

Menopause Policy

Diocese of Guildford

Version	1
Approved Date:	November 2023
Next Review:	October 2026
Approved By:	Guildford Diocese Board of Finance / Bishop's Council
Owner:	Andy Morgan, Head of People

AMENDMENTS

Date	Section	Summary of change

1. Introduction¹

The Diocese of Guildford is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of our clergy and employees and ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

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

Over half of clergy and employees are female, with many being over the age of 45, and therefore working through the natural age of the peri-menopause and beyond. Therefore, there is a need for clear guidance in this area. Every woman's personal and professional circumstances are different, hence it is neither feasible nor desirable to provide a policy with a single set of actions that staff, clergy or senior clergy should take when seeking to support female clergy and staff going through the menopause. This menopause policy aims to develop and promote an environment and culture that supports women experiencing the menopause, so they can feel confident about raising issues relating to their symptoms and asking for reasonable adjustments to be made regarding how they carry out their role and perform their duties.

This policy does not form part of your terms and conditions of employment for staff, or statement of particulars for clergy, and the Diocese reserves the right to vary this policy from time to time.

¹ Based on guidance from ACAS <https://www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work>; Menopause Policy of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Trust; and National Education Union Menopause Policy Template; and reviewed against the Diocese of Exeter Menopause Policy.

2. Legislative Requirements

The Diocese of Guildford undertakes to comply with its legal obligations as set out in:

- The **Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)** requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Employers are required to undertake general risk assessments which should include specific risks to menopausal women.
- The **Equality Act 2010** prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.

3. Aims

The aims of this Policy are:

- To raise awareness of the menopause, related issues, and how this can affect female clergy and employees.
- To create an environment where female clergy and employees feel confident enough to raise issues about their menopause symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work.
- To provide guidance and direction on how to support clergy and 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 ensure that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that reasonable adjustments and support are put in place, recognising that the menopause and perimenopause is an individual experience and therefore there is no 'one size fits all' solution.
- To reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued clergy and employees in the workplace.
- To ensure that no clergy or employee are discriminated against on the basis of the menopause or its associated symptoms.

4. Scope

This Policy applies to all clergy of the Diocese of Guildford, Cathedral clergy, Licensed Ministers and employees of Diocesan Board of Finance, and applies equally to area deans, archdeacons and bishops.

This Policy does not apply to employees of parishes, but we encourage each parish to develop their own policy for menopause support as part of their employee handbook.

5. Definitions

Menopause – The menopause is a natural part of ageing and refers to the time in life when periods stop and a woman's ovaries no longer produce eggs and, as a result, the levels of hormones (oestrogen, progesterone and testosterone) fall. Oestrogen protects a number of different systems in the body including brain, skin, bones, heart, urinary functions and the genital area, and low levels of oestrogen can affect all these parts of the body. The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55.

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).

Perimenopause – the time leading up to menopause when menopausal symptoms can be experienced. Symptoms can start a few months or even years before periods stop. During the perimenopause, the levels of hormones fluctuate greatly, and it is often the imbalance of hormones that lead to symptoms of menopause.

Post-menopause – The time one year after the last period.

6. Symptoms of Menopause

According to the National Institute for Health Care and Excellence (NICE)² the most commonly reported symptoms of menopause (hot flushes and night sweats) can occur in approximately 75% of cases with 25% being severely affected.

Symptoms are associated with 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.

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

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

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.

It is also important to note that the onset of menopause symptoms can also coincide with other health issues as well as potential caring responsibilities for elderly parents/relatives/children.

² NICE Clinical Knowledge: Menopause
<https://cks.nice.org.uk/menopause>

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1. Clergy and Employees

All clergy and employees are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable responsibility and care for your own health, work-life balance and wellbeing (see appendix 1 for sources of information and support).
- Being open to having conversations with your area dean, archdeacon, or manager. If for any reason you feel unable to speak to your supervisor, you can also speak to the Diocesan Advisor for Women's Ministry or the People Team at Church House.
- Upholding a positive working environment treating others with dignity and respect.

