

Menopause and the Workplace

1 Introduction

This policy sets out the Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust's (the Trust) commitment to supporting staff who experience menopause and perimenopause, recognising that it is a natural stage of life which can affect individuals in different ways.

As an employer, the Trust is committed to promoting dignity, equality and wellbeing at work, and to creating a supportive and inclusive working environment where staff feel able to discuss menopause-related needs without stigma or discrimination.

This policy aims to raise awareness, provide guidance for employees and managers, and ensure appropriate adjustments and support are available so that staff can continue to thrive and contribute fully throughout their working lives.

2 Our Commitment

2.1 The Trust is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here.

The Trust recognises that staff experiencing the menopause - whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms - may need additional consideration, support and adjustments.

The Trust recognises that menopausal symptoms can also affect transgender people, including non-binary people.

The Trust is committed to developing a workplace culture that encourages openness and provides appropriate support for employees experiencing the menopause. The Trust will ensure that employees feel able to raise concerns about their symptoms and request reasonable adjustments to support them in the workplace without fear of discrimination or stigma.

When this policy refers to 'women,' it is intended in the most inclusive sense of the word. It is used as shorthand to describe all those who identify as women as well as those that do not identify as women, but who share women's biological realities and experiences. In using this term, we seek to include not exclude.

3 Policy Aims

3.1 The aim of this policy is to educate and inform everyone at the Trust about the potential symptoms of the menopause, the impact of the menopause, and how they can support colleagues at work.

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All staff should endeavour to understand the menopause and related issues, and how they can affect colleagues. This policy will seek to raise a wider awareness and understanding among the workforce, and outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available.

- 3.2** This policy forms part of the Trust's commitment to promoting the health, safety, wellbeing, equality, and diversity of all employees by fostering a workplace culture that respects and values individual differences.

4 Scope of the Policy

- 4.1** The policy applies to all staff employed by the Trust.

5 Definition of the Menopause

- 5.1** Perimenopause means "around menopause" and refers to the time during which a woman's body makes the natural transition to menopause. A woman can start perimenopause at any age, but it's most common within her 40's, and can last for several years.

Menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between the ages of 45 – 55. A woman's oestrogen levels decline, and they stop having periods. Menopause can also be intentionally induced as part of treatment of certain diseases, surgical removal of the ovaries or chemotherapy / radiation.

Women may have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms whilst experiencing the menopause and perimenopause and may often encounter difficulties at work because of their symptoms.

Every woman's experience of the menopause is unique, varying in symptoms and duration, and the effects can often be felt not only by the individual but also by partners, families and colleagues.

- 5.2** Menopausal symptoms may include:

- Hot flushes – a very common symptom that can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downward. It may include sweating, the skin becoming red and patchy, and a quicker or stronger heart rate.
- Heavy and/or irregular periods, with the presence of clots, which can be painful; this can leave those affected with significant fatigue, as well as practically needing to change sanitary wear more frequently; in some cases, individuals may also develop anaemia.

- Night sweats, restless leg syndrome and sleep disturbance.
- Psychological problems that include low mood, irritability, increased anxiety, panic attacks, fatigue, poor concentration, loss of confidence and memory problems.
- Urogenital problems with possible increased urinary incontinence, a higher incidence of urinary tract infections, and a more frequent or urgent need to pass urine.
- Skin irritations, including dry and itchy skin, formication and dry eyes.
- Joint and muscle aches and stiffness.
- Headaches and migraines.
- Menopausal hair loss.
- Increased risk of osteoporosis - bone strength and density are affected by the loss of oestrogen.
- Side effects from the hormones in hormone replacement therapy (HRT). These can be similar to menopause symptoms and will vary depending on the type of HRT.

Menopausal symptoms may also exacerbate existing conditions and/or impairments.

6 Support for Employees Experiencing the Menopause

6.1 The Trust is committed to taking positive action to support staff experiencing the menopause.

All managers and staff will be provided with appropriate information and training so that they are able to better understand the effects of the menopause and be comfortable about discussing and addressing the impact that it can have on employees in carrying out their roles.

All policies and procedures should take account of the effects of menopausal symptoms to ensure that those employees experiencing the menopause are not disadvantaged as a result.

The Trust acknowledges that employees experiencing menopause may be affected in ways that impact their health and wellbeing and aims to offer support to those individuals wherever reasonably practicable. Menopause is a different experience for all and therefore different types and levels of support and adjustment may be needed.

If an employee is struggling with menopausal symptoms that may impact on their work, they are encouraged to tell their line manager or the alternative contact (see below) so

that appropriate support can be provided. Such information will be treated confidentially and in accordance with the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

The designated alternative contact is the HR Officer/Administrator in each academy, who is available to employees experiencing the menopause should they not feel comfortable discussing their difficulties/concerns with their line manager. However, employees may prefer to discuss their situation with an alternative manager and/or a trade union representative.

Where an employee is absent due to their menopausal symptoms, such absences should be recorded as menopause related by the local academy HR.

The Trust recognises that menopausal symptoms may affect employee performance. Managers are expected to provide supportive and sympathetic guidance, rather than initiating capability or disciplinary procedures as an immediate response.

