

British High Commission Nicosia
Menopause at Work PROTOCOL
Prepared by Mahi Solomou, Certified Menopause Champion

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UK Government Menopause Employment Champion

In March 2023, Helen Tomlinson was appointed by the previous government to the independent role as England's first Menopause Employment Champion.

Since 2024, Mariella Frostrup succeeded Tomlinson as the Menopause Employment Ambassador. This voluntary role involves engaging with employers and government departments to advocate for menopausal employees in the workplace. In her engagement with employers and multiple Government departments, she advocates for individuals affected by menopause in the workplace. She helps employers develop policies that foster a supportive environment for women experiencing menopause to ensure that they stay and progress at work.

This appointment was part of a wider government initiative to support older workers for their wellbeing and success, and to improve the economy. It features plans with best practice guidance and education and provides a forum where organizations can share their experiences and expertise. The Menopause Employment Ambassador's work is cross-governmental with the Ministry of Disabled People, Health & Work, the Department of Health & Social Care, the Equity Hub and the Department for Education. This work has been embraced by employers and trade associations who help amplify this message.

FCDO Menopause Policy

This policy, introduced in the summer of 2022, aligns with the Dignity & Respect at Work Policy. It supports the Respect Agenda of the FCDO's 'Who we are' values and applies to all FCDO staff in the UK and all staff working for One HMG at post including Diplomatic Service, Home Civil Service and country-based staff.

This protocol is designed to offer a supportive framework for women experiencing menopause at work and to help embed a menopause-friendly working culture. It does not provide legal or medical advice, but practical guidance with peer support and signposting.

The Protocol aims are to:

- a. Foster an environment in which staff can speak openly and comfortably about perimenopause and menopause without any fear, guilt, judgement or embarrassment.
- b. Ensure everyone understands what perimenopause and menopause are, can confidently have open and supportive conversations and are clear on the BHC policy and practices.
- c. Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of perimenopause and menopause and how they can support individuals at work.
- d. Ensure that anyone suffering with symptoms feels confident to raise the issue and ask for support and any adjustments.
- e. Assure staff going through perimenopause and menopause that the BHC is committed to supporting their needs.

Introduction by BHC Nicosia Menopause Champion

Dear Colleagues,

Navigating the menopause was initially incredibly challenging for me, marked with a plethora of symptoms, which I failed to identify as menopausal. This created a new sense of resolve- to empower myself with knowledge and embolden other women. I embarked on a mission to give menopause a more powerful presence in the workplace and to shed light on the debilitating impact it can have on women as our brains and bodies shift to another stage.

Clearly, menopause is alarmingly undermined in the workplace, with severe implications on productivity, wellbeing and retention. Which is why it is imperative that organizations create a menopause-friendly culture to foster an inclusive and supportive environment.

Remember, 'it's the eggs that expire, not the Hen!' So, be kind to the Hen as she is worthy. Reclaim time for the HEN and start saying 'I am not available' a little more often. Embrace this challenging phase and navigate it gracefully. Educate yourself, speak candidly and shamelessly about your symptoms, and you will emerge stronger, more badass and confident.

Whether you are a colleague going through the menopause, or have a partner, spouse, family member or friend navigating it, please feel free to contact me for guidance!

Mahi Solomou

Certified Menopause Champion, British High Commission Nicosia



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1. WHAT IS MENOPAUSE & WHY IT MATTERS?

The menopause is a natural phase of life when women stop having periods and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in estrogen, progesterone and testosterone levels.

Women experiencing menopause are the fastest-growing demographic in the workforce with the average age of natural menopause at 51.

Menopause lasts on an average of 3-8 years although symptoms may be experienced for between 2-15 years. Menopause symptoms can have a direct impact on productivity, job satisfaction, self-esteem and concentration. While menopause is not a disease, it can lead to increased cardiovascular risk, osteoporosis and cognitive decline.

Women over 50 represent a significant percentage of the workforce, nonetheless menopause remains a highly stigmatized and under-researched topic. A recent Deloitte Global report Women at Work 2023 showcases that many employees suffer in silence.

- **28% of women experiencing menopause-related symptoms continue to work without taking time off.**
- **25% of women globally consider quitting their jobs due to menopause symptoms while many women do not opt for a promotion.**

Promoting and supporting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the workplace portrays good people management and showcases that you are valuing everyone individually.

It's important, therefore, that those experiencing the menopause feel properly supported and included in their working environments and that there is an openness of culture when it comes to discussing issues relating to menopause.

PERIMENOPAUSE	MENOPAUSE	POST-MENOPAUSE
<p>The transitional time when the body experiences a natural decline in reproductive hormones resulting in the end of a woman's menstrual cycles.</p> <p>The menopause transition typically lasts 4-8 years, but can last more than a decade.</p>	<p>The moment in life that is defined once 12 consecutive months have passed after the last menstrual cycle.</p>	<p>The life stage after menopause has completed.</p>

2. MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS: IMPACT AT WORK

Some women navigate their menopause with barely any symptoms, but it is not an easy transition for all. It is important to start talking about menopause more openly, raise awareness and put the right support in place.

