



Menopause Policy

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Key messages

People experiencing menopausal symptoms require the same support and understanding as anyone experiencing any ongoing health condition.

We want to create an open and inclusive culture where employees and managers feel confident to talk about the menopause transition and discuss any practical adjustments that may be needed.

The main objective of this policy is to:

- provide a supportive framework for employees experiencing all stages of the menopause;
- support and encourage people to have open discussions and disclosure, enabling them to feel comfortable speaking about how perimenopause and menopause related symptoms may be affecting both their physical and mental health;
- provide guidance to people managers on how they can support individuals experiencing adverse menopausal symptoms through this time; and
- provide all colleagues with information regarding the menopause and where they can go for further help.



Does this policy relate to me?

This policy applies to all employees, agency staff, secondees, contractors, non-executives, and other workers of The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO).

The term ‘all women’ is used throughout this policy and this includes cisgender women and trans women.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The menopause is a natural hormone transition that every woman and some trans men and non-binary people will experience as their body gradually or dramatically stops producing oestrogen. Some trans women undergoing gender-affirming therapy will experience menopause-like symptoms and as this policy covers all aspects of menopause including perimenopause and menopausal symptoms, this policy also applies to trans women.
- 1.2. People can go through a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms associated with the menopause transition, symptoms can be fluctuating and felt to varying degrees. Not all people will experience menopause symptoms and everyone’s experience of the menopause transition is individual to them. Some women will transition naturally, and some may have their transition medically induced for example following a hysterectomy.
- 1.3. Menopause normally occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts from four to eight years, although this can vary from person to person. The average age to undergo the menopause is



51. However, in rare circumstances, it can affect young women as early as in their teenage years and can also occur much later in life than 51. Menopause can also be medically induced at any age for example following a hysterectomy.

- 1.4. The 'perimenopause' refers to the stage leading up to the menopause and this can start for some people as early as in their twenties or as late as their late forties. The ICO will not make assumptions about what colleagues may or may not be experiencing based on their age.
- 1.5. Post-menopause refers to the stage after the menopause, when someone has not had a period for at least 12 consecutive months. Some people do continue to experience symptoms of menopause.
- 1.6. Not everyone experiences menopause symptoms in the same way, the range of symptoms, severity and duration will vary from person to person. Some people may also experience different symptoms at different stages of the menopause. There are a large range of symptoms, some of the most typical ones include:
 - psychological issues such as low mood, anxiety, depression, memory loss, panic attacks, mood swings, loss of confidence and low self esteem;
 - sleep disturbance, insomnia, night sweats and fatigue which can make people feel tired and irritable;
 - hot flushes –sudden surges of heat which can make people feel dizzy;
 - brain fog and reduced concentration;
 - extreme PMS or heavy periods;
 - muscle and joint stiffness, aches, and pains;
 - recurrent urinary tract infections (UTI's) including cystitis and vaginal dryness;
 - headaches and migraines;
 - palpitations; and
 - skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness).

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2. Support available to employees

- 2.1. If you are experiencing menopausal symptoms and are finding it difficult to cope at work, you should speak to your people manager in the first instance. If you are not comfortable doing this, then you should speak to a member of the People Services team.
- 2.2. The ICO have a procedure in place to support employees with health conditions within the ICO Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments at Work Policy. (A copy can be found on IRIS) As part of this procedure you are encouraged to complete a Workplace Adjustment Passport (See Annex A) giving as much information as you feel comfortable. The main function of the passport is to promote and support a conversation between yourself and your People Manager about your menopause symptoms. All information will be kept strictly confidential.
- 2.3. We are committed to taking all reasonable steps to assist our colleagues through the perimenopause and menopause transition. As part of the Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustment at Work procedure, you will meet with your People Manager to discuss how your symptoms are affecting your work and what support can be provided. Potential adjustments and support include;
 - Flexible working options such as starting later or taking longer breaks if needed;
 - scheduling more frequent breaks;
 - allowing more time to complete tasks;
 - alterations to the work environment such as moving to a cooler area in the office, or providing a fan;
 - adjustments to our dress code;
 - provision for a quiet place to work or relax;
 - free sanitary products are provided in all toilets and all colleagues have access to shower facilities; and
 - providing a radar key for the accessible toilets.



- 2.4 Your People Manager with the support of People Services will conduct a risk assessment to assess any health and safety risks and ensure that your menopause symptoms are not made worse by your workplace or working practices.
- 2.5 If you do not feel comfortable discussing your symptoms with your People Manager, there are internal and external support services that you could reach out to. External support services can be found in section 4. Internal resources include;
- Employee Assistance Programme. You can access this confidential and free service 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 0800 072 0353. It provides services for telephone counselling as well as legal, financial, and medical support.
 - The Inclusion and Wellbeing Team are here for you; providing tools, services and interventions which can educate, develop, and support your health and wellbeing at work.
 - Wellbeing Champions are volunteers at the ICO who are passionate about championing mental, physical, and financial wellbeing, they promote awareness of wellbeing and can provide support to those who are struggling;
 - Mental Health First Aiders. We have around 30 colleagues who are fully trained Mental Health First Aiders, certified by Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England. A list of our Mental Health First Aiders can be found on the staff intranet.
 - The ICO Menopause Network is committed to providing support and raising awareness to everyone affected by any aspect of the menopause. Contact details can be found on the staff intranet.
- 2.6 The ICO recognises that menopause symptoms can impact trans and non-binary colleagues. We will support all colleagues experiencing menopause symptoms and so encourage all colleagues to ask for help if they need it.

