



**MELLERS PRIMARY SCHOOL
MENOPAUSE POLICY
June 2021**



Menopause Policy

1. Who this policy applies to

1.1 This policy applies to all employees of the City Council on permanent or temporary contracts. This policy does not apply to casual workers, consultants, agency workers or any other workers who are not actual employees of the Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 Nottingham City Council is committed to ensuring that all colleagues are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment.
- 2.2 The Council is also committed to improving the wellbeing of its employees. As an employer the Council has a duty to manage age related issues effectively.
- 2.3 In this regard, the Council will provide appropriate support to women who are experiencing the menopause.
- 2.4 It is important that managers understand the difficulties and anxieties of colleagues currently going through this change and that this is managed by raising awareness.

3. Aim of Policy

- 3.1 The aim of the Policy is to make managers aware of menopause related issues and how they can affect their employees by:
- 3.1.1 Creating an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for adjustments at work.
- 3.1.2 Taking a pro-active stance by promoting a greater understanding of the menopause and look to eradicate any exclusionary or discriminatory practices.
- 3.1.3 Providing direction and clarity on how to support women who raise menopause related issues, either for individuals experiencing this or those who are affected indirectly, for example, line managers, partners (including same sex partners) and colleagues.
- 3.1.4 Informing managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, what the consequences can be and what they can do to support women at work.
- 3.1.5 Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- 3.1.6 Accepting that menopause related symptoms can affect women differently.

3.1.7 Meeting the requirements under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure the health and safety and welfare of colleagues; the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 to make the workplace suitable for individuals who work in them; and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which requires the completion of a suitable risk assessment and take action to prevent exposure to risks. There is also a requirement under the Public Sector Duty to promote gender equality.

4. Definitions

4.1 **Menopause** is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when a woman stops having periods and is no longer able to get pregnant. The menopause is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). For most, the menopause starts between the ages of 45 and 55, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons. As a result of these hormonal changes, many women experience both physical and emotional symptoms.

4.2 **Peri-menopause** is the time leading up to the menopause when women may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

4.3 **Post-menopause** is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

4.4 Around 1 in 100 women experience the menopause before 40 years of age. This is known as **premature menopause**, premature ovarian failure, or primary ovarian insufficiency.

5. Symptoms of the Menopause

5.1 Whilst 75% of women do experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe, it is important to note that not every woman will notice every symptom, or even need help or support. Some women can experience few or no symptoms, whilst others can have symptoms that can debilitate them and can affect their work and the role that they do.

5.2 Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically and can be quite severe and have significant impact on their everyday activities including working life. Common symptoms include:

- hot flushes
- palpitations
- headaches
- sweats
- difficulty sleeping, insomnia
- panic attacks
- skin irritation

- low mood or anxiety
- depression
- loss of confidence
- problems with memory, decision making and concentration
- Irritability, mood swings and emotional outbursts.

5.3 Menopausal symptoms can begin months or even years before a woman's period stop and can last around four years after the last period, although some women experience them for much longer and can need medication to alleviate the symptoms. They can also fluctuate and can return.

5.4 Surgical and medical treatments, such as a hysterectomy, fertility treatment, endometriosis, some cancer treatments and hormone therapy as part of someone's gender transition can also bring about menopause symptoms. Further information about surgical menopause is available on the [NHS website](#).

5.5 The effect of the menopause can significantly impact on, a woman's physical and emotional health, how she does her work and her relationships with her colleagues.

5.6 The menopause can adversely affect behaviour, memory and confidence. An example could be that a woman is usually competent and comfortable with addressing a large meeting of people, and then, suddenly, she loses confidence and just cannot do it. Or, with memory loss, i.e. not carrying out a management request because she forgot, the manager should explore these challenges with compassion, and consider any supportive measures that could be put in place.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Employees

6.1.1 All employees are responsible for:

- Taking personal responsibility to look at the options available and their health;
- Being open and honest in conversations with line managers. If a member of staff feels unable to speak to their line manager, they can speak to an alternative manager, HR or their Trade Union;
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues.

6.2 Line Managers

6.2.1 All managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and supporting documents;
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Use the supporting documents in Appendix 1 and 2, signposting and reviewing together, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, and any

reasonable adjustments required to remove any barriers, that may get in the way of the woman effectively doing their job.;

- Record reasonable adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented;
- Ensure ongoing conversations take place and set review dates;
- Ensure that all agreed reasonable adjustments are adhered to.

6.2.2 Where reasonable adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the manager may wish to consider:

- Making a referral to Employee Wellbeing for further Occupational Health advice;
- Review any Occupational Health advice received, and consider implementing any recommendations, where reasonably practical, taking the needs of the service into consideration.

6.3 **Human Resources**

6.3.1 Human Resources will:

- Offer guidance and support to managers on the interpretation of this Policy and supporting documents;
- Support managers in referring employees to Employee Wellbeing for further Occupational Health advice.

7. **Menopause related sickness absence**

7.1 The menopause is not a widely discussed subject and can be misunderstood. Some women may find it difficult to discuss the menopause with their manager and may feel that they need to take time off work to deal with their symptoms without disclosing the real reason.

7.2 Women may not be comfortable disclosing their difficulties, particularly if their manager is younger than them or is male. Offering an alternative female manager for the individual to disclose their difficulties to, may be an option to consider. However managers should try to encourage open and honest discussions with their team.

