

Menopause Policy

Scottish Information Commissioner



Scottish Information
Commissioner

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Glossary and abbreviations

Term used	Explanation
The Commissioner	Scottish Information Commissioner
HOCS	Head of Corporate Services
HRT	Hormone Replacement Therapy

Policy

Introduction

1. The Scottish Information Commissioner (the Commissioner) is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment.
2. The Commissioner is also committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of their workforce. We will provide appropriate support to women who are experiencing symptoms associated with the menopause, whilst supporting line managers by providing guidance.
3. This policy will be supported by guidance for managers.

Aims and Objectives

4. The aims and objectives of this Policy are:
 - to make managers aware of the Commissioner's responsibility to understand the menopause and related issues, how these can affect their team members and how they can support individuals in the workplace
 - to create an environment where women 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 may be available
 - to subsequently reduce menopause related sickness by supporting staff to remain in work meaning that the organisation retains valuable skills and experience.

Background

5. 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.
6. 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, individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.
7. Some people seek medical advice and treatment for the symptoms of the peri-menopause. 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 women.
8. Some people using HRT may experience side effects which may also require adjustments in the workplace.

Definitions

9. The following general definitions are used in the application of this policy. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of menopause may be different for each individual and, therefore, the definitions provide general guidance and should not be interpreted as applying to each and every individual that may be experiencing menopause.
10. **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. Generally, 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*.
11. **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, a person may begin to experience symptoms due to changes in their hormone levels and these may vary in degree. Due to the fact that they may be still having regular periods at the onset of the symptoms, many individuals may not always realise that they are experiencing the peri-menopause and may not understand what is causing their symptoms.

Legislation

12. There is no specific legislation addressing the impact of the menopause in the workplace, however, the following legislation is relevant.
13. 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.
14. The Equality Act 2010 (EA) 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 EA and require reasonable adjustments.

Application of policy

Management

15. Sometimes going through the menopause can be uneventful for some, but for others, it can impact on their working lives, with it becoming increasingly difficult to function effectively at work as a result of their symptoms. This can leave them feeling less confident, more susceptible to fatigue and stress at work. It has also been recognised that certain aspects of work, working conditions and environment may exacerbate menopause symptoms.
16. A lack of knowledge about the menopause may mean that someone can be misdiagnosed as constantly having health issues which restrict them from fulfilling their normal role and having time off work. In addition, symptoms may impact on their performance, leading potentially to capability or disciplinary proceedings. An individual may be afraid to approach anyone losing confidence and feeling isolated.
17. We aim to create an environment where individuals feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work.

Key principles

18. We are committed to ensuring that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place. Therefore, it is important that we understand, address and manage these issues in order to protect the health and wellbeing of our workforce.
19. In particular:
 - we will have a positive attitude to the menopause/perimenopause and will work proactively to make reasonable adjustments, where required, to support individuals experiencing the menopause and, as far as reasonably practicable, ensure that the workplace does not make their symptoms worse
 - we will take a proactive stance and will promote a greater understanding of the menopause/perimenopause being 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
 - we will provide appropriate information and support to all managers and staff.
20. The Commissioner recognises that managers should understand their team members and be familiar with the needs of their team members and any associated issues. In understanding their team members, managers should understand when to apply discretion in respect of this Policy and the related guidance.
21. Managers will receive training on the application of this policy and guidance for managers will also be provided.
22. A manager should create a supportive culture that, as far as possible, removes any barriers to an individual disclosing information to their manager and their manager should equally understand the impact of the menopause and act accordingly without breaking the confidence of the individual.

23. Where required, a risk assessment will be undertaken in order to consider the specific needs of an individual going through the menopause and, as far as reasonably practicable, assist in identifying any potential adjustments which may be required.

Review

24. The Head of Corporate Services (HOCS) will keep this policy under review.
25. If you have any questions or queries about this policy, please contact the HOCS or the Finance and Administration Manager or your manager.

Document control sheet

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