



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Shattering the Silence about Menopause: 12-Month Progress Report

Helen Tomlinson, the Government's
Menopause Employment Champion, and
the Department for Work and Pensions



8 March 2024



Note on language

In this document when we refer to menopause, we include perimenopause and menopause.

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Ministerial foreword

by Mims Davies MP

Minister for Disabled People,
Health and Work



On 6 March 2023, I appointed Helen Tomlinson as the Government's Menopause Employment Champion. Having an ambassador for this agenda is crucial to drive forward conversations with businesses and provide a forum for organisations to share their experiences and expertise.

A year on, it has been incredible to see the scale of progress that has been made. Helen and I have worked together to drive awareness of issues surrounding menopause in the workplace, encouraging employers to develop policies that create a more supportive environment to enable women to stay in work and progress.

We are opening the dialogue, tackling the stigma, and increasing awareness of menopause in the workplace. This is an issue which everyone will encounter, whether first-hand, or via their colleagues, families, and friends, so it is essential that we break the taboo and provide the necessary support for women in the workplace.

With close to four million women aged 45 to 55 employed in the UK¹ and women over 50 representing a significant and growing percentage of the workforce, there are few workplaces where menopause is not being experienced by workers. Menopause can cause a wide range of physical and mental health symptoms, which can be unpredictable, difficult to manage, and debilitating.

The UK Government sees women's health, and particularly menopause, as an essential factor when supporting the recruitment and retention of older women in the workforce.

This is part of a wider government drive to support older workers, for their wellbeing and success in work, to address skills shortages, and to boost the economy. Older workers face a unique set of challenges. People aged 50 and over are historically at a higher risk of experiencing persistent long-term unemployment compared to younger people. 36% of unemployed people aged 50 and over have been unemployed for 12 months or more, compared to 19% of people aged between 25 and 49².

On World Menopause Day, 18 October 2023, we published the [“No Time to Step Back”](#) report. This summarised the work of Helen Tomlinson in the first six months after her appointment and highlighted progress made by businesses during this time. It set out plans to provide best practice guidance and education – as outlined in Helen's Four Point Plan – and detailed the strategic partnerships established and engagement activity that had taken place to date.

This 12-month report provides a further update and reflects on Helen's first year as the Government's Menopause Employment Champion, develops themes from the No Time to Step Back six-month report, and shares progress made against Helen's Four Point Plan.

I would like to thank those who have supported this programme of work, particularly those who have hosted and attended roundtables, provided resources for the Menopause Resource Hub, and shared case studies of successful workplace support. I am also grateful to our cross-government colleagues who have supported us with this work. In particular, the Department of Health and Social Care, who have identified menopause as a priority area in the [Women's Health Strategy](#), the Equality Hub, and the Department for Education.

I am very keen to continue to build on the growing momentum around menopause and women's health in the workplace, to advocate for women working across the UK, and to broaden this conversation to new sectors and voices. I am incredibly thankful to Helen for embracing the role of Menopause Employment Champion, and for driving such exceptional progress in just 12 months. I look forward to continuing to support Helen in her work, alongside the many colleagues, stakeholders and businesses who have assisted us in our success so far.

Reflections from

Helen Tomlinson

Menopause Employment
Champion



When I took on the role of Menopause Employment Champion, my aim was to show that perimenopause and menopause need not be a time for women to step back, step down or step out of their career.

Over the last twelve months, it has been a privilege for me to be able to advocate for people affected by menopause in the workplace, particularly on behalf of those who do not have the platform, opportunity, or confidence to do that for themselves – to ensure they reach their full potential whatever their background, ethnicity, socio-economic demographic, or sector they choose to work in.

In the [No Time to Step Back](#) report I introduced my Four Point Plan for menopause, with the objective to improve support for those affected by menopause in the workplace. It has been truly inspiring to see so many employers and trade associations embrace this and work with us to amplify our message.

This is a crucial time for people affected by menopause in the workplace. Businesses are coming together, working with each other to improve the lives of all women in and returning to the workplace.

