



SHA Menopause and the Workplace Policy

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Southside Housing Association (SHA) aims to provide an inclusive and supportive working environment for all staff. We strive to foster a workplace culture built on empathy, understanding and mutual respect where everyone feels valued and able to contribute.
- 1.2 The association recognises that staff affected by menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change, may require from additional understanding, support, and reasonable adjustments to help them manage symptoms in the workplace
- 1.3 The Association also recognises that menopausal symptoms can affect not only women but also some transgender and non-binary individuals. SHA is committed to providing appropriate support to all staff who may experience these symptoms
- 1.4 The aim of this policy is to:-
 - 1) Increase awareness among managers of their responsibilities in understanding how menopause can affect staff, and how they can provide appropriate support in the workplace.
 - 2) Foster a workplace culture where employees feel comfortable and confident to initiate or participate in respectful and supportive conversations about menopause.
 - 3) Raise wider awareness and understanding of menopause across the organisation.
 - 4) Support staff experiencing menopause to remain effective and engaged in their roles.
 - 5) Outline the support mechanisms and reasonable adjustments available to those affected.
- 1.5 This policy forms part of the Association's wider commitment to promoting the health, safety, and wellbeing of all employees. The Association will take reasonable steps to ensure that the working environment does not contribute to or exacerbate menopausal symptoms experienced by staff.
- 1.6 This policy also reflects the Association's ongoing commitment to equality and diversity. We want to ensure we have a workplace that respects and values individual differences, promotes dignity, and actively challenges prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. Through this policy, the Association aims to support the wellbeing of individual staff members, retain valued employees, boost morale and performance, and strengthen Southside Housing Association's reputation as an inclusive and supportive employer of choice.

2.0 Information on menopause

- 2.1 Menopause is a natural stage of life that may affect most women and others who menstruate, including some transgender, non-binary, and intersex individuals. SHA recognises that all individuals who may experience menopause symptoms deserve equal support.
- 2.2 Menopause usually happens between 45 and 55 years of age but it can also happen earlier or later in someone's life. For many people symptoms last about 4 years, but in some cases symptoms can last a lot longer.
- 2.3 There are 3 different stages to menopause:
- perimenopause
 - menopause
 - postmenopause
- 2.4 Some people might also experience early menopause or go through medical menopause earlier in their lives. These types of menopause can be medically complicated, so employers should consider this when supporting their staff.
- 2.5 All stages and types of menopause are different and symptoms can vary from person to person and range from very mild to severe.
- 2.6 Menopause symptoms may include (but are not limited to):-
- Hot flushes
 - Heavy and painful periods and clots, leaving those affected exhausted.
 - Night sweats, restless leg syndrome and sleep disturbance.
 - Low mood, irritability
 - Increased anxiety
 - Panic attacks
 - Fatigue
 - Poor concentration
 - Loss of confidence
 - Memory problems.
 - Joint and muscle aches and stiffness
 - Weight gain
 - Headaches and migraines
 - Hair loss
 - Osteoporosis
 - Side effects from hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
 - Menopausal symptoms may also exacerbate existing impairments and conditions that those affected may already be struggling to cope with.
- 2.7 These symptoms can appear at the various stages in menopause. They can be short lived or can last many years.

3.0 Information for Managers and Employees

- 3.1 As an employer, menopause is a health and wellbeing concern for staff and needs to be handled sensitively. It is also important be aware of how its symptoms can affect staff at any time.
- 3.2 It is important to be aware that menopause can also have an impact on those supporting someone going through menopause, for example a relative, partner, colleague or carer.
- 3.3 SHA will encourage a positive and open dialogue between managers and employees affected by menopause, to help prevent the person from:
 - losing confidence in their skills and abilities
 - feeling the need to take time off without disclosing the real reason
 - experiencing increased mental health issues
 - leaving their job unnecessarily
- 3.4 Employees experiencing menopause are encouraged to speak to their line manager or the Corporate Services Manager to let them know if they are struggling with symptoms that may impact on their work, so that appropriate support is provided. All discussions about menopause-related health concerns will be treated with sensitivity and in strict confidence, in line with SHA's data protection and confidentiality policies
- 3.5 An alternative contact is available to employees experiencing menopause should they not feel comfortable discussing their problems with their line manager. The alternative contact is the Corporate Services Manager.
- 3.6 Managers should consider reasonable adjustments where menopausal symptoms result in increased sickness absence. Such absence should be recorded appropriately and considered within the context of an ongoing health condition.
- 3.7 The Association recognises the potential impact of menopausal symptoms on performance by employees experiencing menopause. Managers will seek to support staff sympathetically rather than moving directly to capability or disciplinary procedures.
- 3.8 SHA will make every effort to ensure that the working environment will not contribute or exacerbate symptoms, and potential adjustments may be required e.g.
 - **Environmental**
 - Workplace temperature and ventilation
 - Access to adequate toilet and washing facilities
 - Access to drinking water
 - **Work Related**
 - Flexibility around working hours and hybrid working
 - Adjustments to workload and performance expectations.
 - **Supporting Culture**
 - Addressing bullying or harassment related to menopause

- Providing PPE suitable for managing symptoms

3.9 The following adjustments and supports may be considered, where appropriate and reasonable, to help staff manage menopausal symptoms:

- Access to fans, windows, or suitable desk placement to manage temperature.
- Easy access to toilet and washing facilities
- Use of quiet spaces for rest
- Storage space available for spare clothes/toiletries
- Flexible work arrangements

4.0 Responsibility of managers

- 4.1 Managers should ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and understand their own and the employer's responsibilities.
- 4.2 Managers, with the support of the Corporate Services Manager, 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 women's health issues.
- 4.3 Managers should be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treat the discussion sensitively, confidentially and professionally.
- 4.4 Managers will consider all requests for support and adjustments with empathy and will not discriminate against those employees who are experiencing menopause and put in place required support or adjustments in a timely and sensitive 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 menopause.
- 4.5 SHA will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.

5.0 Responsibilities of Employees

- 5.1 All staff should take a personal responsibility to look after their personal health and are encouraged to inform their manager (or the alternative contact, should they not feel comfortable speaking to their manager) if they are struggling with menopausal symptoms and need any support, so that they can continue to be effective in their jobs.
- 5.2 Employees experiencing menopause are encouraged to seek support through their GP, the employee assistance programme and other external organisations.
- 5.3 All staff are expected to contribute to a respectful, inclusive workplace and to support colleagues who may require adjustments due to menopausal symptoms
- 5.4 Employees should report back any instances of harassment, victimisation or

discrimination experienced because of issues related to menopause.

5.5 If an employee is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another employee in relation to menopause, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

5.6 Help is available, and the following resources may be useful:-

NHS – Menopause Overview

www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause

An overview of menopause, together with information about symptoms and treatment options.

Menopause Café

www.menopausecafe.net

Offers the opportunity to discuss menopause with no agenda, objectives or themes

Menopause Matters

www.menopausematters.co.uk

Gives up to date information about menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options

British Menopause Society

www.thebms.org.uk

Information and guidance to healthcare professional specialising in all aspects of reproductive health.

Hysterectomy Association

www.hysterectomy-association.org.uk

Gives an insight into surgically induced menopause as a result of having a hysterectomy.

Macmillan Cancer Support

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/side-effects-and-symptoms/menopause

Support and information to women undergoing treatment which may cause menopausal symptoms

NHS – Mindfulness

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness

An overview of mindfulness, together with tips on how to be more mindful