



Menopause Guidance

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1.0 About Menopause

This guidance is inclusive of all gender identities, including transgender and non-binary employees, who are employed in schools, whereby Birmingham City Council is the employer.

Menopause is a natural part of aging that usually occurs between 45 and 60 years of age, as a person's hormones change and their oestrogen levels decrease.

Menopause means that a person's periods stop, and they will no longer be able to get pregnant naturally

The average age for someone to reach menopause in the UK is 51, but some will experience menopause before the age of 40. This is known as [premature or early menopause](#), and can happen naturally, as an effect of a medical condition or treatment such as hormone replacement therapy during transition.

Transgender, non-binary, and intersex people may also experience menopausal symptoms due to:

- the natural menopause process
- treatments such as hormone replacement therapy, or
- surgeries.

However, not every trans or non-binary person will go through medical interventions.

It is important to note that due to a variety of factors, the experience of menopause may be different for people within these communities, so tailored, gender appropriate support should be made available.

The number of people in the workplace living with the menopause is growing, but there is still a stigma attached to it and, until recently, menopause was rarely talked about.

It is important to note that not everyone will notice symptoms or need help or support, however some people give up work because of a difficult menopause.

Therefore, for the benefit of the council and our employees, we must understand more about the menopause, its symptoms, and how we can support team members and colleagues during this phase of their life.

[Find out more about menopause](#)

Andropause

Andropause is sometimes called the 'male menopause', which is an unhelpful term used in the media.

This label is misleading because it suggests the symptoms are the result of a sudden drop in testosterone in middle age, similar to what happens in the female menopause. This is not true.

Andropause is a condition that is caused by a steady decline of testosterone.

A person experiencing andropause may have a number of symptoms related to the condition and could be at risk of other serious health conditions, such as osteoporosis, without proper treatment:

[Find out more about andropause](#)

2.0 Symptoms of Menopause

Most people will experience some symptoms before they reach the menopause, these symptoms are called perimenopause, but each person's experience will be different, and the type of symptoms, and their severity, will vary.

Symptoms can start months, or even years, before menopause, and can last between 4 and 8 years, possibly longer.

Some symptoms can be severe and can have a significant impact on a person's everyday life, and that can include affecting their attendance and performance in the workplace.

Menopause symptoms can be physical, and can affect your feelings and mental health.

Common symptoms include:

- [hot flushes](#)
- [night sweats](#)
- [problems sleeping](#)
- mood changes such as [low mood](#) or [anxiety](#)
- [headaches](#)
- [palpitations](#)
- problems with [memory and concentration](#) - sometimes called 'brain fog'
- [incontinence](#) and [bladder problems](#)
- joint and muscle pain.

[Read more about menopause symptoms](#)

[Find out how to manage menopause symptoms](#)

Some people find it helpful to record and track their menopause symptoms.

This may help you have informed conversations about treatments with your health professionals, and help you talk to your manager about what workplace support is available.

There are different types of symptom tracker available on the internet. An internet search of 'menopause tracker' will show different ways women can record and track their menopause symptoms. These range from book style journals through to digital apps accessible on a mobile telephone.

Keeping a symptoms record can help conversations with health professionals about treatments, and with a manager about what workplace support is available.

Symptoms of andropause

Some people who experience andropause may develop physical and emotional symptoms when they reach their late 40s to early 50s.

Common symptoms include:

- depression
- mood swings and irritability
- loss of muscle mass and fat redistribution
- a general lack of enthusiasm or energy
- difficulty sleeping ([insomnia](#)) or increased tiredness
- poor concentration and short-term memory.

[Read more about andropause symptoms and how to manage them](#)

3.0 Look after your wellbeing

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle can help minimise the effects that the menopause has on your body:

- [eat a healthy diet](#)
- [exercise regularly](#)
- [think about stopping smoking](#)
- [drink alcohol in moderation](#)
- make use of health screening services, for example, it is important to attend your [cervical](#) and [breast screening](#) appointments when invited
- try [relaxation techniques](#) if you need help to cope with anxiety or mood swings.

For more information about looking after your physical and mental health, discuss with your head teacher what support can be offered by your school.

4.0 If you need support

It is important that you get the help you need to cope with the menopause, and its symptoms.

See your GP

If your symptoms are causing you problems, talk to your GP.

They will be able to confirm that what you're experiencing is due to menopause and talk through the treatments and lifestyle changes that may help.

[Read about treatments for menopause](#)

Talk to your manager

If the symptoms of menopause are affecting you in the workplace, it is important that you talk to your manager to see if there are any adjustments that can be made to support you while you're experiencing the symptoms.

These may include:

- making temporary adjustments to your work environment.

For example, this could mean looking at how to control the temperature and ventilation in your workplace.

- requesting a temporary flexible working arrangement.

For example, if you are experiencing difficulty sleeping, you may find that starting work later will help.

See flexible working guidance for more information on flexible working arrangements, and what you need to do.

Managers will need to think about the needs of the service when deciding whether they can agree a flexible working request.

- discussing whether a referral to occupational health would help.

Use the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

If your school purchase an EAP you can speak to your designated manager about how to access this.

EAP support is available by telephone and on the internet.

The EAP website has useful information about coping with menopause, what to expect, and possible treatments.

Use of Mental Health First Aiders

If your school has a Mental Health First Aider, they should be available to talk and support.

5.0 Information for managers

Menopausal people are the fastest growing demographic in the UK workforce.

More employees are working until later life, and with the state retirement age increasing, large numbers will work through their menopause and beyond.

Supporting menopause issues at work helps the council retain the business knowledge, expertise, and experience that this valued group of employees contributes.

As a manager, you may find it difficult to talk to your employee(s) about menopause. This may be due to lack of understanding, embarrassment, or the fear of saying the wrong thing and making things worse.

