



Menopause at Work Policy

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Contents

Section	Page
1. Introduction/Policy Statement	3
2. Purpose	3
3. Roles and Responsibilities	4
4. Equality and Diversity	5
5. Stages and Supportive Measures	5
6. Supportive Organisations	7
7. Monitoring Compliance with and Effectiveness of this Policy	8
Appendices	
Appendix 1 – Guide for Supporting staff	9

1. INTRODUCTION/POLICY STATEMENT

At St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust, we believe in a whole-Trust culture that is safe and inclusive. We do not discriminate against any child or adult on the grounds of race, disability, gender, age, gender reassignment, religion/belief, pregnancy and maternity, sex or sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership. We embrace the individuality of all our community members and comply fully with the Equality Act 2010.

This policy recognises that the Menopause is an equality and occupational health and safety issue and that there may need to be appropriate flexibility, support, and adjustments during the time before, during and after the Menopause. St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust (the 'Trust') has a positive attitude towards the Menopause and those staff feeling ill effect of the symptoms and will treat all individuals with dignity and respect during this time, giving suitable support where necessary. The Trust is committed to ensuring that we all feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms openly, without embarrassment, and are able to request support and adjustments in order to continue to work safely.

By taking the Menopause seriously and treating it as an occupational health and people management issue, organisations can help to mitigate the potential negative impact of symptoms on the individual and the organisation, such as reduced job satisfaction and higher sickness absence.

Very small changes on a practical level can make a huge difference to the quality of working life for women experiencing the Menopause, and employers can reap the benefits in terms of better attendance and engagement, and reduced employee turnover.

2. PURPOSE

The Trust acknowledges that change before, during and after the Menopause can be significant, challenging and can affect levels of confidence and self-esteem. Staff can feel too embarrassed to seek help and to share the difficulties they are experiencing. We aim to reduce any stigma and embarrassment and through sharing concerns, work together so that joint solutions can be found. We are also aware that the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires that we ensure the health, safety, and welfare of our staff. In addition, in line with the Equality Act 2010, we have a duty not to discriminate and staff should be treated with respect in terms of their age and gender. Any detrimental treatment of staff related to the Menopause could represent direct or indirect sex discrimination and conditions which are linked to the Menopause may often require reasonable adjustments.

The Trust aim to treat the Menopause as they would any other health issue and recognize that people experiencing perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms require the same support and understanding from their employer as anyone experiencing any ongoing health condition. We aim to break the stigma and taboo surrounding the Menopause at work, and to create an open, inclusive and supportive culture where employees and line managers feel able to discuss any symptoms they are experiencing and any reasonable adjustments that may be needed.

We aim to achieve a fair and consistent approach to supporting staff, whilst also recognising that each individual experience of the peri-Menopause and Menopause is unique to that individual. We intend to reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff, assisting them to maintain good levels of health and wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem, we do not want any member of staff to feel they have to cope with the symptoms at work alone. This policy will encourage people to not suffer in silence and feel able to discuss their symptoms so the Trust can support them with the practical steps needed support their full engagement and productivity at work.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Directors of the Trust are responsible for approving this policy.

Heads of School are responsible for monitoring the application of this policy within their respective schools.

The HR Department is responsible for overseeing the introduction, implementation, monitoring, and review of this policy and will report to the CEO and Directors as required. The HR Department will also provide advice, guidance and support in the implementation of this policy, acting as a point of contact for staff, line managers, Heads of School, Senior Leadership Team and the CEO. The HR Department will ensure that this policy is implemented sensitively, fairly and consistently.

Line Managers must ensure they respond sensitively, supportively and professionally to staff experiencing challenges relating to the Menopause. Managers are encouraged to seek advice and guidance from the HR Department as and when required, and to look to jointly solve problems, considering potential workplace adjustments as appropriate. Managers should listen and respond sympathetically. They should familiarise themselves with this policy, be aware of the potential impact the Menopause can have and provide a safe place for staff to speak openly and honestly. Please be assured that if your line manager is male and you would rather discuss your symptoms with a female, please speak with HR and this can be arranged through an alternative manager in the structure and/or HR.

