

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.

This policy applies to Abbeyfield the Dales Limited and its corporate trustee responsibilities for registered providers Charles Edward Sugden Almshouses, and Frank Crossley's Almshouses, also for the non-registered provider The Pawson Cottage Homes, and its subsidiary Abbeyfield Court Limited.

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 benefit from temporary adjustments to reduce the impact of their symptoms at work. If there are adjustments that you think would help, speak to your manager about what you need. Some examples of adjustments that may be helpful include:

- Temperature control could include provision of a USB fan when temperatures are too hot.
- Flexible working could be considered for those that are experiencing debilitating symptoms. Many people have a best part of the day when they work most productively or need to start slightly later following a sleepless night. Working from home more often (if your role allows) may also be considered to support when symptoms are particularly bad.
- Flexible or frequent rest breaks and adequate access to drinking water.
- Temporary changes to duties and/or ways of working could include walking meetings, turning camera off during video calls, re allocating tasks which impact on symptoms.

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 you need to attend medical appointments during your working hours, speak to your manager about how they can support you. 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 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.
- Occupational Health: you could make an Occupational Health referral to better understand any adjustments and other support that may help alleviate symptoms affecting them at work.

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 and suggesting adjustments 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. Risk assessments are to be completed by your line manager or the HR Manager.

4.7. Support & Adjustments

While many who experience menopause can carry on their working lives as normal, we recognise that others may benefit from adjustments to their working conditions to mitigate the impact of menopause symptoms on their work.

If you believe that you would benefit from adjustments or other support, you should speak to your line manager in the first instance. If you feel unable to do so you should contact the HR officer or one of the Mental Health First Aiders.

Physical adjustments could include temperature control, provision of electric fans or access to rest facilities. Depending on individual and business needs, adjustments such as flexible working, we may also consider more frequent rest breaks or changes to work allocation. These are examples only and not an exhaustive list.

We may refer you to – either or both – Occupational Health or a doctor nominated by us or seek medical advice from your GP to better understand any adjustments and other support that may alleviate symptoms affecting you at work. Any request for a medical report or examination will be dealt with as set out in our Sickness and Absence Policy.

4.8. 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

Appendix 1: Menopause Risk Assessment

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

10.1. Manager Guidance for Colleague Discussion

Every woman's experience of the menopause is different and the range of symptoms they are experiencing are likely to be varied, and it is, therefore, not possible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines that will meet every situation.

As a manager you may be approached by a colleague who wants to discuss their symptoms or just how they are feeling, or a male colleague may want to talk about a family member who is experiencing menopause. You should ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation. Do not try to fit it in if you know you are likely not to be able to give the employee adequate time to discuss the matter; if necessary agree a time and date for the meeting which will give the employee confidence that you will hear what they have to say.
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality. This issue is of a highly sensitive nature and confidentiality is paramount.
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly.
- Identify and discuss the employees' symptoms and suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptom support below).
- Agree actions, and how to implement them. Take notes and all parties agree what has been discussed, and the next steps, before the meeting ends. Record the discussion and ensure that this record is treated as confidential and is stored securely.
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom.
- Agree timescales for a follow-up meeting and if possible, a time and date for this to take place to review how the employee is doing and whether the agreed support measures are working.
- Advise the employee that if there are any issues prior to the agreed follow-up they should speak to you as soon as they can.

10.2.Symptoms Support

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including, but not exhaustively or exclusively those listed below; Consider providing support for women as detailed below:

10.2.1. Hot Flushes

- Can temperature control for their work area be provided such as a fan or can they be moved near a window, or away from a heat source.
- Provide easy access to cold drinking water.
- If they are required to wear a uniform can this be altered or adapted in a useful way?
- Do they or can they have access to a rest room for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush.

10.2.2. Heavy/light Periods

- Allow permanent access to washroom facilities.
- Provide storage space is available for a change of clothing.

10.2.3. Headaches

- Provide access to fresh drinking water.
- Offer a quiet space to work.
- Allow the use of noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices.
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

10.2.4. Difficulty Sleeping

- Can flexible working be considered, particularly if suffering from a lack of sleep.

10.2.5. Low Mood

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission.
- Offer Mental Health First Aider.
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head'.

10.2.6. Loss of Confidence

- Ensure there are regular Personal Development discussions.
- Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues.
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

10.2.7. Poor Concentration

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly.
- Review task allocation and workload.
- Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment.
- Offer quiet space to work.
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices.
- Reduce interruptions.
- Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having 'protected time', so that they are not disturbed.
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

10.2.8. Anxiety

- Promote counselling services.
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – perhaps outside of their work area.
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques.
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

10.2.9. Panic Attacks

- Promote counselling services.
- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission.
- Identify a 'buddy' outside of work area.
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques.

