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Sheachadadh PFN agus Athchóirithe
Department of Public Expenditure
NDP Delivery and Reform

Menopause in the Workplace Policy Framework

For Civil Service Organisations

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Foreword from Minister

I am delighted to support the introduction of a *Menopause in the Workplace Policy Framework* for the Civil Service.

This government has made women's health a top priority in recognition of the need to tackle a wide range of issues impacting women's health outcomes in Ireland.

The Programme for Government committed to supporting the work of the Women's Health Taskforce and I welcome the collaboration between my Department and members of the Taskforce in the development of this policy framework.



The *Women's Health Radical Listening Report* was published in 2021 following a nationwide large scale consultation with women on issues affecting their experience of the health sector and health care in Ireland. Through this process, the taboo around discussing menopause, and a lack of trusted information, were consistently raised as key issues for women experiencing menopause. The workplace was also cited as a place where women did not feel comfortable in discussing their experiences of menopause and the impact of menopause on their working lives.

For some, the symptoms of the menopause can be extremely debilitating and, therefore, it's absolutely crucial that those who need access to support at work feel confident to ask. Over 26,000 women are employed in the Civil Service and they account for over 50% of our workforce. By normalising the conversation around menopause and raising awareness about its potential impact, we can ensure that those impacted have the necessary support and resources needed to manage this important transition in their lives.

Over the coming months, Departments/Offices will finalise and progressively roll out their individual long-term Menopause in the Workplace policies and I am delighted to support this initiative which will help raise awareness and provide support for colleagues going through menopause.

Kind regards,
Paschal Donohoe, TD
Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform

1. Introduction

The Civil Service is committed to promoting an inclusive and supportive working environment for all Civil Service employees¹ where everyone is treated fairly, with dignity, respect and understanding and their health and wellbeing is fully supported.

This Framework is intended to support persons who are experiencing, or who may in the future, experience menopausal symptoms. Within the Civil Service, this cohort currently accounts for over 50% of the workforce, most of whom continue to work while experiencing symptoms associated with menopause. Employees experiencing menopausal symptoms may require additional consideration, support and adjustments in the workplace. Menopause can impact all employees either directly or indirectly, and should therefore be considered as an organisational and workplace issue.

There are a number of drivers for the introduction of a Menopause in the Workplace Policy Framework for the Civil Service:

- The Better Public Service Strategy 2030 and the Civil Service Renewal Strategy 2030 under the pillar of *Workforce, Workplace and Organisation of the Future* both commit to fostering workforce equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing for all civil servants. To build the workforce of the future, the principles of equality and inclusion need to be to the forefront of our organisational design and culture.
- The Programme for Government has made commitments to promote women's health with greater scrutiny on women's experience of health care and to support work of the Women's Health Taskforce. Menopause is a key action under the *Women's Health Action Plan 2022-2023* which commits to changing the approach to menopause care in Ireland and to increase public supports available to women before, during and after menopause.
- The Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021 requires organisations to report on their hourly gender pay gap across a range of metrics. Many factors can contribute to the existence of gender pay gaps. These include differences between men and women in educational attainment and qualifications, occupations, career progression, prevalence of fulltime and part-time working, and responsibility for caring roles. Removing barriers to progression for women through the development and implementation of progressive and inclusive HR policies, and including a policy on menopause in the workplace could help employers close their gender pay gap.

¹ For ease of reference, civil servants are referred to generally as "employees" in this document

The introduction of the Civil Service Menopause in the Workplace Policy Framework aligns to these commitments and strategic objectives through raising awareness of menopause amongst all Civil Service employees and managers. This policy will help to promote and create a fully inclusive organisational environment that is supportive of all employees impacted by menopause.

In developing this Framework, the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform have worked closely with members of the Women's Health Taskforce in the Department of Health and HR colleagues from across the Civil and Public Service. The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has also been consulted.

N.B. When this Framework refers to “women” it is intended in the most inclusive sense of the word. It is used as shorthand to describe all those who identify as women as well as those that do not identify as women but who share women’s biological realities and experiences. In using this term, we seek to include not exclude.

2. Framework Governance

The Framework was developed under the guidance and direction of a Steering Group which comprised of clinical leads in the area of Women's Health and Occupational health leads from the Civil and Public Service. Work was further supported by a working group comprised of HR leaders in the Civil and Public Service and an occupational safety expert from the Health and Safety Authority.

