



ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

Joint Staff Committee
10 October 2022

Ward(s) Affected: n/a

Implementation of a Period and Menopause policy for all Adur and Worthing Council staff

Report by the Director for Digital, Sustainability & Resources

Officer Contact Details

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The report seeks approval of the Adur & Worthing Councils new Period and Menopause policy which is recommended for implementation for all staff as best practice.
- 1.2. Currently there is no policy or promoted support channels in relation to managing period related problems and menopause in the workplace.
- 1.3. The aim of the policy sets out the rights of employees experiencing symptoms caused by the menopause, their period or any other related issues and those who may be impacted by a partner or dependent who is experiencing any symptoms.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Joint Staff Committee is recommended to approve the new Period and Menopause Policy with immediate effect.

- 2.2. The Joint Staff Committee is asked to delegate authority to the Head of Human Resources (in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and the Head of Legal Services, where relevant) in order to make minor and non-material amendments to this policy at any time.

3. Context

- 3.1. Adur and Worthing Councils do not currently have a policy to support menopause or period related problems in the workplace.
- 3.2. The Councils have a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees and are committed to ensuring that adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing symptoms linked to periods and menopause. This policy has been developed and consulted on with Unison.
- 3.3. This policy is applicable to women, non-binary and transgender staff who are experiencing any of the health issues mentioned in this policy.

4. Issues for consideration

- 4.1. A decision is needed by members as to whether they support the implementation of this policy for all staff.

5. Engagement and Communication

- 5.1. The Councils' Women's network was engaged in contributing to this policy being developed.
- 5.2. Unison have been consulted with and have agreed the Period and Menopause Policy
- 5.3. The Councils will be promoting menopause awareness day which is on 18th October.
- 5.4. The Councils will also be running menopause awareness training to develop champions in the workplace.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. There are no additional financial costs arising from the proposed changes to the policies.

7. Legal Implications

7.1. This policy is not contractual and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment.

7.2. Section 112 Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council the power to appoint staff on such terms and conditions as it considers appropriate.

Background Papers

- [Period and Menopause Policy](#)
- [Equality Impact Assessment](#)

Sustainability & Risk Assessment

- 1. Economic**
 - Matter considered and no issues identified.

- 2. Social**
 - Matter considered and no issues identified.

- 2.1 Social Value**
 - Matter considered and no issues identified.

- 2.2 Equality Issues**
 - Equality Impact assessment attached

- 2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)**
 - Matter considered and no issues identified.

- 2.4 Human Rights Issues**
 - Matter considered and no issues identified.

- 3. Environmental**
 - Matter considered and no issues identified.

- 4. Governance**
 - Matter considered and no issues identified.



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Period & Menopause Policy

1.0 Overview

- 1.1 This policy sets out the rights of employees experiencing symptoms caused by the menopause, their period or any other related issues and those who may be impacted by a partner or dependent who is experiencing any symptoms.
- 1.2 This policy is applicable to women, non-binary and transgender staff who are experiencing any of the health issues mentioned in this policy.
- 1.3 The Councils recognise the impact of the period and menopause on staff health and strive to do what is possible to support those affected by the menopause, their period or any other related issues.
- 1.4 Individual areas of responsibility are:
 - **Corporate Leadership Team** – publicising and championing this policy fostering an environment in which colleagues can openly discuss menopause / periods in a respectful and supportive manner.
 - **HR team** - reviewing this policy to ensure it is effective and advising managers on the interpretation and consistent application of the policy and on best practice. Working to retain and support all employees experiencing menopause.
 - **Managers** - responsible for reading this policy to ensure they are informed and understand menopause and period related symptoms and how they can support / assist anyone experiencing this at work. Discussing the health and wellbeing of their staff openly and confidentially in 1:1 conversations.
 - **Employees and those working on behalf of the Councils** – taking responsibility for complying with the Officers Code of Conduct, specifically treating others with dignity and respect and complying with the spirit and wording of this policy

2.0 Definitions

- 2.1 Anyone can be affected by hormonal changes during their lives for a number of reasons, including pregnancy, fertility treatment, gender transitioning, conditions needing hormone treatment, and menopause. These can bring about symptoms which could affect a colleague at work.
- 2.2 Whilst this policy is not exhaustive in detailing all possible conditions an employee can face, the below definitions outline some of the more common conditions.

Periods

- 2.3 A period is the part of the menstrual cycle. The pain that can be felt by some people during their period is caused by muscle cramps in the womb which can spread across the stomach, the back and thighs and can cause symptoms such as mood swings, acne and some of the symptoms that come with the menopause (as outlined in 2.5).
- 2.4 The pain of periods can be additionally severe (sometimes debilitatingly so) due to additional complicating conditions, including:
 - endometriosis – where cells that normally line the womb grow in other places, such as in the fallopian tubes and ovaries, causing intense pain when they shed
 - adenomyosis – where the inner lining of the uterus breaks through the muscle wall of the uterus (the myometrium), causing cramps, lower abdominal pressure, and bloating as well as heavy periods
 - fibroids – non-cancerous tumours that can grow in or around the womb and can make periods heavy and painful
 - pelvic inflammatory disease – where the womb, fallopian tubes and ovaries become infected with bacteria, causing them to become severely inflamed

The menopause

- 2.5 The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years. However, each person's experience will differ, and menopausal symptoms can occasionally begin before the age of 40. Menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years, perimenopause or a 'transition' are terms often used to describe when the body moves to end the duration of reproductive years, which is not a one-off event.
- 2.6 While symptoms for menopause vary greatly, they commonly include the below symptoms and can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work:
 - hot flushes
 - night sweats

- trouble sleeping
- anxiety
- dizziness
- fatigue
- memory problems
- depression
- psychological impact of the physical change
- headaches and migraines
- recurrent urinary tract infections
- joint stiffness, aches and pains
- reduced concentration
- heavy periods
- dry eyes
- skin irritation
- osteoporosis

Perimenopause

2.7 Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause, with individuals starting to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause.

Surgical menopause

2.8 A surgical menopause is when the menopause is brought on through a hysterectomy and certain cancers.

Polycystic ovary syndrome

2.9 Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a common condition that affects how an individual's ovaries work. The 3 main features of PCOS are irregular periods as the ovaries do not regularly release eggs, excess androgen – high levels of hormones such as progesterone in the body, which may cause physical signs such as excess facial or body hair and polycystic ovaries where the ovaries become enlarged and contain many follicles that surround the eggs.

Dysautonomia

2.10 Dysautonomia is when the autonomic nervous system doesn't function as it should. One of the side effects is changes to hormonal function.

Additional conditions

2.11 In addition, the menopause can bring on added complications for those with other underlying issues, such as diabetes. The symptoms might include fluctuating blood sugar levels which could make the diabetes harder to control.

- 2.11 It should be noted that going through the menopause can impact a colleague's future health with, for example, the risk of coronary heart disease increasing after the menopause, and impact to those with epilepsy.
- 2.12 Managers and staff can make a referral to occupational health to understand what additional support can be put in place for those with underlying conditions who go through the menopause.

3.0 Support

- 3.1 The Councils have a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees and are committed to ensuring that adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing symptoms linked to periods and menopause.
- 3.2 Employees are encouraged to inform their line manager that they are experiencing symptoms of any of the above conditions (and any other conditions they are dealing with) at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health.
- 3.3 Early notification will also help line managers to determine the most appropriate course of action to support an employee's individual needs.
- 3.4 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, trade union rep or another manager instead.
- 3.5 Support can also be obtained from the Council's Employee Assistance Programme, signposting can be provided through the council's Mental Health First Aid trained staff and some wellbeing hub staff have training about the menopause and can be a useful point of contact.
- 3.6 Further details of support in the councils can be found on the intranet or through the line manager for those with no access to the intranet.
- 3.6 It is acknowledged that those living with someone who is suffering any of the above conditions may also be impacted and can benefit from an open conversation with their manager about how they can be best supported.

- 3.7 Individuals experiencing any of the above health conditions have a duty to look after themselves and their own health. This includes doing what they can to support their own health.
- 3.8 Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up any support available to assist with menopause symptoms or period related matters, raising concerns if this support is not in place.
- 3.9 The Council will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality. If an employee is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another employee in relation to the menopause or period symptoms, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

4.0 Reasonable Adjustments

- 4.1 Menopause symptoms can often be covered by the 2010 Equality Act. There are many reasonable adjustments that can be considered which may help those suffering due to periods and the menopause and managers will need to explore what they can do to support their staff, including:

Occupational Health

- 4.2 A working environment assessment can ensure that an employee's physical environment, whether at home or in the office, is not making their symptoms worse. A review of seating plans /arrangements may be considered.

