

Menopause

1. Background

Abbeyfield the Dales (ATD) are committed to promoting the health, safety and well-being of its employees, and supporting all staff affected by the menopause.

Women represent 47% of the UK workforce, 28% of who are aged 50 and above. The average age for a woman to go through the menopause is 51 so with menopausal women now the fastest growing demographic in the workplace, it's more important than ever for employers to have a good understanding of the menopause and how they can support colleagues through the transition.

The menopause can also impact trans and non-binary people who may not identify as female. Men can also experience a decline in hormone levels as they age, however unlike female menopause, when hormone production can change dramatically over a short period of time, the hormone decline in men is a slower process. The signs and symptoms are varied and tend to only affect a small percentage of men. The menopause can also affect partners and families too. For these reasons the remainder of this policy will refer to 'individuals'.

Each individual's experience of the menopause can be different and present a variety of symptoms. Some of which can lead to increased absence and lower levels of engagement and productivity. This can mean that each individual, without the right support at work, may feel that they have no choice but to leave their job and maybe the workplace altogether.

We believe support from managers and colleagues will help individuals self-manage their symptoms. **However, guidance advises strongly that individuals should seek medical advice from their GP in the first instance.**

2. Objectives

At ATD we understand, and are passionate about, the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusion. We aim to promote a highly positive environment for all our employees and our residents which values the contributions offered by a diverse workforce and everyone we engage with.

This policy recognises that the menopause is an equality, and an occupational health and safety issue, and that individuals may need appropriate flexibility, support, and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause.

The aim of this policy is to:

- Set down the guidelines in supporting staff affected by the menopause.
- Raise awareness of menopause and its impact in the workplace.
- Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of the menopause and how they can provide support.
- Encourage open conversations between line managers and staff; and
- Direct staff to relevant advice and assistance.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all ATD employees.

4. Policy

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time. ATD may also vary the procedures set out in this policy including any time limits as appropriate in any case.

Any information you provide us about your health will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. We recognise this data is sensitive and it will be handled in a confidential manner.

4.1. Menopause Definition

All women, and other individuals, will experience menopause at some point in their life and everyone's experience will be different. The menopause is a stage in life that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, however it may start earlier or end later and happens naturally as hormone levels decline. Often symptoms last between four to eight years, but they can continue for longer but tend to decrease in frequency and intensity over time. It may happen suddenly if a woman is going through treatment that impacts the ovaries.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause during which the body prepares itself for menopause, hormones start to change, and symptoms can be experienced. Perimenopause can last several years and can involve similar symptoms to the menopause itself, the individual may not realise what they're experiencing is because of their menopause transition.

Changes in the body fluctuate and symptoms will range from mild to severe. Here are some examples of the symptoms:

- Sleeplessness
- Hot flushes
- Memory issues/brain fog
- Losing flow mid-sentence
- Headaches
- Joint pains
- Depression and anxiety
- Changes in mood

Symptoms can affect an individual's comfort, confidence, and performance at work, however there are various ways in which we can support individuals with their symptoms, and organisations which can provide specialist advice.

4.2. Guidance for people going through the menopause.

While many people will be able to carry on their working lives as usual, others may not and benefit from additional support to reduce the impact of their symptoms at work, If you require additional support speak to your line manager, they will be discuss and agree with you the support we are able to provide.

If you feel unable to do so you should contact the HR officer or one of the Mental Health First Aiders.

There may be times when you aren't able to work due to the impact of menopause symptoms. You should follow the normal sickness absence process, and if you're comfortable, we'd encourage you to be open with your manager about the reasons for your absence so that they can support you best.

If possible, as with all medical appointments, you should try to arrange these outside your working hours, but we understand that this isn't always possible. If you need to attend

medical appointments during your working hours, speak to your manager about how they may be able to accommodate this.

If you need additional support in managing and understanding your symptoms, have a look at the resources detailed in section 10.