Steering Group Members

Shirley Comerford (Chairperson)	Head of Public Service Workforce Division, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform
Dr. Deirdre Lundy	Clinical Lead at the National Maternity Hospital Complex Menopause Service
Dr. Cliona Murphy	Clinical lead for the National Women and Infants Health Programme (HSE) and Consultant Gynaecologist
Dr. Ciara McCarthy	General Practitioner and Women's Health Lead with Irish College of General Practitioners
Dr. Tom O'Connell	Chief Medical Officer for the Civil Service
Dr Gráinne McNally	Consultant and Accredited Specialist in Occupational Medicine, (HSE)
Dilly O'Brien	Head of Women's Health Policy Department of Health
Roisin Walsh	Head of Workforce Capability and Inclusion Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform

Working Group Members

Paula Reynolds (Chairperson)	Inclusion and Wellbeing Policy Lead, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform
Susan Clarke	Head of the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS)
Ann Marie Brennan	Public Appointments Service (PAS)
Aoife Early	Department of Health
Aoife Gillivan	Department of Health
Barbara Wakefield	Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS)
Claire McCarthy	Department of Foreign Affairs
Grainne Sheeran	Department of Health
Tracey Murphy	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Joan Cahill	Health and Safety Authority (HSA)
Sinead Sweeney	The Office of the Revenue Commissioners
Kieran Lea	Department of Social Protection

3. Purpose of the Framework

This Civil Service Menopause in the Workplace Policy Framework provides an overarching framework to guide Civil Service organisations when developing and implementing menopause policies and other related initiatives for their respective organisations

This Framework is intended to assist Departments and Offices in raising awareness of menopause amongst all their employees helping to promote and create an inclusive workplace environment that is fully supportive of all employees impacted by menopause.

It also provides guidance on the range of supports that Civil Service employers can put in place and sets out the relevant roles and responsibilities, as well as the relevant legal obligations that employers have to provide supports to employees affected by menopause.

The Framework includes:

- A set of key principles to guide organisations
- Definitions and overview of the key stages of menopause transition
- Information on commonly experienced symptoms associated with menopause
- Overview of the role of HR, line managers and employees
- Guidance on the provision of workplace adjustments and supports for employees experiencing symptoms associated with menopause
- Guidance on central supports and obligations
- A menopause in the workplace policy template

4. Menopause in the Workplace

It is important for everyone, in particular people managers, to understand the potential impact menopause can have on employees and their comfort and performance at work.

The topic of menopause is not one which has traditionally been openly discussed in the workplace and there has been a lack of broad awareness and understanding of the impacts that menopause symptoms can have on employees in the workplace.



“not spoken about by anyone, and they felt dependent on mothers, sisters and close friends to provide information where it wasn’t available in mainstream media or talked about in the workplace”

In 2020 and 2021, the *Women’s Health Taskforce* conducted a national engagement with women, including a Radical Listening exercise, wherein over 278 women were invited to share their views and experiences of healthcare in Ireland. Women who engaged in this exercise reported that menopause was a taboo subject, something “not spoken about by anyone, and they felt dependent on mothers, sisters and close friends to provide information where it wasn’t available in mainstream media or talked about in the workplace”. Women in this exercise also reported feeling that their symptoms were dismissed, that society did not support them and they felt a sense of loneliness and isolation.

In November 2022, the Department of Health published the results of a benchmarking survey² on menopause in Ireland. The survey was carried out between September 30 and October 3 and included a sample of 1,250 adults.

The research demonstrated strong agreement across participants that the impact of menopause is not sufficiently acknowledged or recognised and that the workplace poses particular difficulties.



82% of all adults agreed that menopause is not well understood in the workplace.



90% of all adults agreed it is important that employers understand menopause better.



only 30% of all adults agreed that they would be comfortable talking to a manager about menopause in work.



only 45% of all adults agreed that they would be comfortable talking to colleagues about menopause in work.

In terms of respondent's personal experience of menopause:



52% reported having a negative experience of menopause



35% reported experiencing constant symptoms



49% reporting experiencing moderate symptoms



14% reported experiencing severe symptoms

Women account for over 50% of the total Civil Service workforce and employers need to be more cognisant that those going through menopause transition, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments in the workplace.

² Department of Health. Understanding Menopause Highlights of Department of Health Research Carried out by B&A Oct 2022. Department of Health, Oct. 2022, www.gov.ie/en/publication/f1490-why-we-need-to-talk-about-menopause

5. Key Principles



5.1 Health, Safety, Welfare and Wellbeing at Work

The health and safety of all employees is of paramount importance. Both the employer and employee have responsibilities in this area. Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of their employees, in order to avoid workplace accident, injury and ill health.

