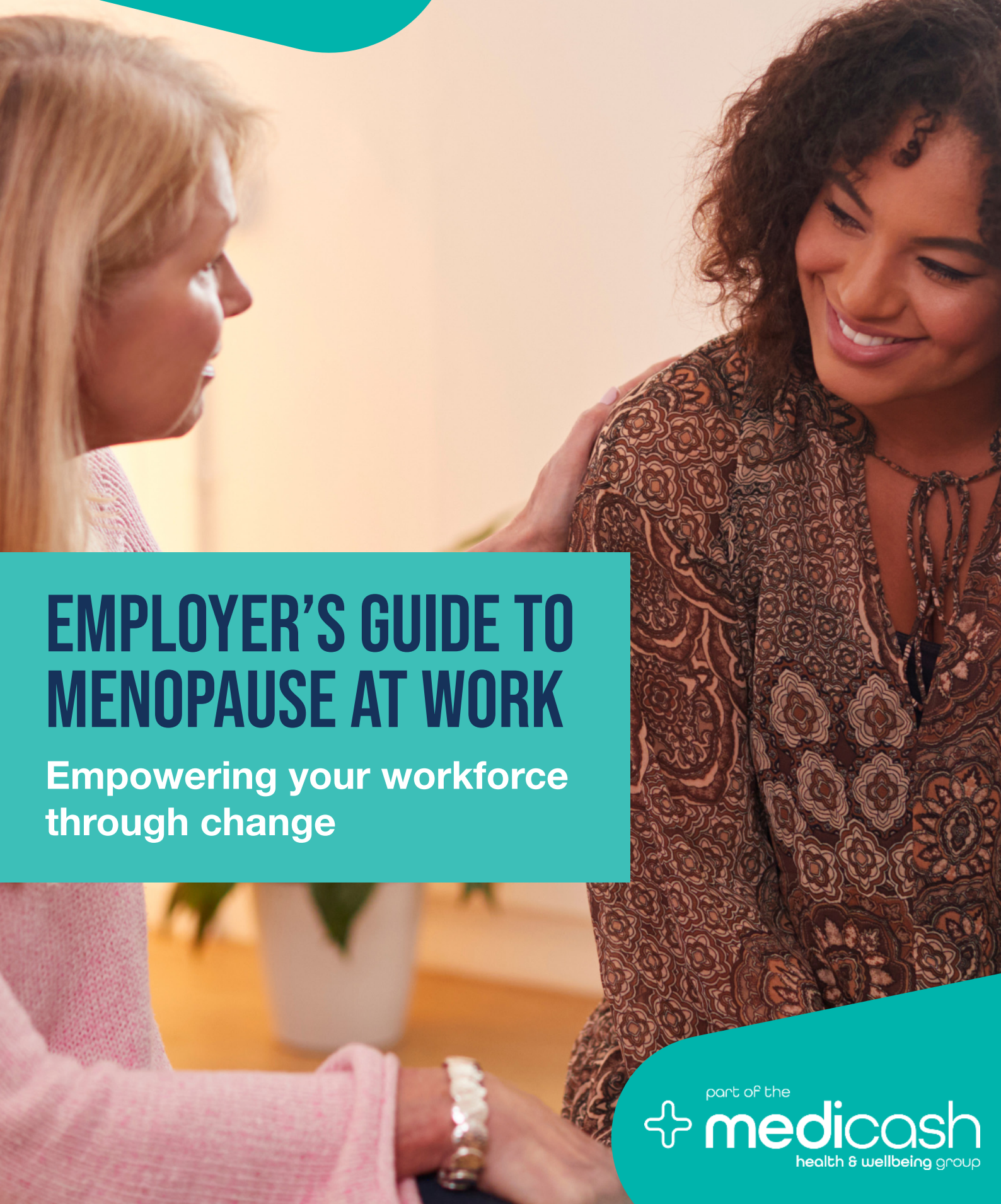




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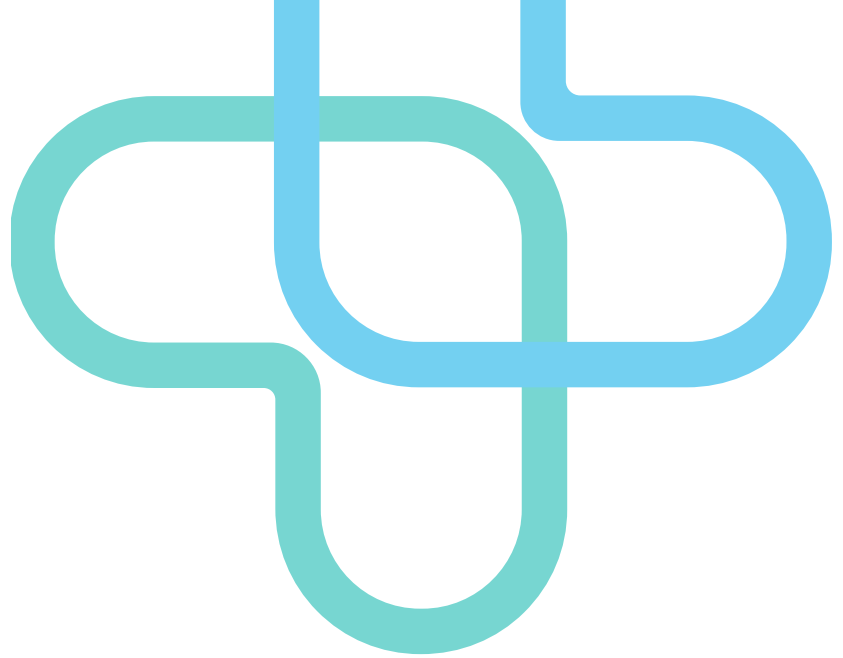
# EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO MENOPAUSE AT WORK

Empowering your workforce  
through change

part of the  
 **medicash**  
health & wellbeing group

# FOREWORD

By Marj Murphy



Menopause is a natural part of life for over half of the entire world's population. And yet, while awareness is steadily improving, the symptoms and experiences of menopause and its various stages are often still misunderstood and underestimated in the world of work. With women over 50 representing the fastest growing demographic in today's workplaces, a better understanding of female health and wellbeing is crucial for modern businesses to thrive.

A key part of our approach to wellbeing at Health@Work is in helping organisations to build supportive working environments that work for them and their unique workforces. That's why, back in 2021, we proudly became one of the first wellbeing consultancy services in the UK to offer dedicated menopause training – because no one should feel that they have to reduce their hours, pass up promotions, or abandon their career due to a lack of support.

