

Supporting employees experiencing the menopause

Policy Statement

New Forest District Council is committed to supporting employees who are experiencing menopausal symptoms.

This policy defines the way in which the Council will support and respond to employees in this regard.

Policy Aims

This policy sets out the rights of employees experiencing menopausal symptoms and explains the support available to them.

To ensure that all employees are aware of the Council's policy, it's implications and where to get advice.

To provide easily accessible information for employees.

To provide guidance to managers on how to support and assist employees.

Introduction

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 employee's experience will differ, and menopausal symptoms can occasionally begin before the age of 40.

Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause. An individual may start to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause.

Managers should also be aware that trans men and non-binary employees may also experience menopause related symptoms.

Although most people will associate the menopause with changes related to a women's period cycle, many women will experience issues such as changes in mood or poor concentration. It has now been scientifically proven that during the menopause there are changes that occur within the brain, which explains some of the symptoms listed below.

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 and may significantly impact on an employee's attendance. The council 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.

Internal support

We aim to facilitate an open, understanding working environment. The HR team have developed a Brief Bite training session called Managing the Menopause, and this will be available to all staff to increase awareness. Managers are particularly encouraged to attend this session.

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. The council also has a number of trained Mental Health First Aiders. Further details of these are set out on the intranet. They can also raise the issue with a member of the HR advisory team if they need support or with their Union Representative.

External Support

There are also other avenues of support including the Employee Assistance programme the details of which are on Forestnet.

Forestnet signposts external sources of help and support for employees and managers, including information on:

- [Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options.
- the [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for people experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency; and
- the [Menopause Café](#), which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause.
- Or try [Balance - Homepage \(balance-menopause.com\)](http://balance-menopause.com) this gives you further information on HRT, wellbeing and Nutrition, and includes information for those who have had or are currently dealing with cancer and how this may affect you during the menopause.

Supporting an employee experiencing the Menopause

Temperature control

The council will strive to achieve a comfortable working temperature for employees. We will allow flexibility within our dress code where reasonable. Chilled water is provided in regular places around our buildings, and desk fans will be provided upon request.

Flexible working

The council 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. Depending on the circumstances, requests may be approved on a temporary basis.

Reasonable adjustments:

The menopause can, depending on the severity of the symptoms, amount to a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, we must ensure that we do not treat employees less favourably than others as a result of a disability and must also make reasonable adjustments as required to ensure that disabled employees are not disadvantaged as a result of their disability.

If in doubt, please speak to a member of the HR Advisory team who can offer advice and assistance in these matters.

Risk Assessments.

We have a duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. Managers should consider whether a risk assessment is necessary to identify how working conditions could affect those experiencing the menopause in the workplace.

Discrimination:

Managers must also ensure that employees experiencing the menopause are not directly or indirectly discriminated against. For example, a requirement to wear a uniform made of uncomfortable, synthetic fabric could indirectly discriminate against an employee experiencing regular menopausal hot flushes on grounds of disability, sex and age.

Further Help and Support

If you require any further help or advice relating to this policy please contact a member of the HR Advisory Team