



The Menopause conversation and the Equality and Human Rights Commission

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On 21 February 2024, The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published [advice for employers on menopause and the Equality Act](#).

Legal Framework

The EHRC's aim for the guidance is *"to clarify these legal obligations and provide practical tips for employers on making reasonable adjustments and fostering positive conversations about the menopause with their workers"*.

The guidance confirms that in the most serious cases, due to the long-term and substantial impact that menopause symptoms can have, they may amount to a disability under the Equality Act 2010 and, further, those experiencing such symptoms may be protected from less favourable treatment on the grounds of age and sex. Failing to make reasonable adjustments may amount to disability discrimination.

The report highlights the need for employers and team leaders to recognise their legal obligations, understand and proactively engage with workplace adjustments, and promote the benefits of adjustments to those staff experiencing symptoms and to the wider team.

After all, as the guidance highlights, research shows that:

- two-thirds of working women between the ages of 40 and 60 with experience of menopausal symptoms said they have had a mostly negative impact on them at work;
- only 12 per cent of respondents sought any workplace adjustments;
- over a quarter who did not seek any adjustments said the reason was 'I was worried about the reaction';
- over half of respondents were able to think of a time when they were unable to go to work due to their menopause symptoms;

- one in ten women surveyed who were employed during the menopause left work due to menopause symptoms.

Promoting Workplace Wellbeing and Inclusion

As of January 2024, the Solicitors Regulation Authority confirmed that women account for 53% of solicitors in practice. Nicole Ridgwell, Senior Associate and member of Lester Aldridge's Equality Diversity & Inclusion Committee said: "The impact of losing **1 in 10** when we have so many ways to retain and promote that talent and contribution is unthinkable"

Coincidentally, on the same day that the guidance was published, Lester Aldridge staff were given the opportunity to attend a fascinating and hugely informative talk by workplace wellbeing specialists SuperWellness on Raising Awareness of Menopause at Work.

Nicole Ridgwell, commented: "This, at times eye-opening, talk allowed us to engage in discussions about both the more familiar symptoms of menopause and how they might disrupt a day-to-day routine, and to learn about some of the more unusual potential symptoms. What was also significant to our conversations, both during and after, was just how frequent, intense, and long-lasting these symptoms can be.

"We are so pleased to have had the opportunity to begin discussions within our teams as a result of yesterday's talk. This new guidance provides further [practical examples](#) of how to have regular, open and supportive conversations within our teams to continue to promote workplace wellbeing. So many of these examples are easily implemented at no or low cost (including room temperatures and ventilation, providing rest areas, and flexible working).

"Our conversations and pro-active engagement with this topic will continue, and we look forward to using the EHRC guidance to raise the profile of the potential effects of the menopause in the workplace and to translate these discussions into meaningful action going forward."

Article written by [Chris Bond](#), [Nicole Ridgwell](#), [Stephanie Setters](#), members of Lester Aldridge's [Equality Diversity & Inclusion Committee](#)

Contact

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