



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Menopause and the Workplace: How to enable fulfilling working lives

UK Government Response to the independent report



July 2022

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Introduction

Women will experience menopause symptoms that can, in some cases, be debilitating and have a significant impact on everyday activities. Without appropriate care these symptoms can have severe impacts on women's physical and mental health, workplace participation and personal relationships.

In July 2021 the Minister for Employment asked members of the Roundtable on older workers to look at the important issue of menopause and employment given the impact menopause can have on women's working lives, particularly in the latter stages of their careers.

Representatives from a range of organisations with wide reach and influence worked together to produce the independent report, including Andy Briggs, the Business Champion for Older Workers, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the British Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, Business in the Community, and UK Hospitality.

The independent report was published on 25 November 2021 and contains ten recommendations aimed at bringing about comprehensive change and support for those experiencing the menopause, in key areas of Government policy, employer practice, and wider societal and financial change.

This document responds to each recommendation in turn¹.

1 The Scottish and Welsh Governments and Northern Ireland Executive are responsible for health, where this response relates to these areas it applies to England only. We are committed to working with the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and to learn from each other where this important topic is concerned.

Government

Recommendations

1. Nominate a Menopause Ambassador to work on behalf of Government to represent the interests of people experiencing menopause transition. This role should promote the economic contribution made by women, the missed productivity by employers and tax revenue by Government and include supporting all elements of the affected population including ethnic minority, disabled and LGBTQ.
2. Equality Act section 14 enacted to enable intersectional, multiple, discrimination claims to be recognised.
3. All the stages of menopause transition to be referenced as a priority issue in Government's public policy agenda on work, diversity and inclusion.
4. Develop methodology to quantify the cost of menopause on the individual, businesses and the UK economy.
5. DHSC and NHS-led implementation of a more holistic view of the menopause transition by clinicians in England, which doesn't just focus on the immediate clinical response, but encompasses mental health and long-term well-being.

Menopause Ambassador

The Minister for Employment crucially has a seat on the UK Menopause Taskforce, which is taking a holistic approach to the menopause, sharing best practice across the four nations and identifying areas for further improvement. It ensures that menopause remains a top priority across government and in society.

The inaugural meeting of the Taskforce agreed that work and employment would be a priority theme. In December 2021 the Government published [Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England – GOV.UK](#), which announced plans to appoint the first ever Women's Health Ambassador for England, and recently named Dame Lesley Regan as the Ambassador.

The Women's Health Ambassador will focus on raising the profile for women's health, increasing awareness of taboo topics, and bringing in a range of collaborative voices to implement the Women's Health Strategy.

Dame Lesley will be invited to join the UK Menopause Taskforce as a permanent member, and part of her remit will be to work closely with the Minister for Employment on employment-related issues.

In addition, one or more Menopause Employment Champions will be appointed by the Minister for Employment to, give a voice to menopausal women, promoting their economic contribution, and working with employers to keep people experiencing menopause symptoms in work and progressing.

DWP are working closely with Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Government Equalities Office (GEO) and No10 on this agenda, as part of our strong cross government commitment to take a holistic approach to menopause, across healthcare, workplace support and education.

Equality Act

As with other employment issues, a framework of legislative protection is an important backdrop that should act to ensure employers adopt best practices. This can help to prevent problems arising in the first place and help employers to work with employees to solve issues where they arise.

Menopause is not a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010 (the Act), but sex, age and disability are all characteristics which provide protection against unfair treatment of employees going through the menopause. As such, the Government does not believe further changes to the Equality Act are needed.

This is borne out by recent cases which show that employees have scope within the Act to challenge discriminatory treatment by employers - claiming under one or more of the three relevant characteristics.

All the stages of menopause transition to be referenced as a priority issue in Government's public policy agenda on work, diversity and inclusion.

The UK Menopause Taskforce will look at the menopause as a cross-cutting policy issue, inviting representatives from different UK government departments and external experts to ensure that the breadth of areas impacted by the menopause are considered and joined up.

The UK Menopause Taskforce is co-chaired by Maria Caulfield, Minister for Patient Safety and Primary Care and Carolyn Harris MP. Membership includes Ministers from GEO, DWP, and BEIS, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish Health Ministers, and leading clinical experts from across the UK. Additional stakeholders are also invited for themed discussions, which will ensure that the taskforce considers menopause as a public policy issue and not just a health issue.

DWP 50PLUS Champions, based within our Job centre districts, will reinforce the Government's commitment to supporting benefit claimants aged 50 and over find and stay in work. The champions support work coaches and employers to understand the characteristics of older job seekers and the issues that may affect them at this stage of their working lives, such as managing a health condition and having additional caring responsibilities.

