



Menopause Policy

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Reviewed by	Vickie Hillier – Deputy Chief Officer

Explanation

Anyone can be affected by hormonal changes during their lives for a number of reasons, including pregnancy, fertility treatment, gender transitioning, conditions needing hormone treatment, and menopause. These can bring about symptoms which could affect a colleague in the workplace environment.

This policy focuses on menopause, and uses a few key terms:

Menopause* is when your periods stop due to lower hormone levels. This usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55. It can sometimes happen earlier naturally. Or for reasons such as surgery to remove the ovaries (oophorectomy) or the uterus (hysterectomy), cancer treatments like chemotherapy, or a genetic reason. Sometimes the reason is unknown.

Perimenopause* is when you have symptoms before your periods have stopped. You reach menopause when you have not had a period for 12 months.

**Definitions as outlined on the NHS website*

Who is this policy for?

Fitmums and Friends aims to support all who experience menopausal symptoms whilst in their paid or volunteer role for the charity. Colleagues and line managers should understand how they can support employees and volunteers experiencing such symptoms.

Why is this policy important?

The menopause is commonly experienced between the ages of 45-55, though some can experience it earlier than this, due to 'premature menopause' or surgery. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically; are different for everyone; and for a quarter of those who experience them are severely debilitating. Symptoms can have a huge effect on an individual's comfort and performance when working. This policy is therefore imperative to ensure Fitmums and Friends provides an inclusive and supportive working environment in the office, in the community, whilst working from home – or anywhere you may find yourself whilst carrying out a paid or voluntary role for Fitmums and Friends - for those experiencing the menopause.

Symptoms vary greatly, and commonly include (but aren't limited to):

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- anxiety
- dizziness
- fatigue
- memory loss
- depression
- headaches
- recurrent urinary tract infections
- joint stiffness
- aches and pains
- reduced concentration
- heavy periods

Research suggests that, for 30% of women, the recent global pandemic has made the physiological and mental symptoms of menopause worse. *Source: Survey by The Menopause Hub, April 2020*

This policy sets out the support available before, during and after the menopause. It is designed to ensure those suffering with menopausal symptoms can feel empowered to ask for adjustments to ease such symptoms without embarrassment, can carry out their role with Fitmums and Friends in a safe working environment whether at home, in the community or in the office, and can have open discussions with colleagues and line managers so that they feel part of an inclusive work culture.

What are the details of the policy?

Minor adjustments to an employee's or volunteer's working environment can make a huge difference. If an employee/volunteer is experiencing menopausal symptoms, the following options can be made available:

- **Desk Fans**
- **Quiet/Cool Room**
It might be helpful to ensure offices are ventilated and where space to be able to go and work in an office that is quiet and cool.
- **Working from home**
It can be helpful to take time out to help manage symptoms when working at home,
- **Occupational Health**
A working environment assessment can ensure that an employee's physical environment, whether at home or in the office, is not making their menopausal symptoms worse.
- **Flexible Working**
Fitmums and Friends recognises that flexibility is key to anyone suffering as a result of transitioning through the menopause and aims to facilitate flexible working wherever possible. Should an employee or volunteer require a temporary/flexible change to their working arrangements which could include: more breaks and time away from their computer; flexibility to work in other areas of the building when in the office; earlier start times and finish times to avoid peak travel times when travelling into the office; a request to reduce working hours on a temporary basis; turning their camera off when on Teams calls; or having a walking meeting if helpful and appropriate. These should be discussed and agreed with the employee's or volunteer's line manager and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure these adjustments continue to meet the needs of the employee and the charity.
- **Sickness/Paid Leave**
An employee may feel unwell and unfit for work due to menopausal symptoms, and if so, Fitmums and Friends will support them. This includes the sudden onset of symptoms during the working day. Details of our Absence Management Policy can be found on the website. Whilst an employee can simply inform their line manager they are unfit for work, they should also feel they can be open about the reason for their menopause-related leave with their line manager without fear of being discriminated against.
- **General Support**
Fitmums and Friends aims to facilitate an open, understanding working environment and so we encourage employees and volunteers to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated, and the necessary support made available. Employees and volunteers who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague, or a member of the Central Team.
- **Medical support**
We encourage employees and volunteers to speak to their GP if they are experiencing severe symptoms which impacts on their quality of life.

- Support Systems
There are a number of support groups that can offer expert advice and the details can be found below.

How do you now go about things?

The following identifies our responsibilities as employees, volunteers, colleagues, and line managers of Fitmums and Friends.

Employees and volunteers/Colleagues should:

- Educate themselves about the menopause and become familiar with the terms of this policy. Understand what information is available. Seek advice and guidance from available support provided at Fitmums and Friends. Support colleagues.
- Be as open and honest as possible with line managers – reviewing and working through the available options together to ensure appropriate measures which support their working environment are in place.
- Agree to keep their line manager and Fitmums and Friends informed to ensure that the right support is being provided.
- If unable to speak to their line manager, or if their line manager is not supportive, speak to a trusted colleague or a member of the Central Team.

Line Managers should:

- Take part in any future menopause awareness training.
- Ensure they are aware of the support Fitmums and Friends provides and the terms of this policy.
- Ensure all members of their team are aware of the policies and where to find information and seek support.
- Ensure they listen to the needs of each employee/volunteer individually and are open and willing to have discussions around the menopause, ensuring confidentiality where requested by the employee/volunteer.
- Work together with the employee/volunteer to ensure that the right support is provided that satisfies both Fitmums and Friends and the employee/volunteer's needs.
- Ensure regular check-ins are in place to review any support and make any necessary changes to an employee/volunteer's working environment or patterns that are required from both Fitmums and Friends' and the employee/volunteer's perspective. Regular check-ins are particularly important when working remotely.

Fitmums and Friends should:

- Ensure it reviews its health and wellbeing practices on a regular basis.
- Ensure any health offerings have provisions to support employees and volunteers experiencing the menopause.
- Listen and work with employees and volunteers and employee rep groups to support and drive change in relation to the menopause.

Where can you get related support and information?

The following are links to some external sites that you may find useful. We are aware there is a lot of guidance available and everyone is different so please use this as a guide only and do let us know if there are any links that should be added to this list:

The official NHS website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/

For more information about symptoms, treatment, help and support

The British Menopause Society (BMS) <https://thebms.org.uk/>

Menopaus'ull Support Network (Hull & East Riding) www.mnetwork.org.uk

Menopaus'ull Support Network aims to empower, support and educate the menopause, enabling more informed choices on health and wellbeing.

Contact 01482 826061 support@mnetwork.org.uk

Endometriosis Support Hull and East Yorkshire www.heyendo.co.uk

Supporting people with endometriosis in Hull & East Yorkshire.

Contact info@heyendo.co.uk

Endobuddies

Menopause Matters: which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options; www.menopausematters.co.uk

The Daisy Network: which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency; www.daisynetwork.org

The Menopause Café: which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause; www.menopausecafe.net

Henpicked: an online community that gives women a place to have their say, promote healthy debate and bring about positive change. They also provide 'lunch and learn' videos with industry wide experts; www.henpicked.net

Balance-Menopause: Balance are on a mission to make support with the menopause inclusive and accessible to all women, and trans and non-binary people. www.balance-menopause.com

