Item 7
Staffing Committee
October 2026

TODMORDEN TOWN COUNCIL

Menopause Policy

Prepared by: Town Clerk
Approved by: Todmorden Town Council
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1. Purpose

Todmorden Town Council recognises that the menopause is a natural stage of life and that menopause and perimenopause symptoms can have a significant impact on an individual's physical health, mental wellbeing, confidence and ability to work.

The Council is committed to creating an open, supportive and inclusive workplace where employees can talk about menopause without embarrassment, stigma or fear of discrimination.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- raise awareness and understanding of menopause across the Council;
- provide a supportive and respectful working environment;
- enable employees to discuss their individual needs confidentially;
- identify and implement reasonable and practical workplace adjustments;
- support employees to remain healthy, productive and in work wherever possible;
- ensure managers understand their responsibilities;
- reduce the stigma and taboo surrounding menopause;
- ensure menopause-related issues are considered appropriately within health and safety, wellbeing, flexible working and absence management arrangements; and
- ensure that employees experiencing menopause are treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

The Council recognises that everyone's experience of menopause is different and that symptoms may vary considerably in type, severity and duration.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Todmorden Town Council, regardless of age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, working pattern, length of service or employment status.

The Council recognises that menopause may affect:

- women;
- trans men;
- some non-binary people; and
- other people who experience menstrual cycles.

The policy also recognises that colleagues, partners, family members and carers may be supporting someone experiencing menopause.

Although the policy is principally concerned with supporting employees experiencing menopause, all employees have a role in creating a respectful and supportive workplace.

3. What is menopause?

Menopause is a natural stage of life resulting from changes in hormone levels. It normally occurs between the ages of approximately 40 and 55, although it can occur earlier or later.

Menopause is not a single event. Employees may experience:

- **perimenopause** – the period leading up to menopause, when hormonal changes and symptoms may begin;
- **menopause** – generally defined as the point at which a person has not had a menstrual period for 12 consecutive months, where this occurs naturally; and
- **post-menopause** – the period following menopause.

Menopause can also occur as a result of medical or surgical treatment, and symptoms can therefore occur at a younger age.

Symptoms vary significantly from person to person and may include:

- hot flushes and night sweats;
- difficulty sleeping and fatigue;
- anxiety, low mood or depression;
- difficulty concentrating or "brain fog";
- headaches or migraines;
- palpitations;
- joint and muscle aches;
- changes to skin or hair;
- heavy or irregular periods;
- urinary or bladder problems;
- dizziness;

- changes in confidence or self-esteem; and
- other physical, psychological or emotional symptoms.

Employees do not need to experience symptoms in order to discuss menopause, and they will not be expected to disclose personal medical information in order to request support.

4. Council commitment

Todmorden Town Council is committed to being a menopause-friendly employer.

The Council will:

1. treat menopause as a workplace wellbeing and health issue rather than a performance or conduct issue;
2. encourage open and respectful conversations about menopause;
3. provide managers with appropriate information and training;
4. consider reasonable workplace adjustments where appropriate;
5. carry out or review individual menopause-related risk assessments where required;
6. consider flexibility in working arrangements where this is reasonably practicable;
7. ensure employees have reasonable access to drinking water, toilet facilities, ventilation and appropriate rest arrangements;
8. consider the suitability of uniforms and work clothing where applicable;
9. consider menopause-related absence sensitively and fairly;
10. provide appropriate signposting to health and wellbeing support;
11. protect confidentiality and dignity;
12. challenge inappropriate comments, jokes, bullying or harassment relating to menopause; and
13. review this policy regularly to ensure it remains consistent with good employment practice and current legislation and guidance.

Current ACAS guidance recommends that employers have a specific menopause policy, train managers, provide a point of contact and review related policies including health and safety, wellbeing, flexible working and absence management.

5. Confidentiality and dignity

Employees should feel able to discuss menopause without fear of embarrassment, discrimination or negative consequences.

