

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Personnel Committee

27th September 2017

Report of the Head of Human Resources - Sheenagh Rees

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All wards

Menopause Briefing Sessions

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Council's recent initiative by Human Resources and UNISON, providing menopause briefing sessions to employees.

Background

2. As a result of high profile women speaking out regarding their experiences of the menopause, there is a growing momentum to lift the taboo around this subject in the workplace. In light of this, the Wales TUC has carried out a major survey of almost 4,000 workers on their experiences of the menopause at work. They have now published a report on their findings called '*The Menopause: a workplace issue*'. The report found that 88% of women workers who have experienced the menopause felt it has an effect on working life, while around 6 in 10 had witnessed the issue being treated as a joke in the workplace. The survey also showed that only a very small number of workplaces have policies

in place to support women who experience difficulties during the menopause.

The TUC report is available to view [here](#).

Menopause Briefing Sessions

3. Three briefing sessions were arranged during October/November at the main Civic Buildings, please see table below. The sessions were well attended and the feedback received was extremely positive.

Date	Venue	No of attendees
19/10/2017	Port Talbot Civic Centre	25
31/10/2017	The Quays	23
1/11/2017	Neath Civic Centre	18

As a result of the feedback, it is intended to run a male only briefing session for managers and supervisors and currently UNISON and HR are considering setting up a Menopause Workplace Support Group to support women going through this natural stage of life, to share experiences and provide helpful resources.

In addition to this, a section has been set up on the HR Intranet dedicated to the menopause where further information and resources are available.

Menopause Briefing Note

4. To further support women going through the menopause, a Briefing Note has been developed for managers and supervisors in order that they are fully informed about the condition, can recognise symptoms and are aware of how they can support women in the workplace. The Briefing Note is attached as Appendix 1.

Conclusion

5. In their report, the Wales TUC recognise that recognition of the issue is the first step to addressing this in the workplace and by running the briefing sessions and developing the Briefing Note. Neath Port Talbot is one of the first Council in Wales to address the issue and therefore improve the situation for our employees.

Equality Impact Assessment

6. An Equality Impact Assessment screening form was completed to assist the authority in complying with its Public Sector Equality Duty. The screening indicated that there was no requirement to carry out a full equality impact assessment. Please see Appendix 2.

Financial Impact

7. There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

Workforce Impacts

8. This initiative will have a positive impact on women experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

Legal Impacts

9. There are no legal implications in relation to this report.

Risk Management

10. There are no risks associated with this report.

Consultation

11. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

12. It is RECOMMENDED that Members NOTE this report.

FOR INFORMATION

Appendices

13. Appendix 1 – Menopause Briefing Note for managers and supervisors.

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment Screening Form

List of Background Papers

14. None

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Menopause: Guidance for Managers and Supervisors

Policy Statement

Neath Port Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. Managers and supervisors must provide appropriate support to women who are experiencing the menopause.

Aim

This Guidance Note is intended to make managers and supervisors aware of menopause related issues and how they can affect their staff. It provides information on how menopause issues should be dealt with as this is a natural stage of life condition. It aims to create an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for adjustments at work.

It is important to emphasise that every women's experience with the menopause is different and all situations should be managed on individual circumstances.

Introduction

Until recently the subject of the menopause has not been fully considered and understood by employers in relation to the affect that it can have on women in the workplace. As managers and supervisors it is important that you have an understanding of the issues that can affect women going through the menopause in the work place.

The Guidance also outlines what considerations you should have working with women going through menopause and measures that you and the woman concerned can consider.

What is the Menopause

The menopause is the medical term given to a woman who is in the final stages of a menstrual period. It is also referred to as "the change of life". This normally occurs between the ages of 45 – 55 but can occur sooner and continue past the age of 55 years.

Surgical and medical treatments, such as hysterectomy, fertility treatment, endometriosis and hormone therapy as part of someone's transition to a true gender can bring about menopause symptoms.

The changes in the body can range from mild to severe and in some cases the symptoms can be debilitating. Without appropriate support, employees may feel isolated and vulnerable.

Symptoms of the menopause may include (this is not an exhaustive list):-

- Hot flushes
- Sleep disturbance / night sweats which can lead to fatigue / poor concentration / poor memory
- Palpitations
- Urinary Problems
- Heavy and or irregular periods
- Feeling low or depressed / anxiety / panic attacks / mood swings

Whereas the menopause is the time when there have been no periods for 12 consecutive months, women also experience the peri-menopause which is the transition to menopause which typically begins several years before the menopause. During the peri-menopause, women may also experience the above symptoms.

As a supervisor or manager what can you do?

As a manager or supervisor you may need to consider what you, the organisation and the woman experiencing these symptoms can do to reduce and minimise the impact they may have on her performance within the workplace.

Research conducted with women during and after the menopause has documented the importance of their manager or supervisor understanding the menopause and its symptoms and having the ability to discuss this and support women in the work place.

Discussions in relation to this can be done as part of regular supervision or one to one meetings. Any specific needs required by the employee and any reasonable adjustments made to accommodate these needs should be recorded and reviewed at least annually, possibly as part of the performance appraisal meeting. Managers should be aware that confidentiality must be maintained when handling health information and additional advice, information and support can be obtained from the Occupational Health Unit.

This understanding and support has been demonstrated to be crucial in maintaining performance and attendance in the workplace during menopause.

Examples of reasonable adjustments that can be made for women going through the menopause and experiencing symptoms, including those diagnosed with peri-menopausal symptoms are provided below. However, it is important to note that the adjustment should be tailored to the individual and it is essential that managers and supervisors do not make assumptions.

- **Support** – both formal and informal, including Occupational Health Support, if required
- **Flexible Working Arrangements** – may be considered for those experiencing debilitating symptoms. However, this may just be amending usual start and finish times etc

- **Temperature and ventilation** – to assist in managing the physical symptoms in the work place. Consideration should be given to providing a desk fan or heater which can be controlled by the individual, where possible
- **Facilitate a comfortable working environment** – the provision of adequate drinking water supplies, showers/washing facilities, adequate access to toilet facilities – this is particularly important where the employee is not office based.
- **Uniforms** – consideration of providing additional uniforms to ensure individuals can change during the day. Pro Natural fibres like cotton are preferable to synthetic materials if the individual is experiencing hot flushes.

Key to this is information and understanding, the following publications and web sites can provide you with the information you may need to feel confident and comfortable discussing with and managing staff going through menopause.

Further reading / Web sites:

Guidance on Menopause and the Workplace (Faculty of Occupational Medicine)

<http://www.fom.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Guidance-on-menopause-and-the-workplace-v6.pdf>

Health and Work: Menopause Focus

<http://www.fom.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Menopause-Focus-Infographic.pdf>

Work and the Menopause: A Guide for Managers (British Occupational Health Research Foundation research) December 2010.

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/menopause/Pages/Menopausehome.aspx

www.healthtalkonline.org/Later_life/Menopause

www.menopausematters.co.uk