



MENOPAUSE POLICY

For schools and settings in the London Borough of Hackney

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Purpose

This policy aims to raise awareness and promote an understanding of the potential impacts at work for staff experiencing symptoms of menopause and provides guidance on how school leaders, line managers and colleagues can support staff experiencing such symptoms.

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Version control

The table below shows the history of the document and the changes that were made at each version:

Version	Date	Summary of changes
1.0	January 2023	First published version.

Next major release

Although this document will be updated as legislation or procedures change, the next major review date will normally be scheduled for three years after the last release.

1. Introduction

Our school is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all those working in our school. Our school has a positive attitude towards the menopause and will treat all staff who are going through the menopause with dignity and respect.

It's important that all staff understand what the menopause is and are able to talk about it openly and without embarrassment. To do this our school expects all staff to be part of an open and supportive culture, where staff feel comfortable speaking about how menopause related symptoms may be affecting their work and are able to ask for the support they need to help manage their symptoms.

This policy is aimed at staff, colleagues and school leaders. It aims to promote awareness and an understanding of how the perimenopause and menopause can affect someone and provide guidance on how to handle matters related to the menopause sensitively, and with dignity and respect.

Although this policy is aimed at women who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause, it also aims to raise awareness that men can also experience physical and emotional symptoms related to declines in levels of testosterone and may also require support at work. Please refer to Section 6 for further information.

In this policy, where we refer to the menopause we also mean the perimenopause (see Section 5.1).

Key considerations: Although, in places, the guidance refers to women and men, it is important to remember that the issues may cross genders, for example for the school's trans and non binary workforce. Gender neutral language is used where possible.

2. Scope

This policy applies to anyone working for the school. When the policy refers to staff it includes teaching and support staff, contractors, supply staff, agency workers and volunteers.

3. Legislation and guidance

There are two main strands of law that may relate to the perimenopause and menopause:

- The Equality Act 2010 protects workers against discrimination. This includes because of their sex, a disability, their age and/or gender reassignment (see Section 3.1).
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 says an employer must, where reasonably practical, ensure health, safety and welfare at work (see section 3.2).

3.1 Equality Act 2010

The [Equality Act 2010](#) prohibits discrimination against an individual based on the protected characteristics, which include age, sex and disability. Employers are under a statutory duty to consider

whether any 'reasonable adjustments' are required to alleviate any disadvantages staff encounter based on these characteristics.

Ongoing symptoms linked to the menopause may meet the definition of a disability and where they do, employers will be required to consider whether any reasonable adjustments are required to alleviate any disadvantage.

Any such adjustments will be made on a case-by-case basis and, where appropriate, staff affected by the menopause will be offered a variety of approaches to support them.

3.2 Health and Safety

Under the [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#), employers have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all staff, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#) require that employers make an assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees. This requires undertaking general risk assessments, which should include specific risks to the health of staff affected by the menopause.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Role of headteacher

Headteachers will:

- publish and circulate this policy to staff and promote additional methods of raising awareness of the menopause to all staff
- carry out risk assessments to assess working conditions for staff and consider the specific needs of staff affected by the menopause
- monitor the wellbeing of staff through regular surveys and structured conversations
- make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to support staff experiencing the menopause
- promote information about and access to external support services such as the school's Employee Assistance Programme.

4.2 Role of line managers

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

- hold regular one-to-one meetings with their staff, allowing them to discuss matters that are both work and non-work related, and enable the manager/member of staff to build a trusting relationship
- provide a non-judgemental, empathetic and confidential support system to staff
- appreciate the personal nature of any conversations about the menopause and treat them confidentially and sensitively
- promote information about access to external support services

- have regular, informal conversations with staff that they line manage who are affected by the menopause to discuss what support they need, and record any reasonable adjustments that are agreed
- allow staff affected by the menopause to take regular breaks from their work if necessary to help manage symptoms
- monitor sickness absence, and have support meetings with staff if any patterns emerge
- record menopause-related absences appropriately so they can be identified during sickness absence monitoring
- consider flexible working requests in order to accommodate acute symptoms
- be sensitive to health issues such as the menopause during the performance management/appraisal process
- discuss a referral with the staff member to Occupational Health, if required.
- if necessary, seek further advice for example from their HR or Occupational Health provider.

