



Department
for Work &
Pensions

“No Time to Step Back”

The Government’s Menopause
Employment Champion.



October 2023

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Ministerial foreword

by Mims Davies MP

Minister for Social Mobility,
Youth and Progression



Supporting women, experiencing menopausal symptoms, to stay and thrive in the workplace is a topic which I am truly passionate about. I am determined to make progress on this, so women can thrive at any age and career stage, but also to ensure they are supported to remain in work for what can be the most fulfilling part of their career and working life.

Women make up nearly half of the UK working population, and women over 50 represent the fastest growing segment of the workforce, so there are few workplaces where the menopause is not being experienced by staff.

We need to open up the conversation, tackle stigma and be aware of the menopause – particularly how it affects individuals in their career and the workplace. Women should not suffer in silence or feel forced to reduce their hours, pass up promotions, or even quit their jobs, because of a lack of support.

This is why on 6 March 2023, I appointed Helen Tomlinson as the Government’s DWP Menopause Employment Champion. I knew having an ambassador for this agenda was crucial to drive forward conversations with businesses and provide a forum for organisations to share their experiences and expertise.

Helen and I share the passion for keeping women in work. Women should feel fully supported in their workplace, in order for them to continue to thrive and contribute with confidence, building their careers and pensions with this backing.

This is critical not only to ensure people can flourish, but to unleash the full potential of UK businesses, both large and small, and our wider economy.

I am extremely pleased and proud to see the progress Helen has made in the role in just six months; confirmed by the testimonies from those that have engaged with her, and our department more broadly. Our engagements and roundtables have been exceedingly positive and provided a great opportunity for collaborative discussion.

I greatly thank Caroline Nokes MP, as the Chair of the Women and Equalities Select Committee, for her support and engagement. My thanks also extends to Minister Maria Caulfield MP, Carolyn Harris MP, and all those engaging with the UK Menopause Taskforce.

As this is a topic which involves all workplaces, the vital collaboration and support we have received from the Department of Health and Social Care and the rest of Government, has allowed us to make strides towards addressing many of the recommendations made in the Women and Equalities Select Committee Inquiry into Menopause and the Workplace.

I look forward to continuing to support Helen in her work, alongside the many interested and supportive parties, stakeholders and businesses who have assisted us in our success so far. We have and will, with determination, make sure that we continue to make real progress in this space across Government, sectors, and communities to ensure everyone can equally and successfully thrive in work.

Introducing

Helen Tomlinson

Menopause Employment
Champion



As a post-menopausal woman in a senior role, I felt privileged during perimenopause to have two key attributes that made a significant difference to my experiences.

Firstly, since I worked in a broadly autonomous role, I had the ability to work from home, even before the covid pandemic hit, and I could choose when I was client-facing and when I would commute to an office.

The second was that I was confident and felt that I could speak out and be heard. That isn't to say that there weren't times when my symptoms were excruciatingly difficult to manage and discuss.

I have taken this voluntary role of Menopause Employment Champion as I feel equally privileged to now advocate for women in the workplace who don't have the autonomy, confidence, or the platform to be able to get the support they need through education or from support within the workplace. This action is for everyone regardless of race, religion, or socio-economic demographic.

My vision is to initially provide best practice guidance and education across five sectors that will ensure that all women in the workplace regardless of the size, budget and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy of their employer can access resource.

This will be combined with a national allyship programme, so every woman has someone to talk to – I have had multiple conversations with women who have felt they had no alternative but to leave their job because they simply had no one to talk to in their workplace.

Encouraging employers to sign the menopause pledge will support women in work and encourage women who are currently not in work to return. Coming back into the workplace for anyone can be difficult but overlay the barriers with perimenopause and it can be a very challenging experience - it doesn't need to be so.

If we get this right and ensure that employers share resources and provide support, putting aside competitive advantage, as they are starting to do, **perimenopause / menopause need not be a time for women to step back, step down or step out of their career.** Post-menopause is a time to thrive and grow, giving women the best 10, 15, or 25 years of their career.

Let's make that happen!

Introduction:

The need for menopause workplace support

With close to four million women aged 45-55 employed in the UK and women over 50 representing the fastest growing segment of the workforce, there are few workplaces where menopause is not being experienced by staff. A lack of awareness and treatment are negatively affecting UK workforce productivity.

The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, with 1 in 100 women experiencing menopause impact before the age of 40 with perimenopause symptoms often during their 40s and some experiencing it mid-30s.

The societal taboo around menopause is starting to lift, but more needs to be done to ensure support is in place to help people who experience menopause symptoms – who will generally be at the peak of their experience and knowledge – to remain in work.

