

MENOPAUSE POLICY

TO:	Governance Sub-Committee
PREPARED BY:	Darren Ward (Housing Services Assistant)
SUBJECT:	Adoption of Menopause Policy
DATE OF MEETING:	16 August 2023
APPROVED BY:	Paul Martin (Chief Executive Officer)

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Milnbank Housing Association (MHA) is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees and ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- 1.2 This policy applies to employees, workers, and contractors. This Policy is inclusive of all gender identities including trans and non-binary employees. It sets out the rights of anyone experiencing menopausal or perimenopausal symptoms and explains the support available to them in the workplace. The policy also helps line managers to understand how best to support someone who is experiencing symptoms and what adjustments might need to be considered.

2. EMPLOYEE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 The menopause usually occurs in women who are in their late 40's/early 50's and is a natural stage of life for women to experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. It can also happen much earlier, but this is not common.
- 2.2 Perimenopause usually starts in the mid-forties but can start earlier or later and last several years. It is important to be aware that certain surgery (e.g., a hysterectomy or having chemotherapy) will also trigger the menopause in a woman.
- 2.3 MHA is committed to treating fairly and supporting employees who are affected in any way by the menopause and ensuring that line managers are adequately informed to deal with employees reporting any issues or symptoms.
- 2.4 For those experiencing symptoms:
 - It can be a difficult and stressful time which sometimes goes undiagnosed and/or untreated.
 - Physical changes to the body which can be considerable and require a change in lifestyle and habits.
 - Mental health and overall sense of wellbeing could be impacted.
 - It is a very sensitive and personal matter which can last many years.
- 2.5 For Management:
 - To understand the health and wellbeing issues which might be raised and ways in which they can provide support.
 - To understand the potential impact on work.

3. SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE

- 3.1 Symptoms of menopause can differ widely in terms of type and severity and can manifest both physically and psychologically. Therefore, if you believe you are in the perimenopause stage or are entering the menopause and this is impacting upon your work, it is important to talk to your line manager. Understanding the symptoms is not easy as there are several which include: Difficulty sleeping and night sweats, Feeling tired and completely lacking in energy, Mood swings, Depression, Feeling anxious and panic attacks, Hot flushes, Struggling to remember things or to concentrate and focus and taking longer to recover from illness.
- 3.2 Each of these symptoms could affect performance at work. To support you during this time MHA needs to be made aware of how the menopause is impacting you, so honest and open conversations are encouraged. With your consent, medical information may be requested and guidance from professionals sought.

4. EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 Provide Support
MHA aims to facilitate an open and understanding working environment. You are encouraged to inform your line manager if you are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health. Early notification will also help line managers to determine the most appropriate course of action to support your individual needs.
- 4.2 If you do not wish to discuss the issue with your direct line manager, you may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague or another manager.
- 4.3 There are many external sources of help and support for employees and managers, including the information points below:
- www.menopausematters.co.uk provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms, and treatment options.
 - www.daisynetwork.org provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency.
 - www.themenopausecharity.org provides information and support during perimenopause and menopause, and the tools and treatments needed to manage.

- 4.4 Reasonable Adjustments
Following discussions with your manager and/or after seeking medical advice, certain reasonable adjustments may be implemented to support you to manage the effects of the menopause and/or perimenopause within the workplace.
- 4.5 Environment
Consideration will be given to your wellbeing, and this could include the environment you work in (e.g., are you able to sit next to a window to enable you to cool down quickly when experiencing a hot flush). It is important to take the time to discuss any identified needs.
- 4.6 Health and Safety
The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 imposes a duty on MHA to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable everyone's health, safety, and welfare at work. MHA will consider whether a risk assessment is necessary to identify how working conditions could affect those suffering from menopause in the workplace.
- 4.7 Flexible Working
MHA recognises that difficulty sleeping is a common symptom of the menopause. To reflect this, as well as the impact of other common symptoms, we aim to facilitate flexible working wherever possible. Requests for flexible working will be assessed in accordance with the Association's Flexible Working Policy. You should discuss such requests with your line manager and depending on the circumstances, requests may be approved on a permanent or temporary basis.
- 4.8 Discrimination
The menopause can, in extreme cases, amount to a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010. MHA will ensure that you are not treated less favourably than others because of any disability and will also work with you to make reasonable adjustments as required.
- 4.9 Data Protection
MHA will process any personal data collected in accordance with the GDPR Policy.

5. REVIEW

- 5.1 The Menopause Policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or as otherwise deemed necessary by the Governance Sub-Committee or dictated by changes to Employment Law Legislation.