

Written evidence from Menopause Support [MEW0030]

Menopause Support CIC (menopausesupport.co.uk) is a not-for-profit community interest company founded by Diane Danzebrink to offer information and support to women and their families and education and support to businesses and organisations. Diane's experience of surgical menopause, without appropriate hormone replacement, led her to question if other women were being failed. What she found shocked her and prompted her to act to help others get the help and support that they deserve during menopause and beyond. Menopause Support offers 1-1 information and advice consultations for women (and their partners if requested) via telephone or video call and menopause awareness training for the workplace. We also facilitate a free private support group for 22,000 women via the Facebook platform where seven moderators answer questions and offer factual, evidence-based information in line with NICE and British Menopause Society guidance.

Menopause Support is the home of the national #MakeMenopauseMatter campaign launched in Westminster in 2018 with cross party support.

Our #MakeMenopauseMatter campaign has three aims:

1. To significantly improve menopause education amongst GP's – far too many women are suffering as GP's receive very little, if any menopause education during their training leaving them ill equipped to recognise and manage a phase of life that will directly affect at least 50% of the population.
2. To raise awareness within the workplace and for all employers to have menopause guidance in place to be able to support women experiencing symptoms. Too many women feel unsupported at work and too many leave the workplace due to a lack of awareness of and support for menopause.
3. To introduce menopause education in to the RSE curriculum for all teenagers. Everybody needs to understand this phase of life. Far too many individuals and relationships suffer as a result of a lack of understanding of menopause.

The third aim was achieved in England in 2019 when the Secretary of State for Education announced that menopause would be added to the curriculum from September 2020.

We frequently read and hear experiences of women who feel that they have had no option but to leave the workplace or have been forced out by employers. We warmly welcome the opportunity to share the information that we have gathered as very often women feel that they have nowhere to address their concerns or to effect change.

All quotes from members of our online community have been shared anonymously with their full permission.

In February 2021 we asked the members of our online community if menopause had impacted their work life.

1533 members responded with the following results.

No impact 661

Reduced work hours 306

Left a job 258

Gave up work permanently 61

Considering Leaving 56

Reduced self-employment hours 44

Closed my business 5

Can't afford to stop work 142

56% of respondents told us that menopause had indeed had an impact on their work and employment or self-employment.

Many of the respondents commented and we wanted to use our submission to share the experiences of the women who wanted us to submit them so that their experiences can be used to improve the current situation for the future. All of those quoted below have given permission for their experiences to be shared anonymously to help the committee understand the variety of experience but also the common themes.

I was told not to speak about menopause in the workplace, I was not allowed to reduce my hours or work from home when symptoms were bad, no empathy and totally unsupported.

I had a full-on meltdown at work in front of an office full of people. Didn't realise what was happening to me but then realised I was peri menopausal with other gynae issues on top. I was open and honest with work but did state that I was being put under immense stress at work which wasn't helping. I was told that this isn't work that in essence this was me, I should be grateful for all the help and support I was getting (which was none) and told basically I will be told off regards my behaviour. Felt I was a child being scolded! No empathy no support whatsoever and the galling thing my supervisors were female!!

I was finding it difficult to cope with my perimenopausal symptoms, they came out of the blue which resulted in being signed off for 8 weeks off work. My line manager was a lot younger than me so I asked the senior HR lady if I could have a supported return to work and a meeting was arranged. The senior HR and my line manager were unsympathetic to how I

was feeling, and my symptoms and my line manager came armed with everything I hadn't completed in my role. I left that meeting and was signed off work again and I was finding it difficult to think positively about ever returning to work. The company I work for hadn't got a menopause policy and when I approached a senior manager about displaying a menopause poster, I was told that the male staff member might not want to see them! When I spoke with my line manager about having someone I could talk to, she basically said she wouldn't always be around. I am back at work but I am still trying to raise the subject when I can.

