

## Introduction

Understanding menopause related concerns is key in supporting employee health, safety and wellbeing, sickness absence, employee morale and general employee relations.

This policy recognises that menopause is a natural part of every woman's life and, as a result, women in the workplace may need additional consideration, support and adjustments during this time of change. Whilst every woman does not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work.

## Aims of the Policy

The Authority/School aims to encourage all employees to maximise their attendance at work. It is recognised that a certain level of sickness absence is inevitable and the appropriate support should be offered to employees, as required. This policy outlines procedures to follow in offering support to employees who are going through menopause, to maximise their attendance at work or assist during periods of absence.

## Scope

The policy applies to all employees with the exception of those employees working in maintained schools under the direct control of a School Governing Body.

## School Based Employees

Newport City Council commends this policy to individual Governing Bodies for adoption. If adopted by a Governing Body, the policy will apply to all employees under the direct control of that Governing Body.

## To be read in conjunction with:

- [Health and Safety Policy](#)
- [Equality Guidance – Age](#)

- Stress Management [Policy](#) and [Guidance](#)
- [Wellness at Work Policy](#)

## PRINCIPLES

- To increase awareness and understanding of menopause related issues, in order to foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably engage in discussions about menopause, so that both women and men feel supported and comfortable in discussing menopause in the workplace;
- To provide training, support and guidance to managers and employees on identifying the potential symptoms of menopause and how they can support women at work;
- To ensure that women suffering with menopause symptoms feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms, and feel comfortable in asking for support and any appropriate adjustments;
- To take a proactive stance, by promoting a greater understanding of the menopause and seeking to eradicate any exclusionary or discriminatory practices.

This policy complies with current employment legislation:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires employers to ensure ‘the health and safety and welfare at work’ of all employees
- The Equality Act (2010) requires employers to provide reasonable adjustments
- The Public sector equality duty is part of the Equality Act 2010 and specifically relates to the public sector workplaces. It places a legal obligation on all public bodies to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 place an overriding duty on employers to make workplaces suitable for the individuals who work in them
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require the employer to undertake a suitable and sufficient assessment of risks and take action to prevent exposure to risks

## POLICY

The Council/School recognises that employees are its most valuable resource in delivering high quality services to the community and should take all practical steps to protect the health, safety and well-being of employees.

The Council/School is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who is employed. The Council/School recognises that menopause is a natural part of every woman's life. Whilst every woman does not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work by proactively making adjustments where necessary.

**What is the menopause?**

The menopause is a part of the natural ageing process for women and is triggered by hormonal changes. Menopause refers to the stage of a woman's life when menstruation has ceased and she has reached the end of her reproductive life. The menopause can also be triggered medically following treatment such as radiotherapy or prescription medication, or surgery, for example a hysterectomy.

There are four known stages of menopause:

**1. Pre-menopause**

This is the time before the occurrence of menopausal symptoms.

**2. Perimenopause**

Perimenopause is the stage of hormonal changes and menopausal symptoms leading up to the menopause and is sometimes called 'menopausal transition'. Perimenopausal symptoms may last a number of years before the woman reaches menopause.

**3. Menopause**

The menopause stage occurs once the woman has had her last period and is no longer considered fertile.

**4. Post menopause**

Post menopause is the time after menopause has occurred and once a woman has not had a period for at least 12 months.

### What are the symptoms of the menopause?

Around 80% of women will experience menopausal symptoms, which can vary greatly in duration, severity and impact on each individual woman. Symptoms can manifest themselves both physically and psychologically. Typical menopause symptoms might include:

- Hot flushes/night & daytime sweats
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Panic Disorder
- Irregular menstrual cycle
- Weight gain
- Low mood, mood swings, irritability, brain fog
- Dizziness
- Headaches and migraines
- Heart palpitations
- Muscle aches, tension and joint pain
- Disturbed sleep
- Fatigue
- Irritated skin
- Loss of self-esteem, confidence and memory loss
- Urogenital issues

All these symptoms can have a significant impact on daily life for some women and be a cause of embarrassment, stress and loss of confidence. In addition, some women may also have existing pressures in life such as caring responsibilities and other health conditions which may then be compounded by the symptoms of menopause.

### Who is affected by the menopause?

The menopause affects approximately 3 out of 4 women, and is commonly referred to as 'the change'. The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and can last from 4 to 8 years on average. In the UK, the average age for a woman to reach the menopause is 51, however, some women may experience menopause symptoms earlier, before the age of 40, either naturally or because of a health condition or medical treatment; this is referred to as 'premature menopause'.

It should be noted that people from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms.

### How does the menopause impact on the workplace?

The changing age of the UK's workforce means that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work. Research shows that the majority of women are reluctant to discuss menopause related health problems with their line manager, nor ask for the support or adjustments they may need.

The Council/School is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all employees. It is recognised that menopause isn't always an easy transition but, with the right support, it can be much easier. Whilst every woman does not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work. As such, menopause should not be a taboo subject, everyone should understand what menopause is and be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. This is not just an issue for women, men should be aware too.

### How can we support those experiencing the menopause?

It is recognised that different adjustments and levels of support may be needed for different individuals. Self-help, with support from managers and colleagues, will assist with management of symptoms. The types of support available can be found in Appendix 1.

Both employees and line managers have roles and responsibilities in supporting those experiencing the menopause:

**Employees** are responsible for:

- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their health and gaining an understanding of their own needs and circumstances;
- Being open and honest in conversations with managers/HR and occupational health. If a member of staff is unable to speak to their line manager, or if their line manager is not supporting them, they can speak to HR, their Trade Union or our [employee assistance programme](#).
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment;
- Being willing to help and support colleagues;
- Understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving because of their menopausal symptoms.
- Attending whole staff training and engaging with any information provided

Line managers should be:

- Familiarising themselves with the menopause policy and guidance;
  - Ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
  - Facilitating support from workplace 'champions' for staff who require additional advice or support
  - Using the guidance in Appendix 1 to agree with the individual how best they can be supported, including any adjustments required and signposting to other support providers;
  - When/if relevant preparing a [Risk Assessment](#) - recording adjustments agreed and actions to be implemented;
  - Ensuring ongoing dialogue and review dates for adjustments and actions;
  - Ensuring that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.
- Raising wider staff awareness through whole staff training and the availability of resources

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the line manager may:

- Discuss and arrange a referral to Occupational Health, for further advice;
- Review Occupational Health advice and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical;
- Review adjustments regularly and, with appropriate advice, implement updates.

#### Further sources of information and guidance

- Menopause Matters  
<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>
- NHS Menopause Guidance  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- The Daisy Network (supporting women who experience premature menopause)  
<https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk/>
- The Hysterectomy Association  
<https://www.hysterectomy-association.org.uk/>

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## Document Control

Version	Date	Author	Notes/Changes
1.1	30/04/2018	Edyta Rice	New policy/guidance
1.2	05/08/2020	Lucy Bridgewater	Content amendments
1.3	22/12/2021	Harriet Kenney	Update to Wellness at Work Policy link
1.4	27/03/2024	Howard Mason	Update for new employee assistance programme
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## APPENDIX 1

Examples of potential symptoms	Examples of potential outcomes	Examples of potential supportive measures
Hot flushes/Daytime sweats and flushes	Less tolerant of workplace temperatures; Work wear/uniform may become uncomfortable; Personal protective equipment (PPE), for example face masks/visors and lead aprons may be uncomfortable if worn for long periods.	Ensure easy access to supply of cold drinking water  Ensure easy access to washroom facilities  Avoid nylon or close-fitting uniforms  Ensure availability of cooling resources, for example cool-packs and cold drinks  Access to brief breaks for fresh air/cool drinks/use of fans away from pupils  Take account of peripatetic workers schedules and allow them to access to facilities during their working day  Limit the time wearing PPE
Anxiety	May feel isolated from colleagues	Manage specific tasks which may trigger anxious feelings and/or overwhelm  Develop strategies to help manage anxiety using school services for CBT/counselling  Practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing and meditation  Seek medical advice from GP and use help lines when necessary
Depression		Allow for flexible working where possible  Encourage healthy lifestyle, such as exercise and diet and promoting self-care  Creating a safe space for employees to discuss their feelings and feel supported. Directing employees to resources which may be beneficial.  Be aware of signs of crisis (suicide) and signpost appropriately



<b>Panic disorder</b>	Possible temporary changes in roles and responsibilities	Provide opportunities and allow for mindfulness techniques in the workplace
<b>Irregular menstrual cycle</b>	Need to access toilet and washroom facilities more frequently	<p>Provide support and advice on suitable food and drink intake under these circumstances</p> <p>Culture of open dialogue with leaders and close colleagues about minor adjustments that could support after a challenging night e.g. awareness of likely slowness in response, changed role during vigorous PE sessions</p> <p>Provide access to relevant hygiene products</p>
<b>Weight gain</b>	Uniform may become uncomfortable and potential difficulties with mobility.	Promote physical wellbeing at work, for example through implementation of NICE workplace guidelines or other wellbeing initiatives.
<b>Low mood, mood swings, irritability and brain fog</b>		<p>Promote physical and mental wellbeing at work</p> <p>Provide access to counselling</p> <p>Provide ability to network with colleagues experiencing similar issues</p>
<b>Dizziness</b>	Moving and handling or adopting static postures may be more uncomfortable	<p>Open communication during challenging episodes to allow for swapping of duties that will be exacerbating</p> <p>Breaks accommodated for access to medication</p>

<b>Headaches and migraines</b>	<b>Allowing time for medication to be taken</b>	
<b>Heart palpitations</b>	Occasional feeling of heart racing or missing a beat for no reason	Encourage employee to moderate or eliminate (depending on the severity of symptoms) intake of stimulants such as caffeine or nicotine Encourage employee to seek advice from their healthcare professional, to rule out any other problem  Promote use of meditation and advanced relaxation techniques, to help to achieve a good level of control over heart functions
<b>Muscle aches, tension and joint pain</b>	Moving and handling or adopting static postures may be more uncomfortable	<b>Create an environment where employees can comfortably discuss menopause related concerns</b>
<b>Disturbed sleep</b>		<b>Culture of open dialogue with leaders and close colleagues about minor adjustments that could support after a challenging night e.g. awareness of likely slowness in response, changed role during vigorous PE sessions</b>
<b>Fatigue</b>	Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out temporarily, for example learning new skills (may also be compounded by lack of sleep and fatigue)	<b>Creation of a culture of openness and safety to share challenges</b>
<b>Irritated skin</b>		<b>Allowing time to apply moisturizer</b>  <b>Seek medical advice if needed</b>
<b>Loss of self-esteem, confidence and memory loss</b>	Performance may be affected and work-related stress may exacerbate these symptoms	Encourage employee to discuss concerns openly at one-to-one meetings with line manager or Occupational Health and negotiate possible adjustments  Provide access to free <a href="#">Employee Assistance Programme</a>

		<p>Promotion of support &amp; counselling services available through school and LA</p> <p>Access to peer support group and support of colleagues with similar circumstances</p> <p>Ensuring that key information is shared both in written and verbal format e.g. meeting minutes, emails of key information, teacher instructions</p> <p>Creation of a culture of openness and safety to share challenges</p>
Urogenital issues	Need to access toilet facilities more frequently; may need to drink more fluids	<p>Ensure easy access to toilet and washroom facilities</p> <p>Allow for more frequent breaks in work, to go to the toilet</p> <p>Ensure easy access to supply of cold drinking water</p> <p>Take account of peripatetic workers schedules and allow them to access facilities during their working day</p>