

## **MENOPAUSE IN THE WORKPLACE GUIDANCE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The University of Bolton is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees and ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- 1.2 Menopause is a natural phase in life and for many individuals can be positively managed through lifestyle adjustments. However, the University recognises that for some menopause is not always an easy transition. Some employees may need additional support to help improve their experience at work.
- 1.3 The University is committed to supporting employees who are affected in any way by menopause and to support and inform Heads of School / Service so that employees reporting issues are treated fairly and given appropriate support.

### **2. SCOPE**

- 2.1 This guidance applies to all employees.

### **3. AIMS**

- 3.1 This guidance document aims to:
  - Support employees to remain in work;
  - Raise awareness of menopause, the related issues and how this can affect employees.
  - Break the stigma and taboo surrounding menopause at work and to promote an environment in which employees feel confident in discussing menopausal issues and asking for support and adjustments, if required.
  - Provide guidance and direction to managers on how to support employees including those experiencing menopause and colleagues who may be indirectly affected. To ensure managers know what menopause is, when it happens and how it can affect people.
- 3.2 Every manager should know what menopause is, when it happens and how it can affect people.

### **4. WHAT IS MENOPAUSE AND WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?**

- 4.1 It is a natural phase in life when most women and some trans and non-binary people stop menstruating and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels.

- 4.2 The menopause typically happens between age 45 and 55, but for some individuals can be earlier (perhaps due to medical intervention or natural early menopause) or it may occur later. As menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years, it is best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off occurrence.
- 4.3 There are different stages that make up the whole process, a series of gradual changes as the body adjusts to shifting hormones: -

**Perimenopause:** This is the phase leading up to the menopause when an individual may begin to experience menopausal symptoms. For some individuals this can start as early as their 20's (or even earlier) or as late as their late 40's/early 50's, or even their early 60's, though this is very unusual.

**Menopause:** This is only one day in time – when an individual has not had a period for 12 consecutive months (for individuals reaching menopause naturally).

**Postmenopausal:** After menopause, an individual is postmenopausal.

**Early menopause:** This is when an individual goes into menopause when they are under 45 years of age.

**Premature menopause:** This is when an individual goes into menopause when they are under the age of 40 (individuals under 40 with early menopause are usually termed as having Premature Ovarian insufficiency).

## 5. WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- 5.1 Menopause can cause a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms that can last for several years. The majority of those impacted experience symptoms, but every individual is different. Symptoms can fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees.

Some of the most typical symptoms of menopause include:

- Psychological issues such as mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
- Hot flushes (brief and sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck and chest)
- Sleep disturbance that can cause tiredness and irritability
- Night sweats
- Irregular periods and/or light or heavy periods
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTI's) including cystitis
- Headaches
- Weight gain
- Palpitations
- Skin changes

- 5.2 The menopause is not of itself a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, it is possible that menopausal symptoms experienced by an employee may meet the statutory definition of a disability under the Act.

- 5.3 There is no expectation on employees to work if they are unwell because of menopausal symptoms. If employees are sick and unable to work, they should follow the procedure set out in the Sickness Absence Procedure.
- 5.4 Although the University encourages employees to speak to their Head of School / Service employees do not have to disclose that their absence is related to the menopause if they wish to keep this private. However, the University wants employees to feel that they can be open about the reason for absence.

## **6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 6.1 Menopause is a natural stage of life which will be experienced by around half of the University's workforce at some point, and yet it is a taboo subject. This shouldn't be an awkward or embarrassing topic, and everybody should feel confident to have a conversation about this, especially if they need to seek personal guidance and advice. The sections below set out the roles and responsibilities of different parties in relation to menopause.
- 6.2 All employees (including Heads of School / Service) are responsible for:
- Taking reasonable responsibility and care for their own health and wellbeing (see appendix 1 for sources of information and support).
  - Being open to having conversations with their Line Manager. If for any reason an individual feels unable to speak to their manager they can also speak to another manager, Human Resources, Occupational Health or seek support from their Trade Union Representative.
  - Upholding a positive working environment treating others with dignity and respect.
- 6.3 All Heads of School / Service will:
- Familiarise themselves with this Menopause Guidance (see appendix 1 for other related policies and guidance documents).
  - Create and cultivate a culture of openness in the team to encourage people to talk about menopause.
  - Be willing to have open discussions with employees about changes in their health including issues relating to menopause, treat the discussion sensitively and recognise that each individual's experience may differ.
  - Ensure on-going communication with employees who may be experiencing difficulties and put in place appropriate support.
  - Not tolerate inappropriate behaviour (e.g. jokes, remarks and/or "banter").
  - Implement agreed adjustments (e.g. temporary flexible working or changes to the working environment) where appropriate.
  - If adjustments have not been successful and/or an employee is reporting on-going difficulties or concerns about their health at work consider seeking advice from Human Resources and a possible referral to Occupational Health.
- 6.4 Human Resources will:
- Offer support to Heads of Service / School and employees on this topic.
  - Promote awareness-raising activities for employees and managers.
- 6.5 Occupational Health will:
- Provide support and information to employees who are referred to the service to discuss health related issues as a result of menopause.
  - Provide support and advice to employees, managers and HR in relation to workplace adjustments, if required.

- Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice.

6.6 The Employee Assistance service (Vivup) will:

- Provide access to 24/7 telephone counselling and face-to-face counselling for all members of staff.
- Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice.

## **APPENDIX 1**

Useful support resources

[NHS Guidance on menopause symptoms](#)

[NICE guidance on menopause diagnosis and management](#)

[Women's Health Concern \(the patient arm of the British Menopause Society\)](#)

[Faculty of Occupational Medicine \(provides guidance on the menopause at work\)](#)

[Menopause Matters](#)

[Menopause Cafe](#)

[Daisy Network](#)

Related Policies and Guidance

[University's Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure](#)

[Employee Wellbeing Statement](#)

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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