



Menopause APPG Inquiry into the Impact of Menopause Session 3: Menopause in the Workplace

Date: Wednesday 20th October 2021

Time: 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Location: Virtual, Zoom

Minutes taken by: Erza Llumnica, DGA Interel

Members Present:

- Carolyn Harris MP – Chair of the APPG
- Peter Dowd MP
- Paula Barker MP

Guest Speakers:

- Rachel Suff – Senior Policy Adviser (Employment Relations), CIPD
- Andrew Bazeley – Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Fawcett Society
- Janet Trowse – Head of HR Systems Operator, Network Rail
- Emma Taylor – People Director UK & ROI, Tesco
- Sarah Churchman OBE – Chief Inclusion, Community & Wellbeing Officer, PwC
- Laura Garside – Colleague Support Advisor, Timpson Ltd
- Dr Angela Rowntree – Occupational Health Practitioner, the John Lewis Partnership
- Lisa Macis – Menopause Project Manager, Bristol Myers Squibb

External Guests:

- Jo Lloyd - Office of Carolyn Harris MP
- Angus Bugg-Millar – Office of Judith Cummins MP
- Jack Hardy – Journalist at the Daily Telegraph
- Charlie White – John Lewis Partnership (or put in the guest speakers)
- Rosie Walworth – Policy Manager, RCOG
- Gabriella Bittante – Senior Public Affairs Manager, Bupa
- Sasha Daly – Policy, Advocacy and Government Affairs Senior Manager, Bristol Myers Squibb
- Claire Deller-Rust – Public Affairs Officer, CIPD
- Katherine Morgan – Interel UK
- Sarina Kiayani – Interel UK
- Holly Ramsey – Interel UK
- Victoria McNish – Interel UK
- Erza Llumnica – Interel UK

Minutes of the meeting 10.00am – 11.30 am.

Carolyn Harris MP welcomed everyone and introduced the meeting. She briefly spoke about her own working experience prior to becoming an MP and stated that, now as an MP, she sees it as her responsibility to use her platform to make sure that women now, particularly younger girls, do not grow up in ignorance of what the menopause is. She aims to ensure that correct support and services are available for women. She spoke about the great reaction the Menopause Revolution has received so far and went on to introduce the guest speakers, inviting them to speak.

Emma Taylor introduced herself, explaining that a large proportion of Tesco's workforce are women and therefore supporting women's health within their workforce is a critical part of their aim as an



organisation. She stated that they recognise that women are working through their different life stages, including menopause. She stated that Tesco are a founding signatory of the Every Women Promise and that they focus on raising awareness and providing support for colleagues in relation to the issues that women face within the menopause; in support of this she explained that, across the year, Tesco have a series of wellbeing weeks to coincide with notable dates in the calendar. Back in 2019, to coincide with World Menopause Day, Tesco launched a Women's Health Guide, an online tool designed to help colleagues to understand more about menopause and provide advice, help, support and information for women and guidance to all. She stated that Tesco have recently signed a menopause pledge and noted that Tesco also have a blog, which includes information about menopause for men, which is contributed to by menopause experts. Tesco have also altered the design of their ladies uniform so that it is more breathable and lightweight and it was mentioned that they work in partnership with Vitality, trialling a menopause support service, called Peppy, which includes a wealth of resources for women. Emma spoke about policies within Tesco and mentioned that they are working on what a specific menopause policy would look like for their business. She lastly mentioned that Tesco hold on-going discussions and conversations with colleagues to understand their experiences and how the Tesco team need to respond; this was stated to be an important foundation in their workplace.

Carolyn Harris MP mentioned that, when she was first elected, she worked closely with Tesco in Swansea and recently went back to talk to staff members about Menopause. Carolyn thanked Emma Taylor for her contribution and invited Rachel Suff to speak.

