

MENOPAUSE IN CUSTODY

OCTOBER 2024



Introduction

Women¹ experiencing the menopause² are often subject to a number of symptoms that can be debilitating or have an impact on their mental, emotional and physical health. Whilst not all of those experiencing menopause will have symptoms, and some symptoms may be well managed, this natural, biological transition can put detainees in police custody at risk of a loss of dignity and potential issues amounting to ill treatment in police custody. While there is legislation in place to protect pregnant and menstruating detainees,³ research has indicated that there is a lack of awareness of the care and support needs of women being detained who may be experiencing the menopause.⁴ Prior to this thematic work, there has been little guidance in place to ensure the dignity and protection of menopausal women while being detained in police custody. This is an area of work that has long been overlooked in many fields, not just within the police custody sector, and a topic where there has been a recent increase of available information to equip a stronger understanding of what people who go through the menopause may experience and how to support them.

Following the release of a Menopause Policy by City Hall on International Women's Day 2022, there have been significant changes in workplaces adopting policies that serve to encourage inclusivity to women experiencing the menopause and make them "as comfortable as possible" by ensuring they are receiving the appropriate support, as they would with any health condition. While the College of Policing has published guidance around the needs and experience of police custody staff who may be experiencing the menopause, the guidance did not extend to those being detained beyond being mentioned briefly in the Authorised Professional Practice (APP) as a potential vulnerability. The guidance does contain background information that can help to understand some of the symptoms menopausal women may experience and the effect of that on their work in police custody, however the experience of being detained is very different from that of working in a police custody setting.

[1] For the purpose of this report we will be using the word women, however we acknowledge that there are people who experience the menopause who may not identify themselves as women (i.e. trans, non-binary) who this will be relevant to

[2] For the purpose of this report the use of the word 'menopause' will refer to perimenopause, menopause, and postmenopause

[3] <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6580543083ba3800de1b792/PACE+Code+C+2023.pdf>
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf

[4] https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Invisible_women_hope_-_health_relationships.pdf

Being detained puts individuals in a stressful and vulnerable position, as they are deprived of their liberty and are reliant on the state for their basic needs. It is important to understand how that experience may differ with regards to menopause symptoms when looking to meet detainee support needs. There is clear evidence that being detained can have a significant impact on the symptoms experienced while menstruating⁵, such as flooding, which requires additional support and regular access to resources such as menstrual products. With this understanding, it can be assumed that women experiencing the menopause may have a similar increase in the intensity of the symptoms they experience, such as suicidal ideation, meaning some individuals may require further support and resources comparative to others.

Having identified gaps within policies, legislation, and guidance for detainee care within a police custody setting for menopausal women, Sussex Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (SOPCC) worked collaboratively with ICVA to begin understanding the needs and experiences of menopausal women being detained. This report will provide an overview of the research undertaken, the findings of that research, the report produced by Sussex OPCC and ICVA, and the outcomes of that work.



[5] <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/9861/the-baird-inquiry.pdf>

Menopause in Custody

To understand the needs of those being detained who may be experiencing the menopause, it's important to understand what the menopause is.

WHAT IS MENOPAUSE

Menopause is a natural hormonal change that typically occurs around the ages of 45-55, however it can sometimes occur earlier, and can last up to 10 years.

SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE

Symptoms can include anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, insomnia, hot flushes, migraines, physical aches and pains, urinary tract infections, incontinence, heavy bleeding, and brain fog ⁶

AWARENESS OF SYMPTOMS

Studies around the menopause have indicated that many women are unaware that they are experiencing this change, or that the physical and mental symptoms they are experiencing are linked to the menopause, and often try to 'push through' and ignore the symptoms, which can have a significant impact on their physical and mental health.⁷

[6] <https://thebms.org.uk/>

[7] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9244939/>

Menopause in Custody

Specific to the experience of those being detained in police custody, it is clear how symptoms such as brain fog, heavy blood flows, anxiety, strong body odour, profuse sweating, tearfulness, hot flushes, or painful urinary tract infections could affect a detainee's ability to engage with the custody process, in particular the accounts they are able to give in interview. The stress of being in custody is likely to intensify some of the menopausal symptoms individuals may be experiencing, which increases the risk that those individuals will agree with what is suggested to them to expedite their release. With an understanding of the symptoms that may be experienced by menopausal women, it is clear how a lack of recognition and support for this specific group of detainees could have a negative impact on their dignity and comfort during a critical time.

The APP does highlight the importance of recognising the difference between male and female detainees in police custody, specifying the need for a 'different and distinct approach' for women.⁹ In addition to this distinction, the APP does have a brief mention of menopause and invites custody staff to consider whether the menopause is likely to influence detainees' welfare. There are also specific sections regarding the need for custody staff to ensure female detainees are made aware of their ability to speak to a female officer in private at any time, as well as access showering and washing facilities on request. However, there is little guidance on the impact that menopause may have on a detainee or the specific care needs of a menopausal individual. At current, menopause is not mentioned within the Police and Criminal Evidence Act Codes of Practice (PACE).

