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| **Policy Title: Menopause Policy** |
| **Date policy began:** 14-11-2022  **Date of last change:** 14-11-2022  **Review date:** 14-11-2023  **Approved by:** Liz Geddes |

**Introduction**

The Diocese of Chester is committed to the care of its staff and clergy and aims to deal fairly and sympathetically with those who are experiencing menopausal symptoms. It recognises that, for someone experiencing symptoms, it can be a difficult and stressful time and that it is a very sensitive and personal matter which can greatly impact an individual’s work and home life.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all clergy and employees (lay and clergy) of the Diocese of Chester.

**Principles**

The main aims of this policy are to:

* Define the terms ‘menopause’ and ‘perimenopause’, and describe common symptoms;
* Set out the rights of those experiencing menopausal symptoms;
* Explain the support which is available to affected staff members and clergy, both the support offered by the organisation, and external support; and
* Signpost to the appropriate policy and procedure if symptoms lead to sickness absence.

**Definitions**

The menopause is a natural event in most women's lives during which they stop having periods and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years.

However, it is important to note that each woman's experience will differ and menopausal symptoms can occasionally begin before the age of 40.

Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause. Women may start to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause.

While symptoms vary greatly, they commonly include:

* hot flushes;
* night sweats;
* anxiety;
* dizziness;
* fatigue;
* memory loss;
* depression;
* headaches;
* recurrent urinary tract infections;
* joint stiffness, aches and pains;
* reduced concentration; and
* heavy periods.

Each of these symptoms can affect a woman's comfort and performance at work. The organisation commits to trying to ensure that appropriate adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing menopausal symptoms.

**Available support**

The organisation aims to facilitate an open, understanding working environment. Women are encouraged at an early stage to inform their line manager, and / or the HR department, that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms to ensure that symptoms are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health. Early notification will also help line managers and / or the HR department to determine the most appropriate course of action to support a woman's individual needs. All discussions on this subject will be kept confidential.

**Diocesan Staff - Reasonable adjustments**

1. **Temperature control**: The organisation strives to achieve a comfortable working temperature for employees.

* Church House is equipped with an air conditioning system.
* Chilled water is available in each of the kitchen areas.
* Desk fans can be provided if a request is made to HR.
* The organisation will allow flexibility within its dress code where reasonable.

1. **Flexible working**: The organisation recognises that difficulty in sleeping is a common symptom of the menopause. To reflect this, as well as the impact of other common symptoms, the DBF will consider flexible working requests. It is important to remember that the DBF also offers a flexitime system for ad hoc changes to working hours. Requests for flexible working could include asking for:

* a change to the pattern of hours worked;
* permission to perform work from home;
* a reduction in working hours; or
* more frequent breaks.

Employees should discuss such requests with their line manager and HR. Depending on the circumstances, requests may be approved on a permanent or temporary basis.

**Clergy**

Those clergy experiencing difficulties should speak to the HR department, the Dean of Women in Ministry or to their Archdeacon to determine what appropriate support might be available.

**Support available**

**Health Assured**

Health Assured provides the Diocesan Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The EAP has a 24/7 helpline and website for all clergy and employees of the Diocese of Chester, and their immediate family members, to access. Clergy and Employees are able to seek support and advice on a wide range of issues including coping with menopausal symptoms. If you require access details, please contact the HR department.

**Occupational Health**

Where appropriate, an employee or member of clergy experiencing symptoms may be referred to Occupational Health through the HR department.

**Other support**

There are a number of external sources of help and support including:

* Menopause matters, which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options;

<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

* The Daisy Network charity, which provides support for women experiencing

premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency;

<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>

* The Menopause Café, which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause.

<https://www.menopausecafe.net/>

**Sickness absence**

Severe menopausal symptoms may lead to sickness absence. In this case, the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure will apply.

**Reporting the absence**

The usual Sickness absence reporting policies and procedures apply.

Staff should follow the requirements in the Absence policy and procedures available on the Staff Intranet.

Clergy should follow the Clergy Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure available on the Diocese of Chester website:

<https://www.chester.anglican.org/clergy-policies-and-procedures-7993.php>

The HR department can be contacted for any further guidance or support with this policy.

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