

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date:	15 August 2018
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Menopause Policy
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- Update the Committee on the development of a Menopause Policy and seek its approval.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendations:-

(1) that the Menopause Policy is agreed and launched to Council employees on World Menopause Day, 18 October 2018.

3. Support for change

3.1. A wide range of organisations have been reporting the need for greater guidance on personal and professional issues faced by women relating to the menopause. These include the Government, NHS employers, health professional organisations such as the Royal College of Nursing, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and many trade union organisations. It is a health issue which will affect all women.

3.2. The Trades Union Congress report, 'Age Immaterial, Women over 50 in the Workplace', has recommended that employers do more to ensure that specific health and safety concerns relating to older women are well managed in the workplace. With this in mind they have also issued a guidance note: 'Supporting Women through the Menopause' which they believe will help union representatives to support members with issues around the menopause.

Through the Council's partnership working arrangements the trade unions have supported the need for the development of a Menopause Policy.

3.3. A report produced for the Department of Work and Pensions, 'A New Vision for Older Workers: Retain, Retrain, Recruit', specifically recommends that employers make provision and ensure support for older women who are going through the menopause. The report also recommends that the Government consider funding for research into menopause symptom alleviation and management, as too many older women are left to cope on their own, without support or understanding from colleagues and managers. This should not be a 'taboo' issue any longer, it is a health issue like any other, but it only affects women.

4. Background to Policy

- 4.1. South Lanarkshire Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. The Council is committed to improving the well-being of its employees and as an employer has a duty to manage related issues effectively.
- 4.2. The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as a woman's oestrogen levels decline. In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach the menopause is 51. However, around 1 in 100 women experience the menopause before 40 years of age.
- 4.3. Many organisations have introduced a Menopause Policy in order to ensure employees know their employer has a positive attitude to the issue and that it is not something women should feel embarrassed about discussing. In addition requests to consider establishing a policy to support employees have been made by both local and national trade unions and elected members. The NHS and STUC both have guidance available around policy content.
- 4.4. It is important that the Council understands the difficulties and anxieties which are faced by women going through this change and that it manages these issues by raising awareness, and providing training and development for all line managers.

5. Menopause Policy (Appendix 1)

- 5.1. The policy is consistent with available guidance and aims to:-
 - Ensure all line managers have been trained to understand how the menopause can affect their employees at work, enabling them to provide guidance and support to those affected and ensure adjustments that may be necessary to support those women who are experiencing the menopause, are provided.
 - All women in the workplace are given information on how they can get support for any issues that arise as a result of the menopause, creating a confidence in the employee to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for the adjustments they require.
 - Promote guidance for those affected indirectly, for example colleagues and partners.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. The Council's workforce is made up of 11035 women, 68% of those are over 40 years of age. The Policy will provide support to these employees and guidance for line managers, in supporting individuals who may be experiencing the symptoms of the menopause.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1. If approved, the Menopause Policy will be launched and communicated to all employees by Personnel Circular, Management Bulletin and featured on the Council's intranet page.
- 7.2. Additionally, a joint launch event will be arranged for employees and line managers, in conjunction with our trade union partners, to coincide with World Menopause Day on 18 October 2018.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. There are no financial implications in terms of this report.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. The introduction of a Menopause Policy will support line managers in considering reasonable adjustments were necessary and allow employees to remain at work where previously they may have reported absent.
- 9.2. There are no risks or implications for sustainability in terms of the information contained within this report.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. The Menopause Policy will positively impact on the female workforce with supports being introduced. Male employees may be affected as a result of their partner and the impact assessment recognises the supports contained in the policy for such instances.
- 10.2. The Menopause Policy has been developed in partnership and agreed with the Joint Trade Union Executive.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

14 July 2018

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Improvement Themes/Values

- ◆ Excellent Employer
- ◆ People Focused

Previous References

none

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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Finance and Corporate Resources

Personnel Services

Menopause Policy

Prepared by: Finance and Corporate Resources, Personnel Services
Date Prepared: 24 January 2017

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1. Introduction

South Lanarkshire Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment.

South Lanarkshire Council is also committed to improving the well-being of its people. As an employer the Council has a duty to manage related issues effectively.

In this regard, the Council will provide appropriate support to women who are experiencing symptoms associated with the menopause, whilst supporting line managers by providing guidance.

It is important that the Council understands the difficulties and anxieties of women currently going through this change and that we manage this issue by raising awareness, and providing training and development for all line management and colleagues.