4.3 Role of staff members affected by the menopause

Staff who are experiencing menopausal symptoms that are impacting their health and wellbeing at work are encouraged to:

- speak to someone at work, possibly their line manager, about their concerns
- ask what support could be offered to help them manage their symptoms when doing their job
- work with their manager/support provider to identify any reasonable adjustment that could be put in place to support them manage their symptoms at work
- be responsible for making time to visit their GP and other support services as needed
- attend a medical examination with the Occupational Health service, if required
- access the school's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for further support.

4.4 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 designated wellbeing lead.

5. What is the menopause?

The menopause is a natural stage of life for women, usually in their late forties/early fifties. It can also happen earlier or later. For many women symptoms last about four years, but in some cases can last longer - up to 12 years.

Managers should be aware that non binary, transgender and intersex people may go through perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms.

In addition, certain surgery, cancer treatments rather than natural ageing, may trigger the menopause for a member of staff.

5.1 Perimenopause

Perimenopase is the transitional stage of the menopause when a woman's body is starting to change in the build up to the menopause. Perimenopause usually starts in the mid-forties, but can start earlier or later and last several years. Perimenopause is not the same as an early menopause.

5.2 What can be the symptoms?

Symptoms related to the menopause can vary from person to person, and range from very mild to severe. Some symptoms of perimenopause and menopause can be the same. They include:

- difficulty sleeping and night sweats
- feeling tired and lacking energy
- mood swings
- feeling anxious and panic attacks
- hot flushes
- struggling to remember things, concentrate and focus
- taking longer to recover from illness
- irregular periods which can become heavier
- aches and pains including muscle and joint stiffness
- urinary problems
- headaches including migraines
- putting on weight
- noticeable heartbeats
- skin irritation
- dry eyes

If a member of staff does not get the help and support they need, it is increasingly likely that the effects of the menopause can, for example, lead to them:

- feeling ill
- losing confidence to do their job
- suffering from mental health conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression
- leaving their job.

6. Andropause

Andropause (or sometimes called the 'male menopause') refers to the symptoms men experience as their testosterone production levels decrease with age. The label 'male menopause' is misleading as it

suggests the symptoms are the result of a sudden drop in testosterone in middle age, similar to what occurs in the female menopause. This is not the case. Although testosterone levels fall as men age, the decline is steady at less than 2% per year from around the age of 30 to 40 and this is unlikely to cause any problems in itself. Testosterone levels can also decline due to medications and lifestyle choices.

A person experiencing andropause can experience depression and trouble sleeping as well as other physical and emotional symptoms when they reach their late 40s to early 50s. The causes may be varied but the symptoms can interfere with everyday life and happiness, and it is important that issues are addressed and the member of staff is supported at work, where appropriate.

Please refer to the NHS guidance: [The 'male menopause'](#) for further information.

7. Supporting staff who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause

School leaders/managers play an important role in creating a supportive and open workplace where staff feel comfortable discussing the menopause at work. Staff may be reluctant to disclose their menopausal symptoms at work because they feel:

- their symptoms are a private and/or personal matter
- their symptoms might be embarrassing for them and/or the person they would be confiding in
- they do not know their line manager well enough
- wary because their line manager is a man, or younger or unsympathetic.

In addition, many staff who take time off work because of the menopause do not tell their manager the real reasons for their absence.

By creating a culture, where staff feel comfortable about discussing and seeking support for their menopause symptoms, this can help with performance, reduce absenteeism and aid retention.

7.1 Consider giving staff the option of talking initially to someone other than their manager

If a member of staff feels unable to broach the subject with their line manager for example, because they feel their symptoms are too personal, they could be given the option of talking initially to someone else. This could be a person from HR, a trade union representative, the school's wellbeing lead or they could contact the school's Employee Assistance Programme.

If the headteacher requires adjustments to support them to manage symptoms of the menopause at work, these will need to be agreed with the Chair of Governors with support from HR or another suitable individual, if appropriate.

Please note: If a member of staff chooses to confide in an individual other than their line manager, they do need to be aware that ultimately it is their line manager who will need to consider and implement any adjustments to their working practices or environment and take account of the impact of the menopause on the member of staff during any sickness absence or performance management processes.

7.2 What to do if a manager suspects a team member may have menopausal symptoms

Unless there is a specific performance or health-related issue that is affecting their work, managers do not need to address any symptoms with the member of staff. If a manager is concerned about a member of staff's health or change in performance, they should sensitively speak to the member of staff about the changes they have noticed and ask how they are doing and to see if they can help in any way.

