
MENOPAUSE POLICY

Prepared By:

KEELAGHER OKEY ASSOCIATES LIMITED
74A London Road, Stockton Heath, Warrington, WA4 6HR

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Table of Contents	Page
INTRODUCTION	4
PART 1 POLICY STATEMENT	5
1.1 Scope of Policy	5
1.2 Definitions	5
PART 2 POTENTIAL SYMPTOMS	5
2.1 Female Menopause	5
2.2 Male Menopause	6
PART 3 SUPPORT AND ADVICE	7
3.1 Support and Advice for those experiencing the Menopause	7
3.2 Advice to and Responsibilities of Managers	8
3.3 Advice to Colleagues	9
PART 4 DATA CONFIDENTIALITY	10
PART 5 REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS	10
5.1 Reasonable Adjustments	10
5.2 Overlap with other policies	11
5.3 Equality and Diversity	12
PART 6 REVIEW AND MONITORING	12
PART 7 SELF MANAGEMENT FOR STAFF EXPERIENCING MENOPAUSE	13

INTRODUCTION

This policy is designed to raise awareness of menopause transition and provide information and support for those who are directly or indirectly affected. It therefore contains information relevant to employees, their managers and other colleagues.

The aim of the policy is to:

- Make managers aware of their responsibility to understand how the menopause can affect staff, and how they can support those experiencing the menopause at work;
- Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner;
- Raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about the menopause; Enable workers experiencing the menopause to continue to be effective in their jobs;
- Outline support and reasonable adjustments available;
- Help the Company to recruit and retain employees experiencing the menopause.

Although it is women and those who have transitioned as women* who experience the physical and psychological symptoms of menopause, it is recognised that the menopause can also directly and indirectly affect others both within the workplace and at home. This can include colleagues, family members, same sex partnerships, those going through gender reassignment and disabled colleagues.

**Although this policy uses the term ‘women’, we recognise that menopause may also be experienced by colleagues who do not identify as female, so the content is intended to support anyone experiencing menopause, regardless of their gender or gender identity. Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here. Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd recognises that women experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments.*

The menopause is a natural event in most women's lives during which they stop having periods and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years. KEELAGHER OKEY ASSOCIATES LTD is committed to developing a workplace culture that supports workers experiencing the menopause in order for them to feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work.

This policy is part of Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd's commitment to ensuring the health and safety and wellbeing of all the workforce, and will ensure the workplace does not make the menopausal symptoms of employees worse. This policy is part of Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd's commitment to equality and diversity. We are committed to creating a workplace that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination and harassment. This policy seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance and enhance the reputation of Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd as an employer of choice.

Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd recognises that many of the changes to workplace culture and adjustments offered here may not only be of benefit to workers experiencing the menopause, but to all staff.

PART 1 | POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all staff who are employed at Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd.

1.2 Definitions:

- Menopause - A biological stage in life when you have not had a period for 12 consecutive months.
- Perimenopause - The time leading up to the end of your periods when changes start to happen.
- Premature menopause - Can happen naturally, or because of illness or surgery.
- Andropause - The Male Menopause - used to describe aging-related hormone changes in men.

PART 2 | POTENTIAL SYMPTOMS

2.1 Female Menopause

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women's lives. For some it will be medically induced. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods. Women may have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms whilst experiencing the menopause and peri-menopause and may often encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms.

Each woman will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues as well.

Disabled women and those with pre-existing health conditions, may find that the menopause can aggravate their existing impairments and health conditions or even trigger new ones. Menopausal symptoms can in turn also be made worse by the disabled woman's impairment or health condition.

Some trans men may experience natural menopausal symptoms and some trans women may experience pseudo-menopausal symptoms related to their hormone therapy treatment. Some non-binary people may also experience menopausal symptoms.

Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd recognises that for many reasons, peoples' individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly. While some women experience no adverse symptoms of menopause, finding their confidence increases as they experience freedom from some of the more disruptive and painful aspects of having periods, others experience a range of potentially debilitating symptoms.

