

Menopause at Work Policy

Feb 2023



1 Policy Statement

Rosehill Housing Co-operative is committed to ensuring the health, safety and Well-being of its employees and ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

The Health and Safety at work act (1974) requires employers to ensure the health safety and welfare of all workers. Within this, employers are required to perform risk assessments which should include any specific risks to menopausal employees.

The menopause is a natural process and for many can be positively managed through lifestyle adjustments. However, Rosehill also recognises that for some the menopause is not always an easy transition. Some employees may need additional considerations to support and improve their experience at work.

Many employees will be working through the natural age of the perimenopause period and beyond. Therefore, there is a need for clear guidance in this area.

With this in mind, Rosehill is committed to supporting employees who are affected in any way by the menopause and to support and inform managers so that employees reporting issues are treated fairly and given appropriate support.

2 Scope

The policy applies to all Rosehill employees.

3 Aim of the Policy

The aim of this Policy is:

- To support employees to remain at work.
- To raise awareness of menopause, the related issues and how this can affect employees.
- To break the stigma and taboo surrounding the menopause at work and to promote an environment in which employees feel confident in discussing menopausal issues and ask for support and adjustments, if required.
- To provide guidance and direction on how to support employees who raise menopausal issues not only for the individuals experiencing the menopause but also those who may be affected indirectly which may include managers, colleagues, partners, and family members.

- To inform managers of the potential symptoms of menopause, how this can affect employees and what can be done to support individuals including reasonable adjustments.

4 Definitions

- 4.1 Menopause – The menopause is a natural part of ageing and refers to the time in life when periods stop and the natural reproductive cycle ends. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 with the average age being 51.
- 4.2 Premature ovarian insufficiency (premature menopause) – Approximately 1 in 100 affected people will experience menopause before 40 years of age (naturally or as an effect of a medical condition or treatment).
- 4.3 Peri-menopause – the time leading up to menopause when menopausal symptoms can be experienced. Symptoms can start a few months or even years before periods stop.
- 4.4 Post-menopause – The time after the last period.

5. Symptoms of Menopause

- 5.1. According to the National Institute for Health Care and Excellence (NICE), the most reported symptoms of menopause (hot flushes and night sweats) can occur in approximately 75% of cases with 25% being severely affected.
- 5.2 Symptoms are associated to a decrease in the body's production of the hormone oestrogen. Other factors such as diet and exercise, lifestyle and medication can also influence the symptoms.
- 5.3. It is important to note that not everyone will notice symptoms or need help and support.

The most common symptoms include:

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Sleep disruption
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating/memory problems/loss of confidence
- Mood disturbances including anxiety and depression
- Headaches

- Irregular periods/heavy bleeding
- Bone and Joint problems

5.4 Symptoms on average continue for 2-4 years however some individuals will experience symptoms for longer.

5.5 The nature of symptoms will vary from mild to severe. These symptoms can have a significant adverse impact on the quality of both personal and working life.

5.6 It is also important to note that the onset of menopause symptoms can coincide with other health issues as well as potential caring responsibilities.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Employees:

All employees are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable responsibility and care for their own health and well-being.
- Being open to having conversations with managers. If for any reason they feel unable to speak to their manager, they can also speak to the Corporate Services and HR Manager.
- Upholding a positive, and professional working environment.
- Treating others with dignity and respect.

7.2 Line Managers:

All line managers will:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy.
- Be willing to have open discussions with employees about changes in their health including issues relating to the Menopause, treat the discussion sensitively and recognise that everyone's experience may differ.
- Use the guidance in section 8 to inform the discussion, reviewing together before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported.
- Ensure on-going communication and agree a plan for review where appropriate.
- Implement agreed adjustments
- If adjustments have not been successful and/or a member of staff is reporting on-going difficulties or concerns about their health at

work, consider a referral to Occupational Health for further advice.

7.3 Corporate Services and HR Manager:

They will:

- Offer support to managers and employees on the interpretation of this Policy.
- Promote awareness-raising activities including training and education for employees and managers

7.4 Occupational Health:

Occupational Health will:

- Provide support and information to employees who are referred to the service to discuss health related issues because of menopause.
- Provide support and advice to employees, managers, and HR in relation to workplace adjustments, if required.
- Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice.

8 Guidance for Managers Discussions with Employees

Regular, informal conversations between managers and employees can enable discussions about issues related to the menopause. One of the most valuable things a manager can do is listen and respond sympathetically if issues relating to menopause are reported.

These conversations can assist to identify support at work which can make a real difference with how employees cope with menopause. This may enable them to continue working well, productively and to remain at work.

It is important to note that employees experiencing menopausal issues (directly or indirectly) may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to approach their manager however, if a manager is aware of the symptoms associated with the menopause and how this can affect a person, this can greatly assist in promoting an environment where employees feel more confident to approach their manager and seek support, if required.

