

Menopause Policy

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1. What is the Menopause?

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women's lives. It is marked by changes in hormones over a period of time during which periods stop. For some it will be medically induced through surgery or medical treatments. 'Going through the menopause' can take several years. About 70% of women experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms and it has been found that approximately 60% of women find their working life negatively affected by symptoms.

Each woman will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partner, families and colleagues as well.

Some women with pre-existing health conditions, may find that the menopause can aggravate their existing health conditions or even trigger new ones. Menopausal symptoms can in turn also be made worse by any pre-existing health conditions.

2. Policy Statement

Every experience of the menopause is different and not every woman¹ will experience menopausal symptoms. However, some women experiencing the menopause and menopausal symptoms, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change may need additional consideration and support with some adjustments made to their working patterns or conditions.

Every woman's personal and professional circumstances are different. Because of this, it is neither feasible nor desirable to provide a policy with a structured set of specific actions that office holders or senior clergy should take when seeking to support office holders experiencing the menopause.

This menopause policy aims to develop and promote an environment and culture that supports office holders experiencing the menopause, so they can feel confident about raising issues relating to their symptoms and seek help with reasonable adjustments to help them carry out their role and perform their duties.

This policy also reflects the Diocese of Newcastle's commitment to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all office holders, as well as its commitment to equality and diversity within the ministerial environment and culture.

3. Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

- Enable office holders experiencing the menopause to continue to be effective and feel supported in their role;
- Foster a supportive ministerial environment to help reduce or prevent absenteeism and the stress of trying to manage menopausal symptoms;
- Help Churchwardens, Clergy in positions of responsibility², Area Deans and Archdeacons or those to whom office holders are accountable, to understand how

¹ This document equally applies to anyone who experiences the menopause

² For example a Training Incumbent or a Team Rector

the menopause can affect an office holder, and how we as an organisation at parish, deanery, archdeaconry and diocesan level can help to support those office holders experiencing the menopause to carry out their role and perform their duties.

- Raise awareness amongst office holders of their rights and responsibilities with regards their experiencing of the menopause and any menopausal symptoms, as well as the rights and responsibilities of their colleagues.
- Foster an environment in which office holders can openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner.
- Offer full assurance to office holders that they will not be subject to any disadvantage if they take up any of the support available or request changes to their work patterns or how they perform their duties.
- Encourage office holders to request to be signposted to a different officer if they are uncomfortable sharing their personal and sensitive menopausal experiences with those to whom they are accountable. It should be noted the office holder may be asked to give their consent to the sharing of some information relating to their menopausal experience and symptoms with their Area Dean or Archdeacon to aid in the provision appropriate support.
- Reassure office holders that a 'need to know' only approach will be taken, keeping to an absolute minimum the number of people who are informed or involved in discussions regarding the provision of support and adjustments.
- Underline the importance of confidentiality and privacy by all concerned if other church officers need to be involved in the provision of support and adjustments.
- Highlight the need for all matters relating to an office holder's menopause and any requests for support and/or adjustments to be dealt with sensitively and in confidence and in accordance with the Diocese of Newcastle's Data Protection Policy.
- Ensure office holders are aware that if they require some support during any meetings with church officers they can request the support of a companion office holder.
- Raise wider awareness and understanding among all office holders about the menopause.
- Outline the support and reasonable adjustments available.
- Help all engaged with the support of office holders across the Diocese of Newcastle to be recognised for fostering a supportive ministerial environment and culture, enabling the recruitment and retention of office holders experiencing the menopause.

This policy does not form part of the Statement of Particulars and it may be amended at any time. It may change because of amendments in the law.

4. Who is Covered by the Policy

This policy is intended to apply to all current and new office holders of the Diocese of Newcastle, including all persons beneficed, licensed or otherwise authorised by the Bishop for ministry in the Diocese of Newcastle. This includes all clergy holding office under Common Tenure, Qualified Common Tenure and Freehold and applies equally to Archdeacons, Cathedral Clergy and Bishops.

5. Self-management for Office Holders Experiencing the Menopause

- a) Office holders experiencing menopausal symptoms are encouraged not to suffer in silence. They are encouraged to consider:
 - Seeking medical advice from a GP or other relevant health care professional.
 - Discussing symptoms with their Clergy in posts of responsibility, Area Dean, Archdeacon and request assistance with appropriate adjustments to the ministerial environment or working pattern.
- b) Office holders are encouraged to make healthy lifestyle choices that may help with some of the symptoms such as:
 - Drinking plenty of water.
 - Eating healthily and regularly: research has shown a balanced diet can help in alleviating some symptoms.
 - Exercising regularly: to reduce hot flushes, improve sleep, boost mood and maintain aerobic fitness levels.
 - Having access to natural light.
 - Not smoking: to help reduce hot flushes and the risk of developing serious conditions.
 - Ensuring alcohol intake is within recommended levels and cutting down on caffeine and spicy food all of which can trigger hot flushes.
 - Staying cool at night: wearing loose clothes and ensuring the bedroom is well ventilated to help with hot flushes and night sweats.
 - Ensuring adequate rest and relaxation to reduce stress levels and improve mood.
- c) Office holders are encouraged to:
 - Inform their Clergy in posts of responsibility, Area Dean or Archdeacon if/when their need for any adjustment changes.
 - Report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause. If an office holder is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another office holder in relation to the menopause, this will be considered a disciplinary offence.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

- a) Clergy in posts of responsibility, Area Deans and Archdeacons are responsible for:
 - Ensuring all office holders and churchwardens are aware of this policy; and that they understand their own and the office holder's responsibilities.
 - Encouraging appropriate discussions with office holders, when this is raised by them, regarding the impact of their menopausal symptoms on carrying out their roles and performing their duties, and on their professional relationships and relationships with those they serve.
 - Knowing how to enable those who need help to access the support available and the adjustments that can be offered.
 - Respecting the personal and sensitive nature of any conversations regarding an office holder's menopause and ensuring any discussions or requests for support

or adjustments are held in confidence and conducted in a professional manner, all in accordance with the Diocese of Newcastle's Data Protection Policy.