Where appropriate, the Trust will undertake gender sensitive risk assessments to consider the specific needs of employees experiencing the menopause. This will ensure that the working environment does not make their symptoms worse and will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments that may be required. Common areas to consider are:

- Workplace temperature and ventilation
- Access to adequate toilet and washing facilities
- Access to drinking water
- Working times and breaks
- Workplace workload and stress
- Bullying and harassment
- Uniform and personal protective equipment (if applicable)

6.2 Potential Adjustments to Consider

Employees affected by menopause symptoms that impact their work can request reasonable adjustments to their working environment. Managers should engage in an open and supportive discussion with the individual to explore and agree the adjustments that may help them manage their symptoms at work.

The individual academy will determine whether a suggested adjustment is reasonable and can be accommodated, taking into consideration the operational requirements of the academy.

The following examples outline adjustments that may help alleviate various menopause symptoms. However, the most important consideration is to listen to the individual and respond with understanding and sensitivity.

- Control over environmental factors – provision of desk fans, office seating plans to allow an individual to sit near or away from a window, door or radiator, fitting blinds to windows, access to chilled drinking water and to toilets and washing facilities.
- If uniform is provided, natural fibres should be used where possible and flexibility with dress codes should they exacerbate the symptoms.
- Changing and washing facilities to allow for clothes to be changed during the working day.
- Flexible working arrangements to include options to alter start and finish times and homeworking, if operationally feasible.
- Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments
- Temporary changes to duties, work location or how work is allocated if the individual is affected at particular points of the day, if operationally feasible.
- Provision of a private space for women to rest temporarily, talk with a colleague or to seek personal or professional support.

Additional guidance and information can be found in Appendix 3.

7 Responsibilities of Managers

Managers should ensure that all their staff are aware of this policy and understand their responsibilities.

Managers should promote a positive attitude to discussions around women's health issues and be ready and willing to have open discussions about the menopause, whilst appreciating the personal nature of the conversation.

Individual discussions and requests for support or adjustments must be treated sensitively, confidentially and professionally. A sensitive conversation checklist for managers (Appendix 1) may be a useful tool to help guide the discussion.

Managers will consider all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and without discrimination. Agreed support and adjustments will be put into place in a timely manner, taking into consideration the operational requirements of the academy.

The Trust will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination, unfair treatment, harassment or victimisation using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.

If appropriate, managers will support their staff in informing colleagues about the situation.

8 Responsibilities of Employees

If an employee is struggling with menopausal symptoms and needs support, they are encouraged to tell their line manager, or the alternative contact should they not feel comfortable speaking to their manager.

Employees experiencing the menopause are also encouraged to seek support through their GP, the Employee Assistance Programme - Education Support or other external organisations. Further details and links are given in the Self-Management for Staff Experiencing the Menopause and Further Information sections.

All staff have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and productive working environment and be willing to help and support their colleagues.

Employees should report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues relating to the menopause. The Trust will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination, unfair treatment, harassment or victimisation using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.

9 Self-Management for Staff Experiencing the Menopause

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged not to suffer in silence. It is worth considering:

- Seeking medical advice from your GP.
- Discussing symptoms with your manager, or with the alternative contact, to identify potential workplace adjustments.
- Contacting the Employee Assistance Programme - Education Support, telephone 08000 856 148.

Employees are also encouraged to make healthier lifestyle choices to help with some of the symptoms. For example:

- Eating healthily and regularly
- Drinking plenty of water
- Exercising regularly and try including weight-bearing activities where your feet and legs support your weight like walking, running or dancing
- Not smoking can help reduce hot flushes and the risk of developing other serious conditions such as heart disease and stroke
- Reducing caffeine intake and spicy foods can also help to reduce hot flushes.
- Staying cool at night by wearing loose clothing and keeping the room well ventilated
- Include foods rich in calcium, such as milk, yogurt and kale to keep bones healthy
- Alcohol intake should be within recommended levels

- Ensuring you have adequate rest and relaxation to help reduce stress levels and improve mood through activities such as yoga, mindfulness, etc
- Talking to other people, such as friends, family or colleagues, who are going through the same thing
- Always talk to a doctor before taking herbal supplements or complementary medicines

10 Further Information

British Menopause Society – *UK specialist authority on the menopause*

<https://thebms.org.uk/>

Daisy Network – *supporting women with premature ovarian insufficiency*

<https://daisynetwork.org/>

Employee Assistance Programme - *confidential support which may include counselling*

<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/your-eap/>

Henpicked – *information on managing menopause and an insight into women's stories*

<https://henpicked.net/>

Hysterectomy Association – *information about surgically induced menopause*

<https://hysterectomy-association.org.uk/>

Menopause Exchange – *free independent and practical advice*

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

Menopause Matters – *award winning website covering the A to Z of the menopause*

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

NHS – *an overview of menopause*

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

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-or-premature-menopause/>

Queer Menopause – *resources for queer, trans, non-binary, LGBTQIA+ people*

<https://www.queermenopause.com/>

The Menopause Charity – *resources about all aspects of the menopause*

<https://themenopausecharity.org/>

Women's Health Concern – *independent advice about post reproductive health*

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

10 Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective, relevant, and aligned with best practice.