I was accused of bullying for a 5 minute conversation with a team member, I was suffering vertigo attacks and a reduced ability to cope at work, all the signs were there, I was 56 and instead of asking if I was ok my employer took me out of my job and subjected me to an unfair investigation, the senior managers even added on allegations against me to give weight to the original incident. I was picked on and undermined until I couldn't function at work or home. They destroyed me and took my career from me, even though it was no case to answer in the end and I work in an all women profession - still amazes me that a bunch of women of a similar age could do this to another. Not one senior manager mentioned the menopause.

I worked within an Occupational Health Dept for a local authority organisation. My increased menopausal symptoms got to a point where I was exhausted every day, poor concentration, muscle and joint aches and less confidence in my role. I discussed with my line manager and dept head (both women in their 50's) so they were aware of my symptoms and difficulties affecting my work. I was offered no adjustments, no time off work and very little support with carrying out the role despite a menopause policy in place. A male colleague who had experienced recent difficulties doing the same role but covering a different area, had previously been given reasonable adjustments to help him through some health issues. I discussed with my gp who was very supportive, started me on HRT and signed me off work, with work related stress. This did not go down well with my two managers as the previous nurse had also left under similar circumstances. I went onto resign after 6 weeks off work, having had no referral to an outside OH dept, only a telephone health assessment by my line manager and no support from HR. After resigning my dept head referred me to my governing body with regulatory concerns, none of which had been raised during my two years of employment with the organisation. That investigation is still ongoing two years later (mainly due to Covid) and I have chosen to carve a new career in a different profession, due to the effects that role had on my health. I paid for private therapy to deal with secondary trauma related to the specifics of the role as this was not offered to me whilst within the position, even though others in the dept received this. I have lost my career as a nurse, due to one individual who effectively did not recognise menopause as a factor in struggling at work. Even though a policy may be in place, it doesn't mean that it is enforced or followed. When you are struggling with low confidence and many symptoms, challenging a large organisation to receive the support and care you deserve is often impossible.

I was managing the largest team in my Dept and one other, more than any other manager. My senior manager stated they had absolutely no issues with my performance, and I was working beyond required.

Out of the blue, all managers and myself were asked to be reinterviewed. That would have been fine if the Dept was reducing numbers, but it wasn't, it was increasing them.

There was also an option for promotion for me and one other, we were the only managers capable and had the experience at the time.

I was peri menopausal; crying, struggling with confidence, not sleeping so tired all time, flushes, mood swings and irritable-hard to hold myself together, heavy periods and the pain, and struggling to stay focused and concentrate for long periods of time. Additionally, I was due to be on annual leave when the interviews took place; two interviews at two levels in 5 days.

I advised my senior manager of this; I was told to attend the interview or be demoted.

I cried for days, literally. I was beyond myself. I thought I'd be on leave, a time to get some sleep and recharge.

The first interview was for promotion. I sat there on Skype in front of a panel of senior managers, appearing to stare into space as I waited for my brain to think of a decent response to the questions. I just wanted to put the lid down on my laptop and cry. I struggled through thinking it's 50/50. My performance was embarrassing.

I declined the second interviews and I resigned from my manager post before they had chance to demote me.

I called work a couple of days later and reported sick, I stayed off for a month. That's so unlike me.

While off sick I had my manager call me asking for help with work related issues and to talk about himself. At no point did he actually listen to how I was, but I could ask for support. Right, not convincing.

My return-to-work interview was a shambles. I spoke, he listened, basically wrote that I was stressed and had anxiety issues. I never said I had anxiety issues.

I rewrote it and sent him back with a 'sign it and don't change the wording'.

My manager and others continued to ask me to do work at the level I was, I had to continuously email them back with a 'no, you're paid to do this now, you do it'. Over and over again. Each time, reopening the wounds.

I have since started a sexual discrimination grievance. I emailed the head of the Dept, he won't reply. Fuel to the fire for me.