While menopause is not considered a hazard in health and safety legislation, the symptoms of menopause (i.e., brain fog, memory issues, fatigue, stress, anxiety, hot flashes menstrual disruption etc.) may have implications in relation to workplace comfort, performance and safety.

In the context of menopause, employers and managers should help employees to manage their menopausal symptoms in the workplace and to ensure that their working environment and conditions do not exacerbate any symptoms. The types of workplace adjustments that employers should consider putting in place are detailed throughout **Section 6.5 of this document**.

A Menopause in the Workplace checklist which outlines some best practice organisational initiatives that support better inclusion, wellbeing and performance for those impacted by the menopause at work is available at **Appendix C** of this document.



5.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I)

The Civil Service is committed to nurturing an inclusive, engaged and empowered workforce that is reflective of the diversity of modern society. A focus on ED&I is increasingly important against the backdrop of growing diversity in Ireland and the need to recognise and design for intersectionality at work. Inclusive workplace cultures also play a key role in attracting and retaining talent, driving organisational and team performance and supporting collaboration and innovation.

There are no laws in Ireland that expressly provide for employees experiencing menopause. However, protection is afforded under the protected characteristics as set out in the *Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2021*.) This legislation provides, for example, protections against discrimination in respect of gender-related issues. It also includes requirements to provide reasonable accommodation for any employee who has a disability. In the equality legislation, “disability” is a broadly-defined term that could, in certain circumstances, include some of the medical issues that can arise during menopause.

It is important therefore that employers be cognisant of the impacts that menopause symptoms can have on work performance and attendance and take necessary steps to support employees in this regard.

In addition, the *Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021* requires organisations to report on their hourly gender pay gap across a range of metrics. Many factors can contribute to the existence of gender pay gaps. These include differences between men and women in educational attainment and qualifications, occupations, career progression, prevalence of fulltime and part-time working, and responsibility for caring roles.

Removing barriers to progression for women in the workplace through the implementation of supportive policies and practices like those outlined in the Menopause Policy Framework can help employers close their gender pay gap.



5.3 Be an Employer of Choice

The Civil Service is an inclusive and progressive employer that supports the needs of its workforce through its employment policies and practices. Providing a positive employee experience aligns with our strategic priority to ‘Be an Employer of Choice’, offering a place where talented people choose to work and stay.

It is important to create an organisational culture which supports a positive team environment that demonstrates respect and consideration. This can help to reduce the potential for an employee to suffer negative experiences during menopause. This approach can also assist in reducing the stigma attached to menopause, retain valuable skills and talent, and support attendance.

6. Guidance on Policy Development

6.1 Obligation to Develop a Policy

Every Civil Service organisation should develop and implement a *Menopause in the Workplace Policy* by the 30th June 2024 and this Framework should be brought to the attention of all bodies under its aegis.

Policy Template

1. Purpose and scope
2. Key principles
3. Definitions
4. Menopause symptoms
5. Roles and responsibilities
6. Workplace adjustments
7. Menopause and sick leave
8. Menopause and supporting performance
9. Reasonable accommodation
10. Confidentiality
11. Further information and resources

Policy Appendices:

- A. Template Record of Confidential Discussion and Agreed Supportive Arrangement
- B. Template Menopause in the Workplace Checklist

A Menopause in the Workplace Policy Template is available at **Appendix A**.

6.2 Definitions

The following are key terms referred to within this Framework

What is menopause?

The word “menopause” is a catch-all word for the various stages and types of changes that women’s bodies go through at this time and includes

perimenopause, post menopause, early menopause, premature menopause, and induced menopause.

Menopause refers to the time when periods stop and the ovaries lose their reproductive function. Usually, this occurs between the ages of 45 and 55. The average age that this occurs in Ireland is 51 years. Periods may start to become less frequent over a few months or years before they stop. Sometimes they can stop suddenly. In some cases, periods can become very heavy in the years coming up to menopause.

Perimenopause

Perimenopause (sometimes known as menopause transition) refers to the lead-up to menopause, when the signs and symptoms of menopause are first observed and ends one year after the final menstrual period. The age in which this begins varies, but the average age is 45 years old. However, some women start to experience symptoms in their 30s or in rare cases, even younger

Perimenopause can last several years and can affect physical, emotional, mental and social well-being. The Health Service Executive report that typically perimenopause symptoms can start up to 7 years before your period stops.

Menopause is reached when a person is 12 months past their final period.

Menopause

Menopause is marked by the end of monthly menstruation (also known as a menstrual period or 'period') due to loss of ovarian follicular function. This means that the ovaries no longer release eggs.

