MENOPAUSE POLICY AND GUIDANCE

TRINITY CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL	**Reviewed by:**	Head and Leadership Team
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1. INTRODUCTION

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 the menopause.

Menopause is a natural part of every woman's life and it isn't always an easy transition. With the right support it can be much better. Whilst not every woman suffers with symptoms, supporting those who do should improve their experience at work.

The changing age of the UK's workforce means that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work. Research shows that the majority of women are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager or ask for the support or adjustments that they need.

Many women are unaware of the variety of symptoms that peri-menopause (the transitional period before menopause) and menopause can cause, so may not be aware that difficulties they may be experiencing with issues such as anxiety, headaches, memory loss, insomnia and joint pain could be due to the menopause. The more that the issue is openly discussed, the easier it becomes for women to access support and for their colleagues to have insight and be able to support them.

Menopause should not be taboo or hidden. We want everyone to understand what menopause is and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. This is not just an issue for women, it's important that everyone has a full awareness of it. This policy and guidance aim to increase knowledge and change perceptions and behaviours so that staff awareness is increased, and the right support is provided to all staff who need it.

2. AIM/PURPOSE

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.

This policy aims to:

- make sure that our school can support women who are affected by the menopause and help them to feel comfortable at work, both when experiencing symptoms and when asking for support and adjustments;

- ensure that women suffering with menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss them, ask for support and any reasonable adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles;
- 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 so everyone understands what it is, what the symptoms that staff affected by it might suffer, and enable them to confidently have good conversations and be clear on the School's policy and procedures;
- provide further resources and guidance to help staff, particularly line managers, to support others through difficulties that the menopause may cause them. Appendix 1 and Appendix 1A are attached to provide guidance on how to agree with an individual how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required;
- reduce any absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.

3. DEFINITITIONS

The **Menopause** is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops having periods and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. 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.

Perimenopause is the time of hormonal change leading up to this, when a woman may experience symptoms.

Post-menopause is the time beyond menopause, although this doesn't necessarily mean that menopause symptoms are gone. Symptoms may ease or stop for some, but some women may continue to experience symptoms for years.

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.

For the purpose of this policy, any reference to the menopause shall include perimenopause and early menopause.

4. SYMPTOMS

It is important to note that not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help of support. However, 75% of women do experience some symptoms and 25% could be classed as severe.

Individuals suffering from the menopause may experience symptoms that cause physical and psychological changes and can affect a wide range of health issues, some of which may impact them at work.

Menopausal symptoms might include:

- problems with memory, confidence and concentration;
- brain fog and feelings of stress and overwhelm;
- hot flushes, night sweats and palpitations;
- difficulty sleeping, insomnia and fatigue;
- low mood, anxiety and depression;
- headaches;
- joint and muscle pain;

- weakened bladder function and urinary tract infections;
- vaginal dryness and reduced sex drive.

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.

Issues with brain fog and memory can make doing ordinary tasks challenging, for example losing a train of thought during a discussion, or experiencing issues organising and prioritising tasks, where these would not have previously been evident.

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.

We acknowledge that the menopause will affect everybody differently – some individuals 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.

In accordance with NICE guidelines, women should be advised to seek medical advice from their GP in the first instance.

5. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

This Policy has been informed by guidance from the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice).

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 The Governing Body

The Governing Body has ultimate responsibility for health and safety matters in the school but will delegate day-to-day responsibility to the Head.

The Governing Body has a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that staff are not exposed to risks to their health and safety on the school premises.

The Governing Body, as the employer, also has a duty to:

- Assess the risks to staff and others affected by school activities in order to identify and introduce the health and safety measures necessary to manage those risks;
- Inform employees about risks and the measures in place to manage them;
- Make sure that adequate health and safety training is provided.

The governor who oversees health and safety is **NAME**.

6.2 Role of Senior Staff

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

- providing resources and training opportunities to make sure that all line managers and HR 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;
- designating a member of staff (HR Team) 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;
- ensuring good ventilation and air quality throughout the school*;*
- ensuring regular access to cold drinking water for all staff;
- ensuring toilet, washing and sanitary facilities are accessible for staff*;*
- allowing small desk fans to help staff cool down;
- ensuring window blinds are fitted and working in offices and classrooms.

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

- providing information on the menopause in the staff room, eg posters and leaflets;
- providing information for all staff and managers to achieve consistent practice;
- referring staff to our employee assistance programme (EAP).

