




Yewstock School

# Menopause Policy

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*"Three in every five women are negatively affected at work as a result of the menopause. The repercussions of that are not merely individual. Excluding menopausal women from the workplace is detrimental to our economy, our society and our place on the world stage."*

Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee, Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP

## **Policy Statement**

Yewstock School is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone.

Yewstock School recognises that women experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments.

Yewstock School recognises that the menopausal symptoms can also affect transgender people including non-binary people.

Yewstock School is committed to developing a workplace culture that supports workers experiencing the menopause in order for them to feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustments at work.

This policy is underpinned the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Equalities Act 2010.

### **The aim of the policy is to:**

- make leaders aware of their responsibility to understand how the menopause can affect staff, and how they can support those experiencing the menopause at work
- foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner
- raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about the menopause
- enable workers experiencing the menopause to continue to be effective in their jobs
- outline support and reasonable adjustments available
- help us recruit and retain employees experiencing the menopause.

This policy is part of Yewstock School's commitment to ensuring the health and safety and wellbeing of all the workforce, and will ensure the workplace does not make the menopausal symptoms of employees worse.

This policy is part of Yewstock School's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. We are committed to creating a workplace that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination and harassment. This policy seeks to benefit the welfare of individual members of staff; retain valued employees; improve morale and performance and enhance the reputation of Yewstock School as an employer of choice.

Yewstock School recognises that many of the changes to workplace culture and adjustments

offered here may not only be of benefit to workers experiencing the menopause, but to all staff.

## **Definition of the menopause**

(See also the section headed 'Glossary')

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women's lives. For some it will be medically induced. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods. Women may have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms whilst experiencing the menopause and perimenopause and may often encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms.

Each woman will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues as well.

Disabled women and those with pre-existing health conditions, may find that the menopause can aggravate their existing impairments and health conditions or even trigger new ones. Menopausal symptoms can in turn also be made worse by the disabled woman's impairment or health condition.

Although the menopause itself is not a disability, due to the legal precedents that have been set, the effects of the menopause can lead to a disability. This will vary from person to person.

In addition, while the menstrual cycle is itself not a disability, it can sometimes create the effects of a disability, especially where it has a substantial and long term effect and for those who may use medication for regulating the effects of their menstrual cycle. In these cases, staff may be treated in the same way as those staff disabled by the effects of the menopause

Yewstock School recognises that for many reasons, peoples' individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.

Menopausal symptoms may include:

- Hot flushes – a very common symptom that can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downward, may include sweating, the skin becoming red and patchy, and a quicker or stronger heart rate
- Heavy and painful periods and clots, leaving those affected exhausted, as well as practically needing to change sanitary wear more frequently. Some affected may become anaemic
- Night sweats, restless leg syndrome and sleep disturbance
- Low mood, irritability, increased anxiety, panic attacks, fatigue, poor concentration, loss of confidence and memory problems
- Urinary problems - more frequent urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections such as cystitis. It is common to have an urgent need to pass urine or a need to pass it more often than normal
- Irritated skin – including dry and itchy skin or formication, and dry eyes. Also vaginal symptoms of dryness, itching and discomfort
- Joint and muscle aches and stiffness
- Weight gain

- Headaches and migraines
- Menopausal hair loss
- Osteoporosis - the strength and density of bones are affected by the loss of oestrogen, increasing the risk of the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis
- Side effects from hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a form of treatment for menopausal symptoms for some people (although not suitable or appropriate for all)
- Menopausal symptoms may also exacerbate existing impairments and conditions that those affected may already be struggling to cope with.

### **Support for employees experiencing the menopause**

Yewstock School is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective. All staff will be provided with appropriate information and training so that they are able to better understand the effects of the menopause and be comfortable about discussing and addressing the impact that it can have on employees in carrying out their roles.

All policies and procedures should take account of the effects of the menopausal symptoms to ensure that employees experiencing the menopause are not disadvantaged as a result of their symptoms.

Yewstock School recognises that some employees experiencing the menopause may find that related symptoms may impact on their health and wellbeing, and we aim to provide as much support as is reasonably practicable for individuals.

