

Thinking Schools Academy Trust

“Transforming Life Chances”

Menopause Policy

This policy was adopted on	September 2022
The policy is to be reviewed on	September 2026

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1. Introduction

Menopause is a normal part of life. This policy recognises that the menopause is an equality and occupational health and safety issue that women may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before (peri-menopause), during and after the menopause (post-menopause).

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust (The Trust) has a positive attitude towards the menopause and will treat all individuals with dignity and respect during this time and ensure that the workplace does not make symptoms worse.

The Trust is committed to ensuring that all staff feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms openly, without embarrassment, and are able to ask for support and adjustments in order to continue to work safely. Although the majority of people who experience the menopause will identify as women, we recognise that people of all gender identities can experience the menopause.

An equality impact assessment will be undertaken to ensure that no groups or individuals with protected characteristics are unintentionally disadvantaged by the policy or practice.

2. The Law

The Trust undertakes to comply with its legal obligations as set out below:

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers are required to undertake general risk assessments, which should include specific risks to menopausal women, see section 5.3.

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.

The Public Sector Equality Duty was created by the Equality Act. The duty places a legal obligation on this organisation to consider how it can positively contribute to a fairer society through paying due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.

This includes: -

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.

It is also possible that the menopause may worsen the impact of a disability or long-term health condition.

3. Status

This policy sets out procedures for members of staff, line managers and leadership to follow in providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

If the Trust wishes to amend the menopause policy, consultation and negotiation on proposed changes will take place with staff via the recognised trade unions.

4. Aims

To create an environment where those experiencing the menopause feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work.

To ensure that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate adjustments and support are put in place, recognising that the menopause and perimenopause is an individual experience and therefore there is no 'one size fits all' solution.

To reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace.

5. Definitions

The menopause is part of the natural ageing process. It refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months.

Most typically occurring between age 45 and 55, the average age for a person to reach menopause is 51; however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

Cancer treatment and hysterectomy can cause someone to have menopausal symptoms or cause early menopause.

The peri-menopause, which is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause, is when people are most likely to experience symptoms including hot flushes, aches and pains, mood changes and 'brain fog'.

Peri-menopause can often last for four to five years, although for some it may continue for many years, or for others only last a few months.

Because they may still be having regular periods at the onset of symptoms, many do not always realise that they are experiencing the peri-menopause and may not understand what is causing their symptoms. This can be a barrier to accessing support.

Post-menopausal – after a person has not had a period for a year, they can be described as ‘post-menopausal’. These symptoms may vary in degree between different individuals from mild to very significant.

Premature menopause is experienced by around 1 in 100 of those who could be affected, who experience the menopause before the age of 40.

Symptoms of the Menopause:

Physical Symptoms can include:

- hot flushes – which can cause dizziness
- difficulty sleeping – which can include night sweats, feeling tired and feeling irritable
- palpitations
- headaches and migraines that are worse than usual
- muscle aches and joint pains
- change in body shape and weight gain
- skin changes – including itchy and dry skin

Mental Symptoms can include:

- changes to your mood – low mood, anxiety, mood swing and low self esteem
- problems with memory or concentration (brain fog)

6. Roles and responsibilities

It is recognised that everyone who works at the Trust has a role to play in ensuring a comfortable working environment for all staff, including those experiencing the menopause. All staff are responsible for:

- taking reasonable steps to look after their health
- being open and honest in conversations with HR and Occupational Health
- contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment
- being willing to help and support their colleagues
- accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments their colleagues request or are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

6.1 Line managers

The most important and valuable thing a manager can do is listen and, wherever possible, respond empathically to any requests for adjustments at work.

All line managers will:

- familiarise themselves with this menopause policy
- be aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance; if someone's performance suddenly dips, consideration will be given as to whether the menopause may be playing a part in this
- provide a safe place to allow the member of staff to speak openly and honestly
- be ready and willing to listen and have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and confidentially and allowing adequate time for the discussion
- review the employee's workload and make reasonable adjustments where requested
- record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented, via an action plan
- ensure ongoing dialogue via a follow-up meeting
- ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to and reviewed as regularly as necessary.
- supporting staff confidentiality

6.2 Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving particularly severe, the line manager may:

- discuss with the employee a referral to occupational health for further advice
- review occupational health advice, and implement any additional recommendations
- update the action plan and continue the review process.

7. What steps will we take as an employer?

7.1 The Trust will educate and inform managers and staff to be aware of how the menopause can affect staff, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support staff experiencing them.

7.2 Where members of staff feel uncomfortable going to their line manager, we will ensure that an alternative contact is available. Confidentiality will always be respected.

7.3 A personal risk assessment will be undertaken to consider the specific needs of the individual. This will be completed by the line manager with the member of staff and their union representative.

7.4 Risk assessments will include consideration of temperature and ventilation issues and will also address welfare issues; such as access to toilet facilities and cold water, during and outside break and lunch times.

7.5 The Trust will make adjustments where necessary to support individuals experiencing the menopause, and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse. These could include simple measures such as:

- leaving doors open
- ensuring that windows can be safely opened
- ensuring that it is possible to regulate the temperature in a classroom or other room by turning down radiators (as long as the temperature does not drop below 18 degrees Celsius, this will be comfortable for all occupants) • provision of fans
- fitting blinds to windows
- establishing a system that allows cover for women who need to access toilet/washing facilities while they are teaching (to deal with heavy and recurring bleeding)
- considering requests for changes to working arrangements, e.g. temporary part-time working
- support to attend menopause-related medical appointments
- adjusting workplace procedures and processes to support and avoid any detriment to menopausal women.
- monitor the support provided over the Trust's schools

This is not a definitive list of measures. The Trust will actively listen to women staff and union reps and take on board other suggestions. Significant amendments would be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

It is recognised that many of these practical and easy-to-institute changes to the workplace, which will make working life more bearable for menopausal women, will benefit all staff.

8. Occupational health

The role of occupational health is to:

- carry out a holistic assessment of the employee to ascertain whether or not the working environment may be exacerbating menopause symptoms
- discuss with the employee what adjustments would help
- signpost to other appropriate sources of help and advice.

9. Signposting, support and further information



The Trust Employee Assistance Programme is available to all staff and should you feel the need for extra support during this time, please feel free to contact 0800 111 6387, which is a 24/7 support service that is entirely confidential.

NHS Menopause Guidance – www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause - provides an overview, together with information about menopausal symptoms and treatment options.

Menopause Matters – www.menopausematters.co.uk – an independent website gives up to-date information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options.

Menopause Support- www.menopausesupport.co.uk – is a non-profit and the home of #MakeMenopauseMatter which looks to support women who are going through the menopause.

TSAT Menopause Risk Assessment – this can be downloaded from the Trust’s website.