

Menopause and Employment

How to enable fulfilling working lives



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Choices
EMPLOYER TASKFORCE

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A photograph of two women sitting at a dark table in a bright, modern cafe. The woman on the left is older, with long grey hair and glasses, wearing a brown sweater and a leopard-print scarf. She is smiling and looking at a food container. The woman on the right is younger, with red braids, wearing a red cardigan over a striped shirt. She is looking down at a food container. There are other food containers and a notebook on the table. Large windows in the background show a city street.

1/3

People over 50 now make
up just under 1/3 of the
working age population

We welcome the opportunity presented to this group, by the Minister for Employment, Mims Davies MP, to collaborate and examine the menopause and employment. We particularly want to emphasise the difference that support and understanding from employers can make in enabling people to have fulfilling working lives in the latter stage of their careers.

It is imperative that people aged 50 and over are active and valued in the work place. The working age population is getting older. We are living longer, so will we be working longer. People over 50 now make up just under one third of the working age population, compared to one quarter twenty-five years ago. Pre-Covid the number of older people in employment was at near-record levels.

The prevalence of health conditions and caring responsibilities may increase with age, with older people often facing additional barriers to staying in work – which may lead to missed pensions contributions impacting future financial resilience.

Since the 2017 Fuller Working Lives strategy was published much has been done to support good work for people aged 50 and over, including the building of a partnership approach between Government and employers, who ultimately benefit from a diverse and healthy workforce. This partnership approach has been spearheaded by Andy Briggs, CEO, Phoenix Group and Business Champion for Older Workers. A key component of this activity is the Minister for Employment's Roundtable of employer organisations, which has set the work on this report in motion.

Roundtable representatives from a range of organisations with wide reach and influence – the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development), the British Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, UK Hospitality, Business in the Community, and the Business Champion for Older Workers – worked together to distil the key recommendations set out in this report.

The recommendations are aimed at bringing about comprehensive change around menopause transition awareness as well as support in the key areas of: Government policy, employer practice, wider societal and financial support recommendations.

As a group, our area of reach and influence is focused on the workplace. We believe that the menopause is a key workplace issue and that organisations should be actively creating menopause-friendly workplaces.

There are compelling business reasons for this:

- We have close to 4 million women aged 45-55 in work in the UK¹ – a rapidly increasing population – meaning there are few workplaces where the menopause is not being experienced by staff.
- It is a key recruitment and retention issue – women experiencing menopause are often at the peak of their skills and experience and we should be getting the most from our female talent. This has never been more important at a time of chronic labour and skills shortages.
- Employers have a duty of care for employees' health and wellbeing and not to discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of sex, age, or disability.
- There are more than 30 physical and mental conditions that may be caused by menopause transition. A lack of awareness and treatment are negatively affecting UK workforce productivity.

¹ CIPD analysis of the Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2020 <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-8789-3>

We have seen positive signs of change and an erosion of taboos in recent months, with more talk of the menopause in society in general and with the issue being highlighted by several high-profile figures including Davina McCall, Zoe Ball, Liz Earle and Michelle Obama.

Many more organisations have also been introducing menopause guidance, policies and support. A CIPD poll in 2019, of almost 500 members, showed that just 9% of organisations were providing dedicated menopause support – the good news is that a repeat poll in April 2021 showed the figure is now almost a quarter, 24%. More employers announced policies and procedures for World Menopause Day in October, but we still have much further to go.

More work is needed to understand the financial impact of the menopause on individuals, but it is clear to see that feeling forced to leave work, reduce hours or take a step back in their careers will negatively impact women, plus some transgender, non-binary, intersex people and those with variations in their sex characteristics – both now and in retirement through reduced pension pots.

We hope that the recommendations outlined in this report will help accelerate the change we need in society and in workplaces and ensure that all those experiencing menopause transition have the support they need and the opportunity to thrive in workplaces and in society in general.



A woman with voluminous curly brown hair and gold hoop earrings is smiling and looking off-camera to the right. She is wearing a beige long-sleeved sweater and is seated at a table. In the foreground, a yellow disposable coffee cup with a black lid is visible. The background features a white wall with vertical paneling and a shelf holding several green glass bottles.

