

NWRWC

North West Regional Women's Committee

October 18th is

WORLD MENOPAUSE
AWARENESS DAY



Menopause News Special

Why the menopause is a workplace issue ?

We all recognise that branches and workplace reps have increasing demands on their time. But negotiating for better support for workers struggling with menopausal symptoms will have a wide-ranging benefit for your branch and workplace, as well as our members. As the UK's leading public service trade union for women, UNISON is determined to ensure that working women have all the support they need to be healthy and safe at work.

These problems can be made even worse by the fact that there remains considerable ignorance and misunderstanding about the menopause, with it often being treated as an embarrassing or taboo subject, or even a topic to make fun of.

Many women are being driven from the workplace because they find that adapting problematic symptoms around inflexible work expectations is just too



Women make up more than 70% of UNISON's 1.4 million members and activists. They are 51% of the UK workforce. And these women will inevitably experience the menopause at some point in their lives, and not necessarily in their late forties or early fifties. It can affect younger women too through a premature or a medical or surgical menopause. It can also affect transgender and non-binary people. Statistics show that around 1 in every 3 women has either experienced or is currently going through the menopause. Some women may cope well with the physical and emotional changes, but for others they may cause particular difficulties both in work and out of work.

difficult. Others may find that managing symptoms mean they miss out on promotions and training, reduce their hours, lose confidence in the workplace and see their pay levels drop, all contributing to a widening gender pay gap. It should be remembered that this can also be a time of life when women are experiencing difficulties, not least with increasing caring responsibilities, and the onset of age related health conditions. UNISON says that the impact of menopausal symptoms on women workers is an occupational health issue and an equality issue. The menopause is a workplace issue and therefore a trade union issue.

Introducing the North West Menopause Action Group

The North West Menopause Action Group was inaugurated by Women's Committee member Elizabeth Cameron and is made up of 23 activists from branches across the region.

Here, some of them explain why they joined:-

My name is Elizabeth Cameron and I am leading on the Menopause Action Group for the North West Region Women's Committee because I want things to be better for women at work experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

When I went through it I was having a difficult time at work, we were going through a restructure and it was a dog-eat-dog culture of people trying to prove themselves more worthy of the fewer jobs that now remained in the system. It simply wasn't the time to be off on sick leave.

Long story short I was plunged overnight into the menopause, from an over producing eggs female to an over-the-hill middle-aged woman, sweating, losing concentration and memory, forgetting where I'd parked or put things or what route I'd taken. Crying that I couldn't have a baby I wasn't even aware I had wanted. All my choices taken away. A vacuous emptiness inside. I felt like I had gone mad. The previous four years were hell and it looked set to continue. I got through it. I needed HRT eventually and things got better but it was tough and mine is just one of many similar stories.

There was no sick note that covered this, no sympathy from a boss or understanding. I don't want anyone to go through that. This is a condition that all women will go through at some time, but it shouldn't have to be so awful an experience. Workplace policies should support women through this time of their life. This is, after all, a natural process. Some of us have it thrust upon us and there is no gradual build up or emotional or physical preparation for not being able to have a baby again and having a body that doesn't feel like your own.

I believe that by honest discussion and an empathetic attitude bosses can support women through this, and with the help of trade unions change attitudes and help to create policies that treat the menopause seriously and take into consideration some of the practical things a woman may need at this time.

That's what we are here for as your union reps in the workplace branches and regions, to help you get through this. Please contact us for advice or to join the group at nwrwc@unison.co.uk.

Elizabeth Cameron

BA International Labour and trade union studies, Strategic Business Management
Chair, GMCA Race Equality Panel
Dep Chair North West Labour Bame Network



I wanted to be a part of the menopause action group to support women, share good work practices, experiences and tips to ensure that women can continue to lead fulfilled lives throughout the menopause. With the access to the right support Menopause should & could be me-no-pause!

Mags Abbott

West Cheshire UNISON Branch Woman's Officer.