You do not need to be menopause expert to support employees who experience menopause symptoms in the workplace.

As with all health and wellbeing matters, it is important to remember that when employees feel supported to talk about and to positively manage their health at work, they are more likely to maintain high levels of attendance and perform well in their job.

Openly talking about health issues, like the menopause, can help develop a more inclusive culture across the council, which supports our wider workplace strategy.

In summary, having more open, supportive conversations with your employees about menopause could:

- help reduce sickness absence due to menopause

- improve performance
- improve employee relations
- help prevent employees leaving the council to find work elsewhere.

NHS case study

A case study by NHS Employers provides useful information about menopause, and how it can affect your workforce.

It also has guidance from the Faculty of Occupational Medicine on how to improve the work environment for people experiencing menopause.

[Go to menopause in the workplace: NHS employers](#)

Legislation

Legislation and codes of practice relevant to menopause:

- Equality Act 2010.

Menopause is broadly covered under the protected characteristics of age, sex and disability.

[Read more about the Equality Act 2010](#)

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Employers have a legal duty, so far as reasonably practicable, to protect the health, safety and welfare of all employees while they are at work. This duty extends to working conditions when employees are experiencing menopausal symptoms.

[Find out more about the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)

- Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

ACAS set out codes of practice surrounding flexible working.

If you fail to comply with legislation and best practice, you could put the council at risk of a discrimination claim.

[View ACAS guidance on flexible working](#)

Trade Unions

If necessary, managers, employees and union representatives should work together to agree workplace adjustments, and other support for those experiencing the menopause.

Additional support

Occupational health and wellbeing service

The support available through the council's occupational health and wellbeing service can compliment menopause treatments people may be offered by a GP or health clinic.

6.0 Further Support

Important: The information below is not a substitute for medical or professional advice, diagnosis, treatment or support. It must be viewed with an understanding that every person's menopause experience is unique to them.

If you have any menopause concerns, you are encouraged to talk through your general health, symptoms, and treatment options with your GP or other healthcare professional.

NHS

The NHS menopause pages give useful information about the menopause, its symptoms, and treatments:

[Visit the NHS menopause pages](#)

The Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust has one of the country's largest menopause services, managing issues that include complex patients, premature menopause, and a hormone implant service.

Based at the Birmingham Women's Hospital, referrals must be made to the specialist menopause clinic by a GP:

[Visit the Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust](#)

NICE

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides national guidance and advice to improve health and social care.

NICE information may help inform peoples' conversations with healthcare professionals who offer menopause care:

[Visit the NICE website](#)

Henpicked

Henpicked is one of the UK's largest, fastest growing communities for people over 40.

Their website has useful articles and resources, including the [Henpicked Menopause Hub](#), and information about health, happiness, work and money and so on.

[Visit the Henpicked website](#)

The Henpicked Menopause Hub gives expert information, useful resources, top tips, and personal stories:

[Find out more about the Henpicked Menopause Hub](#)

Henpicked features information on the theme of POI (Premature Ovarian Insufficiency) or (Primary Ovarian Insufficiency), which links to early menopause.

Nick Panay, Consultant Gynecologist, talks about this in more detail:

[Go to Nick Panay's Q and A on early menopause](#)

Henpicked also features articles on how hormonal changes affect the trans and non-binary community, and on the importance of diversity and inclusion in menopause support:

[Read about how hormonal changes affect the trans and non-binary community](#)

[Read why diversity and inclusion matter in menopause support](#)

Daisy Network

Daisy Network is a charity that supports those experiencing POI, and their families:

[Find out more about Daisy Network](#)

Karen Arthur

Drawing on her own experiences, Karen advocates making Black peoples' menopause matter by opening an overdue conversation about diversity in menopause.

Her podcasts and other social media work help capture the menopause journey of Black UK people, drawing on their stories and lived experience research.

Follow Karen on Instagram: @menopausewhilstblack

Dr Nighat Arif

Dr Nighat Arif is a GP.

Her popular TikTok videos and other social media content help support, better inform and empower people from different ethnic groups about menopause.

Follow Dr Arif on Twitter: @DrNighatArif

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) and menopause

The UK lacks information to inform LGBT communities about menopause, particularly about the experiences of trans people.

Those wanting advice may benefit from reading about the symptoms of menopause, and by talking to a GP or other health care professional who is knowledgeable about menopause care.

Stonewall

Stonewall is the international charity that advocates for the health and wellbeing of all lesbian, bi and trans people. They provide details of NHS services with Diversity Champions to help with menopause conversations. Telephone: 0800 50 20 20, or:

[Visit the Stonewall website](#)

Birmingham LGBT Centre

The centre provides support if people who identify as trans and non-binary want information about menopause:

[Visit the Birmingham LGBT Centre website](#)

Menopause Doctor

Dr Louise Newson is a GP, menopause specialist, and founder of a specialist facility helping improve understanding of the menopause through better education.

Newson Health was set up to provide people with unbiased, evidence-based advice and treatments to manage a healthy menopause. There is a Newson Wellbeing Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon.

[Visit the Menopause Doctor website](#)

MenoHealth

Located at Aston University, MenoHealth aims to “empower women going through menopause to live their best lives”.

They provide fun exercise classes, practical and peer support, and they encourage people to take control of their menopause experience:

[Visit the menohealth website](#)

Rock My Menopause

Rock My Menopause is the public facing campaign of the Primary Care Women’s Health Forum (PCWHF) and aims to stamp out the taboo around menopause:

[Find out more about Rock My Menopause](#)

The campaign also has information about menopause support for transgender and non-binary people:

[Find out more about menopause support for transgender and non-binary people](#)