In general, it is best to avoid direct questions such as "are you menopausal" or "could this be the change," even if a manager has a good relationship with the person as this may make the member of staff feel uncomfortable.

It is up to the individual to disclose any particular symptoms or health issues they may be experiencing or any support they have sought.

7.3 How to respond when a member of staff approaches their manager about the menopause

A member of staff may approach their manager to say that they are struggling with menopausal symptoms. They may well have already undertaken some research, sought help and know what would help them. On the other hand, they may not know what help is available or to whom they can speak to.

Although these conversations can often happen spontaneously and it is important that the manager acknowledges and supports the member of staff at the time but also sets aside time with them for a focussed and confidential meeting to discuss how the symptoms of the menopause are affecting them and what support can be offered.

7.4 Preparing for a supportive and constructive conversation

If a manager and a member of staff have identified that a member of staff may need support at work with their menopause related symptoms, the manager should arrange a meeting where both have the time to focus on the discussion. This could form part of a 1-2-1 meeting or a separate meeting.

7.4.1 Before the meeting

Managers should familiarise themselves with this Menopause Policy and ensure that the member of staff also is aware and has access to this policy. Managers and staff should find it easier to talk, if they:

- are confident that the school has a positive and supportive approach towards staff who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause and is committed to providing ongoing support to the member of staff to help them manage their menopause symptoms at work
- know that symptoms and effects of the menopause and perimenopause can vary widely from person to person and can change over time
- are aware that there are reasonable changes that can be put in place to support the member of staff to manage their symptoms of the menopause at work and that these changes will need to be reviewed and may need adjusting over time
- understand that there is further support available such as the school's Employee Assistance Programme, HR or Occupational Health service or external organisations. Please refer to Section 11 and 12.

7.4.2 During the meeting

This meeting does not need to be formal but is an opportunity for the manager and member of staff to confidentially discuss and record any support that can be put in place. To do this the manager and member of staff should:

- use this Menopause Policy and [Tailored support plan for menopausal symptoms template](#) as a reference point to inform and support discussions
- discuss with concerns the member of staff is having about their menopause or perimenopause symptoms.
- explore any changes to the member of staff's working environment or practices that could support them manage their symptoms at work (please see section 7.4.2.1)
- establish any support the person may have already sought e.g. their GP and/or a medical specialist and any additional support they can access (refer to Section 11 and 12).

If a member of staff wants some information about the effects of their symptoms to be shared, the manager should talk with them about:

- what they want and don't want colleagues to know
- who will be told and who will do the telling.

Please note: It is up to the individual to disclose any particular symptoms or health issues they may be experiencing or any support they have sought.

The manager should take some brief notes of the meeting and/or use the [Tailored support plan for menopausal symptoms template](#).

7.4.2.1 Agreeing changes at work

Equality Act 2010: As menopausal symptoms may constitute a disability under equality legislation, the law may require managers to consider, and put in place, reasonable adjustments.

School leaders/managers should always consider making any adjustments that will support staff so that they are comfortable, productive and engaged in working life.

Any adjustments to help with menopausal symptoms should be tailored to the needs of the individual. Managers need to be prepared to be flexible around adjustments. The support and adjustments the member of staff needs may fluctuate or change over time, for example a staff member may need support for fatigue for a period of time and then may need to support for hot flushes instead of or as well as fatigue.

Please refer to the [Tailored support plan for menopausal symptoms template](#).

Please note: The member of staff may prefer to talk initially to someone other than their manager. However, their manager will need to be involved in agreeing to any adjustments to their work.

The manager and member of staff should discuss any changes which would help the member of staff manage their symptoms when doing their job. These changes will need to be reasonable to the nature of the member of staff's work. Advice can be sought from the Occupational Health service where this might be useful.

Below are examples of the types of adjustment that can help with specific symptoms and may help the manager and the member of staff to work through ideas. However, the list is not exhaustive, and managers should keep an open mind and explore ideas with the member of staff about what might help.

Symptom	Type of adjustment
Hot flushes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Asses lighting and room temperature ● Review seating arrangements and proximity to fresh air ● Make desk fans available ● Consider impact of uniform or dress code
Sleep disruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider flexible working patterns (later start/finish times) ● Explore opportunities to work from home
Tiredness or fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide access to a quiet space ● Facilitate regular breaks ● Consider flexible working patterns ● Adjust workload ● Allow for greater flexibility in performance management procedures

Anxiety, lack of confidence, panic attacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hold regular one-to-one discussions ● Refer to Occupational Health or counselling services.
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Alternatively, both the line manager and the member of staff might discuss and agree to other changes which should be reviewed if the staff member's symptoms alter. For example:

- changing certain duties in the worker's role
- the staff member moving to a more suitable role in the circumstances
- the staff member going part-time
- the staff member switching to a job share.

