



Schools - Menopause Policy

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Committee: Standards

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Menopause is a normal part of every woman's* life. This policy recognises that the menopause is an equality and occupational health and safety issue and that women may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after menopause.
- 1.2 The Trust attitude towards the menopause and will treat all individuals with dignity and respect during this time and ensure that the workplace does not make symptoms worse.
- 1.3 The Trust is committed to ensuring that women feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms openly, without embarrassment, and are able to ask for support and adjustments in order to continue to work safely in the organisation. For this reason, the menopause at work is an issue for men as well as women.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. It is not contractual and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment – however, if the Trust wishes to amend the Menopause Policy, staff will be consulted on proposed changes via the recognised Trade Unions.
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to staff employed at Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College.

3. Purpose

- 3.1 This policy aims to:
 - Create an environment where employees feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work.

- Ensure everyone understands what menopause is, can confidently have good conversations, and are clear on the school's policy and practices, supported by Human Resources and Occupational Health.
- Ensure that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place, recognising that the menopause and perimenopause is an individual experience.
- Reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 The menopause is a stage of life when a woman* stops having periods. It typically affects those aged between 45 and 55, when oestrogen (female sex hormones) levels begin to fall. In the UK, the average age to reach the menopause is 51.
- 4.2 Perimenopause is the time of hormonal change leading up to this, when a woman may experience symptoms. Post-menopause is the time beyond menopause.
- 4.3 Early menopause is when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45. It can happen naturally, or as a side effect of some treatments/medicines.
- 4.4 For the purpose of this policy, any reference to the menopause shall include perimenopause and early menopause.

**The Trust acknowledges that while the majority of people affected by the menopause will be women, those who are trans or non-binary may also experience the menopause or menopause-type symptoms. The support outlined in this policy is designed to meet the above aims for all affected employees.*

5. Symptoms

- 5.1 Employees suffering from the menopause may experience symptoms that cause changes to their emotions and other aspects of their health, some of which may impact them at work. Employees may experience some or all of the symptoms to varying degrees.
- 5.2 Menopausal symptoms might include but are not limited to:
- Hot flushes, night sweats and palpitations and;
 - Difficulty sleeping, insomnia and fatigue and;
 - Low mood, sudden mood changes, anxiety and depression and;
 - Headaches and joint and muscle pain and;
 - Weakened bladder function and urinary tract infections and;
 - Vaginal dryness and reduced sex drive and;
 - Problems with memory, confidence and concentration
- 5.3 For some employees, being at work may make their symptoms worse. For example, if the temperature is too high, this may cause symptoms such as hot flushes, dizziness, discomfort, sweating and heart palpitations.

- 5.4 Symptoms affecting sleep can make it difficult for staff experiencing them to concentrate and stay focused, while low confidence, low mood and anxiety may impact on decision making and relationships with colleagues.
- 5.5 The Trust acknowledges that the menopause will affect everybody differently – some employees may experience no symptoms at all, and some may experience a variety. We will adapt our response to staff affected by the menopause on a case-by-case basis.

6. Legislation and guidance

- 6.1 Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employers have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all staff, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- 6.2 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require that employers make an assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees. This requires undertaking general risk assessments, which should include specific risks to the health of staff affected by the menopause.
- 6.3 The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against an individual based on the protected characteristics, which include age, sex and disability. Employers are under a statutory duty to consider whether any ‘reasonable adjustments’ are required to alleviate any disadvantages staff encounter based on these characteristics.
- 6.4 Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 states that a person has a disability if:
- They have a physical or mental impairment, **and**
 - The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities
- 6.5 Relating specifically to menopause symptoms:
- Many of the aforementioned symptoms would be likely to be classified as a physical and/or mental impairment
 - ‘Substantial’ means more than minor or trivial
 - ‘Long-term’ means an impairment if it has lasted for at least 12 months, is likely to last for at least 12 months, or is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected
 - ‘Day to day activities’ are those carried out by most people on a regular basis, and includes but is not limited to: walking, driving, carrying or moving things, being able to concentrate, writing, reading, typing, speaking
- 6.6 Ongoing symptoms linked to the menopause may meet the definition of a disability and where they do, employers will be required to consider whether any reasonable adjustments are required to alleviate any disadvantage.
- 6.7 Any such adjustments will be made on a case-by-case basis and, where appropriate, employees affected by the menopause will be offered a variety of approaches to support them.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Senior Staff

