

Menopause in the Workplace: Employers' Role is Critical

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About the research

Menopause can be a significant event in a person's¹ life, with a range of possible associated symptoms including night sweats, hot flushes, low mood, and increased anxiety. A [2017 government report](#) highlighted the effect that a menopause transition can have on women's participation in economic life and the workplace across the UK. Since the publication of this report, there has been an increase in public attention to workplace experiences of menopause transition.

Trade unions and organisations alike have [since taken women's menopause experiences into account](#). This is most likely driven by government intentions to extend the working lives of citizens, with women being seen as a group to encourage to stay in the workplace given their lower participation rates when compared to men in older age. Beyond economic gain, some organisations are also concerned with social responsibility and equality in developing positive workplace environments for all staff members.

This research explored women's experiences of menopause transition in the workplace. We ran a baseline survey open to all ages, men and women (open 7 June – 26 July 2018) with 5399 respondents from the general population. The invitation to participate in the survey was distributed by TUC Education and the authors' professional and private networks. In addition, we facilitated intensive action research at 11 workshops delivered with a TUC Education trainer. These were attended by 139 trade union representatives from nine industries across the public, private and third sector. This policy briefing summarises the key findings and makes recommendations to help employers better support women's participation in the workplace during their menopause transitions.

Policy implications

- Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme staff should offer direct, personalized support and advice to all women.
- Human Resources departments should implement menopause policies, with clear guidelines for employers and employees.
- Employers should train line managers to understand the experience of menopause and how to talk with employees experiencing menopause transitions.
- Trade union representatives should raise awareness and provide direct and personalized support to women experiencing menopause transitions.
- Human Resources departments, internal networks, and line managers can provide training and awareness campaigns to encourage broader menopause awareness that will enable colleagues to be supportive and understanding of the experience of menopause transitions.



¹ Although individuals may experience menopause transition regardless of their gender, this research focuses specifically on cis women's experiences of menopause transition in the workplace.

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Key findings

- **Information seeking:** Participant responses highlighted a general lack of available information and resources in understanding the menopause, particularly related to menopause in a workplace. A majority of participants indicated that their workplace either did not provide information about the menopause (59.4%) or did not know whether their workplace did so (21.8%). In seeking advice on the menopause more broadly, 38.5% had seen their GP, 28.9% had looked for information on the web/consulted books, and 10.5% had not sought advice.
- **Low disclosure:** Although participants indicated that symptoms of menopause transition were impacted by workplace environmental factors including high temperatures, poor ventilation, working times, and high workloads, less than half of participants experiencing menopause transitions had disclosed their menopausal status within their workplace.
- **Protecting privacy and reputation:** Participants had not disclosed their menopausal status for reasons including: it is a private issue and they did not want to talk about it at work; fear that they would be perceived negatively; and that their abilities would be questioned.
- **Teaching opportunities:** Participants were enthusiastic about wanting to receive more information related to menopause in the workplace, noting that the following groups should raise awareness: occupational health (75.7%), Human Resources (75.4%), line managers (63.6%), the women who are affected (60.9%), employee assistance programme staff (46.9%), trade union representatives (46.7%), colleagues (42.6%), and GPs (35.6%).

Further information

Brewis, J., Beck, V., Davies, A. and Matheson, J. (2017) [The Effects of Menopause Transition on Women's Economic Participation in the UK](#), London: Department for Education.

Beck, V., Brewis, J. and Davies, A. (2019) [Women's experiences of menopause transition and performance management](#), Organization, Online First.

Beck, V., Brewis, J. and Davies, A. (2020) [The remains of the taboo: experiences, attitudes, and knowledge about menopause in the workplace](#), Climacteric, 23(2): 158-164.

Jack, G., Riach, K., Bariola, E., Pitts, M., Schapper, J. and Sarrel, P. (2016) Menopause in the workplace: What employers should be doing, Maturitas, 85: 88-95.

Kopenhagen, T. and Guidozi, F. (2015) Working women and the menopause, Climacteric, 18(3): 372-375.

Resources

Women's Health Concern: www.womens-health-concern.org

Menopause Matters: www.menopausematters.co.uk

Daisy Network - For women experiencing premature menopause: www.daisynetwork.org

CIPD Menopause resources: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/menopause>

TUC Wales Menopause Toolkit: www.tuc.org.uk/menopause-workplace-toolkit-trade-unionists-wales-tuc-cymru

Henpicked: www.menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk

Menopause Cafes: www.menopausecafe.net

Contact the researchers

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