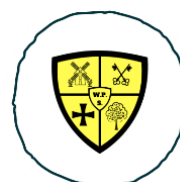




Menopause at Work Policy

Approved via Governorhub

Approved Date	December 2023
Next review	October 2027



Menopause At Work

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Make sure that our school can support staff affected by the menopause and help them to feel comfortable at work, both when experiencing symptoms and when asking for support and adjustments
- Set out how our school will make reasonable adjustments to minimise the risk of the working environment making menopausal symptoms worse for those experiencing them
- Minimise menopause related stigma in our school by educating staff on what it is and the symptoms staff affected by it might suffer
- Provide further resources to help staff, particularly line managers, to support others through difficulties the menopause may cause them

Legislation and guidance

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.

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.

[Section 6](#) of the Equality Act 2010 states that a person has a disability if:

- They have a physical or mental impairment, **and**
- The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities

Relating specifically to menopause symptoms:

- Many of the aforementioned symptoms would be likely to be classified as a physical and/or mental impairment
- 'Substantial' means more than minor or trivial
- 'Long-term' means an impairment if it has lasted for at least 12 months, is likely to last for at least 12 months, or is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected
- 'Day to day activities' are those carried out by most people on a regular basis, and includes but is not limited to: walking, driving, carrying or moving things, being able to concentrate, writing, reading, typing, speaking

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.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

Roles and responsibilities

Role of The Governing Body

The governing board has ultimate responsibility for health and safety matters in the school, but will delegate day-to-day responsibility to the headteacher.

The governing board has a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that staff are not exposed to risks to their health and safety on the school premises.

The academy trust, as the employer, also has a duty to:

- Assess the risks to staff and others affected by school activities in order to identify and introduce the health and safety measures necessary to manage those risks
- Inform employees about risks and the measures in place to manage them
- Make sure that adequate health and safety training is provided

Role of senior staff

Senior staff will make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to support staff experiencing the menopause, and to make sure the workplace doesn't make their symptoms worse, by:

- Carrying out individual risk assessments to assess working conditions in line with the specific needs of staff affected by the menopause
- Monitoring the wellbeing of staff through regular surveys and structured conversations
- Providing resources and training opportunities to make sure that all line managers and HR staff are aware of the menopause, its potential impact on work, and what adjustments may be necessary
- Promoting information about and access to external support services
- Designating a member of staff such as a wellbeing champion that staff affected by the menopause can speak to about their symptoms in confidence, if they do not feel comfortable doing so with their line manager

Senior staff will work to create a culture in the school where staff can talk openly about the menopause by:

- Providing information on the menopause in the staff room, e.g. posters and leaflets
- Providing training for staff and managers to achieve consistent practice
- Referring to the menopause in the school's staff wellbeing policy
- Using an occupational health service and employee assistance programme (EAP)

Role of Line Managers

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

- 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 and access to external support services
- Record menopause-related absences as an 'ongoing health issue' instead of as an individual short-term absence to avoid triggering sickness absence procedures.
- Be sensitive to health issues such as the menopause during the performance management/appraisal process.

Role of staff members affected by the menopause

We encourage staff who are experiencing menopausal symptoms that are impacting their health and wellbeing at work to:

- Share their practical needs to reduce the difficulties the menopause can cause and their preferred coping strategies with their line manager, another manager or the headteacher
- Report honestly about their wellbeing and let their line manager, another manager or the headteacher know if the menopause is having an impact on this
- Make time in their schedule to visit their GP and other support services
- Take the lead in managing their symptoms in all areas of their life

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 physical or emotional support
- 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, another manager or the headteacher

Introduction

This policy does not form part of any employee's terms and conditions of employment and is not intended to have any contractual effect. Soke Education Trust reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.

This policy outlines guidance for Soke Education Trust to help provide staff with the right support to better manage menopausal symptoms at work.

The menopause is a natural stage of life experienced by most women, although it can also affect transmen, transwomen, non-binary and intersex individuals.

Nearly 3 out of 4 women experiencing menopausal symptoms are in work, and previous studies have shown that most individuals are unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager and ask for the support or adjustments that they may need.

The menopausal transition need not be an awkward topic and it should not be regarded solely as a female issue. Our aim is to create an inclusive working environment where employees feel confident to discuss the symptoms they are experiencing, how it may be affecting their personal and work life, and discuss any practical adjustments that they may benefit from.

