

The Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust

Menopause policy

Status & Review Cycle: Three Years

Responsible group: Central team

Implementation date: September 2022

Next Review Date: September 2025



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Statement of intent

The Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust ('the Trust') is committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of all staff members.

We are aware that the menopause is a natural process of every female's life, and the Trust/school is in an important position to provide the right support to staff members experiencing the menopause.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Create an environment in which staff members can openly and comfortably discuss the menopause.
- Ensure every staff member understands what the menopause is and the common signs and symptoms.
- Ensure line managers are aware of the reasonable adjustments that should be put in place to support staff members.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- Increase access to flexible working systems for staff members experiencing severe symptoms of the menopause that may impact on their work.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following school policies and procedures:

- Staff Attendance Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, **“menopause”** is defined as a biological state in a female’s life that occurs when she stops menstruating and reaches the end of her natural reproductive cycle. The average age that a female reaches menopause is 51; however, it can be earlier or later than this due to a number of reasons.

For the purpose of this policy **“perimenopause”** is defined as the time leading up to the menopause where a female begins to experience the signs and symptoms of menopause. This can be several years before the menopause actually occurs.

For the purpose of this policy **“postmenopause”** is the time after which the menopause has occurred, starting from the time when a female has not had a period for 12 consecutive months.

3. Signs and symptoms

Common symptoms of the menopause include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Hot flushes
- Palpitations
- Headaches
- Night sweats
- Difficulty sleeping
- Skin irritation
- Vaginal dryness
- Low mood or anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Loss of concentration
- Depression
- Reduced sex drive

- Problems with memory and concentration

Menopausal symptoms can occur months or even years before a female's periods stop and can last for several years after they have stopped.

The menopause can have a significant impact on females at work and their relationships with colleagues, e.g. if they are experiencing severe anxiety, this may have negative side effects on their happiness at work.

It is important to note that not every female will experience the same signs and symptoms of the menopause or to the same severity.

4. Responsibilities

Staff members experiencing menopause are responsible for:

- familiarising themselves with the procedures in this policy.
- being aware of the common signs and symptoms of the menopause to help with their diagnosis or to support others experiencing the menopause.
- taking a personal responsibility to look after their health.
- engaging in open and honest conversations with relevant individuals, e.g. line managers.
- seeking help where necessary from relevant professionals, e.g. GPs.
- contributing to a respectful and productive working environment.
- having a willingness to help colleagues experiencing the menopause.
- adopting any reasonable adjustments that the school implements to support them.
- creating an action plan in conjunction with their line managers.
- engaging in training to ensure they are able to support others.

All members of staff are responsible for:

- creating a respectful and productive working environment.
- ensuring that unlawful conduct towards staff members experiencing menopause is avoided, and reported to the headteacher/line manager where incidents occur. The following are examples of unlawful conduct:
 - discrimination of any kind, whether it be indirect, discreet, or direct
 - harassment
 - victimisation
 - failure to make reasonable adjustments
- ensuring they have a good understanding of the menopause and how this can affect the workplace.

Line managers are responsible for:

- familiarising themselves with the procedures in this policy.
- organising discussions with staff members experiencing the menopause.
- acting sensitively and emphatically towards staff experiencing the menopause.

- deciding on which reasonable adjustments need to be made to support staff members experiencing the menopause, and ensuring they are implemented.
- implementing an action plan in conjunction with staff members experiencing the menopause.
- recording all reasonable adjustments and reviewing them on a termly basis.
- making changes to action plans and reasonable adjustments, as necessary.
- discussing referrals to Occupational Health, and referring staff to them, where necessary.
- implementing any recommendations by Occupational Health, as required.
- monitoring staff absence in line with the Trust's Staff Attendance Policy.

Occupational Health is responsible for:

- carrying out holistic assessments of individuals who believe they are experiencing the menopause.
- providing advice to staff members experiencing the menopause.
- providing information as to where staff members can seek further advice.
- making recommendations to line managers in relation to reasonable adjustments.
- providing support to line managers, as required.
- monitoring all referrals made because of the menopause.

5. Notification

Where any staff member believes they are experiencing symptoms of menopause which may affect their work, or where they will require reasonable adjustments, they will notify their line manager.

The line manager will hold a one-to-one discussion with the employee to discuss the symptoms and which reasonable adjustments are required.

The one-to-one discussion will be held in an appropriate location to maintain confidentiality, e.g. an office.

If necessary, the line manager will discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further support.

The line manager will conduct a risk assessment for any staff member experiencing the menopause and will review working conditions.

The line manager and employee will devise a written action plan which details the following:

- their signs and symptoms
- the perceived or actual effects on their work
- necessary reasonable adjustments
- time frames for reasonable adjustments to be in place
- next steps
- review date

Where a referral has been made to Occupational Health, the line manager will ensure any recommendations for reasonable adjustments are included in the action plan.

The line manager and employee will discuss whether any other staff members should be notified – if so, who and how the employee would like them to be notified.

The line manager will notify the HT of the action plan.

The line manager will schedule a follow-up meeting **one month** after the initial discussion to review progress so far. Any changes will be made as necessary.

