

Institution: University of Leicester		
Unit of Assessment: UOA17		
Title of case study: Breaking the menopause taboo at work: changing the lives of employees experiencing menopause		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): 1) Dr Vanessa Beck 2) Professor Jo Brewis 3) Dr Andrea Davis 4) Dr Jessie Matheson 5) Dr Glynne Williams	Role(s) (e.g. job title): 1) Associate Professor in Work and Employment Relations 2) Professor in Organization Studies 3) Associate Professor in Marketing 4) Associate Professor in Economics 5) Associate Professor in Work and Employment Relations	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1) 22/09/2003 - 05/06/2017 2) 01/08/2004 - 08/04/2018 3) 01/09/2004 - 28/02/2019 4) 01/09/2011 - 31/08/2018 5) 02/06/2006 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact <p>In 2017, the University of Leicester (UoL) [R2] reported that approximately 47% of the workforce in the UK will experience menopause symptoms during their working life. The findings and recommendations from this report catalysed media and national interest in supporting employees experiencing menopause symptoms in the workplace. The public and legal discourse and subsequent policy and service development influenced by the publication of [R2] have led to a transformation in the way in which issues relating to the menopause are managed at work, reported in the media and recognised in society. The direct impacts include workplace menopause policies across a spectrum of employers in the UK [E5] and the development of toolkits and resources by professional bodies and national and public organizations such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the Civil Service, the Higher Education Academy and the NHS.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>The introduction of the 1970 Equal Pay Act, 1975 Sex Discrimination Act, 1975 Employment Protection Act, and the 2010 Increase in State Pension Age for women, as well as changes in the economy, have led to a significant increase in the number of women in the workforce across all age ranges. The Office of National Statistics reported there was an increase of women in work from 53% in 1971 to 67% in 2013. This equates to 13.4 million women between the ages of 16 and 64. Research funded by the UK Government's Department of Education and conducted by the University of Leicester, School of Business [R1] identified that the</p>		

menopause, a natural part of ageing, was neither well understood, nor provided for in workplace cultures, policies and training.

The menopause is usually experienced within the age range 45 to 55 years although one in 100 women experience the menopause prior to the age of 40. As a result of the 2010 increase in State Pension Age for women, older women are now increasingly contributing to the labour force [R2]. According to the ONS in 2013, approximately 3.6 million women in the UK between the ages of 45 and 54 were in employment. Given the growing numbers of older women in work millions of employees may experience menopause symptoms in the workplace every year. However, [R1] reported that experiences of the menopause were considered a taboo subject with very little sympathy or support provided in workplaces.

UoL researchers [R2] conducted a systematic review and analysis of 104 English language publications on the effects of the menopause on employees from 1990 to the end of March 2016. The study explored the personal and economic impact of employees experiencing menopause symptoms in the workplace, the attitudes of employers, and employer interventions. The analysis demonstrated the negative effects of the menopause transition on economic participation, mainly due to one or more menopause symptoms, including hot flushes, difficulty in sleeping, low mood, anxiety, and problems with memory and concentration [R2].

Whilst menopause symptoms can affect workplace performance, experiences are not consistent, and neither are coping strategies. Experiences range from concealing or managing symptoms, to disclosing them to colleagues to identify support mechanisms. Working conditions and structures can in turn influence the frequency and severity of symptoms, for example hot and poorly ventilated environments. [R2]. The situation is further complicated as the menopause is not discussed in the majority of workplaces, and most affected employees do not disclose their menopause situation and/or problems to others [R2].

3. References to the research

R1: Beck, V., and Williams, G. (2015). The (performance) management of retirement and the limits of individual choice. *Work, employment and society*, 29(2), 267-277.

R2: Brewis, J., Beck, V., Davies, A. and Matheson, J. (2017) *The Effects of Menopause Transition on Women's Economic Participation in the UK*, London: Department for Education (and Government Equalities Office).

R3: Beck, V., Brewis, J., Davies, A., Fish, S. and Garlick, D. (2018) 'Developing workplace menopause policies: four reasons why, and how', *Occupational Health at Work*, 15 (3): 22-25.

G1: 'Critical evidence review of the impact of menopause transition on women's economic participation in the UK' (Department for Education), 01/02/2016 – 31/03/2016, £14,980.