In this book, you'll find a wealth of information to help understand, improve attitudes, and support your employees who are experiencing menopause at work. Our aim is to equip organisations and leaders with the knowledge to build inclusive, supportive workplaces where all employees are empowered to achieve their fullest potential.

Thank you for joining us in this important conversation.

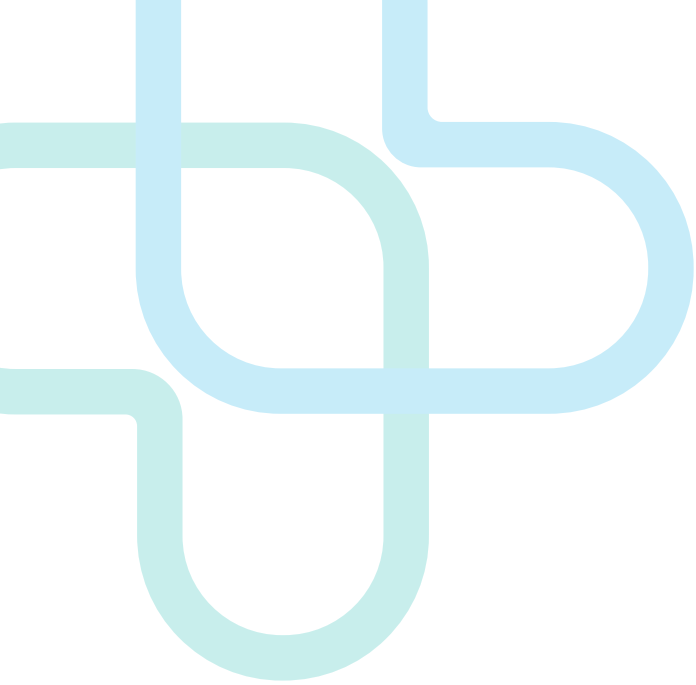
**Marj Murphy**

Director of Operations

Health@Work

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# A HAPPIER MENOPAUSE FOR A HEALTHIER BUSINESS

**Impacting more than half of the population, menopause and its related struggles and symptoms have until recently been viewed as a personal, and often embarrassing issue by many.**

However, with more than 4.5 million women aged 50-64 currently in employment across the UK<sup>1</sup>, workplaces can no longer afford to ignore the impact that menopause has on their employees.

