



Menopause at Work Policy

Introduction

This policy has been developed to assist Yorkhill Housing Association in supporting employees who are experiencing menopause in the workplace. Yorkhill Housing Association is committed to creating an open and supportive culture where employees feel comfortable talking about how menopause-related symptoms are affecting them at work and can ask for the support they need to help manage their symptoms in the workplace. Yorkhill Housing Association is committed to supporting its diverse workforce and to prevent discrimination.

In this policy, where the menopause is referred to it also refers to early or premature menopause, the perimenopause and postmenopause.

Aims of the Policy:

- To raise awareness of the menopause, its symptoms and the impact it can have in the workplace.
- To provide guidance to managers regarding assistance and support available for employees affected by menopause symptoms.
- To support employees to remain in work.
- To ensure Yorkhill Housing Association complies with its responsibilities within employment law, health and safety and best practice.

Definitions

- **Early and Premature Menopause** refers to menopause that happens before the age of 45 (early) or 40 (premature). This happens when the ovaries stop making hormones and periods stop at a younger age than the national average. This can happen naturally or be related to medical reasons.
- **Perimenopause** refers to the time during which the body makes the natural transition to menopause which marks the end of the reproductive years. Some individuals notice symptoms or changes in their early 30's and others within their 40's. It is important to remember each employee is unique and will be impacted by this phase of life differently with regards to age and symptoms experienced.

- **Menopause** is a natural stage of life. Menopause is defined as having no menstrual period for a minimum of one year. The symptoms which can be experienced are a result of a decrease in the hormones estrogen and progesterone in the ovaries. Menopause typically occurs between late 40's and early 50's. However, individuals may go through the menopause earlier naturally, or due to medical / surgical intervention.
- **Postmenopause** refers to the time when symptoms of menopause have eased or stopped entirely but some individuals continue to have symptoms for longer. There can be an increased risk of some health conditions postmenopause, such as cardiovascular (heart) disease, osteoporosis (weak bones) and urinary tract infections (UTIs).

Symptoms of Menopause

Yorkhill Housing Association acknowledges that there are a wide range of menopause-related symptoms that can be categorised as physical or psychological symptoms and are different for everyone. For a quarter of women, they are severely debilitating, and symptoms can have a huge effect on a woman's comfort and performance when working. Symptoms vary greatly, and commonly include (but are not 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

More details on symptoms can be found on the NHS website.

Yorkhill Housing Association recognises that each individual will experience menopause differently, the impact and symptoms of the menopause will differ,

and those symptoms will change as individuals go through this phase of their life.

Employees of Yorkhill Housing Association are encouraged to talk to their line manager, trade union representative, or Menopause champion about how the menopause is affecting them in the workplace.

Line managers will be supportive when discussing menopausal symptoms and the potential impact these are having on an employee in the workplace.

Minor Adjustments

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

Desk Fans

When in the office, desk fans can be obtained by contacting the menopause champion, your line manager or emailing the Governance Assistant.

Quiet/Cool Room

It can be helpful to take time out to help manage symptoms when working at home, but when in the office, the Committee Room offers a quiet, cool and private space should an employee need it, and can be used on a drop-in basis.

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. Employees can also sign up to the free Mindfulness Sessions organised by EVH.

Flexible Working

Yorkhill Housing Association Limited recognises that flexibility is key to anyone suffering as a result of transitioning through the menopause and aims to facilitate flexible working wherever possible.

The Association has an established Flexible Working Policy which can be found on the X drive. However, should an employee require a more temporary/flexible

change to working arrangements these should be discussed and agreed with the employee's line manager and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure these adjustments continue to meet the needs of the employee. Additional changes could include:

- more breaks and time away from their computer
- flexibility to work in other areas of the building when in the office, when possible
- 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 Zoom/Teams calls, and also having a walking meeting instead if helpful

Responsibilities

Yorkhill Housing Association acknowledges the importance of all staff understanding what menopause is and enabling staff to talk openly about it without embarrassment. All employees should be aware of the potential impact of menopause not only on those who experience it but also for employees who are supporting someone experiencing symptoms.

Employers are responsible for:

- Having a menopause policy outlining what menopause is, how it affects everyone differently and the support available to employees affected by it.
- Providing training to managers on the menopause to ensure they understand
 - How to hold sensitive and supportive conversations with employees
 - How to encourage employees to raise any menopause concerns
 - What support Yorkhill Housing Association can offer to employees affected by menopause
 - How the law relates to the menopause and the impact this can have on employees affected by menopause
 - How to deal with employees sensitively and fairly if they are affected by menopause
 - How gender identity links to menopause and why it is important

- Providing information to all employees about menopause and signpost them to relevant organisations providing support.
- Creating a culture where employees affected by menopause know it will be managed sensitively with dignity and respect.
- Ensuring that risk assessments are being conducted for those affected by menopause that speak to their manager about their symptoms.