4. Details of the impact

The publication of 'The Effects of Menopause Transition on Women's Economic Participation in the UK' [R2, G1] and the subsequent public interest, led to a step-change in the way in which organisations address the wellbeing of employees experiencing menopause symptoms at work. Extensive media interest attracted international coverage, from the BBC [E7], The Telegraph [E13b], The Independent [E13c], and the Oprah Winfrey magazine, where the University of Leicester was named as the first University to have "an official, first-of-its-kind

menopause policy” [E13]. This raised the public profile of menopause at work as a national issue. Since 2018, professional bodies, individual organisations and sector leaders have changed their processes or developed guidance to specifically address menopause in the workplace including in the Higher Education Sector [E11], Civil Service [E1], the police [E7] and HR professionals working in all sectors via the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [E2].

In addition to the silence around menopause at work, [R2] highlighted the importance of organisational attention to menopause in terms of employment law and the potential risk of litigation. Firstly, the research identified that there is a clear legal precedent that the failure of an organisation to pay sufficient attention to menopause could be considered as a factor in direct sex discrimination and unfair dismissal. Secondly, severe menopause symptoms could be considered as disabling in the work environment. The report’s conclusions led to a range of guidance for employers that recommended changing organisational culture to tackle gendered ageism, compulsory equality and diversity training, provision of specialist advice, tailored absence policies, flexible working patterns and environmental changes. The profile-raising of these initiatives led to significant impacts across sectors. The research also identified areas for policy maker and government intervention through employer advice, training for medical and social care professionals and awareness raising campaigns. The focus on the rights of employees who experience menopause symptoms has led to ongoing debate on the legal requirement for organisations to address this [E3].

Policy Impact

As a result of [R2], a growing number of organisations have changed their workplace policies regarding menopause, by making it more visible and actively encouraging discussion [E5]. The purpose of these policy documents, which explicitly reference [R2], are, “to raise awareness of menopause transition and provide information and support for employees both those who are directly and indirectly affected”, as stated in the Civil Service Human Resource Toolkit, published in September 2019 [E1]. Several professional and umbrella bodies have issued guidance since the publication of [R2], encouraging and influencing their member organisations and providing exemplar policy templates, including NHS Employers [E8], Advance HE [E9] and Unison [E10].

In their Menopause Guide [E2], The Chartered Institute for Professional Development (CIPD) refer, as an exemplar, to the UoL menopause policy [E5a] developed in response to [R2]. CIPD are the professional body for experts in people at work, with more than 150,000 members around the world. They are the only body in the world that can award Chartered status to individual HR and Leadership and Development professionals.

The Prince’s Responsible Business Network, a business network with >300 member organisations including the BBC, PepsiCo UK and Ireland, Rolls Royce, HSBC and Unilever, published ‘Menopause in the Workplace: A Practical Guide for HR, Wellbeing and Occupational Health Practitioners’ [E4] in 2019 drawing on the underpinning research and in response to needs outlined in [R2]. In August 2020, a joint position statement [E6] calling for appropriate support and policies for menopause to be put in place across the NHS, referencing [R2] was released by the British Menopause Association, The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, The Royal College of General Practitioners, the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare, the Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians and the Faculty of Public Health, endorsed by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges in response to the British Medical Association Report ‘Challenging the culture on menopause for doctors’.

Workplace changes

Although some organisations did address menopause in their equality policies prior to 2018, many of these were included as part of wider health and wellbeing policies and very few made specific reference to the menopause or had specific menopause policies. UoL published their Menopause Policy in January 2018 [E5a] and since then many universities have developed menopause guidance or amended existing policies to better suit employees going through menopause transitions, including the Universities of Bristol and Plymouth [E5b, E5c] that specifically cite [R2]. Many focus on practical tips for employers, for example: providing fans for desks, flexible working to cope with a lack of sleep, and offering a quiet space at work to tackle poor concentration, all of which were recommendations from the research report [R2].

In 2020, Advance HE published menopause awareness guidance [E9] which provides overarching sectoral guidance to HE employers on how to support staff and is recommended guidance for all Athena Swan participants/applicants. Other sectors have followed suit, with former Nottingham Police chief constable Sue Fish stating to the BBC that she: *"was horrified to find out women were leaving early because of the severity of their symptoms. Some had been rebuffed by line managers or they'd chosen not to talk about what they were going through. It was such a waste of all that talent and experience that these women had in serving the public. Bringing in a policy was absolutely the right thing to do. Talking about it helped build a culture of openness"* [E11].

In March 2020, the NHS Staff Council [E8b] launched their Menopause at Work Principles for Staff and Managers citing [R2]. Other organisations launching policies, support and guides directly citing [R2] include the Endocrinology Society [E2d], Inverclyde Council [E2e], the Royal College of Nursing [E2f], NHS Wales [E2g] and Network Rail [E2h].

