



Menopause Policy

RESPONSIBLE DIRECTOR
Chief Executive Officer

RATIFIED BY TRUST
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REVIEW DATE
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1 Introduction

The Knowledge Schools Trust ('the Trust') wants to 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.

The Trust is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment and is committed to ensuring that individuals feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms and asking for support and adjustments in order to continue with their role within the organisation.

The Trust recognises that women and transgender people may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause

2 Purpose

This policy aims to:

- Make sure that our Trust can support to staff affected by the menopause and help them to feel comfortable at work, both when experiencing symptoms and when asking for support and adjustments, as well as recognising that the menopause and perimenopause is an individual experience and therefore there is no 'one size fits all' solution.
- Set out how our Trust will make reasonable adjustments to minimise the risk of the working environment making menopausal symptoms worse for those experiencing them
- To ensure that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect within their working environment
- Provide further resources to help staff, particularly line managers and HR to support others through difficulties the menopause may cause them
- To reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued employees in the workplace.

3 Rationale

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.

4 What is Menopause?

The menopause affects most women and some trans men (those who identify as male but were assigned female at birth), 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.

As menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years, the menopause is best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event.

While menopause is not an illness and experiences can vary, it can cause physical and, sometimes, psychological changes. Symptoms can fluctuate and can therefore seriously impact on a person's ability to contribute to their full potential, both at home and at work.

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

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.

Pseudo menopause refers to a hormonal state in which a woman of reproductive age stops ovulating or producing enough hormones to have a menstrual cycle due to hormonal interruption. The hormonal interruption may be caused by medications that reduce natural hormone levels. For example, trans women (those who identify as female but were assigned male at birth), undertaking hormone therapy may also experience pseudo menopausal symptoms.

5 Possible Symptoms of Menopause

Individuals can experience menopause differently and symptoms can vary from person to person. Some people may experience several symptoms at once, while others may only experience a few.

Please see below some common symptoms of the menopause (this list is not exhaustive):

- Mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression, panic attacks
- Loss of confidence, reduced concentration, memory loss
- Hot flushes and/or daytime sweats
- Sleep disruption and/or night sweats
- Irregular periods and/or periods can become light or heavy
- Urinary problems
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches, and pains
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Headaches and migraines
- Weight gain

- Palpitations
- Skin changes

6 Legislation

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Act, employers are required to do risk assessments under the Management Regulations which should include specific risks to menopausal women and transgender people if they are employed.

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

7 Roles and Responsibilities

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Act, employers are required to do risk assessments under the Management Regulations which should include specific risks to menopausal women and transgender people if they are employed.

7.1 Employer Responsibility:

- 7.1.1 The Trust will educate and inform managers and employees to be aware of how the menopause can affect working women and transgender people, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support those experiencing them.
- 7.1.2 Where women and transgender members of staff feel uncomfortable going to their line manager, please speak to the Trust's central HR team. Confidentiality will always be respected.
- 7.1.3 Risk assessments will include consideration of temperature and ventilation issues and will also address welfare issues, such as access to toilet facilities and cold water, during and outside break and lunch times.
- 7.1.4 All schools across the Trust will make adjustments where necessary to support individuals experiencing the menopause, and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse. It is important to note that adjustments need to be considered on an individual basis and within the school environment in which they are working.

These could include simple measures such as:

- leaving doors open where appropriate
- ensuring that windows can be safely opened

- ensuring that it is possible to regulate the temperature in a classroom or other room by turning down radiators (as long as the temperature does not drop below 18 degrees celsius, this will be comfortable for all occupants)
- provision of fans
- fitting blinds to windows
- establishing a system that allows cover for women or transgender people who need to access toilet/ washing facilities while they are teaching (to deal with heavy and recurring bleeding)
- considering requests for changes to working arrangements, e.g. temporary part-time working
- swift permission for absence to attend menopause-related medical appointments
- adjusting workplace procedures and processes to support and avoid any detriment to menopausal employees. This is not a definitive list of measures. All schools across the Trust will actively listen to employees and adjustments in light of the school context and the safety of students and staff members.

7.1.5 It is recognised that many of these practical and easy-to-institute changes to the workplace, which will make working life more bearable for menopausal women, transgender people and will benefit all staff.

7.1.6 Managers can only be sympathetic and supportive though if they are aware that their member of staff is experiencing difficulties. Research has shown that people may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed approaching their manager to discuss any difficulties in managing their menopausal symptoms. This is particularly the case if their manager is younger than them or male and, as menopause can affect levels of confidence, if the person they are talking to has no idea about the menopause. This can be particularly true for trans or non-binary staff who are not 'out' to their colleagues or manager, and also for men who may be embarrassed to admit that they are affected by the experiences of their partner. It is therefore important that all managers are aware of the symptoms associated with the menopause and understand the issues affecting people going through it. This will help in fostering an environment where we are all more comfortable talking about the menopause, the symptoms and measures that could help in minimising these. Managers should be sensitive to any feelings of discomfort, listen to concerns and complaints and consider what can be done to reduce and minimise the impact symptoms may be having on the staff members performance within the workplace.

7.2 Employer Responsibility:

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

- Familiarise themselves with this menopause policy.
- Provide a safe place to allow the member of staff to speak openly and honestly.
- Be ready and willing to listen and have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and confidentially and allowing adequate time for the discussion.
- Any specific needs identified (including reasonable adjustments that are agreed) should be recorded and reviewed regularly.
- To be aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance. If someone's performance suddenly dips, it is worth considering whether the menopause may be playing a part in this.
- Will seek advice from the Trust's HR team as well as the GP and/or occupational health practitioner if necessary.
- Staff should not experience any detriment because they may need time off during this time. Any absences will be managed in line with the Employee Absence and Attendance Policy and discretion will be applied by the line manager in line with this.

7.2.2 Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving particularly severe, the line manager may:

- Discuss with the employee a referral to occupational health for further advice.
- Review occupational health advice, and implement any additional recommendations
- Update the action plan and continue the review process.

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:

- Share their practical needs to reduce the difficulties the menopause can cause and their preferred coping strategies with their line manager, or with our Central HR Team
- Report honestly about their wellbeing and let their line manager or another trusted member of staff, such as a mental health first aider, know if the menopause is having an impact on them
- Make time in their schedule to visit their GP and other support services

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
- Support other members of staff, such as by providing practical assistance or emotional reassurance
- 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 the Central HR Team or a mental health first aider

Further Advice

If any staff, contractor or visitor requires any further information regarding this policy or support they should either ask their Headteacher or contact the Central HR Team.



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