

This policy does not form part of any lay employee's contract and it may be amended at any time. We may also vary this procedure as we feel appropriate and at any time.

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out the rights of Darlington Methodist District lay employees who are experiencing menopausal symptoms and outlines the support currently available to them.

As a responsible employer we are committed to creating an open and supportive culture and we want you to feel comfortable speaking about how menopause-related symptoms may be affecting you at work and we want you to feel that you are able to ask for support to help you manage your symptoms.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

2. Scope

This policy applies to anyone working for the Darlington Methodist District. This includes lay employees, workers, contractors, volunteers, and interns. In this policy, where we refer to the menopause, we also mean the perimenopause.

3. Definitions of Menopause

The menopause is a natural event during which a person stops having periods and experiences hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels.

The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years. However, menopausal symptoms can begin before the age of 40.

Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause. An individual may start to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause.

While menopausal symptoms vary greatly, they commonly include hot flushes; night sweats; anxiety; dizziness; fatigue; memory loss; depression; headaches; recurrent urinary tract infections; joint stiffness, aches, and pains; reduced concentration; and heavy periods.

4. Our Commitment

We are committed to ensuring that line managers are provided with adequate support and/or training so that they are able to support lay employees who are experiencing adverse menopausal symptoms.

5. Requesting Support

If you are finding it difficult to cope with your work because of menopausal symptoms, we encourage you to speak to your line manager. If for any reason you are unable to do this, you should contact the HR Officer. We urge you to be as open as possible about any particular issues that you are experiencing or adjustments that you need to ensure that you are provided with the right level of support.

Any health-related information disclosed by you during discussions with your line manager or the HR Officer will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

6. Working Environment

If you feel that your working environment is exacerbating your menopausal symptoms, you should raise this as soon as you are able to do so with your line manager. Whilst we are limited to what practical adjustments we can make if you are a home worker, we will listen and work with you to see if there is anything that we can do to support you.

7. Tailored Adjustment Plan

On your request your line manager will work with you to complete a tailored adjustment plan for menopausal symptoms using our form MEPO2.

The purpose of the form is to record any adjustments that are agreed to support you in your work. It is available to download from the district website or on request from the HR Officer

8. Working Flexibly On A Temporary Basis

For lay employees to request flexible working as a permanent change to working arrangements we have a separate process to consider this. However, we recognise that for anyone affected by menopausal symptoms, the option to work flexibly on a temporary rather than a permanent basis may be appropriate.

For example, this could include, if you are not already, working from home, changing your start and finish times, changes to work allocation or taking more frequent breaks. (Please note this is not a definitive list.)

If you feel that you would benefit from a temporary change to your working arrangement on an ad hoc basis because of menopausal symptoms, including for example sleep deprivation, or other symptoms that may be impacting on your performance, you should discuss and agree these with your line manager.

We will try to facilitate temporary flexible working arrangements wherever this is possible and will continue to review these to ensure that they meet your needs.

9. Quiet Place To Work

If you need time out to relax, a short break to manage any symptoms or to take medication, or a quiet space to work, you should speak to your line manager who will try their best to accommodate this.

10. Sickness

There is no expectation on you to work if you are unwell because of menopausal symptoms and you should follow the procedure set out in your terms and conditions of employment.

You do not have to disclose your absence is related to the menopause if you wish to keep it private. However, we want you to feel that you can be open about the reason for your leave.

11. Occupational Health

In some cases, we may refer you to an occupational health specialist so that they can advise on how your symptoms are impacted at work and make recommendations on the types of adjustments that may be appropriate. Occupational health may also signpost you to external sources of help and advice.

12. General Wellbeing

The district will endeavour to signpost you to appropriate resources and agencies. We are committed to support you as best that we can and understand that the Menopause affects people differently.

13. External Sources Of Help

There are a number of excellent organisations that provide help and support on the menopause. We have included a number of links below for information and support:

- Menopause Café: <https://www.menopausecafe.net/>
- The Menopause and Me: <https://www.menopauseandme.co.uk/>
- NHS Menopause Support: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/help-and-support/>
- The Menopause Charity: <https://www.themenopausecharity.org/>
- Menopause Matters: <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>
- Menopause Support: <https://menopausesupport.co.uk>

14. Review

This policy may be reviewed at any time at the request of any member of staff, but it will be automatically reviewed 3-years after initial approval and thereafter on a triennial basis unless organisational changes, legislations, guidance, or non-compliance prompt an earlier review.