If an employee wishes to talk about changes in health including symptoms of menopause it is important to:

- Encourage the employee to discuss any relevant health concerns with their GP practice.
- Maintain confidentiality when handling health information (seek a private room/office and ensure any records are stored in a safe and confidential manner).
- Allow for sufficient time to have the conversation and encourage the employee to be open and honest when discussing any difficulties, they may be experiencing.
- Explore with them ways in which they can be supported, if required (see section 10 for common symptoms and adjustments to consider)
- Agree an action plan, record the outcome of the discussion, and agree a review timeframe.
- Provide details of support and external services available

9. Symptoms and Suggested Adjustments to Consider

9.1 Hot Flashes – Can result in employees feeling uncomfortable and less tolerant of workplace temperatures.

- Review control of workplace temperature and ventilation – consider desktop fan in an office or locate desk closer to an opening window or away from a heat source.
- Access to drinking water.
- Access to washroom facilities.
- Avoid tight fitting uniforms.
- For staff who are not required to wear uniforms recommend loose fitting layers and cotton fabrics rather than manmade fibres.
- Access to a rest area/room for breaks if work involves prolonged periods of standing or sitting.
- Access to a quiet room/area for a short break to manage a severe hot flush.

9.2 Night Sweats/Sleep disruption – Can result in increased tiredness and fatigue.

- Consider flexible working hours to accommodate difficulties

9.3 **Difficulty concentrating/Memory problems** – Performance may be affected

- Regular reviews with manager for additional support, if required
- Review task allocation and workload
- Consider flexibility in working pattern or shift pattern; for example, if concentration is better or worse at certain times of the day.

9.4 **Low mood/Depression/anxiety/panic attacks/loss of confidence** – Can make work tasks more difficult to carry out and performance may be affected.

- Provide opportunity to openly discuss any concerns/difficulties.
- Regular review with manager for additional support, if required.
- Access to a quiet area for a short break if required (allowing time for simple relaxation and mindfulness techniques)
- Encourage that they discuss symptoms with their GP.
- Signpost to sources of support including counselling.
- Consider referral to Occupational Health.

9.5 **Headaches**

- Access to drinking water.
- Access to quiet space or area for short break and to take medication if required.

9.6 **Irregular/heavy bleeding**

- Access to toilet and washroom facilities
- Access to free to use toiletries

9.7 **Bone and Joint problems** – certain moving and handling tasks may be more uncomfortable

- Local risk assessments and moving and handling assessments, if required.
- Consider temporary adjustments or modifications to work tasks

9.8 **Personal/intimate issues**

- Advise to attend GP for advice.

10. Sources of information/support

If you have troublesome menopausal symptoms, please arrange to see your GP practice in the first instance who will be able to discuss management options with you.

- Rowan Counselling (Employee Counselling Service) 01738 562005
www.rowan-consultancy.co.uk
- Menopause Matters <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>
- NHS Choices <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- The Daisy Network (support for early menopause/premature ovarian insufficiency) <https://www.daisynetwork.org/>
- Menopause Services NHS GG&C <https://www.sandyford.org/sexual-health-information/fertility/menopause/>
- The Menopause Exchange <https://menopause-exchange.co.uk/>
- Living Life (Online/Telephone guided CBT)
<https://breathingspace.scot/living-life/>
- Women's Health concern <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>
- Remploy (mental health support service)
<https://www.rempoy.co.uk/employers/mental-health-and-wellbeing/workplacemental-health-support-service-employers>
- Henpicked (community site for women over 40) <https://henpicked.net/>
- Menopause Café (gather to eat cake, drink tea, and discuss menopause) <https://www.menopausecafe.net/>
- The GG&C Menopause Service information leaflet can be accessed via the following link <https://www.sandyford.org/media/3728/menopause-services-nhsggc-pil-12-3-2019.pdf>

11. Data Protection

11.1 On the 25th of May 2018 the legislation governing data protection changed with the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Following the UK's exit from the EU, and the end of the transition period which followed, the GDPR formed part of the retained EU law and became the UK GDPR which together with the Data Protection Act 2018 constitute the UK's data protection legislation.

12. Equality and Diversity

12.1 We are committed to ensuring equal opportunities and fair treatment for all people in our work. In implementing this Policy, we will provide a fair and equal service to all people, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

- 12.2 Rosehill is committed to removing any barriers to communication. Therefore, if required this Policy can be produced in another format e.g. braille, large print, etc.

13. Risk Management

- 13.1 In all key areas of our business we need to consider any risks which may arise. To this end we have in place a robust Risk Management Policy and from these flows our Risk Register. We have identified our strategic risks which are regularly monitored by our Management Team and Audit Sub-Committee.
- 13.2 To ensure we continue to manage the associated risks we will periodically review this policy to ensure compliance with all legislative requirements and regulatory and best practice guidance.

14. Review of Policy

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if required to comply with legislative requirements.