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MENOPAUSE POLICY

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** Shepton Mallet Town Council is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who is employed by the organization.
- 1.2** Menopause is a natural part of every woman's life and isn't always an easy transition. With the right support, it can be much better. Whilst every woman does not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work.
- 1.3** Shepton Mallet Town Council recognizes that staff may need additional consideration, support and adjustments during the transitional time before, during and after the menopause and ensure that all employees are treated according to their circumstances and needs.
- 1.4** Shepton Mallet Town Council also aims to ensure that individuals feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms and asking for support and adjustments in order to continue their role within the organisation, and to ensuring that all employees are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. We are also committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of the workforce.
- 1.5** This policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. It is not contractual and does not form any part of the terms and conditions of employment.

2. Legislative Drivers

- 2.1** While there are no specific legislations addressing the impact of the menopause in the workplace, there are regulations of which we should be aware:

3. Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)

- 3.1** The Act requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all employees - and this will include women experiencing the menopause. Under the Act, employers are required to carry out risk assessments under the Management Regulations and these should include specific risks to menopausal women, considering their specific needs and ensuring that the working environment will not worsen their symptoms

4. The Equality Act (2010)

- 4.1** The Act protects people from discrimination in the workplace because of 'protected characteristics' and includes both direct and indirect discrimination and harassment. This will include women experiencing the menopause. The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- sex
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership

- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation

5. Key Principles

5.1 The key principles of this policy are:

- To create an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work.
- To ensure that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place.
- To foster a positive attitude to menopause/peri-menopause and work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support employees experiencing the menopause
- To take a proactive stance promoting a greater understanding of the menopause/ peri-menopause and seek to eradicate any exclusionary or discriminatory practices.
- To recognise that the menopause/peri-menopause is a very individual experience and that women can be affected in different ways and to different degrees, and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.
- To provide appropriate information and support to staff and other individuals.
- To carry out risk assessments which take the specific needs of individuals into consideration (including stress risk assessments).
- To consider using this policy in conjunction with other WRASAC policies to ensure appropriate adjustments, such as the policy on flexible working, home working etc, where practicable.

5.2 Manager discretion will be used when assessing an employee's individual needs and circumstances, in situations where there is a reasonable expectation of improvement without the need for formal intervention. Managers will create a supportive team culture that removes any barriers to disclosing information to their team leaders.

6. Definition:

6.1 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. Usually that is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching natural menopause). The average age for women to reach menopause in the UK is 51 years, though it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

6.2 Peri-Menopause is the time leading up to the menopause when a woman may experience changes such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before the menopause.

6.3 Post-Menopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

7. Roles and Responsibilities for Employees:

7.1 All staff are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility for looking after their own health
- Being open and honest in conversation with line managers and occupational health (if appropriate)
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment
- Being willing to help and support colleagues
- Understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopause symptoms

7.2 Senior Management Team/Team Leaders are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with the Menopause Policy
- Being ready and willing to have open discussion about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally
- Using the guidance in appendix, signposting and reviewing together, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported and any adjustments required.
- Recording adjustments agreed and actions to be implemented
- Ensuring ongoing dialogue and review dates.
- Ensuring that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

7.3 Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are more severe, the manager may:

- Discuss a referral to occupational health for further advice
- Refer to occupational health
- Review occupational health advice and implement any recommendations where reasonably practicable
- Update records and continue to review.

APPENDIX A - Guidance for Managers

Shepton Mallet Town Council recognises 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 her symptoms or just talk about how she is feeling, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation
- Find an appropriate space to preserve confidentiality
- Encourage her to speak openly and honestly
- Suggest ways in which she can be supported
- Agree actions and how to implement them
- Ensure that recording is treated as confidential and stored securely
- Agree if other members of the team are to be informed and by whom
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting
- Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters

Supporting Menopause Symptoms

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including but not exhaustively or exclusively:

Symptom	Support considered
Hot flushes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Temperature control for work area such as a fan for the desk area, moving near a window or away from a heat source• Easy access to drinking water• Access to a rest room for a break or quiet area to manage a severe hot flush
Heavy/light periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Permanent access to washing facilities• Sanitary products available in toilets• Storage space for change of clothing

Headaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of access to drinking water • Quiet space to work if possible • Noise reducing headphones for open office space • Time out for medication
Low mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree time out from others when needed without need for explanation • Identify a 'time out' space to go for short break • Additional external
Difficulty sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible working offered

Symptom	Support considered
Loss of confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure regular personal development discussions • Regular protected time with team leader/manager to discuss any issues • Agreed protected time to catch up with work
Poor concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss if there are times of day when concentration is better or worse and adjust work patterns accordingly • Review workload • Provide books for lists, actions boards and other memory assisting equipment • Offer noise reducing headphones • Reduce interruptions • Agreement in place in open office that employee is having protected time and not to be disturbed • Agree protected time to catch up with work.
Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree time out when needed • Extra external supervision if appropriate

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake mindfulness activities/breathing etc.• Discuss whether employee has sought medical advice |
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In addition to the points above, managers should also consider:

- Providing paid time off for treatments such as hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) (for moods and anxiety);
- Ensuring that any absence management procedures clearly indicate flexibility with regards to menopause-related absence, with a statement that women will experience no detriment for taking time off during this time.

Informing and Educating the Workforce

All employees should be given information on how they can get support for any issues that arise as a result of the menopause. This should be part of any new worker induction when working through the Staff Handbook. All staff should be informed that this policy can be viewed in the Staff Handbook.

Shepton Mallet Town Council's sickness absence procedures are flexible enough to cater for menopause-related sickness absence. Employees will experience no detriment because they may need time off during this time.

Working arrangements should be flexible enough to ensure they meet the needs of menopausal women, who may need to leave suddenly. They may also need more breaks during the day. Shepton Mallet Town Council will never penalise staff who need to take more frequent toilet breaks.

Risk assessments will consider the specific needs of menopausal women and ensure the working environment will not make their symptoms worse, including looking at include temperature and ventilation and a quiet place to rest and easily adjustable temperature and humidity controls. Employers already have statutory duties to provide these facilities under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

Managers will also recognise that some existing health conditions and disabilities can be adversely affected by the menopause.

Many women report that the menopause seems to make existing health conditions worse, triggering or coinciding with a flare up of symptoms, or that an existing health condition may

also worsen symptoms of the menopause. It can be difficult to tell whether a symptom is caused by the menopause or by the existing condition, or to tell which is making the other worse as many symptoms can interconnect or overlap.

There are reports that a wide range of conditions that can be affected by the menopause including arthritis, multiple sclerosis (MS), mental health conditions, skin conditions, diabetes, hyperthyroidism, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and many others. A significant number of women also experience the menopause as a result of cancer treatment.

Women with certain mental health conditions may perceive menopausal symptoms differently and may find it more difficult to access medical help for symptoms or to get the right support. If a woman has an existing condition that is worsened by the menopause, she may need more time off for medical appointments or treatment for that condition and it may be necessary to review any reasonable adjustments that were previously in place.