

# MENOPAUSE and MENSTRUAL HEALTH POLICY

v3.1

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## 1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1. Beckfoot Trust recognises the importance of supporting our colleagues who experience menopausal and menstruation symptoms and are committed to ensuring that appropriate adjustments and additional support are available to help colleagues feel comfortable at work.
- 1.2. Menopause and menstruation are still very much viewed as a private matter and is rarely discussed openly. Many individuals also do not recognise that the symptoms they are experiencing could be due to menopause.
- 1.3. We aim, as part of our desire to create an open, inclusive and understanding culture, to increase awareness of menopause and menstruation and the impact it has on individuals' lives.
- 1.4. This document includes information on menopause, menstruation, internal and external resources that can help support our colleagues and provides guidance to line managers on ways to support their people who may be experiencing symptoms. We have kept the policy broad and flexible because no two people will experience menopause and menstruation in the same way.
- 1.5. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.
- 1.6. If you feel like the language we've used here could be changed to be more inclusive of you, please let the Head of HR know. We are always open to learning.

## 2.0 Scope and Purpose

- 2.1.1 Beckfoot Trust encourage an environment in which colleagues can, if they want, have open conversations about the menopause and menstruation. We expect everyone to be supportive of colleagues who may be affected by the menopause or menstruation in the workplace.
- 2.1.2 If you are affected by the menopause or menstruation you are encouraged to speak to your manager or HR about your symptoms and the support available to reduce the difficulties it can cause you at work. Early notification, where possible, will also help managers to determine the best course of action to support your needs.
- 2.1.3 While many who go through menopause and/or menstruation will be able to carry on their working lives as normal, we recognise that others may benefit from adjustments to their working conditions to mitigate the impact of symptoms on their work. If you believe that you would benefit from adjustments or other support, you should speak to your manager in the first instance.
- 2.1.4 Experiencing menopausal or menstruation symptoms can be a sensitive and personal matter and as such, you may not wish to discuss with your manager initially. In these circumstances, please speak in confidence to your Senior HR Officer or a trusted colleague instead.

## 3.0 Overarching Principles

### 3.1 What is menopause?

- 3.1.1 Menopause is a natural health event for most women and some trans men, non-binary and intersex people, that usually takes place between 40 and 55 years of age (the average age in the UK is 51), during which they have not had a period for 12 months and experience hormonal changes. It can also

happen earlier or later. For many people, symptoms usually last about four years, but in some cases can last longer, sometimes up to 12 years.

- 3.1.2 Menopause is preceded by perimenopause, during which the body prepares itself for menopause. Perimenopause can also last several years and can involve similar symptoms to menopause itself. For the purpose of this document, any reference to menopause includes perimenopause. Perimenopause is not the same as premature menopause.
- 3.1.3 Premature menopause is when an individual experiences menopause early, either naturally or through surgery or illness.
- 3.1.4 Post-menopause is the time after menopause. A person who is post-menopausal may still experience menopausal symptoms for years to come.
- 3.1.5 Many who experience menopausal symptoms will have mild symptoms, but for others, symptoms can be severe and can greatly impact their day to day lives. While symptoms vary and each person's experience will differ, they commonly include:

Physical symptoms:

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats and difficulty sleeping
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Memory loss
- Headaches/migraines
- Dry eyes
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Reduced concentration and focus
- Irregular and/or heavy periods.

Heavy and painful periods and clots can also be experienced, leaving individuals exhausted, some individuals anaemic as well as practically needing to change sanitary wear more frequently.

- 3.1.6 As a result of the above, or as an extension of the hormone imbalance, individual going through the menopause can also experience psychological difficulties, including:
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Panic Attacks
  - Mood swings
  - Irritability
  - Problems with memory
  - Loss of confidence.
- 3.1.7 Three out of four people get symptoms, one in four troublesome enough to affect day to day life (NHS Employers, 2021). The physical and emotional impact of the menopause can be far reaching due to the symptoms outlined above and may have a significant impact in the workplace. For some individuals who are dealing with these symptoms, they may find their job more challenging which in turn may affect their wellbeing, confidence, and performance at work. It is important that Beckfoot Trust work together to reduce the stigma around menopause, increase our understanding and

awareness of the topic and offer appropriate support while individuals go through this period in their lives.

