

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	COMMUNITY SAFETY & PROTECTION		
DATE:	6 APRIL 2023	REPORT NO:	CFO/004/23
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER PHIL GARRIGAN		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	NICK MERNOCK	REPORT AUTHOR:	PAUL BLANCHARD-FLETT
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM MIKE PILKINGTON AMANDA CROSS		
TITLE OF REPORT:	MENOPAUSE POLICY		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A:	MENOPAUSE SUPPORT POLICY
	APPENDIX B:	EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Purpose of Report

1. To update Members on proposals to further improve support offered for staff undergoing the menopause.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members;
 - a) note the existing support offered to menopausal women including specific guidance documents, the Menopause Lounge support network, and the ability for staff to reclaim Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) prescription costs and;
 - b) approve the newly created attached Menopause Policy which captures both existing support and new proposals developed following extensive consultation with staff

Introduction and Background

3. In 2022 officers commenced a review into support available for employees during the menopause. Government survey statistics had shown that 50% of respondents stated they struggled at work due to menopause symptoms. As such provision of appropriate support and organisational strategies is viewed as vital to ensure women are able to continue to perform to their fullest potential in the workplace.

4. For ease of reading, the term “menopause” is used within this paper and the attached policy as one signature word rather than used specifically for one of the biological phases. Equally, the phrase “woman” is used, although Transgender men may also be affected as anyone born with a uterus will experience menopause.
5. A staff consultation exercise was undertaken in 2022 involving engagement with staff networks, the Menopause Lounge with an internal staff survey also being completed. This internal data was supported by a review of the Government’s ‘Menopause in the workplace 2022-2023’ study released by The House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee.
6. Whilst this review was being undertaken, SLT agreed that from 1st April 2022 all employees would be able to reclaim the costs of their HRT prescriptions as part of an interim range of measures, including promotion of existing guidance and the Menopause Lounge, that were designed to improve the range of support offered to menopausal staff.
7. The proposed Menopause Policy contains recommendations for a holistic package of support for menopausal women following a “cafeteria” approach where women can use supportive actions that are relevant to their needs at that time, and are the most beneficial, but also cost effective for the organisation.
8. A key area proposed relates to awareness. Whilst Menopause is being increasingly discussed, with its profile raised by the “Davina effect”, reflecting the informative programmes made by the presenter on the topic, it can still be a source of embarrassment for women to discuss particularly in the workplace. Only 9% of employees of respondents in our internal menopause awareness survey said they felt able to discuss issues relating to the menopause, with 22% stating they could never discuss it.
9. If approved Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (‘MFRS’) would promote the wider package of proposals to support menopausal women. This would include reminding managers that the staff appraisal process includes a welfare conversation and this should be supportive and encouraging staff to be open about seeking support and engaging in positive health measures.
10. MFRS will further raise awareness of the menopause and the proposed interventions by running workshops and seminars, with our partners and utilising the skills of the OH Medical Team. These seminars will be aimed at Service Managers and all employees. They would include women only sessions.
11. The Menopause Policy including the full details of the support offered is contained in Appendix A.

Equality and Diversity Implications

12. Under the Equality Act the characteristics of age and sex are protected. Adjustments for menopausal women are not just good practice and part of being a responsible employer but would also protect against potential discriminatory actions.
13. A report of the Womens and Equality Committee advised that some respondents identified as from an ethnic background thought that their ethnicity had an impact on their experience of menopause in terms of the response of health professionals and managers, the severity of symptoms and increased stigma in some communities. This policy will address directly these concerns by offering supportive Occupational Health and improving awareness of managers.
14. The report also highlighted the experience of younger women who experience menopause and women generally who felt that assumptions and biases around age made it harder for them when experiencing menopause. Again the Service approach will seek to address these concerns and provide information and education to bust myths and assumptions.
15. A full EIA has been completed and is attached as Appendix B.

Staff Implications

16. The Service workforce comprises some 282 female employees, 29% of our total staff and of the female cohort 112 are aged over 45, over 11% of our staff. The policy proposes an extensive level of support for our female staff and is an investment in those employees to benefit their wellbeing in the work.
17. This is a positive message for the Service and an enhancement of the benefits available, again proof of our going beyond a traditional concept of the duty of care for our staff.

Legal Implications

18. In HM Courts and Tribunals Service figures, the menopause was cited in 10 cases going through employment tribunals in the first six months of 2021. 49 published employment tribunal decisions featured allegations about menopause-related detriment.
19. The incorporation of the Menopause Policy will embed and incorporate the assistance provided to staff who are going through the menopause and allow the Authority to work with those staff to address their needs appropriately.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

20. The additional cost of utilising the OH Nurse for training will be met from OH budgets.
21. It is anticipated that the provisions proposed will have a minimal financial impact on the Service and all can be accommodated within existing service budgets. Officers will continue to monitor the uptake and any impact on budgets.
22. Between 1st April 2022 and 31st January the service has paid for HRT prescriptions to the value of £1K. This has been contained within existing Occupational Health budget lines.
23. The Government has recently announced that from 1st April 2023 all women prescribed HRT - the main treatment for menopause symptoms - will have access to a new scheme enabling access to a year's worth of menopause prescription items for the cost of 2 single prescription charges (currently £18.70). This will reduce the potential cost to the Service for the continued covering of HRT cost.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

24. The proposals contained within this report will have a positive impact on Health & Safety and Welfare, and Environment. It will also have a positive impact on the organisation's reputation as an employer of choice who take seriously the health and wellbeing of our female employees.

Contribution to Our Vision: *To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.*

Our Purpose: *Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.*

25. The proposal demonstrates compassion and support for our female staff.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

HRT	Hormone Replacement Therapy
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
HM	His Majesty's
SLT	Strategic Leadership Team
OH	Occupational Health