

2021.09.14

**3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of the Minister for Social Security regarding menopause support in the workplace (OQ.190/2021)**

What steps is the Minister taking, or planning on taking, to ensure that those experiencing menopause symptoms are treated fairly in the workplace?

**Deputy J.A. Martin (The Minister for Social Security):**

I thank the Deputy for her question on what is a very important subject. I know that October has been designated International Menopause month. Female employees in Jersey have a range of protections under employment and discrimination laws. These include the right not to suffer any detriment by an employer, the right to ask for their terms and conditions of employment to be varied should they need to have a different working pattern, the right not to be harassed and have their dignity violated and the right for reasonable adjustments to be made to their working environment. I have no plans to further change specifically in relation to menopause but encourage all employers to treat the issue with fairness and sensitivity.

**8.3.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I thank the Minister for outlining some of those relevant laws. I just wonder whether those who are experiencing symptoms related to the menopause, does the anti-discrimination law protect those people from accruing performance-related sickness factors or is that separate for many kind of sickness absence management policies? Does that make sense?

**Deputy J.A. Martin:**

I think I know where the Deputy is coming from. If you are severe with lots of women's illness, if you have a severe pregnancy sickness that would be an illness. Again, if you have severe - and some people do - symptoms on different days of the month or maybe for months and months, sometimes years and years, it depends because if it makes you that ill you cannot attend work, it would be treated as a sickness.

**8.3.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I ask the Minister whether she believes enough is being done to increase awareness of the situation, the menopause and the effects it has on women in the workplace, or does she feel that much more needs to be done because our view of it is outdated, as are so many views that we encounter in the workplace?

**Deputy J.A. Martin:**

No, and I thank the Deputy. I think there is much more to be done. I think it is not a taboo subject now. It should be talked about openly, it is one of them. I have read yesterday one in 8 women over 50 are going through the menopause and as you are working older it is going to go down to one in 6 women. It needs to be talked about, you need to talk to your boss, you need to talk to your line manager and you need to say: "I need a bit of extra time or somewhere it is a bit cold, or I just need 5 minutes", they will make it up. Absolutely, the Deputy is right, we need to talk about this; it is not a taboo subject. Every woman will go through it.

**8.3.3 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Just to follow up with the previous Minister's response, does it mean that the G.P. (general practitioner) will give a sick note and they are putting menopause symptoms as the reason for the sickness notice to the employer? Just to understand if it is already recognised as a ...

**Deputy J.A. Martin:**

Again, I think it depends on the severity of the symptoms on certain days, that there may be and it will lead to other things. We all know what the main symptoms are but then that could lead to anxiety, you are very hot, some days you get muddled a bit more than you would other days. Yes, I mean I do not know whether the doctor - because I am not a doctor - would put menopause on the certificate but I do not think there is anything wrong if they did put menopause on it. It is recognised; if the doctor thinks you are ill enough with your menopause you are ill enough to be on a medical certificate.

**8.3.4 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I thank the Minister for her answers. I wonder if she is aware that around one in 10 menopausal women in fact leave the workplace due to their symptoms and does she agree that all employers in Jersey should have a menopause policy, including the States of Jersey? Would she agree to work with me in the first instance to see that the States of Jersey could put this in place?

**Deputy J.A. Martin:**

Absolutely, and that was going to be my final supplementary to the Deputy. I would love to work with her and absolutely right, if we have not got one, and we need to encourage everyone to have one. Some people have the menopause between 45 and still going up to 65 and we cannot lose these people in the workplace. Absolutely, I would work with the Deputy.

**The Bailiff:**

Could I just remind Members that they should be switching off their microphones and indeed I think if you are in the Assembly your speakers as well to prevent echo and feedback?