

Guidance for managers supporting employees during the menopause

People Management – Human Resources

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Guidance for managers supporting employees during the menopause

Background and context

Carmarthenshire County Council is committed to providing equal opportunities for women and men. The possibilities for our employees to participate and reach their full potential should not be defined by their gender, or any factors associated to gender.

The menopause affects all women and typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, although a small proportion of women can experience menopause at a younger age. Symptoms of menopause can vary enormously from the liveable-with, to the incredibly debilitating.

In the authority, 74% of the workforce are female, with the biggest proportion of the female workforce aged between 40 – 60 years of age. It's therefore important to recognise that the menopause is a workplace issue.

Failing to consider the difficulties that women have with the menopause, could amount to a breach of Health & Safety, and Equality legislation.

Effect of the menopause on work

Symptoms of the menopause which can make work difficult include;

- Insomnia, sleepiness and tiredness;
- Poor concentration, and or memory;
- Hot flushes and night sweats;
- Palpitations;
- Depression or feeling low;
- Reduced confidence.

Women experiencing menopausal symptoms can feel less engaged, and satisfied with their job. Studies have shown that menopause symptoms can have a significant impact on attendance, and, at times performance in the workplace. Menopausal symptoms can also contribute to women deciding to leave their jobs early, or not put themselves forward for promotion, thus affecting the diversity of teams.

Offering support to women who are experiencing the menopause can help ensure that they remain productive during this time, and can increase their loyalty and commitment to the authority.

What can managers do to help?

Recommendations from research are for employers to best support menopausal women as part of a holistic approach to employee health and well-being. It is implicit that we are sensitive to any issues that are impacting on the physical and mental well-being of our staff, which includes menopause. Whilst there is not a stand-alone policy in the authority, for the menopause, there are a range of employment policies in place around time away from work, or variations to working time, such as flexible working, agile working, and flexi time, which can provide a framework for managers to support any employee affected:

[Flexi-time](#)

[Flexible working](#)

[Agile working](#)

Facilitating access to support when appropriate, from our Occupational Health Team will also provide another route of advice and support for employees and managers.

[Occupational Health](#)

[Menopause Guidance for Employees](#)

There are a number of practical steps managers can take to support employees. You could undertake a risk assessment with the employee to help identify, and, where possible, make adjustments to the physical and psychological work environment.

These could include:

- Ensuring that rooms are well ventilated;
- Being flexible about breaks (the employee may need to use the toilet more often);
- Consider flexibility to the working day, e.g, agreeing a later start time where the employee may be experiencing sleep deprivation;
- Consider whether there are any reasonable and safe adjustments to uniform (particularly when it is made out of synthetic material), or provide an extra set of uniform;
- Ensuring that there is ready access to cold drinking water;
- Allow the employee to wear noise-reducing headphones in open plan spaces to help reduce headaches, and assist concentration;
- Ensure that regular 1-1's / supervision takes place to re-inforce support and confidence;
- Provide note-pads for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment;
- Encourage the employee to consider incorporating activities into their day such as mindfulness exercises, or going for a walk;
- Encourage a menopausal employee to read the advice for employees on the menopause, provided by the Employee Wellbeing Team, and to see their GP.

Whilst the menopause is a natural stage in a woman's life, with some adjustments and self-managing techniques most women adapt and manage this stage in their lives. For some women however the symptoms can be challenging and impact on the ability to regularly attend work. In these circumstances it is recommended to refer the employee to occupational health in line with the Sickness Absence policy so enable appropriate support and advice to be provided to the employee and the manager and to consider any reasonable adjustments that may support the employee.

[Sickness absence](#)

[Disability: Reasonable adjustments](#)

Surveys show that large numbers of women still don't feel comfortable talking about the menopause, nor do some disclose it as the real symptom of their sickness absence. Menopausal women can also often be reluctant to ask for help. It is important to talk about the menopause, and create an understanding that you as a manager can be approached for support on this matter. You may wish to consider (where practicably possible) to make provision for an employee to talk to a manager of the same sex if this makes them feel more comfortable.

Taking some of the pragmatic steps identified above, and equipping yourself with the information and advice when needed to support a menopausal woman in the workplace, can have a positive influence on the attendance and engagement of any members of your team experiencing menopause. It will also minimise the knock-on impact on the wider team, and ultimately to the service provided to the citizens of Carmarthenshire.

ENSURING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

All employees are required to adopt a positive, open and fair approach and ensure the Authority's Equality and Diversity Policy is adhered to and applied consistently to all irrespective of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, disability, religion and belief or non-belief, age, sex, gender reassignment, gender identity and gender expression, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marital or civil partnership status.

In addition, the Welsh Language Standards ask us to 'ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favorably than the English language' and this principle should be adopted in the application of this guidance.

If you have any equality and diversity concerns in relation to the application of this policy and procedure, please contact a member of the HR Team who will, if necessary, ensure the policy/procedure is reviewed accordingly

If you require this publication in an alternative format please contact People Management on Ext 6184 or email PMBusinessSupportUnit@carmarthenshire.gov.uk