

MENOPAUSE WORKPLACE POLICY



MENOPAUSE POLICY FOR STAFF AT ABBEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES:

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Attendance at Work Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

SUMMARY:

Abbey Community College is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all its staff and recognises that women may need additional consideration, support and adjustments before (perimenopause), during and after the menopause.

This policy sets out the guidelines for employees on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

LEGISLATION:

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000, NI Regulation 3(1)
- Health and Safety, NI Order, 1978
- Sex Discrimination Order 1976 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (NI)
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999.

HISTORY:

Policy created: September 2022
Updated : September 2024

Discussed at Board of Governors:
9/11/2024

Reviewed by staff: 2nd October 2024

To be reviewed: June 2026

INTRODUCTION:

It is estimated that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work in the UK. Menopause is a normal part of every woman's life. This policy recognises that the menopause is an equality and occupational health and safety issue and that women may need appropriate support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause.

Abbey Community College 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. Abbey Community College is committed to ensuring that women 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 in the organisation. For this reason, the menopause at work is an issue for men as well as women.

It should be noted that people from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of the menopause may be different for those among these communities. Although the policy refers to women, please consider that 'people who menstruate' also require consideration. Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that for many reasons, people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly. The menopause can also affect partners and families too.

2. AIMS

The aim of this policy is:

- To create an environment where women staff members feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work.
- To understand the menopause and related issues, and how they can affect staff.
- To raise a wider awareness and understanding among the workforce.
- 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 outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available
- To reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace.

3. DEFINITIONS

PERIMENOPAUSE

The perimenopause is the period in a woman's life when she starts to experience hormonal fluctuations and changes to her periods. The average time for a woman to be perimenopausal is between four to five years. During this time, periods may become increasingly heavy and irregular, meaning it is vitally important for a woman experiencing symptoms to be close to toilets and shower facilities. For some women, the symptoms during this time can be worse than the actual menopause

MENOPAUSE

A woman is described as being menopausal when they have gone 12 months without a period and when her ovaries are no longer responsive. The average age for a woman to reach the menopause in the UK is 51. American evidence suggests that this is different for Asian and black women. An Asian woman may start her menopause later and a black woman slightly earlier. To date, there is no UK evidence on this issue.

POST-MENOPAUSAL

This is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months. The average time for women experiencing symptoms of the menopause is five years, but many women experience symptoms for up to ten years and 3% of women will experience symptoms for the rest of their lives. Post-menopausal women have an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis and managers should be aware of this

4. SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE

Women may experience only some or all of these symptoms (the list is not exhaustive):

- Hot flushes
- Changes to mood
- Fatigue
- Problems with memory
- Palpitations
- Loss of confidence
- Night sweats
- Joint aches
- Insomnia and sleep disturbances
- Dry skin and skin irritation
- Headaches
- Vaginal dryness, itching and discomfort
- Irregular and/or heavy, painful periods, clots and flooding
- Increased perspiration during the day

- Depression
- Dry eyes
- Anxiety
- Hair loss
- Panic attacks
- Urinary problems
- Poor concentration

Symptoms can begin months or even years before a woman's period stop and last around four years after the last period, although some women experience them for longer and can need medication to alleviate the symptoms. The effects on a woman's physical and emotional health can significantly impact how she does her work and her relationships with colleagues. There are a number of varying treatment options for women ranging from natural remedies to medical intervention.

The Board of Governor's and Senior Leadership within Abbey Community College recognises their responsibility to take into account difficulties women may experience during the menopause and to provide support and advice in this regard.

STAFF WHO EXPERIENCE ANY OF THESE ISSUES MAY WISH TO SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE FROM THEIR GP. *PLEASE SEE APPENDIX 2 FOR A MENOPAUSE ADVICE SHEET*

5. WORKPLACE SUPPORT

MEMBERS OF STAFF:

It is recognised that members of staff have a responsibility for their health, safety and welfare. All staff are responsible for:

- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their health;
- Being open and honest in conversations with the Principal/Senior Leadership Team;
- Contributing in a respectful and productive working environment;
- Be willing to help and support their colleagues;
- Understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms

SENIOR LEADERSHIP/LINE MANAGERS:

All Senior Leaders and Middle Leaders should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy;
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the person nature of the conversations, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Use the guidance in Appendix 1, signposting and reviewing together, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required.

- Record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented;
- Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates;
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Line Manager may:

- Discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice;
- Refer the employee to Occupational Health with the assistance;
- Review Occupational Health advice, and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical;
- Update the action plan, and continue to review.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS:

It is recognised that the menopause is a very personal experience and different adjustments and levels of support may be needed for different individuals.

Any adjustment should be tailored to an individual's needs through discussion. It is essential that assumptions are not made regarding a woman's health and experience during menopause or the age at which she is displaying symptoms.

The Senior Leadership Team should be supportive during this time and should be aware of symptoms and realise that it can be daunting or embarrassing for a woman to openly discuss their issues.

If a member of staff wishes to speak with the Principal in relation to wider issues that may be impacting their work, including any health issues, they may request a one to one meeting in order to identify key concerns and adjustments which can take place in order to support them within the workplace. See Appendix 1 for the Confidential Colleague Discussion template.

There is a range of reasonable adjustments that can be considered, should a female member of staff seek support due to the menopause or a condition that can affect the onset of menopause such as a hysterectomy or endometriosis. It is important that any reasonable adjustment is tailored to the needs of the employee and no one size will fit all in this regard.

