



LINK

East Fife Mental Health Befriending Projects

Menopause Policy

Within LINK we aim to empower and provide a supportive working environment for employees and volunteers. We understand that people go through different stages in their lives and may require additional support and understanding during these times and we aim to encourage open and supportive conversations about menopause, the symptoms and what we can do to support employees and volunteers during this time. Therefore, in this policy document we will set out how we may support employees and volunteers during menopause.

- 1. Definition of Menopause**
- 2. Symptoms of Menopause**
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1. Definition of Menopause

Menopause (as defined by the NHS) is when your periods stop due to lower hormone levels. It usually affects women between the ages of 45 and 55, but it can happen earlier. It affects anyone who has periods. Menopause can happen 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.

There are two stages of menopause; perimenopause and menopause. Perimenopause occurs when you have symptoms of menopause, but your periods have not stopped. Perimenopause ends, and you reach menopause when you have not had a period for 12 months.

2. Symptoms of Menopause

There are many symptoms and behaviours to be aware of, and when you recognise them it is important that you have a confidential conversation with the employee/volunteer to see what support can be provided. It is important to remember that each person is an individual and should be treated as one. Below are some of the psychological and physical symptoms that people going through perimenopause/menopause may be experiencing and ways in which they may be supported.

Anxiety and stress

- Be able to take time away from work
- Ability to practice relaxation techniques and support for lunchtime walks

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- Undertaking mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, going for a walk, time away from the screen etc
- Able to review workload, and consider flexible working options

Heavy/light periods

- Ensuring ease of access to bathroom facilities, drinking water and rest facilities
- Flexible working arrangements – working from home (where possible), short term changes to work pattern or hours
- Gender-sensitive absence management
- Awareness that employee may require time off and not want to fully disclose real reason for absence(s)
- Ensure confidentiality and sensitivity to allow honesty and openness
- Recognise it could be causing other symptoms for example anxiety, tiredness, confidence and mood.
- Ensure a supply of feminine hygiene products are always in the toilet facilities

Tiredness and sleeping difficulties

- Be able to take time away from work
- Ability to practice relaxation techniques and support for lunchtime walks
- Undertaking mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, going for a walk, time away from the screen etc
- Able to review workload, and consider flexible working options
- Be able to use a quiet space to work or flexible working arrangements such as working from home (where possible)

Headaches

- Ensuring ease of access to drinking water

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- Enable time out and flexibility where medication is needed
- Offer a quiet space to work or flexible working arrangements such as working from home (where possible)

Hot flushes

- Ensure easy access to fresh drinking water
- Ensure access to a rest area for breaks when required, particularly where the job involves long periods of standing or sitting
- Improve the working environment by ensuring good ventilation

Confidence and self-esteem

- Ensure regular Good Conversations and support meetings
- Ensure positive feedback is given for good work
- Ensure there is time available for the employee to discuss any issues
- Agree protected time for the employee to catch up with you on work issues or concerns

Panic attacks

- Where practical, agree time out can be taken away from others without the need to ask for or where not practical, agree a sign where you need to speak to someone in private or need immediate support
- Be able to have time away from work to undertake relaxation techniques
- Undertaking mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, going for a walk, time away from the screen etc

Change of mood - low/swings

- Where practical, agree time out can be taken away from others without the need to ask for permission or where not practical, agree a sign where you need to speak to someone in private or need immediate support
- Arrange more time with the team where this may provide support to the employee

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- Consider flexibility of working
- Consider job adjustments to provide support – work pattern, workload etc

Lack of concentration

- Engage conversation about particular situations or times of day when this is better or worse for the employee, adjust working pattern or arrangements to accommodate
- Review the workload and task allocation
- Offer a quiet space to work or flexible working arrangements such as working from home (where possible)
- Agree on protected times that the employee can have without being disturbed to carry out or catch up on work

Caring responsibilities

- Ensure confidentiality and sensitivity to allow honesty and openness
- Flexible working arrangements – short term changes to work pattern or hours
- Recognise it could be causing other symptoms for example anxiety, tiredness, low confidence, and mood.

3. How to Support Wellbeing

It is important to remember that everyone's support needs are unique, and what may be suitable for one individual may not be for another. Sensitivity and maturity to the situation are key. It is of great importance to provide time, dignity and respect for each individual. This can be achieved by:

- Allowing adequate time to have a conversation
- Making sure it is done confidentially – this may be different for each employee/volunteer
- Encourage employees/volunteers to speak openly and honestly, without any fear of ridicule
- Not being dismissive of what the employee/volunteer is telling you – how they are feeling is real for them, being dismissive could make matters worse
- Suggesting ways for the employee/volunteer to seek support and provide resources – for example having regular check-ins, using online support tools, visiting their GP, referral to Occupational Health etc.
- Offering suggestions of how the workplace can be of help – changing work pattern or hours, enabling working from home (where possible), ensuring access to facilities such as toilets, drinking water etc, enabling work to be done in private/quiet area, aid employee to stand/sit to do their work and vary this etc.
- Considering ways in which the employee can signal to you that they are feeling particularly poor on certain days and agree with them how to deal with these situations
- Agreeing with the employee if other members of the team can be informed, by whom and for what purpose, or to provide additional support
- Ensuring that there is an agreed time to meet again to see how things are going

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Senior Leadership

- Act as a role model for positive leadership and proactively challenge behaviour and actions that may affect employee mental health and wellbeing
- Encourage and promote Anytime Anywhere working to help improve employees work life balance
- Support managers in implementing mental health and wellbeing initiatives and ensure they have adequate time, resources, and training to balance the aims of LINK and employees/volunteer's health and wellbeing
- Attend relevant training and ensure line managers also participate to ensure increased knowledge and support to employees
- Ensure managers are aware that supporting mental health and wellbeing is central to their role

Managers

- Awareness of this policy and supporting policies to provide adequate support
- Be willing and ready to have open discussions with employees/volunteers on issues that are very personal, treating all discussions with the upmost sensitivity, confidentiality and professionalism
- Ensure participation with relevant training to increase knowledge and improve support for employees/volunteers
- Take into account the employee's/volunteers views on the support they feel is required – this will be different for everyone, but making sure they know available options
- Record, and balance any adjustments made or actions implemented to support the employee/volunteers
- Ensure ongoing conversation is taking place, and creating a positive work environment for employees/volunteers

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Employees/volunteers

- Take personal responsibility to look after your physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Engage and communicate with managers to improve both their and others physical and mental health and wellbeing within the workplace
- Be open and honest in discussions with your manager and keep them updated with any changes to allow suitable support to be given
- Be willing to accept relevant help and support

5. Resources and Links

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

<https://www.themenopausecharity.org/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/curation/p0crsjt>

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/mental-health/mental-health-self-help-guides/anxiety-self-help-guide>

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/womens-health/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/breathing-exercises-for-stress/>

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