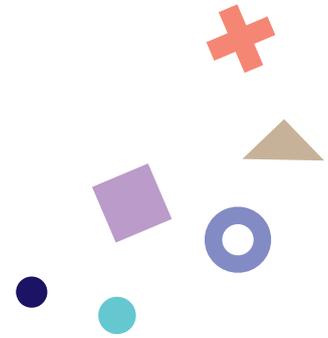


# Approaches to menopause support strategies

*When deciding to integrate menopause support into your workplace, it is important that the key stakeholders in your organization feel confident, knowledgeable, assisted and clear about their role in making the strategy a success. To help in this, we give an overview of some of the key considerations required when developing your menopause-sensitive strategy.*



## STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

### What is the intended outcome of your strategy?

Rank 1-7, 1 being the most important or use N/A

- Awareness raising
- Celebrating diversity
- Compliance with relevant legislation
- Brand reinforcement
- Increasing worker commitment and job satisfaction
- Attracting talent
- Better workforce health and wellbeing

### What is the focus of your strategy?

Rank 1-4, 1 being the most important or use N/A

- Education-only
- Compliance-led
- Cultural approach
- Holistic approach

### Who will own the strategy?

Tick one

- Health and wellbeing team
- Designated Executive
- Menopause champion/s
- Occupational health and safety
- Human resources
- Employee taskforce
- Trade union



## How will the strategy be evaluated?

*Tick all that apply*

### Periodic measures:

- Before and after surveys surrounding menopause support initiatives
- Tracking rates of menopausal disclosure
- Benchmarking your own strategies with emerging best practice of other organizations with menopause support mechanisms

### Annual measures:

- Integrate feedback on menopause support strategies into existing measurement systems, such as employee wellbeing surveys
- Monitoring the uptake of training programmes
- Collating figures from online resources of number of times resources were viewed or downloaded
- Collating information from supervisors and managers regarding how they engaged with the policies through a short 3 question feedback survey via text message
- Content searching and analysis of references to menopause in personal development and appraisal forms

### Longer-term measures:

- Tracking retention, absence and promotion rates of women 50 and over
- Evaluating the incidents and details of complaints surrounding age and sex discrimination
- Introducing feedback mechanisms to improve communication, dissemination and content of resources

## AN EXPLANATION OF CHECKLIST OPTIONS

### What is the intended outcome of your strategy?

Agreeing on the intended outcomes of any support strategy for women experiencing transition is vital to ensure that messaging, target setting and success indicators are consistent and shared across key stakeholders in the organization. It will also ensure alignment between employees' expectations and the objectives of the organization in this space.

Some examples of outcomes might include: awareness raising, celebrating diversity and brand reinforcement, compliance with relevant legislation, increasing female older worker commitment and job satisfaction, and attracting talent to organizations. While you may wish for multiple outcomes, prioritizing them ensures a focused approach that will deliver an efficient and effective use of scarce resources.

Finally, you may wish to consider what form the strategy will take. For example, is it going to be a policy that is required to be followed across the organization? Or is it more in the form of guidance?

### What is the focus of your strategy?

Before committing to an organizational menopause strategy, it is useful to consider its scope. This will often be a balance between budget, objectives and desired outcomes. In general, a smaller scale approach that is sustainable over the long term is more effective than an all-encompassing initiative that may fade out due to on-going resource issues. Starting small and gradually building up provision may also have the benefit of obtaining ongoing feedback from managers, supervisors and employees about what they would find most useful for them.



One way to determine the scope is to think about the approach you will be taking. In general, there are 4 approaches.

**Education-only:** This is when the organization chooses to be a conduit for information provision and circulation. This is usually in the form of information sheets or guides created by or referencing external advocacy and professional support groups. Some studies suggest that women prefer this approach as it provides the opportunity for them to gain advice if they wish without feeling the organization is trying to manage their symptoms. It is also a good first stage in awareness raising and messaging that menopause is not a problematic issue in your organization. However, most advice is general in nature and will not specify workplace-specific adjustments or strategies, which some women might find frustrating.

**Compliance-led:** A compliance approach involves a strategy built around the areas and concerns of the business where menopause transition intersects with compliance or legal responsibilities and duties. It will usually involve a focus on occupational health and safety, and discrimination laws. This approach can be built upon a clear business case. However, employees may be cynical in terms of questioning if the organization is genuinely supportive, or simply trying to avoid litigation.

