



Menopause in the Workplace Guidance for Schools

**This policy was adopted by the Governing Body in February 2024.
It is reviewed annually.**

This policy is due for review February 2025

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1. Purpose of the Menopause Guidance

- To assist school leaders and Governing Bodies to understand and effectively address concerns from employee who are experiencing adverse menopausal symptoms.
- To educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of the menopause, and how they can support women at work
- To understand the menopause and related issues, and how they can affect staff;
- To raise a wider awareness and understanding among the workforce;
- To outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available
- To create an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments and additional support at work

NB Exclusionary or discriminatory practices will not be tolerated.

2. Legal Framework

This policy is fully compliant with the following legislation

- Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992;
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- GB Regulations 4
- Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) introduced by the Equality Act 2010
- Equality Act 2010

3. Introduction to Menopause

The majority of women experience some or all of the symptoms of the menopause at some point in their lives, typically between the ages of 45 and 55

It may also impact non-binary, transgender and intersex communities, who may also experience menopausal symptoms. It impacts all people who menstruate.

The education sector is predominantly made up of women. Supporting everyone working in schools whilst they are going through the menopause, needs to be a priority for every school. Despite the numbers of people going through the menopause in the education sector, it is rarely discussed and many people have no awareness of what is involved.

This has led many women to hide symptoms and to avoid asking for help. Menopause is not just an age or gender issue - it can affect staff directly or indirectly, and it should be considered an organisational wide equality issue.

4. What is Menopause?

The menopause is a natural part of ageing, due to a change in the balance of the body's hormones. It normally happens between the ages of 45-55 years old, but can also happen earlier for unknown reasons or due to other medical factors e.g.

- if women's ovaries have been damaged by treatment for cancer

- they are having treatment for infertility
- conditions such as endometriosis.

4.1 What is Perimenopause?

There is also a stage called the perimenopause which is a period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause that can last on average five years and also has a variety of symptoms.

During this time, periods may become increasingly heavy and irregular, meaning it is vitally important for a woman experiencing symptoms to be close to toilets and shower facilities. For some women, the symptoms during this time can be worse than the actual menopause

4.2 Post menopause

This is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months. The average time for women experiencing symptoms of the menopause is five years, but many women experience symptoms for up to ten years and 3% of women will experience symptoms for the rest of their lives. Post-menopausal women have an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis and managers should be aware of this

5. Types of 'Menopause'

Many people and employers are unaware of the different types and stages of menopause, which means they do not associate symptoms with it. This in turn can act as a barrier to providing or accessing support.

Whatever type of menopause i.e.

- Natural
- Premature
- surgical / medical
- menopause symptoms for other reasons

is being experienced, it is essential that both the physical and emotional impacts and effects are understood and considered when putting in place appropriate support in school settings.

6. Approach to menopause in school

It is important to remember that the menopause affects every woman differently and that there is no 'one size-fits-all' solution to supporting all staff effectively. A best practice approach involves:

- Showing compassion
- Being open minded
- Proactive
- Understanding
- listening to what colleagues need to navigate this major life event
- signpost to support

This approach will provide a supportive and constructive environment

NB However not everyone feels comfortable disclosing symptoms of the menopause within schools

7. Signs and Symptoms of 'menopause'

7.1 Noticeable Signs

Some may be noticeable within school include:

- Changes in mood or regular low mood
- Poor memory and concentration (can lead to loss of confidence and effectiveness) and also referred to as 'brain fog'
- Low energy, fatigue and exhaustion (caused by insomnia and sleep disturbance)
- Headaches and joint aches or pains
- Hot flushes
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Increased, unexplained bathroom breaks (potentially to manage painful, irregular and heavy periods) and regular changes of clothes
- Sudden weight gain
- Increased, unexplained absences
- Worsening of existing health conditions and associated symptoms e.g. arthritis, skin conditions, mental health problems

Please note, this is not an exhaustive list. – Link below for NHS list of symptoms
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/symptoms/#:~:text=Physical%20symptoms&text=hot%20flushes%2C%20when%20you%20have,heartbeats%20suddenly%20become%20more%20noticeable>

NB Symptoms can be physical and mental, and can vary in severity, variety and length. Symptoms can begin months or years before a woman's periods stop and 3% of women have symptoms for the rest of their lives

7.2 Risks of not addressing menopause issues in the workplace

Some employees may feel unsupported or discriminated against or feel like they need more help than you are currently giving, it is important you reach out to offer support.

