

Mount Street Nursery & Infants School



Menopause in the Workplace Policy

Date	October 2022
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Cyngor Sir Powys County Council
Menopause in the Workplace Policy (Schools)

This policy applies to all School-based staff whether in a teaching or non-teaching post. It also applies to Headteachers and Governors with line management responsibilities.



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Policy History

Policy Date	Summary of change	Contact	Version/ Implementation Date	Review Date
May 2019	New policy	HR	TBC	TBC
May 2021	New policy for Schools.	HR	TBC	May 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council and the Governing Body have a positive attitude to the menopause and will work proactively to make adjustments where necessary, so that the workplace does not negatively affect women experiencing the menopause.
- 1.2 The Council and the Governing Body are committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in the workplace. It is recognised that women may need additional consideration, support and adjustments before, during and after the menopause. Furthermore, the Council and the Governing Body are committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of their workforce.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 The primary aim of this policy is to ensure that Governors, Headteachers, teachers and school staff are aware of their responsibility to understand the menopause and related issues and how they can affect employees. It also aims to raise awareness and understanding among all employees and to outline the support and reasonable adjustments that are available.
- 2.2 The Council seeks to create an environment within all schools where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and to request reasonable adjustments if required.
- 2.3 The Council and Governing Bodies will make every reasonable effort to ensure that workplace conditions within schools do not make menopausal symptoms worse by taking a proactive stance in eradicating exclusionary or discriminatory practices.
- 2.4 Menopause in the workplace is covered by certain pieces of legislation to protect employees:
 - Under the Equality Act 2010, menopause is largely covered under three protected characteristics: age, sex and disability discrimination.
 - The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 provides for safe working, which extends to the working conditions when experiencing menopausal symptoms.

3. Key Principles

- 3.1 It is recognised that the menopause is a very individual experience, and that people can be affected in different ways and to different degrees. Therefore, different levels and types of support and adjustments may be required.
- 3.2 The Council will provide appropriate information via the HWB and the Powys County Council Staff Intranet on the menopause to all employees and School leaders and will offer support to employees undergoing the menopause.
- 3.3 When requested by the employee, appropriate risk assessments will be carried out which take the specific needs of menopausal women into consideration, including stress risk assessments.
- 3.4 Reasonable adjustments to working conditions for menopausal women will be put in place where required and agreed.
- 3.5 The Council/HR department are committed to ensuring that Managers are appropriately supported and have the tools available to support staff going through the menopause.

Women who are experiencing any issues at work due to the menopause should speak to their Headteacher or direct Line Manager in the first instance, However, it is recognised that employees may feel more comfortable speaking to a HR representative. Therefore, employees can also contact their Schools' HR Business Partner, or a member of the schools HR Team for advice in addition to their Trade Union representative.

- 3.6 The following video provides a helpful guide for who are experiencing the menopause.

[Guide for Employees Video](#)

4. Definitions

- 4.1 The **menopause** is part of the natural ageing process for women. Often known as “the change”, it is the point in time when a women’s menstruation has stopped for a period of 12 consecutive months. It means that it is the end of a woman’s reproductive life. After a woman

has not had a period for a year, she can be described as being 'post-menopausal'.

- 4.2 The **peri-menopause**, which is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause, can often last for four or five years. However, in some cases, it may continue for many more years and for others, just a few months, so it can differ from individual to individual. During the peri-menopause, women may begin to experience symptoms due to changes in their hormone levels. These symptoms may vary in degree between different individuals from mild to very significant. Because they may still be having regular periods at the onset of symptoms, many women do not realise that they are experiencing the peri-menopause and may not understand what is causing their symptoms – this can be a barrier to accessing suitable support.
- 4.3 **Artificial (surgical) menopause** is a result of surgical removal of both ovaries or destruction of the ovaries by some cancer treatments. With artificial menopause, there is a sudden drop in hormone levels and menopausal symptoms begin abruptly. Often the symptoms experienced are more severe than those experienced with natural or premature menopause.

5. Symptoms

- 5.1 Physical symptoms associated with the onset of the peri-menopause can include:
- Hot flushes
 - Palpitations
 - Night sweats
 - Insomnia/sleep disturbances
 - Fatigue
 - Headaches
 - Increased perspiration during the day
 - Dry skin and skin irritation
 - Hair loss
 - Vaginal discomfort and dryness
 - Urinary problems

There may also be associated psychological symptoms, such as:

- Depression
- Anxiety

- Mood changes
- Panic attacks
- Poor concentration and memory problems
- Loss of confidence.

5.2 Women may experience only some or all of these symptoms (as well as others not on the list). Most women will experience some symptoms, but some women do not experience any noticeable symptoms. On average, women continue to experience symptoms for four years after their last period, but around 10% of women continue to experience symptoms for up to 12 years after their last period.

5.3 Post-menopausal women can be at an increased risk of certain medical conditions such as osteoporosis (“brittle bones”) and heart disease. This is because of lower levels of certain hormones in post-menopausal women. These risks increase in women who have an early or premature menopause.

6. Key Actions and Adjustments

6.1 Headteachers, Governors, Teachers and school staff with line management responsibilities should familiarise themselves with this policy and associated information, for example, internal sources of support for women experiencing the Menopause such as Occupational Health and the Employee Assistance Programme, ‘Care First’. External signposting information such as the links provided in Section 9 of this policy, should also be noted.