1 in
100

Around 1 in 100 women
experience the menopause
by the age of 40

Why more needs to be done on menopause transition and workplace support

The societal taboo around the menopause is starting to lift, but more needs to be done to ensure support is in place to help people who experience menopause symptoms – who will generally be at the peak of their experience and knowledge – to remain in work, and that Government and employers understand their role in making this happen.



The average age for a woman to reach the menopause in the UK.



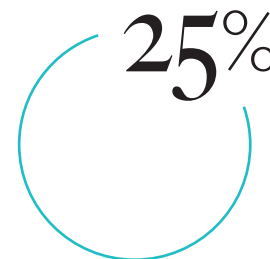
Around 1 in 100 women experience the menopause by the age of 40.



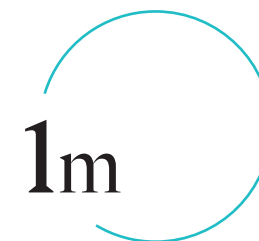
Around 400,000 women starting the menopause each year.



Perimenopause symptoms will last for four years on average, occurring during the 40s for most women, but some will notice changes in their mid-30s.



25% of women consider giving up work as a result of menopause symptoms.*



Almost a million women have left the workplace due to menopausal symptoms.**

* <https://www.itv.com/news/2016-11-23/quarter-of-women-going-through-menopause-considered-leaving-work/>

** <https://www.hrreview.co.uk/hr-news/almost-a-million-women-have-left-the-workplace-due-to-menopausal-symptoms/135691>

MENOPAUSE AND EMPLOYMENT

Why more needs to be done on menopause transition and workplace support

We need to ensure conversations on menopause transition are normalised. Menopause is a near-universal experience for women and some transgender, non-binary, intersex people and those with variations in their sex characteristics. There is, however, a lack of understanding by those who have not experienced it of the wide range of physical and psychological menopause symptoms that can last for several years. The majority of menopausal women experience symptoms, but everyone is different. Symptoms can fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees. Experiencing any of the typical symptoms can pose a challenge for women as they go about their daily lives, including at work.

A survey and an accompanying white paper by Women in Hospitality, Travel & Leisure² reported that 71.2% of women felt that their symptoms may impact or have impacted their performance level, with 25% experiencing severe or life-changing symptoms.

Everyone in society needs to feel comfortable and informed to have conversations around the menopause, be that young women in their 20s who lack awareness until experiencing symptoms in their 30s or 40s; men who feel awkward to discuss how this is impacting friends, colleagues and family members; managers struggling to understand what their employees are going through, as well as those going through it not feeling confident or comfortable to talk about it.

Research by the Government Equalities Office into the impact of the menopause published in 2017³ concluded that unlike pregnancy or maternity, the menopause is not well understood or provided for in workplace cultures, policies and training. This lack of understanding overlooks the clear business case for supporting older women to remain in the workplace, around issues such as retaining skills, impacting the gender pay gap and reducing business costs and risks.

² <https://mailchi.mp/7141137c1f57/menopauseinhtl>

³ Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/menopause-transition-effects-on-womens-economic-participation>.



23%

of women who have been
unwell as a result of the
menopause have left jobs

What is the cost to government, employers and society?

There is no one current method of quantifying the loss to individuals, employers or government of the menopause. This report recommends that such a method be developed.

Almost a quarter of women are leaving their jobs because of the menopause, according to research by Benenden Health⁴. It found that 23% of women who have been unwell as a result of the menopause have left jobs, despite the fact that nearly all businesses polled (95%) recognised that symptoms can negatively impact work.

The Fawcett Society working with Standard Chartered Bank and the Financial Services Skills Commission⁵ conducted research to explore how the menopause transition affects the progression of women into senior roles in the Financial Services Industry. It found only 22% of women and trans men currently experiencing the menopause disclose their status at work. Worries about social stigma are a bigger blocker to disclosure than preferences for privacy and there was strong support for action to reduce that stigma.