Although not all women experience effects which prevent them from working, research suggests those with serious menopausal symptoms take an average of 32 weeks of leave from work, whilst one in six women aged 40-60 report they have considered leaving work due to a lack of support in relation to their menopause symptoms¹.

The Menopause Employment Champion

In July 2021 Minister Davies, as Minister for Employment, asked members of her roundtable on older workers to look at menopause and employment.

The role of the Menopause Employment Champion was one of the key recommendations from the subsequent independent [menopause and employment report](#) which Government accepted in its [response](#) - and which it again committed to in its response to Recommendation 6 of the [Women and Equalities Select Committees report: government response](#).



On 6 March 2023 the Minister for Social Mobility, Youth and Progression announced in Parliament the appointment of Helen Tomlinson as the Government’s Menopause Employment Champion: [Government appoints first Menopause Employment Champion to improve workplace support](#) (www.gov.uk)².

The first 6 months

“I am delighted that Government acted on the recommendation made in our “Menopause and Employment” 50+ Choices Employer Taskforce report and have appointed Helen Tomlinson as Menopause Employment Champion. In a short time, she has already made a significant impact in raising awareness with employers of this important issue and I look forward to continuing to work with her.”

Andy Briggs,
Government Business Champion for Older Workers

Since her appointment in March, the Menopause Employment Champion has undertaken:

- **5** National media interviews
- **5** Keynote speaking events
- **5** Strategic partnerships established
- **18** Governing bodies / Government Departments engaged with
- **57** employers spoken to about their offer of workplace support

(Full list at Annex 1)

Helen met with several key stakeholders, including the Chair of the Women and Equalities Select Committee and the Women's Health Ambassador Professor Dame Lesley Regan (photograph below), with whom Helen has developed a collaborative working relationship.

Helen has a seat on the **UK Menopause Taskforce** a multilateral forum established between the UK Government and Devolved Administrations to strengthen coordination and raise awareness of menopause and its impact across the UK - with whom an inclusive dialogue is maintained and where best practice and experience is shared. Helen has also given evidence to the **Women and Equalities Select Committee's** inquiry into Menopause and the Workplace



Working positively with employers is vital to ensure they can recruit and retain women experiencing menopause and prevent women considering giving up their employment due to the impact. Photograph here shows Minister Davies and Helen meeting staff from Premier Inn.



Key to Helen's role is enabling employers to understand the importance of supporting their workforce experiencing menopause. Employers must actively know what they need to do, how to do it and take subsequent action.

Initially in a listening and fact-finding mode, Helen has been looking at how employers doing good work might be joined up with those wanting to provide support in the workplace.

Helen has established a partnership with **Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)** that will help achieve traction broadly across all sectors from an employer-influence perspective. [CIPD's press release](#) announced the partnership and its future plans including a joint online seminar in October and Helen a guest speaker at CIPD's November conference.

“The CIPD strongly welcomed the appointment of Helen Tomlinson as Menopause Employment Champion - a position we called for in our Menopause Manifesto in 2019.

Since her appointment Helen has made great strides in spotlighting the difference that workplace support can make to women experiencing menopause transition.

The CIPD is particularly excited to be collaborating with Helen to reach as many organisations of different sizes and sectors as possible with the message that menopause supportive work cultures are essential to attracting and retaining valuable talent for UK workforces.”

A similar arrangement has been established with the **Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)**, who early on expressed a desire to be a visible supporter. Agreement has been reached that ACAS will use their access into sectors to share information about the allyship programme as well as to provide case studies and employer guidance. Helen’s engagement with ACAS has produced a podcast for the employers ACAS engage with, as well as being a guest speaker at their October conference.



In June, Helen recorded and filmed a question-and-answer style conversation for the **Wellbeing of Women** charity, from which a written story is being created for the charity's website, with clips being used for social media, the menopause pledge, and an e-letter to employers.



“From my very first meeting with Helen it was clear how passionate she is about improving menopause awareness and support in the workplace. We have spoken at length about Wellbeing of Women’s Menopause Workplace Pledge – which is completely free for organisations to sign up to – and its natural synergy with Helen’s mission. We hope to continue these conversations and work with her to ensure all workplaces can provide appropriate support to their staff.”

“Helen was kind enough to assist us with the development of written and video content for the 3,000 organisations that have signed up to our Menopause Workplace Pledge, to inform them of her plans as Menopause Employment Champion and share best practice. We know just how valuable this can be to our pledge audience, and we would be keen to explore further opportunities to share information and updates directly with these employers as Helen’s work progresses.”

