

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Staff Governance Committee
<b>DATE</b>	21 November 2022
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Menopause Awareness and Support
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CUS/22/263
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Andy MacDonald, Director of Customer
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Isla Newcombe, Chief Officer – People & Organisational Development
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Darren Buck, Acting People Development Manager
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.6, 3

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on support currently available for employees around menopause, highlight legislation changes in this area that may mean changes to policy, guidance and practice; and seek approval from Committee to sign up to a pledge which will support this area of work.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 agree that the Convener and Vice Convener of Staff Governance Committee sign the Menopause Workplace Pledge run by Wellbeing of Women;
- 2.2 note current and future planned work by People and Organisational Development on menopause support; and
- 2.3 instruct the Chief Officer - People and Organisational Development to report back to committee following the accreditation on this pledge if any further work is required to ensure we are meeting the best practice required including any new policies or updates to policies.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

#### 3.1 Workforce Statistics

- 3.1.1 As of June 2022, Aberdeen City Council has 5,965 female employees. This equates to 70% of our workforce.
- 3.1.2 As of October 2022, our female employees are currently in the below age categories:

Age Group	Headcount
Under 20	32
20-29	783
30-39	1534

40-49	1462
50-59	1571
60-69	554
70-79	39
80-89	Less than 5

3.1.3 Having a predominantly female workforce means that we need to pay particular focus on health and wellbeing issues that can have an impact on our female employees and ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are in place for them. One area of focus is menopause.

### 3.2 Strategic Context

3.2.1 Supporting issues that directly impact our female workforce supports our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Outcomes](#) (approved at Operational Delivery Committee in March 2021 and our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#) (ED&I Action Plan) (approved at Staff Governance Committee in April 2021). Our Equality Outcomes are a requirement of the Council as part of the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010. In our Equality Outcomes, we state that we will improve the diversity of our workforce, address areas of underrepresentation, ensure there are equal opportunities for protected groups and ensure that employees who have protected characteristics feel fully valued, safe and included at work. One of the protected categories that we have prioritised for these outcomes is 'Sex'.

3.2.2 In the [Target Operating Model 1.2](#) which was approved at full Council in August 2022, to achieve the cultural ambitions of the workforce, we commit to supporting “employees to be their whole selves at work”. By supporting our diverse workforce with their diverse needs, including supporting those who are affected by menopause, we will be achieving this. Further detail about how we will seek to do this will be contained within our Workforce Strategy and continue to be included within our ED&I action plan which is our delivery mechanism for these overarching aims.

3.2.3 The Council has already committed to the advancement of gender equality in our workforce as part of the [Equally Safe at Work Accreditation](#). One of the aims of this Accreditation is to improve gender equality through improvements to policy and practice.

3.2.4 Promoting Aberdeen City Council as a supportive employer for those going through the menopause will also support our employer of choice activity.

### 3.3 What is Menopause?

3.3.1 Menopause is a natural stage in life where a female’s oestrogen levels decline resulting in them no longer having periods. Menopausal symptoms can be experienced over several years with it being seen as a transitional period as opposed to a one-off life event. Menopause typically happens between the ages of 45 and 55, though it can affect individuals much earlier than this.

There are 3 stages to menopause:

- **Peri-menopause** - this is the time leading up to menopause when women start to experience irregular periods and other symptoms. This stage can last for a number of years.
- **Menopause** - This is when oestrogen levels decline and periods cease, meaning the end of natural reproductive life. The average age for this is 51, but it can be earlier or later than this.
- **Post-menopause** – this is the time after menopause, when periods have stopped for over a year. Some symptoms of the menopause may continue for as many as 12 years or longer.

NB. It's important to remember that menopause can sometimes happen earlier naturally. Or for reasons such as surgery to remove the ovaries (oophorectomy) or the uterus (hysterectomy), cancer treatments like chemotherapy, or a genetic reason.

3.3.2 Symptoms of menopause can be wide-ranging, both physically and psychologically but common symptoms, [according to BUPA](#)<sup>1</sup>, include:

- psychological issues such as mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression, brain fog, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
  - hot flushes (brief and sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck and chest)
  - sleep disturbance that can make people feel tired and irritable
  - muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
  - recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs) including cystitis
  - headaches
  - palpitations (heartbeats that become more noticeable)
  - skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness)

### 3.4 Why is Menopause Important for Employers?

3.4.1 [According to BUPA](#)<sup>2</sup>, menopausal women are the fastest-growing demographic in the workplace, though it is acknowledged that according to their research, almost a million women have left their jobs because of menopausal symptoms. The same research suggests that for those who have not left their jobs, they are reporting having to take approximately 32 weeks' leave throughout their career because of menopausal symptoms.

3.4.2 It is, therefore, important to ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are in place for those going through the menopause so that they are able to remain in employment and also to ensure that they are able to continue to undertake their roles and duties with any financial or leave implications mitigated against.