6.3 Role of Line Managers

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

- provide a non-judgemental, empathetic and confidential support system to staff;
- appreciate the personal nature of any conversations about the menopause and treat them confidentially and sensitively;

- familiarise themselves with this Menopause Policy and use the guidance in the Appendices to have open discussions about menopause and agree how best to support their members of staff;
- monitor sickness absence, and have support meetings with staff if any patterns emerge;
- record menopause-related absence as an 'ongoing health issue' instead of as an individual short-term absence;
- have regular, informal conversations with staff 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 temporary flexible working requests in order to accommodate acute symptoms;
- give swift permission for absence to attend medical appointments;
- promote information about and access to external support services;
- be sensitive to health issues such as the menopause during the performance management/appraisal process;
- if necessary, seek advice from our external HR advisers or discuss a referral with the staff member to occupational health for further support.

6.4 Role of Staff Members affected by the Menopause

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

- seek medical advice from their GP in the first instance; Appendix 2 offers a helpful guide for women to have a constructive conversation about menopause with their doctor;
- share their practical needs to reduce the difficulties the menopause can cause and their preferred coping strategies with their line manager, or with a member of the HR Team;
- report honestly about their wellbeing and let their line manager or another trusted member of staff, such as a member of the HR Team, know if the menopause is having an impact on this;
- practise self-management of symptoms, with support from managers and colleagues, as well as making time to visit their GP and access other support services;
- Access our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) from Health Assured via the Wisdom app or via the free and confidential helpline (0800 028 0199) for further support.

6.5 Role of All Staff

All staff are expected to:

- promote health and wellbeing for themselves and others at all times;
- treat each other with empathy and respect, promoting a supportive environment;
- accept and support any adjustments that staff 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, such as a member of the HR Team.

7. FURTHER RESOURCES

- Menopause (NHS)
- Menopause Matters
- Menopause: diagnosis and management (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)
- The Daisy Network charity

- Women's Health Concern - quick links to online help and advice
- Menopause in the Workplace
- Henpicked: Menopause Hub
- Balance: information and tracking app
- Menopause resources from the CIPD, particularly for:
  - Line managers
  - HR staff

8. LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

This policy is linked to our:

- Equality Information and Objectives Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Health and Safety Policy Statement
- Performance Management Policy
- Staff Attendance Management Policy
- Equality Information and Objectives Policy

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The policy will be the responsibility of the Governors' Personnel Committee, advised by the Head and Deputy in charge of staffing, and ratified by the Full Governing Body.

Appendix 1 – Line Managers' Guidance for Colleague Discussions

We recognise that every woman is different, and it is, therefore, not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines. All advice is given, and written, in accordance with recommendations and best practice produced by the Faculty of Occupational Medicine's (FOM) at the request of the Chief Medical Officer for England.

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly;
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below) and hand out the Menopause Advice Sheet (Appendix 2);
- Agree actions, and how to implement them. You should use the template at Appendix 1A to record the meeting, so that all parties agree what has been discussed, and the next steps, before the meeting ends. Ensure that this record is treated as confidential and is stored securely;
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting.

Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor or staff room.

Symptoms Support

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including, but not exhaustively or exclusively, those listed below; support for women should be considered as detailed below:

Hot Flushes

- Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk (where possible a USB connected desk fan to ensure environmentally friendly) or moving near a window, or away from a heat source;
- Easy access to drinking water;
- Be allowed to adapt prescribed uniform;
- Have access to a rest room for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush.

Heavy/light Periods

- Have permanent access to washroom facilities;
- Ensure storage space is available for a change of clothing.

Headaches

- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water;
- Offer a quiet space to work;
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices;
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

Difficulty Sleeping

- Ask to be considered for flexible working, particularly if suffering from a lack of sleep.

Low Mood

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of the work area;

- Identify a ‘time out space’ to be able to go to ‘clear their head’;
- Access the Wisdom app from Health Assured, our Employee Assistance Programme, or contact them on their confidential 24/7 free helpline on 0800 028 0199

Loss of Confidence

- Ensure there are regular personal development meetings and discussions;
- Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues;
- If necessary, agree some protected time to catch up with work.

