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## **SHERWOOD FOREST HOSPITAL FOUNDATION TRUST**

### IMPROVING MENOPAUSE SUPPORT FOR STAFF IN SHERWOOD FOREST HOSPITAL FOUNDATION TRUST

#### OVERVIEW

Senior nurses at Sherwood Forest Hospital Foundation Trust (SFHFT) recognised that staff sickness absences were often related to menopause symptoms. The trust committed to developing and implementing a menopause strategy so that all staff going through the menopause were supported.

#### THE CHALLENGE

After an ITV survey showed that 25 per cent of women have considered quitting work due to menopause symptoms and with staff retention being a key focus for SFHFT, it became obvious that the trust needed to do something to care for their staff and help them stay at work for longer.

With women making up 81 per cent of the trusts permanent workforce, and with 35 per cent of those over the age of 50 years<sup>1</sup>, it was obvious to the trust that supporting women experiencing the menopause was one way to have a happier and healthier workforce.

#### WHAT THE ORGANISATION DID

In January 2018 Suzanne Banks, chief nurse at SFHFT contacted Deborah Garlick, founder of Henpicked, a community for women over age 40, to ask if they would share their expertise to support the trust in their journey to create a more supportive environment for women going through menopause.

Suzanne then set up a project team including human resources, occupational health, clinicians working in gynaecology and sexual health, communications and trade union colleagues. The team created a menopause project plan and held bi monthly project group meetings. The plan included making links with experts including Professor Jo Brewis, co-

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<sup>1</sup> In the UK the average age for a woman to go through menopause is 51, with some women experiencing it before the age of 40

author of the evidence-based research report, *The effects of menopause transition on women's economic participation in the UK*.

A significant programme of work is now underway in the trust. Professor Jo Brewis has started a research intervention study with the trust led by the University of Leicester, working with the University of Bristol and the Open University looking at the impact of menopause support. This is a 12-month study which will follow a cohort of women in the trust and will include staff surveys and interviews. The findings will inform improvements within the trust and make a valuable contribution to national academic research on the subject.

Suzanne and her project team planned the trusts first menopause conference on World Menopause Day 2018 which launched guidelines, leaflets and intranet support for staff. The first part of the conference focused on line managers and how they can become better informed to confidently support staff. The second half of the conference was aimed at all colleagues and showcased what advice and support was available to them.

The trust is using their learning from Henpicked, the research intervention study and expertise from menopause clinical colleagues to develop an action plan to educate line managers on the menopause.

## RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- The trust has held two sold out menopause conferences.
- A live BBC East Midlands interview took place at the first conference to demonstrate the importance of this work.
- The trust continues to raise awareness both internally and externally through their chief nurse bulletins, communications bulletin, word of mouth and social media.
- The trust now has menopause books available in the library sponsored by trade union colleagues.
- Going forward the trust will host monthly menopause themed support groups with 20 to 30 attendees representing all professional groups in the trust.
- Occupational health, health practitioners and physios have now changed their practices to consider menopause when reviewing a referral.
- Referrals into occupational health now include menopause and stress/anxiety, and the age of a female staff member is considered at triage to give staff the correct support.
- sickness reviews now include menopause where applicable. It is too early to see any change in sickness absence statistics however equally important is a shift in culture with the trust looking at the true reason for sickness as opposed to symptom reasons.

## TAKE-AWAY TIPS

1. Understand your workforce profile and age profile in each division.
2. It's very important to get executive buy in and sponsorship because it helps to implement a cultural change.
3. Use this shift as a retention strategy to retain your most experienced and skilled workforce.
4. Make use of your feedback. SFHFT use feedback from conferences to inform their monthly support groups.
5. Consider the environmental changes that will be needed from both clinical and non-clinical perspective. For example, provide seating next to windows, fans, access to water stations/bottled water and changing facilities.
6. Consider other practical changes such as changing the fabric of uniforms to a cooler cotton base.
7. Keep talking about menopause to overcome the taboo.

## Further information

For more information about the work in this case study, contact Suzanne Banks, Chief Nurse, Sherwood Forest Hospital Foundation Trust.

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For more information about Henpicked

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Ring: 01158243234

Twitter: [@T4W\\_Henpicked](https://twitter.com/T4W_Henpicked)



HENPICKED

Menopause in the Workplace