**Policy document**

**Schools’ Menopause at Work Policy**

**Produced by Human Resources**

**humanresourcesqueries@warrington.gov.uk**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Date** | **Action** |
| 1 | March 2023 |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**CONTENTS** **PAGE**

1. Policy Statement 3

2. Scope 3

3. Definition of the Menopause 3

4. Employee Support 4

5. Managers Responsibilities 5

6. Employees Responsibilities 5

7. Further Information 6

# Policy Statement

The School is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive environment for its workforce.

Menopause is a normal life change and a natural part of the ageing process and we recognise that women experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments.

The School is committed to developing a workplace culture that supports workers experiencing the menopause so they feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work.

The aim of the policy is to:

* make managers aware of their responsibility to understand how the menopause can affect employees, and how they can support those experiencing the menopause at work
* foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner
* raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about the menopause
* enable workers experiencing the menopause to continue to be effective in their jobs
* outline support and reasonable adjustments available
* help us recruit and retain employees experiencing the menopause.

# Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the School. It sets out information and guidelines to help employees and managers understand the possible effects of menopause and to provide simple, positive and proactive ways to support staff during this time.

# Definition of the Menopause

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women’s lives. For some it may be medically induced. It is when a woman’s periods stop due to lower hormone levels. Perimenopause is when women experience symptoms before their periods stop.

Women may have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms whilst experiencing the menopause and perimenopause, and may often encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms. Postmenopause is the period of time after a woman’s periods stop and symptoms can continue for up to 12 years.

Each woman will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues as well.

There are many symptoms of the menopause such as:

* anxiety
* changes in mood - such as low mood or irritability
* changes in skin conditions, including dryness or increase in oiliness and onset of adult acne
* difficulty sleeping – this may make you feel tired and irritable during the day
* discomfort during sex
* feelings of loss of self
* hair loss or thinning
* headaches or migraines
* hot flushes – short, sudden feelings of heat, usually in the face, neck and chest, which can make your skin red and sweaty
* increase in facial hair
* joint stiffness, aches and pains
* loss of self-confidence
* night sweats – hot flushes that occur at night
* palpitations – heartbeats that suddenly become more noticeable
* problems with memory, concentration and 'brain fog'
* recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs), such as cystitis
* reduced sex drive (libido)
* tinnitus

In extreme cases, severe menopausal symptoms and their consequences may combine to have a substantial adverse effect on normal day to day activities thus meeting the definition of a disability under the Equality Act. The definition under the Act being “a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on the ability to do normal daily activities”.

# Managers Responsibilities

It is valuable to acknowledge that the menopause is not an illness, but rather it is a normal stage of life and that reasonable adjustments can be made if necessary.

It is the manager’s responsibility to ensure that every employee of the council has the opportunity to be part of a regular and ongoing conversation about their experience of work through the Our Time to Talk process, in which they can raise any issues whether work related, or personal, that may impact on their work.

Talking Wellbeing is a key feature of all 1 to 1 discussions and this offers individuals the opportunity to talk about their health, stress and resilience levels, personal issues and work life balance.

Managers should recognise that some women may be reluctant to have discussions about their experience of the menopause with their manager and alternative support may be useful.

Managers should consider all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and confidentially and recognise the potential impact of menopausal symptoms on performance by employees experiencing the menopause.

# Employee Responsibilities

All employees have a personal responsibility to look after their own health.

Employees are encouraged to inform their manager (or an alternative contact, should they not feel comfortable speak to their manager) if they are struggling with menopausal symptoms and need any support.

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to seek support through their GP or other external organisations (see section below on Further Information).

All employees have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and productive working environment, be willing to help and support their colleagues, and be understanding of any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

# Employee Support

Simple cost-effective changes to an employees working environment, or the opportunity to talk, can make a big difference. Employees and managers could consider some of the following;

* Look at the work environment and identify any basic comfort changes – portable fans, window desks (where available), window blinds, provision of cool drinking water or easy access to washing facilities.
* If possible identify a room(s), space or work area that women can use if they need to cool down, recover or rest, or make a telephone call to access personal or professional support.
* Consider if a referral to OH would be helpful (this would provide guidance on other adjustments or support, some of which may be suitable to individual circumstances).
* Consider other HR policies that may help provide support to employees (e.g. flexible working, agile working, the Authorised Leave policy provides for time off for medical appointments where necessary etc).
* Where uniforms are compulsory, try and include the use of thermally comfortable natural fabrics, optional layers, and allow the removal of scarves, neckties or jackets, as well as the provision of changing facilities.
* Where work requires constant standing or prolonged sitting, having access to a rest room or space (e.g. to sit during work breaks) would be helpful, as would space to move about for those women in sedentary roles.
* In customer-focused or public-facing roles, it may help to have access to a quiet room or space for a short break to manage and respond to a severe symptom onset.

# Further Information

[NHS guidance on menopause symptoms and treatment](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/)

[NICE guidance on menopause diagnosis and management](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information)

[British Menopause Society](https://thebms.org.uk/)

[The Menopause Exchange](https://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/)