Employees are responsible for looking after their health and wellbeing, and being open and honest, contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment, and being willing to help and support colleagues. By encouraging staff with menopausal symptoms to talk to others and seek support, we hope we are able to alleviate symptoms, anxiety and worry which should support staff to stay in work, when they might sometimes otherwise have been absent.

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Trust is committed to:

- Promoting equality and diversity in its policies, procedures and guidelines, adhering to the Equality Act 2010.
- Delivering high quality teaching and services that meet the diverse needs of its student population and its workforce, ensuring that no individual or group is disadvantaged.
- Conditions linked to the Menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments. This policy aims to ensure that staff experiencing the Menopause are not disadvantaged at work, ensuring supportive measures in place to effectively manage the risks and issues associated with the Menopause and that those affected by the Menopause know there is a system that allows them to speak openly and confidently to enable them to access this support.

All staff have a personal responsibility to promote equality and diversity within the Trust, in respect of all other staff. All staff also have a legal responsibility not to discriminate against others.

5. STAGES AND SUPPORTIVE MEASURES

There are various stages to the Menopause, as follows:

- Peri-Menopause (the period of hormonal change leading up to the Menopause, which can last for months or years, it can include a variety of many symptoms and can change over time. E.g. You may have anxiety lasting for a period of time which eases but could then have other symptoms such as difficulty sleeping, muscle aches or joint pains.
- The majority of menopausal people experience symptoms, although everyone is different and symptoms can be fluctuating and be felt to varying degrees.
- Following Peri-Menopause is Menopause; Menopause starts when you have not had a period for 12 months or more (this usually occurs between the ages of 45-55, although some women can experience premature Menopause at a younger age.
 - Medical/surgical Menopause. It is possible that ovaries can be damaged by treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery which can mean that the Menopause can be experienced at any age, and for some

the loss of fertility can be extremely hard to bear. Support would always be offered from HR with confidential emotional support also being available through our independent counselling service.

- Those undergoing treatment for conditions such as endometriosis and infertility may experience menopausal symptoms whilst receiving treatment.

The Menopause can result in temporary psychological issues, such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, brain fog (some women describe this as changes in their ability to think clearly, make decisions and function well mentally) mood swings, irritability, issues with their memory and loss of confidence. The Trust has a range of resources that may be helpful, which can be accessed via HR. Those resources can be helpful for employees experiencing the Menopause, and for colleagues and managers wishing to increase their knowledge and understanding to enable them to support colleagues more effectively.

Over time, the Trust will educate and inform line managers and staff to be aware of the impact of the Menopause, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and the potential symptoms of Menopause, as well as the ways in which we can support those experiencing perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms. Where employees feel uncomfortable talking about their symptoms with their line manager, they can contact the HR Department, who will be happy to support them sensitively and confidentiality will always be respected.

All staff are expected to behave professionally and exercise confidentiality. Where staff have access to confidential information about other staff, they must not reveal such information to anyone else, except to their line manager (if necessary and on a needs-to know basis) and to HR for appropriate support to be offered.

As with all medical and health issues, when seeking supportive solutions, a risk assessment and wellness action plans may assist in enabling the individual's specific needs and issues to be fully considered and potential options explored. Remedial actions may include: temperature adjustments through ventilation, leaving doors and windows open (where feasible and safe), provision of fans, access to cold drinking water, additionally it could be to enable easy access to toilet facilities and the potential for temporary flexible working arrangements. The Trust has a variety of roles where the demands and limitations are different and any reasonable adjustments we can make will be individual and specific to the person and their working circumstances.