Surveys have found that as many as three in five menopausal women are negatively impacted by their symptoms at work – yet only 11% of those who

take time off for menopause-related reasons feel comfortable disclosing their symptoms to their employer<sup>2</sup>.

This guide is designed to help you and your leadership team cultivate a supportive and inclusive workplace for those navigating the menopausal transition at work. We've included information, suggestions, and support services that empower you to build an environment where employees experiencing menopause not just manage, but thrive.







# WHAT IS MENOPAUSE?

The most important thing to remember about menopause is that it is a natural biological process and a normal part of life. As menopause refers to the period when the levels of oestrogen and progesterone in the body begin to fluctuate and decline, symptoms can be experienced by all those assigned female at birth, including women, non-binary people, and transgender men.

Menopause is defined as the stage after menstruation ends. The time leading up to this is known as **perimenopause**, when hormones within the body start to fluctuate and menopause-like symptoms can appear. These symptoms, which can start from as young as the mid-30s in many people, can have a wide range of both physical and psychological impacts on those experience menopause and perimenopause.

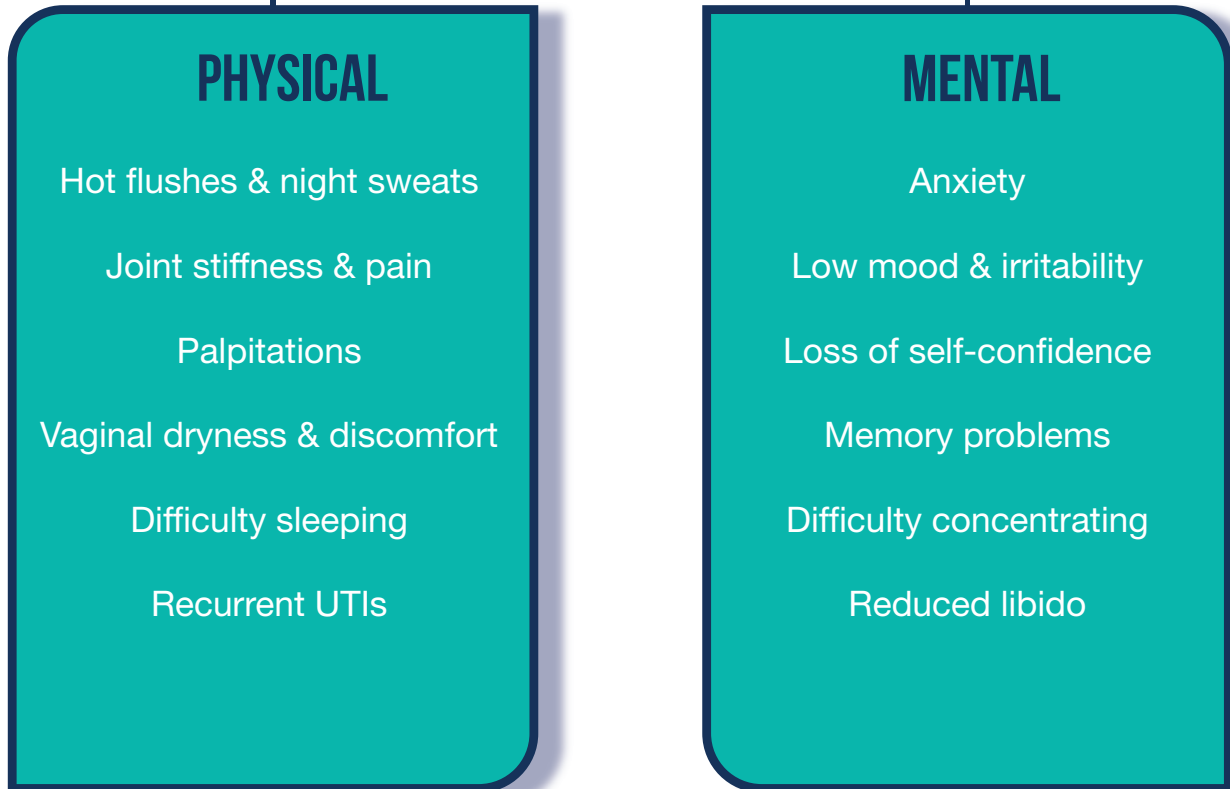
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1 IN 100 WOMEN  
CAN EXPERIENCE  
MENOPAUSE  
BEFORE AGE 40  
- THIS IS KNOWN  
AS 'PREMATURE  
MENOPAUSE'<sup>3</sup>

