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The Women and Equalities Committee says a lack of support for women going through menopause in the UK is responsible for a mass exodus from work of women in their 50’s.

In fact, women who suffer with at least one problematic menopausal symptom are almost 43% more likely to leave their careers.

Research indicates that it’s mainly down to the stigma associated with menopause which prevents women from requesting reasonable adjustments that would otherwise enable them to remain in their roles.

Which begs the question: why aren’t employers doing more to remove the stigma and support these health conditions and help keep key talent in work?

Kate Palmer, HR Advice & Consultancy Director at Peninsula, says: “At a time when women should be reaching the peak point of their careers in senior management roles, instead many are being confined to less-deserving roles or leaving employment completely due to inadequate support measures.

“As of right now, there is no separate protection for employees who are going through the menopause. But MPs are calling for it to be recognised as a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 to provide greater rights for working women, and for companies to pilot offering ‘menopause leave’.

“Regardless of the outcome of this campaign, businesses should not be sweeping menopause under the rug. Investment into internal growth and development opportunities can be wasted if employers fail to support employees through this pivotal change.

“Even without menopause being a protected characteristic, employers must tread carefully to avoid risks of claims for age, sex, and even disability discrimination if symptoms have a detrimental impact to the employee’s ability to carry out their role for longer than a period of 12 months.

“Of course, it should go without saying that employers must not - legally or morally - treat an employee less favourably due to any health condition.

“Businesses should pro-actively consider ways to support employees who are going through the menopause, not only to meet their duty of care but also to improve productivity, satisfaction, and morale, which in the long run, will lead to enhanced retention and company reputation.

“The first step is to remove any stigma around menopause so that staff feel comfortable in speaking up. Champion an open and inclusive environment, ensuring that whenever an issue is raised, measures are implemented as soon as is practicable to tackle it.

“Adjusting your dress code policies, or making physical amendments to the workspace, like improvement ventilation, controlling temperature, and changing desk layouts, can be effective methods to placate symptoms and discomfort. Flexible working, longer or more frequent breaks, and a temporary adjustment to work duties can also go a long way in supporting staff.

“Offer training for managers, provide guidance for employees, and ensure you have inclusive workplace policies. Risk assessments should take specific consideration of menopausal employees, to identify hazards and ways to remove them.

“I’d recommend any company that hasn’t signed the Workplace Menopause Pledge thus far joins Peninsula Group in doing so, to highlight their awareness and understanding that menopause can be an issue in the workplace and underline their dedication and commitment to support all impacted employees.

“I look forward to seeing the outcome of the Women and Equalities Committee’s campaign and hope to champion the movement that will revolutionise the way in which people going through menopause will be supported throughout their careers.”

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