

SCRUTINY
14 FEBRUARY 2022

MENOPAUSE UPDATE

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Nikki Woollatt, Cabinet Member for Working Environment and Support Services

Responsible Officer: Matthew Page, Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste

Reason for Report: Scrutiny have requested regular updates to a presentation of a report in February 2021 on work regarding the menopause that was recommended to advance the organisation's ability to both raise awareness and provide support to the workforce.

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee is asked to note the information below

Financial Implications: No financial risk.

Budget and Policy Framework: This report sits within the current budget and policy framework.

Legal Implications: No legal implications.

Risk Assessment: It is important that the Council can effectively address issues relating to the menopause.

Equality Impact Assessment: No equality issues highlighted in this report.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: This work is in addition to the Corporate Plan.

Impact on Climate Change: No climate change issues highlighted in this report.

1.0 Introduction/Background

1.1 The purpose of this report is to give an update on how the organisation has advanced recommendations detailed in a report regarding the menopause that was approved by Scrutiny in February 2021. We have taken these recommendations in turn and provided an update on each of them below.

1.2 These items included communication and raising awareness around the menopause, creating a pool of wellbeing ambassadors that can signpost and provide practical advice and support to colleagues, the provision of training and the running of an independent staff survey last autumn (to ask about communication and effectiveness of methods used to raise awareness).

2.0 The introduction of 'Wellbeing Ambassadors'

2.1 The all staff consultative group called Impact and the Union created a pool of wellbeing ambassadors (including trained mental health first aiders) which was established with the aim of educating and raising awareness amongst the

workforce of key subjects including the menopause. There are three key priorities which the ambassadors have agreed to implement. These are;

-To raise awareness of the menopause amongst colleagues.

-To signpost support and help provide/highlight practical tips.

-To provide direct support to colleagues where it is appropriate to do so.

2.2 This approach recognises that peers can often help educate their colleagues better than a management (top down) approach but especially where the subject matter is sensitive and/or personal in nature. It also helps give employees confidence that they can share issues in a safe environment.

2.3 The ambassadors will be further mobilised to raise awareness and signpost support around key related subjects including mental health and wellbeing, reasonable adjustments and other equality related issues. A specialist provider is being enlisted to look at the development of wellbeing ambassadors in the organisation and this work is being led on by the Health and Safety Officer and the Learning and Development Specialist.

3.0 **Support is reviewed that is available to staff who have menopause symptoms**

3.1 This to include whether desk fans are too large and how to ensure all staff know how to regulate the climate controls for temperature on the first floor meeting rooms and how to regulate the trench heating in their area during the winter months. Consideration should also be given to understanding needs of staff not working in an office space and whether the current unisex toilets could be changed.

3.2 There is currently a review of our office space being carried out to look at future desk lay out and use of meeting space. An example of how future desk space could be set out and used is in the ICT training room on level 2 of Phoenix House.

3.3 There is also a review being carried out regarding the accessibility of our buildings and these findings will feed into how we further improve our office space and meeting areas. The organisation is also looking at the potential future of mobile, hybrid working where this supports team performance and effective working,

3.4 There are currently unisex toilets available for use at both ends of PH but also single sex toilets in the communal meeting areas situated near the lifts. Work is being progressed on improving the accessibility of the toilet blocks starting with the block on the first floor nearest the meeting rooms.

4.0 Communication and Raising Awareness around the Menopause

4.1 The Health and Safety Officer has written a wide range of articles for the internal staff electronic newsletter, the Link, both on the subject of the menopause and the work we are planning to do to raise awareness of the subject and provide better practical support. This has included providing key information and subject matter for reading, the highlighting of practical points, tips and advice for staff and the dissemination of further guidance and advice to the all staff consultative group Impact and the Union.

4.2 A recent external staff survey has highlighted the need to strengthen corporate communication and staff briefing together with Operational Managers regularly asking staff about their own mental health and wellbeing. The Health and Safety Officer has also written a wide variety of articles in relation to how we promote mental health and wellbeing awareness and support.

5.0 That an MDDC work place policy on the menopause is drawn up, agreed and promoted to all staff.

5.1 A reasonable adjustments policy has been drafted and agreed with the Health and Safety Committee and Leadership team detailing how staff can ask for consideration to be given to workplace changes that would help them carry out their responsibilities. This policy covers the menopause, mental health and other physical adjustments that may be requested by the employee.

5.2 The organisation has a comprehensive flexible working policy in place and also promotes flexible working in its employment practices to staff,

6.0 Line Managers and staff receive menopause in the workplace training

6.1 A package of learning and development is being designed and taken forwards by our Learning and Development Specialist to be accessed by both line managers and staff. This will help ensure line managers are clear about the symptoms and impact of the menopause as well as the support available to all staff.

6.2 This includes the creation of a menopause awareness module for line managers and/or employees to educate them on the effects of the menopause and how this is best supported.

7.0 That a forum is set up for staff and/or line managers

7.1 The Cabinet Member for Continuous Improvement has set up an external drop in Menopause café which is being run on a monthly basis in the District. We are looking at how we bring this model in house for the workforce.

7.2 We are working with an external provider to increase both the presence of literature and information regarding the menopause but also give online access to seminars and podcasts for employees.

8.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 8.1 There are a number of priorities to focus on in progressing our work around the menopause and the implementation of an effective work programme.
- 8.2 It is important that we roll out a full programme of learning and development for both line managers and staff so they can deal with arising issues around the menopause effectively and in a way which gives confidence to the workforce.
- 8.3 It is important that we consider the lessons learned from the external drop in sessions being run in the District so we can facilitate something similar for our own staff.
- 8.4 It is important that we continue to develop our online presence and support which is available to staff (as well as promote this effectively).

Contact for more Information: Matthew Page, Corporate Manager for People, Governance and Waste (MPage@middevon.gov.uk)

Circulation of the Report: Cabinet Member seen and approved Yes – Cllr Nikki Woollatt, Leadership Team seen and approved Yes.

List of Background Papers: Menopause Paper submitted to Scrutiny February 2021.