

Menopause in the care sector:

Making positive changes

Getting up to date research

There are currently thousands of team members working in the care sector today who are experiencing – or have experienced – menopause symptoms at work.

In 2024, alsico brought together a room full of carers from across the United Kingdom, to openly discuss the menopause, creating a space to share their questions and experiences. The day also featured insights from leaders who are making the difference in their care home groups and menopause activist and educator, Diane Danzebrink. One of the overarching messages from the day was that conversations are key, and that up-to-date research with care workers is needed to understand the challenges of menopause on a sector-wide scale.

This year, alsico commissioned a research survey of **410** care home workers, **110** of which reported experiencing perimenopause/menopause symptoms on the job. The results of the research highlight core areas where a change in approach from those responsible for menopause policy and support can make a considerable difference to the engagement and comfort of the workforce.

The full research insights will soon be published in a broader care sector report from alsico on several areas with plenty of opportunity for positive change. However, this resource looks at the key findings on menopause, with key contributions from experienced professionals and a set of recommendations that can be incorporated into people policies in the short and longer term.

28%
OF CARERS SAID MENOPAUSE
SYMPTOMS MADE THEM
CONSIDER LEAVING THEIR ROLE

**ALMOST TWO
THIRDS** OF CARERS DON'T FEEL THEY'RE
OFFERED USEFUL ADJUSTMENTS
FOR MANAGING MENOPAUSE
SYMPTOMS

Where is attention needed?

In alsico's research conducted this year, of the **410** respondents, **27%** of respondents said they had suffered from perimenopause or menopause symptoms whilst working in the care sector. This sample provided the opportunity to understand the day-to-day support or initiatives that care home groups could introduce without significant time and investment, to contribute to a more positive experience when going through the menopause while working. This is critical because over a quarter (**28%**) agreed that their menopause symptoms have caused them to consider leaving their role.

The results highlighted three key areas:



Work adjustments:

Almost two-thirds of respondents (**61%**) disagreed that their employers offer useful workplace adjustments to manage their menopause symptoms (e.g. more breaks, an area to cool down, flexible hours etc.)



Policy and access:

Almost half (**44%**) don't know how to access their company's menopause policy, with **52%** disagreeing that they know what is included in the policy



Uniforms:

Over half disagreed that it had the properties they needed to complete their responsibilities, with respondents **disagreeing** that their uniform:

- allowed them to cool down after a hot flush (**68%**)
- stopped them from getting sweaty and uncomfortable (**63%**)
- stretched and adapted to their bodies to keep them comfortable (**52%**)

What can be changed?

Work adjustments

The statistics suggest that either those asked have not been offered any adjustments for their menopause symptoms at work, or they have been offered options that don't meet their needs. In physically demanding, time-pressured roles the lack of simple, reasonable adjustments can have a real impact on health, wellbeing, and job performance. There is a clear opportunity to improve on communication, to ensure that team members know requests can be made, but also to ensure that adjustments are based on feedback rather than assumptions.

Menopause Friendly by Henpicked is a leading provider of menopause workplace services, which aims to provide organisations with support to ensure those experiencing menopause can continue to thrive at work.

Deborah Garlick, CEO and Founder of Henpicked, commented:

“With the care sector’s workforce made up of a high proportion of women, it’s inevitable that many colleagues will be navigating perimenopause and menopause while carrying out demanding, resident-facing roles. The nature of the work – physically active, emotionally challenging and often in environments where uniforms and long shifts are the norm – means symptoms such as fatigue, brain fog, hot flushes or joint pain can be especially tough to manage.

The statistics highlight that almost half of staff don’t know what support is available, many feel their uniforms don’t meet their needs and more than a quarter of those experiencing symptoms have considered leaving their jobs. This isn’t just a wellbeing issue; it’s a workforce and retention challenge the sector can’t afford to ignore. It is possible to address these issues and create an environment where people can thrive. We’ve seen what best practice looks like from Abbeyfield which was the very first care employer to achieve our Menopause Friendly Accreditation and showed the difference that listening and responding to colleagues can make.”



