

# Nation unite to tackle menopause taskforce

- First meeting of UK Menopause Taskforce to co-ordinate and work together on support for women across all nations
- Consultation launched into reclassification of low-dose hormone replacement therapy (HRT) product Gina
- Formation of taskforce comes ahead of publication of first government-led Women's Health Strategy for England to tackle the gender health gap

Women across the UK will benefit from improved menopause support and care as government ministers and senior clinicians from across all 4 nations will come together today for the inaugural meeting of the UK Menopause Taskforce.

Millions of women go through the menopause every year, with the majority experiencing symptoms that can be severe, such as low mood, anxiety, hot flushes and difficulty sleeping, and have a negative impact on everyday life.

The taskforce will tackle issues surrounding the menopause including increasing access to treatment, and ending the taboos and stigmas that still surround conversations about the menopause, including in the workplace.

The inaugural meeting comes as the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) launched a consultation into the reclassification of a locally applied HRT product, Gina, meaning women in the UK could access a menopausal treatment over the counter at a pharmacy, without requiring a prescription.

This is the first time HRT has been considered for sale over the counter, marking important progress in ensuring women can more easily access menopause treatment.

Minister for Women's Health and co-chair of the UK Menopause Taskforce Maria Caulfield, said:

For too long women have gone unsupported and unheard when it comes to specific women's health issues. This is especially true when it comes to the understanding of and treatment for the menopause.

This must change. The UK Menopause Taskforce is another stride forward in delivering real change for women across the UK, breaking down taboos and ensuring better access to treatment and support.

I look forward to working closely with my colleagues across all 4 nations as we drive forward the women's health agenda to tackle the gender health gap ahead of the publication of our Women's Health Strategy later this year.

Established to ensure co-ordination across the UK in terms of raising awareness of the menopause and improve care and support, the objectives of the taskforce are to:

- ensure clinical evidence underpins all aspects of menopause work
- look across all the recommendations made to government on the menopause, accelerating the delivery of menopause-related programmes of work across the UK
- identify areas of mutual interest and collaboration, share best practice and take forward actions where it is appropriate to take a joint approach across nations
- increase understanding of and encourage open conversations about the menopause among the general public, within healthcare settings, and in workplaces
- work closely with external stakeholder and raise awareness of the menopause in the workplace by encouraging open conversations

The formation of the taskforce forms part of the wider commitment to eradicate health disparities and ensure everyone is able to lead healthier, happier lives.

Co-chair of the UK Menopause Taskforce, Carolyn Harris MP, said:

I am delighted to be co-chair on the newly formed Menopause Taskforce alongside the minister. Improving support and services for those experiencing symptoms of the menopause is something that I am passionate about.

Insufficient education and awareness of its impact alongside historic taboos around openly discussing its symptoms has meant that for too long women have suffered and struggled to access the help that they need.

The taskforce will bring together Parliamentarians from across the UK as well as professional bodies, menopause specialists and experts by experience to raise awareness of the issues and co-ordinate our response in order to improve support and services and ensure better menopause experiences for women in the future.

The inaugural meeting of the taskforce discussed key themes and focuses, shared objectives across all 4 nations, and the future ways of working.

The taskforce seeks to draw on best practice across all nations, and will draw on workstreams including Scotland's Women's Health Plan, which prioritised the menopause.

It was agreed the taskforce will meet every 2 months, and future meetings will be scheduled by theme which will include:

- healthcare provision
- education and awareness

- menopause in the workplace
- research evidence and data

Maree Todd, Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport, Scottish Government, said:

Menopause care and support is a top priority in our Women's Health Plan – the first of its kind to be published in the UK. Women told us they wanted more reliable information and better services around what is an important transition in their lives, so they are not taken by surprise by any changes, either physically or mentally.

We have already launched a new online menopause platform on NHS Inform, as the first phase in the development of a comprehensive women's health platform. And we have set up a Menopause Specialists Network to provide advice and peer support to healthcare professionals.

With more work yet to be done, I welcome the chance to work together with the other UK nations to share best practice on menopause and make a difference to the lives of so many women and their families.

Robin Swann, Minister of Health Northern Ireland Executive, said:

51% of the population in Northern Ireland is female so menopause is clearly a very significant topic for our society.

I welcome the opportunity to explore a UK-wide approach to cross cutting societal issues such as support in the workplace and education programmes for women at this time in their lives, and look forward to working with the other nations on this important women's health issue.

Eluned Morgan, Minister for Health and Social Services, Welsh Government, said:

I'm pleased to be working across the 4 nations on an issue which affects so many people.

Women's individual experience of menopause may differ but we must ensure the same high standards of care are available to everyone. HRT has been available for free in Wales since 2007.

We are determined to improve women's health services and have set up the Women's Health Implementation Group to work with women and healthcare professionals to do just this.

The taskforce is time-limited, holding meetings every 2 months and will be in operation for an initial period of 18 months.

At the end of the initial period, permanent members will consider if there is a need for the taskforce to be extended or transformed into another purpose.

The taskforce will be co-chaired by Maria Caulfield MP, Minister for Patient Safety and Primary Care and Carolyn Harris MP, Labour MP for Swansea East and Chair of the Menopause All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG).

Other permanent members of the taskforce are:

- Maree Todd MSP – Minister for Public Health, Women and Sport, Scottish Government
- Eluned Morgan MP – Minister for Health and Social Services, Welsh Government
- Robin Swann MLA – Minister of Health, Northern Ireland Executive
- Liz Truss MP – Minister for Women and Equalities
- Kwasi Kwarteng MP – Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
- Therese Coffey MP – Secretary of State for Department for Work and Pensions
- Ruth May – Chief Nursing Officer for England
- Matthew Cripps – Director for Behaviour Change at NHS England and Improvement
- Professor Marion Bain – Senior Public Health Adviser, Scottish Government
- Sue Tranka – Chief Nursing Officer, Welsh Government
- Dr Heather Payne – Senior Medical Adviser, Welsh Government
- Dr Joanne McManus – Clinical Advisers, Northern Ireland Executive
- Dr Charlie Beattie – Clinical Adviser, Northern Ireland Executive
- Mr Haitham Hamoda – Chairman of the British Menopause Society and Consultant Gynaecologist
- Dr Louise Newson – GP and Menopause Specialist

The MHRA consultation seeks views on making Gina available over the counter to women aged 50 years and above, who have not had a period for at least one year.

GPs, pharmacists and members of the public can [give their views on whether this product should become a pharmacy medicine and available over the counter](#), without a prescription.