Momentum is building both in the UK and abroad as the taboo is breaking and conversations about health and wellbeing are becoming normalised in the workplace.

Much activity has already taken place in the UK, and we are eager to share this practice internationally, while learning from and working with other countries to ensure women are supported in all workplaces across the globe.

I have been able to build a truly effective network of Strategic Partners to amplify my work and create further opportunities to engage with employers both large and small. I am also working with Sector Advocates, who are providing crucial insights into their areas of work, as well as sharing examples of good practice and practical guidance specific to their sectors. I am incredibly grateful to them all for their work and dedication.

Menopause does not only affect those experiencing it first-hand. Men may not experience menopause in the same way themselves, but those who educate themselves about menopause can become invaluable allies to their partners and colleagues, offering empathy, patience, and practical support both at work and at home during this significant life transition.

I would like to thank all the employers who are supporting this work, particularly those working with me as Strategic Partners and Sector Advocates, as well as the Department for Work and Pensions team who are collaborating with me to deliver on my Four Point Plan.

There is still much to do, but I am so pleased to see the progress that we have been able to make in just 12 months. I look forward to building on this momentum and leaving a legacy that will benefit women for generations to come.

The Four Point Plan

In the [No Time to Step Back](#) report, I launched the Four Point Plan to improve support for people affected by menopause in the workplace. The four elements of this plan are:

- 1.** Sharing of employer best practice (within sectors) on a portal that is accessible to all employers whether large or small, free of charge.
- 2.** A national sector-specific allyship programme which ensures no one is isolated and everyone has someone available to talk to.
- 3.** Menopause-friendly employers who will support, share, and advocate across their sector – retaining and attracting talent to the sector; and
- 4.** A communications plan to improve the working lives of women in their sector, achieved by amplification through strategic partnerships.

Much progress has been made towards the Four Point Plan since its launch on World Menopause Day (18 October 2023), through both engagement with employers and direct support for workers.

The **sharing of employer best practice (within sectors) on a portal that is accessible to all employers whether large or small, free of charge**, has been achieved, and new content continues to be added. The [Menopause Resources Hub](#) on the GOV.UK Help to Grow portal provides menopause-related workplace guidance and resources for employers and their workers.

This information is accessible free of charge to employers of all sizes. To ensure guidance is accurate and relevant, I hosted a series of sector-based workshops to gather evidence, best practice, and challenges from each sector. These workshops, detailed further in section 4 of this report, were hosted in partnership with my Sector Advocates from the National Care Association, UK Hospitality, Make UK, the Chartered Management Institute, and the British Retail Consortium.

I am working to develop **a national sector-specific allyship programme which ensures no one is isolated and everyone has someone available to talk to**. This will seek to ensure that all workplaces are supportive environments for people affected by menopause, regardless of sector or size of organisation.

To create a network of **menopause-friendly employers who will support, share, and advocate across their sector – retaining and attracting talent to the sector**, I have established an organised network of employers, trade associations and menopause experts, called the No Time to Step Back Working Group. This group is driving progress on the Four Point Plan, and sharing sector-specific best practice, designed to enable education in the workplace, upskill leaders and support individuals.

To create a nationwide network of **menopause-friendly employers**, I am also encouraging all employers to sign up to Wellbeing of Women's '[Menopause Workplace Pledge](#)'. The Menopause Workplace Pledge calls on employers to make a public commitment to supporting women's wellbeing, take positive action to make sure everyone going through menopause is supported, and communicate to prospective employees that they are a menopause-friendly organisation.

Lastly, the Four Point Plan calls for **a communications plan to improve the working lives of women in their sector, achieved by amplification through strategic partnerships**. My strategy for communicating with businesses and workers includes a range of forums, including Ministerial roundtables, employer workshops, and online guidance on GOV.UK. I have appointed Strategic Partners and Sector Advocates to support these communications through the provision of business insights and evidence, employer resources for the [Menopause Resources Hub](#) on the Help to Grow portal, and stakeholder networks and events.

