

EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Menopause

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1. Scope & Purpose

- 1.1. The Lothian Group recognises that menopause may impact all employees at some point in their lives, either directly or indirectly.
- 1.2. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that employees are supported through this natural but often challenging stage of life, without adding further pressure or worries at work.
- 1.3. This policy is intended to support anyone experiencing menopause, regardless of gender identity, and also recognises the potential indirect impact on employees who are supporting a partner, friend, family member or colleague through menopause.
- 1.4. The key aims of the policy are:
 - to raise awareness of menopause as an issue that all employees need to know about;
 - to foster a diverse and inclusive culture that encourages open and respectful discussion between colleagues;

- to encourage colleagues to feel confident discussing their health and wellbeing and to ask for support if they need it;
- to educate managers on their role and responsibilities in supporting colleagues experiencing menopause;
- to enable employees experiencing menopause to manage their symptoms and to thrive at work;
- to ensure the Lothian Group is operating within current legislation and best practice.

2. Our commitment

2.1. The Lothian Group is committed to:

- ensuring that all employees experiencing menopause are treated with dignity, empathy and respect in the workplace;
- raising awareness of the scale, importance and potential impact of menopause, through dedicated discussion and training;
- providing support to anyone who needs it, through practical workplace adjustments and/or signposting to relevant resources;
- establishing a support network across the Lothian Group;
- safeguarding the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of employees during a natural stage of life.

3. Legislation

3.1. The following legislation may apply to menopause:

- Equality Act 2010, which protects workers against discrimination;
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

3.2. Menopause is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, however if an employee is treated less favourably because of menopause symptoms, and this is related to age, disability, gender reassignment or sex, this could be discrimination.

3.3. The Lothian Group recognises its legal responsibility to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and will assess any aspects of the working environment that may worsen menopause symptoms or present a risk to health and wellbeing.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. Menopause is a natural life stage experienced by women, transgender men, non-binary people and intersex people.
- 4.2. Menopause signals the end of menstrual periods and should be understood as a transition over several years, rather than a 'one-off' event.
- 4.3. In most cases menopause is caused by the natural decline of oestrogen levels, and typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, although it can occur sooner or later.
- 4.4. Menopause can also occur due to certain surgeries or medical treatments, and in these cases the symptoms can be more sudden and/or severe.
- 4.5. For clarity, the term 'menopause' in this policy refers to all stages of menopause as outlined below:
 - **Peri-menopause** describes the time leading up to menopause, when someone may start to experience symptoms and less frequent and/or irregular periods.

- **Menopause** describes the time when someone has gone 12 months without having a period and continues to experience menopause symptoms.
- **Post-menopause** describes the time after menopause has been reached, when symptoms may ease or stop completely.
- **Early menopause** is when menopause occurs before the age of 45 and premature menopause before the age of 40. Early and premature menopause can occur naturally or as a result of certain surgeries or medical treatments.

5. Symptoms of Menopause

- 5.1. Everyone's experience of menopause is different but the majority will experience some physical or emotional symptoms at some point. Symptoms can range from mild to severe and can have a significant impact on everyday life.
- 5.2. Symptoms can be short-term or long-term. They may ease or disappear over time and/or new symptoms may occur at any stage.
- 5.3. Lothian is committed to providing support and assistance to anyone whose symptoms are having an adverse impact on their everyday life and wellbeing.

6. Support for Symptoms

- 6.1. Some people may require more or less support than others, or different types of support e.g. depending on the severity of symptoms and/or their job role. The level and type of support required may also vary throughout the different stages of menopause.
- 6.2. Anyone in need of support should speak to their line manager in the first instance. If for any reason they feel unable to speak to their line manager, they can contact a member of the People Team for support.
- 6.3. The Lothian Group's confidential Employee Assistance Programme (CRISIS Counselling) is available to all employees who may benefit from support with emotional symptoms such as stress, anxiety or depression, including those who are supporting a partner or family member through menopause.
- 6.4. All permanent Lothian employees are enrolled free of charge in the HSF Health Cash Plan, which provides access to over 35 benefits including HSF Assist, offering a GP Advice Line, Virtual Doctor, Counselling Service and

Health Information. Further information is available on the Ops Hub.