- Considering all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and not discriminating against those office holders who are experiencing the menopause; and putting in place the required support or adjustments in a timely manner.
- Ensuring a 'need to know' only approach is taken, keeping to an absolute minimum the number of people who are informed or involved in discussions and ensuring appropriate consent is obtained from office holders for third party discussions.
- Encouraging office holders to make use of the support of a companion office holder during any meetings with church officers and helping the office holder identify a willing and competent companion.
- Signposting office holders to the Pastoral and Counselling Support provided by the Diocese of Newcastle and outlined in the Clergy Handbook.
- Recording in writing any substantial adjustments to an office holder's working patterns or changes to the performing of their duties; ensuring an ongoing dialogue between themselves and the office holder and any key church officers; ensuring all agreed adjustments are implemented.
- Ensuring reviews of the arrangements are conducted to ascertain if they are still appropriate and practicable.
- Highlighting the need for confidentiality to be maintained throughout any period of support and adjustment.

b) The Diocese of Newcastle is responsible for:

- Providing all office holders with appropriate information so they can better understand and discuss as needed the effects of the menopause
- Supporting and guiding parish representatives (Churchwardens, PCC members etc) who are negotiating any significant changes and adjustments to an office holder's work patterns and the performing of their duties.
- Ensuring any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation relating to the menopause are taken seriously and investigated appropriately using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.
- Ensuring all policies and procedures take account of the effects of the menopausal symptoms so any office holders experiencing the menopause are not disadvantaged because of their symptoms.
- Offering further support when adjustments have not been successful, or symptoms have proven to be more problematic to manage than anticipated. Any further support will be discussed with the office holder and they will be able to review the advice received and implement the recommendations where reasonably practicable.
- Informing their Clergy in posts of responsibility, Area Dean or Archdeacon if/when their need for any adjustment changes. Reporting any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause. If an office holder is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another office holder in relation to the menopause, this will be considered a disciplinary offence.

7. Support and Reasonable Adjustments

The Diocese of Newcastle aims to:

- Provide as much support for office holders as is reasonably practicable and ensure Officers, Clergy in posts of responsibility, Area Deans and Archdeacons support office holders sympathetically.
- Provide an alternative contact to office holders experiencing the menopause should they not feel comfortable discussing their problems with their Clergy in posts of responsibility, Area Dean or Archdeacon. If this is the case please contact the Administrative Lead at Church House, North Shields who will arrange an alternative contact.
- Ensure, Clergy in posts of responsibility, Area Deans and Archdeacons make allowances if there is an additional need for sickness absence by office holders experiencing menopausal symptoms to manage those symptoms. The menopause will be considered as an ongoing condition requiring the consideration of reasonable adjustments and flexibility in absence procedure. The obligations and rights for office holders, if they are unable to perform their duties because of sickness, are set out in Regulations 27 and 28 of *The Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009*.

8. Assessments for Reasonable Adjustments

- a) Clergy in posts of responsibility, Area Deans and Archdeacons may need to help identify reasonable adjustments. The areas to consider are:
 - The ministerial environment including temperature and ventilation.
 - Access to adequate toilets, sanitary provision and washing/changing facilities.
 - Access to drinking water.
 - Adequate working times and break times.
 - Workload and work patterns
 - Bullying and harassment.
- b) Office holders who are experiencing menopausal symptoms can apply for the following adjustments to support them in a workplace setting (where their main workplace is outside of their accommodation provided by the Diocese):
 - Control over environmental factors: such as the provision of desk fans on request; review of office seating plans so affected office holders can be near the window or open doors, or away from direct sources of heat such as radiators; fitting blinds to windows.
 - Provision of greater access to chilled drinking water.
 - Access to toilets, sanitary provision and changing/washing facilities for office holders to change clothes during the working day.
 - Flexibility around the taking of breaks, or increased breaks during the working day, in which case the office holder may need to arrange cover as necessary for these breaks.
 - Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments.

- Temporary changes to the office holders' duties, such as carrying out fewer high visibility activities, such as giving formal presentations or running meetings as it can be difficult to cope with symptoms such as hot flushes,
- Flexibility around working times if an office holder is affected at particular times of the day.

9. Flexible Working Patterns

Flexible working, as it is understood in the employment context, does not apply to office holders. The *Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Directions 2010* currently confer a legal entitlement on office holders to make requests to take time off or adjust the duties of the office to care for a dependant, but not for other reasons (see paragraphs 20 -32). When the right to request flexible working was extended to all employees, the view was taken that it was not appropriate to extend it to office holders, as they already had sufficient flexibility.

Depending on the severity of the office holder's menopausal symptoms and the changes needed to manage these symptoms other church officers may also need to be informed or included in any discussions, this may include church wardens, PCC members, church workers and official volunteers. Where this is the case, every effort will be made by the Clergy in posts of responsibility, Area Dean, or Archdeacon to make this process as tactful and sensitive as possible.

10. Further Guidance and Information

For further guidance and information on the symptoms and for advice on how to manage the symptoms please refer to the following links:

- British Menopause Society (BSM)
www.thebms.org.uk/
- Daisy Network
www.daisynetwork.org
- Menopause Matters
www.menopausematters.co.uk
- NHS information:
www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause
- NICE guidelines on 'Menopause: diagnosis and treatment':
www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information
- The Menopause Exchange
www.menopause-exchange.co.uk
- Women's Health Concern
www.womens-health-concern.org