”



# MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS



## IMPACT ON SELF ESTEEM

One of the more complicated impacts of menopause is the impact on self-esteem. As hormonal fluctuations can cause physical changes such as hair thinning, weight gain, muscle loss, and skin concerns, some people experiencing menopause find that the changes to their physical appearance have a negative effect on their self-image. In addition, some people experiencing menopause have reported that their 'brain fog' – specifically memory and concentration struggles – has caused a loss of self-confidence at work.

Worryingly, research has even found that female suicides peak between age 45-49 – coinciding with the average age for menopause in the UK and highlighting the need for improved mental health support through menopause.

# MYTHBUSTING THE MENOPAUSE

**How many of these meno-myths did you think were true?**

## **“Menopause is the same for everyone!”**

While most people will experience similar symptoms, everyone's body reacts differently. For example, despite being the most 'famous' symptom, less than half of menopausal women experience hot flushes – some women even experience the opposite effect with cold flashes, while some experience no temperature symptoms at all.

## **“Menopause only lasts a few years...”**

On average, most symptoms last for between 4-7 years from the final menstrual period onward. However, 1 in 10 women experience symptoms for up to 12 years, and the physical implications of menopause can also have further reaching effects.

## **“There's no treatment for menopause symptoms.”**

Nowadays, support and treatment are increasingly available. These can include hormone replacement therapy (HRT), medication and talking therapies, or various complementary and alternative therapies that have been said to help with menopause symptoms.

## **“Once you hit menopause, it's all downhill!”**

Although the transition into menopause can feel overwhelming at times, many postmenopausal women report increased feelings of freedom and happiness, and even better physical health

“

**70% OF WOMEN REPORT THAT DIFFICULTY SLEEPING AND 'BRAIN FOG' ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO MANAGE THAN NIGHT SWEATS AND HOT FLUSHES.<sup>4</sup>**

”



# HOW MENOPAUSE IMPACTS THE WORKPLACE

Research by the UK government shows that the gender pay gap is at its biggest for employees aged 40-49, with an almost 11% gap between male and female earnings in this age bracket. In analysing the reason behind this, researchers found a significantly lower incidence of women being promoted into higher paid managerial positions after the age of 39 years.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this age bracket coincides with the age most women begin to experience perimenopausal symptoms – pointing to an urgent need for improved menopause support in the UK's workplaces if the valuable experience and talent of female employees is to be retained.

## FACTFILE: MENOPAUSE AT WORK

# £2.9 BILLION

The estimated cost of menopause to UK workplaces is as high as £2.9 billion per year

# 44%

44% of women say that their symptoms have affected their ability to work



1 in 10 women leave work due to their symptoms; 3 in 10 have reduced their hours

# OVER 60%

Over 60% of women report menopause symptoms as impacting their motivation, self-confidence, and accuracy



A quarter of women have taken time off sick due to their symptoms; less than a third of those named menopause on sick notes

# 91%

91% of businesses plan to offer menopause support within the next two years

# MY MENOPAUSE STORY

JUNE POTTS, HEALTH@WORK

MENOPAUSE AFFILIATE



In my late 40s, I found myself balancing my career while caring for an elderly parent with dementia, a husband with cancer, and a teenager with exams. Life was stressful, and I attributed my mood swings, forgetfulness, fatigue, and paranoia to both lack of sleep and anxiety. Looking back, I was experiencing perimenopause – who knew?

At 49, I eventually consulted my GP after collapsing with endometriosis pain. I was referred to a consultant and, due to my medical history, offered a **bilateral oophorectomy**. Equipped with the knowledge that a total hysterectomy would catapult me into menopause; I grasped the opportunity.

Nothing prepared me for the menopause. Within four weeks, my life was in disarray. I struggled to function, suffering hot flushes, night sweats, insomnia, irritability, and brain fog. Regardless, like most women, I soldiered on. Having had a poor experience with HRT in the initial stages, I chose to manage my menopause holistically by making lifestyle changes and using everyday devices such as the Lady Care, which helped somewhat with my otherwise debilitating menopause symptoms. Still, I prided myself on attending work every day as the Head of Customer Contact, responsible for a 60-seat call centre. As I enjoyed the kudos from winning international accolades for my work, I thought I was coping.

**Bilateral oophorectomy:**

**the surgical removal of both ovaries, a common medical cause of menopause & premature menopause**





“

**Within four weeks, my life was in disarray. I struggled to function, suffering hot flushes, night sweats, insomnia, irritability, and brain fog.**

”



A change of senior leadership and a new, less informed manager resulted in my being side-lined from a senior management position, without discussion. I'd become upset on a couple of occasions; was showing signs of stress; and was described as moody. I also often over-spoke, as I worried I'd forget if I didn't say everything at once! Mortified, I found the courage to divulge my menopause status, despite working in a male-dominated workplace. Sadly, my employer was ill-equipped to support me, other than to offer a new, less significant role and email me a token six sessions with a counsellor with no HR follow-up. I was left to vacate my office of 16 years, watched upon by a team of 60 people. This event still pains me, to the point of exhibiting symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

“  
**After my hysterectomy, nobody at my company took the time to talk to me or understand how my menopause symptoms were affecting my work, behaviours, or personal life.**  
”





After my hysterectomy, nobody at my company took the time to talk to me or understand how my menopause symptoms were affecting my work, behaviours, or personal life. Consequently, my experience of working through the menopause was damaging, difficult and unnecessary. In part, I still carry the psychological scars. I was excluded from meetings – my opinion was no longer valid.

My annual discretionary bonus was withdrawn. I had 18 one-to-one meetings cancelled by my line manager, who told me that if I was unhappy sitting under an air-conditioning unit I should consider leaving. I lacked a sense of purpose and belonging and subsequently became miserable, sad, and insular – a former extrovert, I was unrecognisable to myself and others.

**The reality of the situation forced change. Made redundant in March 2020, I reinvented myself as a Business Consultant specialising in menopause at work. Having lived, worked, and researched menopause at work, I've succeeded in turning a negative into a positive and continue my passion educating organisations on why menopause is of importance in the workplace, how it affects the bottom line, and how to prevent more stories like mine.**

*June Pitts.*



A photograph of two women in an office setting. The woman on the right is wearing a light blue turban and a white button-down shirt, smiling broadly. The woman on the left is partially visible, also smiling. The background is blurred, showing other people in an office environment.

# SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES WITH SYMPTOMS

**Even with new focuses on promoting diversity and inclusion within the modern workplace, building a menopause-inclusive workplace can present a unique challenge due to the range of experiences that menopause presents.**

This is made more complicated by existing conflicts of opinion within the wider discussion. Research by the University of Edinburgh found that many women were concerned that implementing additional menopause support structures would lead to additional stigmatisation – “pulling the menopause card”. Some women also voiced their worries that wider awareness of menopause at work could place more focus on their age and sex, rather than their ability or experience.

For this reason, it’s imperative for workplaces who want to improve their support for employees transitioning through menopause to focus on structural, long-term change. Here at Health@Work, we encourage organisations to embed wellbeing into the foundations of their business, rather than as a short-term retention solution.



# PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

**We often mention the concept of ‘psychological safety’ – but what is it? Effectively, a psychologically safe workplace is one where employees feel safe and supported to raise concerns, ask questions, and make mistakes without fear of reprisal or punishment.**

In fact, psychological safety is now considered the cornerstone of a healthy workplace. Our course, Psychological Safety for Driving Team Performance, is designed to teach your leadership team to both assess psychological safety within your workplace and create and implement action plans to improve awareness and understanding – find out more by heading to [our website](#).

“

Surveys have found that employees in workplaces with high levels of psychological safety report up 76% more engagement.<sup>12</sup>

”



# REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Under UK employment law, employers have a duty to implement reasonable adjustments where necessary and possible to ensure that no employee is disadvantaged at work. While menopause is not – as yet – a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, many employment tribunals have seen menopause cases treated under the protected characteristics of age, sex, and disability. As such, it's a good idea to consider the reasonable adjustments that could be put in place in your workplace, such as:

- Offering options for temperature control, such as allowing the use of a personal fan or heater, or moving desks away from windows, air conditioning units and radiators;
- Adapting or offering flexibility on uniforms for better comfort;
- Providing access to a quiet rest or breakout area for employees who spend long periods of time standing or sitting, or for dealing with symptoms;
- Ensuring that washroom facilities are properly stocked with menstrual hygiene products;
- Allowing employees to turn cameras off during online meetings as needed.





