

# Menopause in the Workplace

## Guidance for Managers

### 1 Having Discussions

It is acknowledged that having a discussion about a very personal subject area like the menopause is often difficult. It's personal and sensitive and for many individuals the conversation will be a challenge.

As a Manager, you are advised to leave it to the staff member to disclose menopause related concerns. You can ask general questions, such as 'How are you?', but you should not ask staff directly if they want to talk about the menopause or perimenopause, or suggest they might be experiencing symptoms. Always respect a team member's wish for privacy.

If a conversation is agreed, you should conduct it in a friendly and honest way, take it seriously and hold it in a confidential, private space where you will not be interrupted.

In particular, you should;

- Start the meeting by checking that the member of staff is happy to have the conversation with you;
- Stress that the meeting and anything that is discussed will be confidential;
- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage the person to speak openly and honestly;
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported;
- Agree actions, and how to implement them;
- If you both agree, keep a note of these actions;
- Ensure that this note is treated as confidential, and is stored securely;
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed about any aspects of the meeting or plans that will be actioned, and by whom;
- Ensure that a designated time is set aside for a follow up meeting.

### 2 Preparing for meetings

In preparing for the meeting, you are asked to consider;

- the University's [policy and guidance](#) on the menopause;
- your role in the situation and how you can support the person;
- the range of support available inside and outside the organisation;

- that effects of the menopause and perimenopause, which can vary widely from person to person;
- consequently, that the changes required to help support a team member can vary from person to person.

Be mindful of the individual concerns that a person may have at this time and ensure that you reassure them where possible;

- their symptoms might be embarrassing for them and/or the person they would be confiding in;
- they may not feel that they know you well enough;
- they may be wary because you are a man, or are younger than they are or may be worried that you might not understand their issues.

Other worries include that:

- their symptoms will not be taken seriously;
- if they do talk, their symptoms will become widely known at work;
- they will be thought to be less capable;
- their job security and/or chances of promotion will be harmed.

### 3 Providing support through the menopause

The steps below will help towards agreeing the changes at work which help manage symptoms when undertaking their role:

- **Step 1** – has the person with concerns about the menopause or perimenopause talked to their GP and/or a medical specialist? If not, is this something they would find helpful? If they have, what advice/help has already been suggested? If this is not a route they wish to take they can self-refer to the University's Occupational Health Service.
- **Step 2** – you should discuss matters with the staff member, perhaps with HR's support. This should include their menopause or perimenopause concerns, the effects they are having difficulties with and what support they may need.

You and the member of staff should discuss any potential changes which would help them manage their symptoms when doing their job.

Remember, the member of staff may prefer to talk initially to HR or the Occupational Health Service and not you. If this is the case, provide reassurance that they can always revert to you in future and that you will follow up on any actions that have been suggested.

You will always be informed of any changes prior to finalising and implementing them.

- **Step 3** – with the support of HR or the Occupational Health Service if they have already been involved, agree changes in writing and have follow-up discussions to make sure the changes are working for the individual and for you as the line manager.
- **Step 4** – follow-up discussions need to be whenever necessary, as symptoms can fluctuate and/or alter. This means the adaptations at work may need to change.

Changes, for example, might be as simple as:

- providing a fan, cool drinking water, an extra uniform for hot flushes
- allowing the person to take more frequent, shorter breaks when needed
- identifying a quiet area where the person can go if they need to manage their symptoms
- moving their desk close to a window that opens
- being flexible where possible over start and finish times to help them manage their symptoms
- allowing them to work from home if/when practical
- permitting the use of noise reducing headphones, or ability to work in natural light
- allowing time off if they cannot carry on working that day or for medical appointments

Alternatively, you might discuss and consider other changes which should be reviewed if the symptoms worsen. For example:

- a temporary change to certain duties/requirements of the role, for example replacing duties which the individual finds difficult with other duties at a similar level
- following Occupational Health consideration, the staff member being considered for a different role under the 'medical circumstances' section of [the University's Redeployment Policy](#)
- the person switching to a job share or part time working.

If the symptoms are serious or result in longer term or more frequent absences, then you should, after you have informed the individual, obtain a medical report to help identify any further adjustments that could be made. This will be undertaken by the Occupational Health Service, accessed via the HR team for your area.

## 4 Menopause and the law

There are two main strands of law that may relate to the perimenopause and menopause:

- The Equality Act 2010 protects workers against discrimination. This includes because of their sex, a disability and their age
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 says an employer must, where reasonably practical, ensure health, safety and welfare at work

### 4.1 Risks of sex discrimination, disability discrimination and age discrimination

Menopause and perimenopause are not specifically protected under the Equality Act. However, if a worker is treated unfairly because of the menopause and perimenopause, this may amount to discrimination because, for example, of their sex and/or a disability, and/or their age.

#### Relevant Cases

[Merchant v BT Plc](#)

[Davies v Scottish Courts and Tribunal Services](#)