Growth of menopause training and services

[R2] highlighted the lack of training for managers that would enable them to support employees confidently and constructively. Working to plug this gap, Henpicked's 'Menopause in the Workplace' worked with the researchers of [R2] to develop their training toolkit [E12a] and other off-the-shelf and bespoke training offers. This training has been delivered to more than 1000 organisations nationwide since 2019, including HSBC, PepsiCo, Sainsbury's Group, Next PLC, E.ON, UK-Wide Police Force, Yorkshire Water, the National Theatre and many more [E12b], *"we were overwhelmed by the speed we were able to move at to become a menopause friendly organisation and the impact this has had on so many lives. Individuals, line managers, friends and families impacted, have enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to talk, share, learn and feel really supported. The fact the menopause is no longer felt to be a "taboo" subject has in fact allowed other difficult subjects to also start being shared and talked about more openly"* HSBC UK [E12b].

In addition to training, a range of services have been developed to support people experiencing menopause symptoms as well as a growing number of menopause related products. In 2017, the media personality, Meg Mathews launched MegsMenopause.com, a web resource now with an online readership of over two billion [E12d], highlighting the findings from [R2] as influencing the inception of the site, *"Nearly three-quarters of women in the survey [R2] said they felt a lack of support from their employers, and 90% felt unable to discuss the issue with their manager. In 2017, this lack of information and support led our founder, Meg Mathews, to set up MegsMenopause"* [E12c].

Since 2017, the public discourse about menopause has shifted significantly, in part influenced by the publication of [R2]. In 2019, the Labour Party stated they would require all large employers to have a workplace menopause policy [E13d]. In 2019, the Secretary of State for Education also announced that menopause would be taught as part of the curriculum for

Relationships and Sex Education [E13e]. Since 2017, millions of employees' rights at work have been protected due to the introduction and recognition of menopause in formal workplace policies and training [E5].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- E1. Civil Service HR – Menopause: Guiding principles for Employees and their Managers, September 2019 & Toolkit
- E2. CIPD Menopause Guide CIPD Menopause Guide
- E3 – Evidence Employment Law debate
- E3a. Aviva Business Insurance – Let's Talk About the Menopause
- E3b. Occupational Health Services Ltd – Why you need a menopause policy
- E3c. Generali – The Menopause & The Equality Act: Why it Pays to Provide Support
- E3d. Nine St John Street – Menopause in the Workplace
- E3e. Linklaters – The Diversity Series: menopause in the workplace, the case for more support
- E3f. Croner-I – Menopause: managing the change of life in the workplace
- E3g. dwf group – Menopause in the workplace: What is the legal impact?
- E4. The Prince's Responsible Business Network 'Menopause in the Workplace: A Practical Guide for HR, Wellbeing and Occupational Health Practitioners' 2019
- E5. Menopause Policies
 - E5a. University of Leicester
 - E5b. University of Bristol
 - E5c. University of Plymouth
 - E5d. Inverclyde Council
 - E5e. Royal College of Nursing
 - E5f. NHS Wales Menopause Policy
 - E5g. Network Rail – Everyone Matters Guide to Menopause
- E6. BMS, RCOG, RCGP, FSRH, FOM and FPH Position Statement in response to the BMA report 'Challenging the culture on menopause for doctors' – August 2020 This Statement was endorsed by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
- E7 Police Federation of Northern Ireland - 'Keeping people safe' & the menopause: Evidence from female police officers in the PSNI
- E8 NHS guidelines
 - E8a. NHS Employers – Menopause and the workplace
 - E8b. NHS Staff Council – Menopause at Work
- E9 Brewis 2020 Advance HE Menopause awareness and higher education :Guidance on menopause awareness in workplace settings, specifically higher education
- E10. UNISON Menopause:The menopause is a workplace issue: guidance and model policy
- E11. BBC Employers urged to 'normalise' menopause in the workplace
- E12. Training and Services
 - E12a. <https://menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk/about-us/>
 - E12b. <https://menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk/reviews/>
 - E12c. <https://megsmenopause.com/2020/10/01/we-have-come-a-long-way-baby/>
 - E12d. <https://share.coveragebook.com/b/a2165d7e3e99cfc4>
 - E12e. <https://www.menohealth.co.uk/our-story/>
- E13 Public Discourse
 - E13a. The Ultimate Guide to Dealing With Menopause – Oprah Magazine
 - E13b. Menopause Costs Economy Millions – The Telegraph
 - E13c. Three Reasons Employers Need to Recognise the Menopause At Work – The Independent
 - E14d. Labour announces plans to break the stigma of the menopause at work
 - E14e. Press Release Rachel Maclean MP