

Report to:	STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING BOARD
Date:	24 March 2021
Executive Member:	Councillor Brenda Warrington – Executive Leader
Reporting Officer:	Tracy Brennand - Assistant Director (People & Workforce Development)
Subject:	SUPPORTING MENOPAUSE AT WORK
Report Summary:	A guide to Supporting the Menopause at Work has been developed in order to support those employees going through menopause, whilst offering practical guidance for line managers on how hold to open and honest discussions and improve workplace environments; to allow affected employees to continue to thrive in the workplace.
Recommendations:	<p>That it be recommended to approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) To implement the proposed Guide to Supporting the Menopause at Work, as detailed in Appendix A for Tameside Council and to recommend implementation to the Tameside & Glossop CCG Governing Body for its employees. (ii) That the Guide to Supporting the Menopause at Work as detailed in Appendix A be recommended for adoption by all Governing Bodies of all community, voluntary controlled and voluntary aided schools.
Corporate Plan:	Supporting employees who experience the menopause to continue to thrive in the workplace supports both Living Well and Ageing Well.
Policy Implications:	N/a
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The development and implementation of the Guide to Supporting the Menopause at Work has been accommodated within existing revenue budgets.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	<p>There are two main strands of law that may relate to the perimenopause and menopause:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>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.</p> <p>Sex discrimination: Unfair treatment of a worker because of their sex could lead to a discrimination claim. For example, this is likely if an employer treats a woman's menopause or perimenopause symptoms less seriously than it would a male worker's health</p>

condition when considering a drop in job performance. Also, for example, unwanted comments, jokes, banter or ridicule about a woman's menopause or perimenopause symptoms could amount to harassment, or sexual harassment depending on the nature of the unwanted behaviour.

Disability discrimination: A worker's menopause or perimenopause could potentially be regarded as a disability by an employment tribunal. If a worker has a disability, an employer must consider making changes to reduce or remove any disadvantages the worker experiences because of it. Regarding disability, the law calls these 'reasonable adjustments'. An employer must make adjustments if they are reasonable. For example, this might include an employer agreeing to record a worker's absence because of the menopause or perimenopause separately from other illness absence. Also, disability law protects a worker against what is termed 'discrimination arising from disability'. This is where a worker is treated unfairly, not because of their disability, but because of something linked to it. For example, this could include a worker being dismissed because they forgot to do a task set by their employer. And this is when they have become forgetful and confused as a result of anxiety caused by their menopause. Their anxiety would have to meet the Equality Act definition of disability.

Age discrimination: Workers are protected against unfair treatment because of their age. This may include unfair treatment of workers because they are going through the perimenopause or menopause which are usually in their mid-forties to early fifties.

Managing the effects of the menopause and perimenopause includes making sure health and safety checks are already in place, are regularly carried out, and risks minimised, reduced or where possible removed.

Risk Management:

Tameside Council, Tameside & Glossop CCG and the Governing Body of a School have a legal duty to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the workplace risks to the health and safety of their employee; which includes ensuring menopausal symptoms are not made worse by the workplace, and making changes to help an employee manage their symptoms when doing their job.

Background Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Jenny Dickie, HR Manager, People and Workforce Development.



Telephone: 0161 342 2938



E-mail: jenny.dickie@tameside.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age as a woman's estrogen levels decline.
- 1.2 Studies have shown that menopause symptoms can have a significant impact on attendance and performance in the workplace.
- 1.3 With our population now living longer, working longer, and with women making up 70% of our Organisation's workforce, it is vital that employees are supported to stay well and thrive in the workplace.
- 1.4 The People and Workforce Development Service have produced guidance on supporting menopause in the workplace. The guidance pulls together the latest information on how the menopause affects some employees at work.
- 1.5 The guidance is aimed at managers and employees to support those going through menopause and offer practical guidance on how hold to open and honest discussion and improve workplace environments.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. A 2017 Government Report on Menopause stated:
 - Menopausal women are the fastest growing demographic in the workforce.
 - The average age for a woman to go through menopause is 51. It can be earlier than this, naturally or due to surgery, or illness. And symptoms may start years before menopause, during the perimenopause phase.
 - According to the Faculty of Occupational Medicine, nearly 8 out of 10 of menopausal women are in work.
 - 3 out of 4 women experience symptoms, 1 in 4 could experience serious symptoms.
 - One in three of the workforce will soon be over 50, and retirement ages are now 68 plus.
 - There have already been successful employment tribunals against employers related to this matter.
- 2.2. The report concluded that work contributes far more than just a salary; it can provide fulfilment, self-esteem, identity and social needs too. But working environments like those with lack of temperature control, cramped conditions, some uniforms and stress can also make menopause symptoms worse.
- 2.3. Some women sail through their menopause with barely a symptom, but it's not an easy transition for all. By talking about it openly, raising awareness and putting the right support in place, Tameside Council and Tameside & Glossop CCG aim to create a culture where menopause is no longer an issue in the workplace at all.

