

Menstrual Policy

It's important to start this policy by noting that, not all women menstruate and not all people who menstruate are women. With this in mind, the terminology used below is hopefully as inclusive as possible however, we welcome any amendments.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that colleagues who menstruate, are provided with a supportive environment across Vertical Advantage, in order to make this a more manageable time for them.

This policy is the result of multiple conversations across everyone in Vertical Advantage. The goal of which is to ensure that those who menstruate are made to feel comfortable, both physically and mentally during this time, via Vertical Advantage; providing colleagues with menstrual products; a wider context specific approach to flexible working, and there being space for mature, open dialogue on the topic in the office, across all colleagues.

This will be done by ensuring that colleagues are equipped with the necessary physical provisions they need in the office – at home for remote colleagues - and that they have the support of Vertical Advantage's Leadership Team, their direct line manager and other colleagues. This policy will also ensure that those who do not menstruate, are educated and aware of the seriousness, and the physical and mental impact menstruation has.

Physical provisions:

In the London office, the following items have been placed into a communal, easily accessible space, with colleagues who menstruate, being aware of this location via the '#menstruation' channel on Slack:

- Applicator and non-applicator tampons – of differing strengths;
- Sanitary pads and panty liners - of differing strengths;
- Pain killers;
- Hot water bottles;
- Iron tablets.

It was decided that snacks/comfort food is tricky to purchase as it is tailored to individual tastes. Additionally, for those with underlying health conditions, it can have adverse effects and so whilst this hasn't been sourced as of yet, if anyone would like something, they know they can ask the Operations Manager and this can be personally expensed. The value of this is to be determined on a case by case basis.

The above list is continuously reviewed to ensure it is inclusive as possible. If there are any products you feel are not accounted for, please inform the Operations Manager.

International colleagues are provided with an allowance of up to £10 GBP per month which they can use to expense menstruation products. This will be approved by the Operations Manager, in advance, for their agency to then pay to them.

Working environment:

1. Flexible working:

Whilst Vertical Advantage has a flexible working policy, colleagues who are menstruating are entitled to; work outside of the current flex policy during their menstrual cycle; work from home on days when colleagues are usually required to be in the office; or paid time off, if required. As individuals experiences of menstruation differ hugely, we have empowered colleagues who menstruate to decide on what is going to help them be most productive; whether this be a later start so they can get more rest; a day to work from home; or to have a day(s) off to rest and re-energise. Please refer to Appendix 1 (below) for the company protocol on communicating this internally.

2. Informal communication channel:

A private Slack channel has been set up with those who have a menstrual cycle, across Vertical Advantage. This is an informal channel where colleagues can have open discussion. It is also there as a place for UK colleagues to inform the current Operations Manager, if menstrual products need to be purchased as it was decided that whilst replenishing from existing supplies is a joint endeavor, the Operations Manager, will be responsible for purchasing items.

3. Company Training

It is part of Vertical Advantage's hiring, ongoing training, onboarding process, to ensure that all colleagues read this policy document and are acutely aware of the company's attitudes towards menstruation, including expected behaviours, eg. not making derogatory remarks, when it comes to this topic, whether they menstruate or not.

Ensuring the importance of this, from the beginning of a colleagues journey with the organisation is vital and line managers will have further training on the topic to ensure they are aware of the protocols, including being encouraged to ask questions if there is something they're not sure of.

We hope that all of the above steps will enable Vertical Advantage to maintain and promote an inclusive working environment for all colleagues.

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Appendix 1: Protocol on communicating time off/flexible working of colleagues due to menstruation:

- As soon as a menstruating colleague begins to feel unwell/unable to work, they can call, text, slack message their line manager, the Operations Manager, or another trusted colleague.
 - The colleague in question will then communicate if, they're not going to be able to work either a full day, if they need to work a half day, or if they need a few hours off, and how this will be allocated, ie. time made up elsewhere or paid time off; if they are going to work from home (on a usual office day) or, if they need to arrive in the office later than the current flex policy allows.
- Wider communication of why someone might be working more flexibly, is up to the menstruating colleague to decide. There is no requirement for the entire business, or even their direct team to know and this will not be shared unless expressly communicated by the menstruating colleague.



It is Vertical Advantage's strong intention that this policy, put into practice will see a reduction in the stigma around menstruation that has previously been felt, alongside facilitating healthy, open discussions around menstruation across the business.