

M I L B A N K G R O U P

Menopause

A Guide for Managers

Supporting colleagues through perimenopause and menopause - how to have the conversation, what adjustments to consider, and how to get it right.

Version 1 / April 2026 / Internal

Why this guide exists

Around 13 million people in the UK are currently going through perimenopause or menopause. That means it is almost certainly affecting someone in your team right now.

For some people, symptoms are mild. For others, they can be severe enough to affect concentration, confidence, sleep, and the ability to do their job. Many people suffer in silence because they feel embarrassed, do not think their manager will understand, or do not want to be seen as 'making a fuss'.

Your job as a manager is simple: make it easy for them to talk to you, listen without judgement, and help find practical solutions. You do not need to be a medical expert. You just need to be a decent human being.

What you need to understand

The basics

Perimenopause is the stage where hormone levels start to change. Symptoms can begin here - sometimes years before periods stop. Many people do not realise this is what is happening.

Menopause is reached when periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months. The average age in the UK is 51, but it can happen from the mid-40s to late 50s - and sometimes earlier.

Who is affected: menopause is most commonly associated with women, but it can also affect trans, non-binary and intersex colleagues. This policy applies to everyone.

Symptoms vary widely. They can include hot flushes, poor sleep, anxiety, low mood, difficulty concentrating, joint pain, headaches, heavy or unpredictable periods, and loss of confidence. Some people experience symptoms for a few months. For others, it can last years.

Why this matters at work

A colleague going through menopause may:

- Struggle with concentration and memory ('brain fog')
- Need more frequent breaks or access to cool air
- Find certain uniforms or PPE uncomfortable
- Experience anxiety about meetings, presentations, or being put on the spot
- Have unpredictable absences due to heavy periods or poor sleep

- Lose confidence in their ability to do a job they have done well for years
None of this means they cannot do their job. It means they might need some support to do it comfortably.

When a colleague comes to you

It takes courage to raise menopause with a manager - especially if the manager is male, younger, or if the workplace culture has not historically been open about these things. If someone comes to you, take it seriously.

Step by step

1. **Thank them for telling you.** Acknowledge that it might have been difficult to raise.
2. **Listen.** Ask them to describe what they are experiencing and how it is affecting them at work. Do not rush to solutions.
3. **Ask what would help.** They may already know. If not, talk through the adjustments below together.
4. **Keep it confidential.** Do not share what they have told you with anyone unless they ask you to, or unless you need to involve the People Team.
5. **Agree next steps and follow up.** Put any adjustments in place quickly. Check in after a week or two to see how things are going.
6. **Review over time.** Symptoms change. What helps now may not help in six months. Keep the conversation going.

What to say - and what not to say

Say this	Not this
<i>Thank you for telling me. I want to help.</i>	<i>Is it not just hot flushes?</i>
<i>What would make things easier for you right now?</i>	<i>My wife went through that - she was fine.</i>
<i>Let us look at this together and find something that works.</i>	<i>Can you not just take HRT?</i>
<i>Take whatever time you need if you are having a difficult day.</i>	<i>You seem a bit hormonal today.</i>
<i>This is nothing to be embarrassed about.</i>	<i>Are you sure it is not just stress?</i>
<i>I will keep this between us.</i>	<i>Everyone gets a bit forgetful at our age.</i>

Adjustments you can make

Not every colleague will need adjustments, and no two people will need the same ones. The key is to ask, listen, and act.

Practical adjustments to consider

Temperature: access to a fan, desk near a window, ability to step outside briefly. Avoid seating near radiators.

Uniform / PPE: consider breathable fabrics where safe to do so. If standard uniform is causing problems, discuss alternatives with Health & Safety.

Breaks: additional short breaks for water, fresh air, or to manage symptoms. Be flexible with timing.

Working hours: temporary flexible start/finish times, especially if sleep is disrupted. Consider a flexible working request if longer-term change is needed.

Workload: temporary reduction in intensity, more time for tasks that require concentration, fewer back-to-back meetings.

Toilet access: unrestricted access, especially for colleagues experiencing heavy or unpredictable periods.

Home working: where the role allows, temporary or regular home working may help on difficult days.

What if a colleague is having a bad day at work?

Symptoms can flare up without warning. A colleague may suddenly feel faint, anxious, or overwhelmed.

1. Give them space. Offer a quiet room or a break outside.
2. Do not draw attention to it in front of colleagues.
3. Ask privately if there is anything they need.
4. If they need to go home, let them. Sort the paperwork later.
5. Check in by text the next day. Keep it brief and kind.

Absence and legal protections

If menopause symptoms lead to sickness absence, this should be managed under the Sickness Absence Policy with understanding and sensitivity. Do not treat menopause-related absence more harshly than any other health-related absence.

Be aware: where menopause symptoms amount to a disability under the Equality Act 2010 (long-term, substantial impact on day-to-day activities), there is a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments. If you are unsure whether this applies, speak to the People Team.

Menopause can also intersect with protections around age and sex discrimination. Inappropriate comments or behaviour related to menopause could amount to harassment. Take it seriously.

Looking after yourself

If you find these conversations awkward or uncomfortable, that is normal - especially if you have not had them before. It gets easier with practice.

If you are experiencing menopause yourself while also managing a team, you are allowed to find that hard. Talk to your own manager or the People Team.

Quick reference

Keep this page somewhere you can find it quickly.

Your checklist

1. If a colleague comes to you: listen, thank them, ask what would help.
2. Keep it confidential unless they ask you to involve someone else.
3. Discuss practical adjustments - temperature, breaks, hours, uniform, workload.
4. Put adjustments in place quickly. Do not wait for a formal process.
5. Review regularly - symptoms change over time.
6. If absence occurs, manage it sensitively under the Sickness Absence Policy.
7. Never comment on someone's symptoms in front of others.
8. If you are unsure about anything - peopleteam@milbank.co.uk.

Policies referenced: Menopause Support Policy / Sickness & Capability Policy / Flexible Working Policy / Dignity at Work Policy