Yewstock School recognises that the menopause is a very personal experience and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to let their line manager or the alternative contact (see below) know if they are struggling with symptoms that may impact on their work, so that appropriate support is provided. Such information will be treated confidentially.

An alternative contact is available to employees experiencing the menopause should they not feel comfortable discussing their problems with their line manager, (particularly if they are male). This is PA to the Headteacher with HR or other members of the Senior Leadership Team. Employees may also prefer to discuss their problems with an alternative leader, Occupational Health and/or a trade union rep.

Leaders should make allowances should there be an additional need for sickness absence by employees experiencing the menopause in order to manage their menopausal symptoms. Absence will be recorded as related to menopausal symptoms and leaders will consider such absence as an ongoing condition requiring the consideration of reasonable adjustments and flexibility in absence procedure triggers. Further details can be found in the Attendance Management Policy for Staff.

Yewstock School recognises the potential impact of menopausal symptoms on performance by employees experiencing the menopause. Leaders will seek to support staff sympathetically rather than moving directly to capability or disciplinary procedures.

Yewstock School will ensure that gender sensitive risk assessments are undertaken to consider the

specific needs of employees experiencing the menopause and to ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. The risk assessment will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments that may be required.

Common areas in particular to consider are:

- workplace temperature and ventilation
- access to adequate toilet and washing facilities
- access to drinking water
- working times and break times
- workplace stress and workload
- bullying and harassment.

Employees who are experiencing the menopause can apply for the following adjustments to support them at work:

- Control over environmental factors – with provision of desk fans on request, review of office seating plans so that affected employees can be near the window or open doors, or away from direct sources of heat such as radiators, fitting blinds to windows, greater access to chilled drinking water, and to toilets and washing facilities
- Flexibility over clothing should they exacerbate symptoms such as hot flushes and sweating (whilst maintaining professional attire)
- Changing/washing facilities for staff to change clothes during the working day
- Flexibility around the taking of breaks, or increased breaks during the working day
- Flexibility around attending relevant medical appointments
- Temporary changes to the employee's duties, such as undertaking fewer high-visibility work like formal presentations or meetings because it can be difficult to cope with symptoms such as hot flushes, or assessing how work is allocated or whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day
- Provision of private spaces for women to rest temporarily, to talk with a colleague or to phone for personal or professional support.

This is not a definitive list of adjustments. Yewstock School will consider additional suggestions put forward by members of staff, union reps and the menopause support group.

Confidential support is available for individual employees from the employee assistance programme and this may include counselling if appropriate, in addition to practical information and advice.

### **Responsibilities of leaders**

Leaders should ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and understand their own and the school's responsibilities. Training on women's health issues including the menopause will be available to all Leaders.

Leaders (with the support of HR where requested) should encourage employees to discuss the impact of their menopausal symptoms on their work-life and encourage them to access the support and adjustments offered.

They should promote a positive attitude to discussions around women's health issues.

Leaders should be ready and willing to have open discussions about the menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treat the discussion sensitively, confidentially and professionally.

Leaders will consider all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and will not discriminate against those employees who are experiencing the menopause, and put in place the required support or adjustments in a timely manner. All employees must be treated fairly and consistently. Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up any support available to employees experiencing the menopause.

Yewstock School will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.

All requests for support or adjustments must be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the data protection policy.

Leaders will support employees in informing their colleagues about the situation if appropriate.

### **Responsibilities of employees**

All staff should take a personal responsibility to look after their health.

Employees are encouraged to inform their manager (or the alternative contact, should they not feel comfortable speaking to their manager) if they are struggling with menopausal symptoms and need any support, so that they can continue to be effective in their jobs.

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to seek support through their GP, the employee assistance programme and other external organisations (see sections below headed 'Self-management for staff experiencing the menopause' and 'Further Information') as well as participating in the menopause support group.

All staff have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and productive working environment, be willing to help and support their colleagues, and understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

Employees should report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause.

### **Self-management for staff experiencing the menopause**

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged not to suffer in silence.