Poor Concentration

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and see if working pattern/practice can be adjusted accordingly;
- Review task allocation and workload;
- Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment;
- If practical, offer quiet space to work;
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices;
- Where possible, reduce interruptions;
- Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having ‘protected time’, so that they are not disturbed;
- If necessary, have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

Anxiety

- Promote the counselling services provided by our Employee Assistance provider on 0800 028 0199, or online via the Wisdom app, the code for which is MHA080721;
- Identify a ‘buddy’ for the colleague to talk to, outside of their work area;
- Learn how to use relaxation techniques;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

Panic Attacks

- Where possible, agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;
- Identify a ‘buddy’ outside of work area;
- Learn how to use relaxation techniques;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.

If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.

Appendix 1A: Confidential Colleague Discussion – Template

Member of staff's name:	
Job title:	
Present at meeting (line manager's name and position:	
Date of discussion:	

Summary of discussion:

Agreed Actions/Adjustments:

Date of next review meeting:	
Signed (member of staff):	
Signed (manager):	

Appendix 2: Menopause Advice Sheet

How to talk to your GP about menopause

If you are suffering from menopausal symptoms to the point where they're getting in the way of you enjoying life, it's time to talk to your doctor, although sometimes, that's easier said than done.

We all know how difficult it can often be just to get an appointment, and then it's often only ten minutes. And talking about symptoms can be hard, let alone if you feel rushed or unprepared. So, what can you do? We've put together some helpful, straightforward tips to help you get the best from your appointment.

Don't wait. It is all too common for women to feel they must simply 'put up' with menopausal symptoms as a part of life, but if they are affecting you, there are things you can do, and support is available. There is no need to wait until symptoms feel unbearable.

Read the NICE guidelines. This stands for National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and these guidelines are what your doctor will use to determine the type of conversations to have with you and treatments to offer. There are guidelines for patients, NICE - menopause guidance for patients which are really useful to read before you see your GP, so you know what to expect.

Prepare for your appointment. It's easier for your doctor to understand what's going on if you provide them with all the information. That may sound obvious, but blood tests to say where you are on the menopause transition aren't always available or accurate – your hormones can fluctuate daily during this time. So, your doctor will be thinking about what to recommend for you, based on your symptoms.

Keep a list of your symptoms, NHS - List of menopause symptoms , your menstrual cycle, hot flushes, how you're feeling, and any changes you've noticed. Write them down and take them to your appointment. Your doctor will thank you for it, and it's more likely that together, you'll find the right solution faster. And, if you have any preferences about how you manage your symptoms, tell them that too – for example, if you'd like to try hormone replacement therapy (HRT), or not.

Ask the receptionist which doctor is best to talk to about menopause. Receptionists are often the fount of all knowledge at a surgery and they can help you find the best person to have your appointment with – it might not be your usual GP, it could be someone who has had special training in the subject.

Ask for a longer appointment. If you don't think your standard appointment will be long enough, try to book a double appointment, as some surgeries do offer this.

Don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion. If you don't feel you've received the help you need, ask to speak to someone else. Don't be put off, you know how you're feeling, and how it's affecting you.

Ask if there is a menopause clinic in your area. Occasionally, there are regional clinics, specifically devoted to menopause. If there is one in your area, and you think this would be helpful, ask for a referral.

Take your partner or a friend with you. You may have spent your life supporting others and, during menopause, it's your turn to ask them for support. Your partner, or a friend, will know how the symptoms are affecting you. They could support you at the appointment, and also find out how they can continue supporting you.

What to expect from your doctor There are certain things a GP should – and should not – do during your appointment.

A GP should:

- talk to you about your lifestyle, and how to manage both your symptoms, and your longer-term health;
- offer advice on hormone replacement therapy and other non-medical options;
- talk to you about the safety and effectiveness of any treatment.

They should not:

- tell you that it's just that time of your life. Yes, menopause is a natural stage, but please don't feel that means you should have to put up with every symptom without help;
- tell you they don't prescribe HRT. It's up to you what you want to try, and for them to say whether it could be right for you, depending on your medical history;
- impose unnecessary time restrictions, such as they will only prescribe this once, or for a year or two. This is an ongoing conversation, and if your symptoms persist, you will still need help to manage them.

Remember, your GP is there to help and support you, and you should feel comfortable and confident in talking to them about your symptoms and any help you need.

Don't think you have to struggle through menopause when there is help and support available.

All staff can access counselling by using the Wisdom app from Health Assured (the code is MHA080721) and accessing live messaging and video calls, or by contacting the Employee Assistance confidential helpline on 0800 028 0199.