Where supportive actions and adjustments are agreed, line managers will be involved and notes will be taken by HR which may also include a risk assessment; the line manager and employee should jointly monitor the achievement of actions and adjustments and their impact on the issues initially highlighted. Where adjustments do not have the desired impact, and

symptoms remain the same or worsen over time, the line manager and employee should discuss further with HR so the next available possibilities can be discussed.

HR would also discuss with the employee what support network they have outside of the workplace GP, Women's Health and Menopause Clinic, exercise and wellbeing practices and use this information in a joined up approach to support the individual. HR would also discuss where further advice and guidance can be accessed, and signpost to other appropriate sources of help and advice.

Schools will ensure that a range of products are placed in staff toilets, to ensure employees are able to manage emergency situations discreetly.

It is recognised that some women going through the periMenopause and Menopause may experience a dip in performance linked to the periMenopause and menopausal symptoms. The Trust will manage anyone in this situation with sensitivity, flexibility and supportively.

6. SUPPORTIVE ORGANISATIONS

There are a number of specialist organisations who can offer support to individuals during the periMenopause and the Menopause, including the following:

The St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust Menopause at Work Policy Page 7 to 9

NHS Guidance on Menopause provides comprehensive advice on symptoms and treatment options available: www.nhs.uk/conditions/Menopause

The employees own NHS General Practitioner

Menopause Matters provides easily accessible information about the Menopause, including treatments available and what steps to take: www.Menopausematters.co.uk

CIPD The Menopause at Work (A Guide for People Professionals)

Menopause Exchange Helpline can be contacted on 020 8420 7245 and their newsletters provide information and advice: www.Menopause-exchange.co.uk

Education Support provides support 24/7 at 08000 562561 or via text on 07909341229. Useful resources can be accessed at: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/blogs/teaching-and-Menopause>

Menopause Society providing factsheets, articles, FAQs and further reading links:
www.womens-health-concern.org

Daisy Network is a charitable organisation providing support and guidance for all experiencing premature Menopause: www.daisynetwork.org.uk

Menopause Café is a discussion group to gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the Menopause in a friendly and easily accessible way: www.Menopausecafe.net

Henpicked is an online community providing 'lunch and learn' videos with industry wide experts: www.henpicked.net

Simply Hormones provides blogs and articles about the Menopause and the opportunity to sign up to receive a free Menopause survival kit, newsletters and updates: www.simplyhormones.com

Simply Hormones – Menopause: A Guide for Men provides information and helpful hints to help men understand more about the Menopause:
www.simplyhormones.com/men-and-the-Menopause

The Royal Osteoporosis Society, with information including factsheets and information regarding bone health, fitness and activity. www.theros.co.uk

Manage my Menopause provides expert advice on the Menopause.
www.managemyMenopause.co.uk

Menstruation to Menopause training. www.theMenopauseschool.com

Support and information can also be provided by the HR Department and if you are in a Trade Union, they will also be able to provide you with support and information as will ACAS – Managing Menopause at Work.

7. MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICY

The HR Department, Core Senior Leadership Team, Trust Directors and Heads of School will monitor effectiveness and compliance of this policy and procedure.

Appendix 1

Guide for Supporting Staff Before, During and After the Menopause

Introduction

What is the Peri-Menopause and Menopause?

Peri-Menopause: the transition period leading up to the Menopause during which women may experience symptoms due to fluctuating hormones.

Menopause: when a woman ceases menstruation for 12 consecutive months. Typically occurring between the ages of 45-55. It is a natural part of the aging process for women.

This guide is based on the CIPD guide, 'The Menopause at Work', published in August 2022 and, the ACAS Guide to Menopause at Work and is being provided to assist us all, those who are experiencing the Peri-Menopause or Menopause and/or those that may be required to support other that are.

The CIPD report that of those who are negatively affected by the symptoms at work: 65% were less able to concentrate; 58% experienced an increased amount of stress; 52% said they felt less patient with others including colleagues and clients (in our case students/pupils).