Consider:

- Seeking medical advice from your GP
- Discussing symptoms with your manager or with the alternative contact (see above) and with your

trade union rep and requesting appropriate workplace adjustments

- Discussing symptoms with Occupational Health
- Contacting the employee assistance programme
- Employees are also encouraged to make healthier lifestyle choices to help with some of the symptoms such as:
  - Eating healthily and regularly – research has shown that a balanced diet can help in alleviating some symptoms, in keeping bones healthy and in not gaining weight
  - Drinking plenty of water
  - Exercising regularly - to reduce hot flushes, improve sleep, boost mood and maintain aerobic fitness levels
  - Not smoking – to help reduce hot flushes and the risk of developing serious conditions such as cancer, heart disease and stroke
  - Ensuring alcohol intake is within recommended levels and cutting down on caffeine and spicy food – all of which can trigger hot flushes
  - Having access to natural light
  - Staying cool at night – wearing loose clothes in a cool and well-ventilated room to help with hot flushes and night sweats
  - Ensuring adequate rest and relaxation – to reduce stress levels and improve mood (through, for example, activities such as mindfulness, yoga and tai chi).

## **Further information**

### NHS information

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause)

NICE guidelines on 'Menopause: diagnosis and treatment'

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information)

### Menopause Matters

[www.menopausemattersco.uk](http://www.menopausemattersco.uk)

### Women's Health Concern

[www.womens-health-concern.org](http://www.womens-health-concern.org)

### Daisy Network

<https://www.daisynetwork.org>

### The Menopause Exchange

www.menopause-exchange.o.uk

The British Menopause Society

<https://thebms.org.uk/>

CIPD guidance on menopause

<https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/guides/menopause-people-manager-guidance/#:~:text=Every%20manager%20should%20know%20what,than%20a%20one%2Doff%20event.>

Meno Health

<https://www.menohealth.co.uk/>

## Glossary

**Menopause** – a natural transition stage in most women’s lives lasting from four to eight years, although for some women it can be much longer. Most women experience the menopause between the ages of 45 and 55. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods. Women may also experience a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms as a result of the menopause.

**Premature menopause** – for some women, it can be experienced at a much younger age, in their 30s or even younger. This is sometimes called premature ovarian insufficiency. The NHS estimates that 1 in every 100 women will experience premature menopause.

**Medical or surgical menopause** – there are some medical circumstances that will create an immediate menopause, whatever the woman’s age, such as a medically induced menopause to shrink fibroids or when the ovaries are damaged by specific interventions such as treatment for cancer, or when a woman’s ovaries are removed as part of a hysterectomy.

**Perimenopause** – a period of time before the menopause, in the years leading up to the menopause where there can be significant changes for women, including irregular and heavy menstrual bleeding and many of the classic symptoms associated with menopause.

**Post-menopause** – a term used when a woman’s periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months. However other menopausal symptoms may not have ended so soon. Problematic symptoms may continue for years.

**Disabled person** – under the Equality Act, a disabled person has a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. In some cases, menopausal symptoms may meet the definition of ‘impairment’.

**Trans man** – identifies as male but was assigned female at birth.

**Trans woman** – identifies as female but was assigned male at birth.

**Non-binary** – people who do not think of themselves as simply male or female. They may define themselves as both, neither or something entirely different. Their gender identity is more complicated.



This policy should be read in conjunction with the Single Equality Policy. The general equality duty requires that, in the exercise of their functions, schools must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010. This should endeavour to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations for all.

***Mental Health and Wellbeing Statement:***

***Yewstock school aims provide a working environment that promotes and supports the mental health and wellbeing of everyone in our school community.***

***All school policies are reviewed to ensure that each policy reflects our commitment to the protection and promotion of the mental health and wellbeing of all and that we will strive to improve the mental health environment and culture of Yewstock School.***

***Promoting and protecting the mental wellbeing of children, families and staff is important for physical health, social wellbeing and productivity. Mental health at Yewstock is relevant to all and everyone can contribute to improved wellbeing.***