- During menopause, the brain and mood can be affected, causing depression and anxiety, sleep problems, night sweats, fatigue and/or dizziness, 'brain fog' (reduced concentration, poor information retention and a reduced ability to learn), unexplained mood swings, irritability and emotional outbursts.
- These symptoms can impact on an individual's performance in terms of coping strategies and reduced ability to deal with the pressure deadlines and priorities. They may also experience a lack of confidence, anxiety or panic disorder.
- Hair and nails can become thin, dry and brittle, and bleeding gums, dry mouths or taste changes and strange oral sensations may occur. The heart and lungs can be affected, causing palpitations and an increased risk of heart disease, or new/worsened allergies.
- Irregular periods brought about by an unpredictable pre-menstrual tension and menstrual cycle can cause heavy bleeding, water retention and bloating, and general skin itchiness and formication (which feels like crawling under the skin), dermatitis or thinning skin.
- Problems with muscles, joints, nerves and bones can lead to muscle pain and weakness, joint pain, osteoporosis / loss of bone density and nerve function may be affected. Sudden changes to body temperature can also result in sweats and flushes, sudden heat or facial redness.
- Other symptoms of the menopause can include loss of libido, vaginal dryness and or atrophy, weight gain, incontinence, anaemia, breast pain and headaches.
- Side effects from hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a form of treatment for menopausal symptoms for some people (although not suitable or appropriate for all).

Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause, with menopausal symptoms sometimes experienced during this time. For other people, the menopause can naturally occur early or result from medical treatment such as surgery; hysterectomy, chemotherapy, aromatase inhibitors (oestrogen suppressants) and treatment for endometriosis.

As employees work through perimenopause, menopause and beyond, this can mean managing the demands of work and home life whilst also dealing with sometimes severe symptoms and other issues.

2.2 Male Menopause

The male menopause "andropause" is used to describe aging-related hormone changes in men. Other terms include testosterone deficiency syndrome, androgen deficiency of the ageing male and late-onset male hypogonadism.

Testosterone levels vary greatly among men. In general, older men tend to have lower testosterone levels than younger men. Testosterone levels gradually decline throughout adulthood — about 1 percent a year after age 30 on average.

Signs and symptoms of the Male Menopause include;

- Low energy.
- Rarely, you might experience hot flushes.
- Changes in sleep patterns. Sometimes low testosterone causes sleep disturbances, such as insomnia, or increased sleepiness
- Emotional changes. Low testosterone might contribute to a decrease in motivation or self-confidence. You might feel sad or depressed, or have trouble concentrating or remembering things.
- Physical changes. Various physical changes are possible, including increased body fat, reduced muscle bulk and strength, and decreased bone density. Swollen or tender breasts (gynecomastia) and loss of body hair are possible.
- Changes in sexual function. This might include reduced sexual desire, erectile dysfunction, fewer spontaneous erections — such as during sleep — and infertility. Your testes may also become smaller.

PART 3 | SUPPORT AND ADVICE

3.1 Support and advice for those experiencing the Menopause

Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and will positively support staff experiencing the female and male menopause.

All staff will be provided with appropriate information and training so that they are able to better understand the effects of the menopause and be comfortable about discussing and addressing the impact that it can have on employees in carrying out their roles.

All staff training will be supported by awareness campaigns aimed at supporting the development of an understanding and supportive culture.

You may find it beneficial to research the menopause, (examples of useful links are given in Part 7) or discuss it with family or friends.

If symptoms are causing problems at work, you should speak confidentially to your manager at an early stage, to ensure the symptoms can be treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health.

Early notification will also help your manager determine the most appropriate course of action to support your individual needs. A plan should be agreed with your manager, and where appropriate, it should include details of the agreed adjustments (see below).

If you do not wish to discuss the issue with your direct line manager, you may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague or an alternative manager.

Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd recognises that the menopause is a very personal experience and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed. Details of other sources of support are given in Part 7.

Some individuals may not be aware that they are going through menopause transition, so GPs can arrange for blood tests to be undertaken to confirm menopause; however, NICE guidance suggests that tests for the over 45s are unnecessary. Employees are however encouraged to consult their GP for any symptoms that are causing concern, as many of them can relate to other medical conditions.

3.2 Advice to and responsibilities of Managers

Although the menopause usually impacts those in their 40s to 60s; it can impact younger people, partners and families, and those who are transitioning. As a manager, you have a duty of care to all your employees, and to support anyone affected by the menopause in the workplace either directly or indirectly.

Menopause can challenge both physical and mental wellbeing, in some cases presenting as mood swings, difficulty concentrating or memory lapses, anxiety or depression, pain and headaches, sleep disorders or fatigue.

Your role as a manager is therefore to have a supportive conversation with your employee, but you are not expected to be an expert or a healthcare professional/occupational health adviser when discussing the menopause.