7.1 Senior staff will make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to support employees experiencing the menopause, and to make sure the workplace doesn't make their symptoms worse, by:

- Carrying out individual risk assessments to assess working conditions in line with the specific needs of employees affected by the menopause
- Monitoring the wellbeing of employees through regular structured conversations
- Providing resources and training opportunities to make sure that all line managers and staff are aware of the menopause, its potential impact on work, and what adjustments may be necessary
- Promoting information about and access to external support services
- Ensuring good ventilation and air quality throughout the school, leaving doors open where appropriate and ensuring windows can be safely opened
- Ensuring regular access to cold drinking water for all staff
- Regulating and monitoring the temperature of the School and collecting feedback from employees, as well as ensuring the temperature can be regulated per room by turning down radiators for example
- Ensuring toilet, washing and sanitary facilities are accessible for employees, and establishing a system that allows for cover for staff to access these facilities where necessary while they are working
- Providing small desk fans to help staff cool down
- Fitting blinds to windows
- Designating a member of staff such as a wellbeing/menopause champion that staff affected by the menopause can speak to about their symptoms in confidence, if they do not feel comfortable doing so with their line manager

7.2 Senior staff will work to create a culture in the Trust where employees can talk openly about the menopause by:

- Providing information on the menopause in the staff room, e.g. posters and leaflets
- Creating a support group so that those who want to can seek support from each other
- Providing training for employees and managers to achieve consistent practice
- Considering the use of an employee assistance programme (EAP)

Role of Line Managers

7.3 Line managers who work with employees who may be affected by the menopause will:

- Provide a non-judgemental, empathetic and confidential support system to employees
- Appreciate the personal nature of any conversations about the menopause and treat them confidentially and sensitively
- Monitor sickness absence, and have support meetings with employees if any patterns emerge

- Have regular, informal conversations with employees that they line manage who are affected by the menopause to discuss what support they need, and record any reasonable adjustments that are agreed
- Consider flexible working requests in order to accommodate acute symptoms
- Allow staff affected by the menopause to take regular breaks from their work if necessary to help manage symptoms
- Give swift permission for absence (where feasibly possible) to attend medical appointments
- Promote information about and access to external support services
- Record menopause-related absences as an 'ongoing health issue' instead of as an individual short-term absence to avoid triggering sickness absence procedures
- Be sensitive to health issues such as the menopause during the performance management/appraisal process
- Ask the employee what they are doing to help themselves and if they can suggest any small reasonable adjustments the Trust could implement

Role of staff members affected by the menopause

7.4 We encourage employees who are experiencing menopausal symptoms that are impacting their health and wellbeing at work to:

- Share their practical needs to reduce the difficulties the menopause can cause and their preferred coping strategies with their line manager/menopause champion or another trusted member of staff
- Report honestly about their wellbeing and let their line manager/menopause champion or another trusted member of staff, if the menopause is having an impact on this
- Make time in their schedule to visit their GP and other support services
- Access our employee assistance programme (EAP) and counselling for further support

Role of all employees

7.5 The Trust aims to put in place a wellbeing strategy which is focussed on addressing those matters which have been identified as priorities for improvement as well as promoting healthier lifestyles. This will be supported by initiatives which aim to raise awareness of wellbeing issues, offer practical support or advice to employees, address training needs and/or seek feedback (e.g. through regular 1:1's). These will be reviewed and, where necessary, adjusted each year in line with changing needs.

7.6 All employees are expected to:

- Promote health and wellbeing for themselves and others at all times
- Treat each other with empathy and respect
- Support other members of staff, such as by providing practical assistance or emotional reassurance
- Accept and support any adjustments that employees affected by the menopause may be receiving as a result of their symptoms
- Report honestly about their wellbeing to their line manager or to another trusted member of staff.
- Attend training sessions

- Responsibility for their own health and wellbeing

8. Further resources

- Menopause (NHS)
- Menopause Matters
- Menopause: diagnosis and management (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)
- The Daisy Network charity
- Menopause in the Workplace
- Women's Health Concern
- Talking Menopause
- Menopause resources from the CIPD, particularly for Line managers
- Champion Health – Menopause and Work
- ACAS – Menopause at Work