4.3. Guidance to support your colleagues.

- Be aware of menopause symptoms and remember to treat any conversations sensitively. Ask what support could help and do what you can to accommodate.
- Understand that they may not know that the symptoms they are experiencing could be related to the menopause. You may want to encourage them to talk to their GP or one of the support organisations detailed below.
- Check in regularly as symptoms and support can change.
- Talk about it so people are aware and can offer support to colleagues who may be affected at work. Ask people in your team if they'd like to share their own experiences and consider people in your teams who may be indirectly affected by menopause if some at home is experiencing severe symptoms.

4.4. Guidance for Managers

You have an important role to play in ensuring that a member of your team experiencing menopausal symptoms gets the same support and understanding as if they had any other health issue.

Here are some of the things that you should consider:

- Enhancing your understanding of the menopause and how it can affect people both personally and whilst at work.
- Have regular supervisions and informal check in conversations. If you are concerned about a team member's wellbeing, ask open questions like 'how are you doing at the moment' or 'I noticed you seem distracted is everything ok'. Open questions give the opportunity for your team member to let you know about any health issues or symptoms they may be experiencing and will help you explore and identify how best to support them.
- Be open to making suggestions that may make a big difference to your team member in managing their symptoms. The symptoms experienced can change in intensity and/or frequency and so it's important that you review adjustments regularly to ensure that they are still relevant and helpful.
- Don't make assumptions – everyone's experience of the menopause is different, so take the time to listen and understand how your team member is feeling and explore the support that you can provide.
- Ensure that your team member is aware of this policy, the support that Abbeyfield offer and the specialist support available from charities and external organisations.

4.5. Open conversations

As mentioned, menopause is not just an issue for women. All staff should be aware of menopause so that they can support those experiencing it or otherwise affected by it.

We encourage an environment in which colleagues can have open conversations about menopause. We expect all staff to be supportive of colleagues who may be affected by menopause in the workplace.

Anyone affected by menopause should feel confident to talk to their line manager about their symptoms and the support they may need to reduce the difficulties menopause can cause them at work.

Line managers should be ready to have open conversations with staff about menopause and what support is available. These conversations should be treated sensitively, and any information provided should be handled confidentially and in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

4.6. Risk Assessments

We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of all our staff and will consider any aspects of the working environment that may worsen menopausal symptoms where reasonably possible. This may include identifying and addressing specific risks to the health and well-being of those experiencing menopause.

4.7. Residents

Some of our younger residents may also experience the menopause and may need support in managing their symptoms, see section 4.2 for 'Menopause Definition'. It's important that staff are mindful of this and signpost them to the support available. Support information to signpost residents to can be found in section 10 of this policy.

5. Finance, Value for Money & Social Value

By looking after our people through menopause, sickness absence levels will improve, as well as retention of key staff, both of which are significant costs for Abbeyfield and have a direct impact on the services we provide to residents.

6. Supported Appendices

N/A

7. Linked Policies

Flexible & Home Working (S041P)

Equality & Diversity (LG016P)

Sickness & Absence (S024P)

8. Legislation/Regulation

This policy is fully compliant with the following legislation:

- Health & Safety at work act 1974
- The workplace (health, safety& welfare) regulations 1992
- The Management of Health & Safety at work regulations 1999, GB regulations 4

Under the Equality Act 2010, menopause is largely covered under three protected characteristics: age, sex and disability discrimination. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 provides for safe working, which extends to the working conditions when experiencing menopausal symptoms.

9. Review

Every 3 years, subject to any regulatory or legislative updates.

10. Procedure/Guidance

There are many websites and social media pages to help research details. We have listed a few but advise staff to do their own research.

- NHS Menopause Pages – www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/symptoms
- Henpicked Menopause Hub: <https://henpicked.net/menopause-hub/>
- Women's Health Concern: <https://www.womens-health-concern.org>

- Daisy Network is dedicated to providing information and support to women diagnosed with Premature Ovarian Insufficiency, also known as Premature Menopause – www.daisynetwork.org
- My Menopause Doctor is a website that aims to help empower women with necessary information to make information decisions regarding any treatment they may take to help turn the menopause into a positive experience that does not negatively impact their lives – www.menopausedoctor.co.uk.N/A