30% said of people said they had been unable to go into work because of the symptoms but only a quarter of those people felt able to tell the organisation the real reason for their sickness absence. This is a very telling finding and underlines the level of taboo/stigma that people feel still exists, this is why the organisation must create a culture where staff feel able to approach their line manager and HR and feel supported in this area.

The Menopause is best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event and for some, symptoms last about four years, for others up to twelve years.

According to the Wellbeing of Women survey in 2016, one in four women even considered leaving their jobs because of their symptoms in the workplace. It is a natural stage of life experienced by half of the workforce at some point, yet it can be a taboo subject. Often a few simple changes to a person's working environment can make a world of difference and reduce the impact of their symptoms.

We aim to help staff to talk more openly about the Menopause and to encourage managers and staff to work together to respond appropriately to concerns.

We encourage staff to:

- Have open conversations about this natural life stage and appreciate and communicate the considerable organisational benefits of embracing an older female workforce
- Seek joint solutions to the challenges and difficulties
- Provide support
- Refer to the appropriate help
- Discuss whether they have sought help through their GP and discussed hormone replacement therapies as well as alternative treatments

Recognise the symptoms

The Menopause can cause a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms that can last for several years. Everyone is different and some of the most typical symptoms include:

- Hot flushes (during the day) brief and sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck and chest
- Sleep disturbance that can make people feel tired and irritable and can impact negatively on concentration
- Night sweats
- Psychological issues such as mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression/panic attacks
- Brain fog/forgetfulness
- Loss of confidence
- Irregular periods and/or periods can become heavy or light
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches, and pains
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (including cystitis)
- Headaches
- Weight gain
- Palpitations (heartbeats that become more noticeable or fast)
- Skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness)
- Reduced sex drive

Experiencing any of these symptoms can pose a challenge as people go about their daily lives, including at work. A bad night's sleep can affect concentration, for example, while heavy periods or hot flushes can be physically distressing and embarrassing in front of colleagues or clients (in our case students/pupils). Some of the potential psychological effects could also impact on an individual's relationships at work.

Seek solutions

Supporting those experiencing the Menopause is crucial and simple steps to jointly find solutions to concerns raised include:

- Line managers and HR should have a tailored approach, where the focus is on providing individualised, sensitive and confidential support
- Ensure conversations are friendly, honest and in private so they are as

relaxed as they can be in the circumstances and will not be disturbed

- Approaching conversations with empathy, building trust with regular reviews and informal one-to-ones
- Reassuring the member of staff and working together to ensure their symptoms are not made worse by their job and making changes to help their symptoms at work to be effectively managed
- Carrying out a risk assessment and as part of this process it may be helpful to consider access to a rest area; consider where the closest toilets are and how we might support an employee to access those (if it was during a lesson) and cold water; more frequent breaks to go to the toilet and take medication; cold drinking water easily available; adjustable temperature and good ventilation; adapting uniforms (where appropriate) to provide comfort and make it easy to request extra uniforms if needed
- Discussing reasonable supportive measures tailored to the individual's specific needs. Examples of reasonable measures include access to a private area to make a phone call to access professional support or availability of a private rest area if their symptoms suddenly become more significant at work
- With HR and the employee and line manager, carrying out a wellness action plan to ensure all needs are explored and thought through.

Provide support

- Regularly check in with staff and encourage them to discuss concerns with you.
- Ask the individual about what support they need and regularly check in with that question, as the support they need may change over time
- Provide information regarding the employee assistance programme, Occupational Health Service, and resources available on the People Portal or from HR
- Discuss whether it would be helpful to visit their GP, if they have not already accessed this support
- Identify a supportive colleague to arrange to talk to away from the work area, such as a Wellbeing Champion, a member of HR, or a trade union representative
- Address any work-related stress issues by having open discussions and agreeing on a plan (refer to the appropriate help)
- Managers, colleagues, and HR should signpost employees to specialist help where needed, and this policy includes a list of support services we can signpost colleagues to.

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