### **3.2 What is menstruation?**

- 3.2.1 The menstrual cycle is governed by natural changes which usually result in monthly bleeding. This process typically happens in a 28-day cycle; however, there are significant individual variations. Irregularity of the cycle can be more common in the years leading up to menopause.
- 3.2.2 For some people, changes in the body's hormone levels before a period can cause physical and emotional changes. This is known as PMS (premenstrual syndrome) or PMT (premenstrual tension).
- 3.2.3 Symptoms:

There are many possible symptoms of PMS, but typical symptoms include:

- Feeling bloated and digestive changes
- Mood changes
- Spotty skin
- Blood loss
- Menstrual cramps/pain
- Worsening of existing muscle/joint/back pain
- Breast pain, tenderness and/or swelling
- Fatigue
- Poor sleep quality
- Headaches
- Temperature hypersensitivity.

These symptoms usually improve when a period starts and disappear a few days afterwards.

- 3.2.4 It is common for people to experience pain during their periods and for some, this can have a significant detrimental impact on their daily life, both at home and work. Periods can also affect mental health, concentration span and energy levels throughout the day. Some people can experience heavy bleeding during their periods which can also affect their daily life.

### **3.3 Data Protection**

Beckfoot Trust will process any personal data collected in accordance with its Data Protection Policy/Workforce Privacy Notice. Data collected from the point at which we become aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

## **4.0 Responsibilities and Arrangements**

### **4.1 Support for individuals**

It is important that you prioritise your personal health and wellbeing. In order to ensure we can provide you with the best support possible we encourage you to be open and honest in these conversations. If you are struggling with any aspect of your role as a result of symptoms associated with menopause or menstruation, we encourage you to outline any concerns you may have to your line manager, who will treat the matter with complete confidence. If you feel unable to do this, please contact your Senior HR Officer.

We welcome any suggestions that you may have to improve the workplace environment in relation to menopause or menstrual symptoms.

Each situation will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and support could take the form of (not exhaustive list):

4.1.1 Flexible working: Beckfoot Trust recognises that difficulty sleeping is a common symptom of menopause. To reflect this, as well as the impact of other common symptoms, we aim to facilitate flexible working wherever possible. Requests for flexible working could include asking for:

- A change to the pattern of hours worked;
- A permission to perform work from home;
- A reduction in working hours; or
- More frequent breaks.

Employees should discuss such requests with their line manager/HR. Depending on the circumstances, requests may be approved on a permanent or temporary basis and you may be asked to submit a flexible working request in accordance with the Flexible Working Policy. A copy of the Flexible Working Policy is available on the trust website.

4.1.2 Temperature control: Beckfoot Trust strives to achieve a comfortable working temperature for employees. We will allow flexibility within our dress code where reasonable. Desk fans will be provided upon request.

4.1.3 A referral to our occupational health providers to ensure that an individual's working environment is not making their menopausal and menstruation symptoms worse and to inform us of any further adjustments that should be considered, especially in the instances where the menopause or menstruation is causing significant sickness absence or where it is directly affecting performance.

4.1.4 We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of all our staff and will consider any aspects of the working environment that may worsen menopausal symptoms. This may include identifying and addressing specific risks to the health and well-being of those going through the menopause.

## 4.2 Internal support

Examples of internal support we can offer:

4.2.1 EAP – the Employee Assistance Programme provided by Health Assured is a confidential support network for practical advice and counselling. The free service is accessible 24-hours a day, 365 days a year by phone on 0800 028 0199.

4.2.2 MHFA - our network of Mental Health First Aiders can listen and signpost mental health support.

4.2.3 Occupational Health - provide impartial and confidential advice on fitness for work and the type of support required to ensure colleagues can remain in the workplace or successfully return to the workplace. For more information, please contact HR.

