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## The importance of supporting staff through the menopause

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development, three out of five working women aged between 45 to 55 who are experiencing menopause symptoms say it has a negative impact on them at work. Women make up three quarters of the Local Government workforce in England, so the menopause will affect a significant proportion of our employees. How it affects women's working lives and relationships can be an issue that managers find difficult to discuss.

Menopause symptoms vary from person to person and can last a few months or years with potentially some having a significant overwhelming, frightening, life changing and isolating impact on daily life. Common symptoms can include hot flushes, poor mental focus and concentration, night sweats, tiredness and insomnia, low mood and anxiety, headaches, joint pain, and palpitations. Many women can lose their confidence and start to believe that they cannot perform their job competently during the menopause.

We know that if employees feel supported at work, they feel more engaged. In the case of working women, if they're supported through the menopause, they will be more likely to stay. Sharing knowledge and openness is the way forward for addressing menopause in the workplace. We need to open up the discussion to raise the profile and awareness of menopause and encourage a culture where people can share information on this topic. This

could be done potentially by creating a group environment for women to share how they are feeling and 'buddy up' to have one-to-one discussions if needed.

Finally, the [LGA menopause guide](#) discusses what councils can do to be 'menopause friendly' employers and create workplaces where female workers and their managers are supported to discuss and consider ways to manage the impact of the menopause at work.



*Content contributed by Heather Bennett, Mental Health First Aider*

### Shape the future of the Wellbeing Newsletter by participating in our survey

The Wellbeing Newsletter aims to give advice, personal stories, details of wellbeing events and more to employees of Nottinghamshire County Council.

[Please complete this short survey](#) to help us improve the Newsletter so it is most useful to you - it should take less than five minutes, and your feedback will be greatly appreciated.

### The effect of light on mood



During the winter months, we take in less natural light due to the shorter days. This reduced light exposure affects our circadian rhythm (body clock) and alters the levels of certain

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hormones in our bodies. This can cause symptoms such as low mood, tiredness, and a lack of motivation.

There are lots of ways to combat these feelings of depression during winter and what works for you might not work for someone else.

Here are three top tips:

- Try to increase the amount of natural sunlight where you work. For example, open your curtains / blinds and sit near a window.
- Get outside regularly during the daytime, especially around midday.
- Consider buying a specialist light therapy light. These are designed to mimic natural sunlight and evidence suggests they are effective at treating seasonal affective disorder (SAD), otherwise known as winter depression.

And finally, try to avoid additional pressure by making drastic New Year resolutions. I have already forgotten mine anyway!

(Remember that if you are seriously struggling to cope it's important to seek help. There are links to different mental health services later in this newsletter.)



*Content contributed by Lucy Fox, Mental Health First Aider*

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A winter walk at Rufford Abbey

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Rufford Abbey was founded as a Cistercian monastery in the 12th Century, but is now a beautiful country park for all to enjoy. After being taken over by Nottinghamshire County Council in 1952, the park has gone from strength to strength and now offers an adventure play area, archery, adventure golf and boat trips, as well as cafes, walks around the lake, and a gift shop.

A trip to Rufford Abbey doesn't have to simply be a great day out – it can also be an opportunity for mindfulness and to take care of your wellbeing. For example, as we said in the last Wellbeing Newsletter, [birdwatching can improve your mental health](#). So why not spend some time reaping the benefits of this by watching the waterfowl on the lake?

As some scents can be linked to relaxation, a walk around the herb garden can be a great way to participate in some self-care. Look at the beautiful plants, take a few deep breaths to enjoy the calming scents, listen out for any wildlife you can hear. This could be the perfect place to practise the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique:

- Acknowledge FIVE things you can see.
- Acknowledge FOUR things you can touch.
- Acknowledge THREE things you can hear.
- Acknowledge TWO things you can smell.
- Acknowledge ONE thing you can taste.



*Content contributed by Bryony Adshead, Graduate Trainee*



## A positive lockdown experience



When the pandemic first hit and the lockdown began, I told myself I was going to learn something and use this time well. I started by completing an Acupressure Diploma online, which I absolutely loved. It kept me busy and my mind active, so I wasn't dwelling on the fact that we were in the middle of a pandemic and in lockdown.

My learning journey continued throughout the pandemic and I became qualified in both Sports and Holistic Massage. I have now turned this into a job I am passionate about, which exceeded all my expectations when I decided to just 'learn something'.

The lockdown for me was a game changer – I literally changed my life.

While none of us want another lockdown, having lots of time on your hands doesn't always have to be a bad thing. You just have to think outside the box and try to stay positive.



*Content contributed by Sarah Golding, Workplace Health Champion*

## Valuing the mental health benefits of woodlands



During the COVID-19 pandemic, the prevalence of mental illness has increased. Access to trees, woods, forests, and other natural environments including urban parks and green spaces has become even more important for individuals to support and maintain their wellbeing.

[A recently published report by Forest Research](#) estimates the annual mental health benefits associated with visits to the UK's woodlands to be £185 million. This new research is the first of its kind to value the mental health benefits associated with the UK's woodlands.