We will be including the impact of the menopause as part of this, so that work coaches are better equipped to understand the barriers that may be faced by those experiencing menopause, no matter their age.

“This is an issue that’s often not given enough attention but can be devastating for people. Work is good for our health; it is a pity to lose good staff without perhaps knowing the reason why or what can be done to keep them. If an employer comes to me, I can help them retain these talented people and together we can face up to this challenge.”

Anne Brewster, 50PLUS Champion

Develop methodology to quantify the cost of menopause on the individual, businesses and the UK economy.

If more women remained in work and worked for longer, retaining higher paid roles, it could result in benefits to our economy and society due to increased productivity and income tax receipts, and reductions in benefit receipt, long-term sickness, and healthcare costs.

Previous estimates of the cost of ill health in the UK found total economic cost of sickness absence, lost productivity through worklessness, informal care giving, and health-related productivity losses, was over £100bn annually² and a proportion of these will be for women affected by menopause.

Research by NHS England and NHS Improvement³ showed by having an optimal care pathway in place for women suffering with significant menopause symptoms it could lead to potential savings and opportunities for improved productivity of over half a billion pounds per year.

2 [Work, Health and Disability Green Paper Data Pack \(GOV.UK\)](#)

3 Because of the paucity of data for women's health issues, these calculations are based on scenarios (designed via clinical expert views on "standard current" for women vs "optimal future") Due to this, a very prudent approach has been taken, and, as such, believe these net savings will be understated.

The recently published research by the UCL Social Research Institute⁴ shows that the onset of menopause before age 45 reduces months spent in work by 9 percentage points (around 4 months' employment) for women during their early 50s. The study also shows that the more menopausal symptoms faced at age 50, the lower the employment and full-time employment rates.

Government recognises the importance of having a suitable methodology to quantify the cost of menopause to individuals, businesses, health services and wider society. We will explore how such a methodology might be best developed and will commit to sharing when this work is completed.

As part of its work, the UK Menopause Taskforce will look at research, evidence, and data related to the menopause.

4 'The consequences of early menopause and menopause symptoms for labour market participation'.

DHSC and NHS-led implementation of a more holistic view of the menopause transition by clinicians in England, which doesn't just focus on the immediate clinical response, but encompasses mental health and long-term well-being. Specific consideration should be given to a public health campaign

It is essential that the health and care system takes a holistic view of the menopause. The severity and length of menopause symptoms can vary, and for some individuals can include significant negative impacts on their mental health, well-being, and participation in employment.

In December 2021 the Government published [Our Vision for the Women's Health Strategy for England - GOV.UK](#) which announced that the menopause will be a priority in the forthcoming Strategy, is due to be published in 2022.

Furthermore, in January 2021 NHS England and Improvement (NHSE&I) established the 'Menopause Pathway Improvement Programme'. This programme brings together menopause specialists and other key stakeholders to improve clinical menopause care in England. The programme has two key strands - a population health management approach, which aims to develop optimal care pathways aligned with NICE guidelines, and a retention programme for the NHS workforce.

The programme will also consider a public health campaign which could promote understanding of symptoms, break down taboos and signpost where women should turn to if they are experiencing symptoms of the menopause. The above-mentioned UK Menopause Taskforce will also take a holistic approach to the health aspects of menopause.

Employers

Recommendations

6. Launch a collaborative and government-backed employer-led campaign, working in conjunction with the Menopause Ambassador, covering:
 - a. The importance of open conversations about the menopause in the workplace to help break down the taboo and normalise the issue.
 - b. The importance of training line managers, acknowledging all people are affected by the menopause in different ways; and where to signpost for further help (OH, GP, etc.).
 - c. The importance of awareness-raising and action to combat bias and harassment.
 - d. The need for workplace adjustments in addition to flexible working.
 - e. The value of support groups and specialist support.
 - f. Sick leave policy/procedure.
 - g. Performance management.
 - h. Flexible working rights; and
 - i. Returner programmes to include and highlight post-menopausal opportunities as well as post-maternity.

This would be underpinned by a toolkit and case studies for employers focusing on the broader education and normalising of the conversation.

7. Larger employers to put in place workplace awareness, training and support via Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP). A 'champion' point of contact to be in place, this is particularly important for SME's where EAP is not available.

Launch a collaborative and government-backed employer-led campaign

Employers are key in increasing available workplace support and enabling conversations about the menopause. Their role, alongside that of the Women's Health Ambassador and Government, is critical to the effectiveness of menopause communications. Communications will play an important part in ensuring employers have the information and tools to encourage and support their activities. The Menopause Employment Champion will spearhead the employer-backed campaign.