Rachel Suff stated that she leads on Health and Wellbeing at the CIPD and that they are the professional body for Human Resources and People Development. She mentioned that, until she started working on menopause, she didn't realise she had been perimenopausal herself. She stated that the CIPD believes that menopause transition is a crucial workplace issue, that it strikes at the heart of women's economic participation. She mentioned that the CIPD embarked on a project three years ago, working with experts and organisations to develop guidance and undertook research which showed that people were not getting enough support, understanding and awareness. She spoke about the progression that workplaces have made with menopause since their project. She spoke about what organisations can be doing and that the CIPD believe that a policy on menopause in the workplace should be explicit, proactive, and culture has to change. She noted that there are three pillars needed for organisations to create menopause friendly workplaces which concern culture, an environment to talk about the menopause freely and openly and thirdly the need for policies – this includes support, flexible working, reasonable adjustments, not penalising people, treating menopause as a fluctuating health condition, giving it the respect it deserves and particularly focusing on line managers who are compassionate, educated and aware to talk about the menopause.

Carolyn Harris MP stated that she too did not realise she was menopausal until talking to other women who experienced the same symptoms as her. She stated the problem is the lack of training with GPs and spoke about the need for nurses or doctors that have an understanding of the menopausal world. She invited Andrew Bazeley from the Fawcett Society to speak.

Andrew Bazeley introduced the Fawcett Society as gender equality and women's rights charity and spoke about their recent research conducted on the experience of the menopause in financial services, particularly looking at what employers can do to support employees going through the menopause. He further spoke about the research the Fawcett Society conducted; that they surveyed 2400 women and men, held focus groups and in-depth interviews to get into the detail of what change women wanted to see in the workplace. They found three key findings from their research: that there is a culture of silence in workplaces meaning the impact of menopause is hidden; that the finance sector is losing talent because of the menopause and failing to progress women as a result; and, finally, that provided with the right support women can progress in that sector. He stated that, ultimately, women are not feeling comfortable to talk about the menopause in their workplace. He spoke about the issues around the information gap and found in their focus groups that a quarter of employees whom are experiencing menopause are more likely to leave before retirement showing the huge impact around staffing issues. He pointed that from their findings it was clear women wanted to see change around culture and awareness, more awareness around menopause and access to



support. He mentioned they had gotten menopause into the SRE curriculum as a result of work by other charities and spoke about the responses they received on how to change culture, with suggestions such as information sessions, manager training, guidance demonstration leadership, facilitating networks and covering employee benefits which include health plans. He stated that flexible working is important. He concluded by saying the Fawcett Society plan to do more work around menopause, specifically around the finance sector, and that it was hoping to do more around key workers.

Carolyn Harris MP thanked Andrew Bazeley for his contribution. She stated the work on menopause is about awareness raising and giving women the confidence to realise they are not on their own. Carolyn explained the more menopausal experiences are shared, the more women will feel comfortable to come forward and managers will feel comfortable to talk about menopause in the workplace. She went on to introduce Janet Trowse from Network Rail.

Janet Trowse mentioned that she is a member of Fawcett Society and a fellow of the CIPD. She stated that Network Rail do not have a policy around menopause but have a guide, an 'Everyone Guide'. She mentioned that Network Rail have a 'reasonable adjustment policy' to help the menopause and they provide tool kits and films which give information around menopause. She spoke of the male to female ratio at network rail, mentioning that the number of female employees has increased since their project started in 2017, highlighting the importance of speaking about the menopause with many of male line managers and senior employees and having guides in place to help fuel these discussions and provide support. She spoke about her role in Network Rail and mentioned the importance of safety and wellbeing particularly when concerning women experiencing symptoms that affect their work performance. She spoke about the workshops Network Rail ran with mixed participants around the country and mentioned the great feedback received from participants around the help it provided with information on menopause. Network Rail created a film to provide further information, accessible on an externally hosted website, allowing women and their partners access, as well as suppliers and contractors. She spoke of the importance of policies, i.e. having good maternity and menopause policies as they're a good indication of an employer who cares, creating a stronger relationship with employees. Janet stated that Network Rail provide welfare packs for their employees out on the tracks, which have different female products including Shewees, menstrual cups and fans as employees may be situated in remote places. She lastly spoke about the importance of senior support and male allies.

Carolyn Harris MP thanked Janet Trowse for her contribution. She highlighted the importance the welfare packs provided and stated the need for these packs to be adopted by the sector and other organisations. She welcomed Sarah Churchman from PwC as the next speaker.