Employees should not have to struggle on their own supporting a colleague experiencing the menopause could involve observing some of the symptoms or signs that indicate someone in your team **may** be experiencing the menopause doesn't mean they definitely are.

8. How can Governing Bodies, Headteacher and Managers support employees?

School leaders and managers have a much bigger role to play in ensuring the menopause is approached appropriately as a workplace equality and occupational health issue.

All School Leaders need to know about the menopause, and how they can support their staff, and should also be aware of the indirect effects of the menopause on people such as spouses, significant others, and close family members or friends of individuals going through the menopause.

9. How to discuss the matter with an employee

9.1 Guidance for informal discussions

Remember that everyone is different, and each person may need something slightly different.

Managers should familiarise themselves with the menopause issues before conducting a meeting with a member of staff to discuss their situation.

Should an employee request a meeting to discuss concerns of the menopause, it is recommended that line managers adhere to the following:

- Arrange a meeting at a convenient time for both parties
- Allow the employee to be accompanied if they wish to. This could be a trade union representative or a colleague.
- Choose a venue that provides privacy and is unlikely to be disturbed
- Allow adequate time to talk
- Encourage the employee to be open and honest. It is difficult to help when you haven't got the full picture
- If the employee wishes to speak to another manager (which may be a female manager or governor), this should be facilitated.
- Keep a note of all discussions and agree outcomes and next steps (the 'Confidential Discussion Record – Menopause' should be used to facilitate this). This may include a Menopause Risk Assessment.

9.2 Other ways you may be able to support staff include:

- Consider and remind the employee of their strengths and try to remove any significant hurdles they are experiencing in the short term.
- Offer the opportunity to attend an occupational health assessment or access the Employee Assistance Programme.
- Listen and encourage them to speak with you.
- Create an open culture in your school
- Encourage discussion and have information about menopause readily available and visible.
- Be aware of how the menopause might impact on work performance and attendance
- Consider reasonable adjustments potentially required, and initiate conversations with staff about this.
- Adopt a whole school menopause risk assessment.

9.3 What school leaders should do?

All Schools must minimise or remove workplace health and safety risks. (*Appendix 1 outlines the minimum requirements of a menopause risk assessment*).

This includes making sure menopausal symptoms are not made worse by the workplace or its work practices. Making changes to help an employee manage their own symptoms when doing their job is vital.

10. Whole School Approach for School Leaders and Governing Bodies

- Make the menopause a whole school issue
- Raise awareness about menopause, bust the myths, and make it everybody's business.
- School leaders should make their aims clear regarding creating a menopause-aware school.
- Challenge negative menopause stereotypes and stigma around the menopause.
- Demonstrate support for those going through the menopause by supporting requests for counselling or other emotional support or encouraging the formation of workplace support groups.
- Make this part of a wider drive to ensure your school is inclusive for all and age friendly. Many workers are expecting to remain in employment through their 60s and beyond.
- Have menopause champions, including senior leaders across the school who make sure staff are aware of the guidance
- Ensure that school risk assessments take account of the needs of anyone experiencing menopause and that adjustments effectively remove or control risks.
- Identify adjustments that can be made for all workers as well as individual reasonable adjustments (see below appendix 2)
- Run training and awareness raising sessions regarding the menopause across your school.
- Provide points of contact who are available for women to go to for menopause related advice.

11. Links to other Schools HR Policies and Procedures

- Dignity at work
- Grievance
- Flexible working
- Performance Management

Key Minimum Requirements of Menopause Risk Assessment

A risk assessment for the perimenopause and menopause should include at a minimum:

- flexible working
- requesting a different uniform if you are experiencing hot flushes
- using technology where it can help you, for example setting up reminders on your phone or taking more notes to help with 'brain fog'
- Temperature and ventilation in the workplace e.g moving to a cooler part of the school or asking for a fan
- Whether there is somewhere suitable for the employee to rest
- Availability and accessibility of toilet, washroom and changing facilities
- Availability of cold drinking water
- Ability and willingness to make changes to help the staff member to work, and minimise, reduce or remove any dips in their job performance due to symptoms
- A commitment to review the menopause risk assessment in a regular basis

