



**Manchester
Metropolitan**
University

Decent Work
and Productivity
Research Centre

Women's Workplace Health

**Key resources from the Centre for Decent
Work and Productivity (CDWP)**

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Introduction

The Centre for Decent Work and Productivity at Manchester Metropolitan University has a strong, established team with a long history of research, practice innovation, and policy support. We are developing a core research strength around women's health and reproductive journeys in the workplace, covering topics including menstruation and menstrual health; fertility testing and treatment; pregnancy and maternity; pregnancy loss; perinatal mental health; involuntary childlessness; and the menopause transition. Our research spans a wide range of industries and sectors, including both female-dominated environments such as the NHS and male-dominated occupations such as policing, as well as organisations of varying sizes.

Through our research and partnerships, we have created a range of practical tools and resources that support workplace policy development; provide training for women and managers to strengthen people-management practices; and drive innovation to help organisations build the capability to manage more effectively.

We actively collaborate with and inform resources developed by key stakeholders, including the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), national charities, training providers, and campaign groups. We also regularly contribute to Government consultations and related activity, through responsive evidence submissions to formal reviews, informal requests for insight, participation in and chairing of academic roundtables, and speaking at All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) events. These activities support meaningful knowledge exchange between research and national policymaking.

Our research consistently highlights the importance of an intersectional approach when examining women's health and reproductive journeys in the workplace. This work is complemented by allied research within our Centre exploring workplace challenges linked to protected characteristics such as ethnicity and race, religion, disability, and LGBTQ+ identities. We are also engaged in practical workplace innovations in this space, for example, BOOST, a five-year intervention transforming the social housing sector in Greater Manchester to enable ethnically diverse leaders to develop and thrive.

We would welcome new projects that deepen understanding of how to strengthen workplace health and wellbeing for women from minoritised communities, as well as those experiencing financial hardship.

If you would like to discuss any of our research and how it could support your organisational development, please do get in touch. We would also be grateful if you could let us know when you use any of our resources to inform your policies or practice, as tracking their use is essential for evidencing the impact of our work.

Lead contact: Dr Krystal Wilkinson
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Research & Resources

Menstruation in the workplace

Menstruation and menstrual health were included in our research project in partnership with the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust, when developing their *Well Women Strategy*. We have insights into the experiences and perceptions of both staff and their line managers.

Practical Resources

[CIPD menstrual health guidance \(2025\)](#) authored by Dr Wilkinson

[Well-women in the workplace: shaping strategy for key health issue \(Research Summary\) \(2023\)](#)

[Well-women in the workplace: shaping strategy for key health issue \(Full Report\) \(2023\)](#)

[CIPD Case Study based on the Northern Care Alliance project \(2023\)](#)

[Podcast for the Women's Organisation \(Episodes 7, 8 & 10\)](#)

*Example organisational policies and manager guidance available on request

Fertility Journeys in the workplace

Experiences across the fertility journey, including infertility, diagnostic testing, fertility treatment, and varied outcomes, were the central focus of a two-year Leverhulme Trust-funded study. Fertility testing and treatment also featured prominently in our research partnership with the Northern Care Alliance NHS Trust during the development of their *Well Women Strategy*.

Publications

Wilkinson, K. and Mumford, C. (2024) [Navigating fertility treatment alongside work and employment: The work-fertility interface. In Work-Life Inclusion: Broadening Perspectives Across the Life-Course](#) (pp. 67-79). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Wilkinson, K., Mumford, C. and Carroll, M. (2023). [Assisted Reproductive Technologies and work, employment and society: extending the debate on organisational involvement in/responsibilities around fertility and reproduction.](#)

Mumford, C., Wilkinson, K. and Carroll, M. (2023) “[Potential parenthood” and identity threats: Navigating complex fertility journeys alongside work and employment.](#)

Wilkinson, K Mumford, C and Carroll, M (2023). [Fertility is becoming a workplace issue, but employer support can create winners and losers](#)

Wilkinson, K (2022) [How fertility issues can affect employees - and what HR can do to provide support \(People Management\)](#)

Practical Resources

[Complex fertility journeys and employment project website, including ethnodrama audios](#)

[Complex fertility journeys and employment report for employers \(2022\)](#)

[Well-women in the workplace: shaping strategy for key health issue \(Research Summary\) \(2023\)](#)

[Well-women in the workplace: shaping strategy for key health issue \(Full Report\) \(2023\)](#)

[Workplace Fertility Campaign Group White Paper \(Dr Wilkinson is a co-author\)](#)

[Podcast for the Women’s Organisation \(Episodes 7, 8 & 10\)](#)

*Example organisational policies and manager guidance available on request

Pregnancy and Maternity in the workplace

Professor Rouse has an extensive track record of research and knowledge exchange on pregnancy and maternity in the workplace, including a particular focus on self-employed women and small businesses. We are also currently delivering a three-year maternity-management innovation project with the NHS. This document also includes dedicated sections on research into complications related to pregnancy and maternity, including pregnancy loss and perinatal mental ill-health.