The regularity and length of the menstrual cycle varies across the reproductive life span but the age at which natural menopause occurs is generally between 45 and 55 years for women worldwide. Natural menopause is deemed to have occurred after 12 consecutive months without menstruation for which there is no other obvious physiological or pathological cause and in the absence of clinical intervention.

Menopause is a retrospective diagnosis as it can only be made after a full year of the absence of mensuration.

Post-menopause

As soon as a woman has been through menopause, they immediately become postmenopausal and they are postmenopausal for the rest of their life. In this third phase of the menopause transition, they may still experience symptoms, commonly for a further five to seven years, though many experience symptoms for longer than this.

Early menopause

Early menopause is when a woman’s periods stop before the age of 45. It can happen by itself or as a side effect of some treatments.

Premature menopause

Premature menopause, also known as premature ovarian insufficiency (POI), is when a woman experiences menopause before the age of 40. While uncommon (<1% of population), it can have a significant impact on health, and requires treatment to prevent long term problems like osteoporosis, increased cardiovascular risk and cognitive decline

Induced menopause

Induced menopause refers to menstrual periods that stop after surgical removal of the ovaries, chemotherapy or radiation damage to the ovaries, or from the use of other medications to intentionally induce menopause as part of the treatment of certain diseases. Induced menopause can happen at any age.

6.3 Menopause symptoms

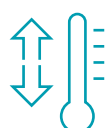
Individuals may experience a spectrum of physical and psychological symptoms associated with menopause. The severity and duration of the symptoms will vary significantly. Some may experience multiple symptoms, either physical, psychological or a combination of both, over a prolonged period of time, and others may not.

Common physical symptoms	
• Hot flushes • Night sweats • Difficulty sleeping • Fatigue • Lack of energy • Vaginal dryness and pain, itching or discomfort • Reduced sex drive (libido) • Discomfort during sex	• Irregular periods • Headaches • Heart palpitations (a fast-beating, fluttering or pounding heart) • Recurring UTI's • Loss of muscle • Weight gain • Joint aches and pains • Dry mouth and skin

Common psychological symptoms

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low mood and irritability• Anxiety• Problems with memory or concentration such as brain fog | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tearfulness• Loss of confidence and self esteem |
|---|--|

According to *The Menopause Benchmark Survey by Behaviour & Attitudes*³, the following are the most commonly reported menopause symptoms:



78% of adults reported experiencing temperature regulation issues.



71% of adults reported experiencing fatigue.



70% of adults reported experiencing sleep issues.



59% of adults reported experiencing period changes.



62% of adults reported experiencing memory/concentration issues.



57% of adults reported experiencing weight and body changes



56% of adults reported experiencing mood changes.



49% of adults reported experiencing joint pain.

³ Department of Health. Understanding Menopause Highlights of Department of Health Research Carried out by B&A Oct 2022. Department of Health, Oct. 2022, www.gov.ie/en/publication/f1490-why-we-need-to-talk-about-menopause

6.4 Roles and Responsibilities

6.4.1 The Role of Human Resources

The Human Resource (HR) function plays a pivotal role in raising organisational-wide awareness of menopause and in creating and embedding a culture that is supportive and inclusive.

This can be achieved by:

- Engaging senior management team to secure buy-in and endorsement for menopause policies and initiatives.
- Developing and implementing a menopause policy in their workplace.
- Undertaking relevant training to gain an understanding of how work patterns could impact symptoms and supporting flexible working arrangements, where possible.
- Providing training and awareness supports for line managers, including guidance on their roles and responsibilities in supporting employees in line with organisational policies.
- Providing menopause awareness training for employees as part of their organisations wellbeing programme.

6.4.2 The Role of the Manager

Managers have an important role to play in ensuring that employees affected by menopausal symptoms receive the right support, as they would with any other health condition. Managers are not expected to be experts when discussing menopause but they should have an understanding of what supports are available to meet the needs of their employees.

In providing support and guidance to employees, managers should:

- Ensure all employees are aware of and familiar with their organisation's Menopause Policy.
- Undertake relevant training on menopause symptoms and the necessary workplace adjustments and supports that may be required.
- Promote a positive attitude to discussions around women's health issues, including menopause, and help to create an environment where employees feel able to discuss their experience of menopause.
- Respect an employee's right not to discuss personal issues. They may be more comfortable talking to a colleague, another manager or a member of the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS).
- Encourage employees to access support and guidance from their personal healthcare provider.
- Provide a private, confidential place for the staff member to discuss how their symptoms impact them at work.