7.2. Managers³

All managers will:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and ensure clergy, or staff are aware of this policy and understand their responsibilities.
- Be willing to have open discussions with the clergy or staff you are responsible for, when raised by them, regarding the impact of their menopausal symptoms on carrying out their roles and performing their duties, and on their professional relationships and relationships with those they serve.
- Use the guidance in section 8 and 9 to inform discussion with any clergy or employees, agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, including any reasonable adjustments or individual risk assessments if needed.
- Ensure confidentiality, keeping to an absolute minimum the number of people who are involved in discussions and ensuring appropriate consent is obtained from clergy or staff for third party discussions.
- Give consideration of the risk of increased workload on colleagues of any adjustments ensuring they are not negatively affected.

7.3. Human Resources

People team will:

- Offer support to managers, clergy and staff on the interpretation of this Policy.
- Signpost to appropriate sources of support and advice (see appendix 1).
- Promote awareness-raising activities, including but not limited to training and education for clergy, employees and managers.
- Encourage clergy and employees to discuss with their doctor health concerns related to the menopause, during working hours if needed in line with the relevant **Sick Leave Policy**.
- Provide support and advice to clergy, employees, and managers in relation to workplace adjustments, if required, and undertaking individual risk assessments.
- Make referrals to Occupational Health where additional advice is needed on reasonable adjustments.
- Ensure Church House **Health & Safety Policy** and risk assessment consider the menopause as a risk.

³ Please note that in this policy "managers" refers to anyone with supervisory or pastoral oversight of employees or clergy.

8. Guidance for Managers

Regular, informal conversations between a manager and their clergy or employees can enable discussions about issues related to 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.

Clergy and employees experiencing menopausal issues may feel uncomfortable to approach their manager because he is a man, or someone much younger, or both, and we will ensure that an alternative contact is available. In these cases, please contact the Head of People. If a manager is aware of the symptoms associated with the menopause and how this can affect an individual, this can greatly assist in promoting an environment where clergy or employees feel more confident to approach their manager and seek support, if required.

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

- Encourage them to discuss health concerns with their doctor.
- Maintain confidentiality when handling health information (seek a private room and ensure records are stored confidentially).
- Allow sufficient time to have the conversation and encourage them to be open and honest when discussing any difficulties being experienced.
- Explore with them ways in which they can be supported if required (see section 9 for common symptoms and adjustments to consider), and as necessary undertake an individual risk assessment.
- Agree any reasonable adjustments needed, record the outcome and agree a review timeframe.
- Provide details of support and external services available (appendix 1)
- Ensure that no clergy or employee is discriminated against on the basis of the menopause or its associated symptoms

In line with our **Sickness Policy**, medical appointments may be taken during working hours, though where possible these should be booked for the start or end of the day to minimise work disruption.

9. Symptoms and Suggested Adjustments

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 (take into consideration employees who travel or work in multiple locations)
- Avoid tight fitting clothing, instead 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.

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

- Consider flexible working hours to accommodate difficulties

Difficulty concentrating/Memory problems – Performance may be affected

- Regular supervision/review with manager for additional support, if required
- Review task allocation and workload
- Consider flexible working for example if concentration is better or worse at certain times of the day.
- Offer quiet place to work (if feasible; for example, in office environments)
- Try to document work conversations or actions in follow up email to avoid having to rely on memory

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 supervision/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 doctor
- Signpost to sources of information and support including counselling (see appendix 1)
- Consider referral to Occupational Health

Headaches

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

Irregular/heavy bleeding

- Access to toilet and washroom facilities
- May require more frequent short breaks

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

Appendix 1. Sources of Information/Support

If you have menopausal symptoms please arrange to see your doctor in the first instance who will be able to discuss lifestyle adjustments options with you and provide medical advice.

NHS Health Advice

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

Menopause Matters

<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

The Daisy Network (support for early menopause/premature ovarian insufficiency)

<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>

The Menopause Exchange

<https://menopause-exchange.co.uk/>

Women's Health concern

<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>

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/>

British Menopause Society

<https://thebms.org.uk/>

Newson Balance Menopause Website and App

www.balance-menopause.com

www.newsonhealth.co.uk

CIPD Menopause at Work A Practical Guide for Managers

https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/line-manager-guide-to-menopause_tcm18-95174.pdf

Health Assured - Diocesan Employee Assistance Programme, providing health advice and free counselling

<https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/contact-us/?msg=I%20have%20forgotten%20my%20login%20details>