In the following sections of this report, I go into further detail on the engagement work to date, and how my growing network of menopause-friendly employers is providing information, resources, and the ambition to drive progress against the Four Point Plan.

Working with employers

i. The need for menopause workplace support

In the [No Time to Step Back](#) report, I set out why there is a need for menopause workplace support. We are still in the early days of progress, and due to the scale of this issue, this need is still pertinent.

Having had the opportunity to hear from multiple employers across several sectors and seen the evidence around the impact of best practice, (and conversely the impact of poor practice in relation to menopause in the workplace) it is encouraging to see that **the conversation is gathering momentum**, and we must use this opportunity to ensure all women have the support they need.

My focus therefore continues to be on direct employer engagement as a means to transform workplace culture and create tangible change.

We know that workplace support is key. A recent report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)³, published in October 2023, surveyed over 2,000 women, aged 40 to 60, currently employed in the UK and who could be experiencing menopause transition. By looking at the type of menopause symptoms being experienced and their impact on women at work, the report explored the difference workplace support can make, and the importance of creating a healthy workplace culture.



Evidence in the report suggests that support from employers, managers and colleagues helps to reduce the negative impact of menopause symptoms.

84% of people who are unsupported said their menopause symptoms have a mostly negative effect on them at work, compared with 71% who are supported.

This research also shows that only one-third of workers feel supported by their manager or employer, compared to around half who feel supported by their colleagues. This does represent an increase from 2019 when only around one-quarter of workers reported feeling supported by their employer. Where workers feel unsupported by their manager or colleagues, they are more than twice as likely to report that the symptoms have a negative effect on their career.

Around one in six (17%) of these workers report considering leaving their job due to lack of support with their menopause symptoms and 6% have left work for this reason.

Around one quarter (24%) of female employees aged between 40 and 60 in 2023 reported that their employer had a menopause policy or other support measures, compared to 43% who reported that they did not and the remainder who did not know.

ii. The economic impact of menopause

The need for menopause workplace support goes beyond the individual impact. Businesses can also feel the advantages of offering menopause support, due to the positive impacts on recruitment and retention. Recent years have seen more older people in employment than ever before⁴, and employers will increasingly need to employ and retain the skills and experience of older workers to remain competitive and avoid skills and labour shortages. The economic costs of menopause in relation to work are those associated with women leaving work or reducing their hours due to their symptoms, and those related to women staying at work and coping with their symptoms⁵.

In the survey by CIPD referenced above, 53% of respondents were able to think of a time when they were unable to go to work because of their symptoms⁶.

One estimate suggests that menopause costs the economy 14 million working days every year, due to women taking time off due to their symptoms and around half of women aged between 50 and 64 choose to work extra hours to make up for their perceived loss of productivity⁷. In addition, 27% of women say menopause has had a negative effect on their career progression⁸. The Fawcett Society estimated that one in ten women, aged between 40 and 55, working through menopause have left a job because of their symptoms and a further 13% reported that they had considered leaving. Additionally, 14% of women working through menopause reported reducing their hours and a further 14% had gone part-time⁹.

iii. Continuing the dialogue

My approach to tackling stigma and increasing awareness of menopause has been primarily based on employer engagement. Over the past year, the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work has hosted a series of **regional roundtables** on menopause in the workplace. At these roundtables, the Minister has facilitated conversations between researchers, employers, Government departments and menopause specialists.



By bringing together voices from across a variety of sectors and local areas, it has been possible to gather a range of perspectives on approaches, best practice and challenges faced when supporting women and those affected by menopause in the workplace.

Roundtables have taken place across the UK – in Swansea, Southampton, West Ham, Derby, London Gatwick and Aberdeen. They have enabled open and honest discussions, bringing people (not only women) around the table to open up the conversation, share experiences and suggest next steps to improve both employer and Government support.

