



<b>Title</b>	<b>Menopause at Work Policy</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>Maryhill Housing is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here. We recognise that women experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments.</p> <p>We recognise that the menopausal symptoms can also affect transgender, intersex and non-binary people.</p> <p>Maryhill Housing is committed to developing a workplace culture that supports workers experiencing the menopause in order for them to feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work.</p>
<b>Scope</b>	<p>This Policy applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All MH employees</li> </ul>
<b>Definitions</b>	<p>For the purpose of this policy the following definitions are provided in relation to the menopause:</p> <p><b>Woman</b> - In the context of the policy the term ‘woman’ refers to people born with female reproductive organs who may therefore experience the menopause irrespective of gender.</p> <p><b>Menopause</b> – a natural transition stage in most women’s lives lasting from four to eight years, although for some women it can be much longer. Most women experience the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55, although it can start earlier. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods. Women may also experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms as a result of the menopause.</p> <p><b>Premature menopause</b> – for some women, it can be experienced at a much younger age, in their 30s or even younger. This is sometimes called premature ovarian insufficiency. The NHS estimates that 1 in every 100 women will experience premature menopause.</p> <p><b>Medical or surgical menopause</b> – there are some medical circumstances that will create an immediate menopause, whatever the woman’s age, such as a medically induced menopause to shrink fibroids or when the ovaries are damaged by specific interventions such as treatment for cancer, or when a woman’s ovaries are removed as part of a hysterectomy.</p>

	<p><b>Perimenopause</b> – a period of time before the menopause, in the years leading up to the menopause where there can be significant changes for women, including irregular and heavy menstrual bleeding and many of the classic symptoms associated with menopause.</p> <p><b>Post-menopause</b> – a term used when a woman’s periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months. However other menopausal symptoms may not have ended so soon. Problematic symptoms may continue for years.</p>
<p><b>Policy Statement</b></p>	<p>Evidence suggests that many people who take time off work because of the menopause do not tell their employer the real reasons for their absence. This can be because the person feels that their symptoms are a private and/or personal matter, that their symptoms might be embarrassing for them and/or the person they would be confiding in. They can also worry that their symptoms will not be taken seriously, that they will be thought to be less capable or that their job security and/or chances of promotion will be harmed.</p> <p>An effective policy must be inclusive of all those who experience menopause and recognise how each person’s experience of menopause is different, therefore requiring a tailored approach. Some people may go through menopause at an earlier age than experienced or have a sudden onset of symptoms as a result of surgical or medical treatment.</p> <p>Generating awareness of good practice when supporting employees and creating positive work cultures benefits organizations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increasing employee engagement, morale and productivity.</li> <li>• improving the health and wellbeing of employees and boosting their healthy working life expectancy which, in turn, benefits their immediate families.</li> <li>• increasing employee retention, and reducing the costs of attrition, recruitment and training while enhancing the reputation of Maryhill Housing as an employer of choice.</li> <li>• improving diversity and inclusion objectives by preventing the loss to the workplace, due to inadequate or inflexible working conditions. We are committed to creating a workplace that respects and values each other’s differences, that promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination, and harassment.</li> <li>• improving leadership culture by generating more awareness among managers without personal or lived experience.</li> </ul> <p>Experiences of menopause may also vary for reasons related to other characteristics such as race, culture, religion and belief or disability. Every individual should be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.</p> <p><b>We aim to</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make managers aware of their responsibility to understand how the menopause can affect staff, and how they can support those experiencing the menopause at work.</li> <li>• foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner.</li> </ul>

- raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about the menopause.
- enable workers experiencing the menopause to continue to be effective in their jobs.
- outline support and reasonable adjustments available.
- help us recruit and retain employees experiencing the menopause.

We recognise many of the changes to workplace culture and adjustments offered here may not only be of benefit to workers experiencing the menopause, but to all staff.

### **Definition of the menopause**

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women's lives. For some it will be medically induced. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods. Women may have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms whilst experiencing the menopause and peri-menopause and may often encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms. Each woman will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families, and colleagues.

Maryhill Housing recognises that for many reasons, peoples' individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly. Some of the more commonly reported menopausal symptoms are described in **Appendix 1**

Menopausal symptoms may also exacerbate existing impairments and conditions that those affected may already be struggling to cope with.

### **Support for employees experiencing the menopause**

Maryhill Housing is committed to supporting staff experiencing the menopause. Staff and managers will be provided with appropriate information and training will be available so that they are able to better understand the effects of the menopause and be comfortable about discussing and addressing the impact that it can have on employees in carrying out their roles. Training will include any specific issues for BAME women, disabled women, and trans employees.

Maryhill Housing recognises that the menopause is a very personal experience and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed. Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to let their line manager or HR know if they are struggling with symptoms that may impact on their work, so that appropriate support is provided. Such information will be treated confidentially and in accordance with our data protection policy. An alternative contact is available to employees experiencing the menopause should they not feel comfortable discussing their problems with their line manager, (particularly if they are male). This is the HR Manager or HR Officer.

Managers should take account of any additional need for sickness absence by employees experiencing the menopause in order to manage their menopausal symptoms. **Absence will be recorded as related to menopausal symptoms and managers will consider such absence as**

**an ongoing condition requiring the consideration of reasonable adjustments and flexibility in absence procedure triggers.**

Maryhill Housing recognises the potential impact of menopausal symptoms on performance by employees experiencing the menopause. Managers will seek to support staff sympathetically rather than moving directly to capability or disciplinary procedures.

