

Public Document Pack



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07 December 2023

Dear Councillor

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** on Monday 11 December 2023 at 3.00 pm, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

5 **MENOPAUSE POLICY** (Pages 2 - 8)

To consider the report of the Head of Paid Service.

7 **HYBRID WORKING POLICY** (Pages 9 - 49)

To consider the report of the Head of Paid Service.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Nicky", written over a white background.

Chief Executive

Subject:	MENOPAUSE POLICY
Meeting and Date:	General Purposes Committee – 11th December 2023
Report of:	Nadeem Aziz, Head of Paid Service
Classification:	Unrestricted
Purpose of the report:	To consider the adoption of a new menopause policy
Recommendation:	That the Committee: Approves the new Menopause Policy to take effect from 1 st January 2024

1. Summary

1.1 This report seeks member approval for the adoption of a new menopause policy, applicable to all Dover District Council (the Council) employees, workers and volunteers.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Council recognise there is now a need to implement a policy relating to Menopause, which includes definitions as to what menopause is, with the intention to enable and encourage open conversations, support and adjustments between employees and managers.

2.2 The Council is seeing an increasing number of employment relations performance, absence and grievance cases where menopausal symptoms have been cited as a contributing factor.

2.3 The policy will be compliant with employment law and be consistent with ACAS guidance.

2.4 This policy is not a standalone initiative and would be implemented alongside a continuation of wellbeing resources and communications to encourage proactive good health across the Council and to increase awareness of menopause.

2.5 The Council do not currently have a menopause policy, anyone requiring support or managing those requiring support must refer to less specific polices that may not be entirely suitable.

2.6 Absence due to menopausal symptoms is currently managed through absence management policies and procedures and will continue to be managed that way.

2.7 Barriers to managing menopausal symptoms and menopausal related absence can be evaluated by five key areas:

- Complicated absence management policies
- Manager confidence
- Manager education
- Perceived risks of discrimination
- Lack of clarity or awareness about menopausal symptoms

2.8 This policy is intended to resolve some of these prevalent issues including, de-mystifying menopause, increasing manager confidence and decisiveness and reducing the risks associated with inconsistent approaches to Menopause support across the council.

3. Identification of Options

3.1 Option 1 - The committee agree the adoption of the new menopause policy from 1st January 2024.

3.2 Option 2 - The committee decline the new menopause policy and instead ask the Head of Paid Service to consider other policy options.

3.3 Option 3 - The committee decline the new menopause policy.

4. **Evaluation of Options**

For the reasons set out in this report, option 1, agree the adoption of the new menopause policy from 1st January 2024 is the recommended option.

5. **Resource Implications**

5.1 There is potential for an increase in managers managing and supporting those experiencing menopausal symptoms. Initially this could create greater demand for HR advisory services, however, it is not expected that this would have a significant impact on the current or future budget for the Council.

6. **Corporate Implications**

6.1 Comment from Section 151 Officer:

The s151 officer has been consulted in the production of this report and has no additional comments (MD).

6.2 Comment from Solicitor to the Council:

The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comment to add.

6.3 Comment from Equalities Officer:

The Equality Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report and it has been identified that an equality impact assessment would be beneficial in support of the delivery of the new Menopause Policy. The adoption of a new Menopause Policy supports the objectives of the Council's Equality Policy and is to be welcomed. In discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

7. **Appendices**

7.1 1. Draft menopause policy

Officer contact: Claire Wagstaff-Townend, HR Manager



Menopause Policy

Version: Draft V1 October 2023

Implemented:

Review:

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CLAUSE

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1. About this policy

- 1.1 We are committed to supporting staff affected by the menopause. We recognise that many members of staff will experience the menopause and that, for some, menopause will have an adverse impact on their working lives.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to:
- (a) raise awareness of menopause and its impact in the workplace;
 - (b) encourage open conversations between managers and staff; and
 - (c) direct staff to relevant advice and assistance.
- 1.3 This policy has been agreed following consultation with the Unison and GMB Trade Unions, employees, and final approval of the Council's General Purposes Committee
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time, following consultation with the Unison and GMB Trade Unions.
- 1.5 Any information you provide to us about your health will be processed in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policies. We recognise that this data is sensitive and will handle it in a confidential manner.

2. Who does this policy apply to?

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees, casual workers, agency workers, volunteers.

3. Who is responsible for this policy?

- 3.1 The Strategic Director Corporate Resource has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. The Strategic Director has delegated responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the Head of HR.
- 3.2 This This policy is reviewed annually by HR in consultation with Unison and GMB Trade Unions. It may be reviewed earlier to meet changes in legislation or the Council's business or service needs.