This has inspired progress towards the Four Point Plan by encouraging employers to support each other and their colleagues, share information, and advocate for women across their sector.



As a result of these roundtables, education, leadership support, and personal experience were all recognised as key themes and essential pre-requisites leading to cultural change within an organisation, as demonstrated in the following case studies.



iv. Evidence from roundtables

With thanks to the many employers who have supported my work, the following two case studies highlight real examples of the impact that menopause workplace support can have.



In Swansea, the work done at Gower College demonstrated how investment in women's health makes business sense. The average age of Gower college staff is 47, of which 60% are female, with 200 women aged between 45 and 55. In light of these numbers, the college has trained their managers to support staff, providing advice and guidance, including menopause appointments with health consultants. The strategy received hugely positive feedback and has seen a 70% reduction in absence for female staff accessing support over a 12-month period.

A quote from Tesco:

As the largest private-sector employer in the UK, we have over 130,000 women working for Tesco, and we are absolutely committed to supporting colleagues going through menopause.

In 2019, we signed the Menopause Workplace Pledge, committing to helping colleagues understand and talk openly about menopause. Since signing, we have introduced a Menopause Guide, breathable fabric for instore uniforms and updated our Sickness & Absence policies so that if colleagues need to take time off due to menopause-related symptoms, this is not counted as part of their absence review calculation.

It's also important that we continue the conversation around menopause, and we do this through quarterly Menopause Awareness Sessions, the Hot@Tesco menopause community as well as line manager upskill training.

v. Sector approach

The approach for influencing employers has and continues to be sectoral, in light of the wide-ranging and differing challenges within each sector.

Work has progressed through a series of sector-based workshops looking at best practice in those sectors experiencing significant vacancies – as indicated by the Office for National Statistics report [VACS02 Vacancies by Industry](#), including:

- Retail
- Hospitality
- Manufacturing
- Care
- Professional and Technical
- Education



The workshops brought together advocates and businesses from each sector, to share best practice, top tips, and practical resources. These resources are now available free of charge on the [Menopause Resources Hub](#).

This series of workshops offered insights into the **common themes and shared challenges** across sectors. For example, the challenge of supporting frontline workers and providing flexibility for colleagues in non-autonomous roles, emerged as a consistent theme across sectors.

There were also a range of sector-specific challenges, such as gender imbalances and retention issues of particular cohorts. For example, female teachers aged between 40 and 59 represent 33.7% of the state funded primary and secondary school teaching workforce in England, by headcount¹⁰. In the 2021/22 academic year, 12,100 women aged between 40 and 59 left the state funded primary and secondary teaching system (by full time equivalent)¹¹.

To further explore the issues for those working in education, and to explore sector-based solutions, in December 2023 I attended a meeting with the Minister for Schools and the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work. Amplifying my message through strategic partnerships is a core component of the Four Point Plan, and to communicate with key players in the education sector, I recorded content for a webinar entitled “Flexible working and the menopause”, part of a series for school leaders led by the Department for Education on flexible working in schools.



vi. Advice, guidance and resources

Progress continues to be made since the launch of the [Menopause Resources Hub](#) for employers, hosted on the Government's [Help to Grow](#) portal. The Menopause Resources Hub is an evolving webspace, and work continues with employers to add more menopause advice, guidance, best practice, podcasts and case studies, as well as sector-specific guidance which was launched on International Women's Day, 8 March 2024.

Since its launch in October 2023, the Menopause Resources Hub continues to grow. Its success as a resource is shown by it being consistently among the top 10 viewed pages on the Help to Grow portal.

vii. Working together

Material for the [Menopause Resources Hub](#) is being provided by organisations, including my Strategic Partners, who are amplifying the messaging around menopause to a much wider audience and creating further opportunity to engage with employers both large and small.