⁴ https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/quarter-women-with-serious-menopause-symptoms-have-left-jobs?_sm_au=iVVVDN76VnfDPRJrW2MN0K7K1WVjq#gref

⁵ <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/News/25-of-women-are-more-likely-to-leave-the-financial-services-workforce-due-to-menopause-experience>



77%

of the NHS
workforce is female

Work is underway to build more evidence and support on menopause transition

Globally, there are limited research and best practice studies available (at least to date) into supporting people through the menopause at work. In the UK, there had been little further evidence collected since the GEO study of 2017 – but the tide is now turning, and the UK has the opportunity to be a lead contributor on menopause transitions in work.

The Women and Equalities Committee⁶ have launched an inquiry to examine the extent of discrimination faced by menopausal people in the workplace, and investigates how Government policy and workplace practices can better support those experiencing menopause.

In January 2021 NHS England and Improvement (NHSEI) established the 'Menopause Pathway Improvement Programme'. This programme brings together menopause specialists and other key stakeholders to improve menopause care in England. The programme has two key strands – a population

health management approach, which aims to develop optimal care pathways, and a retention programme for the NHS workforce. The impact of the menopause on the NHS is significant, given that 77% of its workforce is female.

In March 2021 the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) launched a call for evidence to inform the development of England's first Women's Health Strategy. The call for evidence survey asked a number of questions about women's experiences of the menopause, including how comfortable women feel talking about it with friends and family and clinicians, and whether women feel they have enough information on the menopause. The survey received responses from over 100,000 individuals, and over 500 organisations, charities, and researchers provided written submissions. The Strategy will set an ambitious and positive new agenda to improve the health and wellbeing of women across England. DHSC will publish a response to the call for evidence and then the Strategy in due course.

⁶ <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1416/menopause-and-the-workplace/>

A continued
collaborative approach
between business,
government and society
is needed to increase
menopause support in
the workplace



Government

Government needs to lead from the front to ensure menopause support is built into work practices, with employers understanding the benefits to them both in terms of workforce capacity and financial return.

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. Specific consideration should be given to a public health campaign.

Employers

A collaborative approach between business and Government will increase the prevalence of work place support. Employers are key to making this happen and enabling conversations about the menopause are normalised.

- 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;

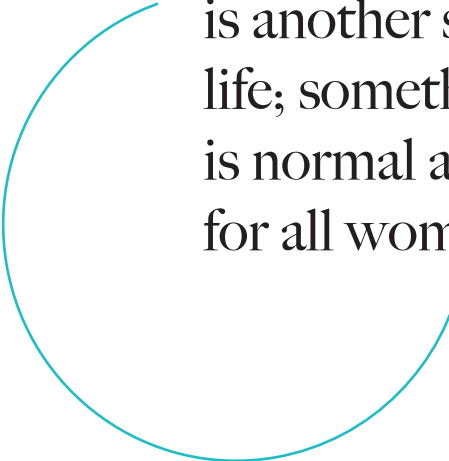
- e.** The value of support groups and specialist support;
- f.** Sick leave policy/procedure;
- g.** Performance management;
- h.** Flexible working rights; and
- i.** Returner programmes to include and highlight post-menopausal opportunities as well as post-maternity.

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.

Societal and Financial

8. Agreement to be gained from organisations who can make a difference to promote good practise 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.



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Support is
available...

Support and resources currently available

Information and guidance for employers as to how they might best support staff in the workplace is available on several websites, a sample of which are listed below:

[**CIPD** — The menopause at work: guidance for people professionals](#)

[**CIPD in partnership with Bupa** — A guide to managing menopause at work: guidance for line managers](#)

[**Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians** — Guidance on menopause and the workplace](#)

[**Society of Occupational Medicine** — Information and advice for employers including case studies](#)

[**NHS Employers** — Menopause and the workplace](#)

[**Unison** — The menopause is a workplace issue: guidance and model policy](#)

[**ACAS** — Menopause at work](#)

[**LGA** — Menopause](#)

[**Business in the Community** — Menopause in the workplace](#)

[**Wellbeing of Women Workplace Pledge**](#)