Janet Lindsay,
CEO of Wellbeing of Women



Another key relationship formed has been with the **British Standards Institution (BSI)** following the publication of their [Menstrual and menopausal workplace guidance](#) (see below).

“Helen has been very supportive of this guidance standard, I have really enjoyed working with Helen over the past few months, she is very knowledgeable about the topic, is a great public speaker and is passionate about the work she does which always shines through. Helen is always positive and encouraging in our discussions and I really value her perspective regarding the work we are both doing to support menopause in the workplace.”

Jane Packer,
Head of Standards at BSI

Helen is also undertaking collaborative campaigning with **Business in The Community (BiTC)** and the **Chartered Management Institute (CMI)**

Menopause Employment Champion's Four Point Plan

To improve menopause in the workplace support, Helen has developed a Four Point Plan:

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.

The task of influencing and persuading employers of the need to provide workplace support will be achieved by the creation of the allyship programme across sectors to support people, and a national programme of menopause-friendly employers helping smaller organisations gain access to guidance and support.

The sectoral approach will focus, in the first phase, on those sectors covering Hospitality, Retail, Care, Manufacturing, and Professional and Technical.

Key to the plan is the development and establishment of a repository of menopause resources and guidance for employers and employees.

The Government's Help to Grow website will be used as the host site for this guidance and will be launched in October to coincide with World Menopause Day and Menopause Awareness Month.

The website will deliver an explanation of the rationale and business case for supporting menopausal women in the workplace – that supporting menopausal women is not only the right thing to do, but research shows that multi-generational diverse workforces are more productive³.

It will feature a series of articles enabling menopause content to be updated using video clips, quotes, as well as providing access to a repository of employer resources featuring:

- discussions on workplace culture
- case studies
- best practice
- the role of CEOs and line managers



HELP TO GROW

Find news, information and advice from the government on starting or growing your business.

Latest business support news



[Government delivers over one billion pounds of support to over 100,000 small firms](#)

27 September 2023

Over one billion pounds has now been delivered to scale up small businesses through the government backed Start Up Loan scheme.



[Millions to benefit from new flexible working measures](#)

20 July 2023

Millions of British workers will have more flexibility over where and when they work as the Flexible Working Bill achieves Royal Assent.



[UK signs treaty to join Indo-Pacific trade group as new data shows major economic benefits](#)

16 July 2023

Progress by business

We have seen positive signs of change and an erosion of taboos in recent months, with more talk of menopause in society in general and with the issue being highlighted by several high-profile figures.

It is pleasing to see more large organisations providing support, demonstrating interest, and crucially taking similar action around education and support. They are starting to show signs of cultural change within their organisation.

A sign of this cultural shift is evident as businesses continue to download the recent publication of the British Standards Institution (BSI) BS30416 Menstruation, menstrual health, and menopause in the workplace guidance.

This guidance is provided free of charge by the BSI and highlights how businesses and employers are keen to introduce menopause workplace support.

The standard sets out practical recommendations for workplace adjustments, as well as strategies to sit alongside existing wellbeing initiatives, to help organisations meet the needs of employees experiencing menopause or menstruation. The guidance is designed to enable organisations to prioritise the needs of colleagues and to tackle the potential loss of skilled workers, who may be at their career peak.

Women in the UK are urging politicians and business leaders to take steps that help older women to remain productive in the workforce for longer. BSI's own recent research - [Lifting the Second Glass Ceiling](#) - shows that more than half (54%) feel it would be difficult for them to raise issues, including menopause, with their employers and three-fifths would also feel uncomfortable bringing up health and wellbeing issues with a male manager.

However, common themes that have been identified and introduced across many organisations include:

- Policy creation
- Management training
- Reasonable adjustments
- Uniform reviews
- Menopause cafes / safe spaces
- One-to-one support

Seeing this activity is encouraging as it confirms the Menopause Employment Champion's strategy is the right one, though care will always be taken to ensure it encompasses small and medium-sized enterprises who are often constrained in terms of resources, as well as by HR capacity.

Helen had the opportunity to share her Four Point Plan with a diverse range of large employers, all of whom were providing quality menopause support to their workforces, at a Ministerial flagship roundtable event on 20 September, held at the **London Stadium, home of West Ham United**, the Premier League's first club awarded menopause-friendly status.



At West Ham Helen was delighted with the enthusiasm in the room for sharing best practice and potential collaborative opportunities that will support businesses who don't have access to education and support. The employers present agreed to keep the conversation going outside of the session and have started to meet on a regular basis.