With thanks to the following organisations for their collaboration as Strategic Partners:

- The Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD)
- The British Standards Institute (BSI)
- The Wellbeing of Women (WoW)
- The Advisory, Conciliation & Arbitration Service (ACAS)
- Business in the Community (BITC)
- The Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC)
- The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)

I have selected **Sector Advocates** who are enabling progress towards the Four Point Plan through their support and insights, by sharing best practice and guidance for the Menopause Resources Hub and advocating for menopause awareness across their sectors. I thank the organisations below my Sector Advocates:

- **Retail:** The British Retail Consortium
- **Hospitality:** UK Hospitality
- **Manufacturing:** Make UK
- **Care:** The National Care Association
- **Professional and Technical:** The Chartered Management Institute

Government support for workers

While my primary focus as Government's Menopause Employment Champion has been on engaging directly with employers, I have also had the privilege to work **with multiple Government departments**. It is excellent to see the scale of work across departments to support people affected by menopause, and to work with so many interested parties across Government.

In the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), **50PLUS Champions work across every Jobcentre** in Great Britain to support and upskill Jobcentre Plus staff and maximise employment outcomes for older workers. 50PLUS Champions also provide advice to Jobcentre Plus employment and partnership teams, to promote the benefits of recruiting and retaining older workers to employers. In November 2023, DWP doubled the number of 50PLUS Champions to further enhance tailored support.

Through their menopause awareness training 50PLUS Champions are building the capability of Jobcentre Plus Work Coach Team Leaders and Work Coaches to effectively signpost customers to menopause support, in order to allow menopause support conversations to be held with employers.



This is enabling progress towards a nation of menopause-friendly employers who support their sector, which is a core pillar of my Four Point Plan.

During World Menopause Month, October 2023, 50PLUS Champions ran over 70 events in Jobcentres to upskill DWP's frontline operational staff on menopause, enabling them to better serve Jobcentre customers. The Champions also delivered sessions for Jobcentre customers affected by menopause. These included menopause awareness and myth-busting sessions, menopause listening circles, a women-only Midlife MOT, menopause drop-in sessions, and many more similar events.

The Midlife MOT is a review for workers in their 40s, 50s and 60s that helps them to take stock of their finances, skills and health, and enables them to get access to the best possible financial, health and career guidance. This is particularly important as it is estimated that 38% of working age people (equivalent to 12.5 million) are under-saving for retirement¹².

A further component of the Midlife MOT is raising awareness among employers and workers of the support and guidance available, including advice about menopause, ensuring that workers are able to stay in and return to employment. As part of the 2023 Spring Budget announcement, the Government announced an expansion of the Jobcentre Plus Midlife MOT offer, with an ambition to reach up to 40,000 customers aged 50 and over in the next year.

I have also worked closely with Professor Dame Lesley Regan, who was appointed as the Government's first **Women's Health Ambassador** for England in June 2022.

Dame Lesley is advocating the implementation of the first-ever **Women's Health Strategy** for England¹³, which has named menopause support as one of the priorities for 2024¹⁴. The strategy sets out plans for boosting the health and wellbeing of women and girls and improving how the health and care system engages and listens to women. The Women's Health Strategy was informed by a call for evidence which received nearly 100,000 responses from individuals and over 400 responses from organisations¹⁵. We are extremely grateful to everyone who responded to the call for evidence.

As part of the delivery of the workplace elements in the Women's Health Strategy, the Equality Hub is working with a range of businesses and professional membership bodies to identify how employers can best support women's wider reproductive health in the workplace. With support from organisations like the Women in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure (WiHTL) network, Chartered Management Institute and Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), the Equality Hub is developing case studies and resources on good practice to help employers share learning and provide peer support.

In addition, The Department of Health and Social Care, and NHS England and NHS Improvement, have released the Health and Wellbeing Fund 2022 to 2025¹⁶. This is supporting women's reproductive wellbeing in the workplace projects and programmes led by voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations. The theme of the fund for 2022 to 2025 is women's reproductive wellbeing in the workplace, with a third of the funded projects looking at menopause and workplace issues. The learning to come from these innovative projects will inform and influence future activity.