All staff can access free confidential counselling services 24/7 through Inspire Workplaces. The contact number is 0800 389 5362.

6. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

In certain circumstances, where a woman experiences extreme symptoms, it may be necessary for them to be referred to 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.

6. EXTERNAL LINKS

There is a wide range of support available for women who wish to find out more about menopause and how to further support themselves. These include:

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE (NICE) GUIDELINES.

These explain how your GP will determine what types of treatments and interventions they can offer you. You can find out more information by using the following link <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-thisinformation>.

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

The National Health Service provides an overview of menopause. You can find more at <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx>.

MENOPAUSE INFORMATION

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists offer further information in a dedicated area of their website at: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/menopause/>.

PREMATURE OVARIAN INSUFFICIENCY (POI)

information and support on very early menopause. You can find out more at <https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk>.

INFORMATION ON HYSTERECTOMY

This provides an insight into surgically induced menopause as a result of having a hysterectomy. Further details can be found at <https://www.hysterectomy-association.org.uk>.

HENPICKED

This site provides information on managing menopause, and an insight into women's stories (see <https://henpicked.net/menopause/>).

15. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Abbey Community College will update this Policy and procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary and review it annually.

On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

Date Policy Reviewed:

Signed:

_____ (Chair of Board of Governors)

_____ (Principal)

APPENDIX 1

TEMPLATE: COLLEAGUE DISCUSSION

Confidential Colleague Discussion



Staff members details:	
Name	
Job Title	
Department	
Present at the meeting:	
Date of meeting:	
Summary of discussion:	
Agreed actions/adjustments	
Date of next review meeting:	
Signed – Staff member:	Date:
Signed – Principal:	Date:

APPENDIX 2

MENOPAUSE ADVICE SHEET - HOW TO TALK TO YOUR GP ABOUT MENOPAUSE

If you are suffering from menopausal symptoms to the point they're getting in the way of you enjoying life, it's time to talk to your doctor. But, sometimes, that's easier said than done.

We all know how difficult it can often be just to get an appointment, and then it's often only ten minutes. And talking about symptoms can be hard, let alone if you feel rushed or unprepared. So, what can you do? We've put together some helpful, straightforward tips to help you get the best from your appointment.

Don't wait. It is all too common for women to feel they must simply 'put up' with menopausal symptoms as a part of life, but if they are affecting you, there are things you can do, and support available. There is no need to wait until symptoms feel unbearable.

Read the NICE guidelines. This stands for National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and these guidelines are what your doctor will use to determine the type of conversations to have with you and treatments to offer. There are guidelines for patients, which are really useful to read before you see your GP, so you know what to expect.

Prepare for your appointment. It's easier for your doctor to understand what's going on if you provide them with all the information. That may sound obvious, but blood tests to say where you are on the menopause transition aren't always available or accurate - your hormones can fluctuate daily during this time. Your doctor will be thinking about what to recommend for you, based on your symptoms.

Keep a list of your symptoms, your menstrual cycle, hot flushes, how you're feeling, and any changes you've noticed. Write them down, and take them to your appointment. Your doctor will thank you for it, and it's more likely that together, you'll find the right solution faster. And, if you have any preferences about how you manage your symptoms, tell them that too - for example, if you'd like to try hormone replacement therapy (HRT), or not.

Ask the receptionist which doctor is best to talk to about menopause. They are often the fount of all knowledge at a surgery, and can help you find the best person to speak to - it might not be your usual GP, it could be someone who has had special training in the subject.

Ask for a longer appointment. If you don't think your standard appointment will be long enough, try to book a double appointment, as some surgeries do offer this

Don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion. If you don't feel you've received the help you need, ask to speak to someone else. Don't be put off; you know how you're feeling, and how it's affecting you.

Ask if there is a menopause clinic in your area. Occasionally, there are regional clinics, specifically devoted to menopause. If there is one in your area, and you think this would be helpful, ask for a referral.

Take your partner or a friend with you. The chances are, you spend your life supporting others and, during menopause, it's your turn to ask them for support. Your partner, or a friend, will know how the symptoms are affecting you. They could support you at the appointment, and also find out how they can continue supporting you.

What to expect from your doctor

There are certain things a GP should – and should not – do during your appointment.

They should:

- Talk to you about your lifestyle, and how to manage both your symptoms, and your longer-term health;
- Offer advice on hormone replacement therapy and other non-medical options;
- Talk to you about the safety and effectiveness of any treatment

They should not:

- Tell you that it's just that time of your life. Yes, menopause is a natural stage, but please don't feel that means you should have to put up with every symptom without help;
- Tell you they don't prescribe HRT. It's up to you what you want to try, and for them to say whether it could be right for you, depending on your medical history;
- Impose unnecessary time restrictions, such as they will only prescribe this once, or for a year or two. This is an ongoing conversation, and if your symptoms persist, you will still need help to manage them.

REMEMBER, YOUR GP IS THERE TO HELP AND SUPPORT YOU, AND YOU SHOULD FEEL COMFORTABLE AND CONFIDENT IN TALKING TO THEM ABOUT YOUR SYMPTOMS, AND ANY HELP YOU NEED. DON'T THINK YOU HAVE TO STRUGGLE THROUGH MENOPAUSE WHEN THERE IS HELP AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE.



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