Line managers are responsible for:

- Being familiar with Yorkhill Housing Association menopause policy and how menopause can impact employees in the workplace.
- Attending menopause training as requested by Yorkhill Housing Association-
- Being prepared to have supportive discussions about menopause with employees, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation and treating it sensitively and professionally.
- Conduct a risk assessment of their employees' work and workplace to ensure that menopause symptoms are not being made worse by the workplace or their work practices.
- Considering with the employee, how best they can be supported, including discussing any requests to make changes at work that may assist the employee to manage their symptoms.
- Ensuring ongoing dialogue and review dates are agreed with employees as they experience different stages and types of menopausal symptoms.
- Ensuring that agreed actions with employees are implemented and reviewed, as necessary.

All employees are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and seeking medical advice if necessary to support self-management.
- Being open about how the menopause is impacting them in conversations with line managers/Occupational Health to enable appropriate support and guidance to be provided.
- Acting in a manner which contributes to a respectful and productive working environment.
- Being willing to support their colleagues who are impacted by menopause.

Menopause Risk Assessment

Menopausal symptoms will be unique to each person, can change over time and impact employees differently. Yorkhill Housing Association acknowledges that they are responsible for the Health and Safety of all employees and will ensure that menopause symptoms or the impact it is having on employees, are not made worse by the workplace or its practices.

Yorkhill Housing Association will conduct a risk assessment for those employees who are open about how the menopause is affecting them. Line managers are also responsible for highlighting any concerns they have with employees in a sensitive manner, if they believe menopause symptoms are having a direct impact on the employee's performance or attendance at work. Line managers will conduct a risk assessment and may refer the employee to Occupational Health if necessary.

Risk assessments should be conducted as frequently as required. This will depend on how menopause is affecting the employee, any agreed adjustments that are made to the employees' workplace or working practices. Risk assessments should be kept under review by the line manager in discussion with the employee (Appendix 1) attached.

Male Menopause

Some men develop physical and emotional symptoms when they reach their late 40s to early 50s. Symptoms include mood swings, poor concentration and difficulty sleeping. A further list of symptoms can be found online at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/male-menopause/>. The NHS advises that although testosterone falls as men age, this is unlikely to cause any problems in itself. In many cases the symptoms experienced are not related to hormones and instead lifestyle factors or psychological problems.

There is a medical condition known as hypogonadism whereby the testes produce few or no hormones. Hypogonadism is sometimes present from birth or can also occasionally develop later in life. This is known as late-onset hypogonadism and can cause the physical and emotional symptoms mentioned above. However, this is an uncommon and specific medical condition that is not a normal part of aging.

As previously noted, any employee concerned about symptoms they are experiencing should be encouraged to speak to their GP as soon as possible to discuss treatment options which may be available to them.

Where can you get related information?

The following are 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:

- **Menopause matters**, which provides information about menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- **The Daisy Network charity**, which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency;
- **The Menopause Café**, which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause;
- **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 that can be accessed;
- **MegsMenopause**, an 'honest and frank' look at all things menopause. This is also a practical guide for Line Managers, offering guidance on supporting employees going through the menopause, including how to approach the conversations about it appropriately and sensitively.
- NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- ACAS - <https://www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work/supporting-staff-through-the-menopause>
- BMA - <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/equality-and-diversity-guidance/gender-equality-in-medicine/menopause-support-in-the-workplace>
- EHRC - [Menopause in the workplace: Guidance for employers | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://equalityhumanrights.com/en/articles/menopause-in-the-workplace-guidance-for-employers/)

General Data Protection Regulations

The organisation will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own [insert name of policy or procedure]. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in Yorkhill Housing Association employee privacy notice.

Legal Framework

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Equality Act 2010

Links to other policies

Dignity at Work Policy
Attendance and Absence Management Policy
All other relevant policies

Appendix 1 - Menopause at work risk assessment

Employee Name		Employee Job Title	
Date Risk Assessment Carried Out		Risk Assessment Carried Out By	
Date of Next Review			

To facilitate discussion between an employee and their line manager a risk assessment will be undertaken. Through this we aim to identify any factors at work that may worsen symptoms of the menopause and put in place a plan to address these.

Menopausal symptoms will be unique to each person, can change over time and impact employees differently. **Any Organisation** acknowledges that they are responsible for the Health and Safety of all employees and will work to ensure that menopause symptoms or the impact it is having on employees, are not made worse by the workplace or its practices.

Any Organisation understands that menopausal symptoms may change over time therefore, the risk assessment will be reviewed as frequently as required by the line manager in discussion with the employee.

Symptoms	Impact on work/ work practices	Requested adjustment	Actions agreed (discussion to take place with line manager) Who will implement the action and what date it will be implanted	Review Date