7.4.3 Agreeing next steps

The manager and member of staff should agree any next steps such as:

- any actions to take by the manager (e.g. Occupational Health referral, sourcing of equipment) and the member of staff (e.g. gp appointment, change in a way of working).
- agreeing the timing of any follow-up discussions to review if any changes that have been implemented have helped and if any more changes need to be made.

7.4.4 After the meeting

The manager and member of staff should follow up on all agreed steps, including confirming a review meeting.

The manager should ensure that any notes they have taken are written up and securely filed on the individual's employee file to ensure confidentiality and a copy is given to the member of staff.

8. Managing sickness absence related to menopause symptoms

Managing absence from work should be handled sympathetically because the menopause is a long-term and fluctuating health change. The manager and the member of staff should consider adaptations to help the member of staff continue to work, and minimise, reduce or remove any absences because of symptoms.

Staff should also be given a reasonable amount of time to adjust to changes.

If an individual is off sick because of the menopause or perimenopause, the manager should record this so that it can be distinguished from other absences in their sickness absence database or as part of the return to work interview. This is because there may be times when it could be unfair or discriminatory to measure menopause-related absence as part of the worker's overall attendance record. Managers should speak to their HR Business Partner or Advisor for further guidance.

9. Managing changes in performance

In some cases, menopausal symptoms can affect a member of staff's performance at work. Where there are suspected or known health issues, these should be explored, prior to any formal processes for underperformance.

If there are performance issues that are known to be caused by menopause-related symptoms, the employer should consider adjustments to the role or working conditions that could help the employee. It may be appropriate to consult Occupational Health.

If adjustments and support has been put into place for the member of staff and the manager is still concerned about their performance, they should contact their HR contact for further guidance.

A failure to address the issue and consider reasonable adjustments could result in the staff member resigning and claiming constructive unfair dismissal, as well as a claim for disability discrimination.

10. Third party/supply staff

Although the general principles set out in the guidance apply to agency workers on assignment in schools, responsibilities are shared between the hirer (the school) and the employer (the agency).

The hiring manager (in the school) is responsible for ensuring that:

- the worker is treated with dignity and respect while on assignment with the school
- the worker has a safe and comfortable working environment while on assignment with the school
- adjustments and support specific to the assignment with the school are considered, and provided where reasonable.

Although the right to request to work flexibly does not apply to agency workers, the worker may discuss with the hiring manager whether changes to the assignment are possible.

The agency is responsible for:

- discussing longer term changes with respect to their employee's hours and duties
- letting the worker know of any employment policies that apply to them.

The agency worker should discuss any issues relating to their rights with the agency.

11. Further support

11.1 HR

HR are able to provide support to school leaders/managers if they are unsure of how best to support a member of staff who is experiencing symptoms of the menopause and agreeing reasonable adjustments. They can also assist if the manager needs guidance on the menopause in relation to

other policies e.g. sickness absence and changes in performance. The HR team can also signpost the manager and member of staff to the most appropriate external support available to them both.

11.2 Occupational Health

The manager may decide to refer the member of staff to their Occupational Health provider who can provide medical opinion on the potential workplace impacts, and advice on reasonable adjustments, where needed.

11.3 School's Employee Assistance Programme

Confidential help and support may be available through the school's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

11.4 Access to work

Able Futures are helping to deliver the DWP's 'Access to Work, Mental Health Support Service'. They provide mental health information and support to employers and providers of apprenticeships, and to individuals. Further information is available on their [website](#).

12. Further Information

- [National Health Service - medical advice on the menopause](#)
- [National Health Service - medical advice on early menopause](#)
- [National Health Service – medical advice on surgical menopause](#)
- [National Health Service – advice on hormone replacement therapy \(HRT\)](#)
- [National Health Service – the 'male menopause'](#)
- [ACAS - Menopause at work](#)
- [Menopause Matters - advice on the menopause](#)
- [Daisy Network - advice on early menopause](#)
- British Menopause Society, "[Menopause and the workplace guidance: what to consider](#)"
- [Menopause resources](#) from the CIPD, particularly for:
 - [Line managers](#)
 - [HR staff](#)