

# MENOPAUSE IN THE WORKPLACE

Minutes



<b>Date</b>	Monday 21st March 2022
<b>Time</b>	15:00 – 15:45
<b>Venue</b>	Virtual meeting conducted via Zoom
<b>Chair</b>	<b>Jess Phillips MP</b>
<b>Speakers</b>	<b>Lynda Bailey</b> Co-founder and Director of Talking Menopause  <b>Nina Kuypers</b> Founder of Black Women in Menopause  <b>Steve Collinson</b> Head of HR at Zurich  <b>Deborah Garlick</b> CEO of Henpicked: Menopause in the Workplace.
<b>Theme/ Background information</b>	In this meeting, we will explore what companies are doing to support their workforce, and the current inquiry of the Women and Equalities Committee, which examines the extent of discrimination faced by menopausal people in the workplace and investigates how Government policy and workplace practices can better support those experiencing menopause.

## MINUTES

**Jess Philips MP** started the meeting thanking everyone for joining and welcoming all attendees. Jess explained that under the Equality Act 2010, menopause discrimination is largely covered under three protected characteristics: age, sex and disability discrimination. She noted that the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 provides for safe working, extending to working conditions when experiencing menopausal symptoms. Several calls have been made for further legislation to require employers to put in place a workplace menopause policy to protect women going through menopause against discrimination whilst at work.

Jess then thanked the APPG sponsors: Montessori Group, Barratt Developments, Vodafone, American Express, Association of British Insurers, Assystem, for supporting the APPG. (Sponsors: Montessori Group, Barratt Developments, Vodafone, American Express, Association of British Insurers, Assystem).

Jess introduced **Lynda Bailey**, the Co-founder and Director of Talking Menopause.

Lynda Bailey explained that she was a former police officer and worked with the police for 30 years. Lynda explained that when she experienced menopause, there was a big reluctance within her organisation to talk about it, hence her passion for wanting to open the conversation around menopause to all people. Talking Menopause has spoken to over 70 organisations and 5000 employees to understand the current situation around menopause in the workplace to inform their decisions on how they want to create the right support for people experiencing menopause and ensure everyone feels confident having conversations around menopause.

Lynda explained the importance of having everyone within an organisation confident to talk about menopause. She explained that the way to do this is to look at the culture within our organisations. Their survey suggests that up to 70% of people have moderate to no confidence talking about menopause in the workplace, but 81% of people surveyed said that these conversations positively impact their workplace performance. She explained that building understanding and awareness of menopause allows for the modification of medical support in the workplace, which in turn will improve performance and mental health.

Lynda explained that still in some organisations, people experiencing menopause are being called names or having detrimental compensation arrangements put in place. She explained the crucial need to have senior leadership teams involved in conversations around menopause so change happens from the top. Lynda noted that we should be asking senior management boards, if we are not menopause confident within our organisation, how are we truly diverse, as menopause sits fairly and squarely in diversity, inclusion and equality.

Lynda explained that the lack of knowledge around menopause contributes to gender inequality, the gender pay gap and to the lack of gender policies at the senior levels. She stated that Talking Menopause believes menopause should be a protected characteristic following pregnancy and maternity, which would help elevate medical help in organisations.

Jess thanked Lynda for her contribution to this vital conversation.

**Nina Kuypers**, Founder of Black Women in Menopause was welcome to the conversation.

Nina Kuypers began by explaining how conscious and unconscious bias plays out in nearly every workplace. For example, one of the strongest biases in the workplace is gender bias. Nina explained that the default for society, whether it be healthcare, equipment, or legislation is made for white males. Nina explained that she sees the workplace as being armed against women in many ways. For example, she explained that menopause is viewed as a nuisance at work, which drives women to not talk about menopause.

Nina noted that from her perspective as a black woman, she experiences invisibility across all areas of society, stressing how there is a lack of investigation and research where black women are not included. She explained that task forces and menopause education groups which are set up to address this discourse are not built on diverse and inclusive foundations which are representative. This lack of representation diminishes the importance of black women's experiences and leaves our understanding of menopause disjointed. This is why Nina set up Black Women in Menopause to challenge and disrupt the status quo, to change and educate. Black women in Menopause is a safe community to add concerns, share experiences and give us competence in this field.

Nina explained that when you are part of the dominant group, in this case, white, your whiteness and privilege prevent you from realising race plays a massive part in all conversations. She explained that black women face chronic stress as they navigate professional lives within a race

conscious society. Combining these issues with issues surrounding menopause adds another layer of bias, which can cause many issues, job insecurity to name just one.

Black women are not being factored into the conversation about menopause in workplaces and therefore there is a lack of education about different cultural experiences of menopause. This means that discussing menopause in the workplace is just another arena of racism where race and cultural background aren't taken into consideration.

Nina stated that it is abundantly clear that there needs to be more education and research conducted on black women's experiences of menopause, followed by accountable action plans being put in place. Understanding cultural differences effect people's experiences of menopause by having culturally competent conversations would offer new perspectives and areas of support to black women, and she noted that we all need to do better with this.

Nina was thanked for her powerful contribution to the conversation and for her time in the meeting.

Jess then introduced **Steve Collinson**, the Head of HR at Zurich.

Steve Collinson began by noting that Zurich has undergone many changes in the last few years based on the voice of employees to ensure everyone is valued in their workplace.

Steve noted that they have adopted a benefit and wellbeing for life stages approach, looking at family friendly policies and menopause policies.

Steve explained that as a firm they do not shy away from conversations around things such as menopause or equally around conversations on race, gender equality, sexuality, disability, as Zurich believe that when you open up the conversation employees notice that your initiative is to help them thrive, not just survive. Steve explained that Zurich has a proud history based on listening which can take many forms including consultation groups, discussion groups, employee networks, resource groups, engagement surveys, line managers calls to the HR hub and many others.

With regard to menopause employees were telling us we need to focus on women's Innovation Network, therefore Zurich embarked on a series of focus groups and studies with internal experts. Zurich listened to people with lived experience of menopause to use their energy to drive the organisation's determination to do better. Steve explained that through this work Zurich became aware that the needed action was largely around educating the wider population around menopause, as well as providing the right support for those who are experiencing menopause. From this, Steve noted how Zurich created a menopause policy that is highly visible in their organisation and externally. They also shared a manager toolkit which covered understandings of menopause to legislation around it. Zurich have also hosted learning sessions, helped by Henpicked to help their organisation upskill surrounding menopause. Steve explained that soon Zurich are launching an online learning resource to help ensure all have a basic understanding of menopause.

Steve noted that one of the most impactful things Zurich has done is give employees a voice to talk about menopause through a series of five social media stories. Steve explained that Zurich have put a lot of thought into their expert suppliers such as their health care provider Bupa, their employee assistance supply life works and their virtual GP provider Babylon, as these organisation have the clinical expertise that Zurich alone do not possess. Zurich have also upskilled on Mental Health First Aiders network. Steve finished by noting that they are aiming to make sure Zurich's approach inclusive, by being careful with language and ensuring LGBTQ+ colleagues find the resources accessible.

Jess thanked Steve for his important talk. Jess went onto introduce **Deborah Garlick**, CEO of Henpicked: Menopause in the Workplace.

Deborah Garlick started her talk by noting that there has been areas of progress surrounding menopause in the workplace. Deborah pointed out that when she began working with employers around responses to menopause, they struggled to find any menopause policies in the UK. Research by CIPD in 2018 suggested that now 1 in 10 employers has started to take action, which is good progress, however Deborah explained that we are not where we need to be. Deborah stated that this topic needs to progress to be a fully inclusive subject, especially listening to Nina's works today.

Deborah gave kudos to Boots because they've announced that they are going to be paying for all their colleagues HRT prescriptions and they will be running a training session on how other employees can do this too.

She finished her talk by stating that all employers must work for this cultural change, noting that it is beneficial to both employers and employees.

Jess thanked Deborah for her talk, noting how important this cultural change is. Deborah, Jess and Lynda had a short discussion around how HRT is not affordable, leaving many people experiencing menopause without it.

Jess then began the Q&A session by reading out a question from the chat asking why some products are not available on NHS prescriptions but accessible through private pharmacies?

Lynda explained that there are issues at the moment surrounding the supply of HRT, which is affecting what is available at pharmacies.

Jess read out another question from the chat asking Steve, what was the biggest obstacle that he faced from senior leadership?

Steve explained that the biggest challenge is talking to people who are uncomfortable with these conversations. To help this they have made some of their trainings mandatory so that leadership from the top, is talking about these issues. They also like to encourage employees to challenge their managers around these issues so there is this two way relationship. The important thing is making space for people to talk.

Jess then asked a question from the chat, that wondered how line managers can be developed to be more educated, supportive and open to sensitive conversations?

Nina explained the importance of having people you can resonate with, stating that representation is key. She explained that there wasn't a lot of representation with our audience today, and when having these conversations, this is key. Nina pointed out that cultural competent conversations are important so different perspectives can be understood. Nina explained that we need to move away from the assumption that we are all the same, as menopause is experienced differently by different groups of people. She explained that black people face discrimination in every area of their lives and this informs their experiences, not just in the workplace, but beyond. This can often mean that black people are less likely to approach their line managers around these issues.

Deborah explained how we need to move away from this taboo surrounding menopause. She noted that it is key we all see menopause as our issue not just a women's issue.

Lynda also noted the importance understanding how different groups experience menopause, talking about transgender people, non-binary and younger people. She explained that we need to treat everyone as a unique person when it comes to menopause to really find what they need.

Lynda also pointed out the importance of leaders speaking about topics such as menopause due to their responsibility to their organisation.

Jess drew the event to a close, thanking the speakers for their invaluable insights and time.

## Appendix

Discussions in the chat function:

From Sandi Rhys-Jones to Everyone 03:18 PM

- 'A very good piece from John Greenwood on LinkedIn today - very supportive.  
[\(https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6906983458527412224/?commentUrn=urn%3Aai%3Acomment%3A\(activity%3A6906983458527412224%2C6911687926389043200\)\)](https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6906983458527412224/?commentUrn=urn%3Aai%3Acomment%3A(activity%3A6906983458527412224%2C6911687926389043200))' (Sandi Rhys-Jones)
- '<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-10614229/Menopausal-women-forced-barter-50-bottles-HRT-BLACK-MARKET.html>' (Tamara Cincik)
- Q for Steve please! How do we encourage more employers to disconnect the requirement for a proven business case in order to do the right thing by their people? (Nicki Seignot)
- 'I am involved in research currently looking at understanding different ethnicities & experience of menopause. The differences are astounding in terms of experience, would a single reliable trust-source of information be helpful?' (Hannah)
- 'I am an Indian women but I sit on the Board at Buttress Architects.- My fellow Directors on the Board are white male but they are fully open to listening to my point of view so they can learn.- They support me to disseminate an inclusive message and implement inclusive initiatives throughout our studio.- I know that they are fully on board with me and that means a lot.' (Chithra Marsh)
- 'Why don't we have menopause ambassadors or first ideas if we can have mental health first aiders then why don't have them. We need to retain experienced talented women.' (Sally Penni)
- 'On the topic of 'business case': all things wellbeing and diversity related need to be elevated beyond an individual business case for each intervention; I often say to people, close Excel and open Google and do some research on the connection between wellbeing and employee engagement - that's where your business case lies.' (Steve Collinson)