Whilst not every woman suffers with their symptoms, supporting those who do may help improve their experience at work.

Soke Education Trust wants to enable everyone to understand what the menopause is and to encourage staff to openly talk about it, without embarrassment.

What is Menopause?

Symptoms of the Menopause

Women can experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms associated with the menopause transition; it is important to note that these symptoms can fluctuate and can be felt to varying degrees. Not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support whereas others may experience significant symptoms, some of which can be quite severe and have a significant impact on a woman's everyday activities. Common symptoms include, but are not limited to:

- Hot flushes
- Difficulty sleeping and night sweats
- Feeling tired and lacking energy
- Psychological issues such as anxiety and/or depression, panic attacks, etc.
- Mood swings
- Problems with memory and poor concentration
- Headaches including migraines
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Palpitations
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains.

Menopausal symptoms can last for up to several years after a woman's last period, although some women experience them for much longer.

The 'Male Menopause'

When men reach their late 40s to early 50s, some may develop certain physical and psychological symptoms that can cause a significant impact on a man's everyday activities.

The term, 'Male Menopause' (often used in the media) suggests that these associated symptoms are the result of a sudden drop in testosterone in middle age, similar to what occurs in the female menopause. However, this is not true.

Although testosterone levels do decline as men age, this is a steady decline from around the age of 30 to 40, at around a deterioration of less than 2% a year; this decline in itself is unlikely to cause any

problems. A testosterone deficiency that develops later in life, also known as late-onset hypogonadism (where the testes produce few or no hormones), can sometimes be responsible for the associated symptoms, but in many cases the symptoms are not related to hormones.

A "midlife crisis" can be responsible for these symptoms; this can happen when men think they have reached life's halfway stage. Alternatively, it can be the result of lifestyle factors or psychological issues such as stress, anxiety or depression.

Men are equally encouraged to raise any concerns they have with their line manager and discuss ways in which the organisation can support you which may include a referral to Occupational Health.

Symptoms of the 'Male Menopause'

Men can experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms associated with the 'male menopause' transition; it is important to note that these symptoms can fluctuate and can be felt to varying degrees. Common symptoms experienced by men around the stated age include, but are not limited to:

- mood swings and irritability
- Psychological issues such as anxiety and/or depression, panic attacks, etc.
- loss of muscle mass and reduced ability to exercise
- a general lack of enthusiasm or energy
- difficulty sleeping at night or increased tiredness
- poor concentration and short-term memory
- lowered self-esteem

Scope and Purpose of this Policy

It is important to note that experiencing any of the above symptoms can pose a challenge for men and women within the workplace. It can influence the way an employee previously handled their responsibilities and relationships at work; for example, they may find certain responsibilities more stressful than before, concentration may lapse from time to time and they may require more support than previously needed. In addition, they can feel physically unwell and require more time off work. Therefore, Soke Education Trust is committed to providing the appropriate support to employees going through the menopause or men experiencing the above symptoms and will aim to make adjustments where reasonably practical, on a confidential basis where possible. This includes:

- promoting a culture of open communication, participation and encouragement, allowing employees to engage in discussions about the menopause;
- educating and informing members of the Senior Leadership Team, Line Managers, school operational teams and governance committees regarding the potential symptoms of the menopause, and how they can support affected staff at work;
- ensuring staff suffering with menopausal symptoms feel confident to engage in discussions surrounding this and to ask for support and any reasonable adjustments that will help them to enable them to continue to be successful within their roles;
- facilitating requests for flexible working request where reasonably practicable in accordance with Soke Education Trust's Flexible Working Policy;

- providing support and services, such as occupational health referrals, for staff affected by or absent by reason of the menopause where appropriate;
- ensuring risk assessments include or specifically address menopausal symptoms; and
- maintaining an appraisal process to ensure the suitability of workloads, supported by a capability procedure.

Additionally, in recognition of menopausal symptoms, Soke Education Trust acknowledges that increased levels of stress can be a genuine problem and should be considered when supporting applicable individuals.

Soke Education Trust wishes to support employees in their personal circumstances and will make necessary accommodations for those experiencing the menopause. However, it is important that the good operation of the Trust is not adversely affected, where this can be avoided.

Staff are encouraged to talk to their line manager if they are struggling with any of their symptoms. However, if they do not feel comfortable talking to their line manager, then they should raise their concerns with another manager or the Headteacher.

