

<https://www.thenational.scot/news/17405152.scottish-menopause-survey-to-help-improve-workplaces-for-women/>

Scottish menopause survey to help improve workplaces for women

By [Nan Spowart](#)
3rd February 2019

THOUSANDS of Scottish women are to be surveyed about their experience of the menopause in a bid to raise awareness and improve conditions in the workplace.

The survey is being launched by the Scottish Women's Convention following a menopause conference yesterday in [Glasgow](#).

It was addressed by Christina McKelvie, Minister for Older People and Equalities, STUC women's committee chair Joyce Stevenson and Collette Stevenson, depute provost of South Lanarkshire Council – which has already introduced a menopause policy to give support to women going through “the change”.

Now the thousands of women on the convention's mailing list are to be asked about their experiences of the menopause in an attempt to make other employers and policy makers more aware of the issue.

“The SWC has already heard from a number of women regarding the significant stress and trauma that many across [Scotland](#) have experienced due to much of the ignorance and stigma that surrounds an issue fundamental to all women's lives,” said chair Agnes Tolmie.

“Women's inequality continues to persist and define us as women at both a societal and cultural level, leading to taboos, unequal access to support and lack of awareness of gendered issues.

“We want to know women's real experiences in order to ensure creative change and solutions that fosters equality in society free of stigma for women.”

In a recent survey of nearly 4000 women by the STUC women's committee, 63% said the menopause had been treated as a joke at work.

One described having a hot "flush" in an office which was already uncomfortably warm without access to a fan or being able to open a window.

"Menopausal insomnia has meant I have taken days off work as I couldn't function," she added.

As a result of the study, the STUC women's committee recommended improved workplace policies such as flexible working to deal with irregular sleep patterns and fatigue and the ability to work from home when symptoms were particularly acute.

Quiet areas and access to fans have also been suggested as well as awareness raising and support for menopausal women and colleagues via training.

South Lanarkshire's new menopause policy, launched on Menopause Day on October 18 last year, includes several of these measures.

"This is a health issue that will affect all women, usually between the ages of 45 and 55 but, in 1% of cases, before 40 years of age," Stevenson said.

"It is important for any organisation of any size to recognise the support that is needed, but considering there are more than 11,000 women working for South Lanarkshire Council, then we have considerable responsibility to treat them with understanding and provide them with support when this natural part of aging affects them. It is important not only to implement the actions of this policy, but also to make sure that women know that the council has a positive attitude towards the menopause and that it is not something they should feel embarrassed about discussing."

McKelvie agreed the menopause had been a "taboo" subject for "too long". "I want that to change and for there to be a greater understanding in society of the symptoms that women face and how it can impact on their lives," she said.

"This is particularly important in the workplace. With increasing numbers of older women in employment, many more will now experience the menopause whilst part of the workforce. Demographic and societal changes mean that more women want to work later in life – and importantly, our economy needs them."