With 100 symptoms- 46 of which are registered, the menopause struggle is real. Menopause is not a disease but can lead to osteoporosis, cardiovascular diseases and cognitive decline.

Menopause is not just about hot flushes and mood swings. The depletion of estrogen undeniably throws a curveball in our life and can cause a wide range of physical and mental health symptoms, which can be difficult to manage and debilitating.

YOU'RE NOT GOING CRAZY - IT'S MENOPAUSE!

TOP 40 SYMPTOMS



1. Hot flashes	22. Sore breasts
2. Cold flashes	23. Headaches
3. Night sweats	24. Digestive issues
4. Clammy feeling	25. Bloating
5. Heart palpitations	26. Allergies worsen
6. Irritability	27. Weight gain
7. Mood swings	28. Hair loss/thinning
8. Trouble sleeping	29. More facial hair
9. Irregular periods	30. Dizziness
10. Low sex drive	31. Vertigo
11. Dry vagina	32. Changed body odor
12. Fatigue	33. Electric shock feelings
13. Anxiety	34. Tingling extremities
14. Depression	35. Bleeding gums
15. Lack of focus	36. Burning tongue/
16. Poor concentration	roof of mouth
17. Faulty memory	37. Chronic bad breath
18. Incontinence	38. Osteoporosis
19. Itchy, crawly skin	39. Weakened fingernails
20. Achy joints, muscles	40. Ringing ears (tinnitus)
21. Tense muscles	

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'Menopause and work- it's a two-way street. Work is good for menopausal women. It contributes far more than just a salary. It can provide fulfilment, self-esteem, identity and social needs too. But working environments like those with lack of temperature control, cramped conditions, and stress can also make menopause symptoms worse.'

-The UK Government Report on Menopause

3. MENOPAUSE CHAMPION ROLE

Champions are instrumental in fostering a more inclusive and supporting workplace. They signal an organization's commitment to employee wellbeing, helping boost productivity, job satisfaction and retention. This is usually a voluntary role.

A certified Menopause Champion requires sufficient training in order to gain a better understanding of the menopause and its impact physically and mentally. Champions can add value to any organization- they can provide a listening ear and they can advise LMs on how they can support their team's wellbeing.

Having a well-informed menopause champion at an organization means that:

- there is a main point of contact when staff need advice/guidance/signposting.
- You make managers aware of the responsibility to understand the menopause and the related issues that can affect staff.
- You raise wider awareness and understanding amongst staff.
- You consider how to support colleagues, either individuals experiencing the menopause, or those who are affected indirectly, for example partners, colleagues, line managers.

Menopause Champion Qualities

- Listening skills, empathy and approachability
- Good communication skills- to articulate the menopause challenges clearly, raise awareness and advocate for necessary changes.
- A passion and interest in wellbeing, diversity and inclusion.

4. MANAGERS' ROLE

Managers have a fundamental role in ensuring that employees affected by menopausal symptoms receive the right support as they would do with any health condition. Managers are not expected to be experts but they should have a clear understanding of what type of support is likely to be needed.

Line managers should:

- a. Ensure all staff are aware of and familiar with their Organization's Menopause Policy/ Protocol/ Guidance.
- b. Familiarize themselves with the menopause protocol and guidance,
- c. Undertake relevant training on menopause symptoms and the necessary workplace adjustments and support that may be required.
- d. Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, treating the discussion sensitively and professionally.
- e. Ensure all adjustments are adhered to.
- f. Respect staff's right to privacy and confidentiality.
- g. Provide a private, confidential place for the staff member to discuss how their symptoms impact their work. Ensure ongoing dialogue.

Menopause could have a negative impact on an employee's performance due to tiredness from difficulty in sleeping, mood changes or problems with memory and concentration. Therefore, managers should take into account the impact of menopause on an employee's performance and be as flexible as possible when considering what adjustments can be made to a role or working conditions to help an employee maintain performance levels.

POSITIVE THINGS TO SAY	THINGS TO AVOID SAYING
Thank you for letting me know. I'm confident we can work through any work concerns you have together.	I feel very uncomfortable about this. Could you talk to someone else?
In what ways can I support you?	This is not an excuse for poor performance.
Our conversation is confidential.	I can't help you with this. It's not my job.
You are important to the team and I want to ensure that you continue to work with us.	I/ my wife didn't have any menopause issues.

5. STAFF's ROLE

If you are experiencing menopausal symptoms and consider you may need support at work, you should ask to have a conversation with your manager. Colleagues need to be mindful, respectful and non-judgemental of women going through the menopause.

ENGAGE: Ask how your co-workers are doing and what support they may need. Offer to support with a task like fetching a cold drink if your colleague is experiencing a hot flush; help them out with a word if you see that they are struggling with brain fog.

EMPATHIZE: Ask questions sensitively and actively listen to the responses so you can understand other people's experiences and how they make them feel.

EDUCATE: Be an ally and advocate to promote change. Sharing resources and increasing awareness of inclusive policies can help women navigate menopause challenges in the workplace.

6. WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS

Menopause is not an illness, however, some of the symptoms can cause illness and may impact on work performance and wellbeing in the workplace. Certain workplace environments may make menopause symptoms worse, i.e. high temperature, poor ventilation, high humidity, excessive noise, no access to a quiet or restful place. Workplace adjustments are usually simple, low-cost support such as easy access to information and resources, workshops and training.

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ADJUSTMENT EXAMPLES

BRAIN FOG	LOW MOOD/ANXIETY	ISOLATION	LOW SELF-ESTEEM
Realistic goal setting Flexible breaks Provision of quiet workspaces Clear communication Use technology to set up reminders Regular & informal check-ins	Suggest talking to their GP Ask what might be helpful in terms of work management	Taking coffee breaks with colleagues Establish a buddy system Menopause Champion/ Menopause Support platform	Establish and encourage 1-1 mentoring Examine the pace of work Provide considered and constructive feedback
HEAVY PERIODS	HOT FLUSHES	INSOMNIA/DIFFICULTY SLEEPING	JOINT PAIN/STIFFNESS
Ensure easy access to toilet facilities Sufficient bathroom breaks Make it easy to request an extra uniform if needed	Move to a cooler part of the office Have your desk next to a window Provision of desk fan Access to fresh drinking water Access to a quiet area Request a cooler uniform	Flexible working to accommodate fluctuating energy levels	Short breaks to stretch, take a short walk, and get fresh air

How menopause friendly is your organisation?

**There are more menopausal women at work than ever before.
It's important that all employers put the right awareness, education and support in place.**

This quick checklist highlights the best practice elements to think about:

Is it clear how your organisation supports menopausal women at work?	<p>It's not law to have a menopause policy but it's best practice to have accessible and well publicised information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have either a menopause policy or guidance document, or is menopause included in another policy? Have you reviewed your existing policies to ensure they include menopause e.g. flexible working, absence and sickness? 	✓/✗
Do you have a culture where menopause can be talked about openly?	<p>Talking about menopause openly supports an inclusive, diverse culture focused on equality, health, safety and performance. Do you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have information about menopause on your intranet or other communications channels such as staff magazines? Have colleague networks or a menopause network where employees can discuss menopause, either in person or online? Promote menopause awareness in campaigns like National Women's Health Week (May) or World Menopause Day (Oct), or include menopause in your own wellbeing campaigns? Have menopause awareness and education sessions for colleagues? 	
Do your managers and support teams have the right knowledge and skills to talk about menopause?	<p>It's important that managers, HR and Occupational Health teams know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What menopause is, its symptoms and how they can affect a woman at work. What changes or reasonable adjustments help a menopausal woman. Your organisation's approach to supporting menopausal women. How to have a supportive conversation about menopause. 	
Do you provide access to occupational health support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do your employees have access to occupational health support either directly or by referral? Do you have an Employee Assistance Programme which supports menopause in the workplace? Are they trained on menopause, how it can affect a woman at work and how to help? 	
Do your employees wear uniforms or have a dress code?	<p>If a uniform or dress code is needed at work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can they be adapted to manage hot flushes or cold sweats e.g. layering? Can extra garments be ordered if needed? Do you think about the fabric and fit when redesigning or updating new uniforms? 	
Do your workplace facilities support menopausal women?	<p>The work environment can sometimes make symptoms worse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it possible to adjust workplace temperature or provide desk fans? Is there access to cold drinking water, washroom facilities and toilets in all workplace situations, including off site? Could those who need to stand for a long period of time or are customer facing take an extra break or sit down? 	

7. BENEFITS OF A MENOPAUSE-FRIENDLY ORGANIZATION

A menopause-friendly organization is clear about how it supports menopause in the workplace by creating an environment where menopause can be talked about easily and putting the right support in place for colleagues.

Menopause-friendly organizations tend to have:

- increased employee satisfaction and retention: reduced turnover costs associated with hiring and training new staff.
- reduced absenteeism.

8. SICKNESS ABSENCE

Absences due to the menopause should be recorded as sickness absences and tagged as menopause-related on HERA.

9. RESOURCES

- [Menopause in the Workplace Resources Hub](#)
- [MENOPAUSE FACT SHEET](#)
- [BSI Menopause Standard](#)
- [FREE menopause information website with a vast library of menopause information, films, podcasts, stories](#)
- [How menopause friendly is your organization](#)
- [The Balance app](#) – for free menopause and menopause support and information. Includes a symptom tracker and personalized health reports which can be used to help women talk to their doctors about their symptoms.
- [The Menopause Brain Dr Lisa Mosconi](#)
- [Dr Louise Newson Menopause Specialist](#)
- [Dr Mary Claire Obgyn The Galveston Diet](#)
- [The Glucose Goddess](#)
- [How to power your way through menopause Dr Stacy Sims](#)
- Expert guidance, useful resources, articles and training on:
[Womenofacertainstage](#) and [Heppicked](#)
Includes: FREE training and accredited training at a cost.
- Watch this documentary with Davina McCall: [Sex, myths & the menopause](#)

CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FCDO Menopause Policy

FCDO Menopause Community Resources

HMRC Menopause Community Resources

Women of a Certain Stage

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