Examples of employers doing good work in this space, across several sectors include:

- **Lloyds Banking Group** – With over 23,000 women aged over 40, menopause is one of the most important wellbeing topics in the organisation. Their Menopause Promise offers access to medical care & wellbeing support, as well as training & education for everyone - they are committed to removing the stigma, so everyone feels informed and comfortable talking about menopause. (An Independently accredited Menopause Friendly Employer and finalist in the upcoming Menopause in the Workplace Awards)
- **Tesco** has updated its sickness policy in order that if colleagues take time off due to menopause-related symptoms, that absence is not counted as a period of absence for their sickness absence policy. This is encouraging open and honest conversations about the menopause and aims to prevent presenteeism. Tesco has also introduced a new menopause-friendly uniform, a virtual networking group on the menopause, signed the Menopause Workplace Pledge, and released a new menopause guide for colleagues.
- **Unilever** – the first fast-moving consumer goods company has been recognised as Menopause Friendly and received accreditation. This is because of the training and awareness courses on the menopause and specialist health care cover Unilever provides.

- **Premier Inn (Whitbread)** - as part of their inclusion strategy, menopause is a key topic for Whitbread, as 67% of their frontline teams are female. They have signed up to become a Menopause Friendly Employer and started their accreditation. The guide sits alongside support groups, run by the Gender Equality Network, and training for all leaders.
- **Aviva** – A menopause support app is freely available to all Aviva UK colleagues (including one-to-one phone consultations with a specialist menopause practitioner). Aviva also offers access to wider wellbeing support to colleagues including online Menopause Awareness training. This recognises that menopausal women are the fastest-growing demographic at work and focuses on why we need to be talking about menopause, what menopause is and how it can impact a colleague at work.

However, there is still more to do - it is important that employers put aside any potential competitive advantage that they believe their menopause strategy gives them in terms of recruitment and retention and instead look at how their great work can support women across their sector.

Evidence of poor practice may still be found, characterised by these recent testimonies:

“When I first entered perimenopause, it took me years to piece it all together and realise that how I was feeling was due to my fluctuating hormones. I think the reason that I found it so overwhelming was due to both the physical and emotional symptoms, such as changes like hot flushes, night sweats, trouble sleeping, changes to my skin and hair, irregular periods, tiredness, mood swings, anxiety, and brain fog.

My company did not support menopause at work and viewed my symptoms as behavioural changes; rather than supporting me, they made me feel even more isolated, which led to imposter syndrome, and I walked away from my career for my own health and well-being”.
(Aviation industry)

“I was forced to leave a job and an organisation that I had loved because no one recognised that something was wrong. As a high performer at work, I was left without HRT during lockdown, and it began to have a serious impact on my ability to focus and on my mood and therefore my performance.

When things started to slip, rather than talking to me to find out what was wrong, I was ignored, side-lined and left to fend for myself.

Education and open conversations about menopause in the workplace can make a huge difference and support women to continue in jobs that they love and contribute to.

I’ve since moved on and am back to my former high performing self. I still have the occasional ‘off days’ but my managers are much more supportive and the ability to work flexibly has helped massively.”

(Education)

The Menopause Employment Champion and DWP

DWP is an active member of the (Westminster) Cross-Government Menopause Executive Committee and has worked closely with its members to share best practice across the Civil Service. DWP has developed toolkits for employees and line managers.

DWP launched its own Menopause Network in 2021, which includes a network of 350 DWP Menopause Ambassadors who have an important role to play in creating awareness and having those menopause conversations, as well as providing support and advice for colleagues. In May 2022 DWP launched its Menopause and the Workplace Policy.

Helen has met with DWP Directors to discuss and explore what more the Department might do to support both staff and customers experiencing the menopause, and has taken part in several sessions to staff, including a highly impactful men-only session and a teach-in to the Departments 50Plus Champions who support employers and work coaches.

“Thank you so much for arranging this – I found it so helpful and will help me manage this issue better going forward.”

Feedback from DWP’s men-only menopause session.

The following feedback was subsequently received from the Chair of the DWP Menopause Network:

“Helen’s appointment has already been of huge benefit to DWP and the wider Civil Service. She has kindly given time to talk about her role to several hundred DWP colleagues which has already given credence to the importance of raising awareness of menopause symptoms and the impact on individuals and the workplace.

Helen’s open and honest approach is showing Senior Leaders that this is a topic that must be taken seriously in the workplace and her appointment is a very important addition to the great work that has already been carried out by the Cross Government Menopause Network in supporting individuals, their line managers and in turn the workplace”.

Forward look – the next six months

The next six months are going to be an exciting time, with much of the hard work completed to date coming to fruition to coincide with October's Menopause Awareness Month and World Menopause Day on 18 October.