Employers and their representative organisations already play a leading role in a number of current employer-focused communications. In DWP and across government we have wide-ranging links with businesses, and we regularly work in partnership on key employer campaigns, including Way to Work, Kickstart, Pensions, and Disability Confident, as well as having regular, on-going engagement through established channels and networks.

We will use these links with established partnerships and campaigns, to increase the reach of menopause communications, and to provide content and 'trusted voices' on a topic unfamiliar to many. As well as raising awareness amongst employers, we will encourage the development of support within their organisations by providing links to advice, guidance and best practice case studies.

Our messaging will create a narrative outlining the benefits to businesses when recruiting and retaining women experiencing the menopause. We will also support businesses and business groups when producing their own communications, promoting their adoption of better working practices for supporting women through the menopause, including Employer Assistance Programmes and Menopause Champions in the workplace.

Larger employers to put in place workplace awareness, training and support via Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP). A ‘champion’ point of contact

Employer Assistance Programmes offer vital support to employees regarding their mental health and wellbeing. This is a valuable tool for individuals to use and for line managers to signpost to. Where possible, we encourage employers to ensure the menopause forms part of the EAP offer.

We recognise it is not possible for all employers to offer this service, especially in smaller businesses.

We are exploring options for additional support for women's reproductive health issues within the workplace, including menopause, through the Health and Wellbeing Fund. The aim of the Health and Wellbeing Fund is to promote equalities and reduce health disparities by building the evidence base about good practice, sharing lessons and widening adoption of interventions with a proven track record. Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise providers will be invited to submit applications for the fund later this year, to trial innovative models of support on a local level.

The Civil Service has recently launched its own Menopause Policy, signalling to managers that they should be supportive of employees who are experiencing menopausal symptoms and raising awareness of the flexibilities available to them. The policy outlines the responsibilities of the manager and employee, provides practical advice on workplace adjustments and signposts to resources, with the aim of improving the experience of employees experiencing difficult menopausal symptoms in the workplace.

It's important that government leads by example. DWP is a member of the Cross-Government Menopause Executive Committee, working closely with them and its 38 member Departments to share best practice across the Civil Service. DWP has developed toolkits for employees and line managers alongside having a DWP Menopause Network, menopause cafés, Menopause Ambassadors, and a resource hub full of information.

Societal and financial

Recommendations

8. Agreement to be gained from organisations who can make a difference to promote good practice e.g., TUC training, GPs, Pharmacists to re-frame the issue – menopause transition is another stage of life; something that is normal and universal for all women at whatever age and however it occurs.
9. Money and Pensions Service and consumer money advice and support organisations to include menopause impact and considerations.
10. Incorporate menopause transition awareness as part of the Mid-life MOT through the Health pillar.

Promoting good practice

The UK Menopause Taskforce will work with employer groups to understand how we can promote best practice for supporting people experiencing the menopause at work.

Several organisations are already promoting good practice as outlined in the menopause and employment report. There is also help and support available on GOV.UK at:

- [Help and support for older workers](#)

Money and Pensions Service and consumer money advice and support organisations to include menopause impact and considerations.

The Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) is working directly with consumers to co-design guidance journeys. One of their design principles is that people need to be able to see themselves and their own circumstances reflected. Journeys can be tailored by age and gender as well as by consumer needs, so the content will vary where appropriate and relevant.

MaPS's aim is to ensure that people can access clear guidance, to help everyone make the most of their money and pensions. MaPS's research shows that people are most receptive to receiving guidance when they experience a change in life circumstances that impacts their finances for example, bereavement, divorce and leaving the workforce for health reasons which includes menopause.

MaPS works closely with a variety of organisations that support people through many challenges including health matters. Partnering with the DWP and other organisations on the mid-life MOT project is a good example of bringing together the impact of health on finances. There may be further opportunities to work with organisations that support women through menopause and provide financial guidance through their channels.

Incorporate menopause transition awareness as part of the Mid-life MOT through the Health pillar

The Mid-life MOT can provide an important nudge for individuals to make decisions at the earliest point, and take stock of their health and finances, wellbeing at work and training and skills. This in turn allows individuals to be more informed in their later life planning and build their future financial resilience and wellbeing. We will explore how we integrate menopause transition awareness into the health pillar of the Mid-life MOT.

In addition, DWP will be piloting Mid-Life MOTs to claimants through our 50PLUS Champions and to employees through private providers.



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