I'm angry, unappreciated, used and tossed aside, not treated with dignity and respect, my confidence went to an all-time low and so did my self-esteem.

I'm ashamed of who I work for. They look amazing from a PR point of view but int he inside they really don't care.

I'm slowly rebuilding myself.

I was signed off work with anxiety and depression. No flexible hrs offered when I had been awake since 4am every day exhausted. I felt insane at work as the boundaries had changed since returning to the office after working from home. Many more responsibilities and less support which means I struggle to run my project. With the anxiety anyway this did not help. The tone and the dismissal of symptoms and request for flexibility and support being rejected by line manager is demeaning. She is a woman. Telling me it was my attitude. I wasn't part of the team! GP wanted me to take anti-depressants and will not listen to me until I do. It's all very sad.

Two and a half years ago I went to Uni to fulfil my dream of becoming a nurse again after nearly 20 years out. I completed the return to practice course. It was a big challenge! I hadn't clocked at that time that the anxiety I was experiencing was due to peri menopause and just thought personal issues were to blame plus my father's death. They probably didn't help. I secured a job working on the community with the team I had my student work placement with. However, I knew for my health and well-being I didn't want to work any more than 24 hours and I had stated this prior to applying and at interview. The job was for 30, there was no movement. There continued to be no movement after being off sick with debilitating anxiety, involvement of occ health and explaining how the hours were affecting my ability to cope, my self-confidence and self-esteem and unable to independently practice as a nurse. I felt a failure. In the end all I could do at work was cry until I went continually off sick resulting in my resignation when the hours were still not reduced. There had been the introduction of a menopause policy and talk of reasonable adjustments. But in practice I was not listened to. I ended up seeing a psychiatrist privately after a visit to an osteopath I'd been having treatment from for anxiety and back pain. He made a retrospective diagnosis of PMDD. I'd not heard of that condition before. It made complete sense after my history of severe PMS, PND and episodes of depression. I'd messed up many relationships with my psychological issues.

My GP had tried several antidepressants over the last 18 months with horrendous side effects. HRT was given for a couple of months during this time, but I was unable to tolerate it as I felt so terrible and came off it. I also had very little knowledge of peri menopause and menopause at this stage of my journey. SSRI's, oestrogen patch and utrogestan was prescribed. I'm now on 75mcg patch plus 2 pumps gel and waiting for testosterone when I see the menopause specialist in 2 months. It's been a horrendous journey one which for a number of months I was unable to go out, shop or socialise in any way.

I am now a volunteer for a charity organisation supporting a menopause group and hope to do more with my extended knowledge of the menopause to ensure ladies do not suffer the way I have. I reckon my peri menopause hit me around the age of 48, I'm now post-menopausal and 56.

I had to take 17 months off work with brain fog, anxiety & depression to the point I was really ill and feeling like I didn't want to be here. As I improved a bit I returned to work on a phased return. I'm still getting brain fog and anxiety but it's improving. I had a nightmare financially as the insurers my employer pays to cover sick pay refused to pay out on the basis, they didn't accept I was unable to work. They never spoke to me about my symptoms once and refused to get medical evidence. They made assumptions that I was suffering from work related stress & that I could work even though the DWP had interviewed me and determined I was not fit for work due to the perimenopause and so had several menopause experts. I've referred my complaint about the insurers to the Financial Ombudsman Service. This shows one other way menopausal women are prejudiced, insurers don't have a clue just how bad we can suffer and think we should be at work as it's menopause! My employer took some time to understand, but since they saw a very supportive occupational health consultant report they've has been great and have kept supporting me even though I still can't meet my targets yet despite working extra hours in my own time.

I was paid off from my job after months of anxiety (which I know now was the start of menopause).

My boss would yell at me about things I'd done wrong and everyone in the office would hear. I had poor concentration and memory loss - I felt mortified that I was making mistakes and my confidence was badly affected (it still hasn't recovered).