Closing Comments

The extensive engagement that has taken place since I was appointed has enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding of how menopause is approached across different sectors, businesses, and working environments. It has been excellent to see so many organisations offering time, resources, and willingness to learn about this topic and I am incredibly ambitious about the progress we can continue to make in the next year and beyond. I intend to continue this programme of engagement in the coming year, with a particular focus on:

- **Interaction of factors:** acknowledging and understanding that individuals can face unique challenges based on the complex interaction of factors including sex, race, socioeconomic status and medical conditions.
- **Intergenerational considerations:** recognising how age and generational perceptions can affect how different age groups approach menopause.
- **Impact of menopause:** not only on the individual, but also on those close to them, such as partners, colleagues, line managers, and how that presents in the workplace.
- **International development and learning:** exploring how we can share our experience in the UK, as well as learning from individuals, organisations and governments in other countries.

Looking ahead, I intend to build on the existing momentum and continue to drive progress on the Four Point Plan. Having built a network of menopause-friendly employers and strategic partnerships, I will use these to enhance the delivery of this work.

In particular, I will focus next on exploring sector-specific allyship, ensuring that no one affected by menopause is isolated, and everyone has someone to talk to. Having launched new sector-specific best practice for employers on the Help to Grow portal, I will seek ongoing feedback and continue to develop the Menopause Resource Hub.

Overall, I am delighted with the engagement and support from those who I have worked alongside and with the progress that has been made since I launched the Four Point Plan. I am looking forward to continuing that engagement and I am ambitious about further progress to come.

My mission is to advocate for women who do not have the platform, opportunity or confidence to do it for themselves. That is why I feel extremely privileged to be able to take this on – to make the world of work better for women who are affected by menopause.

This work is for every woman, everywhere, regardless of socioeconomic demographic, ethnicity, race, or cultural background.

And with this in mind, I am encouraging organisations and employers to reach out to me if you feel you can contribute to this work, ensuring that it will be a shared effort to create cultural change, reaching every place of work.

I hope you will join me on this journey.

Annex:

Biography of Helen Tomlinson, Menopause Employment Champion



Helen Tomlinson, Head of Talent and Inclusion (UK & Ireland) at The Adecco Group, was appointed to the independent role of Menopause Employment Champion for England on 6 March 2023 by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Helen has taken on this voluntary role while continuing her position at The Adecco Group.

Helen is England's first-ever Menopause Employment Champion, and works closely with the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, Mims Davies, to help employers develop policies that empower women experiencing menopause to stay and progress in work.

Advocating for gender equity is a common thread throughout Helen's 30-year career in the recruitment and employability sectors. With three decades of experience across commercial management, sales, and strategic HR planning, Helen brings a wealth of knowledge and skills to her role as Menopause Employment Champion.

Endnotes

- 1 CIPD analysis of the Annual Population Survey, January to December 2020. Pg 3: [The menopause at work: a guide for people professionals \(infocoonline.es\)](#)
- 2 ONS Labour Force Survey, May-July 2023
- 3 [CIPD \(2023\) Menopause in the workplace: Employee experiences in 2023](#)
- 4 [Economic labour market status of individuals aged 50 and over, trends over time: September 2023](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 5 [Menopause transition: effects on women's economic participation](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 6 [Menopause in the workplace: Employee experiences in 2023](#) - (cipd.org)
- 7 [committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/39340/html/#_ftn4](#)
- 8 [Menopause in the workplace: Employee experiences in 2023](#) - (cipd.org)
- 9 [Menopause and the Workplace Fawcett Society 2022](#) - (fawcettsociety.org.uk)
- 10 [Teacher Characteristics from School workforce in England](#)
- 11 [Qualified leavers from teaching from school workforce in England](#)
- 12 [Analysis of future pension incomes](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 13 [Women's Health Strategy for England](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 14 [Health Secretary announces new women's health priorities for 2024](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 15 [Women's Health Strategy: Call for Evidence](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 16 [£1.97 million awarded to support women in the workplace](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)





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