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<sup>1</sup> CIPD, in partnership with BUPA, "A Guide to Managing Menopause at Work", May 2021

<sup>2</sup> CIPD, in partnership with BUPA, "A Guide to Managing Menopause at Work", May 2021

### **3.5 Current Support for Menopause**

3.5.1 People and Organisational Development colleagues currently work closely with partners at NHS Grampian and Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) to provide employees and managers with information, advice and guidance and support on menopause

3.5.2 There is a variety of menopause information available on the Council's intranet pages which includes:

- Links to guidance on managing and supporting employees through menopause from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
- NHS Inform pages on menopause
- Menopause factsheets
- FAQs on menopause
- Links to events and activities for employees going through menopause
- Links to the Mighty Oaks Menopause Movement with AHSCP
- Links to mental health and wellbeing support
- ACC Menopause Employee Peer Support network on Yammer

3.5.3 The Council has an eLearning course hosted on ACC learn on Menopause Awareness in the Workplace and is available to all employees.

3.5.4 The Council's Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Guidance includes a statement on menopause

### **3.6 Menopause Workplace Pledge**

3.6.1 The Menopause Workplace Pledge is run by [Wellbeing of Women](#). The Pledge has been signed by organisations such as the Scottish Government, the House of Commons, the Civil Service, as well as many other public and private sector organisations in the UK.

3.6.2 The main purpose of the Menopause Workplace Pledge is to get organisations to commit to being a supportive and understanding place for employees going through the menopause.

3.6.3 The Pledge asks organisations to commit to:

- Recognising that the menopause can be an issue in the workplace and women need support
- Talking openly, positively and respectfully about the menopause
- Actively supporting and informing your employees affected by the menopause

3.6.4 Aberdeen City Council arguably already meets all of the Pledge commitments. However, signing the Pledge will support the organisation's employer of choice activity by signalling to potential candidates, as well as our existing staff, that we are supportive of employees going through the menopause. This will,

ultimately, have a positive impact on the diversity of our workforce and should increase the uptake of support mechanisms by current staff by the raising of awareness amongst staff and managers. It also helps to reduce stigma and increase open conversations around this topic.

### **3.7 Future Work on Menopause**

3.7.1 In addition to the existing programme of work that we have on menopause, People and Organisational Development are cognisant of potential and proposed future developments in legislation which may require:

- A menopause policy
- Offering menopause leave
- Offering reasonable adjustments for menopause

3.7.2 These are actions that we would wish to take forward regardless of the legislation to ensure appropriate support for employees going through the menopause and will be included in our equality, diversity and inclusion action plan. We plan to discuss this further with our relevant Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working group and network.

3.7.3 The Council already has provisions in place for menopause within the Supporting Attendance procedure and special leave provisions such as compassionate leave are available to employees and could be used for those going through menopause symptoms. In addition, the Council is also developing Reasonable Adjustment Passports, approved at Staff Governance Committee in October 2022 for employees and these could be used as a tool for supporting employees going through menopause. While these provisions are already in place, we want to ensure that they are more visible and accessible.

### **3.8 Next Steps**

3.8.1 Should approval be granted to sign the above pledge, this will be done by the Convener and Vice Convener of Staff Governance Committee and communications issued both internally and externally.

3.8.2 Following this, a review will be undertaken against relevant policies and procedures in line with the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan and with engagement and inclusion of our relevant working groups, to determine if any changes or amendments should be made.

3.8.3 If any further work is required to ensure we are meeting the best practice required, including any new policies or updates to policies, this will be reported back to committee accordingly.

## **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

## 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>		No significant risks identified		
<b>Compliance</b>		No significant risks identified		
<b>Operational</b>		No significant risks identified		
<b>Financial</b>		No significant risks identified		
<b>Reputational</b>		No significant risks identified		
<b>Environment / Climate</b>		No significant risks identified		

## 8. OUTCOMES

<u><a href="#">Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</a></u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the below outcomes:  2.2 Increasing the number of people in Aberdeen in sustained, fair work.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	The proposals within this report support the below statement from the TOM 1.2: “to support employees to be their whole selves at work” It also works towards our two Equality Outcomes as an employer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the diversity of our workforce and address any areas of underrepresentation, ensuring that there are equal opportunities for</li> </ul>

	<p>all protected groups (with consideration for both internal employees and external applicants), with a particular and prioritised focus on Age, Disability, Race and Sex.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that all of our employees who have protected characteristics feel fully valued, safe and included at work, with a particular and prioritised focus on Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Race, Sex and Sexual orientation.</li> </ul>
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## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	<a href="#">Integrated Impact Assessment - Menopause and Pregnancy Loss.docx</a>
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not Required
<b>Other</b>	Not Applicable

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report](#), Operational Delivery Committee, March 2021, CUS/21/051
- 10.2 [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#), Staff Governance Committee, April 2021, RES/21/077
- 10.3 [Equally Safe at Work Employer Accreditation Programme](#), Staff Governance Committee, April 2021, RES/21/092
- 10.4 [EAS Six Monthly Update January 2022 – June 2022 Occupational Health and Absence update January 2022 – June 2022](#), Staff Governance Committee, October 2022, CUS/22/217

## 11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 There are no appendices to this report.

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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