



Diocese of Coventry Clergy Menopause Policy

Document Overview

Purpose The purpose of this policy is to assist with creating an open and menopause friendly workplace where those experiencing the menopause feel comfortable discussing any issues associated with this, and to ensure the necessary help is known about and offered to those affected.

It applies to all current and new office holders of the Diocese of Coventry, including all persons beneficed, licensed or otherwise authorised by the Bishop for ministry in the Diocese. This includes all clergy holding office under Common Tenure, Qualified Common Tenure and Freehold and applies equally to a Cathedral Clergy, Archdeacons and Bishops.

Confidentiality This document is not confidential

Document owner Archdeacon Pastor and Diocesan HR Advisor

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Distribution All clergy within the Diocese of Coventry

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Version History

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1.0	07/03/2024	Approved by BCST

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1. Pastoral Introduction

We recognise that the menopause can have a big impact on women's lives and work for a number of years. The aim of this policy is to assist in creating an open and honest environment where clergy can discuss issues associated with the menopause and seek the support they need.

Our aim is to build a culture of trust and confidence for clergy where they are able to talk openly and honestly about the impact of the menopause on them, and that they are listened to in supportive, positive and respectful ways.

This policy is intended to apply to all current and new office holders of the Diocese of Coventry, including all persons beneficed, licensed or otherwise authorised by the Bishop for ministry in the Diocese. This includes all clergy holding office under Common Tenure, Qualified Common Tenure and Freehold and applies equally to a Cathedral Clergy, Archdeacons and Bishops. The Diocese of Coventry takes the well-being of clergy very seriously. This document and policy, while following legal and HR obligations, is designed to help you to understand the procedure that will be followed should you become ill and need time off work.

Illness can come at any time, whether that is a cold requiring a few days of self-certified absence or a condition that requires more time away from work. It can also bring with it feelings of guilt at not being able to attend to all the pressing matters of the benefice and in the case of long-term illness anxiety as to what the future may hold. Whatever the situation, this policy outlines what you and the diocese need to do so that you will feel supported and upheld during your time of absence. It also gives the process of how a return to work will be managed after a prolonged period of sick leave. The flow chart at Appendix 1 gives a basic understanding of the process.

If you need advice or further clarification on this document, please contact the Archdeacon Pastor.

2. Prioritising your wellbeing – everyone's responsibility

- 2.1. The CDBF encourages everyone to prioritise their wellbeing. Office holders experiencing menopausal symptoms are encouraged not to suffer in silence. If you find yourself struggling with any aspect of your role as a result of symptoms associated with the menopause please do feel able to discuss these in confidence with your Area Dean, the Dean of Women's Ministry, the Archdeacon Pastor or an appropriate senior female colleague.
- 2.2. We would also encourage you to consider seeking medical advice from a GP or relevant health care professional. Depending on the symptoms being experienced clergy may also wish to access the Diocesan Counsellor.
- 2.3. We have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all of our employees and office holders under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Additionally, the Equality Act 2010 outlines that individuals must

not be discriminated against due to any form of disability. We recognise that severe symptoms of menopause may constitute a disability.

- 2.4. We are committed to exploring with you, flexible supportive options and arrangements in your ministry and will seek to actively support and share information about the help and assistance that we can provide or signpost people to.
- 2.5. If you feel that you have been mistreated in any way by a colleague because of matters related to the menopause, please share this with your Area Dean, the Dean of Women's Ministry, or the Archdeacon Pastor who can then take the matter forward.

3. Definition

- 3.1. **Menopause:** A natural transition stage in most women's lives lasting from four to eight years, although for some women it can be longer. Most women experience the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods. Women may also experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms.
- 3.2. **Premature menopause:** For some women, it can be experienced at a much younger age, in their 30s or even younger. This is sometimes called premature ovarian insufficiency. The NHS estimates that 1 in every 100 women will experience premature menopause.
- 3.3. **Medical or surgical menopause:** There are some medical circumstances that will create an immediate menopause, whatever the woman's age, such as a medically induced menopause to shrink fibroids or when the ovaries are damaged by specific interventions such as treatment for cancer, or when a woman's ovaries are removed as part of a hysterectomy.
- 3.4. **Perimenopause:** A period of time before the menopause, in the years leading up to the menopause where there can be significant changes for women, including irregular and heavy menstrual bleeding and many of the classic symptoms associated with menopause.
- 3.5. **Post-menopause:** A term used when a woman's periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months. However other menopausal symptoms may not have ended so soon. Problematic symptoms may continue for years.

4. Making practical and pragmatic adjustments

- 4.1. Making reasonable adjustments to a 'working environment' for clergy can be complex, but there may be a number of ways in which exploring how adjustments to your role or working environment may reduce the effect that the menopause is having on you.
- 4.2. Examples of possible adjustments that can be discussed and may be considered as initial temporary changes and reviewed regularly to help monitor a situation may include:
 - Conducting an individual risk assessment (to identify any particular areas of the working environment that are potentially challenging).
 - Locality to toilet facilities when visiting churches, homes, schools etc.
 - Reviewing rest breaks.
 - Flexible working patterns, including flexibility around working times if an office holder is affected at particular times of the day.

- Reviewing support for additional sickness absence.
 - Temporary changes to the office holders’ duties, such as undertaking fewer high visibility activities, for example giving formal presentations or running meetings as it can be difficult to cope with symptoms such as hot flushes.
 - Allowing changes to the types of vestments and clerical clothing worn for ministry purposes.
- 4.3. Depending on the severity of the office holder’s menopausal symptoms and the changes needed to manage these symptoms other church officers may also need to be informed or included in any discussions. This could include church wardens, PCC members, church workers and official volunteers. Where this is the case, every effort will be made by the Clergy in posts of responsibility to make this process as tactful and sensitive as possible.

5. Further guidance and information

- 5.1. For further guidance and information on the menopause and for advice on how to manage the symptoms please refer to the following links:

NHS information: www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause

British Menopause Society (BSM): www.thebms.org.uk

Daisy Network: www.daisynetwork.org

Menopause Matters: www.menopausematters.co.uk

The Menopause Exchange: www.menopause-exchange.co.uk

Women’s Health Concern: www.womens-health-concern.org

The Menopause Charity: www.themenopausecharity.org/menopause