



Policy Title:	Menopause and work policy
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Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Scope	3
3	Policy aims	3
4	Relevant legislation	3
5	Employee responsibilities	3
6	Headteacher responsibilities	4
7	Procedure.....	4
8	Support.....	5
9	Associated policies.....	6
10	Data Protection.....	6

1 Introduction

On average women experience the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55. When a woman begins the menopause before the age of 40 it is classed as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI). The majority of women experience symptoms that can affect their lives, including their work. Some women will experience debilitating symptoms and symptoms usually last 4-8 years. Therefore, it is very important that all women feel encouraged to speak with their Headteacher, or line manager if they are experiencing menopausal symptoms affecting them in the workplace.

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 Policy aims

- To offer help and support to any employee who is experiencing symptoms caused by the menopause, which is affecting their work.
- To maintain a safe, healthy and productive workplace
- 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

4 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

5 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 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

6 Headteacher responsibilities

It is expected that Headteachers will:

- Encourage an approachable, supportive environment, which encourages 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 successful
- Be mindful that not all employees will want to discuss their menopause symptoms or even be open about going through the menopause. In these cases the Trust will respect that decision and consider what support could be offered generally
- 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.

7 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

- Arrange an informal meeting to discuss the employee's situation and decide what action can be taken, taking into account section 8 and 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.

8 Support

Often women do not realise that their symptoms are related to the menopause (or perimenopause) and therefore may not talk about it and subsequently do not ask for help. Or they are 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, experience job dissatisfaction and therefore their performance may decrease, or they may appear less committed. Where this is recognised, the Trust and/or individual school will offer support as leaving it unchecked could lead to the woman's attendance dropping or leaving her job, which leads to a negative outcome for the woman and for 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 and follow the procedure outlined in section 7 above.
- Offer the employee the advice provided by the Faculty of Occupational Medicine 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, this could be hot drinks or food - 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.
- Advice on how to access counselling or mindfulness programmes to assist with anxiety or panic attacks
- Explore using 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. Either 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.

External support

- Occupational Health
- NCC's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team
- [Guidance on menopause and the workplace](#) – Faculty of Occupational Medicine
- [NICE guidelines](#)
- [Remploy](#) – where the employee's menopause experience is linked to symptoms of a mental health condition
- www.menopauseandme.co.uk

9 Associated policies

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

10 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.