

# Menopause guidelines

## For employees and managers

(You and work version)

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## 1.0 Introduction

At Luton Council we want to support our colleagues' wellbeing at every stage in life. We know that women make up nearly two thirds of the council's workforce - and 48% of those women working are over the age of 50 – so many of today's female employees will be working through the perimenopause and menopause and managing the symptoms at work.

We know that many people feel uncomfortable talking about the perimenopause and menopause – which means that some women suffer in silence while experiencing a wide range of symptoms that can affect their physical as well as mental health. So it's time to stop viewing this as just a women's issue, rather as a workplace issue that we all have a role in supporting.

The purposes of this document are to encourage our colleagues to talk more about the perimenopause and menopause – for women experiencing symptoms to feel you can ask for the help you need, for managers to have the knowledge and confidence to know what to do if you need to support a colleague through this time, and to give all colleagues, whatever your gender, information of where you can go for further help in the event that you or those you live or work with are experiencing the transition.

While this document uses the term 'women' to talk about people who may experience perimenopause and menopause transition, we know that it can impact trans or non-binary colleagues who don't identify as women in the same manner. We will support all colleagues experiencing perimenopause and menopause transition, so encourage colleagues to ask for help if they need it.

## 2.0 Our commitments

We're committed to taking all reasonable steps to make sure that we:

- listen to you if you tell us about your perimenopause or menopause symptoms
- keep information about your health confidential
- support you if you're experiencing menopausal symptoms, making workplace adjustments where needed
- treating you with respect, not making judgements or assumptions about you based on your age or because you've told us that you're in menopause transition
- treat any issues of bullying and harassment in relation to health issues associated with the menopause seriously – see our unfair discrimination, harassment and bullying procedure for more information (available on the you and work platform, the intranet or your manager).

## 3.0 Perimenopause and menopause as health conditions

The perimenopause is the period when hormone levels start to change, you may start to notice new physical and/or mental health symptoms but are still experiencing periods. The perimenopause can last for several years and typically affects people between the ages of 45 and 55 although the age can vary from person to person.

A person is described as in menopause when they have not had a period for one full calendar year or more. Menopause occurs when a person's ovaries no longer produce eggs and as a result the levels of three hormones – namely oestrogen, progesterone, and testosterone – fall.

The average age for a person to undergo menopause transition is 51 – but 1 in 100 women will experience it before the age of 40. That could be as a result of surgery, illness or treatment for other conditions, such as chemotherapy – or it could be for no reason at all. ‘Perimenopause’ can start as early as in your twenties or as late as your forties. So we won’t make any assumptions about what you may or may not be experiencing based on your age.

Supporting those experiencing symptoms of perimenopause or menopause transition means understanding that not everyone experiences menopause in the same way. Like any other health condition, colleagues will have different symptoms and need different support at different times. So this guidance isn’t about creating a one-size fits all approach. It’s about highlighting all of the different ways that we can support you – so you can decide what works best for you.

## 4.0 Confidentiality

If you tell your manager about your menopause transition, they’ll keep this confidential and won’t share this information unless you say it’s okay – except if we’ve got serious concerns for your safety or that of others.

## 5.0 Symptoms

Most people might know about the symptom of hot flushes during menopause transition, but there are a number of physical and mental health symptoms we know could affect you at work, that we might need to put adjustments in place for:

- psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
- hot flushes
- sleep disturbances, like insomnia (including night sweats) that can make you feel tired and irritable
- extreme PMS or heavy bleeding that might cause pain or embarrassment at work
- muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- bladder problems including recurrent urinary tract infections and cystitis, increase in frequency of urination and incontinence
- headaches, increase in migraines
- skin changes – dryness, itchiness
- re-emergence of allergies you felt you had left behind

We know that you might experience some, none, or all or one of these symptoms. If you do experience symptoms to the extent that they are affecting you at work, please talk to your manager, or another manager you feel comfortable with, about any changes we can make to help you. You could also contact our employee assistance provider [Spectrum Life](#) for support.

## 6.0 Making workplace adjustments

There’s a legal duty on employers to carry out a suitable, sufficient assessment of health and safety risks to employees in their workplace, which falls under the remit of the management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.

Your manager may do an assessment to better understand more about how your menopausal symptoms are affecting you at work and to consider the adjustments you may need or wish to make. This assessment should cover the specific needs of employees experiencing the menopause. Essentially, we should ensure that the working environment will not worsen menopausal symptoms. Indeed, we are under a legal obligation to do this.

You can also use a [Wellbeing Menopause Support Plan](#) to identify how your menopausal symptoms are impacting you at work, and use this to discuss any changes you might need with your manager.

There might be workplace adjustments we can make at work to help you manage your menopausal symptoms. These are likely to be temporary changes while you go through menopause transition.

The workplace adjustments we can make will depend on your circumstances, but the types of changes that might help could be:

- changing your start time if you're experiencing disturbed sleep
- providing more breaks
- working from home
- making sure you've got access to cold water while you're working
- making sure you've got easy access to toilet facilities
- making sure the temperature is comfortable, providing a fan or access to fresh air
- adjusting your uniform requirements, or providing more items of uniform
- giving you somewhere to store extra clothes or change clothes during the day
- thinking about more flexible ways of working to meet both work and your needs
- adjusting working times/patterns to enable time off to attend medical appointments/allowing time off to attend medical appointments (more details can be found in the sickness absence toolkit).

If you think you might need a change to your working pattern to help you to manage your menopausal transition, talk to your manager about this when you're creating your Wellbeing Support Plan. Just so it's clear we'll deal with this as a possible workplace adjustment, so you don't need to make an application under the flexible working process.

You might wish to speak to our independent employee assistance provider to get some help and advice. They may encourage you to go to your GP for support, if you haven't already. They might also ask you if you're happy to be referred to occupational health, however this should only be necessary if advice to manage short term absences or agree temporary workplace adjustments is needed. Alternatively your manager may decide to refer you to occupational health so we can get more information about how your menopause symptoms are likely to affect you at work, and what adjustments we can make to help.

## 7.0 Wellbeing Menopause Support Plan

Wellbeing Menopause Support Plans can be used to help you identify what helps you to manage your menopausal symptoms at work, what causes you to become unwell and the support you'd like to receive to boost your wellbeing.

By creating a Wellbeing Menopause Support Plan, you can identify what works and doesn't work for you in managing your menopause transition, what support you might need from your manager and what you can do to support your own health and wellbeing.

There's a [template](#) you can use to create your Wellbeing Menopause Support Plan. You can either do this on your own and then share it with your manager, or discuss it with them to put it together. Either way, once you've shared this with your manager they'll keep it confidential and won't share it with anyone else.

It's good to meet with your manager regularly to discuss your Menopause Support Plan and how you feel things are going. You can use your usual one-to-one, your check-ins or just ask them if you want a catch-up.

## 8.0 If you need further support

Remember we have an [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#) who can provide colleagues with support. You can contact the EAP on 0808 196 2016 or via WhatsApp (text “Hi” to 00353 87 369 0010), or you can download the Spectrum Life app on your phone. It’s independent and totally confidential. And there’s no charge for Luton council colleagues or their family members who live in the same house.

If managers need advice they should contact Human Resources, Occupational Health or the [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#)

### **Other sources of support**

There are lots of charities and other support groups who offer information and support about menopause. We can’t list them all here, but here are a few that you might find helpful:

- Menopause Matters – [www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk) – independent website providing information about symptoms and treatment options
- Daisy Network – [www.daisynetwork.org](http://www.daisynetwork.org) support for women experiencing early menopause
- Women’s Health Concern – [www.womens-health-concern.org](http://www.womens-health-concern.org) – the patient arm of the British Menopause Society
- Newson - A clinical centre of excellence run by doctors totally dedicated to women's health and wellbeing <https://www.newsonhealth.co.uk/>
- Gen-M – everything you need to know about the menopause all in one place [Gen M | The Very Best Of The Menopause | We've Got This](#)

## APPENDIX 1 Example menopause support plan

Employee: You can use this menopause support plan to remind you what you need to do to stay well at work, and what your manager can do to support you. You need only give information you're comfortable with sharing and that relates to your role and your workplace. It can help you and your manager to plan and agree together how to support you to address any health needs.