Sarah Churchman stated that she has worked in the diversity and inclusion space for over 20 years and reflected on the advancement women have made in the workplace and the campaign around gender equality. Sarah is the lead on diversity, equality and inclusion and on employee wellbeing. She spoke about the steps forward PwC have made in the world of wellbeing at work, stating they now take a more proactive approach and are acknowledging/shining a light further on certain wellbeing topics that are taboo. She spoke about the work they have done in the mental health space and the progress made since, then went on to speak about their more recent work on tackling the stigmas and their focus on the menopause. She stated their goal was creating a culture, to make people feel comfortable to talk about the menopause and their focus on empowerment in terms of supporting, encouraging and equipping women to have better conversations with those around them including GPs, managers, within teams. Sarah mentioned that PwC have previously worked with RCOG to develop the menopause in the workplace tool kit, accessible on their microsite to all their employees. She further went on to speak about what PwC have done to support and provide assistance for women. This includes the number of live webcasts they have held specialists from Wellbeing of Women, who talk about the menopause in their aim to tackle the wrong and poor information available online by putting people directly in touch with experts. She spoke about the importance of listening to women and responding to their needs as to why they have a Menopause Matters group, consisting of their female employees, who regularly meet to support each other, discuss their feelings



and how to better the workplace in relation to acknowledging the health and menopausal struggles of women.

Sarah Churchman mentioned that PwC retain a number of men who have become allies to this agenda, with numbers growing. She stated that PwC offer free sanitary products across all their offices in the UK and that all employees have access to private medical insurance which for the menopause now covers an initial diagnosis, blood test etc and consultation through AXA, their provider. She mentioned PwC offer a virtual GP which work with AXA to bring specialists on board and that going forward they may too be working with Peppy. It was stated that PwC have recently opened a clinic in London where their chief medical officer resides whom is a menopause expert herself and that in the near future they will be opening up a fertility and hormone clinic for their women. In her final points she stated that PwC have signed a menopause pledge with Wellbeing Of Women and mentioned their work with the IT and productions team in producing a short clip/ 4 minute film along with other organisations for the menopause. She highlighted the importance of women getting the support they need.

Carolyn Harris MP thanked Sarah Churchman for her contribution and invited Laura Garside from Timpson Ltd to speak.

Laura Garside began by speaking about the large support from James Timpson around menopause. She stated that, within the company, it is about retaining talent, which goes hand in hand with the culture at Timpson. She mentioned that as Timpson's Ltd already have the culture in place, so it is an easy addition to start supporting their colleagues more with the menopause, i.e. with James being more vocal about talking about the menopause their colleagues then feel it is less of a taboo topic. She outlined that they previously have had mental health champions and are now putting in place menopause champions, to which Laura is the first. She mentioned they have raised awareness through their Timpson group news, a weekly newsletter that all colleagues receive to their branches and personal emails. She explained that this newsletter has been a success, providing an educational platform for colleagues, both men and women, to gain further understanding around the menopause in aims to break the taboo around speaking openly and encourage conversations about menopause. She stated that Timpson now offer to cover expenses on prescription costs when women are recommended Hormone Replacement Therapy. Laura stated there is much more Timpson can do and want to do, mentioning that they were looking into the network idea and having more champions.

Carolyn Harris MP thanked Laura Garside for her contributions and invited Dr Angela Rowntree from John Lewis to speak.

Dr Angela Rowntree began by introducing that she is the John Lewis Partnership Occupational Health Practitioner and is a trained GP who works part time in general practice in England. She stated she is a member of the Primary Care Women's Health Forum and spoke about their work to get the menopause message out there, particularly through their Rock My Menopause – their public facing information site for women and men who want to know about the menopause. She spoke about the John Lewis Partnership and its large scope, and mentioned their strong democratic vitality, as they believe all partners are equal, as well as touching upon the many diverse roles John Lewis offers and taking care of their workers. She stated that as a partnership, John Lewis have declared themselves as a menopause friendly workplace. She said they do not have a menopause policy, she instead named a few of other policies which they believe are good comprehensive policies. She stated they instead have a gone for a guidance available to all used as a live document which can be updated, tweaked and added to on a daily basis. She explained that their guidance is based on education and awareness, stating the guidance is for people who are experiencing menopause, for co-workers who are supporting someone in the workplace, and managers to understand how to manage and help someone going through the menopause.

