



MENOPAUSE POLICY

**Presented to
Full Trustees
3 October 2024**

Date approved:	3 October 2024
Date of next review:	Autumn 2027

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Menopause is a normal part of every woman's life. This policy recognises that the menopause is an equality and occupational health issue and that women may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause.
- 1.2 The Four Cs MAT 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 Four Cs MAT is committed to ensuring that women feel comfortable 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.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- 2.1 Make sure that our schools can support staff affected by the menopause and help them to feel comfortable at work, both when experiencing symptoms and when asking for support and adjustments
- 2.2 Set out how our schools will make reasonable adjustments to minimise the risk of the working environment making menopausal symptoms worse for those experiencing them
- 2.3 Minimise menopause-related stigma in our schools by educating staff on what it is and the symptoms that staff affected by it might suffer
- 2.4 Provide further resources to help staff, particularly line managers and HR teams, to support others through difficulties the menopause may cause them
- 2.5 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
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 To reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace.

3. Definitions

3.1 Menopause

The **menopause** is a stage of life when a woman* stops having periods. It typically affects those aged between 45 and 55, when oestrogen (female sex hormones) levels begin to fall. In the UK, the average age to reach the menopause is 51.

3.2 Peri-Menopause

Perimenopause is the time of hormonal change leading up to this, when a woman may experience symptoms.

3.3 Post-menopause

Post-menopause is the time beyond menopause.

3.4 Early menopause
Early menopause is when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45. It can happen naturally, or as a side effect of some treatments.

3.5 For the purpose of this policy, any reference to the menopause shall include perimenopause and early menopause.

3.6 *We acknowledge that while the majority of people affected by the menopause will be women, those who are trans or non-binary may also experience the menopause or menopause-type symptoms. The support outlined in this policy is designed to meet the above aims for all affected colleagues, including male colleagues where it is a family issue.

4. **Symptoms**

4.1 Individuals suffering from the menopause may experience symptoms that cause changes to their emotions and other aspects of their health, some of which may impact them at work.

4.2 Menopausal symptoms might include:

- Problems with memory, confidence and concentration
- Hot flushes, night sweats and palpitations
- Difficulty sleeping, insomnia and fatigue
- Low mood, anxiety and depression
- Headaches and joint and muscle pain
- Weakened bladder function and urinary tract infections

This list is not exhaustive and is not in order of severity of symptoms.

4.3 For some individuals, being at work may make their symptoms worse. For example, if the temperature is too high, this may cause symptoms such as hot flushes, dizziness, discomfort, sweating and heart palpitations.

4.4 Symptoms affecting sleep can make it difficult for staff experiencing them to concentrate and stay focused, while low confidence, low mood, memory and anxiety may impact on decision-making and relationships with colleagues as well as managing workload.

4.5 We acknowledge that the menopause will affect everybody differently – some individuals may experience no symptoms at all, and some may experience a variety. We will adapt our response to staff affected by the menopause on a case-by-case basis.

5.0 **The Legislative Setting**

The Four Cs MAT undertakes to comply with its legal obligations as set out below:

5.1 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 7.3.

5.2 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.

6. **Status**

6.1 This policy sets out procedures for members of staff and managers to follow in providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. If the Four Cs MAT wishes to amend the Menopause Policy, consultation and negotiation on proposed changes will take place with staff via the recognised trade unions.

7.0 **What steps will we take as an employer?**

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

7.2 Where women members of staff feel uncomfortable going to their line manager, we will ensure that an alternative contact is available through the HR Team and will signpost this support within each of the schools in the MAT. Confidentiality will always be respected.

7.3 The risk assessments which we undertake will consider the specific needs of menopausal women, and, where required, we will consult with union representatives and women staff members and share with all managers and new managers, requesting signatures to confirm that measures are understood and will be acted upon. 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, both during and outside break and lunch times.

7.4 The Four Cs MAT 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 which 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, eg temporary part-time working
- Swift permission for absence to attend menopause-related medical appointments
- Adjusting workplace procedures and processes to support and avoid any detriment to menopausal women

This is not a definitive list of measures. The Four Cs MAT will actively listen to staff and take on board other suggestions.

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

7.6 The Trust will signpost to support any member of staff affected by the Menopause, either directly or indirectly, to appropriate support services, including DAS services.

The Trust also has a trained and certified Menopause coach who staff can access (Emma Kavanagh).

8.0 Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 It is recognised that everyone who works at The Four Cs MAT, including Governors and Trustees, has a role to play in ensuring a comfortable working environment for all staff, including women experiencing the menopause.

8.2 All staff are responsible for:

- taking personal responsibility 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 colleague
- accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments their colleagues request or are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms

8.3 Line Managers

The most important and valuable thing a manager can do is listen and, wherever possible, respond sympathetically 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)
- encourage 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
- 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

8.4 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

8.5 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

9.0 **Links to other policies**

This policy is linked to our:

- Staff Wellbeing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Sickness Absence Policy
- Performance Management Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Equality Policy

Wider Links

- The Menopause Charity
- Menopause Support UK
- British Menopause Society
- Menopause Matters

10.0 **Review**

The Trust Board (or responsible committee) will review this policy in line with the procedure for policy review.

Date for Review

If no other reason for review (see policy review procedure) this policy will be reviewed every 3 years.