NB Failing to consider the difficulties that people may have with the menopause could amount to a breach of health and safety legislation

Practical Examples of Reasonable Adjustments (NASUWT Risk Assessment considered with H & S Risk Assessment)

Working patterns:

Wherever possible, flexibility is needed and staff requests for flexibility should be upheld. The following can be implemented (including using a whole school approach) to aid this:

- Enable people to undertake non-contact times at home or off site - sometimes just five minutes for walking and fresh air can help to reset.
- Make sure women can have breaks to get to the toilet if they need to. The frequency of these breaks is likely to increase during the menopause. This might be most easily managed as part of a whole school policy for workers to take toilet breaks during lesson time.
- Ensure people can have time to attend medical appointments.
- Consider timetable adjustments to help take the pressure off e.g. perhaps you don't want to give someone the most difficult class at the time of day when they're the most exhausted or experiencing brain fog.
- Consider changing tasks or hours for staff on a temporary basis whilst symptoms are managed, or consider possible job alternatives where needed.

Working environment - ensure there is easy and ready access to:

- Cold drinking water
- Toilets, washing and showering facilities which also provide sanitary products
- Adjustable temperature control in classrooms and break rooms
- Space to store sanitary products and changes of clothes in secure areas
- Fans if necessary
- Windows that you can open and shut
- Calm and quiet rest / break room spaces for staff

Other workplace considerations

- Temperature management systems
- Dress codes or policies
- Stress management initiatives - it's been shown that stress makes menopausal symptoms worse. It may be appropriate to set up support groups, or help arrange counselling or coaching.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list

Confidential Discussion Record – Menopause

Name of Employee	
Job Role:	
Date of meeting	
Present at meeting	
Summary of discussions:	
Agreed action points/reasonable adjustments:	
Agreed date of review meeting:	

Signed (staff)..... Signed (manager).....

Date:

Date

Key Sources of information on Menopause/ perimenopause

[Menohealth](#) is the first of its kind in the UK to offer **support, education and exercise** to help you to take control of menopause. Each session includes 15 minutes discussion on topics such as weight gain, HRT, lost libido, confidence crisis and busting menopause myths.

[Menopause Matters](#) is an award winning, independent website providing up-to-date, accurate information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options.

[Henpicked](#) is one of the UK's largest, fastest growing websites for people who weren't born yesterday.

At [healthtalk.org](#) you can find information and support for a range of health issues by seeing and hearing people's real life experiences.

[Women and work](#) is the Government Equalities Office (GEO) area for women, they are responsible for equality strategy and legislation across government. They take action on the government's commitment to remove barriers to equality and help to build a fairer society, leading on issues relating to women, sexual orientation and transgender equality.

The [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) has information on vulnerable workers, including examples of sex difference in occupational health and safety.

The Government Equalities Office produced a report on the [effects on women's economic participation](#) whilst going through the menopause transition.

The Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians have produced [Guidance on Menopause and the Workplace](#).

The [British Menopause Society](#) provides education, information and guidance to healthcare professionals specialising in all aspects of post reproductive health. This is achieved through an annual programme of lectures, conferences, meetings, exhibitions and their interactive website.

[Women's Health Concern](#) is the patient arm of the British Menopause Society (BMS). They provide an independent service to advise, reassure and educate people of all ages about their health, wellbeing and lifestyle concerns. They offer unbiased information – by telephone, email, printed factsheets, online and through symposia, seminars and meetings.

NHS Advice on Menopause

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/womens-health/later-years-around-50-years-and-over/menopause-and-post-menopause-health/menopause-and-the-workplace/#:~:text=It's%20important%20to%20remember%20that,affect%20a%20woman's%20working%20life.>

Positive Pause

<https://www.positivepause.co.uk/>

Education Support

<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/resources/for-individuals/guides/menopause-in-the-education-workplace/>

Henpicked

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

Diverse Educators

<https://www.diverseeducators.co.uk/menopause-awareness-toolkit/>

NEU

<https://neu.org.uk/menopause-toolkit>

NASUWT

<https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/equalities/under-represented-groups/women/managing-the-menopause-in-the-workplace.html>

UNISON

<https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/women/key-issues/menopause/>