Publications

Rouse, J., Atkinson, J. and Rowe, A. (2021) [Peering inside mutual adjustment: Rhythmanalysis of return to work from maternity leave](#) (International Small Business Journal)

Stumbitz, B., Lewis, S. and Rouse, J. (2018) [Maternity management in SMEs: A transdisciplinary review and research agenda](#), (International Journal of Management Reviews)

Lewis, S., Stumbitz, B., Miles, L. and Rouse, J. (2014) [Maternity Protection in SMEs: An International Review](#), report prepared for The International Labour Office, Geneva.

Rouse, J. and Sappleton, N. (2009) 'Managing maternity fairly and productively: support for small employers', *International Small Business Journal*, 27, 215-225.

Rouse, J. and Kitching, J. (2016) Entrepreneurial practice in pregnancy: a conceptual framework and research agenda. In: 9th Diana International Research Conference: Gender in Family Business & Gender and Innovation; 12-14 Jun 2016, Bodo, Norway. [Available on request from Professor Julia Rouse]

Rouse, J. (2009) 'Can You Hang On While I Give Birth and Breastfeed? Individualisation, Agency and Oppression in Entrepreneurs' Maternity Plans', presented at the Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship Conference, Liverpool. [Available on request from Professor Julia Rouse]

Rouse, J. (2005) 'Pregnancy and Maternity in Self-employment: Individualised Social Reproduction?', paper presented at the 28th Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Blackpool, November 2005. [Available on request from Professor Julia Rouse]

Practical Resources

[NHS Maternity management innovation project page: Research: Innovating workplace maternity management in the NHS | Manchester Metropolitan University](#)

Rouse, J., Sappleton, N. and Ellen, D. (2007) [An Action Plan to Support Small Businesses to Manage Maternity Fairly and Productively.](#)

*Example organisational policies and manager guidance available on request

Pregnancy and baby loss in the workplace

Early pregnancy endings, including miscarriage, emerged as a recurring theme in our two-year Leverhulme Trust-funded study on complex fertility journeys and employment. Pregnancy loss was also a central focus of our research partnership with the Northern Care Alliance NHS Trust during the development of their *Well Women Strategy*. In addition, pregnancy and baby loss continue to be core concerns within our current maternity-management innovation project with the NHS.

Practical Resources

[Well-women in the workplace: shaping strategy for key health issue \(Research Summary\) \(2023\)](#)

[Well-women in the workplace: shaping strategy for key health issue \(Full Report\) \(2023\)](#)

[NHS Maternity management innovation project page: Research: Innovating workplace maternity management in the NHS | Manchester Metropolitan University](#)

Dr Wilkinson has also contributed to research and publications on pregnancy loss and employment produced by both the CIPD and the Office for National Statistics.

*Example organisational policies and manager guidance available on request

Perinatal Mental Health in the Workplace

Dr Wilkinson has led a series of publications and empirical studies examining mental ill-health during pregnancy and the post-birth period (the perinatal period). Her work includes research within male-dominated organisational settings, such as policing, where perinatal mental health needs are often less recognised. Perinatal mental health is also a central focus of her ongoing maternity-management innovation project within the NHS.

Publications

Wilkinson, K. (2025) '[Does your organisation support employees' perinatal mental health?](#)' *People Management*.

Wilkinson, K., Lennie, S.J. and Duddin, K. (2024). [Perinatal Mental Health and Employment: Exploring the Work-Illness Intersection in the Context of UK Policing.](#) in *Work-Life Inclusion: Broadening Perspectives Across the Life-Course*

Wilkinson, K. (2023). [Maternal \(perinatal\) mental health and employment: An agenda for research and practice.](#) *Human Resource Management Journal*

Practical Resources

[Supervisors Toolkit \(hosted by Blue Light Card Foundation\)](#) (2025)

[Perinatal mental health and policing research summary](#) (2024)

[HR Toolkit \(hosted by PANDAS Foundation Charity\)](#)

Dr Wilkinson contributed to the development of a new corporate offering on perinatal mental health, delivered by the Maternal Mental Health Alliance: [The Parent Gap](#). This platform provides a range of resources for member organisations, including learning materials, policy guidance, and risk-assessment documentation.

In addition, Dr Wilkinson collaborated with several organisations featured in the site's [case studies](#), such as Greater Manchester Police, Kids Planet Day Nurseries, the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust, and Manchester Metropolitan University.

*Example manager guidance and policy insert examples available on request

Neonatal care in the Workplace

The issue of workplace support for parents whose babies are born early and/or unwell, and who require stays in neonatal care, has emerged repeatedly in our research on perinatal mental health, as well as in our maternity-management innovation project within the NHS.

