

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Personnel Committee – 16 March 2022

Subject: New Human Resources and Organisational Development policy
– Menopause Policy

Report of: Director of Human Resources and Organisational
Development.

Summary

To outline a new employment policy for the Committee's consideration: the new Menopause Policy.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to approve the new policy attached to this report.

Wards Affected: All

Contact Officers:

Name: Deb Clarke
Position: Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Telephone: 07812 502614
E-mail: deb.clarke@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Annalie Pearce
Position: Head of Policy, Strategy and Change, HROD
Telephone: 0161 219 6365
Email: annalie.pearce@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The new Menopause Policy has been developed to fill a policy gap where there is no MCC policy on the Menopause and dealing with the symptoms which may have a detrimental impact on work.

2.0 Context

- 2.1 There are several imperatives for the Council to develop this policy at this time. These include:
- Our workforce statistics (November 2021). 65% of our workforce identify as female; 71% of our workforce that identify as female is over 40 years of age. People in the UK normally go through the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55, the average age being 51. As the average age of our workforce increases, menopause will have an increasing impact throughout the Council.
 - Research data. According to the CIPD (March 2019), 59% of working women between the ages of 45 and 55 with menopause symptoms say it has a negative impact on them at work. 30% of women the CIPD surveyed said they were unable to go to work because of menopause symptoms. Only 25% said they could tell their line manager the real reason for their absence.
 - Compliance. The Council has a duty of care for employees' health, safety and wellbeing and a duty not to discriminate on the grounds of sex, age or disability.
 - Attendance. It is unclear how many days are lost to sickness caused by menopause symptoms as this is not included as a reason for sickness in SAP and staff may not be comfortable in disclosing this. Information gathered at discussion groups suggest that where staff have taken time off work (giving the reason, for example, of headache or gynaecological), having adjustments and support in place would most likely have enabled them to attend work.
 - Introducing the Menopause Policy will provide a framework to support people going through the menopause, encouraging them to disclose how the symptoms of this life event impact them at work so that reasonable adjustments can be discussed and implemented where necessary.
 - Awareness and demand for change are building and there has been overwhelming interest from employees to be involved in shaping the draft policy.

3.0 Policy engagement

- Given that this is a new policy, significant engagement has taken place to ensure that the policy (and the accompanying guidance and training), meet the needs of staff, managers, and services.
- Online discussion groups have been held with 38 front line managers, staff and equality group members to gather intelligence on the experiences of staff in relation to the menopause.
- 80 questionnaires were completed and returned to understand staff experiences further where they were unable to attend discussion groups. Anonymised comments are included at the end of this report.

- Working groups were run with members of the discussion groups to obtain feedback on policy and guidance as they were developed.
- Equality groups have been given opportunity to comment on the policy.
- Trade Union consultation has taken place.
- HR Business Partners and the HR Casework Team Manager have been asked for comment on the policy.

Feedback from all these groups has been fed into the policy.

3.1 Policy Content

- The policy draws from best practice in the subject area (CIPD, NHS), Trade Union template policies and existing policies from other Local Authorities and private businesses. The discussion groups enabled this to be put in the context of Manchester City Council.
- The policy defines the common terms related to the menopause (early menopause, perimenopause, post menopause).
- The responsibilities of line managers and employees are outlined in relation to the policy, namely that managers listen empathetically and offer support and that staff take medical advice from their GP and talk to their managers about reasonable adjustments they may need at work because of menopausal symptoms.
- An overview of the common symptoms associated with the menopause is provided in the policy, though it is acknowledged that these are highly individual. This is followed by a section on what support and reasonable adjustments can be considered for those experiencing menopausal symptoms. There is signposting to the Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health.
- The final section of the policy describes how sickness absence which is menopause-related should be managed, namely through application of the Management of Attendance Policy. It is noted that the HR Casework team should be consulted if there is persistent absence related to the menopause.
- The policy is accompanied by comprehensive guidance to support and manage menopausal symptoms at work. This will be published on the intranet along with the policy and updated content.

3.2 Menopause Policy: Approach to Implementation

- From the discussion groups and questionnaires, it was found that there is work to be done on educating people about the menopause. Despite it directly affecting half of the population, many people said they did not know what was happening to them once menopausal symptoms started to affect them.
- Many people felt less able to discuss their menopause transition with a manager that identified as male. Senior managers that identify as male will be encouraged to participate in the conversation on menopause to champion the cause as part of the approach to implementation.
- Detailed guidance will be provided to staff and managers with the aim of increasing understanding of the menopause and to normalise conversations

about the menopause and how it impacts people at work. Once approved, the aim is to have the policy as an agenda item on every team meeting agenda to support the launch, with follow-up at one-to-one meetings.

- Regardless of their own protected characteristics, managers are encouraged to listen and be empathetic in discussions around the menopause, as they would when talking to staff about any other life event.
- Given the scale of the interest and demand from staff about visible menopause support and training, there will need to be an awareness campaign designed to help normalise the conversation around the menopause and embrace this as a life event. Initial briefing events, both virtual and face-to-face, are proposed, followed by ongoing support. For example, staff have expressed interest in the opportunity to share their experiences: regular lunchtime 'menopause cafes' and 'menopause champions' are options being looked into.
- Training options are being explored to ensure that staff and managers have a clear understanding of menopause and the symptoms and how they can be supported at work. Melearning have just launched a package of elearning that MCC would have access to as part of the contract; there is also a NWEO package that MCC could buy with other Local Authorities as part of GMCA.
- Managers are being signposted to transferable skills in the leadership package of training and the Menopause Guidance also provides tips for constructive and supportive conversations.

3.3 Policy Guidance

3.4 There will be new and expanded content on the intranet to accompany the policy along with comprehensive guidance which covers:

- Definitions relating to the menopause.
- Statistics about the menopause and the case for having workplace guidance.
- Symptoms associated with menopause and common treatments.
- Guidance for managers on conducting empathetic conversations.
- Reasonable adjustments that may be relevant for those experiencing menopause symptoms.
- The Employee Assistance Programme.
- Sources of external support (websites, forums, apps).

4.0 Comments from Trade Unions

4.1 UNISON welcomes the report and we will continue to work with the council to monitor implementation and success.

4.1.1 As the menopause is now something that is more widely discussed and not treated as a taboo subject, it is vital that the council understand the issues that women can experience and be ready to support them. Menopause is not an older women's condition, it can happen at any time in a women's life, therefore this policy should only enhance and support our female employees. We need to be also mindful and support staff whose partners may be going through this change.

- 4.1.2 We look forward to the vital next stage of rolling out the policy and being involved in the development and delivery of training for all employees.
- 4.2 Unite the union welcomes this policy as the council have a duty to prevent workplace discrimination and to make adjustments to ensure women can work safely through the menopause. This policy will bring benefits for the council as by fostering safer and fairer workplaces for women working through the menopause, the council are more likely to retain the skills and talents of experienced workers and benefit from increased morale and wellbeing among staff.
- 4.3 The GMB welcomes the Menopause Policy and wants the roll out and especially training to be enacted as soon as possible for the benefit of our members.
- 4.3.1 This will support our members going forward and give the council the relevant advice and guidance in assisting them in the workplace.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Personnel Committee are requested to approve the new Menopause Policy.