



MENOPAUSE POLICY

Policy Number 43
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Introduction

The Society is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment.

The Society is also committed to ensuring health, safety and wellbeing of our employees and will provide appropriate support to those who are experiencing symptoms associated with the menopause, whilst supporting line managers by providing guidance.

Aims & Objectives

The aim of this Policy is:

- to make managers aware of the Society's responsibility to understand the menopause and related issues and how they can affect staff, their partners, families and work colleagues, by educating and informing managers about potential symptoms and how they can support individuals in the workplace;
- to create an environment where people feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for adjustments at work;
- to raise wider awareness and understanding amongst employees and to outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available; and
- to subsequently reduce menopause related sickness by supporting employees to remain in work rather than having to take sick leave (or in some cases resign) meaning that the Society retains valuable skills and experience.

Definitions and Background

All women experience the menopause, but they are not the only ones affected. It is important to understand that transgender, intersex and non-binary staff may go through the menopause too, and need to be treated with dignity and respect. Men may also need support while someone they are close to is menopausal.

Sometimes in this policy we may refer to "women" – this is because the majority of people experiencing the menopause are women and sometimes it gets clumsy if we try to list everyone affected every time, but please bear in mind that other staff could be affected too.

Menopause is part of the natural ageing process for women, although it can be brought on as a result of other medical conditions or certain surgical interventions. It refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months. After a woman has not had a period for a year, this is considered to be post-menopausal.

Perimenopause is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause and can often last for four or five years although for some women it may continue for many more years or for others, may last just a few months. It varies greatly in different individuals. During this time, individuals may begin to experience symptoms due to changes in their hormone levels and may vary in degree. Due to the fact that they may be still having

regular periods at the onset of the symptoms, many individuals do not always realise that they are experiencing the peri-menopause and may not understand what is causing their symptoms. This can be a barrier for support.

The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55. In the UK, the average age is 51 but it can happen much earlier.

People from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of menopause may be different for those within these communities. Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, or marital/civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that for many reasons, peoples' individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.

Some people seek medical advice and treatment for the symptoms of the menopause/perimenopause. A common form of treatment is known as hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Many women find these treatments helpful in alleviating symptoms, but HRT is not suitable or appropriate for all.

Some people using HRT may experience side effects which may also require adjustments in the workplace.

Legislation

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Act, employers are required to do risk assessments under the Management Regulations which should include specific risks to menopausal women if they are employed.

The Equality Act (2010) prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain protected characteristics including sex, age and disability. It is also important to note that conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an "impairment" under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments be made.

Key Principles

The Society aims to create an environment where individuals feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work. The Society is committed to ensuring that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place.

The Society has a positive attitude to the menopause/perimenopause and will work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support individuals experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse.

The Society takes a proactive stance and will promote a greater understanding of the menopause/perimenopause is a very individual experience and that people can be affected in different ways and to different degrees, and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.

The Society will provide appropriate information and support to all staff and other individuals.

The Society will carry out risk assessments which take the specific needs of individuals into consideration (including stress risk assessments).

The Society recognises that manager should 'know their staff' and be familiar with the needs of their staff and any associated issues. In 'knowing their staff' managers will understand when to apply discretion in respect of this Policy and its guidance sections. Manager discretion should be used when assessing a staff member's individual needs and circumstances, in situations where there is a reasonable expectation of improvement without the need for formal intervention. Managers should create a supportive team culture that removes any barriers to disclosing information to their manager and their manager should equally be made aware of the impact of the menopause and act accordingly without breaking the confidence of the individual.