

Menopause Policy



Introduction

Chelmsford City Council is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment. We recognise that women experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments.

The Council recognises that the menopausal symptoms can also affect transgender people including non-binary people and we are committed to developing a workplace culture that supports workers experiencing the menopause in order for them to feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work.

The aim of the policy is to

- foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner
- educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support those experiencing the menopause at work
- raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about the menopause
- enable workers experiencing the menopause to continue to be effective in their job
- outline support and reasonable adjustments available
- help us recruit and retain employees experiencing the menopause.

Menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and it isn't always an easy transition. With the right support, it can be much better.

Whilst every woman does not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work.

What is the menopause?

The menopause is a natural event in most women's lives during which they stop having periods and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. It 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 occasionally begin before the age of 40. Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause. An individual may

start to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause.

While symptoms vary greatly, they commonly include:

- hot flushes that may include sweating, the skin becoming red and patchy, and a quicker or stronger heart rate
- night sweats, restless leg syndrome and sleep disturbance
- anxiety
- dizziness
- fatigue
- reduced concentration and memory loss
- depression
- headaches and migraines
- Irritated skin – including dry and itchy skin or formication, and dry eyes.
- recurrent urinary tract infections
- joint stiffness, aches and pains
- heavy and painful periods; some affected may become anaemic
- hair loss
- Osteoporosis - the strength and density of bones are affected by the loss of oestrogen, increasing the risk of the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis

Each of these symptoms can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work. Our organisation has a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees and therefore commits to ensuring that adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing menopausal symptoms.

Responsibilities of managers/team leaders

Managers and team leaders (with the support of HR where requested) should encourage employees to discuss the impact of their menopausal symptoms on their work-life and encourage them to access the support and adjustments offered. They should promote a positive attitude to discussions around women's health issues.

Managers and team leaders should be ready and willing to have open discussions about the menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treat the discussion sensitively, confidentially and professionally.

Managers and team leaders will consider all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and will put in place the required support or adjustments in a timely manner. Managers will treat employees fairly and consistently.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees are encouraged to inform their manager if they are struggling with menopausal symptoms and need any support, so that they can continue to be effective in their jobs. Employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague or another manager instead. They can also raise the issue with their HR Business Partner if they need support.

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to seek support through their GP, the employee assistance programme and other external organisations (see section below headed Available support).

All staff have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and productive working environment, be willing to help and support their colleagues, and understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms

Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments can be made to support employees experiencing menopause symptoms.

Employees are encouraged to talk to their manager and/or HR Business Partner to discuss what support and or adjustments could be put in place to support them at work.

Common areas to consider are:

- workplace temperature and ventilation; this could include provision of desk fans, review of office seating plans so that affected employees can be near the window or open doors, or away from direct sources of heat such as radiators, fitting blinds to windows etc
- access to adequate toilet and washing facilities
- access to drinking water
- uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE); such as flexibility over uniform and dress codes should they exacerbate symptoms such as hot flushes and sweating, and provision of additional spare uniforms.
- working times and break times; allowing flexibility in accordance with the policy “Working flexibly: Our approach”, or increased breaks during the working day.

- providing access to a rest room for breaks if work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area to manage a severe hot flush or impacts of disturbed sleep.
- workplace stress and workload; this could include temporary changes, such as undertaking fewer high-visibility work like formal presentations or meetings or on reception because it can be difficult to cope with symptoms such as hot flushes, or assessing how work is allocated or whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day

This is not a definitive list of adjustments. Employees can also make a request for flexible working if they feel they would benefit from a permanent adjustment to their hours or working pattern. Please see right to request flexible working – in Entitlement for Time Off Policy.

Available support

On the intranet employees can find information about internal and external sources of help, including information on:

- [Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- the [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for people experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency;
- [Menopause Support](#), which gives independent advice about the menopause, midlife and post-menopausal health.
- employee assistance programme (EAP) confidential support is available for individual employees from the EAP and this may include counselling if appropriate, in addition to practical information and advice
- mental health first-aiders available to provide you with a listening ear and signpost you to further support.

There is also a dedicated [menopause intranet page](#) with further information.

Supporting trans, people with variations of sex development and non-binary employees

It might not always be obvious who is experiencing menopause symptoms. It's important to remember that the menopause affects most women and other people who have a menstrual cycle.

This can include:

- trans people – 'trans' is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth
- people with 'variations of sex development' (VSD) – some people might prefer to identify as intersex or use the term 'differences in sex development' (DSD)
- those who identify as non-binary – non-binary people do not think of themselves as simply male or female

Managers should support everyone equally and keep conversations confidential and private.

Someone might talk about their gender identity when discussing their menopause symptoms and might not want it more widely known. It might also be a criminal offence to disclose information about a person who has a Gender Recognition Certificate.

Please be aware that:

- not all trans, VSD or non-binary people take hormones, but those who do can experience menopause symptoms when stopping or restarting treatment
- trans men might experience menopause symptoms if their ovaries remain and they're not given hormone therapy
- trans men and intersex women might experience surgical menopause if their ovaries are removed
- trans men and intersex women might not experience menopause symptoms with hormone therapy, but they may experience hormonal disruption
- trans women and intersex women might experience some of the symptoms related to the menopause if their hormone therapy treatment is interrupted or hormone levels change