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.

If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.

Appendix 1: Menopause Risk Assessment

Abbeyfield The Dales

Risk Assessment



Site Name:	All ATD Sites	Address:	All Sites	Date:	15/07/2026
Activity:	Menopause				
Groups at Risk:	Staff				
Assessor:	Stacey Dean	Role:	HR Manager		

No	Task/Activity	Hazard/Risk	Likelihood x Severity = Risk Rating			Current Controls	Likelihood x Severity = Risk Rating (with controls)		
			L	S	RR		L	S	RR
1.	General itchininess and formication.	Uniforms may become uncomfortable for staff.				- Staff are advised to avoid nylon <i>Offer cotton uniforms or cotton-based clothing (Menopause matters 2017)</i> - Provide comfortable working temperatures when possible, using fans, open windows.			
2.	Muscular aches, bone or joint pains.	Moving and handling or adopting static postures.				- Make necessary adjustments to work activity through individual manual handling risk assessments and reviews each week. - All staff are trained in manual handling including the HSE TILE. - Staff are to following instruction, training and supervision instruction at all times.			
3.	Weight Gain.	Restricted mobility and long term ill health risks.				- Promote physical wellbeing at work and advise to eat less - Promote wellbeing checks with line managers. - Advise to use my fitness pal to monitor calories. - Advise to carry out more exercise and take longer walks.			

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No	Task/Activity	Hazard/Risk	Likelihood x Severity = Risk Rating			Current Controls	Likelihood x Severity = Risk Rating (with controls)		
			L	S	RR		L	S	RR
4.	Urogenital issues.	Need access to toilet more frequently or increase drinking oral fluids.				- Easy access to washroom or toilet facilities are in most ATD large buildings. - Encourage frequent breaks very short breaks.			
5.	Irregular periods.	Need access to toilet and washroom facilities more frequently.				- Easy access to washroom/toilet are in most ATD large buildings. - Allow for more frequent breaks in work.			
6.	Psychological Problems e.g. Memory loss or changes in concentrate on levels, mood changes.	Tasks may become more challenging or difficult temporarily for example learning new skills (may be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue); performance may be affected; work-related stress may exacerbate these symptoms.				- Encourage open discussions with line manager during supervision or at weekly update meeting adjustments. - Self-help strategies from NHS or GP and access to ATD Mental Health First Aiders services. - Address work related stress through individual risk assessment and implementation of the HSE's management standards http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg430.pdf			
7.	Hot flushes and sweats (Daytime)	Prolonged use of face masks, visors. Workwear/uniform may become uncomfortable. Difficulty adjusting to usual workplace				- Consider access to fans and cold-water facilities. - Changing workstation position such as near windows or doors. - Providing a discrete and ventilated place to recover if possible. - Working from home if possible for job role (only if this meets the needs of the business). - Providing well-ventilated and comfortable / flexible temperature control in meetings.			

No	Task/Activity	Hazard/Risk	Likelihood x Severity = Risk Rating			Current Controls	Likelihood x Severity = Risk Rating (with controls)		
			L	S	RR		L	S	RR
		temperature and ventilation. Difficulty during meetings or delivering presentations in the workplace.							
8.	Hot flushes and sweats (Night time).	Fatigue lead by sleep deprivation.				• Provide support and advise on sleep hygiene • http://www.sleepcouncil.org.uk • Consider temporary shift adjustments flexible working, this must fit the need of the business.			
9.	Insomnia (unable to sleep.	Fatigue.				• Temporary adjustments to shift patterns to accommodate, but must meet the needs of the business. • When managing possible sickness, absence issues be alert to menopause and make allowance.			

Risk/Priority Indicator Matrix

LIKELIHOOD	Almost certain/imminent	5	5	10	15	20	25
	Likely	4	4	8	12	16	20
	Even chance/may happen	3	3	6	9	12	15
	Unlikely	2	2	4	6	8	10
	Improbable/very unlikely	1	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4	5
			Negligible (delay only)	Slight (minor injury / damage / interruption)	Moderate (lost time injury, illness, damage, lost business)	High (major injury damage, lost time, business interruption, disablement)	Very High (fatality/business closure)
			SEVERITY (CONSEQUENCE)				

Risk Status / Suggested Timeframe

17-15	High	Stop activity	As soon as possible and make immediate improvements.
10-16	Medium	Tolerable	Look to improve within specified time frame / within next 3-6 months.
5-9	Low	Adequate	Look to improve at next review / whenever viable to do so.
1-4	None	Acceptable	No further action required

Action Plan

Activity / Situation / Hazard	Action Required	Action By	Completed By (name & date)