



WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
ASHURST CE AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Menopause Policy

1. Policy Aim

This policy aims to raise awareness of, and provide information on, the menopause. The Policy aims to support the creation of an environment where menopause is well understood, where employees feel comfortable discussing their needs and receive the support that is available.

Providing support to employees experiencing menopause is important as it helps reduce health and wellbeing impacts, encourages open and supportive conversations and helps to retain skills, knowledge and experience within the workforce.

As an employer we are committed to creating an open and supportive culture. We want employees to feel comfortable speaking about how menopause-related symptoms may be affecting them at work and to be able to ask for the support that is needed to help manage symptoms.

This policy also emphasises how line managers and head teachers can support employees who are experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all WSCC and school employees on permanent, temporary and fixed term contracts. West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Employees can also refer to the West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Menopause Guidance.

3. Other Relevant Policies and Resources

This policy should be read alongside related HR policies and guidance, including the Sickness Absence Policy, Flexible Working Policy, Reasonable Adjustments Guidance and the Dignity and Respect at Work Policy.

The policies and guidance can be accessed via the HR Zone on the Point for corporate staff or on West Sussex Services for Education for school staff.

Access to supportive resources and information on a range of matters is also available via the WSCC Wellbeing Hub or via the Wellbeing and Stress Management Page on West Sussex Services for Education.

4. What is the Menopause?

The menopause is a natural stage of life which affects most women and others who have a menstrual cycle. This can include transgender employees and those who have variations in sex characteristics or are non-binary.

We recognise that experiences of menopause vary and may be influenced by factors such as age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity or other health conditions.

Managers should take an individual and sensitive approach when offering support. Menopause is when periods stop due to changes in hormones when oestrogen and progesterone decline in the body and the menstrual cycle is disrupted, causing symptoms associated with the menopause. The menopause will affect people usually between the ages of 40 and 60. It most commonly affects those between the ages of 45 and 55 and the average age at which menopause is reached is 51. The symptoms typically last for around 4 years but can last for up to 12 years.

Each person will experience the menopause differently and symptoms can vary. It is therefore important that individual experiences are explored and understood by managers/headteachers so that support can be put in place, where possible.

There are three stages of menopause. Perimenopause is the period of time when symptoms start. This can be up to ten years before the last period. Menopause is when an individual has not had a period for 12 consecutive months and post-menopause is the time after the 12 months that periods have stopped for. Some people may experience an early menopause for specific reasons. Menopause under the age of 45 is classed as an early menopause and before the age of 40 it is classed as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency. There are many reasons for early menopause including surgery, medical treatments e.g. chemotherapy, which can damage ovaries and stop them working, eating disorders, prolonged stress or infections.

5. Menopause Symptoms

The menopause can cause a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms that can last for several years. Symptoms can fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees. People experiencing any of the symptoms may experience challenges as they go about their daily lives, including work.

Some of the most typical symptoms of the menopause include:

- Psychological issues such as mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression, memory loss, panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration.

- Hot flushes (brief and sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck and chest).
- Sleep disturbance that can make people feel tired and irritable.
- Night sweats (hot flushes that happen during the night).
- Irregular periods and/or periods can become light or heavy.
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains.
- Recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs) including cystitis.
- Headaches.
- Weight gain.
- Palpitations (heartbeats that become more noticeable).
- Skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness).
- Clumsiness, falls, and lack of coordination.
- Reduced sex drive. By offering timely and appropriate support, managers can help ease the challenges of menopausal symptoms on an employee's health, wellbeing, attendance and performance.

6. Workplace Support from Managers

To ensure appropriate support is implemented in an effective and timely way, employees are encouraged to be as open and honest about symptoms, as much as they feel able to, with their line manager/head teacher.

This will help managers to work with employees to identify the support that is required. If the individual does not feel comfortable speaking with their manager, they may consider seeking the support of another person who can liaise with their manager on their behalf. There is no obligation to disclose menopause if someone does not wish to. If an employee does not feel comfortable speaking with their line manager, they may contact another appropriate manager for support and guidance.

Considering Support in the Workplace:

We recognise that individuals affected by menopausal symptoms may benefit from support or changes in the workplace.

It is important for managers and employees to consider the impact that the nature of the role could have on symptoms and, to consider implementing support or changes where these may be practicable and reasonable within the work setting.

We recognise that such support can help mitigate symptoms and make the working environment more comfortable and that small changes can often have a big impact.

Examples of Types of Support and Support Plans:

The specific needs of individuals may vary individually and over time and the practicality of changes will vary according to the symptoms, work setting, and nature of the job.

Some examples of changes that could help may include:

- Flexible working arrangements e.g. starting/finishing later or allowing working from home where possible/feasible.
- Changing work patterns on a temporary basis.
- Taking more frequent breaks.
- Looking at ways to cool the working environment/improving ventilation.
- Providing easy access to cold drinking water, washrooms/toilets and private spaces when needed.
- Providing time out from others or quiet time where needed.
- Allowing flexibility in uniform or dress code to improve comfort
- implementing stress risk assessments and MIND wellness action plans.

These are available on the Wellbeing Hub for Corporate Staff and on the Wellbeing and Stress Management page of West Sussex Services for Education for school staff. The Menopause Individual Support Plan template at Appendix 1 may provide a useful framework for exploring needs and recording any support agreed.

The priority for any conversation should be to identify support that would help and that can be implemented where possible.

Manager Support:

Line managers/head teachers play a pivotal role in creating an environment where employees feel able to discuss the menopause and ask for support. They should ensure a supportive, respectful, and confidential setting that allows employees to speak openly and honestly about what may be a difficult subject.

Discussions should be sensitive and supportive, with active listening and avoiding assumptions about the support required. Managers can contact the Employee Assistance Programme for advice on having a sensitive conversation about any subject. Discussions should be documented and support should be implemented where possible and regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to have the desired impact.

Where support provided is not having the intended outcome, or symptoms are particularly difficult, managers may find it helpful to seek advice from Occupational Health after discussing this with the employee.

Managers are encouraged to access training and guidance on supporting colleagues experiencing the menopause. Training is available for corporate employees through the WSCC Learning and Development Gateway. Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Support:

Confidential support for employees and managers can be accessed via:

- The EAP website contains information, self-help guides and webinars on a range of issues. Username: Wellbeing Password: Support

- Telephone support available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year via the freephone number 0800 028 0199.

- The EAP app is available on mobile, tablet and desktop. From a desktop click on Wisdom portal, and enter your email address. From a mobile phone download the Wisdom app from App Store or Google Play. Employer / Organisation code MHA000088.

Occupational Health Advice:

A referral to the occupational health service may be helpful in some complex situations. To make a referral head teachers will need to access and register to use the portal in the usual way. Consent for the referral should be obtained from the employee first.

7. Risk Assessments

Managers have a duty to ensure the health and safety of all employees and to identify any issues/risks which may impact on them and this includes the menopause.

Managers have a responsibility to put measures in place to minimise any risks identified through a risk assessment. Risk assessments can be helpful for employees experiencing symptoms of menopause and should consider the specific needs of the employee and ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse.

Often, making simple changes to the working environment can help to alleviate the impact of some symptoms.

Template risk assessments are available as follows:

- Corporate Staff: On the Health & Safety Risk Assessment Pages on the Point.
- School Staff: On the Health & Safety Risk Assessment pages of West Sussex Services for Education.

8. Further Information and Support Available

Further specialist advice and support is available from the following organisations:

- NHS Advice on Menopause (www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause)
- Balance Menopause (www.balance-menopause.com)

- Daisy Network (www.daisynetwork.org) • Menopause matters (www.menopausematters.co.uk)
- The Menopause Café (www.menopausecafe.net)
- The Menopause Exchange (www.menopause-exchange.co.uk)

Headteachers can contact the HR Business Partner Team for further advice and support in relation to individual employees.

Employees can seek advice from their recognised Trade Union representative, where applicable.

9. Confidentiality and Data Protection

We recognise that very personal information may be shared during discussions with your line manager/head teacher and this information will be treated sensitively and respectfully and only shared within the management chain where necessary and shared no further, unless otherwise agreed.

We will process any personal data collected in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. We will record only the personal information required and keep the information only for as long as necessary.

10. Document History

Reviewed	Ratified by		Expires
March 26	FGB		April 27
	Health and Safety subcommittee		