Managers should ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and understand their own and the employer's responsibilities. Training on women's health issues including the menopause will be provided to all managers.

Managers should encourage employees to discuss the impact of their menopausal symptoms on their work-life and encourage them to access the support and adjustments offered. They should promote a positive attitude to discussions around health issues.

The employee may have chosen to speak to a colleague, a different manager or colleagues before raising the subject with you, but even if they have done so, please advise them that they can also consult their GP for further support.

When an employee discloses menopause-related concerns, you should gain an understanding of their likely support needs, using the information in this policy, as well as your own research using the links in Part 7. However you should also:

- Remember that every individual's issues are unique, so do not make assumptions;
- Ensure that all information shared by the employee is treated in the strictest confidence and is not shared further without their consent;
- Discuss timescales and leave requirements if this has been raised as part of the discussion, noting that perimenopause and menopause symptoms do not have an indicative timeline for resolution;
- Take account of individual and business needs when dealing with requests for special leave, being mindful of the importance of being supportive of attendance at appointments;
- Outline the support available to the employee;
- Treat all discussions sensitively, professionally and confidentially.
- Support employees in informing their colleagues about the situation if appropriate.

Workplace adjustments are used to remove barriers or a disadvantage, and can be helpful during menopause for agreeing and recording temporary or permanent changes. In some instances, it may be helpful to seek medical evidence and/or occupational health advice to consider whether adjustments could add value.

Any adjustments agreed should be recorded in writing with a copy provided to the employee. Where a review period is agreed, a follow up meeting should be diarised with both the manager and employee, to ensure it takes place at the agreed time.

Absences directly related to the symptoms of menopause should be recorded as sickness absences but the description should clarify that it related to symptoms of menopause, rather than more 'generic' reasons.

If there is an additional need for sickness absence by employees in order to manage their menopausal symptoms, managers will consider such absence as an ongoing condition requiring the consideration of reasonable adjustments and flexibility in absence procedure triggers.

Managers will consider all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and will not discriminate against those employees who are experiencing the menopause, and put in place the required support or adjustments in a timely manner. All employees must be treated fairly and consistently. Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up any support available to employees experiencing the menopause.

Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd recognises the potential impact of menopausal symptoms on performance by employees experiencing the menopause. Managers will seek to support staff sympathetically rather than moving directly to capability or disciplinary procedures.

3.3 Advice to Colleagues

Traditionally, the menopause has not been widely discussed in workplaces, with some people finding it difficult and embarrassing to raise the subject.

Fortunately, however, due to increased media coverage and the availability of online support and guidance, conversations around managing the menopause in the workplace are becoming more normalised, and this policy aims to support this.

Menopause transition should be managed with consideration, understanding and in some circumstances, with workplace adjustments or adaptations. This will enable employees to continue to perform at their best during this transition.

Workplace 'banter' can be upsetting, and could be interpreted as harassment, so it is important that all colleagues behave with kindness, understanding and acceptance, keep an open mind, behave sensitively and avoid making assumptions.

Employees should report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause.

Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality. If an employee is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another employee in relation to the menopause, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

It is also important that if a colleague speaks to you in confidence, this should be respected and the information kept confidential unless they give you express permission to share it.

PART 4 | DATA CONFIDENTIALITY

We will process any personal data collected in accordance with our data protection policy. Data collected is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

PART 5 | REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

5.1 Reasonable Adjustments

The Company not only has a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees, but also aims to facilitate an open, understanding, working environment.

In some cases it may be appropriate for a gender sensitive risk assessment to be undertaken to consider the specific needs of the employee experiencing the menopause and to ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. The risk assessment will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments that may be required.

As the symptoms associated with menopause can affect an employee's comfort and performance at work, the Company commits to ensuring that adjustments and additional support will be available to those experiencing menopausal symptoms, including the facilitation of flexible working, wherever possible. Requests for flexible working could include asking for:

- a change to the pattern of hours worked;
- permission to perform work from home;
- adjustments to workload;
- a reduction in working hours; or
- more frequent breaks.