Manager: The purpose of the plan is to help your discussions with an employee on the menopause and establish how it may impact them in the work environment.

Please refer to the Menopause Guidance for Managers and Employees.

### Employee to prepare in advance of discussion

Employee Name	Line Manager or nominee	Date

Points to consider	Notes
What helps you stay healthy at work? For example: getting some exercise before or after work, getting some fresh air at lunchtime, opportunities to get to know colleagues, time to talk to your manager.	
Are you seeking support from your GP and/or our EAP to help you understand any treatment options available to you?	
What can your manager do to support you to stay healthy at work? For example: regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments	
Are there any situations at work that trigger menopause/perimenopause symptoms?	

Points to consider	Notes
How might your experience of menopause/peri-menopause symptoms be impacting on your work?	
What support could we put in place to reduce triggers or help you manage the impact?	

The list below is not intended to be exhaustive and may not all be applicable. There may be other items, which should be considered. Substitute as applicable

Menopause symptoms	Agreed support/action	By whom
<b>Hot flushes</b>	Examples: Fan can be used on desk area. Relocate further away from radiator. Time away from desk when required to help with hot flushes	
<b>Headaches</b>	Examples: Relocate to a quieter part of the office. Time away from desk when required to take medication/cold compress.	
<b>Poor concentration towards the end of the day</b>	Examples: Earlier start and earlier finish times.	
<b>Anxiety during busy events, such as large committee meetings</b>	Examples: Discuss whether it is necessary for employee to attend. Consider the purpose of the event or committee a colleague would be willing to swap committee responsibilities or it provides a development opportunity. Look at whether committee responsibilities could be carried out as	

Menopause symptoms	Agreed support/action	By whom
	part of a smaller working group so that large meetings can be avoided.	
<b>Anxiety around travel and being away from home</b>	<p>Examples:</p> <p>Explore the possibility of alternative representation at conferences or off-site meetings. Is it possible to exchange off-site for on-site responsibilities with a colleague?</p> <p>Look for virtual alternatives to being physically present at off-site events.</p> <p>In terms of personal development, look for ways to continue development that do not require travel.</p>	
<b>Other</b>		

<b>Next Steps</b>	Points to consider
<b>Additional Support</b>	<p>Ensure employee is aware of a range of support</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources outlined in the Menopause Guidance.</li> <li>• Trade Union Representatives.</li> <li>• Menopause Support Networks (consider talking to GP).</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Occupational Health Referral</b>	<p>Consider whether an Occupational Health Referral is required to agree additional information or advice to support the employee in the work place and agree workplace adjustments</p>



<b>Next Steps</b>	Points to consider
<b>Communication to Team/ Colleagues</b>	Explore with the employee what level of information they would be comfortable sharing with colleagues regarding their situation. You may want to revisit this at future reviews.
<b>Review date</b>	Consider when to review the support plan. There is no set timeframe as this will be dependent on individual circumstances

**Manager: If you retain a copy to refer to, please ensure this is kept in a secure location to ensure confidentiality.**

## APPENDIX 2 Menopause Checklist for Managers

This document should be retained on the individual's e-file and reviewed by the individual and manager on a regular basis.

Agreed adjustments must be put in place to lower any risks to an acceptable level. (It may also be necessary to seek further guidance from Occupational Health).

