



**THE
DIOCESE OF
SHEFFIELD
ACADEMIES
TRUST**

Menopause Policy

Signed off by: Board of Trustees

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1. Overview

- 1.1 The Diocese of Sheffield Academies Trust is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. It is also committed to improving the well-being of its people and has a duty to manage related issues effectively.
- 1.2 The menopause can have significant effects on a woman's personal life and on her work life. Trans and non-binary employees may be affected in the same or similar ways and are covered by this policy.
- 1.3 We aim to create an environment in which all our employees feel informed about the menopause and are comfortable and confident talking about its impact. If you are going through the menopause, you'll have help in coping with its effects so that you can continue to do your job successfully.
- 1.4 This policy should be read alongside our policies on Flexible Working, Wellbeing, Equal Opportunities, Absence Management and Data Protection.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of your employment contract, and we may update it at any time.

2. Aims

The aims of the policy and supporting guidance is to make managers aware of menopause related issues and how they can affect their employees by:

- 2.1 Creating an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for adjustments at work.
- 2.2 Promoting the guidance which will provide direction and clarity on how to support women who raise menopause issues, either for individuals experiencing this or those who are affected indirectly – for example, line managers, partners and colleagues.
- 2.3 Informing managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, what the consequences can be and what they can do to support women at work.
- 2.4 Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.

3. What is the menopause?

- 3.1 The menopause is a biological process that signals the end of a woman's ability to conceive a child. The menopause is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). It typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 when oestrogen levels begin to fall.

- 3.2 The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.
- 3.3 Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.
- 3.4 The menopause produces a range of physical and psychological symptoms that can affect many aspects of life. Every woman is different and not all will be affected in the same way or to the same extent.
- 3.5 Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically. Common symptoms include:

Hot flushes

Headaches

Poor concentration

Dry eyes

Anxiety

Low mood

Lack of confidence

Panic attacks

Poor sleep

Weight gain

Fatigue

Poor memory

Joint and muscle pain

- 3.6 Perimenopause symptoms can last up to 8 years. Menopause symptoms tend to last about four years, but can last longer.

4. Understanding the Menopause

- 4.1 Despite its potentially serious impact on a woman's everyday life, the menopause is still not spoken about as freely as some other physical or mental health issues. We aim to do things differently so that the menopause becomes a normal part of the health and wellbeing conversation.

- 4.2 Through training and raising awareness of the symptoms and related issues, we promote an organisation-wide understanding of what the menopause means for those going through it. This is essential to building a culture of openness, trust, sensitivity and respect around what is for many women a challenging time in their lives.
- 4.3 The menopause may affect those you work with and sometimes you will need to make certain things easier for women going through it. That might include simply accepting that some adjustments need to be made to a person's role, their working environment or their working day.
- 4.4 We may not be able to tell you about any menopause-related issues that a particular colleague is experiencing. We need you to accept that and respect their privacy.
- 4.5 If you treat a colleague badly (including making unwanted comments or jokes) because of her menopause symptoms, you could be disciplined.
- 4.6 For managers, recognising the symptoms of the menopause is vital to treating an affected employee fairly. It can explain certain behaviours that you might otherwise put down to a bad attitude or poor performance.
- 4.7 We will give you specific training in handling all menopause-related issues sensitively and with confidence. This is not just about legal compliance; good support at work leads to happier and better performing employees who have valuable skills and experience.
- 4.8 If you think that someone who reports to you may be going through the menopause and it is affecting their performance, and you're not sure what to do, please contact **Alison Bradley, DSAT People Director.** (abradley@DSAT.education). Women who don't get the right support can lose confidence in their ability to do their job (some even decide to leave) and may find that their mental health suffers.

5. Helping you through the Menopause

- 5.1 If you are going through the menopause and are finding things difficult at work, please don't suffer in silence.
- 5.2 We know that the menopause is a very personal matter, so we will not raise it with you even if we think you are displaying symptoms. We might ask how you are, in general terms. You can then decide whether to talk to us about the menopause or not. We would encourage you to do so because we will want to support you.
- 5.3 We have a four-step procedure that applies to discussions around the menopause and the action we'll take:

Step 1

- 5.4 Speaking with your GP or medical specialist about your menopause-related concerns could be a good place for you to start.
- 5.5 You should also talk to **Alison Bradley, DSAT People Director** who is our wellbeing champion. You could go straight to your manager instead (5.6 below), if you would feel comfortable doing that.

Step 2

- 5.6 Meet with your manager. You should expect to be able to have a private, friendly, honest and constructive conversation (see Appendix A) It can be helpful for a trusted colleague to be at the meeting too, but it's not essential.
- 5.7 We will discuss with you ideas that could make things easier for you. Adjustments will depend on the symptoms you are experiencing and, if relevant, the budget we have available, but things you could ask us to consider could include:

Hot flushes

Controlling the temperature of your work area, such as providing a desktop fan, moving near a window or away from a heat source;

Providing easy access to drinking water;

Having access to a rest room for breaks if your work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if you need to manage a severe hot flush.

