



**Human
Resources**



Menopause Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Menopause is a natural stage of life when an individual's oestrogen levels decline, and they stop menstruating. Symptoms can be experienced over several years, so it's a transitional phase rather than a 'one-off' event. It typically affects individuals between the ages of 45 and 55, but for some, this can be later or earlier in their life.
- 1.2. Early menopause (before 45 years) can happen naturally (known as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency) or due to certain treatments, e.g., for cancer or ovary removal and is known as induced or surgical menopause
- 1.3. The 'perimenopause' is the phase leading up to the menopause when an individual's hormone balance starts to change. During this time they may start to experience menopause symptoms whilst still having periods.
- 1.4. Individuals are said to have reached the menopause when they haven't had a period for over a year. The symptoms last on average for four years, but for some can last much longer.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Make sure that our school can support staff affected by the menopause and help them to feel comfortable at work, both when experiencing symptoms and when asking for support and adjustments
- Set out how our school will make reasonable adjustments to minimise the risk of the working environment making menopausal symptoms worse for those experiencing them
- Minimise menopause-related stigma in our school by educating staff on what it is and the symptoms that staff affected by it might suffer and fostering an inclusive working environment
- Provide further resources to help staff, particularly line managers, to support others through difficulties the menopause may cause them
- Make managers feel confident about managing and supporting those with menopausal symptoms

3. Symptoms

- 3.1. Some symptoms of menopause are easier to spot than others. Here are a few of the most common. However, bear in mind that this is not an exhaustive or exclusive list and some may be present and some not. They can also fluctuate and be experienced to varying degrees.
 - Hot flushes / night sweats
 - Skin changes – dryness / acne / general irritation
 - Palpitations
 - Muscle and joint stiffness, aches, and pains
 - Irregular or altered periods
 - Weight gain
 - Recurrent urinary tract infections
 - Headaches
 - Sleep disturbance leading to tiredness and other issues
 - Changes in mood, e.g. depression, anxiety, memory loss, panic attacks, reduced concentration
 - Exacerbate symptoms of pre-existing conditions (for example migraine and osteoporosis)
- 3.2. For some individuals, 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.
- 3.3. Symptoms affecting sleep can make it difficult for staff to concentrate and stay focused, while low confidence, low mood and anxiety may impact on decision-making and relationships with colleagues.
- 3.4. The menopause will affect everybody differently – some individuals may experience no symptoms at all, and some may experience a variety. The response should be adapted to staff affected by the menopause on a case-by-case basis.

4. Legislation and guidance

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require that employers assess 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.
- 4.3. 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. 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.

- 4.4. 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. Any such adjustments will be made on a case-by-case basis and, where appropriate, staff affected by the menopause will be offered a variety of approaches to support them.

5. Key manager actions and support

- 5.1. The most important thing is to start and have a conversation. The easier you make it for someone to open up to you, the easier it will be to identify the support they need. Menopause can affect people's confidence and it can be very daunting talking to someone who has no knowledge or awareness of the menopause.
- 5.2. In some circumstances it may be beneficial to have a chaperone or arrange for a female colleague or another appropriate manager to initiate a conversation. Make sure that there is a good privacy, with minimal interruptions and adequate time for any meeting or conversation to take place. Managers might also consider additional training opportunities and guidance to assist.
- 5.3. The more supportive and knowledgeable you are about the range of menopausal symptoms, the less likely that individuals will feel embarrassed to approach you and discuss how the menopause is affecting their health and their work.
- 5.4. If someone's performance is suffering, it's important to help them address the root cause. Whilst in many cases individuals experience mild symptoms, in some cases the menopause can be serious enough to affect a person's performance at work. In this situation it's in everyone's best interest to discuss potential adjustments that could help the individual perform to their full potential.
- 5.5. The following are helpful in supporting employees:
 - Regular contact – regular and informal one to ones can provide opportunities for conversation. The health and wellbeing of any staff member should be a regular point of discussion.
 - Don't make assumptions – everyone is different, so take your lead from the individual. Discussing any health condition can be a sensitive and personal issue.
 - Ask – You will know your staff member best, but in general most people would prefer a concerned and genuine enquiry about how they are as opposed to silence.
 - Be informed – ensure you are aware of any relevant policies and procedures and provide that information to staff members to support their health and wellbeing.
 - Assessing risk and consideration of adjustments – employers have a legal duty to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the workplace risks

to the health and safety of their staff members. Contributing to fulfilling the legal responsibility for health and safety will help ensure a staff member's menopause symptoms are not being exacerbated by their job.

- Risk assessment – a risk assessment should consider the specific needs of menopausal individuals and ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse.
- Agreeing adjustments – simple changes to someone's role or working environment can help ensure the menopause does not become a barrier to performance. Consider involving relevant experts where appropriate, such as an occupational health practitioner, to help identify appropriate adjustments that could be put in place to help ease the impact of their symptoms on their work.
- Monitor sickness absence – have support meetings with staff if any patterns emerge.

6. Role of staff members affected by the menopause

- 6.1. We encourage staff 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.
- 6.2. Be prepared to seek medical advice from your GP in the first instance, but to engage with other support also, for example Occupational Health.
- 6.3. Be aware that there are many external organisations which you can access that have a specific remit for menopause, e.g.:
 - [Menopause - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
 - [Menopause Matters, menopausal symptoms, remedies, advice](#)
 - [British Menopause Society | For healthcare professionals and others specialising in post reproductive health \(thebms.org.uk\)](http://thebms.org.uk)
- 6.4. Access our employee assistance programme for further support.