

Age at Work

Case Study



GOWER COLLEGE SWANSEA | MENOPAUSE INITIATIVE

As a result of increased staff absence levels, Gower College invested in a targeted menopause initiative, resulting in a 70% increase in attendance in females over the age of 47.

About the company

Gower College Swansea is a further education provider based over seven different campuses across Swansea. The College employs just over 1000 staff and the average age of a member of staff is 47.

The College became involved in the Age at Work Programme as it has an aging workforce and wanted to ensure it was doing everything to support its staff. An action plan to support its older workforce was developed and it learned from other organisations about initiatives they have introduced.

Gower College Swansea was concerned that absences due to emotional health have increased over the last few years as many of its female staff members struggle with their resilience juggling eldercare, childcare, a demanding job and the menopause.

Sixty percent of the workforce at the College is female and over the age of 40 and absence levels were impacting their ability to meet their strategic



Coleg Gŵyr Abertawe
Gower College Swansea

objectives of delivering excellent education for their learners. 19% of absences in the period 2021/22 were reported from female employees in the age range 45-55, with many absences being attributed to conditions commonly associated with menopause, i.e. low mood, anxiety, sleep issues and headaches. However, many individuals did not realise this could be related to perimenopause and therefore were not getting appropriate support. One senior manager disclosed that perimenopause impacted her drastically, leading to a loss of confidence and self-esteem, memory loss and brain fog, and a feeling that her only option was to consider resignation.

The senior management team agreed to commit to becoming an accredited menopause organisation and to invest in a targeted menopause initiative to support the wellbeing of the College's female staff, improve attendance, reduce the costs of absence, reduce the pressure on other staff covering, and as a retention tool to be able to retain the skill and knowledge of these experienced staff.

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What Gower College did

The College's Chief Executive and Senior Management Team signed a workplace pledge in January 2022 to commit to becoming a menopause friendly organisation.

In order to overcome the challenge of managers not feeling confident enough to speak to staff about the menopause, all 80 managers including the Chief Executive attended menopause awareness training which enabled them to have menopause conversations with staff. They also invited their Health & Safety team to attend the training to gain their support, enhance their knowledge and consider what adjustments may be required for menopausal women.



Gower College Swansea introduced a menopause policy and recruited a dedicated Staff Wellbeing Advisor and Staff Fitness Coach who became menopause champions. These menopause champions host Menopause Cafes, virtually and face-to-face, across all campuses, and staff regularly attend to speak openly in a safe space and share stories.

The College raises awareness through participation in national events, and hosts webinars delivered by key speakers such as Carolyn Harris MP who

champions menopause. It recently welcomed a cross campus visit from Theramax who brought its Menovest, to allow staff to wear the vest whilst going about their work duties and experience the feeling of a hot flush.

The College asked female staff who were struggling with menopause symptoms or considering HRT to get in touch, with a view to being referred to Newson Health for expert advice. In return, the participants submitted before and after symptom checkers to review if the appointments and subsequent medication or advice had helped reduce symptoms and improve their wellbeing. As a result, a cohort of 17 staff came forward for a pilot research study.

Impacts and Outcomes

The participant group all remain in their roles and attendance has reduced by 70% in this target group. The College has also retained skills and experience, saved on recruitment costs and improved the wellbeing of staff.

Furthermore, the feedback received from participants has been glowing:

“I feel calmer, less anxious and more like myself”

“Feel more relaxed every day, and have no pain now when I walk”

“This initiative has given me the peace of mind to know that it will take time to improve my symptoms”

“My mood has improved, I am happy now and clearer headed, which has enabled a return to work”

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“I feel loads better myself and am able to function throughout the day”

“I am still tired, but less emotional and happier. My migraines are more manageable, I’m not as forgetful, have less brain fog and no longer think that I am losing my mind.”

“The best bit is able to talk to an expert who is non-judgemental”



“OUR HR TEAM HAS ALWAYS BEEN COMMITTED TO THE WELLBEING OF OUR STAFF, ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THEIR WELLBEING AND HEALTH ARE PARAMOUNT TO THE SUCCESS OF THE COLLEGE.”

WE THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT OUR WELLBEING PROVISION REFLECTS THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF OUR ORGANISATION. THE AVERAGE AGE OF OUR WORKFORCE IS 47 AND WE HAVE MORE FEMALE STAFF THAN MALE SO AS AN ORGANISATION WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE SYMPTOMS OF THE MENOPAUSE AND PROVIDE PRACTICAL SUPPORT TO INDIVIDUALS SO THEY CAN MANAGE THIS TRANSITIONAL STAGE OF LIFE AS BEST AS THEY POSSIBLY CAN.

BEFORE THE START OF THIS INITIATIVE, WE HAD STAFF REQUESTING TO REDUCE OR LEAVE THEIR JOBS, HOWEVER ABSENCE LEVELS ARE DOWN 70% AND STAFF ARE ABLE TO THRIVE WITH SOME GOING ON TO BE PROMOTED.”

Sarah King, Director of HR