Maryhill Housing will ensure that a Menopause Support Risk Assessment [here](#) is undertaken to consider the specific needs of employees experiencing the menopause and to ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. The risk assessment will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments that may be required. Common areas in particular to consider are:

- workplace temperature and ventilation
- flexible working arrangements
- access to adequate toilet and washing facilities
- access to drinking water
- uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- working times and break times
- workplace stress and workload
- bullying and harassment.

Employees who are experiencing the menopause can apply for adjustments to support them at work. Further details are contained in **Appendix 2**

We will consider additional suggestions put forward by members of staff and Trade Union reps.

Confidential support is available for individual employees from the employee assistance programme, and this may include counselling if appropriate.

**Responsibilities of managers**

Managers should ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and understand their own and the Maryhill Housing's responsibilities.

Managers (with the support of HR where requested) should encourage employees to discuss the impact of their menopausal symptoms on their work-life and encourage them to access the support and adjustments offered. They should promote a positive attitude to discussions around women's health issues.

Managers should be ready and willing to have open discussions about the menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treat the discussion sensitively, confidentially, and professionally.

Managers will consider all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and will not discriminate against those employees who are experiencing the menopause and put in place the required support or adjustments in a timely manner.

	<p>All employees must be treated fairly and consistently. Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up any support available to employees experiencing the menopause.</p> <p>Maryhill Housing will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.</p> <p>All requests for support or adjustments must be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the data protection policy.</p> <p>Managers will support employees in informing their colleagues about the situation if appropriate.</p> <p><b>Responsibilities of employees</b></p> <p>All staff should take a personal responsibility to look after their health. Employees are encouraged to inform their manager (or the alternative contact, should they not feel comfortable speaking to their manager) if they are struggling with menopausal symptoms and need any support, so that they can continue to be effective in their jobs.</p> <p>Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to seek support through their GP, the employee assistance programme, and other external organisations in <b>Appendix 3</b></p> <p>All staff have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and productive working environment, be willing to help and support their colleagues, and understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.</p> <p>Employees should report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause. If an employee is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another employee in relation to the menopause, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.</p>
<b>Approval</b>	SMT - 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Arlene McLaughlin HR Manager
<b>Review</b>	This policy will be reviewed in September 2026 or as determined by relevant legislation

## Appendix 1

### Menopausal Symptoms

- Hot flushes – a very common symptom that can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downward, may include sweating, the skin becoming red and patchy, and a quicker or stronger heart rate.
- Heavy and painful periods and clots, leaving those affected exhausted, as well as practically needing to change sanitary wear more frequently. Some affected may become anaemic.
- Night sweats, restless leg syndrome and sleep disturbance.
- Low mood, irritability, increased anxiety, panic attacks, fatigue, poor concentration, loss of confidence and memory problems.
- Urinary problems - more frequent urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections such as cystitis. It is common to have an urgent need to pass urine or a need to pass it more often than normal.
- Irritated skin – including dry and itchy skin or formication, and dry eyes. Also vaginal symptoms of dryness, itching and discomfort.
- Joint and muscle aches and stiffness.
- Weight gain.
- Headaches and migraines.
- Menopausal hair loss.
- Osteoporosis - the strength and density of bones are affected by the loss of oestrogen, increasing the risk of the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis.
- Side effects from hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a form of treatment for menopausal symptoms for some people (although not suitable or appropriate for all).

## Appendix 2

Control over environmental factors ie

- with provision of desk fans on request,
- review of office seating plans so that affected employees can be near the window or open doors, or away from direct sources of heat such as radiators,
- fitting blinds to windows,
- greater access to chilled drinking water, and to toilets and washing facilities.
- Where uniforms are provided, to use natural fibres wherever possible.
- Flexibility dress codes should they exacerbate symptoms such as hot flushes and sweating, and provision of additional spare uniforms.
- Changing/washing facilities for staff to change clothes during the working day.
- For employees who are required to drive as part of their usual work pattern, duration of travel to be reduced and increased rest breaks provided.
- Flexible working arrangements. Full details can be found in the 'Flexible working policy [here](#)
- Flexibility around the taking of breaks, or increased breaks during the working day, and if required providing cover as necessary for these breaks.
- Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments, more details to be found in the Guidance Note [here](#)
- Temporary changes to the employee's duties, such as undertaking fewer high-visibility work like formal presentations or meetings or on reception because it can be difficult to cope with symptoms such as hot flushes, or assessing how work is allocated or whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day.
- Provision of private spaces for women to rest temporarily, to talk with a colleague or to phone for personal or professional support. (For further advice on adjustments available contact HR).

This is not a definitive list of adjustments.

## Appendix 3

### Self-management for staff experiencing the menopause

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged not to suffer in silence. Consider:

- Seeking medical advice from your GP
- Discussing symptoms with your manager or with the alternative contact (see above) requesting appropriate workplace adjustments.

### Further information

NHS information

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause)

NICE guidelines on 'Menopause: diagnosis and treatment'

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information)

Menopause Matters [www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk)

Women's Health Concern [www.womens-health-concern.org](http://www.womens-health-concern.org)

Daisy Network <https://www.daisynetwork.org>

The Menopause Exchange [www.menopause-exchange.co.uk](http://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk)