

The Federation of St John's and St Paul's Whitechapel CE Primary Schools

MENOPAUSE POLICY

Introduction

Menopause is a normal part of every woman's life. This policy recognizes that menopause is an equality and occupational health and safety issue and that women may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause.

The Federation of St John's and St Paul's Whitechapel CE Primary Schools has a positive attitude towards the menopause and will treat all individuals with dignity and respect during this time ensuring that the workplace does not make symptoms worse. We are committed to ensuring that women feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms openly, without embarrassment, and are able to ask for support and adjustments in order to continue to work safely in the organization. For this reason, the menopause at work is an issue for men as well as women.

The legislative setting

The Federation undertakes to comply with its legal obligations as set out below:

- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers are required to undertake general risk assessments which should include specific risks to menopausal women, see section 5.3.
- The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments e.g. a 5-minute break to get some air if suffering with hot flushes.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Guidance: Under the Equality Act 2010, if menopause symptoms have a substantial and long-term adverse impact on a worker's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, they meet the statutory definition of a disability. Employers have a strict legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for workers affected.
- Protection from Harassment and Less Favourable Treatment: Unwanted comments, jokes, or dismissal of menopausal symptoms can amount to harassment or discrimination on the grounds of sex, age, or disability under the Equality Act 2010.
- Inclusivity under Gender Reassignment: Menopause and perimenopause symptoms can affect workers of various gender identities, including transgender men and non-binary individuals. The legal protection against discrimination extends under the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.

Status

The policy sets out procedures for members of staff and managers to follow in providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

Aims

To create an environment where women staff members feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work.

To ensure that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place, recognizing that the menopause and perimenopause is an individual experience and therefore there is no 'one size fits all' solution.

To reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace

To establish clear protocols for carrying out individual Menopause Risk Assessments and implementing documented reasonable adjustments in line with EHRC workplace guidance.

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What steps will we take as an employer?

The Federation will educate and inform managers and staff to be aware of how the menopause can affect working women, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support women experiencing them.

Where women members of staff feel uncomfortable going to their line manager, because he is a man, or someone much younger, or both, we will ensure that an alternative contact is available. Confidentiality will always be respected.

Our risk assessments will consider the specific needs of menopausal women, and we will consult with union representatives, where appropriate, and women staff members to share with all managers and new managers, ensuring that measures are understood and will be acted upon. Risk assessments will include consideration of temperature and ventilation issues and will also address welfare issues; such as access to toilet facilities and cold water during, and outside, break and lunch times.

The Federation will make adjustments, where necessary, to support individuals experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptom worse. These could include simple measures such as:

- Leaving doors open;
- Ensuring that windows can be safely opened;
- Provision of fans;
- Fitting blinds to windows;
- Establishing a system that allows cover for women who need to access toilet/washing facilities while they are teaching (to deal with heavy and recurring bleeding);
- Adjusting workplace procedures and processes to support and avoid any detriment to menopausal women;
- Offer an informal invitation to a 'coffee early morning' (before school) where women staff can discuss how they are feeling with others who may be going through the same experiences to offer support and empathy.

It is recognized that many of these practical and easy-to-institute changes to the workplace, which will make working life more bearable for menopausal women, will benefit all staff.

Roles and responsibilities

Everyone who works in our schools has a role to play in ensuring a comfortable working environment for all staff, including women experiencing the menopause.

All staff are responsible for:

- Taking responsibility for looking after their health
- being open and honest in conversations with HR and occupational health
- contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment
- being willing to help and support their colleagues
- accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments their colleagues request or are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms

Line managers

The most important and valuable thing a manager can do is listen and, wherever possible, respond sympathetically to any requests for adjustments at work.

All line managers will:

- familiarise themselves with this Menopause Policy
- be aware of the potential impact of menopause; if someone's performance suddenly dips, consideration will be given as to whether the menopause may be playing a part in this.
- Provide a safe place to allow a member of staff to speak openly and honestly
- Be ready and willing to listen and have open discussions about menopause appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and confidentially and allowing adequate time for the discussion.
- If necessary, record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented, via an action plan

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- Ensuring ongoing dialogue via a follow-up meeting and ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to and reviewed as regularly as necessary.

Where adjustments are unsuccessful or, if symptoms prove particularly severe, the school may:

- Discuss with the employee a referral to occupational health for further advice
- Review occupational health advice, and implement any additional recommendations
- Update the action plan and continue the review process

Occupational health

The role of occupational health is to:

- Carry out a holistic assessment of the employee to ascertain whether or not the working environment may be exacerbating menopause symptoms
- Discuss with the employee what adjustments would help
- Signpost to other appropriate sources of help and advice.

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