I was elected within my branch as the Women's officer and when I attended my first NWRWC I was inspired by all the strong women who wanted to force change and to support women, from their I have gone on to start my own Women's Self organised group within my branch and I want to put women's issues at the forefront of UNISON.

The Menopause action group was something I wanted to be part of because so many women and members are affected and I want to be part of the group to start conversation within workplaces and branches to bring about support and change for all members affected by Menopause.

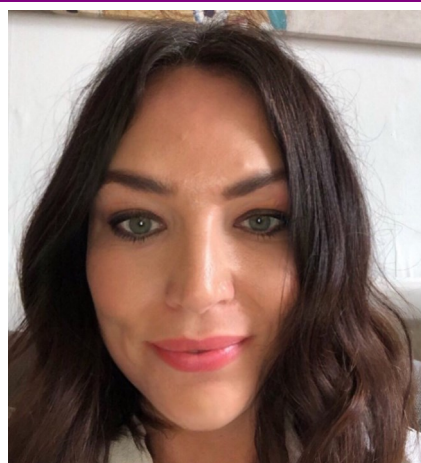
Christine Collins

Bolton UNISON Women's Officer

I want to be part of the menopause group because the menopause isn't a joke, it isn't a 'women's issue', it's something that does, has or will affect the majority of UNISON members across the course of their working life. Our members need to know that they won't be held back, held down, treated poorly because of something they have no choice in experiencing. Our brothers in solidarity need to understand the questions to ask, the strategies to employ, and the protections they can deploy to support staff experiencing the menopause, especially where employers are using the impacts to discipline and even dismiss women. It's time to change The Change!

Lesley Lancelott

Chair Manchester LG Branch Woman's SOG



I joined the UNISON NWRWC Menopause Group after running a menopause campaign in Wirral Council to get a dedicated menopause policy which I was successful in acquiring for women staff members. I wanted join NWRWC Menopause Group to help get menopause policies similar to Wirral's in more work places across the region and to learn from fellow trade unionists on how to raise awareness of the subject.

Danielle Vipond

Assistant Branch Secretary and Women's officer Wirral

I am a branch officer for Sefton UNISON I became increasingly concerned for members when I was allocated three women, as part of my caseload, all three women's job security was at risk due to the menopause. A qualified and highly experienced social worker who had done the job for 25 years didn't feel she could cope anymore due to brain fog and had asked for a redeployment into to a much lower grade post, another member was nursery nurse who couldn't remember the children's names anymore, her employer was disciplining her under capabilities and my third case was a kitchen assistant in a school kitchen who just couldn't cope with the heat and the manager wouldn't allow additional breaks so she felt she had to resign !! All three women stayed in their jobs with reasonable adjustments. This is the reason I want to be part of the Menopause Action Group.



Sefton UNISON LG branch, held a virtual launch of a new menopause policy, the branch proposed and worked together with Sefton Council a new joint policy.

The launch of this essential policy was unveiled with a light show at Bootle Town Hall to coincide with World Menopause Day 2020.

June Evanson Horan

Sefton UNISON LG Branch Officer

Other members of the group are: Jessica Aitchison, Sara Bennett, Michelle Charlotte, Pauline Cole, Louise Dennis, Amie Gillett, Angela Greenhalgh, Karen Hall, Kim Hannon, Kathryn Jackson, Karen Marshall, Joan McNulty, Karen Narramore, Rachel Ndukwe, Dawn Warriner, Karen Wilson and Rachel Wright.

ACAS Menopause Guidance

More than 2 million women aged over 50 have difficulties at work due to menopause symptoms, according to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS).

This can lead to loss of confidence and feelings of stress and anxiety surrounding the ability to do their jobs.

Click on this link to access the ACAS guidance on menopause at work

[Managing the effects of the menopause: Menopause at work - Acas](#) and on this one to access the guidance to menopause and the law [Menopause and the law: Menopause at work - Acas](#)

