



Menopause Policy

Approved by Trust Board July 2023
Next renewal July 2028

Our Trust 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.
- Provide further resources to help staff, particularly line managers, to support others through difficulties the menopause may cause them.
- 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.

Our trust policy sets out procedures for members of staff and managers to follow in providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. This policy applies to all Trust staff and senior leaders.

Introduction

Valour Multi Academy Trust is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all its employees and recognises that women may need additional consideration, support and adjustments before (perimenopause), during and after the menopause.

It is estimated that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work in the UK. It is therefore imperative that workplaces have a workable, informative and robust policy in place that is fully consistent with UK legislation.

The menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and marks the end of her reproductive cycle. 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.

The policy acknowledges that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the menopause and so it is intended as a support guide for all workers. All stakeholders agree to work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support women experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse.

It should be noted that people from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities 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 other 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. It is important to recognise that for many reasons, people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.

The menopause can also affect partners and families too. 'Male menopause' is a misleading term because it suggests that hormone levels drop in a similar way to the female menopause and this is not true. Testosterone declines gradually and is unlikely to cause problems in itself. However, some men experience physical and emotional symptoms when they reach their late 40s to early 50s and these symptoms can interfere with everyday life and happiness. Men are advised to seek guidance from their GP and further information can be found on the NHS website.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/male-menopause/>

Legislation

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers are required to undertake general risk assessments which should include specific risks to menopausal women.

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.

Definitions

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.

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a person may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

Post menopause is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a they have not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

Symptoms

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

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, but not exclusively, hot flushes, poor concentration, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, and loss of confidence. Some also experience difficulty sleeping.

Roles and responsibilities

The Local Advisory board

The advisory board has ultimate responsibility for health and safety matters in the school, but will delegate day-to-day responsibility to the head teachers. The board 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 Role of Senior Staff and line managers

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy.

- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally.
- Use the guidance in Appendices 1 and 2, signposting and reviewing together, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required.
- Record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented through individual risk assessments.
- Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates.
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to; where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Line Manager may: discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice.
- 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.
- Ensuring good ventilation and air quality throughout the school, leaving doors open where appropriate and ensuring windows can be safely opened.
- Ensuring regular access to cold drinking water for all staff.
- Ensuring toilet, washing and sanitary facilities are accessible for staff, and establishing a system that allows for cover for staff to access these facilities where necessary while they are teaching.
- Providing small desk fans to help staff cool down.
- Referring to the menopause in the school staff well-being policy.
- Record menopause-related absences as an 'ongoing health issue' instead of as an individual short-term absence to avoid triggering sickness absence procedures – this is reflected in the sickness absence policy.
- Be sensitive to health issues such as the menopause during the performance management/appraisal process
- Allow staff affected by the menopause to take regular breaks from their work if necessary to help manage symptoms

All staff

- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their health.
- Being open and honest in conversations with managers/HR team.
- If a member of staff is unable to speak to their line manager, or if their line manager is not supporting them, they can speak directly to the CEO, as Trust well-being support, or another member of the school's SLT.
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment.
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues.
- Understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

Central Team and Trust Board

The academy trust, 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.
- Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this Policy.
- Attend training sessions, and develop briefing sessions, for staff.

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in respect of related absence levels and performance.

APPENDIX 1 - Guidance for Managers Discussions with Employees

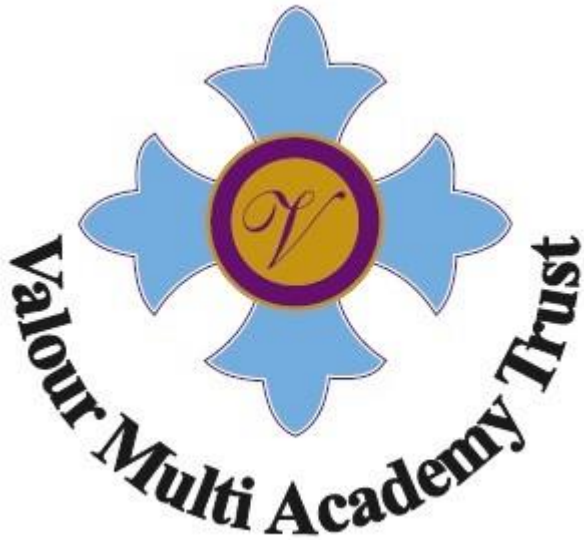
Managers should familiarise themselves with the menopause before conducting a meeting with a member of staff to discuss their situation.

Regular, informal conversations between manager and employee can enable discussions about issues related to menopause. One of the most valuable things a manager can do is listen and respond sympathetically if issues relating to menopause are reported. These conversations can assist to identify support at work which can make a real difference with how employees cope with menopause. This may enable them to continue working well, productively and to remain at work.

It is important to note that employees experiencing menopausal issues (directly or indirectly) may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to approach their manager however, if a manager is aware of the symptoms associated with the menopause and how this can affect a person, this can greatly assist in promoting an environment where employees feel more confident to approach their manager and seek support, if required.

If an employee wishes to talk about changes in health including symptoms of menopause it is important to:

- Encourage the employee to discuss any relevant health concerns with their GP practice.
- Maintain confidentiality when handling health information (seek a private room/office and ensure any records are stored in a safe and confidential manner).
- Allow the employee to be accompanied if they want it. This can be a trade union representative or a colleague.
- If the employee wishes to speak to another manager, this should be allowed.
- Allow for sufficient time to have the conversation and encourage the employee to be open and honest when discussing any difficulties, they may be experiencing.
- Explore with them ways in which they can be supported.
- Agree an action plan, record the outcome of the discussion and agree a review timeframe.
- Provide details of support and external services available.



Confidential Discussion Record – Menopause

Date of meeting:

Name of member of staff: Job title:	
Name of line manager: Job title:	
Summary of discussion:	
Agreed action points/reasonable adjustments:	

Agreed date of review meeting:

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

APPENDIX 2 – Workplace issues/suggested adjustments

Symptoms support

Symptoms can manifest physically and psychologically. Support for employees should be considered as detailed below.

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 may include making any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules.

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.

Links to other policies

Equality and Diversity

Staff Well-being Policy

Performance Management Policy

Capability Policy

Grievance Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Management of Sickness Absence Policy Performance Management

These policies can be accessed on the Trust website.

Additional links

Menopause Matters

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

NHS Choices

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

The Daisy Network (support for early menopause/premature ovarian insufficiency)

<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>

Menopause Services NHS GG&C

<https://www.sandyford.org/sexual-health-information/fertility/menopause/>

The Menopause Exchange

<https://menopause-exchange.co.uk/>

Living Life (Online/Telephone guided CBT)

<https://breathingspace.scot/living-life/>

Women's Health concern

<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>

Henpicked (community site for women over 40)

<https://henpicked.net/>

Menopause Café (gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss menopause)

<https://www.menopausecafe.net/>

[Menopause: diagnosis and management](#) (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)

The [Daisy Network](#) charity

[Menopause in the Workplace](#)

[Menopause resources](#) from the CIPD, particularly for:

- [Line managers](#)
- [HR staff](#)