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3. Responsibilities

3.1 Employees

The menopause affects everyone, whether experiencing it first hand or second hand as a family member, friend, or colleague. All employees are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility to look after their health;
- being open and honest in conversations with People Managers, People Services and Occupational Health;
- completing a Workplace Adjustment Passport (if comfortable to do so) to aid discussions regarding menopause symptoms and the impact this is having on them or their work;
- being respectful and willing to support their colleagues; and
- treating the menopause sensitively and avoid inappropriate comments such as referring to 'women of a certain age, hot flushes, and senior moments.'

3.2 People Managers

People Managers are not expected to be experts in the menopause. The People Managers role is to have an awareness so that they can have supportive conversations with colleagues and help them to access and signpost appropriate support. People Managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy;
- support colleagues, and be willing to have open discussions about menopause, treating discussions sensitively and professionally;
- encourage colleagues to complete a Workplace Adjustment Passport and discuss potential adjustments that could help mitigate the impact of any menopausal symptoms at work;
- ensure support for all, regardless of their work pattern and location. Some symptoms may be easier to manage at home, whilst some employees may benefit from face-to-face support;
- be aware that each experience of menopausal transition is different so individuals will require different levels of support and adjustments;



- ensure that no one experiences less favourable treatment as a result of the menopause;
- in collaboration with People Services, conduct a risk assessment of their staff members working environment and working practices.
- conduct return to work interviews in a sensitive and empathetic way, discuss what if any ongoing support is needed and possible adjustments to workloads to help ease colleagues back into their work routine, particularly if the absence has been long term;
- record any adjustments agreed and actions to be implemented;
- ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates;
- ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to;
- ensure that all conversations are kept strictly confidential;
- signpost internal support such as the Menopause Network, Employee Assistance Programme; and
- if necessary, seek advice from People Services (with the permission of the employee)

3.3 The Inclusion and Wellbeing Team will:

- Process the Workplace Adjustment Passport in accordance with the Reasonable Adjustments at Work Policy;
- support People Managers on the implementation of any workplace adjustments; and
- signpost relevant sources of additional support such as the Menopause Network

3.4 People services are responsible for;

- Offering guidance to people managers ensuring they have the required training and support;
- working with our Occupational Health (OH) provider to support employees with menopausal symptoms;
- working with OH provider on proactive support to create a preventative and supportive environment promoting good health and wellbeing;
- ensuring appropriate risk assessments are carried out on the working environment and working practices, this may also include a stress risk assessment;



- promoting the Employee Assistance Programme and ensure that counselling is available if needed; and
- monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy.

4. Useful resources

- NHS guidance on menopause symptoms and treatment
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- Women's Health Concern – the patient arm of the British Menopause Society
<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>
- Daisy Network – Provides support for premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency.
<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>
- Menopause Café (gather to eat cake, drink tea, and discuss menopause)
<https://www.menopausecafe.net/>
- The Menopause Exchange – Provides independent advice about the menopause, midlife and post-menopausal health.
<https://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/>
- Menopause Matters – An independent website providing up-to-date, accurate information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms, and treatment options.
<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

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Version history



Version	Changes made	Date	Made by
1.0	First Draft	May 2023	People Services
1.1	Updated section 1.1 of published document to clarify how menopause affects trans women.	November 2023	People Services

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Annexes

Annex A

Workplace Adjustment Passport

Personal when completed.

The purpose of the passport is for you to record all workplace adjustment requirements agreed with your manager. Sharing and discussing your passport with your manager, can enable them to provide you with tailored support and appropriate workplace adjustments.

All decisions relating to workplace adjustments will be based on the information contained within this passport or shared confidentially with the Inclusion and Wellbeing Team.

Name:	Name of manager:
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Details of your disability, health condition, reason, or barriers you currently experience:

This section should include information that may help your manager to understand the impact your disability, health condition, reason or caring responsibilities have on your ability to fulfil your role.

Please do not list anything that you do not feel comfortable disclosing.



Details of how this affects you at work and the support you need:

This section could include:

- details of how your disability, long-term health condition or caring responsibilities may affect you day by day – physically, emotionally, and behaviourally;
- the aspects of the job where you experience barriers and require adjustments. This could include the work environment, communicating with others, working arrangements or equipment;
- any specific requirements such as altered lighting, sitting away from draughts or near to toilets. These adjustments may be in place now, but this may alter if your workplace accommodation changes;
- specific adjustments you already use or know you need. For example, screen reading software to convert text to speech already installed on your laptop or flexibility in start and finish times; and
- how the adjustments will help you or remove the barriers identified above.



Additional information:

- This section could include details of any recent assessments for Occupational Health, display screen equipment or workstation.
- Information about help you may need to evacuate a building in an emergency and whether you have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. Contact details of someone to get in touch within case of an emergency.
- Information about any plans you have in place such as a Wellness Recovery Action Plan or what your manager and/or colleagues should do if you feel unwell.
- Details of anything else you think would be useful.

Details of agreed workplace adjustments

Adjustment	Date identified	Date implemented

In the event that an adjustment may take longer than 20 calendar days, an interim measure will be sourced and documented above.

The following table is used to keep a written record of when the passport is reviewed and/or amended. The passport should be reviewed at 3, 6 and 12 months and at least annually thereafter.

Review date (DD/MM/YYYY)	Amendments made	Reason for amendment	Employee signature	Line manager signature

Employee signature and date:	People manager signature and date:
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Inclusion and Wellbeing Signature and date:

If, for any reason, a suitable workplace adjustment has not been implemented, the Director of People Services must be informed with reasons/justifications as to why the adjustment has not been made.