



Menopause Policy

Version	1.0
Approved By	Trustee Board
Issue Date	30.06.2023
Review Date	30.06.2024

REVIEW HISTORY

VERSION NO.	DATE OF CHANGE	CHANGE SUMMARY	REF.

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1 Summary

This policy aims to raise awareness of menopause related issues at work and to assist Line Managers in supporting employees who are experiencing the menopause and their associated symptoms. The Trust is committed to the wellbeing of all employees and aims to create an environment where employees feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support at work, and where Line Managers feel confident in holding relevant conversations and providing appropriate support.

This policy ensures that Line Managers understand their responsibilities in relation to supporting employees who are impacted by the menopause, and to ensure that it is approached sensitively and meaningfully.

2 Introduction

There are significant benefits in supporting employees who are experiencing the menopause and ensuring they feel able to discuss any concerns with their Line Manager. This way we can proactively take any reasonable steps to ensure any individual needs are met. This will enable us to support the health and wellbeing of our employees which will in turn help to retain and recruit talented employees and reduce sickness absence rates.

The menopause is a natural stage of life experienced by half of the workforce at some point, and yet it can feel like a taboo subject. This means many employees with menopausal symptoms, which can range from mild to severe, suffer in silence. We commit to ensuring that the menopause is not an awkward or embarrassing topic and that employees do not feel that they need to press pause on their working life, or in some cases leave altogether. Often a few simple changes to an employee's working environment can make a world of difference – enabling someone experiencing menopausal symptoms to continue performing and contributing to their full potential. This may be explored through the Flexible Working Policy and through looking at reasonable adjustments.

3 Menopause and perimenopause: definition and symptoms

Menopause is a natural stage of life when an individual's oestrogen levels decline, and they stop having periods. As menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years, it is best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event. The 'perimenopause' is the phase leading up to the menopause when the hormone balance starts to change. This can begin many years before the menopause begins. The menopause and perimenopause can cause a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms that can last for several years. Many employees experience symptoms, but everyone is different; symptoms can fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees. Experiencing any of the typical symptoms can pose a challenge for people as they go about their daily lives, including being at work. Some of the symptoms of the menopause include:

- psychological issues such as mood changes, anxiety and depression, memory loss, brain fog, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration
- hot flushes (brief and sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck and

chest), including night sweats

- sleep disturbance that can make people feel tired and irritable
- irregular periods and/or periods can become light or heavy
- muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs) including cystitis
- headaches
- weight gain
- palpitations (heartbeats that become more noticeable)
- skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness)

4 Legal considerations

While the menopause is not covered specifically under any legislation, no one should face a detriment based on their sex, age, or gender reassignment under the Equality Act 2010. This also includes disability discrimination, which may cover employees who develop conditions related to the menopause. This policy will assist Line Managers to manage situations that arise in line with their obligations under the legislation.

This policy sets out information and ensures compliance with the:

- Equality Act 2010, including Public Sector Equality Duty
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- General Data Protection Regulation Act 2018
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

5 Key principles

The key principles of the Trust's approach to menopause include:

- raising awareness of the menopause
- recognising the menopause as a health issue seeking to support employees during the menopause and perimenopause
- approaching menopause in an open way and listening sensitively about the effects it may cause
- encouraging employees to discuss their needs in regard to menopause and work with their Line Manager if they feel able to do so
- accommodating reasonable adjustments to the working environment and/or working patterns where it is possible to do so
- providing advice which is available from Occupational Health for both the Line Manager and the employee, including health & wellbeing articles

6 Line Manager's responsibilities

Taking a proactive stance to supporting employees through the menopause can ensure that employees are able to ask for help and adjustments so they can continue to be successful in their roles and reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms. This will also reassure employees that the Trust is a responsible employer committed to supporting their needs during this transitional stage of their lives. We would expect support to be given as part of the regular supervision and day to day management provided by Line Managers. These points of contact are fundamental to supporting individual health and wellbeing, spotting early signs of ill health or distress, and initiating early intervention. The level of trust built with employees will determine the extent to which colleagues are able to discuss menopausal symptoms and any support or adjustments they need at work.

For Line Managers, using this policy and familiarising themselves with the subject should help improve confidence in being open to discussing this with employees, thus reassuring employees that support will be provided. However, it should be noted that no employee is obliged to discuss their symptoms if they wish to keep the matter private.

Line Managers are:

- the first point of contact if someone needs to discuss their health concerns or needs a change or adjustment to their work or working hours, to enable them to perform to their full potential
- responsible for implementing the people management policies and practices that can help someone experiencing the menopause to feel supported, and to be effective in their role
- responsible for managing absence and keeping in touch if someone is off work ill or because of their menopausal symptoms, as well as supporting an effective return to work
- responsible for managing in a supportive and confidential manner

7 Approaching conversations about menopause

Conversations about health and wellbeing of employees should be a normal part of day-to-day management and this conversation is no different. If a Line Manager has concerns, particularly if employees are behaving differently, underperforming, or taking more sick leave, then this should be addressed as soon as possible.

Within the meeting:

- Allow the employee to decide how much information they wish to disclose
- Do not make assumptions about an employee's health condition or ask them a direct question as to whether they have menopause symptoms
- If you have concerns about an employee's wellbeing or performance, approach conversations with empathy and try to understand how the employee is feeling from their perspective

- Hold the conversation in a private, confidential setting where the employee feels at ease
- Explore with the employee what impact they feel that their symptoms have on their ability to undertake their role
- Seek their views on what changes to their working practices, working environment, or auxiliary aids (such as a fan) would support them in undertaking their role
- Give a full and fair consideration to all potential reasonable adjustments, (e.g., what action is required, by whom and within what timescale)
- A record should be maintained as to what reasonable adjustments were considered to support the employee and the reasons for any decisions taken

If you are uncertain whether an adjustment is reasonable, seek advice from the Trust HR Department.

8 Reasonable adjustments

The following list sets out some possible examples of reasonable adjustments which could be made to accommodate an employee's symptoms:

- consider the employee's needs with regards to location in their working environment, for instance if they need to be near to a window
- provide fans to maintain appropriate temperatures
- ensure toilet facilities are easily accessible
- provide access to a rest room, for example a quiet room
- temporary adjustment to sickness triggers (with advice from Occupational Health)

9 Managing performance

In some situations, the symptoms of the menopause can result in poor performance or high levels of sickness which meet the triggers within our performance development and management of absence policies. In these circumstances it is important that informal conversations have taken place and reasonable adjustments have been made where possible, with time allowed for the adjustments to take effect. If concerns remain and are having a continued detrimental impact on the school and performance, then a referral should be made to the Trust's Occupational Health provider.

10 Additional information

For further advice on reasonable adjustments and specific advice on an employee's health, the employee could be referred to the Trust's Occupational Health provider.

11 Further support

The British Menopause Society: <https://thebms.org.uk/>

NHS Menopause pages: www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/

Healthtalk.org: <https://healthtalk.org/>

Menopause Support UK:

<https://menopausesupport.co.uk/>