I was ambushed one afternoon by my boss, taken to a meeting room, and told it wasn't working out, and that if I chose to stay, I would find the performance management 'very stressful'. I was shown a figure on a piece of paper and given 24 hours to decide on whether to take the pay out or not.

I took it and found out afterwards that this was not strictly legal. ACAS helped me to get a

higher pay out, but I didn't feel able to take my employer to tribunal.

There was no HR, no support from anyone at work. My GP said blood tests were inconclusive and signed me off with anxiety.

This was in 2016 and I still haven't managed to get treatment (waiting for appointment for a menopause clinic).

I worked as a nurse in the NHS. I ended up on the disciplinary route due to my lower performance, after a 20-year exemplary career. The doctor in Occupational Health recognised my symptoms as menopausal and suggested I go on HRT. Which I did, but because some of the symptoms continued, brain fog and fatigue, I retired early. My line manager, a woman, told me "It's only the menopause". The final year of my career was humiliating and depressing. It was such a sad way to end a career as a specialist nurse, which I loved and was successful in.

I left work after a sequence of events in which might be considered normal in the UK: brinkmanship and bellicose work environment and had lost my belief in myself to apply for other jobs or argue for correct pay for my responsible role. I didn't realise that nervousness/anxiety, and lack of interest and depression were symptoms of menopause. I then went on to get a private contract, however I had no idea that brain fog was a symptom of menopause, which added to the anxiety. I was so anxious that I started shaking when one of my invoices was questioned; however, a year later after having some HRT I reviewed that email and didn't understand why I had such an extreme response to it. I stopped that contract owing to not being able to handle the anxiety of evidencing the hours worked. Anything requiring confrontation over important issues caused me to start shaking and end up crying. When I found out that it was perimenopause, I asked my GP for HRT, but she wouldn't give me any because I was still having periods. In order to speak at a conference, I resorted to taking some old combined contraceptive pills in order to deliver the speech (it worked). I would like the nature of the UK work environment to change to not trigger so much stress in women/females overall.

I got ill health retirement. The anxiety which I had suffered all my life deteriorated hugely. The extra sensitivity which seemed to arise as part of the menopause made it really difficult to find a treatment that didn't give me dreadful side effects. I can't take HRT.

Being a teacher during the menopause is degrading and humiliating. No recognition of how debilitating it, no time to go to the loo, constant pain as you never stop or sit down. Was on my feet from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. Usually no time to eat lunch. So glad to be out, the job is totally incompatible with the menopause.

The anxiety at work at being constantly over scrutinised whilst suffering hellish anxiety tipped me over into a phobia of the place. I'd become paralysed with anxiety. No one talks

about anxiety in the menopause, it's all hot flushes.

The workplace needs an overhaul with regards to the menopause.

I work for a private health care company and my Dr recently signed me off with anxiety and stress. I changed jobs about 2.5 yrs. ago and this past Yr. I have been struggling with menopause. I started hrt in December but struggled to get the right dose and made my manager aware. I have had no support; it's been the complete opposite as my manager has been on my back constantly. I have been in the company for 21 yrs. and felt my only option was to be signed off as I found myself getting emotional when my manager would get at me and at one point, she actually laughed at me because I was upset. I have been off for 3 weeks now with no contact from anyone in my company. I am not sure if I will be able to go back into that environment as I feel it will just be worse now that I have taken time off. I have been taking this time to get myself back into the right head space but certainly won't be returning anytime soon as my mental health is worth more than what I have been suffering. I have been thinking about raising a grievance, but I am not sure if I am strong enough at the moment but definitely something I am considering. It's sad to think I loved my job and now it's adding stress to my mental health.