Temperature control

- 4.3 The Councils' strives to achieve a comfortable working temperature for employees. There are air conditioning systems operating in some areas, blinds and chilled water across many of the Council sites. Fans may also be available from Facilities.
- 4.4 For staff in Uniform - a considered approach to this will be taken to any adjustments including the provision of additional uniform.

Flexible working

4.4 The Councils' recognise that difficulty sleeping is a common symptom of the menopause and other conditions. To reflect this, we aim to facilitate flexible working wherever possible. Requests for flexible working could include asking for:

- a change to the pattern of hours worked
- a reduction in working hours
- more frequent breaks and flexibility on when these are taken
- flexibility in where they work

4.5 Employees should discuss any such requests with their line manager. Depending on the circumstances, requests may be approved on a permanent or temporary basis.

4.6 This may also include flexibility to attend appointments if required or home working when a member of staff has had a poor night's sleep or is in pain.

Support for concentration

4.7 The manager can look at granting access to a quiet meeting room if this helps the member of staff concentrate or find more comfort or agree where practical to work from home.

4.8 It is the responsibility of the member of staff to ensure they take short screen breaks and rest throughout the day if they experience tiredness. Managers have a duty to ensure all staff take necessary breaks.

4.9 If a member of staff's symptoms form part of a cycle, the manager and member of staff can discuss being mindful of this and reviewing workloads to coincide with when the member of staff is at optimal health.

Adjusted conversations

4.10 Whilst we encourage staff to talk openly about any concerns with their manager, we recognise that some staff members may feel uncomfortable talking about these issues with their manager.

- 4.11 Adjustments can be made to these conversations, including discussing over email/chat, having a colleague or informal union support in the meeting with them or using a *wellness action plan* to talk in advance about what the manager can do to support when someone is struggling with symptoms.

Sickness/Paid Leave

- 4.12 An employee may feel unwell and unfit for work due to their period or menopause and if so the councils will support them. This includes the sudden onset of symptoms during the working day.
- 4.13 Details of our Sickness Absence Policy can be found on the intranet or via the line manager. This entitles an employee to take paid leave for up to seven consecutive days without needing a fit note from their doctor. Absence related to periods or menopause should be recorded as such and will be considered in relation to absence triggers.
- 4.14 Whilst an employee can simply inform their line manager they are unfit for work, they should also feel they can be open about the reason for their leave with their line manager without fear of being discriminated against.

Performance Support

- 4.15 The council recognises the potential impact of menopausal symptoms on performance by employees experiencing the menopause. Managers will seek to support staff sympathetically rather than moving directly to capability or disciplinary procedures.
- 4.16 Managers will consider all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and will not discriminate against those employees who are experiencing the menopause, and put in place the required support or adjustments in a timely manner.

5.0 Resources for staff going through the menopause

5.1 In addition to the resources available in the workplace, there are specific resources for those going through the menopause, including:

- A [menopause advice sheet](#) available on the intranet or through the line manager

- [Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options
- the [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for those experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency
- the [Menopause Café](#), which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause
- [Menopause Doctor](#), which is a free perimenopause and menopause support app with a wealth of personalised information, expert advice and many more functionalities
- [MegsMenopause](#), an 'honest and frank' look at all things menopause
- [CIPD line manager guide](#) on supporting someone going through the menopause
- [Menopause at work practical guide for people managers](#) from the CIPD, which offers guidance on supporting employees going through the menopause, including how to approach the conversations about it appropriately and sensitively.

6.0 Review and Monitoring

- All new employees, supervisors and managers will receive details of this policy with training to be rolled out for Managers.
- Adequate resources will be made available to fulfil the aims of this policy. The policy will be widely promoted, and copies will be freely available and displayed in The Council's offices and through the staff intranet.
- This policy will be reviewed jointly by unions and management, on a regular basis to ensure working conditions and practices best enable this policy..