



# Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

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# BBCET Menopause Policy

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## 1. Introduction

This policy aims to:

- Make sure that our Trust can support colleagues 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 Trust 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 Trust by educating colleagues on the menopause and possible symptoms.
- Provide further resources to help staff, particularly line managers and HR teams, to support others through difficulties that the menopause may cause them.

The Trust acknowledges that the experience of the menopause is highly individual and can vary significantly between women. This policy is therefore not exhaustive and is considered to be a first step in addressing the challenges faced by women going through the menopause.

## 2. Scope

This policy is part of the Trust's overall commitment to safety, wellbeing and duty of care to its employees. This Trust is committed to being inclusive and supportive of all its staff. This policy applies to all employees who are experiencing menopausal symptoms. It also provides a framework for managers to support employees throughout their menopause to enable them to improve their experience at work, ultimately helping them to remain at work.

## 3. Definitions

The menopause is a stage of life when a woman stops having periods. It typically affects those aged between 45 and 55, when oestrogen levels begin to fall. In the UK, the average age to reach the menopause is 51.

Perimenopause is the time of hormonal change leading up to this, when a woman may experience symptoms. Post-menopause is the time beyond menopause.

Early menopause is when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45. It can happen naturally, or as a side effect of some treatments. When a woman begins the menopause before the age of 40 it is classed as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI).

For the purpose of this policy, any reference to the menopause shall include perimenopause, early menopause and POI.

Individuals suffering from the menopause may experience symptoms that cause changes to their emotions and other aspects of their health, some of which may impact them at work.

Menopausal symptoms might include:

- Challenges with memory, confidence and concentration
- Low mood, anxiety and depression
- Hot flushes, night sweats and palpitations
- Difficulty sleeping, insomnia and fatigue
- Headaches and joint and muscle pain

- Weakened bladder function and urinary tract infections
- Vaginal dryness and reduced sex drive

For some individuals, being at work may make their symptoms worse. For example, if the temperature is too high, this may cause symptoms such as hot flushes, dizziness, discomfort, sweating and heart palpitations.

Symptoms affecting sleep can make it difficult for staff experiencing them to concentrate and stay focused, while low confidence, low mood and anxiety may impact on decision-making and relationships with colleagues.

We acknowledge that the menopause will affect everybody differently – some individuals may experience no symptoms at all, and some may experience a variety of debilitating symptoms.

It is therefore very important that all women feel encouraged to speak with their headteacher or line manager, or other appropriate senior colleague, if they are experiencing menopausal symptoms affecting them in the workplace.

#### **4. Policy aims**

- To offer help and support to any employee who is experiencing symptoms caused by the menopause which are affecting their work
- To maintain a safe, healthy and productive workplace
- To encourage an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing the effects of the menopause
- To educate all employees on what the menopause is and how it can affect women
- To provide headteachers and managers with advice on how to help and support employees experiencing the menopause
- To provide support to ensure the employee remains at work and absence is kept to a minimum because the correct support is provided

#### **5. Relevant legislation**

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 - places a duty on the Trust (as the employer) to protect the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees
- Equality Act 2010 - sex and disability discrimination

#### **6. Employee responsibilities**

##### **Employees undergoing the menopause**

It is expected that employees will:

- Find out about the menopause from available sources
- Seek medical advice from their GP where necessary
- Be honest in conversations with Headteachers/Managers/Occupational Health and HR, especially where an employee feels that their symptoms are affecting their performance and/or attendance at work
- Be willing to discuss and/or implement practical needs to improve their experience at

- work. See section 8 for suggested support
- Look after their own health e.g. getting enough rest, eating well and taking regular exercise

### **Work colleagues**

It is expected that employees will:

- Look out for the health and wellbeing of colleagues, be sensitive in any approaches made to enquire about issues or raise issues sensitively with the headteacher/management
- Respect adjustments put in place for others
- Be considerate, understanding and respectful

## **7. Headteacher responsibilities**

It is expected that headteachers and line managers will:

- Encourage an approachable, supportive environment, which helps employees to be confident about raising any issues they may be experiencing
- Manage all disclosures with professionalism, sensitivity and confidentiality – the employee will need to agree to other colleagues being made aware
- Decide on and implement reasonable adjustments to support the employee
- Be mindful that all employees and their experiences are different, so a one size fits all approach is unlikely to be effective
- Be mindful that not all employees will want to discuss their menopause symptoms or even be open about going through the menopause
- Monitor employee absence in line with the Trust's absence management policy and procedure
- Ensure that performance and capability procedures do not discriminate against female staff members experiencing the menopause