Activities will include a series of five sector-specific workshops – one each for retail, hospitality, care, manufacturing and professional and technical, and launch of employer guidance and resources, and the allyship programme on the Help to Grow website.

Further sectors – for example construction and education – will be brought into the programme over the coming months.

Alongside this activity the Minister for Social Mobility, Youth and Progression will continue her high-profile programme of **regional** menopause roundtables which have the aim of increasing visibility of the issues, sparking discussion and gaining regional insights from a variety of stakeholders and perspectives.

To date, roundtables have taken place in Southampton (25 May), Swansea (27 July) and Derby (22 September), with further ones planned later in the year in Scotland and Gatwick.

Annex 1: Menopause Employment Champion Engagement: March – September 2023

The appointment of Helen Tomlinson as Menopause Employment Champion attracted considerable media attention, including an interview on Women’s Hour, a feature in The Times and an interview on BBC News following the publication of the British Standards Institution guidelines on menopause and menstrual health.

Of particular significance has been the global BBC flagship business programme – “Talking Business” with Aaron Heslehurst – which featured a discussion with Helen about the issues around menopause and the impact on women and how the world of work is becoming more aware of this and possible further solutions.



This edition of Talking Business has been aired as a global broadcast on the BBC News Channel as well as in the UK, where it is currently streamed via the iPlayer.

Interviews

- BBC News
- Guardian
- The Times
- Woman’s Hour
- BBC “Talking Business”

Keynote speaking events

- Institute of Government and Public Policy – Menopause in the Workplace conference
- Health and Wellbeing Conference
- British Standards Institution launch event
- Fire Service Conference
- Women In Work Summit

Governing bodies

- Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)
- British Chamber of Commerce (BCC)
- Business in the Community (BiTC)
- British Standards Institution (BSI)
- Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD)
- Chartered Management Institute (CMI)
- Department for Education (DfE)
- Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
- Institute of Government and Public Policy (IGPP)
- DWP National Employer Partnership Team (NEPT)
- National Health Service England (NHSE)
- Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)
- Scottish Government – Women’s Health Plan Team
- This Is Purpose
- Wellbeing of Women (WoW)
- Cross Government Menopause Network Executive Committee

Organisations / employers

- AbVista
- Anglian Water
- British Airways (BA)
- Bentley Motors
- Bettys
- Beyond Corporate
- Black Menopause
- Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue
- Centrica
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Effem (MARS)
- Enterprise
- Fairbreak
- Falanx
- Fraser Dove
- Google
- Greene King
- Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW)
- Jobs 4 Women
- Keishas Hub Haringey
- Leyland DAF
- Locala
- Loughborough Uni
- Manchester University
- Menopause Support UK
- Menopause Working
- Molson Coors
- Nestle
- Network Rail
- Optima Health
- Peabody
- Phoenix UK
- Premier Inn
- Punch Pubs
- Redloft
- Rolls Royce
- Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH)
- Serco
- Serco Tech
- Shelter
- Sexual Health London (SHL)
- Siemens
- Southern Water
- Talking Menopause
- Teleperformance
- Tesco
- Tesco Bank
- The Meno Hub
- Tower Hamlets Homes
- Travelodge
- Trethewans
- Trade Union Congress (TUC)
- UK Hospitality
- University of Southampton
- Warwickshire Council
- Xerox
- Yorkshire Cancer

Annex 2:

Biography of Helen Tomlinson, Menopause Employment Champion

Helen is England's first-ever Menopause Employment Champion, helping employers develop policies that empower women experiencing menopause to stay and progress in work.

Advocating for gender equity is the common thread throughout Helen's 30-year career in the recruitment and employability sectors. In addition to her voluntary Menopause Champion role, Helen is Head of Talent and Inclusion (UK and Ireland) for the Adecco Group, the global leader in HR solutions. Her pioneering podcast on menopause and work inspired the Adecco Group to design and implement one of the UK's first corporate menopause policies.

Since then, Helen has supported companies of all sizes to create supportive environments, encourage open conversations, and help women thrive at work through menopause and beyond.

With three decades of experience across commercial management, sales, and strategic HR planning, Helen helps organisations to realise the business benefits of an enlightened approach – and drives positive, pragmatic change for employers and their people.

Endnotes

- 1 CIPD, “Majority of working women experiencing the menopause say it has a negative impact on them at work | CIPD”.
- 2 The Scottish and Welsh Governments and Northern Ireland Executive are responsible for health. Where this response relates to health policy, it applies to England only. We are committed to working with the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and to learn from each other where this important topic is concerned.
- 3 OECD (2020) Promoting an Age-inclusive workforce.



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