- Encourage employees to be open about discussing the impact of their menopausal symptoms on health, wellbeing and work life balance.
- Ensure any discussion is treated with sensitivity and professionalism and that confidentiality is maintained at all times.
- Listen carefully to what the employee is saying and avoid any assumptions, judgements or downplaying the situation.
- Discuss and be supportive of any upcoming healthcare appointments or leave requirements.
- Investigate any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimization using the relevant Dignity at Work and Grievance Procedures.

6.4.3 The Role of the Employee

All employees have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful working environment, be willing to help and support their colleagues, and understand that colleagues may need adjustments to manage their menopausal symptoms.

In terms of individual employees experiencing symptoms associated with menopause:

- It is important that employees take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. If an employee is experiencing symptoms associated with menopause, they should first and foremost seek advice from their health care provider.
- If an employee is experiencing menopausal symptoms and feel they may need support at work, they should speak with their manager.
- Early discussions can help determine the most appropriate course of action, how to overcome any barriers and agree what support is needed.
- If an employee does not feel comfortable discussing the impact of menopause with their own manager, they should be encouraged to request a discussion with:
 - an alternative manager
 - a trusted colleague
 - a member of the CSEAS
- Employees should monitor how their symptoms are impacting them and if the supports put in place by their manager are effective in supporting the management of their symptoms while at work.
- If employees are experiencing menopause symptoms so severe that they are temporarily unable to work, sick leave can be availed of and managed as per *Circular 12/2023: Management of Sick Leave in the Civil Service*. See **Section 7** Menopause and Sick Leave.

6.5 Workplace Adjustments

Menopause, in and of itself, is not an illness. However, some of the symptoms of menopause can cause illness and may impact on work performance and wellbeing in the workplace. There may be times when an employee who is experiencing severe symptoms may need adjustments to support them to continue working.

The purpose of workplace adjustment is to provide a supportive working environment by making appropriate adjustments and removing barriers wherever possible. Departments and Offices should not take a one-size-fits-all approach and should instead explore options with employees to determine what support would be helpful based on the nature of the symptoms they are experiencing.

Employers should be flexible and make adjustments where possible because minor adjustments can make a significant difference to the quality of working life for employees experiencing symptoms associated with menopause. Departments and Offices should consider what practical measures they can implement to support an employee and lessen the impact of menopausal symptoms at work and to also ensure that working conditions do not exacerbate symptoms.

Depending on the circumstances, requests for workplace adjustments may be approved on a temporary basis with ongoing review to ensure that both the employee and the manager are satisfied that the arrangements in place are adequate for the needs of the employee and the business needs of the Department/Office. Requests should be considered on a case by case basis, balancing the needs of the employee and the business.

Managers should confirm in writing any arrangements agreed verbally. This is particularly important if a request has been made informally and has been agreed as a temporary measure.

A Template Record of Confidential Discussion and Agreed Supportive Arrangement is available at **Appendix B** of this Framework.

6.6 Types of Workplace Adjustments



6.6.1 The Physical working environment

With regard to workplace adjustments, Departments and Offices should consider a number of factors relating to the physical working environment including but not limited to:

- Temperature,
- Ventilation,
- lighting ,and
- Provision of changing facilities.

Examples of adjustments to the physical working environment include:

- Move a workstation nearer to a door or window and/or to provide a fan for use to regulate temperature - which may provide a cooler or brighter working environment.
- Allow flexibility in dress code, where possible, and consider the use of breathable, darker fabrics in uniforms.
- Allow frequent toilet breaks especially during longer meetings and allow time for breaks so the employee can get up and walk about particularly if stiffness and joint pain is an issue.



6.6.2 Flexible working Arrangements

Flexible working allows an employee the opportunity to manage their menopausal symptoms by altering their working hours/pattern.

Requests for flexible working could include:

- A change to the pattern of hours worked, for example, managers could consider agreeing to a later start time where an employee is experiencing sleepless nights. This may help alleviate tiredness at work.
- If an employee works on a shift system, it may be helpful to consider and review the effect of the shift pattern on an employee who is struggling with sleep.
- The option to avail of blended working arrangements in line with local Blended Working policies.

- As per existing schemes available to all civil servants, employees may wish to avail of work-sharing arrangements or the shorter working year scheme.



6.6.3 Design of work

Managers may also consider making adjustments to work design and allocation. Some examples may include but are not limited to:

- Allowing flexibility to focus on less intensive tasks or switch to different tasks on days when an employee is struggling with difficult symptoms.
- Enabling temporary changes to work allocation, in consultation with the employee, to ensure that the type and volume of work is appropriate. This includes shift work or night work adjustments.