2. Aims

- 2.1. The aim of the policy and supporting guidance is to make managers aware of menopause related issues and how they can affect their employees by;
 - 2.1.1. Creating an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for adjustments at work.
 - 2.1.2. Promoting the guidance which will provide direction and clarity on how to support women who raise menopause related issues, either for individuals experiencing this or those who are affected indirectly, for example, line managers, partners and colleagues.
 - 2.1.3. Informing managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, what the consequences can be and what they can do to support women at work.
 - 2.1.4. Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to all employees of the Council.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. **Menopause** is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating, and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. The menopause is sometimes known as the 'change of life' and it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons. As a result of these hormonal changes, many women experience both physical and emotional symptoms.
- 4.2. **Peri-menopause** is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.
- 4.3. **Post-menopause** is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

5. Symptoms of Menopause

- 5.1. Whilst 75% of women do experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe, it is important to note that not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support.
- 5.2. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, hot flushes, sweats, poor concentration, insomnia, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, and loss of confidence. Some women also experience difficulty sleeping.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Employees:

- 6.1.1. All employees are responsible for:
- Taking personal responsibility to look after their health;
 - Being open and honest in conversations with line managers
 - If a member of staff feels unable to speak to their line manager they can speak to Employee Support, Personnel Services, or their Union
 - Being willing to help and support their colleagues

6.2. Line Managers (see Appendix 1 for Managers' Guidance)

- 6.2.1. All line managers should:
- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and Guidance;
 - Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
 - Use the guidance in Appendices 1a and 1b, signposting and reviewing together, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required;
 - Record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented;
 - Ensure ongoing conversations take place and set review dates;
 - Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Line Manager may:

- Discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice;
- Refer the employee to the Occupational Health Adviser;
- Review Occupational Health advice, and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical;
- Update the Confidential Discussion Template (Appendix 1b), and continue to review.

6.3. Personnel Services

- 6.3.1. Personnel Services will:
- Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this Policy and Guidance
 - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in respect of related absence levels and performance
 - Process referrals to Occupational Health Services

7. Links to other policies/documents

This policy is linked to:

- Dignity at Work;
- Maximising Attendance Policy
- Flexible Working Policy

8. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Managers' Guidance for Discussions with Employees;
- Appendix 1a – Confidential Discussion Template;

9. Further Sources of Information/Support and External Links

- All employees can access counselling in the following ways;

Through the Employee Counselling Service 'Time for Talking' by simply phoning 0800 970 3980. All calls are free and available 24 hours, 7 days a week throughout the year or by emailing admin@timefortalking.co.uk with the following information;

- Your name
- That you are an employee of South Lanarkshire Council
- A contact telephone number
- Confirming if it is ok, or not, to leave a message on that number if you are unable to answer the phone.

Alternatively you can ask your line manager, who will request an appointment to be arranged for you through the Council's Employee Support Team on your behalf.

By contacting the Employee Support Team confidentially yourself on 01698 455017

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause>
- <http://menopausematters.co.uk>
- <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause>

Appendix 1

Managers' Guidance for colleague discussions

We recognise that every woman is different, and it is, therefore, not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines.

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly;
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below) – hand out the Menopause Advice Sheet (Appendix 2);
- Agree actions, and how to implement them (you should use the template at Appendix 1a to record the meeting), so that all parties agree what has been discussed, and the next steps, before the meeting ends. Ensure that this record is treated as confidential, and is stored securely.
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting.

Symptoms Support

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including, but not exhaustively or exclusively; support for women should be considered as detailed below:

Hot Flashes

- Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk (where possible a USB connected desk fan to ensure environmentally friendly) or moving near a window, or away from a heat source;
- Easy access to drinking water;
- Be allowed to adapt prescribed uniform, such as by removing a jacket;
- Have access to a rest room for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe flush.

Heavy / Light Periods

- Have access to toilet facilities;
- Request an extra uniform.

Headaches

- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water;
- Offer a quiet space to work;
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

Difficulty Sleeping

- Ask to be considered for flexible working, particularly when suffering from a lack of sleep.

Low Mood

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;

- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head';
- Refer to the Employee Assistance Programme for further support and guidance via http://intranet.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/20061/employee_assistance_programme
http://intranet.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/4255/employee_assistance_programme_leaflet.pdf

Loss of Confidence

- Ensure there are regular Personal Development Discussions;
- Have time with their manager to discuss any issues;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work following discussions.

Poor Concentration

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly;
- Review task allocation and workload;
- Offer quiet space to work;
- Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having 'protected time', so that they are not disturbed;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

Anxiety

- Promote counselling services provided by Employee Counselling Service;
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk.

Panic Attacks

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk.

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.

If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.

Appendix 1a

Confidential Colleague Discussion – Template

Employee's Name		Job Title	
Resource/Service Area		Location of Work	

Line Managers Name and Position:	
Date of discussion:	

Summary of Discussion:

Agreed Actions/Adjustments:

Date of next review meeting

Signed (Member of staff)

Signed (Manager)