Staff can also discuss their concerns in confidence by contacting the Employee Assistance Helpline

The Headteacher will have responsibility for informing all staff of this policy and their role in its implementation.

Absence due to Menopausal Symptoms

If a member of staff is absent due to the menopausal symptoms they are experiencing, they are required to follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained within the Sickness Absence and Sick Pay Policy.

Soke Education Trust will take into account any absences due to the menopause and adjust its procedure as appropriate.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important part of this policy. In order to facilitate our aim to promote a culture of open communication, participation and encouragement, to allow employees to engage in discussions about menopause; every member of staff will be responsible for observing a high level of confidentiality where required, whether another member of staff has confided in them, supporting a colleague who is suffering from menopausal symptoms or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a policy or procedure.

A breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action in accordance with our Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

However, there are occasions when matters reported by female staff suffering from certain menopausal symptoms (such as stress) may have to be brought to the attention of a third party. For

example, where duties may need to be reallocated within to alleviate stress. If this is the case, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.

Soke Education Trust will monitor the development and distribution of good practice, the recognition of the symptoms related to the menopause, awareness of and effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.

Further Resources

- [Menopause](#) (NHS)
- [Menopause Matters](#)
- [Menopause: diagnosis and management](#) (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)
- The [Daisy Network](#) charity
- [Menopause in the Workplace](#)
- [Menopause resources](#) from the CIPD, particularly for:
 - [Line managers](#)
 - [HR staff](#)

Links to other policies

This policy is linked to our:

Health and safety policy

Sickness absence and sick pay policy

Flexible working policy

Equality information and objectives policy

Please give an indication of the medical intervention you have received to date			
None		GP diagnosis, no treatment	
Diagnosis, treatment plan in place		Insert details of treatment plan	
No formal diagnosis; alternative/ personal treatment		Insert details	

Section 3: Job and Workstation

Do you have easy access to drinking water, rest facilities and toilets?	Yes	No
Insert details:		
Is the environment in which you work comfortable?	Yes	No
Insert details:		
Is the job self-paced and are you able to avoid long periods of standing/sitting/driving or fatigue?	Yes	No
Insert details:		
Are you concerned about your levels of concentration/stress/anxiety?	Yes	No
Insert details:		

Section 4: Discussion Points/ Actions Agreed

Having completed your assessment (section 2 & 3), list the points for discussion with your manager	
Discussion Points	Actions Agreed
e.g. medical intervention	Referral to OH, visit GP by (date)

Appendix 2 – Examples of Support

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)
- Agree actions, and how to implement them (you should use the risk assessment template to record the meeting), so that all parties agree what has been discussed, and the next steps, before the meeting ends.
- Ensure that this record is treated as confidential, and is stored securely. · Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting.
- Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor or break room.

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including, but not exhaustively or exclusively; support for women should be considered as detailed below:

Hot Flushes:

- Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk (where possible a USB connected desk fan to ensure environmentally friendly) or moving near a window, or away from a heat source;
- Easy access to drinking water;
- Be allowed to adapt prescribed uniform, such as by removing a jacket;
- Have 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 hot flush.

Heavy/light Periods:

- Have permanent access to toilet and wash facilities;
- Ensure sanitary disposable products are available in toilet facilities.
- Provide storage space for a change of clothing if required.

Headaches:

- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water;
- Offer a quiet space to work (dependent on role responsibilities);
- Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices;
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

Difficulty Sleeping:

- Ask to be considered for flexible working, particularly suffering from a lack of sleep.

- Consider homeworking if appropriate to the employees' role, if fatigued to reduce travelling etc.
- Agree time out from others, when required.
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of the work area;
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head';

Loss of Confidence:

- Ensure there are regular Personal Development Discussions;
- Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues;
- Offer coaching to the individual which might help with confidence;
- Offer reassurance about a person's value and worth in the organisation
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

Poor Concentration:

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly;
 - Review task allocation and workload;
 - Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment;
 - Offer quiet space to work;
 - Offer noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices;
 - Reduce interruptions;
- Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having 'protected time', so that they are not disturbed;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

Anxiety:

- Promote counselling services provided by Thinkwell or other organisations.
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – outside of work their area;
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

Medical Advice and Impact of Work upon

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 make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace. Occupational Health can carry out a holistic assessment of the employee to ascertain whether or not the working environment may be contributing to or exacerbating menopause symptoms.

Signpost the member of staff to the Employee Assistance Programme and support they offer.