3. A GUIDE TO SUPPORTING THE MENOPAUSE AT WORK

- 3.1. 33% of the organisation's female employees are aged between 45-55, meaning the menopause could have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing, and the performance, of a large number of the organisation's employees.
- 3.2. The guidance has been developed in order to encourage open and honest discussions between affected employees and their line managers, or another supportive individual, in order to ensure those employees feel supported at work.

- 3.3. The menopause is a biological process that signals the end of a woman's ability to conceive a child. It usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55, but it can be earlier (sometimes much earlier) or later.
- 3.4. The menopause produces a range of physical and psychological symptoms that can affect many aspects of life. Every woman is different and not all will be affected in the same way or to the same extent.
- 3.5. Some of the most typical menopause symptoms 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 make people feel tired and irritable
 - irregular periods and/or periods can become light or heavy
 - muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
 - Headaches.
- 3.6. Each of these symptoms can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work, and in some cases symptoms can even be exacerbated by the work environment, for example, if the working environment temperature is too high this can worsen or increase the frequency of hot flushes.
- 3.7. Managers have an important role to play in ensuring that anyone who experiences menopausal symptoms is offered the same support and understanding as they would if they had any other health issue, and that support is tailored appropriately to the individual.
- 3.8. The organisation has a legal duty to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the workplace risks to the health and safety of their employee; which includes ensuring menopausal symptoms are not made worse by the workplace, and making changes to help an employee manage their symptoms when doing their job.
- 3.9. For women experiencing the menopause, a risk assessment should be carried out. By completing the risk assessment, it will help to identify simple changes to someone's role or working environment that can help ensure the menopause does not become a barrier to performance.
- 3.10. In many cases small and simple adjustment can make a significant difference i.e. ensuring the temperature is at the right level, frequent consumption of water, easy access to toilet and changing facilities, and flexibility of working hours.
- 3.11. In some cases, menopausal symptoms can be so serious that they affect a person's performance at work.
- 3.12. Performance management is most effective when it's proactive, informal and based on regular and constructive feedback and discussion. If managers don't address the root causes of poor performance, any solutions are unlikely to fully resolve the issue – and problems can spiral into sickness absence.
- 3.13. Line managers should approach performance conversations supportively and positively, taking any health issues fully into account; and identifying any extra support or coaching the employee may benefit from.
- 3.14. The guidance also encourages employees experiencing symptoms of the menopause to adopt healthier lifestyle choices in order to help alleviate them.

4. RAISING MENOPAUSE AWARENESS IN THE WORKPLACE

- 4.1. Menopause awareness sessions have been delivered, with 61 females attending the available sessions and providing extremely positive feedback. Testimonials include:
- I found the session really helpful and informative as well as answering a lot of questions which I didn't have answers for
 - I have to say I found this session really informative and inspirational
 - I found out about symptoms I had that I thought were more major problems
 - So interesting and informative, loved the science behind it and useful and realistic advice on nutrition
 - It was really useful for understanding symptoms and tools to help
 - It was amazing, I understand so much more!
 - An excellent introduction and explanation to the menopause, with practical self-help strategies
 - Extremely informative – it would be great to have longer so we could ask questions and get through more
- 4.2. Future menopause sessions will build on this established platform to increase awareness across the workforce and enable managers to effectively support employees affected by the menopause. Learning programmes will be available through a variety of channels, primarily online.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 As set out at the front of the report.