Heavy periods

Allowing you to work somewhere with easy access to toilets;

Providing access to sanitary products in toilets;

Providing storage space for a change of clothing.

Headaches

Providing easy access to drinking water;

Providing a quiet space to work when possible;

Low mood

Agreeing time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission (ensuring children's safety first);

Having access to a quiet area.

Loss of confidence

Having regular protected time with your manager to discuss any issues.

Poor concentration

Adjusting work patterns;

Reviewing task allocation and workload;

Providing quiet spaces to work;

Reducing interruptions;

Agreeing protected time when you won't be disturbed.

Panic attacks and anxiety

Providing mindfulness training or counselling for anxiety;

Agreeing to have short times away from work to undertake relaxation techniques or going for a walk.

Please note: we've included these potential adjustments to help you and your manager consider how best to support you. If there are other things you'd like us to consider to help you, please ask.

5.8 Your conversation with your manager will be confidential. He or she will probably need to discuss issues and possible solutions with others including HR, senior **leaders** and/or occupational health. Those people will be subject to duties of confidentiality.

5.9 We will work hard to balance your needs with those of your colleagues, however on occasions we may not be able to find a solution that works for everyone.

5.10 We will not talk to your colleagues, other than those included in 5.8 above, about the menopause-related difficulties you are having unless you ask us to or agree that we can.

5.11 We will keep notes of the things we discuss and will comply with our data protection responsibilities in respect of the information that passes between us. That's in line with our Data Protection Policy.

5.12 After your initial meeting with your manager, and periodically after that, we may carry out health and safety risk assessments and/or seek advice from occupational health.

Step 3

5.13 Taking account of any specialist advice, we will agree with you the adjustments that we will make.

- 5.14 We will meet with you to make sure that the adjustments are working for you and for us. If any modifications are needed, or if anything new needs to be put in place, we will discuss that with you.

Step 4

- 5.15 We will meet with you on an ongoing basis to check that your symptoms are being managed effectively.
- 5.16 You may find that your symptoms change over time. You should tell us if that happens so that we can look at making further or alternative adjustments. Once your symptoms pass we would expect you to tell us, and we may discuss with you removing the adjustments that had been put in place.
- 5.17 We may need to consult with occupational health at various points to ensure everything is being done that should be done.

6 Some resources

- 6.1 The NHS website has some good, basic information about the menopause:

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

- 6.2 The British Menopause Society:

<https://thebms.org.uk>

- 6.3 Women's Health Concern:

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

- 6.4 You can also download a free app to help you manage and track your symptoms, access personalised expert advice and obtain support:

<https://balance-app.com/>

7 Roles and Responsibilities

Employees

All employees are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility to look after their health and seek medical advice where necessary;
- Being open and honest in conversations with managers
- if a member of staff feels unable to speak to their manager, they can speak to the DSAT People Director or contact the Education Support helpline;
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues.

Managers

All managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and Guidance;
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treat the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Use the guidance in Appendix A, 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;
- Ensure ongoing conversations take place and set review dates;
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the manager may:

- Discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice;
- Refer the employee to the Occupational Health adviser;
- Review Occupational Health advice, and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practicable;
- Record any additional adjustments agreed and continue to review.

People Director

The People Director will:

- Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of the Policy and Guidance;
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this Policy in respect of related absence levels and performance;
- Advise schools on processing referrals to the Occupational Health adviser

APPENDIX A

Managers' Guidance for Employee Discussions

We recognise that every woman is different and it is, therefore, not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines. If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly;
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below) – refer them to the Menopause Advice Sheet (<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause/>);
- Agree actions and how to implement them, record the agreed actions and the next steps before the meeting ends. Ensure that this record is treated as confidential and stored securely;
- Agree if other members of staff should be informed and by whom;
- Ensure that time is arranged for a follow up meeting.

Symptoms

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including but not limited to those listed below and support for women should be considered as detailed:

Hot Flashes

- 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;
- Easy access to drinking water;
- Having access to a rest room for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe flush.

Heavy/Light Periods

- Have access to toilet facilities;

Headaches

- Offer a quiet place at break times.

Difficulty Sleeping

- Offer a quiet place at break times.

Low Mood

- Agree 'time out' from others, ensuring adequate cover;
- Identify a 'time out' space to be able to go to 'clear their head' at break times;
- Refer to the Educational Support Helpline for further support and guidance.

Loss of Confidence

- Ensure there are regular Personal Development discussions;
- Have time with their manager to discuss any issues.

Poor Concentration

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and consider any possible adjustments to work practice accordingly;
- Offer quiet space for use during break times.

Anxiety

- Promote counselling services provided by Educational Support Helpline;
- Provide information about relaxation techniques;
- Encourage taking fresh air at break times.

Panic Attacks

- Offer quiet space for use during break times;
- Provide information about relaxation and breathing techniques.

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 have make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.