6.6.4 Examples of adjustments for related symptoms

Brain Fog	• Realistic goal setting • Allow for flexible breaks • Provision of quiet workspaces • Give clear communication • Conduct regular and informal check ins
Low mood/ anxiety	• Suggest talking to their GP • Suggest speaking to CSEAS • Ask what might be helpful in terms of managing work
Isolation	• Taking tea breaks with colleagues • Encourage anchor days, bringing team together • Provide details on collaborative networks • Establish a buddy system • Conduct regular and informal check-ins
Low Self Esteem	• Establish and encourage 1-1 mentoring • Examine the pace of work • Establish a buddy system • Conduct regular and informal check-ins • Provide considered and constructive feedback
Insomnia/ Difficulty sleeping	• Provision of flexible working patterns • Provision of temporary Shift/Rota adjustments

Heavy Periods	• Ensure easy access to toilet facilities • Allow for sufficient breaks to use the bathroom • Provision of sanitary products made available in bathroom or “caught-out kits” containing sanitary products, wet wipes, disposable underwear and a towel • Ensure cover is available so colleagues can leave their post, if needed • Make it easy to request an extra uniform if needed
Hot Flushes	• Provision of desk fan • Provide access to fresh drinking water • Provide access to a quiet area • Allow for short breaks to step out into the fresh air • Review the ergonomics of the office e.g. situation of the person’s desk, proximity to the facilities • Ensure uniforms consist of breathable fabric, are dark coloured with comfortable waistbands and have easy access fastenings

The types of adjustments detailed above are not intended to be an exhaustive list and it is open to Departments and Offices to consider offering additional adjustments taking account of their own organisational and business needs.

7. Menopause and Sick Leave

Notwithstanding that menopause is not classified as an illness, there may be instances where an employee becomes unwell as a result of menopause symptoms and may need to avail of sick leave.

Employees should follow procedures for reporting illness as outlined under *Circular 12/2023: Management of Sick Leave in the Civil Service* and should consider letting their manager know if they are aware that any absences are menopause related. As this issue is often perceived as intensely personal, a manager may not be aware that any impacts are menopause-related.

A manager should make all reasonable efforts to ensure an employee is able to share information confidentially to help manage their symptoms whilst at work. The absence/absences should be treated consistently and supportively in line with other health conditions and sick leave policy.

Managers should note that new courses of treatment can result in temporary improvement or deterioration which can impact the employee's absence pattern. Managers should be cautious about taking decisions based on temporary changes in absence levels.

8. Supporting Performance During Menopause

Menopause could have a negative effect on an employee's ability to perform at work due to tiredness from a difficulty in sleeping, mood changes or problems with memory and concentration.

Managers should take into account the impact of menopause on an employee's performance and be as flexible as possible when considering what adjustments can be made to a role or working conditions to help an employee maintain performance levels.

For some, menopausal symptoms can last for a considerable and undefined period of time. Managers and employees should consider this when looking at both workplace adjustments and performance.

9. Reasonable Accommodation

Under the *Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2021* employers are required to provide reasonable accommodation for any employee who has a disability. In the equality legislation, “disability” is a broadly-defined term that could, in certain circumstances, include some of the medical issues that can arise during menopause.

An employer will have a duty to make reasonable accommodations and take appropriate measures that are needed by an employee to have access to employment, to participate or advance in employment or to undergo training, unless the measures would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer.

Examples of reasonable accommodation may include but are not limited to:

- Making adjustments to premises and/or working space where reasonably practicable
- Allocating minor or subsidiary duties to another civil servant
- Altering working hours/reduction in hours
- Changing the location of the work
- Providing blended working arrangements
- Offering additional or extended training for the post
- Acquiring relevant equipment or modifying existing equipment

10. Guidance on Central Supports

10.1 The Role of the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service

The CSEAS is a nationwide Employee Assistance service available to all civil servants. The CSEAS provides a non-judgmental, confidential and free service where every individual will be met with empathy and understanding. The CSEAS provides a safe space to discuss the menopausal experience and to develop a client focused self-care plan.

Employee Assistance Officers have the training and expertise to work collaboratively with employees, offering emotional, solution focused and informational support to those who are experiencing emotional and mental health symptoms associated with the menopause.

The service has a dedicated resource person specifically trained in menopause mental health support and can provide defined support for those experiencing adverse effects of this transition. The service hosts a dedicated Menopause webpage which provides up to date information on menopause, details of additional external and community based supports for menopause, access to the Greene Climatic Scale to self-assess menopausal symptoms and links to additional psychoeducational menopause resources.

