

# Why Menopause Action Plans matter

**Deborah Garlick, founder of Henpicked.net, provides a clear update on the truth about Menopause Action Plans and progress in the workplace. It's important all employers understand their responsibilities and requirements.**



□ Deborah Garlick



- **Menopause Action Plans are now explicitly recognised within the Employment Rights Act 2025 and the UK has taken a groundbreaking step.**



**F**or years, menopause at work was something whispered about, tolerated at best and amounting to discrimination at worst. Many organisations addressed the issue within their workplace by creating a policy and...well, that was it. No true engagement; no listening to their colleagues and, unsurprisingly, no change. Since Menopause in The Workplace by Henpicked came into being and took on the challenge of truly addressing this totally unacceptable situation by educating, training and working with a great many businesses, both large and small, we have seen and experienced a growing momentum for change. Today, we stand at a very different point in history. With Menopause Action Plans now explicitly recognised within the Employment Rights Act 2025, the UK has taken a groundbreaking step.

### **Employment Rights Act – and its effect**

It is the result of sustained advocacy, lived experience, robust evidence and employers choosing to lead rather than wait. Menopause support at work is no longer optional, discretionary or dependent on a progressive employer. It is being embedded into law and that matters.

We saw clear commitment in the Labour Party manifesto to strengthen employment rights and improve protections for women at work. That commitment has now progressed through the Employment Rights Bill and, following Royal Assent in December 2025, is now law.

But what exactly is a Menopause Action Plan? What does it involve, what does it mean for menopause in the workplace and, importantly, why does it matter?

### **A Menopause Action Plan is:**

- **a legal requirement for employers with 250+ staff**
- **a strategic plan covering policy, education, adjustments and culture**
- **a practical framework to support inclusion, performance and retention**
- **a shift from “awareness” to action, leadership and accountability**

It is no longer enough for employers to just write a policy and put it in a drawer to gather dust. Nor can they hold a couple of training sessions and tick a box that says people are sufficiently aware about menopause in the workplace.

Menopause Action Plans must demonstrate an employer's ongoing commitment to improving the lived experience for those working through menopause and enable their colleagues and managers to support them.

By supporting inclusion, wellbeing and performance, Menopause Action Plans will help retain experienced talent, reduce inequality and end silence around symptoms. Far from just being a legal obligation, they will help employers build trust through consistent, credible support and help employees thrive at work.

This is a powerful shift in culture and that is why it matters.


### **What happens now?**

All employers with over 250 employees will be required to design and implement a Menopause Action Plan. From Spring 2026, organisations will be able to upload their plans to a government portal on a voluntary basis. But by Spring 2027, this will become mandatory.

This signals a fundamental shift. Menopause is no longer framed as an individual issue to be managed quietly. It is recognised as a workplace responsibility requiring leadership, structure and, very importantly, accountability. This much is clear.

### **What happens next?**

However, certain specifics of how the precise format will work are yet to be published including the final metrics or assessment criteria and how reporting will be monitored or enforced in practice.

Further information on what employers will be required to include is expected to be published on or around International Women's Day. Having been involved as a stakeholder with the Cabinet Office and the Equality 



and Human Rights Commission, one thing is already clear. This will be about far more than writing a policy and doing a bit of training. A significant commitment to cultural change is required which is why my advice to employers, the HR teams and menopause friendly advocates is to make a start right now.

### Act now – don't wait

Waiting for absolute clarity is a risk. Organisations that start now by listening to employees, reviewing what is already in place, building capability and embedding menopause into wider health, wellbeing and inclusion strategies will be ahead. No doubt about it! The people who make up these organisations will already be feeling the difference.

Menopause Action Plans represent a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform working lives. They have the potential to keep experienced, skilled people in work, reduce inequality and normalise conversations that have been silenced for far too long. The law has set the direction. The responsibility now sits with employers.

### Not just for big businesses

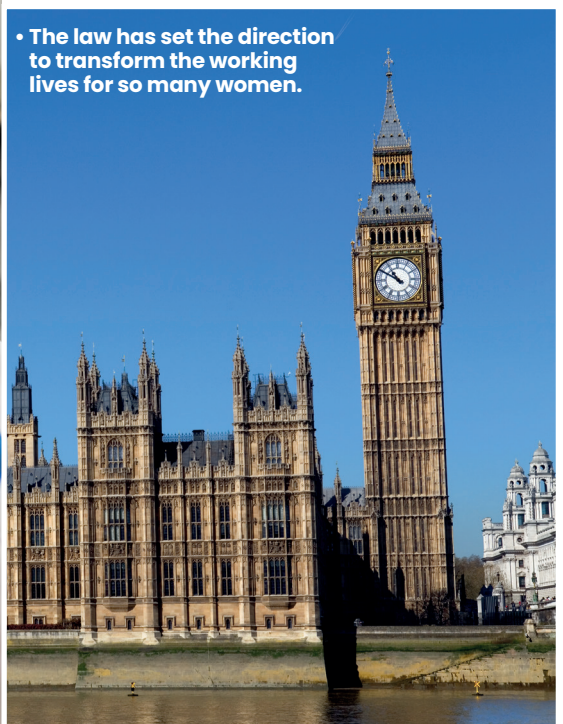
Whilst the legal requirement will begin with, what is termed, larger businesses of 250+ employees, it will become the norm for all workplaces. People looking for work and those in work will expect this from their employers. Without truly embracing Menopause Action Plans and the culture which drives these to be meaningful and supportive, businesses will be left behind as people find what they need and deserve elsewhere.