## INCLUSIVITY AND MENOPAUSE

**Menopause impacts everyone differently, but particularly when we think of the many diverse characteristics that can impact our experiences and identities. When planning for your menopause strategy or workplace support, you may wish to consider:**

- **Disabilities:** The menopause transition may exacerbate existing challenges for those with disabilities. Remember, not all disabilities are visible!
- **Cultural differences:** Those from differing cultures that are experiencing menopause may have perspectives and experiences that differ from others’.
- **Inclusive language:** Not everyone who transitions through menopause will be a woman – both transgender men and many non-binary people also experience menopause.

“

**“Pre-existing healthcare treatments, such as hormone replacement, surgery, or cancer treatment can impact an individual’s menopause symptoms: remember that no one’s menopause journey is the same.**

”





# CREATING MENOPAUSE - INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

A fully menopause-aware workplace better allows your workforce to feel safe not only discussing their menopause status but also taking advantage of the support available.

## **So, what does a structural change look like for a menopause-positive workplace?**

- Flexible working – offering increased flexibility for staff, particularly those experiencing menopause symptoms, can help alleviate concerns around productivity and workload.
- Psychological safety – workplaces where employees feel they can speak about their symptoms and health needs without fear of being side-lined are often the most supportive.
- Positive, empathetic reviews – holding regular check-ins with employees to discuss the best way to support their unique needs equips your workforce with a feeling of control and security over their own career.

# MENOPAUSE CHAMPIONS: GIVE YOUR EMPLOYEES A VOICE

**Workplace Menopause Champions** are subject matter experts; providing invaluable insight and knowledge to your wellbeing strategy by ensuring that any menopause initiatives remain lively and relevant.

Menopause Champions generally have experience of menopause and are comfortable talking about it. They are your workplace conversation-starters for those struggling with their menopause experience, providing a listening ear and signposting colleagues towards both internal and external support.

Health@Work's dedicated Workplace Menopause Champion training is designed to equip your workforce with an understanding, empathetic, and practical 'first-aider' for their menopause concerns. You can find out more about the course [here](#).



“

**Less than a third of those experiencing menopause discuss their symptoms at work.<sup>8</sup>**

”



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

**It's increasingly apparent that employer support for menopause is no longer a benefit, but a necessity for retaining the top talent within the modern workforce. When it comes to planning and presenting your organisation's menopause support strategy or approach, the key things to remember are:**

- Menopause is not a single experience. Despite symptoms impacting more than 13 million people across the UK, every individual will have a different experience, symptoms, and perspective on their menopause transition.
- Menopause is a business issue. With as many as 1 in 10 women estimated to leave the workforce entirely due to the severity of their symptoms, better structures for support are key in retaining the knowledge and experience of an entire demographic.
- Support should be built into your business. With many people voicing concerns that increased support could lead to prejudice against older women in the workplace, it's vital that support is both structural and long-term to be embedded within your organisational ethos.
- Workplace benefits should promote both mental and physical health. Menopause symptoms can have as much impact on emotional wellbeing as physical health. An inclusive employee benefits programme should take a comprehensive and holistic approach to personal health and wellbeing.





# HOW HEALTH@WORK CAN SUPPORT YOU

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

EAP's can  
provide an ROI of  
£10.35 for every  
£1 spent <sup>9</sup>

Employee Assistance Programmes, or EAPs, can be invaluable in providing an on-the-go support network for your employees. With the mental – and physical – impact of menopause often weighing so heavily on the shoulders of those experiencing symptoms, an EAP's counselling service can be a lifeline for your workforce.



The Health@Work EAP also offers 24/7 a Menopause Helpline Service where employees can find specialist support for those important conversations. The helpline is available 24/7 for employees to book a one-off assessment with a specialist menopause clinician who can:

- Signpost to a GP with advice on how to discuss their symptoms
- Provide dedicated menopause resources and information
- Refer them for up to 8 counselling sessions

### YOU CAN ALSO CHOOSE TO ADD THESE BOLT-ONS TO YOUR EAP PACKAGE:

#### IMPROVE YOURSELF

Improving mental resilience and physical fitness can be a great way to regulate menopause symptoms – provide on-demand guides for mindfulness, sleep, exercise, and more.

#### BEST DOCTORS

Access the knowledge & expertise of over 50,000 of the world's leading doctors for peace of mind regarding Hormone Replacement Therapy treatment plans and other diagnoses.

