



What do Shropshire Employers need to know about the Menopause?

The menopause is something that all women will experience. This means that many female employees are undertaking their role while enduring symptoms ranging from hot flushes to depression and reduced concentration.

The legal obligations

Menopause is covered by:

- Age, Sex and Discrimination in the Equality Act (201)
- Safe working (including experiencing menopause symptoms) - Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- ACS new Code of Practice around Flexible Working
- And of course, what ever policy your Company has!

Should you have a Menopause Policy and what should be in it?

Having an effective menopause policy in place can help raise awareness and understanding of the issue, improve retention, help to ensure a diverse workforce and crucially - reduce the potential for sex, age and disability discrimination. The following are some headings to consider:

1. Introduction - why do you have a policy - what is menopause? For example:

This policy sets out the rights of employees experiencing menopausal symptoms and explains the support available to them. The menopause is a natural event in most women's lives during which they stop having periods and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years. However, each woman's experience will differ and menopausal symptoms can occasionally begin before the age of 40. Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause. Women may start to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause. While symptoms vary greatly, they commonly include:

- hot flushes; night sweats; anxiety; dizziness; fatigue; memory loss; depression;
- headaches; recurrent urinary tract infections; joint stiffness, aches and pains;
- reduced concentration and heavy periods.

Each of these symptoms can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work. The organisation has a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees and therefore commits to ensuring that adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing menopausal symptoms.

2. Support: where can your staff access information - who can they go to for help?

The organisation aims to facilitate an open, understanding working environment. Employees are encouraged to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health. Early notification will also help line managers to determine the most appropriate course of action to support an employee's individual needs.

Employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague or another manager instead. They can also raise the issue with [HR/occupational health] if they need support.

A variety of initiatives such as [our employee assistance programme and mental health first-aid programme] are also on offer. Further details of these are set out [in the organisation's employee handbook].



There are external sources of help and support for employees and managers, including information on:

- Menopause matters (www.menopausematters.co.uk), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- The Daisy Network charity (www.daisynetwork.org), which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency; and
- The Menopause Café (www.menopausecafe.net), which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause.

Remember - Line Managers need support to. Who can they talk to in your organisation for help in supporting their teams?

Employers may also be liable for the actions of employees. It is therefore important to train employees on appropriate behaviour to avoid any instances of harassment!

3. **Reasonable adjustments:** list the things that you will consider (bearing in mind the points I've made about not being discriminatory in the face of a long term condition!) - for example:

Temperature control

The organisation strives to achieve a comfortable working temperature for employees. The organisation will allow flexibility within its dress code where reasonable. *(Consider cotton tunics, not synthetic fabrics; chilled water provided on each floor and desk fans on request.)*

Flexible working

The organisation recognises that difficulty sleeping is a common symptom of the menopause. To reflect this, as well as the impact of other common symptoms, we aim to facilitate flexible working wherever possible. Requests for flexible working could include asking for:

- a change to the pattern of hours worked; permission to perform work from home;
- a reduction in working hours; or more frequent breaks.

Employees should discuss such requests with [*their line manager/HR*]. Depending on the circumstances, requests may be approved on a permanent or temporary basis. *(When considering requests for flexible working, employers should be aware that such requests may fall under the reasonable adjustments required to be made for disabled employees).*

For more help on HR policies, advice & guidance

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