Dr Angela Rowntree spoke about the resources put together in their guidance, saying they have created short inhouse videos to explain the issues around menopause, they provide information documents around the menopause that people can refer to and they signpost people to many more



free, reliable websites and resources that they may access. She stated that, in the partnership, they have their own inhouse Occupational Health Service, which gives every partner access to bespoke advice on how they can adapt in their workplace. She noted that every clinician in their Occupational Health Service has had menopause training and that the clinicians in their inhouse Employee Assist Programme have also had menopause awareness training. She went on to speak about the online support community they run, called Lifting the Taboo, and stated that it is, in effect, their menopause space, and allows people to come together virtually and share their experiences, ideas and emotions within a supportive community. They run regular menopause awareness campaigns via the virtual space and have taken the menopause out on roadshows. Dr Rowntree stated they run Q&A sessions with their clinicians which have proved very popular. Additionally, she mentioned they provide free sanitary products in their workplaces and have been involved in using more thermo comfortable fabric for the redesign of their uniform. Lastly she mentioned the number of partners within John Lewis, the majority of who are women, with a large number falling in the menopausal age range, as to why the John Lewis Partnership want to look at individual circumstances to provide an equal playing field within their business by giving women the support necessary when going through the menopause.

Carolyn Harris MP asked Dr Angela Rowntree if John Lewis Partnership are struggling to find enough helpful menopause information websites which have been signposted by NHS specialists as she has found that the majority of GPs have not got current, up-to-date knowledge and experience of menopause, contributing to why women are having to go private. Carolyn stated that she worries that treating menopause has become a socio economic problem.

Dr Angela Rowntree responded stating that, during her GP training (30 years ago), she had no menopausal training and the lack of information initially around treatments but she said as of now every general practise has got access to free good quality menopause awareness training.

Carolyn Harris MP stated that many of the women she has spoken to have said they are finding very few practices who are specialising or have a doctor who has the knowledge of prescribing HRT or diagnosing Menopause. This has meant women are being misdiagnosed as a result of experiencing menopausal symptoms. She spoke about her vision to ideally have a cluster group of surgeries who have a fully up to date nurse who can prescribe and take the pressure of doctors when women are presenting symptoms of menopause, who can be referred to this individual. She then went on to introduce the last speaker, Lisa Macis from Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS).

Lisa Macis stated that her role is to drive awareness and education on perimenopause and menopause across BMS, and said that BMS is a menopause friendly workplace. She re-iterated that, as BMS are a global pharmaceutical company, they have no commercial interest in women's health and their innovative around menopause is to support and educate their workforce internally. Externally, she stated, they fund the APPG on Menopause and hope to impact their communities. Lisa explained that BMS aim to continue to foster their inclusive culture irrespective of gender as menopause does not only effect women in aims to create a safe environment and have open conversations on the menopause across their business. She stated that 61% of the workplace at BMS are women and 22% are over the age of 51 explaining why work around menopause needs real focus. She spoke about her personal experience with menopause, and the lifechanging symptoms she suffered as a result, which affected her everyday role. When experiencing her severe menopausal symptoms, Lisa mentioned that her then manager had a lack of understanding around menopause, which exacerbated her symptoms massively. She, too, was unaware she was menopausal, which strongly affected her confidence and led to her misdiagnosis of depression, resulting in antidepressant prescriptions, until she was correctly diagnosed by a private expert. Through her work and efforts at BMS, she explained that BMS now have plans for the UK and Ireland to drive awareness and education of menopause across every team and across every gender. It was stated that BMS are developing guidelines, they have menopause advocates in place ready to train in November 2021 and that all people and HR managers HR are having mandatory training to have the skills to support employees. She also mentioned that, in January 2022, their leadership team have agreed to fund a fast track referral service through their occupational health partners health work allowing employees to see a consultant free of charge who is an accredited member of the British Medical Society. BMS are working to become an accredited menopause friendly workplace and it was



stated that as of recent the project was launched internally. She concluded saying that BMS aim to continue working around this topic and take this project globally once they gain the menopause accreditation.

Carolyn Harris MP thanked Lisa Macis for her contribution. She lastly briefly spoke on the work by the APPG on Menopause and its aim to make sure women get the best possible support and resources, that companies get credit for their work around menopause and the best medical provisions for women are available, to be treated equally ultimately to get the best possible outcome for women through this platform. Carolyn Harris thanked Peter Dowd MP for his time and commitment to the cause, then thanked all the speakers and external guests for their contributions and attending.

The session concluded at 11.30am.