Any discussion between an employee and their manager about menopause symptoms or support requirements should be treated sensitively and confidentially.

Managers should only share information where there is a legitimate need to do so, for example where information is required to arrange an agreed workplace adjustment or to meet a health and safety obligation.

Employees will not normally be expected to provide detailed medical information to their line manager.

Where medical advice or occupational health advice is required, this should be sought in accordance with the Council's normal procedures.

6. Talking about menopause at work

An employee does not have to wait until their symptoms significantly affect their work before asking for support.

Employees are encouraged to speak to:

- their line manager;
- the Town Clerk / Responsible Officer;
- the Council's designated wellbeing or menopause contact, where appointed; or
- another appropriate person with whom they feel comfortable having the initial conversation.

Managers should create an environment in which such conversations can take place privately and without interruption.

Managers should listen rather than make assumptions. They should ask the employee what would help them at work rather than assuming that a particular adjustment is required.

A conversation may cover:

- which symptoms are affecting the employee at work;
- whether particular workplace conditions make symptoms worse;
- whether temporary or longer-term adjustments may help;
- whether changes to working hours or location would be beneficial;
- whether additional breaks are required;
- whether the employee needs time to attend medical appointments;
- whether a risk assessment is appropriate; and
- whether further support or occupational health advice is required.

Agreed adjustments should be recorded appropriately and reviewed periodically, as an individual's needs may change over time. ACAS specifically recommends follow-up conversations because adjustments may need to change as symptoms and circumstances change.

7. Workplace adjustments

The Council recognises that relatively small changes can make a significant difference.

Depending on the individual's role and circumstances, possible adjustments may include:

Working environment

- improving ventilation;

- providing access to a fan where appropriate;
- allowing the employee to move to a cooler or better-ventilated area;
- considering access to a window or temperature-controlled environment;
- providing a quiet or private area where an employee can briefly recover from symptoms;
- ensuring easy access to toilet facilities;
- ensuring access to drinking water; and
- considering appropriate workplace clothing.

Working arrangements

Where reasonably practicable:

- flexible start and finish times;
- temporary changes to working hours;
- additional flexibility around breaks;
- allowing employees to work from home where the role permits;
- temporary changes to duties;
- adjusting meetings or workloads where appropriate;
- allowing additional time for tasks where symptoms temporarily affect concentration; and
- consideration of flexible working requests in accordance with the Council's Flexible Working Policy.

Attendance and medical appointments

Where appropriate, the Council may allow reasonable time for medical appointments relating to menopause.

Employees should follow the Council's normal arrangements for notifying their manager of appointments and absence.

The Council will consider menopause-related absence sensitively and will seek to distinguish between short-term health issues and persistent attendance or performance concerns.

ACAS recommends that employers consider recording menopause-related absence separately from other sickness absence where appropriate, because including it automatically within attendance measurements may be unfair or discriminatory.

8. Menopause risk assessment

Menopause itself is not a workplace hazard. However, aspects of the working environment or working arrangements may exacerbate symptoms.

Where appropriate, the Council will undertake an individual menopause risk assessment with the employee.

This may consider:

- temperature and ventilation;
- access to toilets;
- access to drinking water;
- opportunities to take breaks;
- workload and working patterns;
- shift arrangements, where applicable;
- work clothing or uniform;
- workplace lighting;
- noise;
- lone working;
- manual or physically demanding work;
- workplace stress;
- access to suitable rest facilities; and
- any other factors identified by the employee.

The risk assessment should focus on practical solutions and should be reviewed if circumstances or symptoms change.

GOV.UK guidance published in 2026 specifically recommends menopause risk assessments as a way of identifying workplace adjustments and ensuring that working conditions do not exacerbate symptoms.

9. Reasonable adjustments and disability

Menopause is not itself a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

However, individual menopause symptoms may amount to a disability where the legal criteria are met. In such circumstances, the Council will comply with its legal duties, including the duty to consider reasonable adjustments.

Menopause symptoms may also give rise to discrimination relating to other protected characteristics, including age, sex and disability.

The Council will therefore consider requests for support fairly and individually and will not make assumptions based on a person's age, sex or perceived health.

The Local Government Association advises councils to consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and highlights reasonable adjustments, flexible working and changes to workplace arrangements as important measures for supporting employees experiencing menopause.

10. Absence management

The Council recognises that menopause symptoms may sometimes result in an employee being unable to attend work.

Where menopause is identified as a contributing factor to absence, managers should consider the circumstances sensitively and discuss whether workplace adjustments or additional support could reduce future absence.

Menopause-related absence should not automatically be treated in exactly the same way as ordinary short-term sickness where doing so would disadvantage the employee.

Where appropriate, the Council may:

- record menopause-related absence separately for monitoring purposes;
- seek occupational health advice;
- review workplace adjustments;
- consider whether an underlying health condition or disability is present;
- consider whether the employee requires additional support; and
- review whether existing attendance-management triggers remain appropriate.

The Council will follow its Sickness Absence Policy and any applicable employment legislation.

11. Performance and capability

Menopause symptoms can sometimes affect concentration, memory, sleep, confidence, mood and energy.

Where an employee's performance changes, managers should not automatically assume that this is a capability or conduct issue.

Managers should consider whether there may be an underlying health or wellbeing issue and should provide the employee with an opportunity to discuss whether menopause or another health condition is affecting them.

Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments, temporary changes or occupational health advice should be considered before formal capability procedures are commenced.

This does not prevent the Council from addressing genuine performance concerns where appropriate, but such concerns must be handled fairly, sensitively and consistently.

12. Managers' responsibilities

Managers have a particularly important role in implementing this policy.

Managers should:

- familiarise themselves with this policy;
- undertake appropriate menopause awareness training;
- create a culture where employees feel safe raising health and wellbeing concerns;
- listen without judgement;
- maintain confidentiality;

- avoid making assumptions;
- consider practical adjustments;
- arrange a risk assessment where appropriate;
- agree and document adjustments;
- review adjustments regularly;
- consider the relationship between menopause, sickness absence and performance;
- seek advice from the Town Clerk or appropriate professional support where necessary; and
- challenge inappropriate behaviour.

Managers should not attempt to diagnose an employee or provide medical advice.

ACAS recommends manager training so that managers feel confident discussing menopause and identifying appropriate support.

13. Menopause awareness and training

The Council will seek to ensure that all employees have a basic awareness of menopause and understand that it can affect colleagues differently.

Managers should receive additional training covering:

- menopause and perimenopause;
- common symptoms;
- how menopause can affect work;
- having sensitive conversations;
- workplace adjustments;
- health and safety considerations;
- confidentiality;
- equality and discrimination;
- absence and performance management; and
- sources of further support.

Training should be refreshed periodically and when significant changes to guidance or legislation occur.

14. Menopause Champion / Wellbeing Contact

The Council should consider appointing a Menopause Champion or designated wellbeing contact.

The role may include:

- acting as an initial point of contact for employees;

- signposting employees towards reliable information and support;
- helping raise awareness;
- supporting managers and employees to understand this policy;
- promoting a supportive workplace culture; and
- identifying opportunities for further training or improvement.

The Menopause Champion will not provide medical advice or replace the employee's line manager, GP or other healthcare professional.

The appointment of a Menopause Champion is consistent with ACAS guidance, which identifies menopause or wellbeing champions as a useful source of advice and support.

15. Workplace culture and inappropriate behaviour

Menopause should not be a subject of ridicule, inappropriate jokes, gossip or derogatory comments.