The CSEAS is available to support managers in embedding a culture of wellbeing within their organisation and in supporting their colleagues who are going through menopause.

10.2 The Role of Occupational Health

Ordinarily, where an employee is seeking workplace accommodations, referral to occupational health is not required as local management are best placed to decide whether a particular work accommodation is feasible or not.

However, where menopausal symptoms are leading to repeated short-term absences, or an employee's fitness for work is impacted, referral to occupational health may be necessary. Such a referral helps to establish the extent to which relevant treatments are being accessed and utilised and to determine whether or not any additional accommodations may be of benefit.

In the case of long-term absence and in line with normal practice, a referral to occupational health will be made after a period of four weeks.

10.3 Provision of Training and Awareness Supports

A number of centralised training and awareness supports have been developed in support of the Frameworks overarching objective to increase awareness of menopause in the workplace and equip managers with the necessary tools to support employees experiencing symptoms associated with menopause at work.



10.3.1 CSEAS Guidance on Understanding and Improving Menopause Support in the Workplace Document

The Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) have developed a guidance document, *Guidance on Understanding and Improving Menopause Support in the Workplace* to assist both managers and employees in fostering an inclusive environment where employees can openly and comfortably engage in discussion about menopause and its impact on them.

This guidance document will help:

- Raise awareness and increase understanding of the wide range of physical and psychological symptoms which are associated with menopause
- Assist in normalising and supporting conversations about menopause at work and improve the level of support available
- Ensure that those suffering with menopausal symptoms feel confident to discuss how it is impacting them and feel able to ask for support and any reasonable adjustments, if required, so they can continue to be productive and contribute fully in their roles

It includes guidance on:

- How to support employees going through menopause transition both as a colleague and as a manager
- How to approach and manage a sensitive conversation around menopause
- Signposting to relevant supports



10.3.2 Menopause Support Hub and Menopause Cafes

The CSEAS has also developed a specialist Menopause Support page on their website containing information and support on menopause and menopause in the workplace which can be accessed here: www.cseas.per.gov.ie/the-menopause

In June 2023, the CSEAS ran the first Menopause Café for civil servants. The Menopause Café was established to build awareness, share up to date information and discuss menopause in a friendly non-judgmental environment. CSEAS Menopause Café events run quarterly covering topics pertaining to menopause and menopause in the workplace.



10.3.3 E-learning Module

A Menopause e-learning module will be available through the OneLearning Learner Management System to support the implementation of the Framework.

The module will build awareness of menopause, its symptoms and effects on in a workplace context, the legal obligations of employers, and it will also provide guidance on the provision of workplace supports and how to approach conversations empathetically.

The e-learning module will assist HR Leaders and Managers in enhancing their understanding of the impacts of menopause in the workplace and build their capability in providing support to employees.

In addition, all existing people manager courses available through OneLearning will be updated to take account of the Frameworks publication.

11. Confidentiality

Every employee has the right to privacy in respect of their medical status. It is essential that managers ensure that all information shared by the employee is treated in the strictest confidence and is only shared with others where necessary and with the consent of the employee.

It is good practice to discuss with the employee how they wish any questions from their peers/colleagues to be managed. Confidentiality must be respected unless the employee indicates that they approve of their team being informed on their behalf in a tactful and respectful way.

12. Further Information and Resources

- Further practical information and support can be found in *the CSEAS Guidance on Understanding and Improving Menopause Support in the Workplace*
- The Civil Service Employee Assistance Service: [CSEAS \(per.gov.ie\)](https://per.gov.ie)
- The Civil Service Occupational Health Department: [Chief Medical Office \(cmo.gov.ie\)](https://cmo.gov.ie)
- Department of Health Menopause awareness: gov.ie - [Menopause \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie)
- HSE Menopause Overview: [Menopause - Overview - HSE.ie](https://www.hse.ie)
- CIPD Menopause at Work: [The menopause at work: A guide for people professionals | CIPD www.cipd.org/uk/topics/menopause/](https://www.cipd.org/uk/topics/menopause/)

13. Review of Framework

The Civil Service Menopause in the Workplace Policy Framework will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in consultation with Civil and Public Service employers and employee representative organisations to adapt to any changes required to meet the needs of employees, the business, and to incorporate any broader strategies, legislative changes, and approaches to menopause supports in the workplace.

Appendix A: Policy Template

1. Purpose and scope

[Department / Office] is committed promoting inclusive and supportive working environment where all employees are treated fairly, with dignity, respect and understanding and their health and wellbeing is fully supported.

