



South York
MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Menopause Policy

Title	Menopause Policy
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Links to other procedures:	Attendance Management Policy, Capability Policy, Dignity at Work, Grievance Policy, Flexible Working Policy

This policy has been adopted by the Board of Directors of the South York Multi-Academy Trust (SYMAT) and applies to all Schools that make up the Trust.

This policy applies to support and teaching staff within each School operating within the South York Multi-Academy Trust unless specific conditions and applications are identified within this policy.

This policy will be monitored regularly by the Multi Academy Trust Board in line with the agreed timetable for policy review or sooner as events or legislation changes require.

Introduction

Menopause is not just a gender or age issue, as it can impact on colleagues both directly or indirectly, and it should therefore be considered as an organisational issue.

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

It should be noted that people from the non-binary, transgender and intersex community may also experience menopausal symptoms. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of the menopause may be different for those among these communities. Although the policy refers to women, please consider that "people who menstruate" also require consideration.

Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status.

Awareness on this topic is fundamental and reducing the stigma attached to it is vital so that more people will talk openly about it and the menopause can begin to be normalised. This policy recognises that menopause affects individuals in different ways and that women may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause.

Why do we need to know about the menopause?

- In the UK, the average age for a person to go through menopause is 51.
- Symptoms of the menopause can last up to 10 years.
- Symptoms range from cognitive, physical and psychological symptoms (for example hot flushes, muscular aches, poor concentration, anxiety and headaches).
- Around one in 100 people that experience the menopause, will go through the transition before age of 40.
- Three out of four people experience symptoms: one in four can experience severe symptoms, which impact on their day-to-day life.
- The changing age of the UK workforce means that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work.
- Within the Trust women aged 40 and over represent nearly half of the entire workforce.

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.

The aim of this policy is:

- to create an environment where staff members feel confident enough to raise issues about their menopausal symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work
- to 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 and therefore there is no 'one size fits all' solution
- to reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace
- to educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of the menopause, and how they can support such staff at work
- to raise a wider awareness and understanding among the workforce
- to outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available - exclusionary or discriminatory practices will not be tolerated.
- For many reasons, it may not be an easy time in a woman's life and so it is imperative that workers who require additional support during this time are treated with understanding, dignity and respect.

Definitions

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a person may experience changes, such as changes to their periods or other menopausal or changes linked to variation in hormones. This can be years before menopause.

Menopause is defined as a biological stage in a person's life that occurs when they stop menstruating and reaches the end of their natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when they have not had a period for twelve consecutive months. The average age to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

Post menopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when they have not had a period for twelve consecutive months. This may vary greatly and is not prescriptive.

Symptoms

Symptoms vary greatly and can manifest both physically and psychologically, but they can commonly include:

- psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration, low mood / mood swings
- hot flushes
- fatigue, palpitations, insomnia
- sleep disturbances (including night sweats) that can make you feel tired and irritable
- heavy bleeding that might cause pain or embarrassment at work
- muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- recurrent urinary tract infections, including cystitis
- headaches
- skin changes – dryness, itchiness
- obesity, diabetes - many symptoms can occur and this list cannot be fully prescriptive

Legislative Context

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.

If menopause affects a colleague's comfort and performance at work, the Trust has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974) for all employees and therefore commits to ensuring that adjustments and additional support are available to those experiencing menopausal symptoms.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, The Management of Health & Safety at Work 1999, Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) introduced by the Equality Act 2010.

Making reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments can be made to help colleagues manage menopausal symptoms. These are likely to be temporary changes whilst going through menopause transition.

Risk assessments should be completed by line managers to understand more about how menopausal symptoms are affecting colleagues at work and the adjustments that are needed.

Risk assessments should be reviewed periodically and whenever appropriate. Reasonable adjustments will depend on colleagues' specific circumstances (symptoms, job role etc), but the types of changes that might help could be:

- access to drinking water whilst at work
- easy access to toilet facilities
- making sure the temperature is comfortable, providing a fan or access to fresh air / natural light - possible risk assessments

Specific roles/responsibilities

Line managers are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with the procedures in this policy.
- Organising discussions with staff members experiencing the menopause.
- Acting sensitively and emphatically towards staff experiencing the menopause.
- Deciding on which reasonable adjustments need to be made to support staff members experiencing the menopause, and ensuring they are implemented.
- Implementing an action plan in conjunction with staff members experiencing the menopause.
- Recording all reasonable adjustments and reviewing them on a termly basis.
- Making changes to action plans and reasonable adjustments, as necessary.
- Discussing referrals to Occupational Health, and referring staff to them, where necessary.
- Implementing any recommendations by Occupational Health, as required.

School Headteachers supported by the Trust's HR Business Partner are responsible for:

- Offering guidance to line managers to enable them to effectively support staff experiencing the menopause.
- Maintaining effective communication with line managers and staff experiencing the menopause.

Available Support

Colleagues are encouraged to inform their line manager that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated as an ongoing health issue rather than as individual instances of ill health.

Early notification will also help line managers to determine the most appropriate course of action to support an employee's individual needs.

Managers are encouraged to consider the Support Guidance at Appendix A.

Employees who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague or another manager instead. Employees will be encouraged to seek advice from medical practitioners regarding appropriate treatment and/ or to investigate suitable ways to manage/ reduce symptoms.

A referral to Occupational Health could also be of assistance, to understand what adjustments can be made; so, colleagues are encouraged to give their consent to be referred for advice. Please contact your SBM / Trust HR to arrange this.

External sources of help and support for employees and managers, is available:

- [Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options
- the [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency
- The [National Health Service](#), which provides an overview of menopause
- The [Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists](#) who offer further information in this dedicated area of their website
- The [British Menopause Society](#)
- [NHS Menopause Info](#)
- [Health Assured](#) - our Employee Assistance Programme

You can speak to a qualified and experienced counsellor who will offer support in a professional, friendly and non-judgmental manner.

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

Health Assured will also support your partner and children who live with you who are aged between 16 and 24 and are in full-time education.

Free 24 Hour Confidential Helpline 0800 030 5182

Username: Northyorkshire Password: Council

Appendix A – Support Guidance

Symptoms support

Symptoms can manifest physically and psychologically. Support for employees should be considered as detailed below. Any support must be agreed between the employee and line manager.

Hot flushes

- request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk or moving near a window, or away from a heat source
- provide easy access to drinking water
- encourage use of the staff room for breaks Heavy/light periods
- have permanent access to washroom facilities
- ensure sanitary products are available

Urogenital problems

This will include an increased frequency and urgency to pass urine, with a need to access toilet facilities more frequently and to drink more fluids. Suitable adjustments may include:

- providing ready access to suitable toilet facilities
- providing ready access to suitable washing facilities
- allowing more frequent breaks to go to the toilet
- providing easy access to drinking water

Headaches

- have ease of access to fresh water
- use the staff room as a quiet place to work when not teaching or when time out is required
- have time out to take medication if needed

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'

Loss of confidence

- ensure there are regular personal development discussions
- have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues
- have agreed protected time to catch up with work

Poor concentration

- discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse
- review task allocation and workload
- provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment
- offer quiet space to work

Anxiety

- identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to
- be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques
- encourage your colleague to undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going

for a walk.

Panic attacks

- agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission

- identify a 'buddy'
- undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk

Muscular aches and bone and joint pain

For individuals experiencing these symptoms, moving and handling or adopting static postures may be more uncomfortable.

Suitable adjustments (as listed above) may include making any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules. This will be discussed between the employee and line manager.

Consideration may also be given to lack of appropriate uniforms or PPE when working within a science environment.

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.