

The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust



Policy & Guidance

BWCAT

Menopause at Work

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The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust



Our Mission

Outstanding Catholic education for all pupils. As a family of schools, we will enable our young people to develop spiritually, morally, intellectually and personally, putting their faith into action, through serving Christ in others, in the church and in the world around them.

This policy was approved by the Resources Committee on behalf of the Trust Board

Signature:

**Mrs Diane Gaskin
Chair of Trust Board**

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Menopause at Work Policy

I. Introduction

- I.1 The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust (the Trust) is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation where all members of its community are treated with respect and dignity. The Trust aims to create a culture of diversity within its community, providing a dynamic working and learning environment, where all members are valued for their contribution.

The Trust is committed to improving the well-being of all our employees, and supporting colleagues with managing the effects of the menopause, as effectively as possible, whilst at work.

- I.2 The menopause is a natural stage of life which affects most women. We will support all employees experiencing perimenopause and menopause transition, so encourage all employees to ask for help if they need it.

Menopause usually happens between 45 and 55 years of age, the average age of the natural menopause is 51 years, but can occur much earlier or later. Menopause occurring before the age of 45 is called early menopause, and before the age of 40 is premature menopause. It can also happen earlier or later in someone's life as a result of surgical or medical reasons, such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery. For many women, the symptoms can last about four years, but in some cases, symptoms can last a lot longer. There are three different stages to the menopause:

- **Perimenopause** (is the stage from the beginning of menopausal symptoms to the postmenopause)
- **Menopause** (means the last menstrual period)
- **Postmenopause** (is the time following the last period, and is usually defined as more than 12 months with no periods in someone with intact ovaries, or immediately following surgery if the ovaries have been removed).

All stages and types of the menopause are different and symptoms can vary from person to person and range from very mild to severe. The Trust recognises that a proportion of its employees will be working through and well beyond the menopause. The Trust also recognises that the menopause can also often indirectly affect partners, families and other members of staff as well.

- I.3 We will provide appropriate support to employees who are experiencing symptoms associated with the menopause, whilst supporting line managers by providing guidance. For those experiencing the menopause it can be a difficult and stressful time, with varying symptoms both physically and mentally, therefore, it is important we understand the experiences of employees currently going through this change and that we manage this issue by raising awareness, and providing training and development for all line management and staff.

2. Aims

2.1 The aim of the policy is to provide guidance and a signpost to resources in managing and supporting line managers and employees with an awareness of menopause related issues and how they can impact on an employee's health and wellbeing and attendance at work. We will:

2.1.1. Create an environment where employees feel confident to raise and discuss their symptoms privately and confidentially with their line manager or another staff member, these conversations are handled sensitively and supportively and, if necessary, adjustments at work are put in place.

2.1.2. Promote advice, guidance and information which will provide direction and clarity on what to consider in order to support colleagues who raise menopause related concerns, either for individuals experiencing symptoms of the menopause or those who are affected indirectly, for example, line managers, partners and work colleagues.

2.1.3. Inform, train and support managers about the potential symptoms and effects of the menopause, and what they can do to support employees at work, ensuring that conditions in the workplace are supportive and impact positively on employee's well-being at work.

2.1.4. Encourage employees who are interested in being a Menopause Champion, and support any training requirements to ensure the role is able to provide support and guidance to line managers and colleagues.

2.1.5. Consider menopause related absence and an employee's well-being in order to reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms, and consider a range of reasonable adjustments in order to retain staff in the workplace.

2.2 This policy and guidance will ensure an awareness that the menopause and its symptoms can affect any woman at any time. Supporting and creating a positive open environment can help prevent an employee losing confidence in their skills and abilities, feeling like they need to take time off work, having increased mental health conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression or leaving their job.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Employees

3.1.1 All employees are responsible for:

- Proactively taking personal responsibility to look after their health and wellbeing, requesting guidance and support where available;
- Being open and honest in conversations with line managers, HR and Occupational Health when needed;
- If an employee feels unable to speak to their line manager, they can speak to another manager within the department/Academy or the Trust's HR team or their Trade Union.
- Be willing to help and support their colleagues.

Accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments for themselves or their colleagues that have been requested and are receiving as a result of their menopause symptoms.

3.2 Line Managers

3.2.1 All line managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause at Work Policy and Guidance;
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause symptoms, providing a safe and confidential place to allow the employee to speak openly, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Be aware of the potential impact of the menopause on performance and confidence of the employee, considering appropriate risk assessments in terms of health and safety and/or managing stress in relation to their job role where needed;
- Confidentially record support and adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented;
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to;
- Ensure ongoing conversations take place and set review dates;
- Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, consider, discuss and action a referral to Occupational Health for further advice, if agreed;
- Review Occupational Health advice, and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical;
- Discuss and consider support from the Employee Assistance Programme;
- Seek support and guidance from the Trust HR team where required.

3.3 Headteachers / Human Resources (HR)

3.3.1 Headteachers / HR have overall responsibility for providing advice regarding this policy.

3.3.2 Headteachers / HR are responsible for helping to ensure that this policy and its guiding principles are understood by managers, staff and that it is implemented in a supportive way for employees requiring support.

3.3.3 Headteachers / HR will support employees wishing to undertake a role of Menopause Champion and consider access to training and support available to support the role.

3.4 Occupational Health

3.4.1 The role of Occupational Health is to:

- Carry out a holistic assessment with the employee to ascertain whether or not the working environment may be exacerbating menopause symptoms;

- Discuss with the staff member what adjustments would help;
- Signpost to other appropriate sources of help and advice.

4. Menopause and the Law

4.1 The menopause relates to the law through:

- Equality Act 2010, which protects workers against discrimination;
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, an employer must, where reasonably practical, ensure everyone's health, safety and welfare at work.

4.2 Whilst the menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, if an employee is put at a disadvantage and treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms it is important to note that this could be discriminatory if related to a protected characteristic such as age; disability; gender reassignment or sex.

Menopause at Work Guidance

Understanding the Menopause and Providing Support

It is important to understand what the menopause is and how it can affect employees, alongside understanding what support is available for staff and how that support will be implemented and reviewed.

Whilst we are not medical practitioners and able to offer medical advice, we can provide support, advice, guidance and signposting for other services and resources, to employees where needed in support of their health and wellbeing.

Menopause symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically and, therefore, encouraging regular conversations to understand the impact of such symptoms and the support or adjustments that may be required, is necessary to help resolve issues early.

One of the key requirements is to create an environment that is supportive and responsive to different needs, therefore where relevant, line managers and colleagues should ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to support individuals. It will be necessary at times to develop tailored interventions for colleagues, taking into consideration all of the different and at times unique working environments.

Below are some examples of particularly challenging experiences for colleagues with menopause symptoms:

- 1. Inadequate ventilation, high temperatures, humidity and dryness and confined workspace or crowding can have a negative impact on the experience of hot flushes.***

Possible adjustments:

- Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk, or moving near a window, ensuring windows can be opened safely, or moving away from a heat source and/or turning radiators down;
- Easy access to drinking water;
- Be allowed to adapt prescribed uniform, such as by removing a jacket when in the classroom/office;
- 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.

- 2. Stress related to workload, deadlines, responsibility and formal meetings, especially meetings involving senior colleagues; increased stress, anxiety or even panic attacks in having to learn something new and/or give presentations can be linked to the frequency of menopause symptoms.***

Possible adjustments:

- Ensure regular one to one discussions are in place, consider additional performance management discussions to review progress along with any additional training or support that may be required to assist building confidence;
- Have time with their manager to discuss any issues;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work following discussions.
- Promote counselling services provided by Occupational Health or the Employee Assistance Programme;

- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk.

3. *Lack of access to appropriate toilet facilities, showers, cold drinking water or quiet rest areas and not being able to take regular rest breaks can make coping with heavy or irregular periods, stress incontinence, hot flushes and transition-related fatigue difficult.*

Possible adjustments:

- Have access to toilet facilities, establishing a system that allows cover for those that are teaching who may require facilities whilst they are in the classroom;
- Ensure sanitary products are available;
- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water;
- Offer a quiet space to work;
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

4. *Physical demands of the job role, headaches and difficulty sleeping can make heavy periods harder to manage, poor concentration and fatigue in being able to function at work.*

Possible adjustments:

- Ask to be considered for flexible working, particularly when suffering from a lack of sleep;
- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly where possible;
- Review task allocation and workload;
- Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment;
- Offer quiet space to work;
- Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having 'protected time', so that they are not disturbed;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

5. *Muscular aches and bone and joint pain can make moving and handling or adopting static postures more uncomfortable.*

Possible adjustments:

- Temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules;
- Support through Occupational Health;
- Adaptations to equipment, such as chair, desk, equipment used for a specific task.

Managing Sickness Absence and Performance Management

It is important to link any absence or performance concerns with the Trust's Sickness Absence Management Policy & Procedure, Appraisal and Capability policies respectively. However, as the menopause can be long term and affects everyone differently, managing absence from work and performance must be handled sensitively, taking into account adjustments that may be needed to support attendance and performance at work.

When a colleague is absent due to symptoms of the menopause, we will look to record these absences separately from other absences to ensure a fair and non-discriminatory approach when measuring menopause-related absence as part of the individual's overall attendance record. Colleagues will be allowed to attend medical appointments related to the treatment or reviews regarding the menopause and the leave of absence policy within the Academy will be adopted for these appointments.

Accessible Resources and Information

The information below is a number of sites, guidance documents and support that all colleagues can access. The intention of this information is to support discussions about adjustments, help to recognise symptoms and understand the impact menopause can have on colleagues and their ability to attend work and undertake their role.

[Education Support, supporting teachers and education staff](#)

NHS Menopause - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

The British Menopause Society - <https://thebms.org.uk/> Talking

Menopause - <https://www.talkingmenopause.co.uk/>

Menopause Matters - <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

My Menopause Centre - <https://www.mymenopausecentre.com/>

The Balance App - <https://www.balance-menopause.com/balance-app/>

Training Support for Menopause Champions - <https://www.menopauseexpertstraining.com/>

NASUWT

<https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/equalities/under-represented-groups/women/managing-the-menopause-in-the-workplace.html>

NEU - <https://neu.org.uk/menopause>

UNISON - <https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/women/key-issues/menopause/>

GMB - https://www.gmb.org.uk/sites/default/files/STS_FACTS.pdf

ASCL - <https://www.ascl.org.uk/Help-and-Advice/Leadership-and-governance/Health,-safety-and-safeguarding/Guidance-for-employers-on-supporting-staff-with-me>

The 13 schools in our Trust:

St. Mary's Menston, a Catholic Voluntary Academy

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School Otley, a Voluntary Academy

Ss Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School Ilkley, a Voluntary Academy

St Mary's Horsforth Catholic Voluntary Academy

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School Pudsey, a Voluntary Academy

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Harrogate, a Voluntary Academy

St Mary's Catholic Primary School Knaresborough, a Voluntary Academy

St. Stephen's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, a Voluntary Academy

Holy Name Catholic Voluntary Academy

St Roberts Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

St John Fisher Catholic High School Harrogate, a Voluntary Academy

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Tadcaster, a Voluntary Academy



The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust

The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust is a charity and a company limited by Guarantee, registered in England and Wales.

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Appendix

Menopause Champion

Role profile

This is a voluntary role, ideally a Menopause Champion will be based in each of the BWCAT academies. The most important characteristic required is that they are enthusiastic about helping others at this stage, they have experience of the menopause and feel comfortable discussing it.

Tasks may vary, but the role is expected to include:

- Raising the profile of the menopause in your academy
- Highlighting the support that the Trust is able to offer to employees
- Advocating for improvements in the workplace on behalf of employees in menopause or perimenopause
- Creating a support network with the other Menopause Champions in the BWCAT academies
- Be part of a working group / project group to help promote the menopause and celebrate the annual World Menopause Day
- Acting as a focus for suggestions from colleagues on reasonable adjustments
- Keeping up to date with menopause issues
- Assist with arranging training / workshops for colleagues and managers as required