[8] <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378512221000797>

[9] <https://www.college.police.uk/app/detention-and-custody/detainee-care/equality-and-individual-needs#female-detainees-d5e91aaa-f57b-430e-a16f-0d67aa8ee37d>

Action

Sussex OPCC were a key driver in establishing a gap in awareness and guidance for the care of this particular cohort of detainees and approached ICVA for some support. A report with recommendations was produced, and along with stakeholders from the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), the College of Policing (CoP) and Healthcare colleagues, a working group was formed to consider the recommendations and next steps. As a result of the report and the establishment of a working group of stakeholders, a recommendation for forces to adopt a referral pathway for those who enter custody that may be experiencing menopause was put in place, supported by the NPCC. The working group also resulted in the support of the following question being put in place on booking in for all female detainees of 40 or over:

As someone over the age of 40 you meet the criteria for us to offer you a health screening with a healthcare professional, which includes questions around perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause. It is our recommendation that you consider this opportunity whilst in custody. Would you like to see the health care professional?

The wording for the above question was supported by NHS clinical leads. If individuals accept this health screening, they will see a health care practitioner to discuss their individual needs and a care plan will be produced for their time in custody. In addition to this, it was recommended that custody staff should consider completing a risk assessment for the individuals and, if a vulnerability is identified, a referral to the Liaison and Diversion (L&D) team and/or an Appropriate Adult (AA) allocation should be made as per the PACE vulnerability safeguard.

CELL DIGNITY & CARE PLAN

A care plan for a detainee who is experiencing the menopause could include things such as access to distraction items, access to more frequent showers, a menopause specific hygiene pack and replacement clothing, access to additional blankets and access to the exercise yard for breaks as ways to support with cell dignity.

INTERVIEW

Regarding the detainee interview, the guidelines instruct custody staff to be mindful of planning and preparation, provide memory boosting aids, ensure sufficient rest periods, and a clear start and finish time.

CUSTODY SUPPORT

To further support their time in custody, it was recommended that individuals should also be provided with a female detainee leaflet, and Sussex OPCC provided a copy of the one in use in their suites for forces to adapt.

LEAVING CUSTODY

The awareness package also provides an overview of some considerations that should be given at time of release for the individuals' care, including a recent meal and drink, medication, signposting to GP, replacement clothing if required, and menstrual products or hygiene packs.

To assist with the effective monitoring for this potentially vulnerable group in police custody and to ensure appropriate individualised care is in place for individuals who may be experiencing the menopause, ICVA and Sussex OPCC have produced a training module for ICVs on menopause awareness and updated the monitoring checklist for women in police custody to include considerations around menopause.

In August 2023, a letter was sent by the NPCC from DCC Nev Kemp, the NPCC Custody lead, to all forces to provide an overview of the menopause referral pathway and request for police custody suites to disseminate the awareness package and to adopt the referral pathway across the country. Sussex OPCC also produced a menopause awareness slide pack, which accompanied the letter from the NPCC to all force leads asking them to implement the new referral pathway. This awareness package included information on the menopause to upskill staff in this area, and information on what kind of things could assist a detainee experiencing symptoms in the custody environment.

The report and working group also accepted a recommendation for amendments to the APP to enhance the guidance given to forces and include the referral pathway.

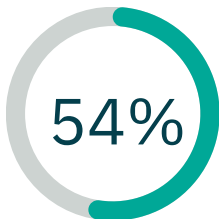


Outcome of Action

A survey was sent out by ICVA to all scheme managers in April 2024 to seek feedback on the adoption of the menopause referral pathway across police custody suites.

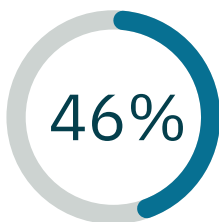
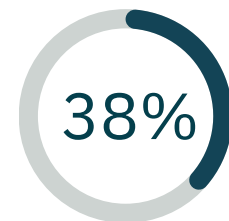
Results indicated that prior to the communications from the NPCC recommending the introduction of the new menopause pathway, only 2 respondents had arrangements in place for those experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

The survey results demonstrated that at the time of the survey:



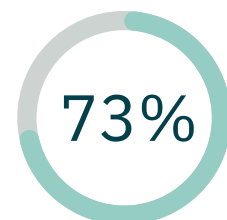
54% of custody officers and staff were aware of the NPCC letter suggesting the new referral pathway


38% had training on this issue



46% of respondents also advised that changes were implemented as a result of the letter, including the introduction of menopause packs, training, and having a single point of contact.

73% of respondents have also shared the ICVA menopause training toolkit with ICVs.





Responses confirmed that menopause kits, where in place, were being widely used and offered on arrival to any detainees that may require them and that many individuals in the police custody setting are welcoming of the changes as enhancing detainee care.

MENOPAUSE PACKS

The most common items included in a menopause pack were lip balm, decaffeinated drinks, mist spray, paper/card fans, intimate hygiene wipes, pads, and flannels.

The survey responses provided examples of how detainee menopause care is being put into practice, which included the addition of a specific questions to the ICVs script that should support them to capture the detained persons age, and that all detainees are treated according to their support needs in custody with access to Healthcare Professionals (HCP) and L&D being available as needed.

The survey responses help provide an overview of the early impact that the development of a menopause referral pathway has had on police custody, however it is prudent to note that responses were not received from all schemes. **While the initial statistics were promising, the survey responses made clear the continued need to build on the work undertaken.**



Amends to the APP

Amendments to the APP went live in June 2024, with a delay due to staffing at the College of Policing. The APP is national guidance which all forces have signed up to, and, whilst not mandatory, provides all forces with a good practice document to which they should adhere and which the formal inspectorates consider in their visits.

The APP amends include the need for a distinct approach for women, the consideration given to vulnerability and a specific section on the new menopause referral pathway:

All female detainees aged 40 or over should be offered on booking in, the opportunity to speak to an HCP regarding perimenopause and menopausal symptoms to produce a care plan for their time in custody. Considerations for the care plan could include but not be limited to, consideration of PACE vulnerability and need for an AA, memory aids and distraction packs, paper fans and access to water. Custody staff should ensure that arrangements detailed in the care plan are available to the detainee as soon as practicable.

The United Kingdom National Preventive Mechanism (UKNPM)

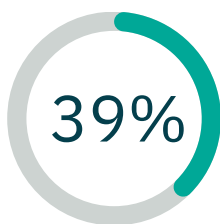
The UK National Preventive Mechanism was established in 2009 to prevent torture and ill treatment of people deprived of their liberty, and to strengthen the protection of people in detention through independent monitoring. The UKNPM has members who monitor all types of detention, including prisons, court custody and mental health settings.

ICVA shared the joint work on menopause and monitoring with the UKNPM, and a task and finish group was established, with members from other detention settings and Sussex OPCC to work on an awareness package and monitoring toolkit. This package for monitors will be launched on World Menopause Day 2024.

Outcome of Action

A second survey was sent out by ICVA to all scheme managers in September 2024 to seek feedback on the adoption of the menopause referral pathway across police custody suites.

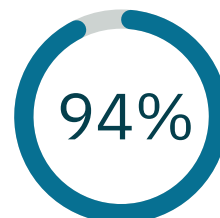
Although a response was not received by every scheme, the survey results help provide an overview of some of the progress undertaken by schemes in supporting menopausal detainees.



39% of schemes had arrangements in place for those experiencing symptoms of menopause prior to August 2023



100% of respondents recorded that custody officers and staff are aware of the changes to the APP regarding the menopause referral pathway



94% of respondents have shared the ICVA menopause training toolkit with their ICVs

Feedback to date has been positive with detainees, ICVs, and custody staff and officers responding well and being welcoming of the new referral pathway.

The most common measures now in place were a specific booking in question, healthcare referral, Liaison and Diversion, care plans, interview support, and pre-release assessment.

“A detainee had been told about the menopause packs in the police vehicle on the way to custody. Her view was expressed that this was a welcome addition to custody”

All schemes that completed the survey have instated elements of the referral pathway. The most common good practice areas instated were detainees being assigned a female detention officer, provision of extra menstruation products, provision of wash kits, provision of spare underwear and provision of fans. Some schemes were also noted as providing pen and paper, spare (dark coloured) towels, lip balm, flannels, E45 Cream, and wellbeing leaflets.



A Menopause pack/toolkit was given to a detainee last week, who was very impressed with this provision



In schemes that haven't introduced as many elements of the referral pathway, it was noted that they are in the process of introducing, risk assessing, and making other arrangements to ensure additional provisions will be in place soon. Several responses also referenced that ICVs have introduced updates to their checks relating to the menopause, such as checking stock levels for menopause packs and ensuring that detainees are specifically asked if they are being catered to with regards to menopausal needs.



A detainee was very grateful and polite and had since spoken to the nurse over what she would be doing next regarding her menopause plan



As acknowledged in the training, a comment was received surrounding the age range of those experiencing symptoms of the menopause. ICVA has made note of this comment and will be mindful of this for future work and development on the menopause referral pathway.



Police personnel have reported anecdotal stories of positive feedback and appreciation from women in custody - one officer described it as 'an ice breaker' as the person felt that the officer really understood the implications of the menopause




Conclusion and Onward Action

The survey responses demonstrate the positive impact of this work to better the support for women in police custody and raise overall awareness of the experience and needs of menopausal women. The introduction of the menopause referral pathway and amendments to the APP have been well received by detainees, ICVs, and custody staff and officers and is a welcome outcome of the work completed by ICVA and Sussex OPCC.

ICVA will continue to review the impact of this work and collaborate with the NPCC to determine suitable routes to ensure ongoing monitoring and development of the support and implementation of the menopause referral pathway.

Sussex ICV Scheme Manager and key contributor to these developments Claire Taylor, said:



We noticed there were no clear consistent policies across Forces in relation to additional considerations for detainees experiencing the Menopause, or how Forces actively identify any vulnerabilities linked to Menopausal symptoms. It was vital this was addressed urgently to ensure those in custody were being treated humanely and to identify any vulnerabilities during the criminal justice process. I'm delighted our toolkit has been recognised and is now in the official professional practice issued by the College of Policing.