<b>What are the hazards</b>	<b>Considerations</b>	<b>Who might be harmed</b>	<b>What is already being done</b>	<b>What further action is necessary</b>	<b>Action by whom</b>	<b>Action by when</b>	<b>Date achieved</b>
<b>Information on menopause</b>	Does the employee have access to information on menopause, relevant policies on attendance management, EAP, Occupational Health etc?						
<b>Sickness reporting</b>	Is there the facility for those who are not able to attend work due to menopausal symptoms to report these to a female manager or other point of contact?						
<b>Stress</b>	Are there the appropriate mechanisms in place to deal with other related issues such as stress management? e.g. Counselling services, HSE Stress Management Standards						

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<b>Occupational health arrangements</b>	Has the employee been made aware of what facilities are in place for OH referral and support to remain in the workplace? Do they need a referral?						
<b>Unions support /discussion groups</b>	The employee has been made aware of other support mechanisms in the workplace which may be able to help? E.g. Occupational Health, EAP						
<b>Work stations</b>	Are work stations / Locations easily accessible to toilet, and rest facilities?						
<b>Facilities</b>	Are there private washing and changing facilities available?						
	Is there access to sanitary products?						
	Do rotas, shifts and schedules ensure that workers have easy access to sanitary and washing facilities?						

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<b>Temperature</b>	Are the employee/ employer aware of the workplace maximum and minimum temperature and is it implemented?						
	Is ventilation available and is it regularly maintained?						
	Is additional ventilation provided if necessary? E.g. Desk Fan, ability to open / sit by a window. How is this implemented?						
	Do uniforms and PPE equipment reflect the needs of the individual?						
	Is the employee aware of what additional uniform can be provided and how to get this?						
	Are the clothes provided made of natural fibres?						
<b>Environment/ duties</b>	Have workstation assessments been reviewed to take menopause into account?						
	Are there opportunities to switch to lighter or different duties?						

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	Do manual handling assessments take any issues around menopause into account?						
	Are there flexible arrangements in place in relation to breaks?						
	Can start and finish times be adjusted as part of a flexible working agreement?						
	Is the role suitable for agile working? If not why not?						
	Is there access to natural light?						
	Have work processes been assessed to see if any adjustments are needed?						
	Are air conditioning / Humidifiers functioning efficiently?						
	Is the environment too noisy?						
	Does the role impact on fatigue (mental and physical)? Are you able to assess, monitor and respond to frequent changes in patient acuity / job demands? Are you able to concentrate to undertake and record complex medicine calculations / complex pieces of work? Do you						

<b>What are the hazards</b>	<b>Considerations</b>	<b>Who might be harmed</b>	<b>What is already being done</b>	<b>What further action is necessary</b>	<b>Action by whom</b>	<b>Action by when</b>	<b>Date achieved</b>
	have the ability to deal with emotionally challenging clinical / staff / customer situations etc.?						
	Does the role result in fatigue from standing?						
	Do you have sufficient workspace?						
	Are you able to move freely / adjust posture etc.?						
	Do you undertake remote working?						
	Could remote working support you to perform effectively in your role? E.g. Ad Hoc Home Working Policy?						
<b>Working conditions</b>	Do you work night shifts?						
	Do you work shifts in general?						
	Are you a lone worker?						
	Do you work ad hoc/ regular overtime /on call?						

<b>What are the hazards</b>	<b>Considerations</b>	<b>Who might be harmed</b>	<b>What is already being done</b>	<b>What further action is necessary</b>	<b>Action by whom</b>	<b>Action by when</b>	<b>Date achieved</b>
	How do you travel to work? Do you drive for business purposes?						

**Other issues and considerations**

<b>What are the issues</b>	<b>Considerations</b>	<b>Who might be harmed and how</b>	<b>What is already being done</b>	<b>What further action is necessary</b>	<b>Action by whom</b>	<b>Action by when</b>	<b>Date achieved</b>

PLEASE NOTE: The list above is not exhaustive. There may be other issues that are highlighted which should be considered when agreeing workplace adjustments

CONFIRMATION OF COMPLETION OF REASONABLE WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS IDENTIFIED

Details of adjustments agreed:

Details of adjustments not approved (including reasons for the decision)

Date of annual review meeting

(N.B. this review can be cancelled if the employee decides the meeting is not required)

I confirm that the meeting was undertaken for \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_  
and that any agreed adjustments listed above will be carried out.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Line Manager) Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Line Manager)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Employee) Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Employee)