[Department / Office] believes that the publication of a menopause policy is another step in our Department's/Office's efforts to embed a culture of dignity, respect and inclusivity in the workplace and to promote gender equality.

[Insert further info on the organisation's aims and the benefits of introducing a menopause policy. Consider using relevant employee demographic data]

We recognise that employees experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments.

We are committed to developing an organisational culture that supports employees experiencing the menopause. We want them to feel comfortable to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for workplace adjustments.

We are committed to providing a safe working environment for all employees, including providing access to information about the menopause, signposting to appropriate healthcare and ensuring that adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing menopause symptoms.

This policy is intended to raise awareness of menopause amongst all employees, to provide guidance on workplace adjustments and supports that may be considered for employees and also outlines relevant roles and responsibilities.

This policy is intended to support persons who are experiencing, or who may in the future experience, menopausal symptoms

We have developed this Policy in line with *the Menopause in the Workplace Policy Framework for Civil Service Organisations*.

2. Key principles

The following key principles inform this Policy and the approach of [Department / Office] to menopause:

- a) Promote health, safety, welfare and wellbeing at work
- b) Promote equality, diversity and inclusion
- c) Be an employer of choice

3. Definitions

[Department / Office] to outline key terms associated with menopause as informed by *the Menopause in the Workplace Policy Framework for Civil Service organisations*.

4. Menopause symptoms

[Department / Office] to outline the common physical and psychological symptoms associated with menopause as informed by *the Menopause in the Workplace Policy Framework for Civil Service organisations*.

5. Roles and responsibilities

[Department/Office may wish to set out the roles and responsibilities as relevant to this policy in their own organisation. Organisations should also consider setting out obligations on the senior management /HR/ managers / employees.

6. Workplace adjustments

[Department/Office to outline possible workplace adjustments that employees can request if they are experiencing problematic symptoms in line with *the Menopause in the Workplace Policy Framework for Civil Service Organisations*. The adjustments detailed in the Framework are not exhaustive and it is open to Departments and Offices to consider additional adjustments may be required taking account of their own organisational and business needs.

7. Menopause and sick leave

[Department/Office should set out procedures for managing sickness absence related to menopause in line with *Circular 12/2023: Management of Sick Leave in the Civil Service*.

8. Supporting performance during menopause

[Department/Office should set out clearly how performance management policy and practices will be utilised to support employees experiencing problematic symptoms.

9. Reasonable accommodation

[Department/Office] need to acknowledge that in certain circumstances, employees may require reasonable accommodations under the *Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2021* and should clearly state their obligations in this regard.

10. Confidentiality

[Department/Office] to include statement on safeguarding employee confidentiality.

11. Further resources

[Department/Office] to include list of further resources or supports that employee may wish to access.

Policy Appendices:

- A. Template Record of Confidential Discussion and Agreed Supportive Arrangement**
- B. Template Menopause in the Workplace Checklist**

Appendix B: Template Record of Confidential Discussion and Agreed Supportive Arrangement

Confidential discussion template

Employee Details:

Name		Job title	
Department/ Division		Location	

Present at meeting (line manager name and position)	
Date of discussion	

Summary of Discussion

Agreed Actions/Adjustments:

Date of next review meeting

Signed (Member of staff)

Signed (Manager)

Appendix C: Template Menopause in the Workplace Checklist

It's important that those experiencing menopause feel adequately supported and included in their working environments.

The following is a useful checklist which outlines some best practice organisational initiatives that support an inclusive, diverse culture focused on wellbeing and performance.

Menopause in the Workplace Checklist

	Yes/No	Actions
Does your organisation have a Menopause in the Workplace Policy?		
Has the Menopause in the Workplace Guidance Document been shared with all staff?		
Has your organisation held Menopause awareness sessions for both management and staff?		
Have all managers completed the Menopause in the Workplace eLearning Module?		
Do your managers have the right knowledge and skills to talk about menopause and to support colleagues who disclose they are experiencing menopausal symptoms?		

	Yes/No	Actions
Have you communicated to all staff the following Central supports available to all: Education and Awareness: OneLearning E-Learning on Menopause in the Workplace CSEAS Specialist Menopause Support webpage CSEAS Understanding Menopause in the Workplace Guidance document CSEAS People Managers Guide CSEAS Menopause Café events		
Does your organisation encourage access to one to one employee supports available through the CSEAS		
Is there flexibility in your organisation regarding: • Blended working • Shift patterns (if applicable) • Alternative tasks and duties		

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