The menopause is a natural part of female ageing when menstruation stops. It usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, although it can occur anytime up to mid-60s. Symptoms which might affect work include tiredness, poor concentration and memory, and low confidence.

Evidence indicates that approximately 20-25% of women will have hot flushes which adversely affect their perceived quality of personal and working lives.

Symptoms of the menopause usually last between 4 and 8 years.

The average age for women to reach menopause in the UK is 51 years.

Around 75-80% of women of menopausal age are in work.

By 2020 it is estimated that 1 in 3 British workers will be over the age of 50.

Consequently, at any one time a significant proportion of older female workers will experience symptoms which might feasibly impact on working life.

Menopausal symptoms can pose major and embarrassing problems for some women, leaving them feeling less confident and at odds with their desired professional image.

The majority of women are unwilling to disclose menopause-related health problems to line managers, most of whom were men or younger than them.

It has been noted that in the workplace, the management of gender-specific health issues other than pregnancy are rarely discussed.

In addition to managing potential menopausal symptoms, a quarter of women aged 50 to 64 have informal caring responsibilities for a sick, disabled or elderly person.

People in late middle-age are often caught between generations of family members requiring care: parents and in-laws, spouses or partners, children or grandchildren.