Due to symptoms of the menopause I couldn't concentrate properly, memory was a shambles, anxiety was through the roof and complete loss of confidence, but Team Leader and Manager (both female) knew I was starting my menopause journey and had started HRT. I had explained all the symptoms I was having and had asked my Team Leader on 3 occasions if I could reduce my workload and was told 'you know MANAGER won't go for that'. I was working 16 hour shifts from home, due to the start of the pandemic, had very little support. So eventually it all got to a point, and I made a mistake which was a huge one and carried a high risk of the company losing some of their financial standards. Having owned up to the error I was eventually dismissed on the grounds of gross misconduct. I expected that outcome but what was so degrading, and upsetting was the two women who did my disciplinary procedure said that 'they had taken my comments about my menopause on board but that it wasn't mitigating circumstances and that they could no longer trust me to do my job'. My manager never spoke to me for 2 weeks during that time to ask if I was OK or needed anything. I spoke to her when she called about IT organising to pick up my equipment and told her I really hope you don't have to go through what I was going through. Had my team leader or manager been better informed and educated around the menopause they would have seen that I was struggling and needed to reduce my hours or workload until my HRT was at its optimum level. I may have still been in that job, but I know now that I'm in a much better place life and work wise. Workplaces need to be educated from the ground up not just HR and a few employees.

I left my job in Early July after a long time feeling both anxious, embarrassed and stressed due to menopause symptoms. Needing the loo frequently, getting brain fog and making silly little mistakes as well as feeling utterly exhausted and weak all the time. Having been there almost two years (despite asking numerous times) I had no contract, didn't get any statutory holiday pay and was being constantly messed about with days I was expected to work. No routine added to my stress, so I left without giving any notice which left me feeling awful! I have now got my P45 and two years of holiday pay!!! Go figure!!!!

I worked for a FTSE100 - no support. In the long run, I am so happy to be out although it was traumatic at the time.

I think it's fair to say you get forced out of work. It's so hard to keep up with the brutal workforce regime in the world today. Targets, performance management, competitiveness. Menopause destroys the ability to cope with these somehow. I'm like a ghostly trembling shadow of my former dynamic confident self.

At work my fatigue was absolutely crippling, my brain fog caused me so many problems. I was working as a Community Occupational Therapist support worker and visual impairment officer for Social Service. I was also absolutely struggling with the heat. Because I was sleeping in my car at lunch time to try and keep me functioning in the afternoons, I lost my job, which absolutely broke my heart. They said it wasn't acceptable to be resting in my car at lunchtime. I was told off for wearing light clothes to keep cool.

It absolutely broke my heart to lose the job I was totally committed to and absolutely loved.

I felt totally discriminated because I needed medical treatment for the menopause which work didn't want to give me the time off for, and how they treated me in the underhanded way they got rid of me because I was menopausal.

I was asked to be reinterviewed for the job I was already doing and for promotion within 5 days of each other. They'd already moved me round to support the Dept and I had the biggest team and projects, so they knew I was capable.

I was already at breaking point with the stress of picking up a team that had been unmanaged for years, huge structural change for the Dept and a new IT system-all at the same time.

I asked them not to interview me for the post I was in, it made no sense-a process for a process's sake when I was supposed to be on leave that I desperately needed.

It appears I was a means to an end for them. I was told to attend the interviews or risk being demoted.

I was demoted, I'm now at grievance stage.

The menopause has never been brought up in my workplace, yet the impact has been challenging. The tiredness and brain fog, as well as mood swings before the battle to get hrt was eventually won with GP's. However, my individual managers have been amazing when I have asked for help. It's the system that's limiting as you have work targets set and such limited sick leave etc. There just needs to be more awareness and more transparency about the issue but education needs to start so much earlier. There was so much I didn't know about the menopause until I was in it myself! It feels exhausting to think of working until retirement age whilst battling menopause honestly.

I was a headteacher and in my early 40's with brain fog, anxiety, exhaustion, irregular sleep patterns and silent reflux. They all took their toll on my ability to function effectively.

As a headteacher you have a persona to maintain for colleagues and parents, you are expected to function at a high level irrespective of anything else going on in your life.

At the time, I felt that there was a complete lack of understanding about my symptoms from my GP and little support from my local authority and Governors.