Recommendations:

Get started:

- Make adjustments easy to request by communicating the process regularly throughout the company and via line managers
- Make it simple for line managers to know what they can make decisions on vs where they need to escalate requests upwards
- Include examples of reasonable adjustments in policies so that everyone can see what’s available and has been accommodated before
- Try to designate a space for cool, quiet rest and make sure everyone knows it’s available
- Consider external support e.g. Menopause Friendly by Henpicked

Policy and access

Ensuring awareness of relevant policies and easy, reliable access to them is critical to providing effective workplace support. Such a high percentage of the affected workforce not knowing how to access a policy indicates a disconnect between policy and practice, suggesting that even in cases where employers have taken positive steps to implement a menopause policy, it is not reaching the staff who need it most.

Menopause policy and ensuring access to resources has been a particular focus for Abbeyfield.

Gail Manley, Corporate Services Director at Abbeyfield shared:

“Menopause support has been a key area of focus for Abbeyfield and we’ve taken a really broad approach to ensure colleagues feel understood and supported. From drop-in sessions and monthly all-staff briefings to marking World Menopause Month with employees sharing personal stories and even quizzes, our aim has been to start conversations and normalise the topic.

We’ve also worked with Henpicked to become a Menopause Friendly accredited employer, which has helped us to review and strengthen our policies, adding menopause-specific guidance in areas such as flexible working and EDI. All of our managers are now mandated to complete menopause awareness training so they can better support their teams.

Ultimately, this has been about education and empowerment - making sure our managers know where to find information, how to signpost colleagues, and what practical support they can provide. By embedding menopause awareness across our policies and everyday conversations, we’re turning awareness into action and aiming to make a real difference for our colleagues.”



Recommendations:

Get started:

- Get an up-to-date menopause policy in place
- Make sure reminders on policies in place and where to find them are communicated regularly, such as in onboarding processes, during reviews, during all team meetings
- Ensure line managers are routinely updated on policy changes and are signposting policies and resources to direct reports
- Talk about it! Make sure menopause is a regular discussion topic among the team
- Make the resources engaging and try different approaches to get people talking e.g. drop ins, quizzes, posters

Uniforms

Uniform design must accommodate the physical challenges of menopause, where inadequate uniforms can undermine comfort, performance, and wellbeing for care workers. The statistics have quantified the opportunity in care homes across the UK to make uniforms menopause-friendly, especially for those performing roles that involve physical activity and long shifts. The lack of stretch and adaptability to the body also revealed in the new research reflects a broader issue of rigidity in uniform standards, which fails to consider body changes, bloating, or sensitivity which are common during perimenopause and menopause.

Sara Catanzaro, Design Manager at alsico, shared:

“The statistics echo feedback that we have seen from organisations who have listened to their workforce and are ready to make uniform changes. Crucially, there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution for menopause because it is such an individual experience, therefore regular discussions with the team on their uniforms helps to ensure a consistent feedback loop and that needs are met. However, for common menopause symptoms such as hot flushes, sweating, bloating and sensitivity, there are considerations that can be made to help. For example, selecting garments that incorporate a percentage of natural or regenerated fibre such as cotton, lyocell and/or synthetic fibres will facilitate a wicking effect to manage the absorption and evaporation of moisture. Importantly, the uniforms should be made available to the entire workforce because there is no menopause symptom-specific uniform, they are simply designed with properties that can support with the management of common symptoms, which can also be experienced by others in the workforce who are not going through the menopause.”



Recommendations:

Get started:

- Do a uniform review, or a focus group on a smaller scale to get up-to-date feedback on uniforms
- Consider offering multiple uniform styles to suit comfort and mobility needs
- Make sure that uniform is included in your menopause policy, with a clear understanding of what the organisation can provide
- Make sure that menopause is included in your uniform selection framework
- Consult workwear manufacturers for advice on the best solutions for your company's needs



OVER HALF

IN THE WORKFORCE HAVING EXPERIENCED MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS DISAGREED THAT THEIR UNIFORM HAD THE PROPERTIES THEY NEEDED TO COMPLETE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

Conclusion

Improving menopause support is critical to the viability of the UK care sector, and with such important and complexity due to the individual nature of experiences, it can be difficult to know where to start. Alsico's research has helped to narrow the focus to three key areas where positive change can be made which will have a significant impact on the comfort and satisfaction of the workforce.

With the honesty and support of those in the industry and supplying to it, recommendations have been shared with the hope of inspiring readers with new ideas to make a positive change. Some of the recommendations are quick and easy to introduce, whereas others will become longer term projects, but all will help to tackle the challenges identified and contribute to a more inclusive industry.

For more insights from alsico's latest research, keep an eye out for the overarching industry report which will be published soon, looking at menopause but also wider areas such as training needs, respect and motivation.



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