that the suggested information in this policy does not conflict with any information you may have in any of your other policies, e.g. flexible working.
- Check that your health and safety risk assessments are suitable regarding the perimenopause and menopause.
- There may be times when it could be unfair or discriminatory to measure menopause-related absence as part of the worker's overall attendance record, so absences related to menopause should be recorded in a way that can be distinguished from other absences.
- According to ACAS, there are risks of disability discrimination and/or sex discrimination, and/or age discrimination if a worker is mismanaged because of their menopause or perimenopause symptoms.
- Some of the policy wording defers to line managers to make decisions, so empower them. Educate them about health and wellbeing policies but more importantly let them know that you trust their judgement when it comes to offering individuals in their team a variety of options for support, flexibility and leave. According to CIPD research (iv), nearly a third of women (30%) said they had taken sick leave because of their symptoms, 32% of them cited an unsupportive manager as the reason they chose not to disclose the real reason for their absence.
- Menopause is not just an issue that affects heterosexual women. It's important to include everyone – including trans and non-binary employees – in the conversation. Men should also be included so they have more understanding of what their colleagues are experiencing and know how they can offer positive support.
- Make sure your employees know about the policy and where to find it.
- Anxiety and loss of confidence are just two of the psychological symptoms associated with menopause. It makes sense to link your menopause policy with your mental health policy.

## Menopause policies from other organisations

**Vodafone**<sup>(v)</sup> estimates that menopause affects 15% of its 100,000 employees, and it has decided to support them through a range of different measures. As well as introducing training and awareness programs about menopause for all employees, it is offering them extra support around sick leave, medical treatment, and flexible working.

**Diageo**<sup>(vi)</sup> a global leader in beverage alcohol launched guidelines – Thriving Through Menopause – which it hopes will raise awareness and understanding on menopause, which they recognise is often a taboo subject. They will be providing resources to employees and line managers who maybe experiencing menopause, directly or indirectly. Support includes access to counselling or mindfulness sessions through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and increased flexibility where needed (e.g., changing working patterns, or access to sick pay entitlements to deal with symptoms where appropriate).

**Channel 4**<sup>(vii)</sup> employees have the option to access desk fans or a quiet or cool room, as well as the use of the Babylon app through their Bupa benefit, more paid sick leave, and a counselling service. Menopausal women will also have more flexible working options, including more breaks, earlier start times and finish times to avoid rush hour traveling, being allowed to have their camera off during Teams calls, and the ability to request reduced working hours on a temporary basis. According to an internal survey, 10% of female employees have used (or plan to use) the policy – only 13% of Channel 4 staff are women aged over 45.

**Access2Funding**<sup>(viii)</sup> a research and development tax specialist SME has launched a menopause policy as part of its investment in workplace culture, people and employee wellbeing. The initiative includes an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) as well as modifications to the work environment such as temperature control and flexible working. The menopause will now be treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health at the organisation.

**Modibodi**<sup>(i)</sup> the sustainable period pants brand has launched a policy offering its employees paid leave for menstruation and menopause symptoms and miscarriage. Employees will be entitled to an extra 10 days paid personal leave per year in addition to the organisation's existing sick leave entitlements. Modibodi said these days are to be used by staff suffering menstrual or menopause symptoms which interfere with their ability to work.

## How will a menopause policy benefit employers?

### Impact on the bottom line

- 2019 research from Health & Her indicated that the UK could be losing 14 million working days a year related to menopause<sup>(ix)</sup>.
- One in four women who experience menopausal symptoms consider leaving their job<sup>(x)</sup>. This could leave a significant skills gap in your business.
- The gender pay gap is widest for women over 50<sup>(xi)</sup>. Action to reduce the gap where it is highest will have a significant impact on reducing the gap overall.
- Companies in the top 25% for gender diversity on their executive team are 21% more profitable than companies in the bottom 25%<sup>(xii)</sup>.
- Research from Balance reveals the cost to the UK economy based on women leaving the workforce due to menopause symptoms is £10 billion a year. <sup>(xiii)</sup>

## Becoming an employer of choice

- Policies like this help to support gender equality and enable employers to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace.
- With women over 50 being one of the fastest growing demographics in the workplace, having policies that support the health of these workers is a great way to attract and retain experienced talent and build employee loyalty.
- Showing employees that they will be treated with respect and compassion is vital if stigmas like menopause are to be overcome.

