

Written evidence from NatWest Group [MEW0040]

As one of the largest banks in the UK- we offer retail, business and commercial banking for over 19 million customers and 1 in 4 businesses across the UK.

Our purpose is to champion the potential of customers, colleagues and communities, by helping to identify and break down the barriers they may be facing.

With menopausal women being one of the fastest growing workforce demographics, it's important to us as an employer that we foster a culture where menopause can be talked about openly and comfortably, and those experiencing menopause can access the right support.

How can businesses factor in the needs of employees going through the menopause?

- **Review existing policies and frameworks relevant to menopause-** for example, flexible working or absence policies. It is beneficial to look for opportunities to specifically highlight the menopause within these policies, helping to raise awareness of the challenges it can cause and the simple actions that can help colleagues thrive in the workplace.
- **Introduce a specific menopause policy or guidance document** – ideally outlining information about the menopause, internal and external support, and guidance on how to talk about the menopause.
- **Promote culture of openness & honesty-** talking about the menopause can make a world of difference- but in most workplaces it remains a taboo subject, so many don't get the support they need. For example, by running awareness events, or sharing colleague stories, and promoting information on support available. Also important to get senior leaders, and male colleagues involved.
- **Provide reasonable adjustments-** small adjustments to someone's job or working pattern can help manage symptoms and support people to continue to perform well in their role. For example, flexible working, change of uniform (if applicable), desk fans.
- **Enable line managers to support their teams-** educate line managers about the menopause, who it can affect, what symptoms can be experienced and how they can support colleagues.

What are examples of best or most inclusive practices?

Guided by a commitment to make NatWest a purpose-led, inclusive organisation where we champion the potential of all our colleagues, we've been working to build awareness and understanding of the menopause across our organisation, as well as improve the support available for those experiencing menopause in the workplace. By fostering a culture of openness, awareness and inclusivity, we aim to be a forward-thinking employer where we support, motivate and retain valuable members of our workforce. Please see an outline of some of the recent activity at NatWest Group:

- It's important to raise awareness of the typical symptoms and simple changes that that can be made to support colleagues through the menopause. As such, we **run an annual reproductive health campaign**, covering many aspects of reproductive health (including Menopause and related topics such as fertility). As part of this we have welcomed a variety of external speakers to the organisation to run informative sessions on menopause and reproductive health to improve the understanding of our colleagues.
- We have been working with Henpicked: Menopause in the Workplace to **facilitate line manager training** covering reasonable adjustments, support available and how to approach a conversation about menopause with colleagues.

- We know that **storytelling and sharing experiences is an effective and impactful way to start conversations about health & wellbeing** in the workplace and create an environment of openness and transparency. As such, we created an internal colleague film, where both male and female colleagues discussed their experiences of menopause, exploring topics such as early menopause & its impacts on fertility. In addition, we have also had colleagues share a candid account of their experiences of early menopause for articles on our internal intranet page.
- We have recently **launched a Menopause Café** – a virtual space to engage with other colleagues either experiencing menopause or those who'd like to find out more because they're supporting someone going through menopause. The Café is open to all, and encourages open, friendly and honest discussion in a safe environment. The group aims to provide peer to peer support and is an opportunity to share experiences, ideas and thoughts on the subject of menopause.
- We have launched a **'Menopause Chatroom' on our internal social media site** which has attracted around 350 of our colleagues, providing a safe forum to share stories and extend support to others in a similar situation.
- As well as promoting conversation around menopause, we have sought to **improve the support on offer to our colleagues**. We have a menopause support guide in place to help line managers have effective conversations with colleagues raising a perimenopause or menopause concern, as well as outlining what support and/or changes might be appropriate for the colleague.
- We also know that menopause can be a long-term and fluctuating health change- and as such we have **reviewed our absence policy** to include reference to menopause related symptoms.
- We have also recently **signed up to the Menopause Friendly Accreditation**, ran by Henpicked: Menopause in the Workplace. As part of this accreditation, we will take part in an independent assessment that review the practices NatWest group have in place to support those experiencing menopause, as well as highlighting opportunities and areas for improvement.
- Building on that, we have over 1300 wellbeing champions across the organisation who help to promote a holistic view to positive health and wellbeing. The role of the champion is to raise awareness, educate others, and signpost the most appropriate support and resources to colleagues. We have included information on menopause as part of Champion training to ensure that champions are well equipped to signpost menopause support to colleagues who need it most.

We're hugely proud of the progress we've made and are aware there's more work to be done to help build a supportive environment both for those living with menopausal symptoms and for colleagues and line managers to understand the simple steps they can take to reduce the impact. Looking forward to 2022, we are keen to maintain focus, remove barriers and create more awareness on menopause and reproductive health and have built these topics into the next iteration of our wellbeing agenda. We'll be looking to increase training for our line manager population, continue to build awareness through storytelling, as well as sharing our experiences with customers and our broader peer community.

What further legislation is required to enable employers to put in place a workplace menopause policy to protect people going through the menopause whilst at work?

As it stands, no legislative change would be required to allow employers to introduce a menopause policy. This would be different if it became a requirement to do so, but currently employers are free

to introduce a policy if they wish to do so. However, to encourage employers to have a menopause policy it would be helpful for ACAS to publish some more guidance around what could be covered and what a good policy looks like.

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