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Royal Mail Group New Menopause Guide Introduction – ‘Supporting Women at Work Through The Menopause:’

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

Further to LTB 610/17, I am pleased to announce that agreement has been reached between the Health, Safety and Environment Department and the Royal Mail Group Head of Health on the introduction of the first ever Royal Mail Group Menopause Guide for Managers entitled “Supporting Women At Work Through The Menopause.”

The New Guide goes live as of this month and sections cover:-

- What the Menopause is
- How does it affect people?
- How might it affect work?
- What do I need to do as a manager?
- Key points to consider when managing an employee who is going through the menopause
- Sources of information and guidance

The Guidance has been placed on the Royal Mail Group Health & Wellbeing pages of the Royal Mail Group intranet with Publicity in the following places:-

- Myroyalmail
- RM Bi-weekly
- Feeling First Class Focus
- Feeling First Class (FFC) website.

A copy of the Guide is attached.

Motions To CWU Conference

A number of Motions have been carried at CWU Conference in recent years calling for such guidance, i.e. Motion 93(2015), Motion 85(2013,) Motion 93(2012), Motion 100(2005).

Meetings With Subject Matter Experts

In the build-up and in preparation for the introduction of the guidance, meetings involving Royal Mail Group and the CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department took place with

Professor Amanda Griffiths of the Nottingham University School Of Medicine, who is an expert in the field of the Menopause and author of many research studies and guidance on the issue. In November 2016 the "Faculty of Occupational Medicine" produced guidance on menopause and the workplace, based on the largest study to date about menopause and work, conducted by Professor Amanda Griffiths. Professor Griffiths concluded that "It's good to see that menopause is increasingly being widely recognised as a potential problem and is no longer 'taboo'".

More awareness and some simple changes, many that women themselves have recommended, could make their working lives during this time much easier.' We also met with Jeremy Bevan HSE Head of the HSE Vulnerable Workers Team. Both experts endorsed the RMG/CWU approach.

Royal Mail Group "Managing Short Term Absence & Informal Absence Review Guide"

The CWU Health Safety and Environment Department pointed out that line managers need to be trained and informed in order to be aware of how the menopause can affect work and what adjustments may be necessary to support women who are experiencing the menopause. The Royal Mail Group "Managing Short Term Absence & Informal Absence Review Guide" has a new additional paragraph inserted which should help managers deal with absences relating to the menopause. The paragraph headed "Managing an employee's return to work" states – "Employees may find it difficult to discuss their health concerns particularly for conditions that are of a personal nature, such as irritable bowel syndrome, the menopause or gender related health issues. Managers should allow time and listen to the employee when having these conversations." The emphasis is on the manager to listen and understand that this is a condition to a certain age group of women where they may not be able to perform elements of their duty on a particular day but may be able to perform some other work within the office for example. This is a small but positive step, coupled with the fact that members can ask to be interviewed by someone of the same sex, and now combined with this new 'Menopause at Work' Guidance is a positive move in the right direction.

Latest Menopause Research Studies and Polls Including a Government Study

A 2017 research study, commissioned by the government into menopause support, conducted by the University of Leicester on 'the effects of menopause transition on women's economic participation in the UK' has outlined what the government can do to better support women going through transition. The research suggests that there should be more awareness raising campaigns for mid-life women; further advice to employers; training for medical and social care professionals so they are more aware of and sympathetic to the effects of menopause and more research. So let's hope that change is on its way to make employers generally more aware of the impact the menopause may have on their female workforce.

A 2018 "ComRes" poll looked at how the menopause affects women at work and in their relationships, and the treatments they found effective. (ComRes are the leading research consultancy specialising in Corporate Reputation) The main findings were:-

- 70% of working women didn't want to make their employers aware of their menopause symptoms.
- 48% felt that their mental health had suffered as a result of the menopause.
- 25% said that the menopause made them want to stay at home.

A 2018 published 'Wellbeing of Women (Charity)' study looking at how symptoms of menopause affect women's careers, conducted by King's College London, found women struggling with menopause symptoms. The study concluded that a simple self-help cognitive behavioural therapy programme, provided in short practical and accessible guidance on the subject and coping at work, would have a positive effect, helping to reduce the degree to which women felt their symptoms were causing them problems and improved the way in which

they felt they could discuss menopause in the work place, thus challenging the stereotypical belief that women in menopause are 'past it'. The study found many women suffering from these debilitating symptoms and feeling unsupported during the menopause with some dropping out of the work force. This natural process has been overlooked and considered a taboo for too long it concluded.

Findings from the studies:-

- In the UK there are 4.3 million women aged 50 and over in employment. By 2020 1 in 3 UK workers will be over 50. All female workers will go through the menopause. The average age of menopause for women in the UK is 51. Some begin in their early 40's and for others it can go on into their late 50's and beyond.
- 3 in 4 women experience menopause symptoms and 1 in 4 of these women experience severe physical or psychological symptoms.
- 4 out of 10 women haven't ever consulted their GP about symptoms of menopause.
- Employers should do more to provide support and better protect these women.

See attached 'Health and Menopause Focus Infographic.

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer