Supporting Employees during the Menopause

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CHAIR OF TRUSTEES:	
CEO:	

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Introduction

1. Eynsham Partnership Academy is committed to the wellbeing, dignity and inclusion of its employees. We aim to create an environment where employees experiencing perimenopause, menopause or postmenopause feel confident to raise concerns, without embarrassment or stigma, and are able to ask for appropriate support and workplace adjustments so that they can continue to work safely and effectively.

2. The purpose of this guidance is to raise awareness of menopause and its potential impact at work, and to provide a clear framework for managers and employees to identify support, agree appropriate workplace adjustments and review these as needs change.

Aims

3. To create an open and supportive culture where employees feel confident to raise menopause-related concerns and ask for support and adjustments at work.

4. To ensure that workplace conditions and working arrangements do not unnecessarily worsen menopausal symptoms, recognising that perimenopause and menopause are individual experiences and there is no 'one size fits all' approach.

5. To support employee wellbeing, attendance, performance and retention by ensuring that menopause-related needs are considered fairly, sensitively and consistently.

What is the menopause?

6. Menopause is a natural stage of life when hormone levels change and periods eventually stop. Menopause is reached when a person has not had a period for 12 months, where this is not due to another cause. The transition can include perimenopause, menopause and postmenopause and may last for several years. Menopause predominantly affects women, but some transgender, non-binary and intersex people may also experience menopause or menopausal symptoms and should receive support relevant to their needs.

7. Menopause usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55, with the average age in the UK around 51. It can happen earlier or later. Some people experience premature ovarian insufficiency or early menopause, and menopause can also occur following medical or surgical treatment.

8. Perimenopause is the phase leading up to menopause when hormone levels begin to change and symptoms may start, even though periods may still be occurring. Postmenopause describes the time after menopause. Symptoms and their impact vary significantly from person to person.

Symptoms of the menopause

9. Menopause can cause a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms. Symptoms can fluctuate, change over time and have different levels of impact on day-to-day life and work. Some people experience few symptoms, while for others the impact can be significant.

10. Symptoms may begin during perimenopause and can continue after menopause. There is no standard duration and managers should avoid assumptions about how long symptoms will last or how they will affect an individual.

11. Menopausal symptoms can present challenges at work. In some cases, the effects may meet the legal definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010. Regardless of whether this threshold is met, the Trust will seek to identify appropriate support and remove avoidable barriers wherever reasonably possible.

12. Common symptoms can include, but are not limited to:

- Hot flushes and changes in temperature regulation
- Night sweats
- Problems with memory, concentration or 'brain fog'
- Anxiety or panic symptoms
- Difficulty sleeping and fatigue
- Headaches or migraines
- Changes in weight or body composition
- Mood changes, including low mood, anxiety or depression
- Urinary symptoms, including recurrent urinary tract infections
- Palpitations
- Skin changes, including dryness or itching
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Vaginal or genitourinary discomfort

This is not an exhaustive list. Symptoms and their impact are individual and may change over time.

13. Employees may find it helpful to keep a record of symptoms, including their frequency and impact at work, to support conversations with a healthcare professional or manager. Employees should seek appropriate medical advice where symptoms are concerning, unusual or affecting their wellbeing.

Legal context

14. Menopause is not itself a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, an employee experiencing menopause symptoms may be protected in relation to characteristics including disability, sex, age and gender reassignment. Where the effects of symptoms meet the legal definition of disability, the Trust has a legal duty to consider and make reasonable adjustments.

The Trust also has responsibilities for employees' health, safety and welfare at work. Menopause-related concerns will therefore be considered through an individual, supportive approach, with appropriate risk assessment where required. Managers should focus on the employee's needs and the barriers they are experiencing rather than requiring an employee to establish that they are disabled before support is considered.