4.2.4 People First Charter SharePoint site – contains a variety of resources to provide information or signpost to further support.

## 4.3 External support (specialist agencies and charities)

The following external support organisations offer a range of help:

- Menopause Matters - [Menopause Matters, menopausal symptoms, remedies, advice](#)
- The Daisy Network - [Charity for Women with POI | The Daisy Network](#)
- Menopause Café - [Gather to eat cake, drink and discuss menopause](#)
- Henpicked – [Homepage Henpicked](#)
- Balance - [Homepage balance-menopause.com](#)

Please refer to our People First Charter SharePoint site for information of other support organisations.

#### **4.4 How can you stay healthy during menopause?**

4.4.1 We encourage you to speak with your GP to determine if you are experiencing menopause and to explore what treatment/medication may be suitable for you to help ease your symptoms. There are checklists available such as the Henpicked colleague support pack which can help prepare you for these conversations.

4.4.2 There are also other ways to ensure you look after your physical health as you go through the changes that menopause brings:

- Eat a balanced diet
- Refrain from smoking
- Limit alcohol intake
- Exercise regularly.

#### **4.5 Support for managers and colleagues**

4.5.1 It is important that everyone within Beckfoot Trust are aware of this guidance and understand the practical steps that can be taken to support a colleague who is experiencing menopause or menstruation symptoms.

4.5.2 What you should do:

- a) Make yourself and your team familiar with this document and our internal and external sources of support
- b) Attend webinars or other training we provide on menopause and menstruation
- c) Create an environment where individuals feel comfortable disclosing health issues i.e. make conversations about wellbeing standard in one-to-one meetings and try to raise awareness of menopause generally in your team to help breakdown the stigma and embarrassment some people feel about the topic
- d) Ensure you listen to the needs of each individual and be open to having discussions about menopause and menstruation, ensuring confidentiality where requested
- e) You may find that an individual chooses not to initially discuss their symptoms with you, try not to take this to heart and remain open to a discussion when/if they feel ready to talk
- f) Be aware that some individuals may seek to downplay symptoms, so encourage an open and honest discussion where appropriate
- g) If an individual does inform you that they are suffering with menopausal or menstruation symptoms, then work with them to ensure the right support is provided. Menopause and the symptoms associated with it, should be treated as a long-term health issue, if you are not sure about what options of support are available, speak with HR.
- h) Ensure that you check-in regularly with the individual to review the effectiveness of any support measures put in place and make any changes as necessary

- i) Treat all conversations about the menopause and menstruation sensitively and handle all information disclosed confidentially and in accordance with the Beckfoot Trust's data protection policy/Workforce Privacy Notice.

#### 4.5.3 What you shouldn't do:

- a) Make assumptions about menopause and menstruation and how this may be affecting the individual
- b) Shy away from talking about menopause and menstruation
- c) Share personal information that has been disclosed to you without consent
- d) Provide medical or personal advice where it is not wanted
- e) Try to refrain from making decisions for the individual; instead signpost relevant help and agree together how to move forward.

#### 4.5.4 Example questions to ask:

- a) What symptoms are you experiencing?
- b) How are these symptoms affecting you day to day/at work?
- c) What are you already doing to try to manage this?
- d) What other ways can we help you at work in managing these symptoms?

## 5.0 Review of Policy

- 5.1 This policy is reviewed and amended every two years by the Executive and any significant changes will be agreed with the unions. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.
- 5.2 We are committed to applying all policies with cultural sensitivity and discretion so that colleagues are protected from stigma and or discrimination.

All colleagues are entitled to fair treatment irrespective of gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, age, religion and/or socio-economic background.

We define fair treatment as ensuring justice and equity for all individuals, an emphasis on impartiality and respect for everyone's rights and dignity. We recognise individual needs and work to avoid a 'one-size-fits-all' approach whilst ensuring adherence to policy and law. We want everyone to have fair access to the support they need to be successful.

If you feel that the language we've used in this policy, or any other, could be more inclusive, please let the Head of HR know. We are all here to learn.