Where employees are required to work in the office, consideration will be given to the following:

- Flexible and easy access to toilet and changing facilities;
- Ensuring there is good ventilation (e.g. a fan or opening window or adjustable air conditioning);
- Review of office seating plans so that affected employees can be near the window or open doors, or away from direct sources of heat such as radiators;
- Fitting blinds to windows;
- Access to cold drinks;
- Regular breaks in a private and quiet space, including flexibility for the staff member around the taking of breaks;
- Consideration of adjustments to PPE.
- For employees who are required to travel as part of their usual work pattern, duration and frequency of travel to be reduced and increased rest breaks provided;
- Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments;
- Temporary changes to the employee's duties, such as undertaking reduced high-visibility work like formal presentations or meetings because it can be difficult to cope with symptoms such as hot flushes, or assessing how work is allocated or whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day.

This is not a definitive list of adjustments. KEELAGHER OKEY ASSOCIATES LTD, will consider additional suggestions put forward by members of staff.

KEELAGHER OKEY ASSOCIATES LTD will provide temporary staff cover wherever possible, where there is a lengthy absence related to menopausal symptoms.

Confidential support is available for individual employees from the employee assistance programme, and this may include counselling if appropriate, in addition to practical information and advice.

Employees should discuss requests for reasonable adjustments or flexible working with their line manager and depending on the circumstances, requests may be approved either on a permanent or temporary basis.

The Company will seek to be flexible and to support all requests wherever possible, and to this end will work proactively with staff members experiencing menopause.

5.2 Overlap with other policies

It may be appropriate for an employee to be supported using the Company's Mental Health & Wellbeing and Health Safety and Welfare policies, but as support needs will vary according to individual circumstances, managers should ensure fairness and consistency.

5.3 Equality and Diversity

We will apply this policy consistently and fairly and will not discriminate against anyone based on any relevant characteristics, including those set out in the Equality Act 2010. The menopause primarily affects women and those who have transitioned as women. However any person experiencing menopause symptoms or supporting colleagues who are experiencing symptoms will be supported through this policy, regardless of gender or gender identity.

KEELAGHER OKEY ASSOCIATES LTD, will develop a menopause support group in the workplace where employees affected by the menopause directly or indirectly, can share knowledge and information, gain peer support and review workplace policies that may have an impact on staff experiencing the menopause.

PART 6 | REVIEW AND MONITORING

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if there is a specific legislative, regulatory or service requirement or change in guidance, law or practice, including recommendations from the menopause support group. The policy will be reviewed by the support group and management, on a regular basis.

The recommendations of the menopause support group on how working conditions, practices and policies may impact on staff experiencing the menopause, will be reviewed jointly by the support group and management, on a regular basis.

The purpose of this monitoring and review is to identify where reasonable adjustments can be made to working conditions, practices and policies in order to make this policy effective.

KEELAGHER OKEY ASSOCIATES LTD will ensure that all new employees, supervisors and managers will receive induction on the policy.

Adequate resources will be made available to fulfil the aims of this policy. The policy will be widely promoted, and copies will be freely available and displayed in Keelagher Okey Associates Ltd's offices and through the staff Sharepoint.

PART 7 | SELF MANAGEMENT FOR STAFF EXPERIENCING MENOPAUSE

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged not to suffer in silence, but to consider:

- Seeking medical advice from your GP;
- Discussing symptoms with your manager or another colleague and requesting appropriate workplace adjustments.

Employees are also encouraged to make healthier lifestyle choices to help with some of the symptoms such as:

- Eating healthily and regularly – research has shown that a balanced diet can help in alleviating some symptoms, in keeping bones healthy and in not gaining weight;
- Drinking plenty of water;
- Exercising regularly - to reduce hot flushes, improve sleep, boost mood and maintain aerobic fitness levels;
- Not smoking – to help reduce hot flushes and the risk of developing serious conditions such as cancer, heart disease and stroke;
- Ensuring alcohol intake is within recommended levels and cutting down on caffeine and spicy food – all of which can trigger hot flushes;
- Having access to natural light;
- Staying cool at night – wearing loose clothes in a cool and well-ventilated room to help with hot flushes and night sweats;
- Ensuring adequate rest and relaxation – to reduce stress levels and improve mood (through, for example, activities such as mindfulness, yoga and tai chi);
- Trying vaginal lubricant or moisturizer to reduce the symptoms of vaginal dryness – available either on prescription or over the counter from pharmacies.

Sources of support

- [Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;
- the [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for those experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency; and
- the [Menopause Café](#), which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause.
- NHS Health A-Z – [Menopause](#)
- [Women's Health Concern](#)
- [NICE](#)
- NHS - [Male Menopause](#)
- [The Menopause Exchange](#)



Name: Derek Bradshaw
Position: Managing Director
Date: 31st January 2026