



South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust

Menopause Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. SMART Trust (the Trust) is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone. Menopause is a normal part of every woman's life. Although the majority of people who experience the menopause will identify as women, we recognise that people of all gender identities can experience the menopause. This policy recognises that the menopause is an equality and health and safety issue and that individuals who are experiencing symptoms may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during, and after the menopause.
- 1.2. The Trust has a positive attitude towards the menopause and will treat everyone with dignity and respect during this time and ensure that the workplace does not make symptoms worse. This policy sets out the guidelines for staff on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. All stakeholders agree to work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support anyone experiencing the menopause.
- 1.3. The Trust is committed to ensuring that all staff feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms openly, without embarrassment and are able to ask for support and adjustments in order to continue to work safely.

2. The Legislative Setting

The Trust undertakes to comply with its legal obligations as set out below:

- 2.1. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- 2.2. 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 the health of staff affected by the menopause, see section 5.3.
- 2.3. The menopause is an equalities issue as according to the Equality Act (2010) employers have a duty not to discriminate on the grounds of certain protected characteristics including sex, age and disability, and staff should be treated with respect in terms of their age and gender. Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an impairment under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.
- 2.4. The Public Sector Equality Duty was created by the Equality Act. The duty places a legal obligation on the Trust to consider how it can positively contribute to a fairer society through paying due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.

This includes:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- 2.5. It is also possible that the menopause may worsen the impact of a disability or long-term health condition.

3. Status

- 3.1. This policy sets out procedures for everyone to follow in providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. If the Trust wishes to amend the Menopause Policy, consultation and negotiation on proposed changes will take place with staff via the recognised trade unions.

4. Aims

- 4.1. To create an environment where those experiencing the menopause feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work.
- 4.2. 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.
- 4.3. To reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace.

5. Definitions

- 5.1 The menopause is a life transition that all people who have or have had periods go through. It refers to the point in time when oestrogen levels decline and menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months.
- 5.2 The average age to undergo the menopause in the UK is 51, and it most typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55. It can be earlier or later due to surgery, illness or other reasons. Early menopause occurs if someone reaches menopause before the age of 45. In individuals under the age of 40 this is sometimes referred to as Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI).
- 5.3 The perimenopause is the phase of hormonal change leading up to the menopause, and it can last for a few months or several years. Post-menopause refers to the stage after the menopause when someone has not had a period for at least 12 consecutive months.

Symptoms of the Menopause

5.4 Common physical symptoms can include:

- Hot flushes
- Sleep disturbance
- Palpitations – heartbeats that become more noticeable
- Headaches or migraines that are worse than usual
- Muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Changes to body shape and weight gain
- Skin changes, including dry and itchy skin

5.5 Mental symptoms can include:

- Changes to your mood, like low mood, anxiety, mood swings and low self-esteem
- Problems with memory or concentration (brain fog)

6. What steps will we take as an employer?

6.1. The Trust will educate and inform managers and staff to be aware of how the menopause can affect colleagues, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support those who are experiencing them.

6.2. Where members of staff feel uncomfortable going to their line manager, we will ensure that an alternative contact is available. Confidentiality will always be respected.

6.3. A personal risk assessment will be undertaken as required to consider the specific needs of the individual. This will be completed by the line manager with the member of staff, and their trade union representative if applicable. 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.

6.4. The Trust 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;

- considering room temperatures and applying control measures where possible (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 staff 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, e.g. temporary part-time working;
- support to attend menopause-related medical appointments;
- adjusting workplace procedures and processes to support and avoid any detriment to menopausal staff.

This is not a definitive list of measures. The Trust will actively listen to staff and trade union representatives and take on board other suggestions. Significant amendments would be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

- 6.5. 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 staff, will benefit all.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

- 7.1 It is recognised that everyone who works at the Trust has a role to play in ensuring a comfortable working environment for everyone, including those who are experiencing the menopause.
- 7.2 All staff are responsible for:
- taking personal responsibility to look after their health;
 - being open and honest in conversations with their manager, HR and Occupational Health;
 - contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment;
 - being willing to help and support their colleagues;
 - accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments their colleagues request or are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

7.3 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 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;
- review the individual's workload and make reasonable adjustments where requested
- 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.

7.4 Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving particularly severe, the line manager may:

- consider 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.

7.5 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.

8. Related Policies

These policies can be found on the SMART website at: <https://www.smart-trust.net>

- HSW Policy Statement
- Attendance Policy – Staff
- Flexible working policy
- Dignity at work policy

9. Further Advice and Support

There is a free, confidential, 24-hour telephone counselling service that is available to SMART employees and their families: DAS Counselling Service 0117 934 2121.

Further information and guidance is available from the following websites:

NHS information:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause

www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause

NICE guidelines on 'Menopause: identification and management:'

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/informationforpublic

Menopause Matters:

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

Menopause Support:

www.menopausesupport.co.uk

Daisy Network (support for premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency):

www.daisynetwork.org