Practical Resources

Dr Wilkinson contributed to Bliss's employer guidance on supporting staff in relation to the introduction of the 2025 Neonatal Care Leave and Pay legislation.

<https://www.bliss.org.uk/parents/support/neonatal-care-leave-and-pay-guidance-and-faqs>

*Example organisational policies and manager guidance available on request

Menopause in the workplace

Professor Carol Atkinson has led a series of publications and empirical research on the topic of menopause transition in the workplace, including specifically in the male dominated environment of policing. Menopause transition was also one of the focal topics in our research collaboration with the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust for their *Well Women Strategy*.

Publications

Atkinson, C., Carmichael, F. and Duberley, J. (2025) [A bio-psycho-social investigation of menopause transition and job satisfaction](#)

Atkinson, C., Carmichael, F. and Duberley, J. (2024) [Menopause transition and workplace well-being](#) in eds. Wilkinson, K. and Woolnough, H., *Work-Life Inclusion: Broadening Perspectives Across the Life-Course*

Atkinson, C., Page, C. and Duberley, J. (2024) [Menopause in the Workplace](#), in eds. Beck, V., Brewis, J. and Davies, A. *Menopause transitions and the workplace: theorising transitions, responsibilities and interventions*.

Atkinson, C., Carmichael, F. and Duberley, J. (2021) [The Menopause Taboo: examining women's embodied experiences of menopause in the UK police service](#)

Atkinson, C., Brewis, J., Beck, V., Davies, A. and Duberley, J. (2021) [Menopause and the workplace: new directions in HRM research and HR practice](#)

Atkinson, C., Carmichael, F. and Duberley, J. (2019) [Menopause Discrimination is a real thing: how employers can help](#)

Practical resources

Menopause taboo research briefing: [research-briefing-menopause-taboo-at-work.pdf](#)
Atkinson, C. and Carter, J. (2018) Menopause in the Workplace at West Yorkshire Police (available on request)

[Well-women in the workplace: shaping strategy for key health issue \(Research Summary\) \(2023\)](#)

[Well-women in the workplace: shaping strategy for key health issue \(Full Report\) \(2023\)](#)

Menopause Enquiry Tool: [Generating routes for women's leadership | Manchester Met](#)

Involuntary childlessness in the workplace

Involuntary childless at the end of a fertility journey was a core issue in our two-year Leverhulme Trust funded research project, so please see the section above for resources connected to this. The topic also arose in Dr Wilkinson's research on single and solo-living professional women and was a core focus of Dr Hadley's research on the experiences of men.

Publications

Hadley, R., Mumford, C., Carroll, M. and Wilkinson, K (2024) [Frontiers | Reproductive capital: theoretical foundations and empirical evidence from the workplace](#)

Wilkinson, K. and Rouse, J. (2022) [Solo-living and childless professional women: Navigating the 'balanced mother ideal' over the fertile years](#)

Hadley, R.A. (2021). [How is a Man Supposed to be a Man? Male Childlessness-a Life Course Disrupted](#)

Other relevant research and expertise

- Supporting women's careers across the life-course via the Generating Routes for Women's Leadership (GROWL) project
- Exploring the experiences of women with mental health issues working within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics research and innovation roles. This was a collaborative project led by Professor Dulini Fernando at Aston University.
- Dr Jamie Atkinson has expertise on fathers in the workplace: j.atkinson@mmu.ac.uk
- Dr Anneke Shaeffer has expertise on blended families and the workplace: a.schaeffer@mmu.ac.uk
- [Dr Jasmine Hearn](#) has expertise on women's health issues and navigating healthcare, including barriers to care/diagnosis, and healthcare communication j.hearn@mmu.ac.uk

Practical Resources

The different enquiry tools from the GROWL project are available here: [Generating routes for women's leadership | Manchester Met](#)

Project page for the mental health & STEM project, including guidance for employers and women: <https://www.aston.ac.uk/research/bss/abs/departments/work-organisation/stem-research>



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For general queries about women's health and reproductive journeys in the workplace, please contact Dr Krystal Wilkinson: k.wilkinson@mmu.ac.uk. You can view her profile and full list of publications here: <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/staff/profile/dr-krystal-wilkinson>

For queries specifically about maternity management, please contact Professor Julia Rouse: j.rouse@mmu.ac.uk. You can view her profile and full list of publications here: <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/staff/profile/professor-julia-rouse>

For queries about menopause transition and the workplace, please contact Professor Carol Atkinson: c.d.atkinson@mmu.ac.uk. You can view her profile and full list of publications here: <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/staff/profile/professor-carol-atkinson>

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Faculty website: <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/about-us/faculties/business-law/business-school/research>

Research Centre: <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/research/groups/decent-work-productivity>