MENOPAUSE POLICY

Policy Created: September 2023

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Next review: February 2027

Reviewed by: Laurence Clark

Responsible Officer: CEO

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Approved by: CEO

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1. Introduction and Commitment

Pathways Associates is committed to being a supportive and inclusive employer. We recognise that menopause and perimenopause transition affect a significant proportion of our workforce and can impact people differently. This includes women, and also trans and non-binary individuals who may experience menopausal symptoms.

We are dedicated to fostering an open, stigma-free environment where colleagues feel safe to discuss menopause-related needs without fear of judgement or disadvantage. This policy supports our Equal Opportunities and Equality Policy and aims to:

- Enable everyone experiencing menopausal symptoms to continue performing effectively and confidently
- Reduce risks such as loss of confidence, increased absence, mental health challenges (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression), or leaving employment
- Promote awareness, early dialogue, and practical support

This policy aligns with ACAS best practice guidance on Menopause at Work, EHRC guidance, and relevant legislation (Equality Act 2010 and Health and Safety at Work Act 1974).

We provide menopause awareness training for **all** employees and associates, including managers, to build understanding and confidence in handling conversations sensitively.

Support extends to anyone affected, including those living with or supporting someone experiencing menopause.

2. Supporting Colleagues Experiencing Menopause

We encourage open, confidential conversations at any stage (perimenopause, menopause, or post-menopause). Our open-door approach allows colleagues to raise concerns with their line manager, HR, or another trusted contact.

Key support includes:

- Early and regular discussions to understand individual needs and agree practical solutions

- Consideration of **reasonable adjustments** under the Equality Act 2010 where symptoms have a substantial and long-term impact (menopause symptoms may amount to a disability in some cases — e.g., severe hot flushes, brain fog, anxiety, or heavy bleeding affecting daily activities)
- Access to our existing **Flexible Working Policy** (e.g., hybrid/remote working, adjusted hours, reduced workload temporarily)
- Other common adjustments (tailored on a case-by-case basis): quiet workspaces, access to fans or temperature controls, relaxed uniform/dress code policies, more frequent comfort breaks, adjusted performance targets during difficult periods, or redeployment if appropriate

We will work collaboratively to identify and implement adjustments, reviewing them regularly.

3. Training and Awareness for Staff and Managers

All employees and associates receive training on menopause to reduce stigma and build supportive cultures. Manager-specific training covers:

- The different stages (perimenopause, menopause, post-menopause) and range of symptoms (physical, cognitive, psychological)
- How to have sensitive, supportive conversations and encourage early disclosure
- Legal aspects (Equality Act 2010 — links to sex, age, disability, and gender reassignment; Health and Safety at Work Act 1974)
- Identifying and implementing reasonable adjustments and workplace changes
- Handling issues fairly, avoiding discrimination, and signposting to support (e.g., occupational health, GP, employee assistance programme)
- Intersectional considerations, including gender identity and how menopause can affect trans and non-binary people

Training draws from ACAS codes of practice and is refreshed periodically.

4. Health, Safety, and the Working Environment

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, we have a duty to protect health, safety, and welfare so far as reasonably practicable.

We will:

- Conduct **menopause-sensitive risk assessments** (individual or general) to identify and mitigate workplace factors that may worsen symptoms (e.g., temperature, ventilation, lighting, noise, uniform requirements, lack of toilet access)
- Review and adapt the physical environment (e.g., temperature controls, rest areas, access to cold water)
- Remove barriers and ensure colleagues can raise health and safety concerns related to menopause without fear of detriment
- Integrate menopause considerations into existing health and safety reviews

See our **Health and Safety Policy** and **Flexible Working Policy** for related details.

5. Managing Sickness Absence and Performance

We handle menopause-related absence and performance issues sensitively and non-punitively.

- Menopause-related sickness/absence will be recorded and managed separately from other absences to avoid unfair treatment or discrimination
- We make reasonable efforts to accommodate medical appointments related to menopause (e.g., HRT reviews, specialist consultations)
- Performance management or capability processes will take menopause symptoms into account; we will explore adjustments before formal action

- Occupational health referrals are available where appropriate

Colleagues are encouraged to discuss any menopause-related issues openly so support can be put in place early.

6. Menopause and the Law

Menopause is not a standalone protected characteristic under the **Equality Act 2010**, but less favourable treatment because of menopause symptoms may constitute discrimination linked to:

- Sex
- Age
- Disability (where symptoms are substantial and long-term)
- Gender reassignment

Harassment or victimisation related to menopause discussions is also unlawful.

We comply fully with these protections (see our **Equality Policy**). Breaches may lead to disciplinary action.

Our **Health and Safety Policy** reinforces duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

For further information, refer to:

- ACAS Menopause at Work guidance: https://www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work
- EHRC Menopause in the Workplace guidance: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/menopause-workplace-guidance-employers

7. Next Steps and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following significant legislative changes (e.g., mandatory Menopause Action Plans for larger employers from 2027). Feedback is welcomed to ensure it remains effective.

If you are experiencing menopausal symptoms or supporting someone who is, please contact Lynn James-Jenkinson (lynn.james-jenkinson@pathwaysassociates.co.uk) in confidence.