

March 2026

# Stop and pause

How to manage menopause in accounting.

By Dr Ffion Hargood, Co-Founder of Husu

---

## **Menopause in the workplace**

Menopause is still not discussed openly enough in many workplaces, yet it is already a people, performance and governance issue for accounting firms. In the UK, employers with 250 or more employees can publish voluntary menopause action plans from April 2026 alongside gender pay gap reporting, with mandatory action plans expected from spring 2027, subject to secondary legislation.

This matters because menopause is not a niche issue. It affects a significant number of people directly, often at a stage of life when they are carrying deep technical knowledge, managing client relationships and holding leadership responsibility. NHS guidance notes that menopause usually happens between 45 and 55, with an average age of 51 in the UK, though it can happen earlier. It affects anyone who has periods, and symptoms can last for months or years.



## What is menopause?

Menopause refers to periods stopping due to lower hormone levels. Symptoms can begin before menopause and continue afterwards, lasting an average of 7 years. They are not limited to hot flashes. In work settings, the symptoms that often have the biggest effect are poor concentration, memory problems, tiredness, disrupted sleep, lower confidence and low mood. Physical symptoms can also make a standard working day harder to manage.

## Menopausal symptoms

- Poor concentration
- Tiredness
- Low mood
- Heavy and irregular periods
- Joint pain
- Headaches

**24% of partners are female across the UK's top 100 firms**

---

## How does this affect the workplace?

CIPD research shows that 67% of working women aged 40 to 60 who have experienced menopausal symptoms say those symptoms have had a mostly negative effect on them at work.

A combination of difficulty managing symptoms, plus a lack of understanding and workplace support are the main negative factors. Support makes a substantial difference. Employees experiencing menopause transition are more than twice as likely to have considered leaving their job if they feel unsupported by their employer or manager. In a profession already dealing with skills shortages and retention pressure, that is a risk firms should take seriously.

This cumulates in a leadership pipeline issue, with a lack of representation of women in leadership and partner roles. Accountancy Age reported that the average percentage of female partners across the UK's top 100 firms was 24% in 2024. Firms cannot afford to lose experienced people at the stage when many are ready to move into more senior roles.

---

## So, what does good menopause support look like in accounting?

### 1. Team development

Education matters, but tone matters just as much. People experience menopause differently, and a firm should not assume there is one standard pattern. The aim is to build enough understanding across the team that symptoms are recognised early, conversations can happen without embarrassment, and support does not depend on one person being unusually confident enough to ask for help.

At an individual level, it helps to notice patterns, understand which symptoms are affecting work most, and speak to a GP or other appropriate clinician where support is needed.

At firm level, the priority is to make menopause part of normal management practice. That means giving managers clear guidance, using inclusive language, avoiding intrusive questioning, and making it clear that disclosure is a choice. It can also help to name a point of contact or menopause lead, provided that role is properly briefed and supported.

### 2. Workplace design

Workplace design is often overlooked, but it can remove a lot of unnecessary friction. Better design also benefits the wider team, which reduces the pressure on anyone to disclose why they may need something different.

For someone working from home, this may mean thinking about ventilation, easy access to water, and wearing multiple thin layers that can be easily removed.

In the office, having dark upholstery, offering desk fans, improving ventilation, making water easy to access, ensuring toilets and sanitary products are easy to find, and creating quieter spaces for focused work or short recovery breaks can all help. Thermal mapping hot and cool areas can also be useful.

### **3. Flexible working**

Accounting is cognitively demanding. Menopause symptoms such as brain fog, poor concentration and tiredness can make long meeting days and rigid working patterns harder to sustain.

At an individual level, people may notice shifts in when they work best, or find that they need more frequent short breaks. Those patterns can change over time, so support needs to leave room for adjustment.

At firm level, flexibility is often one of the most practical forms of support. This can include flexible hours, sensible use of hybrid or home working, and a more considered approach to performance conversations where symptoms are fluctuating. It should also include reviewing absence triggers and management processes so that menopause-related issues are handled fairly. Looking at performance reviews over a longer period of time allows for fluctuations in menopausal symptoms.



Workplace design is often overlooked, but it can remove a lot of unnecessary friction.

---

## Key takeaways

The key is a balanced and evidence-based approach. Menopause support should be treated as part of good leadership and sensible workforce design.

When firms get this right, they make it easier for experienced people to perform well and continue progressing. That is better for the individual and better for the firm.