The organisations that will thrive are those that understand this is not about compliance alone. It is about culture, credibility and care. Menopause at work is now firmly a leadership issue.

What we have experienced whilst working with businesses over the last decade has consistently shown that real change happens when organisations focus on culture. Changing hearts and minds about menopause takes time and intent. It requires a well delivered strategy that is right for the organisation itself.

### Feeling the impact

We have been supporting employers for over 10 years – when I first started out, I couldn't find an employer with a menopause policy. Now look at where we are! Since 2016, we have worked with thousands of organisations across every sector and size, from SMEs to globalemployers. Our long-term view →



• The law has set the direction to transform the working lives for so many women.



• Today menopause should sit firmly on board agendas as it is now within legislation.



• Menopause is no longer framed as an individual issue to be managed quietly. It's now about workplace structure and an open door for female employees.

**“It is no longer enough for employers to just write a policy and put it in a drawer to gather dust. Menopause Action Plans will help retain experienced talent, reduce inequality and end silence around symptoms.”**

matters. It means we have seen the early days when menopause was barely acknowledged, through to today where it sits firmly on many board agendas and within legislation.

We are about to celebrate the 200th employer achieving the industry-recognised Menopause Friendly Accreditation. Make no mistake, this Accreditation is earned, not granted. An independent panel assesses an organisation's impact across five key pillars – culture, policies and practices, training, engagement and working environment – before awarding the Accreditation or advising where improvements must be made before reapplying. Every three years, organisations

must apply for Reaccreditation and show evidence of continued progress and best practice.

We have many more employers working towards the Menopause Friendly Accreditation with others realising that if they meet these strict criteria, they are will doubtless also meet the Menopause Action Plan standard.

Being menopause friendly is not about following a trend. It's about demonstrating what happens when menopause is treated as a strategic workplace priority rather than a side project.

## Getting started

If your employer hasn't embraced menopause as a workplace priority thus far, or is in the early days of working towards the goal of shifting the culture and embedding support and training for colleagues, this could help get them started:

- **listen to employees' experiences**
- **review what is already in place**
- **educate leaders and line managers**
- **embed menopause into wider health and inclusion strategies**
- **considering using eLearning to scale knowledge quickly and sustainably**

Every workplace is different. Cultures, job roles, existing practices, policies and geography all shape what each 'good' looks like. A Menopause Action Plan that genuinely works must reflect that reality rather than impose a one-size-fits-all solution.

Pledges alone do not change lived experience. Strategies do. Menopause Action Plans represent one of the most significant advances in workplace inclusion in decades. The urgency



- **Menopause in the workplace is undergoing change and invites some clearer, blue sky thinking for everyone's benefit.**

is real, but so is the opportunity. Acting now builds confidence, normalises conversations, supports retention and performance and shows commitment to fairness and inclusion. **MM**

**Deborah Garlick is the CEO of Menopause In The Workplace and founder of Henpicked.net. Her team has been working with UK-wide and international organisations since 2016 to make it easier for them to introduce the right training, policies and practices to raise awareness, education and support of this critical area. She advised the BSI (formerly British Standards Institute) on its Menstruation, Menstrual Health, Menopause Guidance and is part of the stakeholder group for the Menopause Action Plans, supporting the Government team developing the implementation.**

**In April 2023, she co-founded Menopause Friendly Australia with CEO Grace Molloy and in December 2023 partnered with MiDOViA in the US.**

**Her team has delivered menopause friendly training to over a thousand organisations across the public and private sector. In 2021, she was instrumental in establishing**

**the Menopause Friendly membership for organisations to collaborate, share best practice and offer support to each other. Membership enables employers to work towards the industry-recognised Menopause Friendly Accreditation and be assessed for this meaningful accolade by an independent panel of experts.**

**Deborah instigated the industry-recognised Menopause Friendly Employer Awards in 2022 to celebrate workplace excellence in the field. Importantly, this annual event also helps to raise vital funds for menopause charities and research with £217,000 donated so far. Planning for the fifth networking event is well underway for September 2026.**

**Deborah is a passionate advocate of all-things menopause, appearing regularly in press, on TV and radio. She gave evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Menopause and is also the author of the book *Menopause: The Change for the Better*, published by Bloomsbury.**