## Supporting Staff Through Menopause

### Introduction

1. The Cairngorms National Park Authority (the Park Authority) is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in the workplace. We are committed to ensuring all out policies and behaviours embrace the Park Authority’s 4 principles of; Passion and Dedication; Community; Pioneering; and Inspiring Leadership. We are also committed to supporting and enhancing the wellbeing of members of staff and manage related issues effectively.
2. In this regard, the Park Authority will provide appropriate support to staff who are experiencing symptoms associated with the menopause, whilst supporting line managers by providing guidance. It’s important that the Park Authority understands the difficulties and anxieties of staff currently going through the menopause and that we manage this issue by raising awareness, and providing training and development for all line managers and colleagues.
3. In this regard, the Park Authority has committed to the Menopause Workplace Pledge. [Sign the Menopause Workplace Pledge](https://www.wellbeingofwomen.org.uk/menopause-workplace-pledge/)

### Scope and Purpose

1. This policy applies to all Park Authority employees. The purpose of this policy and supporting guidance is to:
* Create an environment where staff feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work
* Promote guidance which will provide direction and clarity on how to support staff who raise menopause related issues, either for individuals experiencing this or those who are indirectly affected e.g. line managers, partners and colleagues.
* Inform managers about the possible symptoms of menopause, what the consequences can be and what they can do to support staff experiencing these symptoms at work.
* Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.

### Definitions

1. Menopause affects anyone who has periods, and is a natural part of ageing that takes place when they stop menstruating and reach the end of their natural reproductive life. It is sometimes known as the ‘change of life’. It usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as the oestrogen hormone levels decline. In the UK, the average age to reach menopause is 51. However, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons. The length of time menopause lasts can vary from only a few months to many years. The average is 4 years. As a result of these hormonal changes, many people experience both physical and emotional symptoms.
2. Peri-menopause is the transition stage before reaching menopause. Peri means ‘around’ and so is used to describe the time when changes that lead to menopause are experienced, such as irregular periods or other symptoms. The peri-menopause stage can last for years before reaching menopause.
3. Post-menopause is the time following the last period, and is usually defined as more than 12 months with no periods (if menopause is reached naturally), or immediately following surgery if the ovaries have been removed.

### Symptoms of Menopause

1. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically. They can be severe, but for some there will be few/no symptoms, and not everyone will need help or support. Typical symptoms can include:
* Hot flushes
* Sweats
* Difficulty sleeping
* Problems with memory and concentration
* Headaches
* Anxiety / panic attacks
* Light/heavy periods
* Fibroids which can cause haemorrhaging or “flooding”
* Loss of confidence
* Palpitations
* Joint stiffness, aches and pains
* Reduced muscle mass
* The menopause can also increase the risk of developing certain other problems, such as weak bones (osteoporosis).

### Responsibilities

#### Organisation

1. The Park Authority has a legal duty of care to employees to ensure health at work, as set out in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Through the Park Authority’s Health and Safety Committee, the Park Authority will ensure that its policies and practices reflect this duty and review the operation of these at regular intervals.

#### Line Managers

1. Line managers must familiarise themselves with this policy and guidance, and the guidance in appendix 1, as well as the Park Authority’s policies on Equality and Diversity and Health and Wellbeing.
2. Line managers should also:
* Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
* Some people are not comfortable discussing these issues with their line managers and in these circumstances, the line manager should sign post the employee to HR if the employee requests this.
* Use the guidance in Appendices 1 and 2, signposting and reviewing with the member of staff before agreeing how best they can be supported and any adjustments required;
* Record adjustments agreed and actions to be implemented;
* Ensure ongoing conversations take place and set review dates;
* Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.
1. Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, a referral to Occupational Health may be considered.

#### Human Resources

1. The HR team will develop organisation-wide policies and procedures to protect the health and wellbeing of employees, assist line managers in supporting individuals, and liaise as appropriate with occupational health and other medical professionals, with the object of supporting employees to maintain good physical and psychological health.
2. A key priority for HR is to help create a working environment where Park Authority staff are supported. To do this the HR team will:
* Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this policy and guidance
* Be available to any member of staff who wishes to discuss menopause and who would prefer to discuss this with HR than with their line manager
* Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and review as required.

#### Employees

1. Staff must take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing and informing the organisation if they believe their work or the work environment poses a risk to their health. If employees believe that their work, or some aspect of it, is putting their wellbeing at risk they should, in the first instance, speak to their line manager or the HR team.
2. Any health-related information disclosed by an employee during discussions with managers, the HR team or the occupational health service is treated in confidence.
3. Staff should be willing to help and support their colleagues.