The Council will not tolerate:

- mocking or ridiculing someone because of menopause symptoms;
- inappropriate comments about an individual's periods, menopause or symptoms;
- unwanted sexualised comments;
- bullying or harassment;
- deliberately embarrassing a colleague about menopause; or
- treating someone less favourably because they have disclosed menopause symptoms or requested support.

Such behaviour may be dealt with under the Council's Dignity at Work, Equality, Disciplinary or other relevant policies.

The LGA highlights that inappropriate "banter" about menopause can potentially amount to harassment or sexual harassment, while ACAS advises employers to ensure workers are protected against discrimination.

16. Support and signposting

Employees may be signposted towards appropriate sources of information and support, including:

- their GP or other healthcare professional;
- NHS information and services;
- occupational health services, where available;
- employee assistance or wellbeing services, where provided by the Council;
- recognised menopause organisations and charities; and
- relevant Council policies.

The Council will ensure that information provided to employees is from reputable and appropriate sources.

17. Links with other Council policies

This policy should be read alongside, and where appropriate implemented alongside:

- Health and Safety Policy;
- Sickness Absence Policy;
- Flexible Working Policy;
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- Dignity at Work / Bullying and Harassment Policy;
- Stress and Wellbeing Policy;
- Occupational Health arrangements;
- Performance and Capability Policy;
- Grievance Policy; and
- any relevant Uniform or Dress Code Policy.

The Council will review these policies periodically to ensure that they do not unintentionally disadvantage employees experiencing menopause.

18. Employee responsibilities

Employees are encouraged to:

- raise concerns at an early stage where possible;
- participate in discussions about workplace adjustments;
- follow the Council's normal sickness and absence notification procedures;
- take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others;
- provide relevant information where necessary to enable appropriate support;
- treat colleagues with dignity and respect; and
- challenge or report inappropriate behaviour.

Employees are not required to disclose a menopause-related condition in order to be treated with dignity and respect.

19. Review and monitoring

The Town Clerk / Responsible Officer will monitor the implementation of this policy and review it at least every two years, or sooner where:

- legislation or recognised guidance changes;

- significant organisational changes occur;
- employees identify issues with its operation; or
- experience demonstrates that changes are required.

Where practicable, the Council will seek feedback from employees when reviewing the policy.

The Council should also consider monitoring, in an appropriately anonymised manner, whether employees are able to access workplace adjustments and whether any barriers to support exist.

20. Implementation action plan

Following approval of this policy, the Council will seek to:

- identify a named menopause/wellbeing contact;
- provide menopause awareness training to managers;
- provide basic menopause awareness information to all employees;
- review workplace facilities, including ventilation, temperature, toilet access and drinking water;
- ensure the Council's risk-assessment process can address menopause-related workplace factors;
- review the Sickness Absence Policy in relation to menopause-related absence;
- review the Flexible Working Policy to ensure it can support employees experiencing menopause;
- review any uniform or dress requirements;
- make reliable menopause information readily available to employees;
- consider whether occupational health support is available where required; and
- review this policy following implementation and employee feedback.

21. Policy statement

Todmorden Town Council recognises that supporting employees through menopause is part of creating a healthy, inclusive and respectful workplace.

No employee should feel that they have to choose between managing their health and remaining in employment.

The Council will therefore seek to create an environment in which menopause can be discussed openly and respectfully, appropriate support can be accessed without unnecessary barriers, and employees are enabled to continue contributing effectively to the Council wherever reasonably practicable.

Supporting guidance

This policy has been developed with reference to current guidance from:

- **ACAS – Menopause at Work**, including guidance on supporting workers, workplace conversations, adjustments, discrimination and menopause policies.
- **Local Government Association – Menopause**, including its guidance specifically aimed at councils and local-government employers.
- **GOV.UK – Workplace adjustments and menopause risk assessments**, published in 2026.
- **GOV.UK – Reviewing policies and procedures to meet the needs of employees experiencing menopause**, including flexible working, workplace adjustments and leave provisions.