

Model Menopause Guidance for West Sussex Schools

1. Aim

This guidance has been written to raise awareness of the menopause, covering what it is and what the symptoms might be. It also covers how best managers/headteachers can support staff that are experiencing symptoms.

It is important we have an environment where menopause is well understood, and we have a culture where staff feel comfortable discussing their needs and that they receive the support they require.

Supporting staff through this change in their life, is important as it:

- helps to mitigate the impact on health and wellbeing;
- ensures that staff feel valued, empowered, and enabled to reach their potential; and
- helps to retain skills, knowledge and experience.

2. What is the menopause?

The menopause is a stage in a person's life, usually a woman's, where their oestrogen drops, they stop producing eggs and having periods. The menopause usually takes place between the ages of 45-55, but can take place at outside of this. Some people may experience the menopause at a younger age which is called 'premature menopause'. Those experiencing premature menopause may find difficulty with issues such as fertility and may require appropriate support.

Menopause can be a gradual process, usually starting off as 'perimenopause' where a person's periods become irregular, leading into the 'menopause' and ending with 'post menopause'.

Each person will have a different experience and symptoms when going through the menopause, so it is important that where required tailored support is implemented, based on the needs of the individual.

Trans, intersex and non-binary people may also experience the menopause and should be supported in line with this guidance.

3. Menopausal symptoms

Menopausal symptoms vary between people, however some of the more common symptoms are listed below:

- hot flushes and night sweats;
- feeling the heart racing and palpitations;
- difficulty sleeping;
- changes in mood, such as feeling tired, irritable, depressed or anxious;
- difficulty concentrating;

- poor memory; and
- urinary problems, such as recurrent urinary tract infections and loss of bladder control.

With timely and appropriate support, any potential adverse impact of menopausal symptoms on a member of staff's health, wellbeing, attendance and performance, can be reduced.

4. Obtaining support

To ensure appropriate support and adjustments are implemented in an effective and timely way, staff are encouraged to be as open and honest about symptoms, as much as they feel able to, with their head teacher/line manager. This will help managers/headteachers to work with staff to identify the support that is required. If the individual does not feel comfortable speaking with their line manager/head teacher, another person can be nominated to liaise with them, with their agreement.

The [NHS](#) lists several things that people can do to try to help themselves, such as eating well, exercising and ensuring that they have appropriate rest.

However, in addition to self-help there may be support and adjustment that can be implemented at work to help mitigate the symptoms and make the working environment more comfortable. Small adjustments can often have a big impact and some examples may include:

- starting later, if experiencing difficulties sleeping;
- taking regular breaks; and/or
- working in a location that is well ventilated, with easy access to cold water and toilet facilities.

See Section 8 for links to further advice and support.

5. The role of a manager/headteacher

Headteachers/managers play a pivotal role in creating a culture where staff feel that they can discuss or raise the menopause and ask for support. A suitable place and sufficient time should be provided to allow the member of staff to speak openly and honestly about what may be a difficult subject for them. Discussions should be sensitive, supportive and remain confidential. It is important that staff are listened to and assumptions are not made on the adjustments/support discussed.

Any identified support should be documented, implemented and regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to have the desired impact.

Where adjustments and/or support is not having the intended outcomes, or symptoms are particularly difficult, managers should consider seeking advice from the Occupational Health after discussing this with the employee.

6. Risk assessments

Risk assessments should consider the specific needs of menopausal women 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.

A risk assessment should look at issues such as:

- temperature and ventilation
- the materials used in any uniform or corporate clothing
- access to toilet facilities and access to cold water.

7. Support available

Below is a list of support options for staff and for line manager/head teachers:

- [West Sussex Services for Schools](#) (access limited to Headteachers, Business Managers and School Bursars)
- The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provided by Health Assured:
 - Telephone support is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year via the free phone number **0800 028 0199**. Callers will need to confirm their organisation as West Sussex County Council and the name of the School that they work at.
 - The [EAP website](#) unlocks a wealth of information, self-help guides and webinars on a range of issues. Username: **Wellbeing**
Password: **Support**
 - The My Healthy Advantage app can be downloaded from the App Store or Google Play, enter the following employer code when prompted: **MHA000088**.
- HR Professional Support (where this service has been purchased):
 - Email: hr.professional.support@westsussex.gov.uk
 - Telephone: 0330 22 22422
- Occupational Health (OH) service provided by Health Partners:
 - To make an OH referral Headteachers/managers will need to access and register to use the OH service provider's online system. Details of how to do this are available on West Sussex Services for Schools.
 - If Headteachers / managers are unsure about the need for a OH referral or they need information about a specific OH referral that's already been raised, they can contact the OH service provider as follows:
 - Email: Team1@healthpartners.uk.com
 - Telephone: 01273 023 170
 - If Headteachers / managers need advice about the recommendations made in an Advice Letter they should contact HR Professional Support.
- The **Sickness Absence Policy** and associated guidance documents can be found on WSSfS here: [Managing Sickness and Absence](#) (login to WSSfS required)

8. Further advice and support

- [Balance Menopause](#)
- [Daisy Network](#)
- [Menopause matters](#)
- [Menopause support](#)
- [My Menopause Centre](#)
- [The Menopause Café](#)
- [The Menopause Exchange](#)

9. Document history

Document originally written by NP WSCC SHRS July 2022

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