4. What is menopause?

- 4.1 All women will experience menopause at some point during their life. Menopause can also impact trans and non-binary people who may not identify as female. People who are non-binary, trans or intersex, and who may not identify as a woman, may also experience menopausal symptoms. Therefore, the reference to menopause also applies to anyone experiencing the menopause, regardless of their age, gender expression or identity.
- 4.2 Most of those who experience menopause will do so between the ages of 45 and 55. However, some start experiencing symptoms much earlier. Early menopause can take place for a variety of reasons. Often, symptoms last between four to eight years, but they can continue for longer.
- 4.3 Symptoms can include, but are not limited to, sleeplessness, hot flushes, memory loss or poor concentration, headaches, muscle and joint pains, depression, and anxiety.

- 4.4 The majority of those going through menopause will experience some symptoms, although everyone is different, and symptoms can be long-term and fluctuate.
- 4.5 It is important to remember that treatment options vary and that due to a variety of reasons, including illness or medication some will be unable to or choose not to consider Hormone Replacement Therapy.
- 4.6 Menopause is preceded by perimenopause, during which the body prepares itself for menopause. Perimenopause can also last several years and can involve similar symptoms to menopause itself. For the purpose of this policy, any reference to menopause includes perimenopause.

5. Open conversations

- 5.1 The Council will support all colleagues experiencing menopause transition and encourage staff to ask for help if they need it.
- 5.2 All staff should be aware of menopause and the Council is committed to raising awareness so that they can support those experiencing it or otherwise affected by it.
- 5.3 The Council encourages an environment in which colleagues can have open conversations about menopause. We expect all staff to be supportive of colleagues who may be affected by menopause in the workplace.
- 5.4 Anyone affected by menopause should feel confident to talk to their line manager or HR about their symptoms and the support they may need to reduce the difficulties menopause may cause them at work.
- 5.5 Line managers and the HR team should be ready to have open conversations with staff about menopause and what support is available. These conversations should be treated sensitively, and any information provided should be handled confidentially and in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policies.

6. Risk assessments

- 6.1 The Council is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all its staff and will consider any aspects of the working environment that may worsen menopausal symptoms. This may include identifying and addressing specific risks to the health and well-being of those experiencing menopause.

7. Support and adjustments

- 7.1 While many who experience menopause may not require any adjustments, we recognise that others may benefit from some adjustments to their working conditions to mitigate the impact of menopause symptoms on their work.
- 7.2 If you believe that you would benefit from adjustments or other support, you should speak to your line manager in the first instance. If you feel unable to do so, you should contact the HR team.
- 7.3 Physical adjustments could include temperature control, provision of electric fans or access to rest facilities. Depending on individual and business needs, other adjustments may be considered.
- 7.4 If appropriate, you may be referred to either Occupational Health or medical advice may be sought from your GP to better understand any adjustments and other support that may help alleviate

symptoms affecting you at work. Any requests will be dealt with as set out in our Sickness Absence policy.

7.5 Please visit the Wellbeing at Work page of the Staff Hub for additional support and to access a wide variety of resources.

8. Sickness Absence and Performance

8.1 The Council takes a positive and proactive approach to performance management and considers all health conditions when supporting staff to perform to the best of their ability.

8.2 The menopause in itself is not an illness or a disability, but there may be times when the symptoms of menopause transition are severe enough to cause employees to take sickness absence, or for it to affect performance.

8.3 Because this issue is intensely personal, a manager may not be aware that any impacts on performance or attendance are menopause-related. Wherever possible staff are encouraged to be open with their manager about how their symptoms are affecting them. Managers should make all reasonable efforts to ensure an employee is able to share information confidentially to help manage their symptoms whilst at work.

8.4 Managers should be aware that sickness absence relating to menopause transition can lead to unexpected absence and fluctuating levels of absence. When managing an employee with frequent sickness absences or prolonged sickness, line managers must use the Sickness Absence Policy and this is the same if the absence is related to menopause symptoms. Managers should speak to the HR for further advice in these circumstances.

8.5 If the employee is absent from work because of the impact of the menopause or it is affecting their performance, line managers and employees should consider if an occupational health assessment would be appropriate, to ensure the best support can be put in place for the employee to help them manage their symptoms but also to improve their performance and/or attendance at work.

8.6 If the employee's performance is being affected, managers should support the employee to improve by following the procedures set out in the Council's Disciplinary and Performance Policy and Procedure and should contact HR for further support.

8.7 When reporting sickness absence due to the menopause the normal sickness absence procedure should be followed. This procedure can be found on the HR Hub.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Agenda Item No 7

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