## Tips on how to communicate your menopause policy

- Reduce the stigma: as a company, talk about menopause and actively let employees know that you're there to support them.
- Find someone in the senior leadership team who is willing to be a spokesman for the policy and speak about it when appropriate both internally and externally.
- Work with your internal communications team to use a variety of methods to communicate the policy. The CIPD's Let's Talk Menopause resource provides tools - including posters, podcasts and tools for line managers and HR - on how to effectively support women going through the menopause at work.
- Combine the launch of the policy with training on how to talk about menopausal symptoms, especially for line managers. The CIPD has a great guide that you can provide line managers with as a resource: CIPD Guide to Managing Menopause at Work.
- Understand that many people may want to keep their menopausal symptoms private, so make sure employees can access the policy at any time and on any device.
- If possible, create a menopause champion who can offer additional support to others.
- Use national awareness events, like World Menopause Day in October as an opportunity to provide information about the subjects and communicate this to employees while also letting them know about any internal policies or support available to them.
- Continually evaluate and refresh your policies and ensure that you continue to communicate about them at all given opportunities in the employee lifecycle: job adverts, late-stage interviews, onboarding, 1-2-1s, staff meetings, etc, so anyone who is affected knows where to turn to for help.
- Remember that menopause isn't a negative experience for everyone, for some women it can be a relief. Be sensitive to this in the way that you communicate.
- Be mindful that this isn't a tick box exercise - it's easy to release a policy and then forget about it. For your menopause policy to become truly embedded, it needs to be part of a long-term commitment to being an inclusive company.
- Survey employees regularly, for example every six months, to see if they know about the policy and understand what it contains.
- Make sure feedback can be given anonymously to protect people's privacy.
- Review what others are doing and update your policy if you see an appropriate initiative that would suit your employees and your organisation.
- Speak to line managers to find out about uptake of the various support on offer.
- Consider offering an opportunity for those affected by the policy to come together to talk with those responsible for creating the guidelines to really help ensure that your policy is delivering what your employees need.

## References

- **i** <https://www.nhsemployers.org/articles/menopause-and-workplace>
- **ii** Department for Work and Pensions (2016)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/employment-statistics-for-workers-aged-50-and-over-since-1984>
- **iii** Research by Vodafone and Opinium (March 2021) <https://newscentre.vodafone.co.uk/press-release/new-global-employee-commitment-on-menopause/>
- **iv** The CIPD's 2019 research surveyed 1,409 women experiencing menopause symptoms and was led by YouGov (<https://www.cipd.co.uk/about/media/press/menopause-at-work#gref>).
- **v** <https://newscentre.vodafone.co.uk/press-release/new-global-employee-commitment-on-menopause/>
- **vi** <https://www.diageo.com/en/news-and-media/features/diageo-introduces-global-menopause-awareness-guidelines/>
- **vii** <https://www.channel4.com/corporate/menopause-policy>
- **viii** <https://www.balance-menopause.com/news/menopause-cripples-the-uk-economy>
- **ix** <https://employeebenefits.co.uk/access2funding-menopause-policy-employees/>
- **x** <https://www.bakermckenzie.com/en/insight/publications/2020/09/uk-menopause-business-issue>
- **xi** <https://www.bakermckenzie.com/en/insight/publications/2020/09/uk-menopause-business-issue>
- **xii** Office for National Statistics (2018) Gender pay gap in the UK:  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2018>
- **xiii** <https://genderdiversity.co.uk/what-is-gender-diversity>