

## **WELSHPOOL TOWN COUNCIL**

### **MENOPAUSE POLICY**

Each person that menstruates will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and symptoms and complications related to a menstrual cycle can often indirectly affect their partners, families, and colleagues as well.

Period stigma can be felt in numerous ways and more needs to be done to ensure this is minimized and doesn't impact on someone's health and wellbeing. A lack of empathy and openness around periods and relating condition can lead to a person's pain and health being minimized and dismissed.

People who menstruate experience a range of medical issues from cramps to endometriosis and migraines but 57% of those who suffer have had to lie to their managers about the reason for sick days. If workers felt able to speak honestly and openly, employers would be able to better provide support for them in the workplace.

Welshpool Town Council recognises that for many reasons, peoples' individual experiences of their menstrual cycle may differ greatly.

#### **Menstrual period symptoms may include:**

- i) Heavy and painful periods
- ii) Low mood, irritability, increased anxiety, panic attacks, fatigue, poor concentration, loss of confidence and memory problems
- iii) Joint and muscle aches and stiffness
- iv) Weight gain and bloating
- v) Headaches and migraines
- vi) Leg, back or stomach cramping
- vii) Constipation and/or diarrhea

#### **Medical conditions relating to a menstrual cycle may include:**

- i) Endometriosis
- ii) Poly Cystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

- iii) Pre-Menstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)
- iv) Adenomyosis

Symptoms and conditions may also exacerbate existing impairments and conditions that those affected may already be finding difficult to manage at work

### **Support for employees experiencing symptoms relating to their menstrual cycle**

Welshpool Town Council is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and will work to take positive action to support staff experiencing symptoms relating to their menstrual cycle. All staff will be provided with appropriate information and training so that they are able to better understand the effects of the menstrual cycle and be comfortable about discussing and addressing the impact that it can have on employees in carrying out their roles. All staff training will be supported by awareness campaigns aimed at supporting the development of an understanding and supportive culture.

All existing staffing policies and procedures should take account of the effects of the Menstrual cycle and related conditions to ensure that employees experiencing symptoms are not disadvantaged as a result.

Welshpool Town Council recognises that some employees experiencing symptoms may experience an impact on their health and wellbeing, and we aim to provide as much support as is reasonably practicable for individuals. Welshpool Town Council recognises that the menstrual cycle is a very personal experience and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.

Employees experiencing issues are encouraged to let their line manager or the alternative contact (see below) know if they experience symptoms that may impact on their work, so that appropriate support is provided. Such information will be treated confidentially and in accordance with

**Welshpool Town Council's Data Protection Policy.**

An alternative contact is available to employees experiencing issues should they not feel comfortable discussing their problems with their line manager, (particularly if they are male). This is the Town Clerk in the first instance, or any other line manager. Employees may also prefer to discuss their problems with a trade union representative.

Managers should make allowances should there be an additional need for sickness absence by employees experiencing issues relating to their menstrual cycle in order to manage their symptoms and/or conditions.

Absence will be recorded as related to their menstrual related health condition or symptoms and managers will consider such absence as an ongoing condition requiring the consideration of reasonable adjustments and flexibility in absence procedure triggers.

Welshpool Town Council recognises the potential impact of a menstrual cycle on performance by employees. Managers will seek to support staff sympathetically rather than moving directly to capability or disciplinary procedures

Welshpool Town Council will ensure that gender sensitive risk assessments are undertaken when requested to consider the specific needs of employees and to ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. The risk assessment will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments that may be required.

**Common areas in particular to consider are:**

- i) workplace temperature and ventilation
- ii) access to adequate toilet and washing facilities
- iii) access to drinking water
- iv) uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- v) working times and break times
- vi) workplace stress and workload
- vii) bullying and harassment.

**Employees who are experiencing the issues relating to their menstrual cycle can apply for the following adjustments to support them at work:**

- i) Control over environmental factors – with provision of desk fans on request, review of office seating plans so that affected employees can be near the window or open doors, or away from direct sources of heat such as radiators, fitting blinds to windows, greater access to chilled drinking water, and to toilets and washing facilities
- ii) Where uniforms are provided, to use natural fibres wherever possible
- iii) Flexibility over uniform and dress codes should they exacerbate symptoms such as hot flushes and sweating, and provision of additional spare uniforms
- iv) Changing/washing facilities for staff to change clothes during the working day
- v) For employees who are required to drive as part of their usual work pattern, duration of travel to be reduced and increased rest breaks provided.
- vi) Flexible working arrangements including options for flexitime (to work around symptoms or adjusting start and finish times for example), shift-swapping, and homeworking etc.
- vii) Flexibility around the taking of breaks, or increased breaks during the working day, and if required providing cover as necessary for these breaks
- viii) Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments
- ix) Temporary changes to the employee's duties, such as undertaking fewer high-visibility work like formal presentations or meetings or on reception because it can be difficult to cope with symptoms such as hot flushes or assessing how work is allocated or whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day.
- x) Provision of private spaces for women to rest temporarily, to talk with a colleague or to phone for personal or professional support.

This is not a definitive list of adjustments. Welshpool Town Council, will consider additional suggestions put forward by members of staff, as required.

Welshpool Town Council will provide temporary staff cover wherever possible, where there is a lengthy absence related to menstrual cycle symptoms.

## **Responsibilities of Managers**

Managers should ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and understand their own and the employer's responsibilities. Training on women's health issues including around issues relating to the menstrual will be

provided to all managers. This will also include any specific issues for Black women, disabled women and trans employees.

Managers should encourage employees to discuss the impact of their symptoms on their work-life and encourage them to access the support and adjustments offered. They should promote a positive attitude to discussions around women's health issues. Wellbeing services are to be offered when required and judged to be appropriate.

Managers should be ready and willing to have open discussions about the menstrual cycle, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treat the discussion sensitively, confidentially, and professionally.

Managers will consider all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and will not discriminate against those employees who are experiencing issues and put in place the required support or adjustments in a timely manner. All employees must be treated fairly and consistently. Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up any support available to employees experiencing issues.

Welshpool Town Council will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.

All requests for support or adjustments must be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the data protection policy.

Managers will support employees in informing their colleagues about the situation if appropriate.

## **Responsibilities of employees**

All staff should take a personal responsibility to look after their health.

Employees are encouraged to inform their manager (or the alternative contact, should they not feel comfortable speaking to their manager) if they are experiencing menstrual cycle related symptoms that may

impact on their work and need any support, such as gender sensitive risk assessments or workplace wellbeing programmes, so that they can continue to be effective in their jobs.

All staff have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and productive working environment, be willing to help and support their colleagues, and understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of any menstrual cycle related symptoms.

Employees should report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to their menstrual cycle.

If an employee is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another employee in relation to their menstrual cycle, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence

### **Review and monitoring**

Welshpool Town Council will ensure that all new employees, supervisors and managers will receive induction on the policy.

Adequate resources will be made available to fulfil the aims of this policy. The policy will be widely promoted, and copies will be freely available and displayed in Welshpool Council's offices and through the staff shared drive.

This policy will be reviewed by management, in consultation with staff, on a regular basis.

The purpose of this monitoring and review is to identify where reasonable adjustments can be made to working conditions, practices and policies in order to make this policy effective.