**Cultural approach:** A cultural approach prioritizes people-orientated initiatives focused on challenging stereotypes, celebrating diversity and changing organizational cultures surrounding ageing and gender. Given that menopause is a taboo more broadly in society, it may also include myth-busting or awareness raising about menopause. However, there is the danger that cultural approaches are involved in a one-off 'celebration' in the organization before making way for the next initiative, and therefore do not embed into organizational practice.

**Holistic approach:** A holistic approach seeks to gather up existing best practice across the organization from multiple areas of the business (such as OHS, diversity and inclusion and family-friendly policies) and consider how they may be adapted or developed to include menopause support. Holistic approaches are more complex to implement and there may be disagreement about the motivations behind the project and conflicting objectives across the stakeholders involved.

### Who will own the strategy?

One of the first conversations is who is responsible for developing, delivering and evaluating the strategy, both in terms of its resourcing and financials.

Menopause support at work often requires a multipronged approach, since it is wrapped up in a range of issues surrounding health, organizational culture, physical workplace environment, and health and medical support. However, one function or department is most likely to be responsible for monitoring and delivery to ensure accountability.

Some choices in ownership of the strategy include:

**Health and Wellbeing:** Larger organizations that have a health and wellbeing manager should consider allocating responsibility to this individual as they may have existing networks and relationships with areas of the organization associated with health, workplace and culture.

**Designated Executive:** One of the most effective ways to change culture is to have a figurehead in the organization who leads and executes menopause strategies as part of their KPI (Key Performance Indicators). This may be as part of a broader later life agenda whereby one executive owns a portfolio and budget surrounding the support and promotion of the older workforce. Having leadership commitment also provides visibility at boardroom level. However, it needs to be clear for staff involved in rolling out strategy what various departments' involvement will be in liaising with the executive.

**Menopause Champion/s:** This person or group of people can come from across the organization and act as a broker to co-ordinate strategy and support practices. They can also be a hub for any immediate enquiries that may result from the strategy, and identify and quickly address possible areas for improvement.

**Occupational Health and Safety (OHS):** If the strategy surrounding menopause is primarily concerned with providing a safe and healthy environment, OHS may be the best function responsible for menopause-related strategies. However, prioritizing occupational health and safety legislative requirements may mean there is a focus only on risk areas and prevention of accidents and absence, rather than proactively developing practices that enable menopausal women to thrive in their workplace.

**Human Resources (HR):** Ownership by HR can be useful since managers, supervisors and employees are usually aware of how to contact them, and associate them with dealing with all the people-related issues in the organization. If you see a menopause support initiative as part of a broader strategic remit to recruit, retain and develop older workers, HR is also an effective 'home' for ownership as it aligns with specific Key Performance Indicators they may be accountable for

surrounding, for example, turnover. However, employees may associate HR with performance management, rather than a source of proactive support in the workplace.

**Employee Taskforce:** The need to consider menopause is often initiated on the work-floor when an employee or group of employees express a desire to disclose and discuss menopause-related provision. Empowering these individuals to help facilitate broader organizational policy surrounding menopause ensures a highly motivated team who can provide insights and legitimacy to strategies through their own personal experience. However, it is important not to rely solely on individuals with direct experience of menopause as the key advocates. Ensuring that such groups have representation across ages and gender will encourage on-boarding with subsequent initiatives and provide a plurality of perspectives.

**Trade Unions:** Trade unions may not be a primary group in charge of designing, delivering and evaluating menopause support strategies. However, they are often an excellent partner in providing space to promote training, new health and safety initiatives, or broader diversity and equality approaches to menopause in the workplace.

### How will the strategy be evaluated?

Measuring strategic success in organizations is often a challenging process but one that is vital to ensure continued commitment of staff and financial resources. Therefore, before considering the evaluation mechanisms, be clear about what are regarded as accepted forms of evaluation in your organizations, and what the desired outcomes of your strategy are.

Best practice evaluation usually involves benchmarking. So before implementing strategies (or training), you may wish to encourage participants to engage in attitudinal or awareness surveys to identify a baseline. Alternatively, you may have existing data collected prior to the menopause transition support strategy that could be useful as a proxy benchmark.

### Periodic measures may include:

- Before and after surveys surrounding menopause support initiatives
- Tracking rates of menopausal disclosure
- Benchmarking your own strategies with emerging best practice in other organizations with menopause transition support mechanisms

### Annual measures may include:

- Integrating feedback on menopause support strategies into existing measurement systems, such as employee wellbeing surveys
- Monitoring the uptake of training programmes or information sessions
- Collating figures from online resources of number of times resources were viewed or downloaded
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### Longer-term measures may include:

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