I did not feel that I was myself and I didn't know what was wrong. I was less effective in my work and anxious and tired all the time, so I went to my GP who prescribed anti-depressants and counselling.

Somehow, I knew that this wasn't the answer. I had no idea that how I was feeling was linked to symptoms of the Menopause, so I made the difficult decision to walk away from my job and resigned, I felt useless.

Seven years have passed and on reflection I feel very hurt and let down because of the lack of understanding and support in the workplace and my GP not recognising the symptoms.

I think I have a strong character and I am not afraid to speak out, so I don't like dwelling on how helpless I felt at the time.

It now seems inconceivable that I felt this way and I believed that my only option was to walk away from a successful career.

For the last year, I have been on HRT and feel that I am back to my old self without any of my old symptoms.

Six years ago I changed career and I love my job. At every stage of my journey, I've felt supported at work. I have been very lucky in that respect.

I strongly believe over the last 7 years things have changed in terms of accessing accurate information and being able to talk more openly about Menopause.

I feel that I have a duty to share my experiences about Menopause and to support female colleagues and friends about how they can overcome barriers in the workplace and access information.

I have POI diagnosed at the age of 34. 4 years ago I was a specialist nurse working in fertility at a private clinic, I had recently changed jobs following a difficult few months due to a miscarriage a result of another undiagnosed rare reproductive condition after fertility treatment.

It was a struggle getting my hormones back to an equilibrium after what had happened I was struggling with brain fog, fatigue, memory problems, headaches, anxiety, coordination

I was honest with my employer as I recognised the symptoms and knew it was early days back on the HRT after everything had happened

Was waiting on a referral to see a specialist for more help, I devised my own support and work plan so they knew I was aware and taking steps, initially employer said ok but a few days later the mgr. asked me into the office in between my clinic patients and handed me a letter with no explanation

The letter invited me to a disciplinary meeting the next day with written implications that my contract could be terminated

I had never received anything like this before in over 8 years of nursing! I cried but had to go straight out to see the next patient who was waiting, when I had finished my clinic mgr. had left!

I drove home having to pull the car over several times to be sick wondering what I could do with such short notice until the meeting the following morning

After speaking with husband, family, RCN I arrived next morning told my team I was leaving and handed my notice in and left all before 9AM! Something I have never done before!

It took a long time for symptoms to improve, and I am now always open about my brain fog/memory, but I now work in fertility and menopause and have just completed my MSc in reproductive medicine something that would have seemed impossible 4 years ago!

I work in IT for a university and after starting that job two years ago after a long period of poor mental health, poor sleep, panic attacks etc all put down to stress by my GP, I found that at work I just couldn't learn anything new. My new colleagues must have thought I was an idiot! I had total brain fog and struggled to remember anything even from the day before. My panic increased to the point of being signed off. BUT I already suspected a hormonal influence on my mental health problems and together with the insomnia and brain fog I reached out to the university Menopause group; a lunch club set up by a brilliant woman who wanted to bring together women across the Uni to support each other. Given that of the 6000 strong staff, many are highly experienced and long serving, it isn't surprising that many, many of us are forty- and fifty-something women! She realised that half the Uni might be being run by women struggling with menopause symptoms! The club is just a (free) meetup once every two months basically for a chat/vent/swap tips. It clued me into the sheer scope of actual symptoms! My (male) boss has also been v supportive, and this has continued through the pandemic and now we are mostly home based. Having heard some horror stories I feel v lucky to work where I do, and if /when I get a proper diagnosis and hopefully some advice about my peri/menopause, I feel confident that I can request reasonable adjustments (e.g., longer lunch breaks to take a nap after a disturbed night and make up the time later etc) without jeopardising my job. I still feel that my symptoms have affected my reputation at work (esp. as a new member of staff) and my actual ability to perform as I used to but knowing there is both formal and informal support available, I hope I can get through this and not be regarded as a total disaster. I miss just knowing stuff and thinking quickly, but so far work have been very understanding and seem to accept that this is not the true level of my abilities!

