

CLERGY WORK-LIFE BALANCE

MENOPAUSE POLICY

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Policy Owner(s)	Bishop of Crediton Diocesan Director of People Services
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Extensions	None
Exclusions	None

Menopause Policy

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1. Who is Covered by the Policy

This policy is intended to apply to those persons who are licensed or otherwise authorised by the Bishop for ministry in the Diocese of Exeter, including (but not limited to):

- ordained or lay people;
- those in receipt of a stipend or who are self-supporting;
- those who work in non-beneficed environments such as schools, hospitals or prisons;
- those who have Permission to Officiate;
- those who work in the Cathedral, are Archdeacons or Bishops; or
- those who work for the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd as an ordained employee.

Throughout this policy the words “**woman**” and “**women**” have been used as it recognises that this policy applies primarily to those who are women and identify as such. It equally includes those people who are non-binary, trans or have undergone gender reassignment treatment for whom their original gender may no longer be appropriate, but who may still experience the effects of the menopause. The use of the words women and woman are intended to be inclusive for all individuals who experience the menopause.

2. Policy Statement

Every experience of the menopause is unique and not every woman¹ will experience menopausal symptoms. Menopause can also affect individuals who may not identify as female, such as trans and non-binary people. However, some individuals experiencing menopause and its symptoms, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change, may need additional support and adjustments to their working patterns or conditions.

Given the diversity of personal and professional circumstances, this Menopause Policy aims to foster an environment and culture of understanding and support for those who are experiencing menopause. We want everyone to feel confident about raising issues related to their symptoms and requesting reasonable adjustments to their roles and duties.

This Policy reflects the Diocese of Exeter’s commitment to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all its people and promoting equality and diversity within our

¹ This document equally applies to anyone who experiences the menopause

ministerial environment and culture, and is supported by the EDBF's Menopause Action Plan

This Policy aims to:

- Enable those who are experiencing menopause to continue to be effective and feel supported in their role, reducing or preventing absenteeism and the stress of managing menopausal symptoms.
- Help Clergy in positions of responsibility², Rural Deans and Archdeacons or those to whom clergy are accountable, to understand how menopause can affect women and how they can offer support.
- Raise awareness amongst women of their rights and responsibilities regarding menopause and any related symptoms.
- Foster an environment in which women can comfortably discuss menopause in a respectful and supportive manner.
- Ensure that any matters related to a woman's menopause and requests for support are handled sensitively and confidentially, in accordance with the Diocese of Exeter Data Protection Policy.
- Offer assurance that women will not be subject to any disadvantage for seeking support or requesting changes to their work patterns or duties.
- Encourage women to speak to the Dean of Women in Ministry, a member of the EDBF People Services team or another appropriate person if they are uncomfortable discussing menopausal experiences with those to whom they are accountable.
- Reassure women that a 'need to know' only approach will be taken, minimising the number of people who are informed about their situation.
- Highlight the importance of confidentiality and privacy in all related discussions and support provisions.
- Ensure women are aware that they can request the support of a companion office holder during any meetings with church officers.
- Raise wider awareness and understanding among all office holders about menopause.
- Outline the support and reasonable adjustments available.
- Help the Diocese of Exeter be recognised for fostering a supportive ministerial environment, aiding the recruitment and retention of those experiencing menopause.

Please note: Women who prefer not to discuss their menopause with those to whom they are accountable may be asked to share some information with their Rural Dean or Archdeacon to ensure appropriate support.

It may be a challenge for any woman experiencing menopause to discuss the practical support they need to perform their duties with other church officers. Depending upon

² For example Training Incumbent, Team Rector

their specific needs it may be necessary to inform and involve other church officers. When this is the case and with the woman's permission, the relevant Clergy, Rural Dean or Archdeacon will sensitively communicate the personal nature of the issues and guide other church officers in how to respond to requests for support and adjustments. If an individual requires some support during meetings with church officers they can request the assistance of a companion office holder.

If women are unsure about their rights they are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their Archdeacon or those to whom they are accountable, the Dean of Women in Ministry or a member of the EDBF People Services team.

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

This policy is effective from 1 June 2026 and shall not apply to any actions that occurred prior to this date.

3. What is the Menopause?

According to the NHS, menopause occurs when periods have stopped for over 12 months due to lower hormone levels. Most individuals experience menopause between the ages of 45 and 55 although some may start experiencing symptoms much earlier. Symptoms often last between four to eight years, but they can continue for longer. The NHS notes that six out of 10 women experiencing menopausal symptoms say it negatively impacts their work.

4. Definitions

Menopause: When periods stop due to lower hormone levels, usually between the ages of 45 and 55 but can be earlier or later.

Premature menopause: Menopause occurs under the age of 40 and is sometimes called premature ovarian insufficiency (POI).

Medical or surgical menopause: There are some medical circumstances that will create an immediate menopause, whatever the person's age, such as a medically induced menopause to shrink fibroids or when the ovaries are damaged by specific interventions such as treatment for cancer, or when a person's ovaries are removed as part of a hysterectomy.

Perimenopause: The transitional period before menopause where symptoms begin and periods may become irregular, continuing 12 months after the final period.

Post-menopause: This is the time after menopause (12 consecutive months without a period). However other menopausal symptoms may not have ended so soon and may require continued support. Problematic symptoms may continue for years.

5. Menopausal symptoms

Menopausal symptoms can be psychological (e.g. anxiety, mood swings and memory problems) or physical (e.g. hot flushes, sleep disturbance and headaches). The severity and duration of symptoms vary greatly among individuals .

Menopause is preceded by perimenopause, during which periods continue but the body prepares itself for menopause. Perimenopause can also last several years and can involve similar symptoms to menopause itself. For the purpose of this policy, any reference to menopause includes perimenopause.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Deans and Archdeacons (with the support of the Dean of Women in Ministry and the EDBF People team where requested) are responsible for:

- Ensuring all women for whom they have responsibility are aware of this policy.
- Encouraging appropriate discussions about menopause when raised by women.
- Knowing how to enable access the support available and the adjustments that can be offered.
- Respecting the personal and sensitive nature of any conversations about menopause and ensuring any discussions or requests for support or adjustments are held in confidence and conducted in a professional manner, all in accordance with the Diocese of Exeter data protection policy.
- Considering all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and not discriminating against those women who are experiencing menopause and putting in place the required support or adjustments in a timely manner.
- Ensuring a 'need to know' only approach is taken, keeping to an absolute minimum the number of people who are informed or involved in discussions and ensuring appropriate consent is obtained from women for third party discussions.

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- Encouraging women to make use of the support of a companion office holder during any meetings with church officers and helping the woman identify a willing and competent companion.
 - Signposting women to the Pastoral Support provided by the Diocese of Exeter (outlined in the Clergy Wellbeing Handbook) including the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service.
 - Recording in writing any substantial adjustments to a woman's working patterns or changes to the performing of their duties; ensuring an ongoing dialogue between themselves and the woman and any key church officers; ensuring all agreed adjustments are implemented.
 - Highlighting the need for confidentiality to be maintained throughout the support process.

The Diocese of Exeter is responsible for:

- Providing appropriate information to help all clergy and lay workers understand menopause.
- Ensuring complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation relating to menopause are taken seriously and investigated appropriately using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.
- Reviewing policies to avoid disadvantaging women experiencing the menopause because of their symptoms.
- Offering further support if adjustments are insufficient, or symptoms have proven to be more problematic to manage than anticipated. Any further support will be discussed with the woman and they will be able to review the advice received and implement the recommendations where reasonably practicable.
- Providing guidance and support to parishes when parish representatives (Church Wardens, PCC members etc.) are negotiating any significant changes and adjustments to an individual's work patterns and the performing of their duties.

The Dean of Women in Ministry (or the EDBF People Services team) is responsible for:

- Being a first point of contact for women wanting to talk in confidence about their menopausal experience and symptoms when the woman does not wish to talk to their Rural Dean or Archdeacon or Clergy in posts of responsibility.
- Offering guidance to the woman as to potential courses of action to take
- Holding all conversations in confidence and maintaining the privacy of the woman.

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- Providing the woman with an alternative contact for discussing their menopausal experience and/or a willing and competent companion to attend any meetings with church officers.

Individual Women are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility for 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 and supportive ministerial environment and culture; being willing to help and support colleagues and understand any necessary adjustments a colleague may receive because of their menopausal symptoms.
- Informing their Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Dean or Archdeacon (or the Dean of Women in Ministry or People Services team) 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.
- Seeking any appropriate support through their GP, the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service or any other external organisations (see Sections 8 and 9 below).
- Informing their Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Dean or Archdeacon if/when their need for any adjustment changes.
- Reporting any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to menopause. If anyone is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against a woman in relation to the menopause, this will be considered a disciplinary offence.

7. Support and Reasonable Adjustments for Office Holders Experiencing Menopause

The Diocese of Exeter is committed to providing pastoral support and recognising the unique experiences of women going through menopause. Our aim is to create a compassionate understanding environment for all office holders.

Key Aims:

- Comprehensive Support – Offer as extensive support to women as is reasonably practicable ensuring Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Deans and Archdeacons approach these matters with sympathy and understanding.
- Alternative Contacts – Provide an alternative contact for women who may not feel comfortable discussing menopause-related issues with their immediate Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Dean or Archdeacon. In such cases please contact the Dean of Women's Ministry or a member of the People Services team.

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- Allowance for Sickness Absence – Ensure the Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Deans and Archdeacons allow for sickness absence if needed by the woman experiencing menopausal symptoms. Menopause will be considered as an ongoing condition that requires reasonable adjustments and flexibility in absence procedures.
 - Further details can be found in the ***Clergy Handbook – Terms and Conditions of Service, Chapter 4.***
 - The obligations and rights for office holders unable to perform their duties due to sickness are set out in Regulations 27 and 28 of ***The Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009.***
 - Refer to the ***Clergy Handbook – Terms and Conditions of Service Chapter 8.2*** for support during sickness absence.

Assessments for Reasonable Adjustments

Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Deans and Archdeacons may need to consider reasonable adjustments for roles that are home or office based. It is important to note that many clergy and lay worker roles take place in diverse environments, not always within their power to adjust. Key considerations (where practicable) include:

- **Environmental Control:**
 - Ensure appropriate temperature and ventilation.
 - Access to adequate toilets, sanitary provisions and washing/changing facilities.
 - Access to drinking water.
 - Adequate working times and break times.
 - Manageable workload and work patterns
 - Addressing any instance of bullying and harassment.

While many who experience menopause continue work lives as normal, we recognise that some may benefit from adjustments to their working conditions to alleviate the impact of menopause symptoms. Women experiencing menopausal symptoms can request adjustments to support them in their workplace (excluding their provided accommodation by the Diocese). Possible adjustments include:

- **Control Over Environmental Factors** – Provision of desk fans on request, adjusting office layout to be near the window or open doors or away from direct sources of heat such as radiators and fitting blinds to windows.
- **Medical Appointments** – Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments.

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- **Temporary Duty Changes** –Undertaking fewer high-visibility activities, such as holding services to cope with symptoms such as hot flushes. This may have limited scope but should be explored where possible.
 - **Flexible Working Times** – Adjusting working times if symptoms are particularly at certain times of the day while recognising the rigidity in clergy and lay worker schedules due to service timings.

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 (see paragraphs 20 -32). When the right to request flexible working was extended to all employees, it was deemed unnecessary for office holders due to their inherent flexibility.

Depending on the severity of the woman’s menopausal symptoms and the necessary changes needed to manage these symptoms other church officers may need to be informed or included in any discussions. This may include church wardens, PCC members, church workers and official volunteers. Every effort will be made by the Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Dean, or Archdeacon to handle this process as tactfully and sensitively as possible.

8. Self-management for Office Holders Experiencing the Menopause

Women experiencing menopausal symptoms are encouraged not to suffer in silence. Taking proactive steps can greatly alleviate the impact of these symptoms. They are encouraged to consider the following:

- **Seek Medical Advice** – Consult a GP or other relevant health care professional for appropriate medical guidance and support.
- **Open Dialogue** – Discuss symptoms with Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Dean, Archdeacon (or Dean of Women in Ministry or the People Services team). Request adjustments to the ministerial environment or work pattern as needed.
- **Personal Strategies** – Reflect on and implement personal strategies that might help manage symptoms. Useful resources and information include:
 - Maintaining a balanced diet and staying hydrated.
 - Incorporating regular exercise into your routine.

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- Practicing relaxation techniques such as meditation or deep-breathing exercises.
 - Keeping a symptom diary to track patterns and triggers, which can aid in managing symptoms more effectively.

9. Further Guidance and Information

- British Menopause Society (BMS): www.thebms.org.uk/
- Daisy Network: www.daisynetwork.org
- Menopause Matters: www.menopausematters.co.uk
- NHS information: www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause
www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause
- NICE guidelines on 'Menopause: diagnosis and treatment': <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23>
- The Menopause Exchange: www.menopause-exchange.co.uk
- Women's Health Concern: www.womens-health-concern.org

APPENDIX A

Guidance to facilitate discussions between Women and Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Dean or Archdeacon (or alternative contact).

Each person's experience of menopause is unique and some people may not initially recognise that they are going through the perimenopause or menopause. This guidance aims to support and inform conversations in the following scenarios:

- When a woman wishes to discuss their symptoms.
- When a woman just wants to talk about how they are feeling or what they are experiencing even if they do not identify these experiences as symptoms.

To facilitate these discussions:

- **Create a Supportive Environment:**
 - Ensure the conversation takes place in a private, comfortable setting.
 - Approach the discussion with empathy and understanding, recognising the sensitivity of the topic.
- **Active Listening:**
 - Listen without interrupting, allowing the woman to share their experiences fully.
 - Acknowledge their feelings and experiences without judgement.
- **Provide Information and Resources:**
 - Share relevant information about menopause, including symptoms and potential impacts on work.
 - Offer resources such as contact information for the Dean of Women's Ministry or the People Services team.
- **Discuss Possible Adjustments:**
 - Explore potential adjustments to their ministerial environment or work patterns that could help manage their symptoms.
 - Be open to suggestions from the office holder about what might work best for them.
- **Follow Up:**
 - Arrange a follow-up meeting to review any adjustments made and address any ongoing concerns.

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- Ensure ongoing support is available and that the woman knows who to contact for further assistance.

Things for the Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Dean or Archdeacon to Do:

- ☑ **Allow Adequate Time** – Ensure you have enough time to have a meaningful conversation without rushing.
- ☑ **Private and Comfortable Setting** – Find a suitable, comfortable and private space to the discussion.
- ☑ **Encourage Openness** – Encourage the woman to speak openly and honestly about their experiences and needs.
- ☑ **Discuss Support Options** – Talk about ways in which the woman can be supported and what adjustments are necessary.
- ☑ **Agree Actions** – Agree specific actions to be taken and how to implement them.
- ☑ **Maintain Confidentiality** – Ensure that any records are treated as confidential and are stored securely.
- ☑ **Communication** – Agree if and how other members of the team or colleagues should be informed and by whom.
- ☑ **Follow-up Meetings** – Schedule a follow-up meeting to review progress and address any ongoing concerns. Avoid relying on quick queries during chance encounters or other meetings.

Things for the Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Dean or Archdeacon Avoid:

- ☑ **Do Not Raise Menopause First** – Avoid bringing up the menopause or using the term unless the woman does so first.
- ☑ **Avoid Negative Reactions** – Do not belittle, judge or joke about the woman's symptoms or feelings.

Support for Women

- Clergy in posts of responsibility, Rural Deans and Archdeacons are not expected to have medical expertise about menopause. However, they can provide support by making small practical adjustments to help alleviate symptoms.
- **Specific Symptom Support**

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- **Low Mood / Mood Swings** – Encourage women to use of one of the **Pastoral Support services**, including the Churches’ Ministerial Counselling Service (CMCS). For CMCS - Contact Graham Exon on 07867009740.
 - **Anxiety:**
 - Encourage the woman to make use of available Pastoral Support.
 - Allow time away from work for relaxation techniques.
 - Support activities such as breathing exercises or physical activities such as walking.
 - Be mindful of how your own management style might impact their anxiety levels, e.g. avoid last-minute scheduling, ensure effective communication, and timely information sharing.
 - **Panic Attacks:**
 - Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission.
 - Allow time away from work to undertake relaxation techniques.
 - Encourage calming activities such as breathing exercises or walking.

Finally, and more generally:

- **GP Visits** – Discuss whether they have visited their GP. This might be the next step particularly if they are experiencing difficulty in sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.
- **Occupational Health Referral** – Consider whether it may be helpful to refer specific issues to the People team who may be able to arrange for an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.
- **Pastoral Support Services** – Ensure they know about and can access details, of the Pastoral Support services.
- **Clergy Wellbeing Handbook** – Encourage them to read the Clergy Wellbeing Handbook which has a lot of useful information to help manage workload stress and other issues.
- **Wellbeing Activities** – Encourage participation in any wellbeing activities and to join any menopause network or group.
- **Trusted Colleague** – Discuss whether they have a trusted colleague to talk to informally and in confidence.

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- **Schedule Follow-Up** – Ensure you schedule a follow-up meeting to continue the support and review any adjustments.