



## Clergy Menopause Policy

### Diocese of Chichester

<b>Policy Approver(s)</b>	Bishop's Council
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Clergy HR Officer
<b>Approved date</b>	5 December 2024
<b>Next review date</b>	December 2027
<b>Scope</b>	<p>This policy applies to all current and new office holders of the Diocese of Chichester, including all persons beneficed, licensed or otherwise authorised by the Bishop for ministry in the Diocese of Chichester. This includes all clergy holding office under Common Tenure, Qualified Common Tenure and Freehold and applies equally to a Cathedral Clergy, Rural Deans, Archdeacons and Bishops.</p> <p>This Policy does not apply to employees of parishes, but we encourage each parish to develop their own policy for menopause support as part of their employee handbook.</p> <p>The Diocese of Chichester reserves the right to amend this policy at its discretion at any time.</p>

## **1. Introduction**

The Diocese of Chichester is committed to ensuring that all office holders are treated fairly with dignity and respect in the workplace and to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all.

We recognise that every experience of the menopause is different and not every woman will experience menopausal symptoms. Women experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and may need to make adjustments to their working patterns or conditions.

Throughout this policy we refer to women in relation to the menopause. However, we acknowledge that people who are non-binary, transgender or intersex, may also experience menopausal symptoms. This policy therefore equally applies to anyone who experiences the menopause.

## **2. Policy Statement**

This policy aims to:

- Allow all office holders experiencing the menopause to feel supported in their role and enable them to continue performing their roles effectively.
- Increase awareness of available support and resources, encouraging office holders to identify and implement reasonable adjustments that help them carry out their duties while maintaining their well-being.
- Educate all office holders to the possible impact of the Menopause so that they can better understand how to support and empathise with those going through the Menopause.
- Reflect the Diocese of Chichester's commitment to equality and diversity by providing a safe space to have open conversations about the impact of the menopause, breaking down the taboo and protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of all our office holders experiencing the menopause.
- Underline the importance of confidentiality and privacy regarding all matters relating to an office holder's menopause. Any support and/or adjustments will be dealt with sensitively, in confidence and in accordance with the Diocese of Chichester data protection policy.

This policy does not form part of the Statement of Particulars, and it may be amended at any time. It may change because of amendments in the law.

This policy is effective from 5 December 2024 and shall not apply to any actions that occurred prior to this date.

## **3. Who is Covered by the Policy**

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

This Policy does not apply to employees of parishes, but we encourage each parish to develop their own policy for menopause support as part of their employee handbook.

## **4. Legislative Recommendations**

The majority of clergy in the Church of England hold their Ecclesiastical office under Common Tenure. This is part of a framework of terms of service that provides clergy, who are not subject to employment law, certain legal rights and obligations. Whilst Clergy office holders are not subject to the following legislations, the Bishop and the diocese have a duty of care.

- The *Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)* requires organisations to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers, including specific risks to menopausal women.
- The *Equality Act (2010)* prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain ‘protected characteristics’ including sex, age and disability. In some cases, conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an ‘impairment’ or ‘disability’ under the Equality Act. Women experiencing menopause symptoms may also be protected from [direct and indirect discrimination](#), as well as [harassment and victimisation](#), on the grounds of age and sex. For more information on Menopause and the Equality act, watch this [video](#).<sup>1</sup>

## 5. What is the Menopause?

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women’s lives, usually occurring between 45 and 55 years of age with the average age in the UK at 51. It is marked by changes in hormones and when a woman stops having periods.

Women may have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms whilst experiencing the menopause and may often encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms. A study of [Menopause in the Workplace](#) shows that 94% of menopausal women have experienced at least some symptoms at work and according to a [report](#) by the DWP, 84% of people who are unsupported said their menopause symptoms have a mostly negative effect on them at work, compared with 71% who are supported. Each woman will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues as well.

There are differences in biological and hormonal changes in women of different races and ethnicity. There are also often significant differences among women’s perceptions, attitudes and expectations surrounding menopause, and this is hugely influenced by their race, culture and ethnicity.<sup>2</sup>

Disabled women and those with pre-existing health conditions, may find that the menopause can aggravate their existing impairments and health conditions or even trigger new ones. Menopausal symptoms can in turn also be made worse by the disabled woman’s impairment or health condition.

Menopausal symptoms may include:

- Hot flushes
- Heavy and painful periods and clots
- Night sweats, restless leg syndrome and sleep disturbance
- Low mood & anxiety
- Fatigue
- Poor concentration
- Loss of confidence
- Memory problems and/or brain fog
- Urinary problems
- Irritated skin
- Joint and muscle aches and stiffness
- Weight gain
- Headaches and migraines
- Hair loss

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<sup>1</sup> This video refers to employers and employees. Clergy are office holders but may still find this helpful information.

<sup>2</sup> Prasad, S. (2023) *Menopause in ethnic minority women*, <https://thebms.org.uk>. Available at: <https://thebms.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/20-BMS-TfC-Menopause-in-ethnic-minority-women-JUNE2023-A.pdf>

- Increased risk of osteoporosis
- Side effects from hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
- Exacerbation of existing impairments and conditions

## 6. Roles and responsibilities

The Diocese of Chichester is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and will work under [the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing](#) to take positive action to support our clergy experiencing the menopause so that the whole Church may flourish in the service of the mission of God.

### The Diocese of Chichester will:

- Provide as much support for office holders as is reasonably practicable and ensure Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Deans and Archdeacons support office holders sympathetically.
- Ensure any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation relating to the menopause are taken seriously and investigated appropriately using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.
- Ensure all policies and procedures take account of the effects of the menopausal symptoms so any office holders experiencing the menopause are not disadvantaged because of their symptoms.
- Recognise the potential impact of menopausal symptoms on performance or absence by Clergy experiencing the menopause. The diocese will seek to support clergy sympathetically and be supportive should there be a need for reasonable additional sickness absence in order to manage their menopausal symptoms.
- Encourage clergy experiencing the menopause to contact the [Dean of Women's Ministry](#) should they not feel comfortable discussing their problems with their Bishop, Archdeacon or Incumbent.

### Office holders are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility for looking after their health, work-life balance and wellbeing, including taking note of the good practice and guidance in the [Clergy Wellbeing Handbook](#).
- Contributing to a respectful, open and honest ministerial environment and culture; being willing to help and support colleagues and understand any necessary adjustments a colleague may put in place because of their menopausal symptoms.
- Informing their Clergy in posts of responsibility, Bishop, Archdeacon or Rural Dean (or the Dean of Women's Ministry or Clergy HR Officer) if they are struggling with menopausal symptoms that may impact on their ministry, so that appropriate support can be provided to enable them to continue to be effective in their roles.
- Reporting any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause. If an office holder is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another office holder in relation to the menopause, this will be considered a disciplinary offence.

## 8. Self-management and Reasonable Adjustments for Office Holders Experiencing Menopause

Office holders experiencing menopausal symptoms are encouraged not to suffer in silence. Office holders have a responsibility for maintaining their own health and wellbeing. However, when the 'workplace' is also the home and boundaries between ministerial life and personal life are often blurred, it is important to make time for self-care and a healthy work/life balance.

Office holders experiencing menopause are advised to consider:

- Seeking medical advice from a GP or other relevant health care professional.
- The ministerial environment including temperature and ventilation.
- Access to adequate toilets, sanitary provision and washing/changing facilities.
- Access to drinking water
- Eating healthily and regularly
- Regular exercise
- Adequate working times, break times, rest periods and annual leave
- Workload and work patterns
- Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments
- Temporary changes to the office holders' duties
- Provision of private spaces for women to rest temporarily, to talk with a colleague or to phone for personal or professional support.
- Access to Occupational Health Assessment if required through the diocesan Occupational Health scheme with Thrive Worldwide.

This list is not exhaustive. Pastoral support is available first and foremost from the Bishops and Archdeacons for any of our clergy suffering in body, mind or spirit. Further support is available through the Head of Wellbeing for Clergy and Families, Dean of Women's Ministry or Clergy HR Officer if adjustments have not been successful, or symptoms have proven to be more problematic to manage than anticipated. Any further support will be discussed with the office holder and their Archdeacon and/or Bishop, and they will be able to review the advice received and implement the recommendations, where reasonably practicable.

## 9. Flexible Working Patterns

Flexible working, as it is understood in the employment context, does not apply to office holders. [The Ecclesiastical Offices \(Terms of Service\) Directions 2010](#) currently confer a legal entitlement on office holders to make requests to take time off or adjust the duties of the office to care for a dependant, but not for other reasons. When the right to request flexible working was extended to all employees, the view was taken that it was not appropriate to extend it to office holders, as they already had sufficient flexibility.

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. 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.

## 10. Further Guidance and Information

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

- [British Menopause Society \(BSM\)](#)
- [Daisy Network](#)
- [NICE guidelines on 'Menopause: diagnosis and treatment'](#):
- [The Menopause Exchange](#)
- [NHS information](#): advice regarding symptoms, things you can do, treatment and help & support