## **8. Procedure**

Where an employee has approached the headteacher (or their manager) to discuss the impact their menopausal symptoms are having, or a situation has arisen where it is clear a conversation is required with an employee, the headteacher (or manager) will read this policy in preparation and arrange an informal meeting. This meeting will allow them to discuss the employee's situation and decide what action can be taken, taking into account any suggestions from the employee. The meeting will be held in an appropriate location to maintain confidentiality. At the meeting the employee and headteacher (or line manager) will:

- Agree together what action can be taken and how the employee can be best supported. This is most easily recorded by using an action plan template.
- Record any adjustments and actions on the action plan. Ensure completion or review dates are assigned to any actions. Subsequently, where completion or review dates cannot be met ensure the employee is informed of this and kept up to date on progress.
- Conduct a risk assessment to identify risks and implement appropriate control

measures. The risk assessment will need to consider the specific needs of the individual in question and include (but not limited to) assessing;

- Existing symptoms
  - Temperature and ventilation
  - Access to a quiet space
  - Access to toilet facilities
  - Access to drinking water
  - Level of workplace stress
  - Review of workload and work activity
  - Consideration of flexible working adjustments
- Record and implement any reasonable adjustments identified on the risk assessment. These can be recorded on the action plan so that the actions are all in one place.
  - Ensure the action plan and risk assessment are reviewed every term or more frequently where required (e.g. if new symptoms arise).
  - Schedule a follow-up meeting one month after the initial meeting takes place to ensure the employee is being supported successfully.
  - Schedule future meetings to ensure agreed reviews take place.

Where adjustments are not successful or if symptoms develop/change and require other adjustments the headteacher (or line manager) can:

- Make a referral to occupational health, having already discussed this with the employee, and implement any recommendations where reasonably practicable.
- Keep the action plan up to date and under review.

## **9. Support**

Often women do not realise that their symptoms are related to the menopause and therefore may not talk about it and subsequently do not ask for help. Alternatively, they may be aware but do not want to talk about it because they feel they will not be supported or understood, due to lack of awareness from colleagues or managers.

Women who frequently experience symptoms are more likely to feel less engaged at work or experience job dissatisfaction which may affect their performance. Where this is recognised, the Trust and/or individual school will offer support in order to ensure a positive outcome for both the employee and the Trust.

Where the individual school and/or Trust is aware support is needed:

- Arrange an informal meeting with the employee(s) to establish what support would help them, following the procedure outlined in section 8 above.
- Offer the employee advice and guidance to help them consider what they can do to reduce the impact of their symptoms.
- Where practicable, consider improving ventilation in the work environment to alleviate hot flushes.
- Suggest the employee works to understand their hot flush triggers and avoid them, where possible, just before teaching/presentations or times of known

heightened anxiety.

- Provide access to a rest room and/or a quiet place to work where required, to help with hot flushes or poor concentration.
- Offer advice on how to access counselling or mindfulness programmes to assist with anxiety or panic attacks.
- Explore the use of relaxation techniques to help reduce the impact of symptoms.
- Where possible, consider work allocation to assist with poor concentration.
- Ensure there is adequate access to toilets.
- Arrange for storage space to be available should the employee need to store a change of clothing.
- Arrange, where viable, for the employee (teaching staff) to be supported by a TA who can take over should they need to leave the class.

General support which can be offered regardless of whether or not symptoms are known:

- Referral to Occupational Health for further information and ways to support.
- Raise awareness of symptoms of the menopause through sharing this policy with all line managers.

Be aware that whilst this policy is going to apply in the main to female employees, male employees may also be affected by::

- a partner who is currently going through the menopause. Their sleep may be disturbed if their partner is unable to sleep well at night. This may cause them to be sleep deprived and feel that they are unable to concentrate properly or perform in their role as they were.
- a colleague who is going through the menopause and they are not sure how to deal with it or how to offer help.

Anyone affected in this way should contact their headteacher or line manager, or appropriate senior leader. They can also contact the Trust Head of HR.

### **External support**

- Occupational Health
- NCC's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team
- [Guidance on menopause and the workplace](#)
- [NICE guidelines](#)
- [Remploy](#) – where the employee's menopause experience is linked to symptoms of a mental health condition
- [www.menopauseandme.co.uk](http://www.menopauseandme.co.uk)
- [Menopause](#) (NHS)
- [Menopause Matters](#)
- [Menopause: diagnosis and management](#) (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)
- The [Daisy Network](#) charity
- [Menopause resources](#) from the CIPD, particularly for:
  - [Line managers](#)
  - [HR staff](#)

## **10. Associated policies**

- Trust/School Sickness & Absence policy and procedure
- Code of conduct

## **11. Data Protection**

When an employee informs the headteacher or their line manager that they need support because they are going through the menopause it will be dealt with confidentially and any data collected in relation to this will be processed in accordance with the Trust's data protection policy. Data collected will be held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of supporting the employee and ensuring the organisation remains a safe place to work in. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the Trust's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the Trust's disciplinary procedure.