#### GYM DISCOUNTS




Regular exercise can help reduce menopause symptoms. Offer discounted membership at over 3,000 gyms, health clubs, yoga studios or boot camps across the UK.

# SPECIALIST MENOPAUSE TRAINING WITH HEALTH@WORK

Health@Work is proud to have been one of the first UK wellbeing training providers to offer dedicated menopause awareness courses. Below you can find our currently available courses, designed to promote awareness, nurture understanding, and provide practical solutions for both managers and employees of all genders and age ranges.




## **Championing the Menopause - Menopause Champion Training**

This course is designed to train your workplace's Menopause Champions – the conversation starters who can signpost employees toward both internal and external support and are instrumental in creating, facilitating, and embedding menopause initiatives.

-  **Understanding** – Your Champions will learn both about menopause and a range of options for managing symptoms both in and out of the workplace
-  **Best practices** – Champions will learn to identify workplace solutions to embed a culture where it's okay to talk about menopause
-  **Solutions** – We'll teach your Champions how to signpost colleagues to appropriate internal support, information, and external sources of help.

## **Supporting Employees Through Menopause - Menopause Training for Managers**

According to government research, less than 1 in 3 women discuss their menopause symptoms with their line manager. This course is designed to engage, inspire, and prompt managers and leaders in supporting employees experiencing menopause by sharing up-to-date resources, signposting advice, and offering impartial guidance.

-  Managers will learn about the symptoms, triggers and misconceptions of menopause helping them identify, support and signpost employees
-  Your management team will learn about the legal and business reasons why menopause is relevant at work and identify ways to support rather than stigmatise
-  Attendees will discover the best-practice workplace solutions and policies to create a menopause friendly culture that keeps your team motivated and engaged.

## 🗣️ Let's Talk Menopause - + Menopause Awareness Training

Research suggests that less than half of women, and **less than 30% of men**, feel adequately informed about menopause and how to support their colleagues<sup>1</sup>. This course is designed to educate employees, of all ages and genders, on menopause awareness and provide support both in and out of the office.

- 🔗 **Understanding** – Your employees will gain a real understanding of menopause and discuss the many misconceptions surrounding menopause
- 🔗 **Awareness** – We'll help your workforce raise awareness of the need to support colleagues and how to do this in a way that benefits everyone
- 🔗 **Let's Talk** – Your employees will learn how to normalise menopause by encouraging them to take responsibility and feel confident to engage in meaningful conversations.

1 -Ipsos Mori, Menopause in the Workplace, October 2020

## 🗣️ The Menopause Lounge - + Coping with the Impact of the Menopause

Over half the population will transition through menopause, yet each will experience menopause differently. With the right education and support, women can feel more equipped to deal with the menopause – the Menopause Lounge is designed to provide a safe environment to talk about everything menopause-related.

- 🔗 **All about Menopause** – Your employees will discuss menopause, including the symptoms, triggers and misconceptions that can impact day-to-day living
- 🔗 **How to Cope** – We'll provide information on a range of coping tools and strategies for managing menopause symptoms such as hot flushes, brain fog, and sleep deprivation
- 🔗 **Let's Talk** – Your employees will learn how to open up channels of communication to develop conversations with line managers, co-workers, partners and GP's.

## 🗣️ The Menopause Wellness + Plan: Nutrition and Lifestyle Interventions for Optimal Health

This course is designed to provide those experiencing menopause with the tools and knowledge to better manage their symptoms through nutritional and lifestyle changes.

- 🔗 **Knowing the Facts** - Employees will gain a rounded understanding of the physiology of menopause
- 🔗 **Food & Exercise** - We'll discuss the impact and role of nutrition and physical activity on menopause symptoms and management
- 🔗 **Better Rest** - We'll equip your employees with strategies and techniques for improving sleep and reducing stress during menopause.



**HEALTH SCREENING**  
Improve your  
workforce's everyday  
health awareness  
with *regular* health  
screenings



# BETTER UNDERSTAND YOUR WORKFORCE'S NEEDS WITH THE WORKPLACE WELLBEING CHARTER

The best employee wellbeing strategies are the ones built into the heart of your organisation. But this can make assessing your existing offering particularly challenging – questions of engagement, usage, and appropriateness can be hard to answer.