I work for the IOW NHS and the wellbeing team have set up a menopause matters network where ALL staff are invited to join an online forum once a month, we also have a WhatsApp group set up to support each other. There are new policies and procedures being set in place so that we are able to log any sick time due to menopause symptoms and not feel like we have to lie.

My experience has been positive. My work has an employer lead support network and a discussion pack to help the conversation between employees on this issue. We won a civil service diversity award in 2017 for our work. Without the support I would be one of those sadly having to give up my much-loved job of thirty years.

I can only speak highly of my workplace. I work for the University of Warwick. We have a menopause staff network and information and support through this. My line manager knows I have recently gone onto HRT after a consultation as I have been struggling and has also been very supportive. I am lucky and am so shocked at the things I have read in this thread so far.

I would like to tell my story of direct sex and disability discrimination, victimisation and harassment in the workplace regarding menopause by male managers & HR advisors. I am now taking my employer to employment tribunal.

I'm taking my employer to tribunal as my behaviour changed but they dismissed me despite having a letter from my GP saying it could be fixed and they should wait until the HRT was working and look again. I was in a senior position in a school. Now I drive a van.

The way forward

Recent surveys, including our own, have shown us that menopause can have a profound impact on some women in the workplace.

The CIPD survey from August 2019 showed that 59% of working women between 45 and 55 said menopause symptoms had a negative impact on them at work.

As women over 50 are the fastest growing demographic in the workplace this issue needs to be addressed urgently to stop women losing careers that they have worked hard to build and to stop employers losing valuable, knowledge staff.

At Menopause Support we have been approached by women who have had to apply to the benefits system for the very first time in their lives. Whilst it is right that the benefits system is there to support them, many feel that if they had received the right information and support prior to menopause coming along they would have felt more educated and empowered to manage their symptoms.

When women lose their jobs and income it can affect their self-confidence which can stop them from applying for similar positions. The effects on individuals can also be felt within families both emotionally and financially.

The key to better menopause care and support is education. This is why Menopause Support has campaigned so hard for menopause to be added to the curriculum in schools. Educating young people is just common sense, it will mean that those who will experience menopause directly have a better understanding as will those around them. Most will enter the workplace at some point in their lives and this basic understanding of menopause will allow them to recognise and understand what they and their colleagues may be experiencing.

Currently the issue for many women, once they realise that menopause could be the cause of their symptoms, is that they are unable to get the right help from their doctors due to a lack of mandatory menopause education for GPs. Many women tell us that if they had known more about menopause before it came along and had been able to get the right

support from their doctors at the right time many of the issues that they experienced in the workplace would not have happened.

It is high time that the government prioritised menopause as a public health issue as it has so many wide-ranging effects on the lives of the whole population and the economy.

Simple solutions would be to

1. Educate all teenagers about menopause so that they carry this knowledge with them throughout their lives
2. Ensure that all primary care doctors and nurses have a good level of menopause education to enable them to recognise and support the menopause transition in their patients, allowing women to make informed choices.
3. Provide official guidance to employers regarding their legal and moral responsibilities to their staff experiencing menopause. This should include the need for regular menopause awareness training for all staff including all managers, directors and business owners.
4. To create a government led public health campaign focusing on menopause to raise awareness amongst the general public.

At Menopause Support we are delighted to see this inquiry and very much hope that the findings will be used to make much needed and long overdue change to stop the needless suffering and injustice currently being endured by so many women.

At Menopause Support our focus and expertise is on supporting women and their families however, whilst it is not our area of expertise, we would ask the committee to consider that transgender and non-binary colleagues also need to be considered in any menopause recommendations, guidance or policy. We trust that representation to the inquiry will be included from those who have expertise in this area of menopause support.

Better menopause care and support must be available for all, both in and out of the workplace.

September 2021