### Other Support for Menopause

#### Menopause Support Group

1. Recognising that a significant proportion of CNPA staff are women who fall into the peri-menopause, menopause and post-menopause age range, a MS Teams support group has been set up, this is a self-driven group with no corporate intervention. The purpose of the group is to provide peer support, to share information and seek guidance and advice. Any individual wishing to be part of this group should contact the HR team.
2. Appendix 1 sets out a variety of interventions and measures that can be implemented to support many of the symptoms of menopause. Some of these are:
* Access to Occupational health service.
* Employee assistance programme (see para 21 below)
* Opportunities for hybrid and flexible working.
* Free sanitary products available in all toilets.
* Wellbeing room offering secure, private space for any member of staff needing it
* Free supply of black leggings in various sizes available for staff in the Wellbeing room.
* Reasonable Adjustments Passport policy which staff can take with them when they move roles.

### Related Policies

1. This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant CNPA policies and procedures, including:
* Absence management.
* Dignity at work.
* Equal opportunities.
* Flexitime.
* Health & wellbeing.
* Leave.
* Stress.
* Work/life balance.

### Further Sources of Information/Support

1. All employees can access counselling through the Park Authority’s Employee Assistance Programme by calling 0800 587 5670. All calls are free, confidential and available 24 hours, 7 days a week throughout the year. Further information can be found at: www.sg.helpeap.com
2. NHS [Menopause - NHS](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/)
3. Women’s Health Concern (patient arm for the British Menopause Society): [The menopause - Women's Health Concern](https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause/)

### Laws Relating to this Document

1. Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

### Monitoring and Review

1. This policy shall be reviewed periodically or exceptionally upon request.
2. This policy is intended to provide guidance but is not contractual and does not form a part of any employee’s terms and conditions of employment.

**Policy Owner: HR**

**Approved By: SCF**

**Date Approved: 25 March 2019**

**Date Reviewed: October 2024 (updated onto new branded template)**

## Appendix 1

## Managers’ Guidance for colleague discussions

We recognise that everyone is different, and it is, therefore, not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines.

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if they wish to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

* Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
* Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
* Encourage them to speak openly and honestly;
* Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below) – provide the Menopause Advice Factsheet if appropriate

[15-WHC-FACTSHEET-The-Menopause-NOV2022-B.pdf](https://www.womens-health-concern.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/15-WHC-FACTSHEET-The-Menopause-NOV2022-B.pdf)

* Agree actions, and how to implement them (you could use the template at Appendix 2 to record the meeting, or you could use the Reasonable Adjustments Passport template [Reasonable Adjustments Passport Template.docx](https://cairngormuk.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/g/Ed7vHBFtE81HlF7TukxyIEYBzPoZjmt9Y2FSr4UADQpM-g?e=XQIcYK)), so that all parties agree what has been discussed, and the next steps, before the meeting ends. Ensure that this record is treated as confidential, and is stored securely in the Corporate Services/Corporate Management/Appraisals folder.
* Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
* Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting.

### Symptoms Support

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including, but not exhaustively or exclusively; support should be considered as detailed below:

#### Hot Flushes

* Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk (where possible a USB connected desk fan to ensure environmentally friendly) or moving near a window, or away from a heat source;
* Easy access to drinking water;
* Have access to a space for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area (eg the Wellbeing room) if they need to manage a severe hot flush.

#### Heavy/Light periods

* Have access to toilet facilities. with suitable waste disposal facilities as well as washing cleaning facilities.
* Access to sanitary products in all neutral toilets
* Supply of free black leggings in various sizes available in the Wellbeing room

#### Headaches

* Have ease of access to fresh drinking water;
* Offer a quiet space to work;
* Have time out to take medication if needed.

#### Exhaustion and Difficulty Sleeping

* Suggest they make full use of flexible working, particularly when suffering from a lack of sleep. Flexible working in these circumstances may include later starting times, or a request for a temporary reduction in hours

#### Low Mood

* Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;
* Identify a ‘time out space’ to be able to go to ‘clear their head’;

#### Loss of Confidence

* Ensure there are regular personal development discussions;
* Have time with their manager to discuss any issues;
* Have agreed protected time to catch up with work following discussions.

#### Poor Concentration

* Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly;
* Review task allocation and workload;
* Offer quiet space to work;
* Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having ‘protected time’, so that they are not disturbed;
* Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

#### Anxiety

* Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
* Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk.

#### Panic Attacks

* Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;
* Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
* Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk.

Remember, where appropriate in your discussions, you can provide the employee with the Freephone number for counselling support through the Park Authority’s Employee Assistance Provider, 0800 587 5670 ([www.sg.helpeap.com](http://www.sg.helpeap.com))

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.

If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to discuss an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.

For any further advice or guidance, please speak to the HR team.

## Appendix 2

## Confidential Colleague Discussion – Template

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Employee’s Name | Job Title |
| Job Title: |  |
| Directorate  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Line Managers Name: |  |
| Date of discussion: |  |

Summary of Discussion:

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Agreed Actions/Adjustments:

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Date of next review meeting ..................................................................................................

Signed (Member of staff) ..................................................................................................

Signed (Line Manager) ..................................................................................................