Key principle	EPA approach
Equality and reasonable adjustments	Consider individual needs promptly. Where symptoms meet the legal definition of disability, reasonable adjustments must be considered and made where reasonable.
Health, safety and confidentiality	Consider workplace risks, treat health information confidentially, and share information only where appropriate and with explicit agreement unless there is a legal or safeguarding reason otherwise.

15. Employees who believe they have experienced discrimination, harassment or unfair treatment relating to menopause should raise this with their line manager, HR or through the appropriate Trust procedure. Health information will be treated confidentially and only shared where appropriate and with the employee's explicit agreement, unless there is a legal or safeguarding reason that requires otherwise.

How can menopause symptoms be managed?

16. Not everyone will require medical treatment or workplace support. Employees who would like advice about managing symptoms should seek guidance from an appropriate healthcare professional. Current NHS and NICE guidance provides information about treatment and management options, including HRT and non-hormonal approaches.

17. Where symptoms are persistent, complex or not responding to treatment, a GP or other healthcare professional may consider referral to a clinician or service with expertise in menopause. The Trust does not provide medical advice but will support employees to

access appropriate workplace support, Occupational Health and other available services.

How managers can support an employee during the menopause

18. Managers have an important role in ensuring that anyone experiencing menopausal symptoms receives the same support, dignity and understanding as they would for any other health issue. Effective support can help employees remain well and effective at work, retain valuable skills and experience, and reduce avoidable sickness absence.
19. There are a number of steps that managers should take to support employees and reduce the impact of menopausal symptoms at work:

• Have a private, confidential, two-way conversation with the employee to understand the specific impact at work.
• Ask what support would help and avoid assumptions about symptoms, capability or treatment.
• Offer an alternative appropriate person to speak to if the employee would prefer not to discuss the matter with their line manager.
• Consider the employee's role, workload and working environment and undertake or review a risk assessment where appropriate.
• Identify and agree appropriate workplace changes or reasonable adjustments and implement them without unnecessary delay.
• Record agreed adjustments in writing and set a date to review them; review sooner if needs change.
• Consider Occupational Health or HR advice where this would be helpful, with the employee's knowledge.
• Treat health information as confidential. Agree what, if anything, will be shared with colleagues and obtain explicit consent.
• Consider whether menopause is contributing to absence, wellbeing or performance concerns before formal action is taken.
• Where appropriate, record menopause-related absence separately from general sickness absence, particularly where disability provisions may apply.
• Signpost to appropriate sources of support, including GP, Occupational Health, EAP, NHS, NICE, Acas and CIPD guidance.
• Hold regular follow-up conversations because symptoms and support needs can fluctuate over time.
• Managers, supervisors and team leaders should receive appropriate menopause awareness training so they understand the Trust's approach, available support and relevant legal duties.

Discuss appropriate adjustments

20. Simple changes to someone's role, working arrangements or working environment can help ensure that menopause does not become a barrier to wellbeing or performance. Managers should consider adjustments promptly and on an individual basis. Where menopause

symptoms amount to a disability, reasonable adjustments are a legal requirement.

21. Adjustments may be physical, such as access to drinking water, a fan or a cooler workspace, or may involve changes to working arrangements, duties, breaks or start and finish times. Agreed adjustments should be recorded in writing, implemented without unnecessary delay and reviewed regularly because symptoms and needs can change. Examples of potential adjustments are set out in Annex A.

Review of guidance

This policy and associated guidance will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains consistent with current legislation and national guidance. The latest approved version will be available through the Trust's usual policy arrangements.

If you have questions about this guidance or require support, speak to your line manager, HR or another appropriate senior colleague. Employees may also be signposted to Occupational Health or the Employee Assistance Programme where available.

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Other related policies

- Flexible Working Time PolicyFlexible Working Policy
- Stress at Work / Wellbeing Policy
- Sickness Absence Policy
- Equality / Dignity at Work Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments / Disability guidance
- Occupational Health / Employee Wellbeing arrangements

Annex A – Potential Reasonable adjustments

The following are examples of workplace adjustments that may help employees manage menopause symptoms. This is not an exhaustive list. Adjustments should be discussed with the employee, tailored to individual need, recorded where appropriate and reviewed regularly.