Any necessary updates will be made in consultation with staff representatives and relevant stakeholders to ensure continuous improvement in supporting employees experiencing the menopause.

Version	Date of review	Date agreed	LGBs	MAT Board	Review date
1	April 2026	June 2026	Autumn 2026	June 2026	April 2029

Appendix 1**Sensitive Conversation Checklist**Preparation Before the Meeting

- Choose a private, quiet space where the colleague will feel comfortable.
- Allow enough time for an unhurried conversation.
- Review relevant policies such as menopause guidance, wellbeing, absence management.
- Approach the conversation with sensitivity, empathy, and confidentiality.
- Consider potential reasonable adjustments without making assumptions.
- Ensure the colleague knows they may bring a support person (HR, union rep, trusted colleague).

Starting the Conversation

- Explain the purpose of the discussion (support and understanding).
- Reassure the colleague that the discussion is confidential and supportive.
- Use open questions to encourage discussion.

Listening and Understanding

- Listen actively and without judgement.
- Allow the colleague to share only what they feel comfortable disclosing.
- Acknowledge the impact menopause symptoms may have on work.
- Avoid medical questions and focus on workplace impact.

Discussing Support Needs

- Ask the employee what adjustments might help them.
- Discuss possible workplace adjustments relevant to their role.
- Clarify what can be implemented immediately and what requires approval.
- Agree to review temporary arrangements.
- Consider if referral to OH might be appropriate – if so, please discuss with the local HR Officer/Administrator

Agreeing Actions

- Summarise the agreed actions and support measures.
- Set clear timelines and responsibilities.
- Schedule a review meeting.
- Remind the colleague they can request further support at any time.

Recording and Confidentiality

- Take notes of the key agreed actions and share them with the employee. This can be done by email, copying in the local academy HR.
- HR will store the details securely on the employee's personnel file.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times and only share details with HR.

Following Up

- Check in regularly and sensitively after the meeting.

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- Adapt or escalate support as required, seeking advice from HR where appropriate.
- Signpost to internal support services (useful links in the Menopause and the Workplace Policy, Employee Assistance Programme, wellbeing resources, etc).

Appendix 3

Potential Adjustments to Consider

Symptoms	Adjustments
Hot flushes	- Temperature control for the work area such as USB connected desk fan, moving closer to an open window - Easy access to fresh drinking water and fresh air outside - Access to a quiet room for breaks if work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe hot flush - Opportunity to move away from/reduce a heat source - Adapt uniforms to improve comfort (if relevant)
Heavy/light periods	- Access to washroom facilities - Allow for more frequent breaks to go to the toilet - Make it easy to request extra uniforms (if relevant) - Consider if ad hoc home working would be more comfortable where possible - Ensure sanitary products can be stored and/or are available in toilet facilities - Provide storage for a change of clothing if required - Ensure staff that require it have someone to contact to provide cover should they urgently need to leave the classroom
Headaches	- Easy access to fresh drinking water - Consider if there is a quieter place to work - Allow the person to move around/stay mobile if this helps
Heart palpitations	- Signpost them to their GP - Lifestyle changes can help, such as reducing caffeine and alcohol intake - Reduce work related stress
Difficulty sleeping and fatigue	Consider the employee making a flexible working request to adjust start and finish times (if operationally feasible), or to have additional break times
Loss of confidence	- Held regular support one-to-one meetings if this would be of benefit to the employee - Additional or refresher training in a particular topic/area - Signpost them to internal support such as the Employee Assistance Programme and wellbeing resources and counsellors if available
Poor concentration and forgetfulness	- Where possible, consider adjusting the working hours to fit times of the day when concentration is better - Provide list books, note board or other memory assisting equipment - Where possible, offer a quieter working space - Where possible, reduce interruptions - Signpost to the Employee Assistant Programme
Low mood, anxiety, depression and panic attacks	- Signpost them to the Employee Assistant Programme - Signpost them to their GP - Consider an appointment with Occupational Health

Appendix 4

Glossary

Menopause

The natural transition stage in women's lives last from 4 to 8 years, although for some women it can be much longer. Most women experience the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55 and it is marked by changes in the hormones, and the woman stops having periods. Women may also experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms as a result of the menopause.

Premature Menopause

For some women it can be experience at a much younger age, in their 30s or even younger and is sometimes called premature ovarian insufficiency.

Surgical or Medical Menopause

There are sometimes circumstances that will create an immediate menopause, whatever the age of the woman. Examples include situations where the ovaries are removed during a hysterectomy, or when menopause is medically induced because the ovaries have been damaged by certain treatments, such as cancer therapy.

Perimenopause

A transitional period before the menopause when hormone levels (oestrogen and progesterone) begin to fluctuate and decline, causing irregular periods and symptoms.

Post-menopause

Defined as the phase starting 12 months after a woman's last natural period, marking the end of the perimenopause stage. While periods cease, many experience ongoing symptoms.