



Menopause in the workplace

Starfish Search's Lorraine Payne and Sunita Patel look at the importance of breaking down the stigma around menopause for a more inclusive and empathetic workplace

As a female-led executive search firm, the menopause is a topic that's really important to us.

The conversation around menopause is getting louder but it can still feel like an uncomfortable topic and there can be a lot of information to digest. Last month we partnered with the Public Service People Managers Association (PPMA) to deliver a webinar for leaders and HR professionals to share the truths about the menopause and the impact it can have on employees, and to explore why it needs to be addressed in the workplace.

According to The Menopause Charity, 10% of women leave their jobs due to the menopause. Given the workforce challenges local government is already facing, this is a significant problem for the sector. Menopause typically affects women between the ages of 45 and 55 and often brings with it a range of physical and emotional changes. Everyone's menopause journey is different and there is not a one size fits all approach available to support women or employers.

It has only been within the last few years that organisations are increasingly recognising the importance of providing training and support for their employees to better understand and address the issues surrounding menopause.

At Starfish we support individual and organisational leadership journeys, but we also want to support our clients' understanding of some of the challenges women face as they progress through their careers.

We know up to 80% of women experience as many as 34 different symptoms linked to the menopause, which can have a negative impact on their work. With a decline in both estrogen

and progesterone, this can also lead to a significant dip in overall confidence, and the entire period of the menopause, including perimenopause and post-menopause, can last up to 15 years.

At the webinar, it was positive to hear about the initiatives some local authorities have already implemented and the impact these are having.

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Barnsley MBC is a council leading the way on increasing knowledge and understanding around the topic, holding a menopause wellbeing event with more than 150 attendees of all genders, and has recently been accredited as a Menopause Friendly Employer. At the webinar, they shared their experience of accreditation providing an excellent framework for helping organisations to improve their offer and support.

Other organisations have developed guidance for staff, produced menopause toolkits, held drop-in café sessions for staff, and monthly 'let us talk health' menopause training and e-learning modules for managers.

Graham Charsley, a PPMA board member is similarly positive: 'One of the more notable changes over the past few years is the momentum building to create a safe environment for all colleagues to talk about the menopause and to be able to have sensitive, open, organisation-wide conversations about it. It's encouraging to see the increasing level of interest from public sector organisations in supporting colleagues, whether this is through more flexible working practices, providing opportunities for voices to be heard, or internal workshops and modules to help all colleagues understand the menopause.'

It is clear that employees who feel supported in the workplace experience greater job satisfaction and improve retention rates. By breaking down the stigma around menopause, organisations are fostering a more inclusive and empathetic workplace culture.

If you or your council are leading programmes or initiatives to support menopause issues and would like to share your learning we would love to hear from you. ■

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