- 6.5. With the agreement of the employee, managers may refer them to Lothian's occupational health specialist. The purpose of this referral is to gain a better understanding of the employee's symptoms and the impact on their wellbeing both inside and outside of work. The medical report obtained will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be used to inform reasonable adjustments or other support to help manage symptoms at work.
- 6.6. Managers have a responsibility to explore and discuss all aspects of support and reasonable adjustments with employees, with a focus on providing the right support at the right time.
- 6.7. Depending on the individual circumstances and taking into account business needs, reasonable adjustments may include, for example:
 - **for sleep problems:** a permanent or temporary change to working patterns, i.e. through a flexible working request (see Linked Policies, Flexible Working;

- **for hot flushes or chills:** frequent access to drinking water, extra uniform items;
- **for heavier periods or bladder weakness:** more frequent toilet breaks and/or ensuring good access to toilet facilities (see LB Roads for information on the location of toilets by service).
- **for side effects of hormone replacement therapy (HRT):** temporary amended duties or ad hoc changes to working patterns at times when the side effects are most severe.

6.8. Adjustments should be reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to meet individual and business needs, bearing in mind that symptoms and circumstances may change over time.

7. Attendance & Performance

- 7.1. The physical and emotional symptoms of menopause affect everyone differently and in some cases can have an adverse impact on attendance and performance. In such cases, menopause-related attendance or performance issues must be handled sensitively, with the initial focus on support and flexibility, rather than a formal approach.

- 7.2. This policy recognises that many employees may not wish to disclose menopause as a reason or underlying cause of issues at work, due to the highly personal and sensitive nature of the subject. However, employees have a duty to disclose all concerns, medical or otherwise, that may impact their ability to perform their job role. Employees are encouraged to share as much information as they feel comfortable, to ensure that full consideration can be given. If for any reason an employee feels unable to share information with their line manager, they can contact a member of the People Team for additional support.

7.3. Attendance

- 7.3.1. For some employees, symptoms of menopause may be so debilitating that they are unable to attend work, resulting in short-term or long-term absence.
- 7.3.2. As with any absence, employees who cannot attend work due to menopause symptoms must follow the absence reporting procedure in accordance with Lothian's Attendance Policy.
- 7.3.3. In cases of absence due to menopause symptoms, it is important that colleagues share the genuine reason for absence to ensure they are offered the appropriate support and consideration for their symptoms.
- 7.3.4. Any concerns about menopause-related absence should, in the first instance, be discussed informally between the line manager and employee in a wellbeing meeting, which should be arranged in accordance with Lothian's Attendance Policy. The People Team can provide additional support and advice before, during or after such meetings, as required.

7.4. Performance

- 7.4.1. For some employees, menopause symptoms may be so pronounced that they impact performance at work. For example, sleep problems, headaches, fatigue and brain fog can be particularly intrusive at work.
- 7.4.2. Performance issues (where there is no wilful misconduct on the employee's part) should always be handled with care and sensitivity, in accordance with Lothian's Managing Performance Policy.
- 7.4.3. In the first instance, performance issues should be discussed informally between the manager and employee with a focus on identifying and addressing any underlying causes. For any such discussions, a member of the People Team can provide additional support and advice, if required.
- 7.4.4. If an employee feels that their menopause symptoms are adversely impacting their performance at work, it is important that they share this with their line manager or a member of the People Team to ensure they are offered the appropriate support and consideration for their symptoms.

8. Confidentiality

- 8.1. Any personal information disclosed by the employee in relation to menopause, and/or all medical information obtained from an occupational health specialist or GP, shall be treated sensitively and in the strictest confidence.
- 8.2. Information shall not be disclosed without the prior knowledge and full consent of the employee, and then only on a 'need to know' basis.
- 8.3. Any breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action. Any concerns about confidentiality should be reported to a manager or a member of the HR team.

9. Useful links

www.acas.org.uk/

www.crisiscounselling.co.uk/

www.menopausesupport.co.uk

www.nhsinform.scot/

www.themenopausecharity.org/

[LB Roads: Roadworks Map](#)

10. Linked policies

- Attendance Policy
- Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Managing Performance Policy

11. Version control

Version No.	Date of Change	Change made by:	Key Amendments
V1.0	July 2023	H Devereux	Published

This policy does not form part of employees' terms and conditions of employment and may be varied from time to time in accordance with business and legislative requirements.