

# 'Design Your Menopause Life' with MEG – A wellbeing resource powered by AI

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## Introduction

'Design Your Menopause Life' was conceptualised following many years research and design work in areas of healthspan, ageing experience and emerging technologies. Research insights revealed disruptive impact for some women as they navigated peri and post-menopause experience. In turn, it revealed challenges that could be offset at an earlier age to optimise ageing. Factors such as Physical (e.g., bone density) Emotional (Feeling heard and relevant in society) Mental (anxiety can often become a challenge because of hormonal changes) Nutrition (eating foods that enhance your feeling of wellness) – 'PhEMiniNe'. My hypothesis began to ask, *Is menopause a pathway to successful ageing, or not?* The 21st century presents population demographic challenges across the globe. It is anticipated that by mid-century, there will be more older adults than working age population. In addition, women of working age are choosing to retire early, or changing roles or types of work practice often to offset challenges experienced due to menopause symptoms. We know that in the UK, 14 million working hours are lost each year due to menopause symptoms. Furthermore, there is still ambiguity regarding identification of symptoms, access to support and empowerment through design. Marginalised groups, ethnic minorities and those with limited cognitive capacity are often overlooked or not included when design solutions or 'menotech' tools are introduced. In 2023, an in-person event was held in the Highlands and Islands campus of Glasgow School of Art, it welcomed a cross section of those who identified as women to the event and provided attendees in advance with 'cultural probe' packs to provoke and prime thinking and creativity in advance of the event. The event culminated in a co-design session at the 'menopause wall' in the studio sectioned into 'PhEMiniNe' expressions and Artifactualities from the cultural probe packs that attendees brought on the day.

## Methodology

The research to date has relied on Constructivist Grounded Theory, User Centred Design approaches including Participatory, Co-design and inclusive design considerations. It utilised cultural probes and digital cultural probes for attendees to an in-person event and a series of online workshops. Furthermore, usability and review sessions are currently underway with user groups as we develop the working prototype of MEG. We have an Employer testbed, a planned Discrete Choice Experiment to define the health and economic impact of MEG and further Employer testbeds and citizen guerilla testing opportunities over the coming year as we move towards proof of concept.

## Key findings

The Design Your Menopause Life in-person and online series Three concepts emerged 1) in-person event, 2) series of online workshops and finally 3) MEG (Menopause Experience Guide).

MEG has been deemed as the MVP with most probable commercial opportunity. It is being developed as an inclusive design and wellbeing resource that is accessed in the workplace through the Employee Assistance Programmes.

## Discussion

MEG is the result of impactful work and development because of interactions and engagement with people – citizens and professionals. Initially there was consideration that MEG would be a healthcare/primary care resource but through development activities and knowledge gathered through accelerator and start up programmes, it was decided to progress the wellbeing in the workplace route. This would have numerous challenges including perceptions, adoption impact security and data ownership statements. The working prototype of MEG will go through numerous planned testing in live settings over the next year, and will be scrutinised through the user experience, usability, safety, and impact for person and economy. In addition, we have pipeline features to add to the MVP which will begin development in 2026. AI has the capacity as a design 4 good technology that benefits people to access guidance, support and empowerment in a personalised, empathetic way to the network of people who experience or are affected by menopause symptoms. A major USP of MEG is its inception as a resource for all; with an inclusive design approach that facilitates and supports women (all ages, ethnicities, abilities), transpeople, working environment colleagues (e.g., line managers, HR) and partners, or those close to someone challenged with menopause symptoms and how they can be best supported/heard. Future work will involve adapting the technology as new wellbeing resource in the workplace for other life challenges that can affect people but impact economy.

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