7.3 Those experiencing the menopause or peri-menopause may experience bouts of feeling unwell at work, so managers should take a flexible and sympathetic approach to requests for a break or even a return home.

7.4 Colleagues who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause should follow the normal sickness absence reporting procedure, The attendance management procedure should also be followed when managing a colleague's sickness absence.

8. **Further Sources of Information and Support**

8.1 The Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is provided through PAM Assist. It is a free, confidential service that can offer colleagues personal support when they require it. Colleagues can telephone 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on Freephone 0800 882 4102. Managers can also contact PAM Assist for advice on supporting colleagues.

- 8.2
- The Daisy Network - <https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk/>
 - NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
 - Menopause Matters - <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>
 - Women's Health Concern - <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>
 - The Menopause Exchange - <http://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk/>
 - My Menopause Doctor - <https://www.menopausedoctor.co.uk/>
 - Cancer Research UK - <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/coping/physically/sex/women/early-menopause>

Appendix 1

Guidance for colleague discussion

We recognise that every woman is different, and it is therefore, not feasible to set out a structured set of guidelines.

If colleagues wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if a colleague wishes to speak about a family member, you will need to consider:

- Allowing adequate time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality;
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly;
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported;
- Agree actions, and how to implement them, so that all parties agree what has been discussed, and the next steps before the meeting ends. Ensure that this record is treated as confidential, and is stored securely.
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting.

Symptom Support

- Find out more about the menopause from available sources (see Section 8).
- Colleagues may wish to speak to their GP for advice on available treatment options.
- Facilitate discussion about troublesome symptoms – communicate that health related problems such as those experienced during the menopause are normal.
- Use technology where this is helpful, e.g. for reminders or note taking.
- Avoid hot flush triggers (such as hot food and drinks) especially before presentations or meetings.
- Consider relaxation techniques such as mindfulness and other potentially helpful techniques such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) via the Council's Employee Assistance Programme, as these can help reduce the impact of symptoms.
- Consider lifestyle changes such as weight reduction, smoking cessation and exercise.
- Consider flexible working arrangements, including working from home, to enable the individual to continue working productively and manage the impact of their symptoms.
- Allow time off to attend medical appointments, as detailed in Appendix A of the [Flexible Working Framework](#).

Other support to consider

Hot Flashes

- Review workplace temperature and ventilation and see how they might be adapted to meet the needs of individuals.
- This might include having a desktop fan or locating a workstation near an opening window or away from a heat source.

Appendix 1

- Easy access to drinking water.
- Be allowed to adapt prescribed uniform, being able to remove neckties or jackets or have a change of uniform.
- Have access to changing facilities.
- Have access to a rest room for breaks if their work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if they need to manage a severe flush.

Heavy/Light Periods

- Have access to toilet facilities.
- Request extra uniform.

Headaches

- Easy access to drinking water.
- Offer a quiet space to work.
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

Difficulty Sleeping

- Consider flexible working hours or shift changes. If sleep is disturbed, later start times might be helpful.

Low Mood

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission.
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head'.
- Refer to the Employee Assistance Programme for further support and guidance.

Loss of Confidence

- Ensure there are regular one to one meetings.
- Have time and be available for colleagues to discuss any issues they may have.
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work following any discussions.

Poor Concentration

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and consider adjusting working patterns/practice accordingly.
- Review task allocation and workload.
- Offer a quiet space at work.
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.
- Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having 'protected time', so that they are not disturbed.
- If work performance issues are identified, explore whether the symptoms are related to the menopause and consider an Occupational Health referral to the Employee Wellbeing team.

Anxiety

Appendix 1

- Offer access to counselling or CBT via the Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Access to these services via the NHS can be protracted and, colleagues are encouraged to access support via the EAP.
- Encourage colleagues to undertake relaxation techniques, mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

Discuss whether the colleague has visited their GP and/or allow time off to attend medical appointments. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.

If they have visited a GP and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make a referral to Employee Wellbeing for specific Occupational Health advice regarding the workplace.

Appendix 2

CHECKLIST FOR MENOPAUSE RISK ASSESSMENT

Health and safety	YES/NO	Comments
Does the employee have access to information on the menopause?		
Has referral to Occupational Health been considered in relation to the menopause?		
Have alternative reporting lines been put in place for those women who would prefer or need to discuss menopause issues with a female manager?		
Sanitary and health issues	YES/NO	Comments
Are workstations easily accessible to sanitary and rest facilities?		
Are private washing and changing facilities available?		
Is there easy access to sanitary products?		
Other considerations	YES/NO	Comments
Is ventilation available and is it regularly maintained?		
Are additional ventilation, for example portable fans, provided if necessary?		
Do uniforms provided and any PPE reflect the needs of menopausal woman? E.g. loose clothing?		
Have workstation risk assessments been reviewed to take menopause into account?		
Are there opportunities to switch to lighter or different duties?		
Do manual handling assessments take these into account?		

Appendix 2

Is additional flexibility required in relation to working hours and breaks?		
Where driving is required as part of the working day; what consideration has been given to changes due to fatigue and other symptoms		
Is there natural light in the work station area?		
Is time off for medical treatment, medical appointments or advice about the menopause required?		

Appendix 2