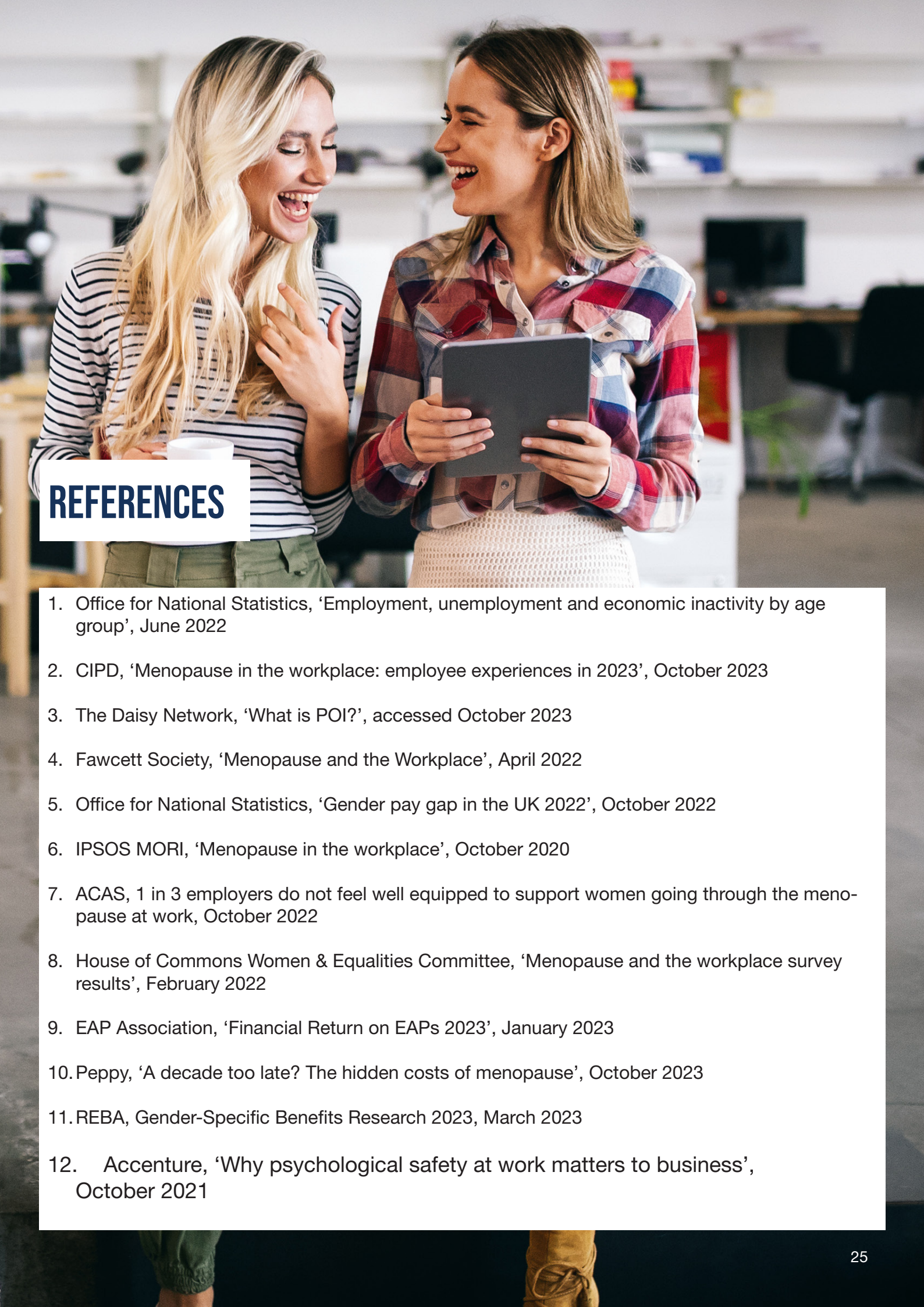
The Workplace Wellbeing Charter is the UK's national accreditation for businesses who know the value of great wellbeing. Working alongside your dedicated consultant, we'll work with you to identify, strategise, and implement long-term wellbeing solutions that are bespoke to your workforce's unique needs.

To find out more about the Workplace Wellbeing Charter can get you on the way to a winning wellbeing culture, [visit our website today.](#)



“The Charter is part of our long-term plan to keep staff wellbeing at the heart of our culture. The accreditation process initially seemed daunting; however, we hadn't factored in our consultant, who kept us on track and supported!”  
- Circle Health Group





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