Vadim Saraev at Forest Research, [quoted in a recent Guardian news article](#), said: "If people spend 30 minutes a week in trees, doing whatever they like – walking, sitting, meditating – there are noticeable benefits. It's amazing how small that is in terms of time."

It might be colder this time of year but if you embrace the weather and wrap up warm, we're sure you won't regret the time spent outdoors. Obviously we have a bias for the Sherwood Forest area and our suggestion this month for a woodland walk is [Moor Pond Woods in Papplewick](#). The site of a former cotton mill, it is now a designated local wildlife site with mature ash, oak and chestnut trees and an extensive area of wetland. A real hidden gem and well worth a visit!



**Miner2Major**  
The Real Sherwood Forest

*Content contributed by Steve Little, Miner2Major*

## Wellbeing Time to Talk events

A programme of interesting and helpful monthly wellbeing events is being led by our Mental Health First Aiders, with changing topics each month to help with colleagues' mental wellbeing.

### Event Dates and Themes

Title	Time	Date
Low mood and depression	11 – 12pm	Thursday 6 January 2022
Viva Insight	2 – 3pm	Tuesday 1 February 2022
Wellbeing toolkit	11 – 12pm	Thursday 3 March 2022

At the end of each session, there will be time to talk, ask questions and socialise about anything and everything! You will also have an opportunity to ask a Mental Health First Aider for a follow up call to talk about your wellbeing and anything you may be struggling with.

[Book onto a Time to Talk event](#)

## Looking after our social work staff



The D2N2 Social Work Teaching Partnership is putting on a series of wellbeing events from January, aimed at frontline social work teams.

These events will provide social work staff from both Children's and Adults' social care with an opportunity to reflect on the last 18-20 months – and explore the benefits of embracing good self-care habits as we move into a 'new normal'.

These workshops will give us all a chance to take a breath, consider where we are now, and look at what we need to do, as individuals and as teams, to make sure that we stay well and look after ourselves and each other.

**Looking After You:** three repeated wellbeing workshops for frontline social workers (only book one date)

- All at The Post Mill Centre, South Normanton, Derbyshire, DE55 2EJ
- Tuesday 25 January, 1.00pm – 5.00pm, [book your place for 25 Jan](#)
- Wednesday 26 January, 1.00pm – 5.00pm, [book your place for 26 Jan](#)
- Tuesday 1 February, 9.00am – 1.00pm, [book your place 1 Feb](#)

Please note: the above links work better with Chrome, rather than with Explorer.

Please use your **work email address** to book your place.

*Content contributed by Liz Maslen, Workplace Health Champion*

National wellbeing campaigns to get involved in



- **Dry January** - *throughout January* - a challenge to go without alcohol for January to raise awareness of alcohol-related issues.
- **Veganuary** - *throughout January* - encourages people to try being vegan for a month to help the planet and improve personal health.
- **World Braille Day** - *4 January* - a reminder of the importance of accessibility and independence for those who are blind or visually-impaired.
- **World Religion Day** - *16 January* - promoting inter-faith understanding and acceptance.
- **Brew Monday** - *17 January* - a day for everyone to reach out for a cuppa and a catch-up with the people you care about.

## Useful contacts

Support available at work

Here at NCC we have dedicated workforce teams you can contact for support, advice, or a general chat.

- [Mental Health First Aiders](#)
- [Workplace Health Champions](#)
- [Workplace Chaplaincy Service](#)

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## [Explore wellbeing support](#)

\*Please note: Mental Health First Aiders, Workplace Health Champions and Chaplaincy can listen or provide reassurance but they are not therapists. If you require ongoing support or



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counselling please contact the [Employee Counselling Service](#). This service is available 24/7 and you do not require line manager approval to refer yourself.

### Who to contact in a crisis

- [Nottinghamshire Healthcare Mental Health Advice Line](#) – 0808 196 3779 (available 24/7)
- [Samaritans](#) – call 116 123 (available 24/7)
- [NHS Urgent Mental Health Helpline](#) – 0808 196 3779 (available 24/7)
- [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) – call 0808 2000 247 (available 24/7)
- [Mind](#) – call 0300 123 3393 (available 9am – 6pm, Monday to Friday except bank holidays)

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### ☕ Take 5 ☕



The winter, with its cold temperature and dark mornings, can make it even harder to get out of bed. Here are three top tips for better sleep:

1. Creating a routine is key. Aim to go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day, and try to 'wind down' for at least 30 minutes before bed by doing relaxing activities such as reading or light yoga.
  2. If you have thoughts and worries about tomorrow racing round your head, write a 'to do' list for the next day. This is a simple way to organise your thoughts and make space in your mind for relaxation.
  3. Keep TVs, smartphones, tablets and other electronic devices out of the bedroom, and try not to use these during your 'wind down' routine as the light emitted from these has a negative effect on sleep.
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# Could you foster for Nottinghamshire in 2022?

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