Service Policy
Menopause Support

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Document Control:

Active date	Review date	Author	Editor	Publisher
April 2023	February 2027	Amanda Cross	Nick Mernock	Sue Nash

Amendment History:

Version	Date	Author	Reasons for Change
New	Feb 2023		
1.1	July 2024	Amanda Cross	Update of Language and additional information

Equalities Impact Assessment:

Initial	Full	Date	Reviewed by	Comments
	x		Mo Jogi	

Civil Contingencies Impact Assessment:

Date	Reviewed by	Comments

Related Documents:

Doc. Type	Ref No.	Title	Location
Guidance document		Menopause guidance	ED&I portal
SI	0853	Capability	Portal
SI	0852	Absence Management	Portal

Distribution List:

Name	Position	Department

Sign-Off List:

Name	Position

Target Audience:

All MFRS	Principal Officers	Senior Officers	Operational Crews	Fire Safety	Community Fire Safety	Support Staff
x						

Ownership:

FOI exemption required?	Yes		URL	
	No	x	Reason	

Legislation:

Title	

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Menopause Support Policy

Policy Introduction and Background:

This policy outlines to all employees and managers the ways in which we can support employees during their menopause.

It's important for employers to be aware of all the people who might go through the menopause and menopause symptoms and to support them all equally.

The menopause is a natural stage of life which affects most women and other people who have a menstrual cycle. This can include:

- trans people – 'trans' is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.
- people with 'variations of sex development' (VSD) – some people might prefer to identify as intersex or use the term 'differences in sex development' (DSD)

Although the menopause will only be experienced by women and other people who have a menstrual cycle, men should also be included in conversations and training. This is because they might be supporting others going through it.

Definitions

Menopause is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when they stop menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally).

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before

menopause.

Post menopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

The term “menopause” is used within this policy as an umbrella term covering all 3 stages.

Similarly, the term “woman” is used for ease of reading, acknowledging the policy’s applicability to all people who may have a menstrual cycle, and all other service employees.

Policy Background

The menopause and any related symptoms are often seen as a taboo, with both the women experiencing them and those around them often shying away from discussing the topic or any support that may be needed.

The aim of MFRS’ approach is reducing the embarrassment that some people can feel when talking about the menopause.

The menopause is a health and wellbeing concern for all employees due to its direct and indirect impact and needs sensitive handling. Having early and regular follow up conversations with women to understand their individual needs can help to put support and procedures in place to enable a woman to do her job effectively.

The Service pays for HRT prescriptions; however it recognises that not all women can benefit from this forward thinking assistance and has therefore devised a range of options from an organisational to individual level of action that may benefit each individual situation.

Policy Explanation:

The Service has adopted a cafeteria approach to support a woman through their menopause. The suite of options is branded as “Your Menopause” to reflect that each woman has a completely different experience and that this experience can change over time. This meets best practice guidance as detailed in the recent House of Commons Report of the Women and

Equality Committee' Menopause and the Workplace Survey results (2022).

Not only are there sensible employee relationship and organisational benefits to have an employee performing to their best, if a woman is disadvantaged or treated less favourably because of her menopause symptoms, this could be discriminatory if connected to a protected characteristic.

Menopause can be a frightening or an unsettling time for an individual and it is therefore critical that an employee feels comfortable speaking to their manager about the symptoms they are experiencing. We want our employees to feel supported in work and will work with them to reduce the detrimental impacts that some women can experience in their menopause.

The main problems frequently reported in relation to work are.

- poor concentration,
- tiredness,
- poor memory,
- feeling low/depressed and,
- lowered confidence and self-esteem.
- Mood swings
- Temperature control

Having a suite of options can therefore assist women and their managers to mitigate the issues above and to help them to contribute in a meaningful way in work.

Policy Implementation:

People and Organisational Development (POD):

POD has responsibility to develop organisation-wide policies and procedures to protect and promote the wellbeing of employees, assist line managers in supporting individuals, and liaise as appropriate with occupational health and other medical professionals, to help employees to maintain good physical and psychological health.

As part of Menopause Support the team and colleagues will work to:

- Raise greater awareness and understanding through guidance for line managers, which will assist in understanding the impact of the menopause and what simple adjustments can be made to support women to remain in work.

- Raise awareness with all staff through campaigns, demonstrating our positive attitude to issues associated with the menopause and emphasising it is not something to be embarrassed about. A set of workshops ran and were designed primarily for women.

- Continue to provide information for women on how they can get support for any issues that arise because of the menopause. This is in the form of a guidance documents which are regularly reviewed and updated.

- Signpost to the Fast Facts for Women information guide about the menopause. This provides the information women need to have an informed discussion with their healthcare professional and to help them choose how they want to manage their menopause transition.

  http://intranetportal/sites/smd/equalityanddiversity/Menopause%20lounge%20Library/Fast%20Facts%20for

- Consider temporary adjustments in absence triggers, which would be based on the professional advice of the Service Doctor and reviewed annually to meet our obligations under the Equality Act.

- Develop E-Learning modules in Learn Pro, to help all our employees to discuss menopause in a simple but effective manner both in work and at home.

- Offer a voluntary over 45's menopause health check/ conversation which will enable women to be more informed when consulting with their General Practitioner over appropriate treatment such as HRT. These checks will be with an Occupational Health Nurse.

- Operational Appliances & Equipment in liaison with members of the 'Gender Equality

Network', 'Menopause Lounge' and 'Female Firefighters Forum' will continue to explore options for uniform issue to assist menopausal women with issues with heat and temperature and review the requirement for Control staff to wear hosiery as part of uniform.

- Operational Appliances & Equipment will consider welfare arrangements at incidents, to consider cool sprays and gel, and the availability of women only toilets at incidents.

- Estates will trial women only gym time at Service Gyms. The specifics in terms of duration and days will need to be negotiated and agreed with partners. This in particular could benefit women unused to using gyms and concerned that they are a male only environment. The Service will utilise our Health and Fitness Advisors who are supportive of this initiative.

- Strategy & Performance will continue to consider food and drink options offered by the Service canteen and conferencing Teams, to provide availability of food and drink that may assist menopausal women with their symptoms.

- Continue to provide the Menopause Lounge with information pertaining to Service developments and continue to champion this and the Gender Networks.

- Introduce a self-assessment risk assessment to enable women to have structured and beneficial conversations with their line manager and GP

- Provide a menopause health and safety risk assessment.

- Provide menopause champion training to create a service wide group of champions.

- Collaborate and support the NFCC providing National Menopause Champions.

Relationship with other policies

This should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures covering positive mental health, management of attendance, work-life balance, special leave, flexible working, the management of short and long-term absence, sick pay, and equal opportunities.