6.2 All line managers are expected to create an environment where employees feel comfortable raising menopause-related issues and requesting reasonable adjustments where necessary. Headteachers/Governors with line management responsibilities and line managers should be approachable and available to hold open conversations about menopause and appreciate the sensitivity and confidentiality required during these discussions. If Headteachers are experiencing difficulties holding these discussions, or require further guidance, they can contact their Schools HR Business Partner for advice and support.

6.3 All line managers have a responsibility to ensure that the workplace is suitable and will not make an employee’s symptoms worse. Risk assessments can be used to identify any potential adjustments which may be required. Line managers can use the menopause risk assessment checklist (Appendix A) but shall also take account of any additional issues raised by affected individuals.

- 6.4 Common issues that need consideration within schools are:
- Classroom/workplace temperature and ventilation - do windows open? Are fans easily available?
 - Access to adequate toilet/bathroom facilities - does the School allow for this and have arrangements in place for staff to access facilities during lessons when needed?
 - Access to cold drinking water.
 - Headteachers/line managers being aware of the psychological symptoms and ensuring workloads are manageable and all staff are well-supported and wellbeing is prioritised.
- 6.5 The effects of the menopause, including peri-menopause and post-menopausal stages, in addition to the effects of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) should be taken into account in the implementation of sickness absence monitoring, performance capability and disciplinary action so that menopausal women are not unfairly penalised and do not experience detrimental treatment because of their symptoms.
- 6.6 Flexible working arrangements will where possible be considered, potentially including adjustments to start and finish times, part-time working hours, scheduling of PPA at the best time for the employee and additional breaks from work.
- 6.7 Line Managers can refer women experiencing the menopause to Occupational Health where initial adjustments following completion of the Menopause Risk Assessment have been unsuccessful and/or symptoms are particularly severe.
- 6.8 The following video provides a helpful guide for managers about supporting employees experiencing the menopause:

[Guide for Managers Video](#)

7. Employee Self-help

7.1 Current advice to women highlights the importance of lifestyle choices before, during and after the menopause, as well as the benefits of:

- Healthy eating – research has shown that a balanced diet can help alleviate some symptoms and helps keep bones healthy;
- Eating regularly;
- Drinking plenty of water – some women find chilled water helpful;
- Wearing clothes made of natural fibres;
- Exercising regularly – exercise can help to reduce hot flushes and improve sleep. It can also help to boost mood and maintain strong bones;
- Consulting with a GP on the management of the menopause and to ensure that any symptoms are not due to other causes;
- Not smoking;
- Cutting down on caffeine, alcohol and spicy food;
- Having access to natural light;
- Getting adequate rest and relaxation.

These measures can help with some symptoms of menopause and may also help reduce the risk of osteoporosis, diabetes and heart disease in later life.

8. Internal Signposting Information

Employee Assistance Programme – Care First

This service provides a telephone counselling service for employees and an impartial advice and support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through a free-phone number - 0800 174319 - and online resource - <https://www.care-first.co.uk>

Occupational Health

Occupational Health referral forms can be located via HWB and the Powys County Council Staff Intranet. Once complete, please send to occ.health@powys.gov.uk.

For more information, please contact occ.health@powys.gov.uk or phone 01597 827025. Alternatively, you can speak to your Schools HR Business Partner for advice and support.

9. External Signposting Information

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

Healthy Working Wales -
<http://www.healthyworkingwales.wales.nhs.uk/home>

British Menopause Society - <https://thebms.org.uk/>

Menopause Matters - <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

The Daisy Network - <https://www.daisynetwork.org/>

Appendix A

Menopause Risk Assessment Checklist

Health and Safety

Hazard	Considerations	Current Action?	Further Action?	Comments
Information on menopause	Does the employee have access to information on menopause and any associated policies, guidance, etc. e.g. Sickness Absence Management Policy			
Sickness reporting	Is there the option for those who are unable to attend work due to menopausal symptoms to report these to an alternative point of contact, if felt necessary?			
Stress	Are there appropriate mechanisms in place to deal with other related issues such as stress?			
Occupational Health	Has the employee been made aware of the OH service? Has the Line Manager considered making a referral as an additional support measure?			
Further support	Has the employee been			

	made aware of other support in the workplace? E.g. trade union representative, HR representative, Telephone Counselling through the Council's Employee Assistance Programme, 'Care First'			
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Physical

Hazard	Considerations	Current Action?	Further Action?	Comments
Work stations	Are classrooms/workstations locations easily accessible to sanitary and rest facilities?			
Facilities	Are there suitable washing and changing facilities available?			
	Is there nearby access to cold drinking water?			
	Is there reasonable access to sanitary products?			
	Do rotas, shifts and schedules ensure that employees have easy access to sanitary and washing facilities?			
Temperature	Are both the employee and the manager aware of the maximum and minimum workplace temperatures and is it implemented?			
	Is ventilation available and is it regularly maintained?			
	Is additional ventilation provided if necessary?			

	Do uniforms and PPE equipment reflect the needs of the individual?			
	Is provided clothing made of natural fibres as far as reasonably possible?			
Environment/ duties	Is there access to natural light?			
	Have work processes been assessed to see if any reasonable adjustments are needed?			
	Noise levels too high?			
	How are levels of mental and physical fatigue?			
	Fatigue from standing?			
	Insufficient workspace?			
	Any issues with movement and posture?			
	Remote working – is this part of the current role and what mechanisms are in place to manage this in terms of access to facilities?			
	Are there any issues regarding travelling for work purposes?			