



## Human Resources

# MENOPAUSE POLICY



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## I. Introduction

Surrey Heath Borough Council is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for their staff. This policy sets out the rights of all staff experiencing menopausal symptoms and explains the support available to them.

- As an employer at Surrey Heath Borough Council we employees are all increasingly working well into our 60s and beyond, and most employees are working through their menopause ~~and beyond~~. Menopause is a natural phase which affects 51% of the population in the UK ~~and W~~ whilst some people experience few symptoms, others experience severe symptoms that impact both their home and work lives. Some employees may experience symptoms in their 50's but some maybe even earlier. This policy also refers to transgender men (women who are assigned as female but transitioning to male) as the menopause can still affect them and they require the same support in the workplace.

Menopause can be a significant issue in the workplace but there are other conditions such as endometriosis which has similar symptoms. ~~F~~for those who experience moderate to severe symptoms, ~~and~~ it is important to offer appropriate support for those individuals.

- Employees that are experiencing menopausal symptoms, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) whether moderate or severe are required to talk to their line managers or HR. These symptoms are treated separately from the current sickness and absence policy capability, disciplinary, complaints, respect at work and performance policies to ensure that menopausal women are not unfairly penalised and do not experience detrimental treatment as a result of their symptoms.



Removing the taboo around menopause in the workplace helps to create a supportive environment, where everyone can talk openly and without embarrassment. [This and](#) encourages all staff to have a better understanding of the menopause. This in turn will support staff to discuss menopausal related health problems and ask for the support that they may need. This policy sets out the guidelines on providing the right support for menopause in the work place.

For more information and resources to support you please see:

<https://www.wellbeingofwomen.org.uk/campaigns/menopausepledge/resources>

## 2. Definition

Menopause is the time when menstruation periods permanently stop. It is defined as occurring when the individual has experienced no periods for 12 consecutive months and no other biological or psychological cause can be identified.

Menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years. However, each employee's experience will differ, and menopausal symptoms can sometimes begin before the age of 40. Symptoms can come on gradually or start very suddenly, particularly if there has been surgery or other medical interventions involving the female reproductive organs.

Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause. An individual may start to experience menopausal symptoms during the perimenopause.

While symptoms related to menopause vary greatly, they commonly include:

- hot flushes;
- night sweats;
- anxiety;
- dizziness;
- fatigue;
- memory loss;
- depression;



- mood swings;
- panic attacks;
- insomnia;
- skin irritation;
- headaches;
- recurrent urinary tract infections;
- joint stiffness, aches and pains;
- reduced concentration; and
- heavy periods.

Each of these symptoms has the potential to affect an employee's comfort and performance at work.

### 3. Employee Support

Employees are encouraged to speak to their line manager as their first point of contact or, they can approach HR, if they experience menopausal symptoms, which are impacting on their work performance [and/or wellbeing](#), to ensure that these are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health.

Line managers should build trust with their staff so that employees feel comfortable in approaching them. It is essential that reports of symptoms are listened to carefully and treated with sensitivity. Employees who do not wish to discuss the matter with their line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with HR, a trusted colleague or another manager instead. The employee can be assured that confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

Surrey Heath Borough Council offers a variety of initiatives [and managers are required to attend mandatory training](#) to support [individualswomen](#) experiencing menopausal symptoms, including our Employee Assistance programme. There are also courses available to improve a greater understanding and awareness on Surrey Learn Partnership. Further details can be found on Warbler and there is also a course for line managers to attend.

External support and help for individuals and managers can be found at:



- Menopause Matters ([www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk)) which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- The NHS ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)), which provides information and treatment options; and
- The Daisy Network ([www.daisynetwork.org](http://www.daisynetwork.org)), a charity which provides support for people experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency.

## 4. Reasonable Adjustments

Surrey Heath Borough Council has a duty to provide a safe working environment for all staff and commits to ensuring that suitable adjustments and additional support are available to individuals experiencing menopausal symptoms that impact on their work.

The [CouncilCompany](#) acknowledges that the menopause affects individuals in different ways and so no adjustment will be made without fully discussing it first. It is always essential to balance the needs of the individual against the wider context of the team and customer service requirements.

Examples of adjustments include:

- conducting a risk assessment to identify any areas that are a detriment to individuals going through the menopause;
- implementing temperature control, such as [hot desking in air conditioned areas or providing](#) access to a fan;
- allowing flexibility within the Company's dress code where reasonable;





- assessing how work is allocated. Employees still must be able to perform their role but the employer would be flexible about and allow reasonable adjustments to help facilitate this.
- This policy has been introduced as a supportive measure for employees but there may be occasions when guidance from HR will be required around the Attendance and Capability Policies;
- considering flexible working patterns e.g. changes to the pattern of hours worked, working from home or a reduction in working hours;
- Increased frequency or timings of breaks;
- Ensure ease of access to drinking water supplies;
- Ensure easy access to toilet facilities.
- Allowing flexibility in dress code please see the enclosed link for House Rules - <https://surreyheath.app.box.com/s/sbzud39fxfo99dremi7t03wlef157sxf>
- If ~~With~~ employees are experiencing behavioural changes, ~~mood swings~~ managers or team leaders should discuss with the employee how and whether to communicate this sensitively and supportively to the wider team. ~~this is having a detrimental affect on the rest of the team.~~

Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be regularly reviewed with the employees, Line Manager and HR if required.

Where reasonable adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving problematic, a line manager may refer an employee to HR/Occupational Health or recommend them to seek professional advice.

## 5. Line Manager Support



- Familiarising themselves with this guidance.
- Being ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, treating the discussion sensitively and professionally.
- Ensuring they are aware of reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to support those who are experiencing severe menopausal symptoms and provide appropriate support when needed.
- Allow adequate time to have any conversation and designate time to follow up meetings.
- Listen, discuss and agree appropriate action to be taken and how this will be implemented.
- Discuss any further action and if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom.
- Recording adjustments agreed and actions to be implemented.
- Ensuring that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.
- Referring employees to HR/Occupational Health when both parties feel that this is appropriate.

## 6. Internal Support

Individuals can also access confidential support through a variety of initiatives such as our employee assistance programme, which offers expert advice and specialist counselling online or by telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week For further details please use the enclosed link-

<https://warbler.workvivo.com/spaces/50867/pages/employee-assistance> .



Our mental health first-aiders are also on offer at various departments across the council to provide support where needed.

## 7. Data Protection

The Company will process personal data in accordance with its Data Protection Policy. Data is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support to employees.

## 8. External Links

[Menopause matters](#)

[NHS menopause pages](#)

[NHS information on HRT](#)

[NICE Menopause: diagnosis and management](#)

[Healthtalk.org](#)

[Women's Health Concerns](#)

[The Menopause Exchange](#)

[Menopause Support UK](#)

[British Occupational Health Research Foundation – research on women's experiences working through the menopause](#)

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