



How to create a winning environment for women in your workplace

The excitement around Wimbledon and the Lioness' recent victory has led us to discuss how the conversations they have sparked surrounding women's health translate into the workplace.

Wimbledon's all white dress code has been a tradition for over 50 years, but there has been much discussion in recent years around the stress that this can place on female tennis players who are menstruating during the competition. Professional tennis players such as Heather Watson, Coco Gauff and Alicia Barnett have discussed the anxiety of wearing a uniform which is not made with menstruating women in mind. Campaigns such as Address The Dress Code have been petitioning for women to be allowed to wear the All England Club's official colours of green and purple under their whites to give women more peace of mind. Designing uniforms in the workplace with those who menstruate in mind would allow for employees to feel more secure during this time, as research by Women in Sport found that 78% of girls who used to be sporty and 64% of girls still passionate about sport admitted to avoiding taking part in sport when on their period.

This figure translates into the workplace, as according to a recent poll of 3,000 UK workers who menstruate, nine in 10 experienced stress or anxiety in the workplace relating to their period. Employers who take steps to support employees during menstruation may be able to benefit not only from increased employee engagement, but also greater productivity by allowing these employees to be more comfortable. This flexibility could include designing uniforms with women in mind (for example using darker fabrics). Uniform design isn't only relevant for menstruation but also menopause.

Workplace dress codes could be adapted to help those experiencing menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes, by creating lightweight uniforms which can be layered so that they can easily be removed when a hot flush occurs. [ACAS guidance](#) on supporting menopausal employees suggests a risk assessment to consider the material and fit of uniform in case it may make employees feel too hot or cause discomfort. Alternatively, uniforms could be updated to incorporate more comfortable fabrics than polyester and non-natural materials; this is a measure which Tesco introduced by changing their uniform to incorporate a breathable fabric to help with hot flushes and allow women to be more comfortable at work. Sir Lindsay Hoyle recently discussed how the House of Commons is looking to become more menopause friendly through the possibility of allowing staff to request breathable uniforms. These relatively

simple changes can make a big difference in creating an environment which allows all employees to thrive regardless of whether they are experiencing health symptoms or not.

Additionally, employers could offer free sanitary products in bathrooms to ease the worries of those who need them (which this month [August] became a legal obligation for local authorities in Scotland). Creating a culture of period dignity in the workplace not only supports employees; it can also contribute to reaching broader charitable goals – the charity [Hey Girls](#) provides employers with menstrual products for workplace bathrooms as part of a Buy One Give One pledge in which products are donated to period poverty initiatives.

We recently wrote about the hotly debated introduction of menstrual leave in the workplace ([see here](#)) and whether this could be on the horizon in the UK. It remains to be seen whether the UK will follow Spain's lead on this topic though it's clear that, for women in sport, it's not going to be much use if this leads to you missing out on game day. Alicia Barnett has highlighted the need for funding into research surrounding training and competing in line with menstrual cycles for tennis players. Whilst often seen as a taboo and negative subject, it's exciting to see that women in sport are learning more about their menstrual cycles and using this to their advantage.

The Lioness' recent victory was said by England's vice-captain to be partially due to using the FitrWoman app to tailor the women's training around the team's menstrual cycles to enhance performance and reduce susceptibility to soft tissue injuries. Mille Bright has spoken about tracking her cycle for two years and seeing a massive improvement in her training as a result. This same approach was implemented amongst the England team to help players anticipate and manage their symptoms, as well as alerting them to when they may be more susceptible to injuries.

Winning isn't only for the Wimbledon and the Lioness'. Employers who are looking to improve their initiatives on women's health in the workplace should check out our [Q&A](#) on this topic.