Symptom	Potential Workplace Impact	Potential Adjustments
Daytime sweats and hot flushes	• Less tolerant of temperatures in the workplace • Work clothes / uniform may become uncomfortable • Personal protective equipment (PPE) may be uncomfortable if worn for long periods	Ensure easy access to drinking water and washroom facilities Allow additional short breaks where needed Consider access to a fan, opening window or cooler workspace Review uniform/PPE requirements where these worsen symptoms Consider a private space to manage symptoms where available
Night-time sweats and hot flushes	• Tiredness (due to lack of sleep) • Concentration issues (due to lack of sleep)	Consider temporary flexibility in start/finish times where operationally possible Review workload or timing of demanding tasks Allow short breaks where needed
Sleep difficulties	• Tiredness (due to lack of sleep) • Concentration issues (due to lack of sleep)	Consider temporary flexibility in start/finish times Review workload and task timing Allow short breaks and access to a quiet space where practical

Irregular and/or heavy periods	• Need to access toilet facilities on a frequent basis • Certain tasks may be unfeasible (e.g., a teacher supporting swimming may not be able to be in the pool)	Ensure prompt and easy access to toilet and washing facilities Allow additional toilet breaks without embarrassment Consider temporary adjustment to duties where necessary Ensure appropriate sanitary facilities and disposal arrangements
Poor concentration / loss of confidence	• Performance may be affected • Difficulty making decisions • Work-related stress	Discuss when concentration is strongest and, where possible, adjust task timing Review workload, priorities and deadlines Hold regular one-to-one meetings and provide clear written follow-up/actions Consider a quieter workspace or reduced interruptions Use practical memory aids, checklists or digital reminders Consider a stress risk assessment where appropriate
Low mood / anxiety / panic attacks	• Performance may be affected	Offer a confidential conversation and regular check-ins Signpost to EAP, Occupational Health or other support Allow short breaks or access to a quiet space where practical Review workload and work-related stressors Consider temporary flexibility where this would help

Headaches	• Loss of concentration / performance may be affected	Ensure access to drinking water Consider a quiet or lower-stimulation workspace where practical Allow short breaks where needed Review screen use, lighting or other triggers where relevant
Urinary problems	• Need to access toilet facilities more frequently • May need to drink more fluids	Ensure easy access to drinking water and toilet facilities Allow additional toilet breaks without embarrassment Consider location of duties and access to facilities when working off site
Joint stiffness, aches and pains	• Static postures may be more uncomfortable	For desk-based employees, review workstation setup Allow opportunities to change position, stretch or move Consider temporary adjustment to physically demanding duties where appropriate Seek Occupational Health advice where helpful

Appendix B - Sources of Further Support and Information

(These sources may also be shared in staff wellbeing information and communal areas.)

NHS – Menopause: www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/

CIPD – Menopause at work: guidance for people managers: www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/guides/menopause-people-manager-guidance/https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/menopause/people-manager-guidance

Acas – Menopause at work: www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-workwww.talkingmenopause.co.uk

British Menopause Society: www.thebms.org.ukwww.menopausematters.co.uk

Women's Health Concern – patient information and support: www.womens-health-concern.org

info@hysterectomy-association.org.uk
https://healthyhappywoman.co.uk/hysterectomy-information/

NICE guideline NG23 – Menopause: identification and management: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23www.managemymenopause.co.uk

Occupational Health / Employee Assistance Programme – details available through the Trustwww.nos.org.uk nurses@nos.org.uk

Equality Advisory and Support Service: www.equalityadvisoryservice.comwww.womens-health-concern.org/

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists – menopause information: www.rcog.org.ukhttps://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information

The Menopause Charity – information and support:
www.themenopausecharity.orghttps://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/