

Guidance on Staff Affected by the Menopause

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Attendance Management Procedure, which details the arrangements for managing the attendance of Royal Borough employees, excluding schools, agency staff and those on probation.

1. Introduction - What is the Menopause

The menopause, also known as the 'change of life', marks the time when a woman's periods stop. It usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55 and the average age for a woman to reach the menopause in the UK is 52. Periods generally become less frequent, the odd period is missed and then they stop altogether. A woman is said to have reached the menopause once she has not had a period for one year.

2. Signs and Symptoms of Menopause

Every woman's experience of the menopause will be different but some of the most common signs and symptoms that women may experience are:

- **Hot flushes**, which can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downwards. At night they are felt as night sweats. Most flushes only last a few minutes and the woman may sweat and the face, neck and chest become red and patchy. The heart rate can also become quicker or stronger.
- **Sleep disturbance** can be caused by the night sweats, although it can also be caused by the anxiety women feel during the menopause. Sleep loss can cause irritability or lack of concentration at work.
- **Increased anxiety or depression** as the menopause can effect emotions and how the employee is feeling, leading to irritability or lack of concentration.
- **Urinary problems** may also occur during the menopause, and many women have recurrent lower urinary tract infections, such as cystitis. It is common to have an urgent need to pass urine or a need to pass it more often than normal.
- **Heavy periods** and clots are common during the menopause and some periods may last longer. Most women will also experience irregular periods, which are harder to prepare for.
- **Vaginal symptoms** such as vaginal dryness, itching or discomfort are common. These happen not only during the menopause and shortly after but can occur in the period leading up to the change.

3. Management Support

Some women are not comfortable disclosing their difficulties to their managers. Consideration may need to be given for women to speak with alternative managers, if they are managed by younger and/or male managers and feel embarrassed to talk about menopausal issues with them. This will inevitably give them confidence and potentially reduce stress they may be undergoing, as a result of not being able to address the issue with their line manager. The employee should make the request to their manager to speak an appropriate person.

4. Dealing with Sickness Absence related to Menopause

The Attendance Management Procedure will apply. However, managers should use their discretion when considering menopausal related sickness absence and the point at which formal action is taken when the employee reaches the sickness trigger points. Absences directly related to menopause can be considered as an underlying medical condition and accordingly recorded as an “on-going issue” rather than a number of short term absences triggering the procedure.. Normal Council procedures and processes should apply, e.g. referral to Occupational Health and support from the Employee Assistance Programme etc.

5. Workplace Adjustments

Managers must take into consideration the following as reasonable workplace adjustments:

- Provide desktop fans
- Opening windows (being mindful of other employees and building requirements)
- Flexible working requests
- Giving flexibility to women who wear uniforms e.g. to allow wearing layers of clothes and being able to change clothes at work.
- Risk assessments should consider the specific needs of menopausal women and ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. Issues that need to be considered include temperature and ventilation, changing facilities, access to cold water; have easy access to appropriate bathroom facilities, particularly during lengthy meetings.
- Employees should speak to their managers about any other reasonable support or adjustments.

6. Further Advice and Assistance

7. Employee Assistance Programme

The Royal Borough offers an employee assistance programme. The key benefits of the employee assistance programme include:

- No cost to the employee or family members
- Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year
- Unlimited support
- Confidential
- Independent, impartial source of support

The employee assistance programme can provide support on a wide range of work and personal issues. Although there is no exhaustive list, some examples include:

January 2018

Legal Advice	Career Coaching
Childcare	Health
Money Advice	Manager support
Elder Care	Financial Advice
Daily living	

To use the service Freephone: 0800 030 5182

Website: To access from work PC use following link ***Employee Assistance Programme***

To log in from home or using a non RBG PC visit www.healthassuredeap.com and use the login details below.

Username: royal

Password: greenwich

NHS/GP

Employees can be advised to seek advice and treatment from their GP and this may include Hormone Replacement Therapy, counselling, dietary changes.

NHS Choices website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause>