

Press Release 8th May 2024

UK Government's Menopause Employment Champion to Talk About Supporting Menopausal Women in the Workplace

Helen Tomlinson is the Government's first-ever Menopause Employment Champion. Working alongside the Department for Work and Pensions, Helen helps employers develop policies that empower women who experience menopause to stay and progress in work. On Wednesday 29th May she will be in conversation with Adam Pavey, an expert on employment law and a leading voice on menopause discrimination in the workplace, at a webinar being held by the International Stress Management Association (ISMA^{UK}), moderated by Noami Dvir, an ISMA^{UK} trustee.

With close to four million women aged 45 to 55 employed in the UK and women over 50 representing a significant and growing percentage of the workforce, there are few workplaces where menopause is not being experienced by workers. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development¹ found that two thirds (67%) of working women between the ages of 40 and 60 with menopausal symptoms said they have had a mostly negative impact on them at work. Menopause can cause a wide range of physical and mental health symptoms, which can be unpredictable, difficult to manage, and debilitating.

In February the Equality and Human Rights Commission issued new guidance² stating that workers are protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of protected characteristics including disability, age and sex. If menopausal symptoms have a long-term and substantial impact on a woman's ability to carry out day-to-day activities, these symptoms could be considered a disability. Employers are therefore legally obliged to make 'reasonable adjustments' and are also obliged not to discriminate directly or indirectly because of disability. Under health & safety legislation, they also have a legal obligation to assess workplace risks.

In March, the Department of Work and Pensions and Helen Tomlinson produced a report, *Shattering the Silence About Menopause*, to open the dialogue, tackle the stigma, and increase awareness of menopause in the workplace. Helen said, "Because this is an issue everyone encounters, first-hand or via colleagues, families, and friends, it's essential that we break the taboo and provide support for women in the workplace. At ISMA^{UK}'s webinar, we will talk about future plans, including the development of a national allyship programme, to ensure no one is isolated and everyone has someone they can talk to".

Adam said, "My introduction to menopause cases came about when I was instructed by a menopausal woman who had been unfairly dismissed for poor performance. The case really got under my skin; I realised that I wasn't alone in my lack of understanding - her employer didn't understand it and, more significantly, the law didn't properly recognise it. I studied the subject intensely and found that this lack of awareness was damaging women. I saw women leaving employment who didn't need to. This led to me speaking to the national media on the subject and ultimately led to me appearing at the Women's Equality Select Committee on Menopause, giving evidence on the discrimination faced by women".

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Carole Spiers, Chair of ISMA^{UK}, said, “This is an extremely important topic and we are delighted to be hosting a debate involving two acknowledged experts on menopause in the workplace. This year, ISMA^{UK} marks 50 years raising the profile of stress and mental health issues – such as menopause - campaigning against the stigma associated with them, whilst promoting resilience and wellbeing. There can be nothing more important than creating a healthy workplace culture, where people feel safe in speaking up about stress and mental health issues: they shouldn’t feel they can’t talk about personal problems. Companies need to listen to and collaborate with their workforce, investing in their emotional, mental, physical and spiritual health, so that each of us can look forward to a healthier and more hopeful future.”

¹ <https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/reports/menopause-workplace-experiences/>

² <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/menopause-workplace-guidance-employers#>

Notes for Editors

- ***Shattering the Silence About Menopause: Tacking the Stigma and Increasing Awareness of Menopause in the Workplace***

For more information on ISMA^{UK}'s webinar on Wednesday 29th May from 19:30 – 20:30, go to <https://isma.org.uk/interactive-webinars>. Places may be booked in advance on <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/shattering-the-silence-about-menopause-tickets-891233181437>. ISMA^{UK} members attend free. Non-members are asked to pay £10.

- **Helen Tomlinson** is the Government’s first-ever Menopause Employment Champion. Working alongside the Department for Work and Pensions, Helen helps employers develop policies that empower women who experience menopause to stay and progress in work. Helen has advocated gender equity throughout her 30-year career in recruitment, employability, and commercial management. Helen has built a clearly defined strategy to support women’s health throughout their careers. Helen is also Head of Talent & Inclusion (UK and Ireland) for the Adecco Group, global leaders in HR solutions. Her pioneering podcast on menopause and work inspired Adecco to design and implement one of the UK’s first corporate menopause policies.
- **Adam Pavey** is a partner in the employment team at Beyond Corporate. He started his legal career at Rowlands in Manchester, always specialising in employment law, with a particular interest in discrimination. Adam acts mostly for companies but also brings cases on behalf of employees in tribunals and has acted for large international companies as well as representing doctors and nurses within the NHS. Through his work in the field of discrimination, he has become a leading voice on menopause discrimination within the workplace. Adam advises on HR issues as well as representing clients in employment tribunals and appeal courts.
- **The International Stress Management Association (ISMA^{UK})** has been the leading professional body for workplace and personal stress management, wellbeing and performance, promoting sound knowledge and best practice in stress management, resilience, wellbeing and mental health for 50 years, marking its 50th anniversary in 2024. ISMA^{UK} practitioners and consultants provide stress management services to individuals and businesses, assisting around 40,000 people who need professional help with stress-related

issues every year. ISMA^{UK} endorses and uses the HSE guidelines for managing stress in the workplace. To find out more about ISMA^{UK}, visit www.isma.org.uk.

- **Press Interviews**

For all press and media enquiries please contact Carole Spiers, Chair of ISMA^{UK}, for an immediate response on +44 (0) 77 688 78910 or at chair@isma.org.uk.