The line manager will schedule **termly** review meetings to review the action plan and make any changes as necessary.

6. Risk assessments

Menopausal females are identified as workers who may be particularly at risk and, therefore, the school has a duty to make suitable and sufficient risk assessments for such employees.

Where an employee has voiced concerns about their symptoms of the menopause, the line manager will conduct a risk assessment of their work practice to identify risks and implement appropriate control measures.

A separate risk assessment will be conducted for each member of staff experiencing the menopause.

The risk assessment will consider the specific needs of staff members experiencing the menopause. Specific information that will be considered includes, but is not limited to the following:

- temperature and ventilation
- current symptoms
- access to toilet facilities
- access to fresh drinking water
- workplace stress

Appropriate reasonable adjustments will be implemented in light of the risk assessment.

The risk assessment will be reviewed and updated by the line manager when any circumstances change, e.g. symptoms.

7. Reasonable adjustments

In order to support staff members' symptoms of the menopause, the line manager will ensure a variety of reasonable adjustments are implemented, suitable to staff members' individual needs. While menopause is not classed as a disability, certain symptoms may class as a disability themselves, and therefore the employer has a duty to ensure reasonable adjustments are made where necessary.

Each case will be treated individually, and the below adjustments are not exhaustive.

Hot flushes – the line manager will ensure:

- the temperature of the work area can be controlled, such as putting a fan on their desk or moving their desk close to a window.
- there is easy access to drinking water.
- enable adaptations to dress code, where appropriate, providing that this is in accordance with the Trust's Staff Code of Conduct.
- there is adequate access to toilets.
- a quiet area is provided for the staff member if they experience a severe hot flush.
- That for teaching staff, the staff member has support from a higher-level teaching assistant (HLTA) who can lead the class should the staff member need to take an agreed break.

Heavy and light periods – the line manager will:

- ensure there is adequate access to toilets.
- ensure that sanitary products are readily available.
- ensure storage space is available for a change of clothing, should the staff member require it.
- allow the staff member to bring extra clothing with them, providing it is in accordance with the Trust's Staff Code of Conduct.

Headaches and lack of sleep – the line manager will:

- ensure there is access to fresh drinking water at all times.
- ensure a quiet space to work is accessible, if necessary.
- ensure there is adequate supply of headache medication, e.g. ibuprofen, in the school staff room.
- discuss the effects of a healthy balanced diet on improving symptoms.
- allow staff members time to take a break if they experience a headache.
- ensure teaching staff have support from a higher-level teaching assistant (HLTA) who can lead the class should the staff member need to take a break.
- allow staff members to be considered for flexible working, in line with the Flexible Working Policy.

Low mood and loss of confidence – the line manager will:

- identify a 'time out space' where the staff member may go if they need to take a break, e.g. the staff room, meeting room.
- ensure teaching staff have support from a HLTA who can lead the class should the staff member need to take a break.
- ensure the staff member has a sufficient support mechanism in place from their line manager, and another colleague should they require it.

- ensure there are **termly** personal development discussions in place with the staff member's line manager.
- establish, with the staff member's line manager, an agreed time for the staff member to catch up on any missed work as a result of absence.

Poor concentration – the line manager will:

- discuss with the staff member if there are times of the day where concentration is better or worse, and review if/how working can be managed.
- review the staff member's task allocation and workload, distributing tasks to others where possible.
- provide materials to assist with concentration and memory, such as action boards.
- offer quiet spaces to work wherever possible.
- establish, with the staff member's line manager, an agreed time for the staff member to catch up on any missed work as a result of absence.

Anxiety and panic attacks – the line manager will:

- provide the staff member with contacts for external support and counselling and discuss referral to Occupational Health.
- ensure the staff member has a sufficient support mechanism in place from their line manager, and another colleague should they require it.
- encourage the staff member to seek help from their GP.
- identify a time out space where the staff member may go if they need to take a break.
- for teaching staff, ensure the staff member has support from a HLTA who can lead the class should the staff member need to take a break.
- discuss relaxation techniques, such as breathing exercises, and encourage the staff member to practise these when taking an agreed break.

8. Staff training

All line managers will be alerted to the signs and symptoms of the menopause, how it can affect work, and what adjustments should be made to support staff members.

The Trust/school will ensure that, as part of a wider Occupational Health awareness campaign, issues of the menopause are highlighted so all staff members understand how it affects staff, and to create a positive attitude towards managing the menopause whilst being employed at the school/within the Trust.

The Trust/school will ensure all female staff members are provided with sufficient information as to where they can access support for any issues that arise as a result of the menopause.

9. Attendance procedures

Attendance of staff members experiencing the menopause will be managed in line with the Staff Attendance Policy

All menopause-related sickness absences will be recorded as ongoing issues, rather than individual absences.

The Trust/school will ensure staff members experiencing the menopause are able to request flexible working, in line with the Flexible Working Policy.

Any requests for breaks or flexible working will be outlined in the employee's action plan.

The Trust/school will ensure that any appraisal, capability and performance procedures are not applied in a way as to discriminate unlawfully against female staff members experiencing the menopause.

10. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed by the Trust every three years

The scheduled review date for this policy is September 2025

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all staff members.