

Greenshaw Learning Trust

Menopause at Work Policy and Guidance

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Greenshaw Learning Trust - Menopause at Work Policy & Guidance

Application

This Greenshaw Learning Trust Menopause at Work Policy & Guidance applies to Greenshaw Learning Trust as a whole and to all the schools and service units in the Trust. The Greenshaw Learning Trust, including all the schools and services within the Trust, their Trustees, governors and staff, must abide by this GLT Menopause at Work Policy & Guidance.

The Greenshaw Learning Trust is the single employer of all staff in the Trust's schools and in its Shared Service. Therefore the Trust must have Human Resource Policies and Procedures that apply equally across all of its schools and services and ensure that all staff are treated in a lawful, fair and consistent manner.

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body and Headteacher of each school, and the Board of Trustees and CEO for Trust Shared Services, to ensure that their school/service and its staff adhere to this Policy. In implementing the policy, the Governing Body, Headteacher and Trust staff must take account of any advice given to them by the GLT Director of People / Head of HR, the GLT CEO and/or Board of Trustees.

This Policy is subject to the Scheme of Delegation approved for Greenshaw Learning Trust. If there is any ambiguity or conflict then the Scheme of Delegation and any specific Scheme or alteration or restriction to the Scheme approved by the Board of Trustees, takes precedence.

If there is any question or doubt about the interpretation or implementation of this Policy, the GLT Director of People should be consulted.

Approval and review

- This Policy is the responsibility of the GLT Director of People.
- This Policy was agreed by the Board of Trustees: December 2024
- This Policy is due for review by the Board of Trustees: December 2027
- This Policy will be kept under review by the GLT Director of People. Where amendment is necessary due to technical or legislative changes that do not materially affect the nature of the Policy, the policy will be updated and approved by the GLT Director of People.
- This Policy has been subject to consultation with recognised trade unions and substantive changes will be subject to review.

Menopause at Work Policy

1. Introduction

Greenshaw Learning Trust is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. GLT is committed to improving the well-being of our employees, and supporting colleagues with managing the effects of the menopause, as effectively as possible, whilst at work.

Menopause is a natural stage of life which affects around half of the population, and includes women, trans people and intersex people. Menopause usually happens between 45 and 55 years of age, but it can also happen earlier or later in someone's life as a result of surgical or medical reasons, such as chemotherapy or (temporarily) during IVF (In vitro fertilisation) treatment. For many people, the symptoms can last up to ten years, but in some cases symptoms can last a lot longer. There are three different stages to the menopause:

- Perimenopause
- Menopause
- Postmenopause

All stages and types of the menopause are different and symptoms can vary from person to person and range from very mild to severe. Many people are surprised by the fact that they may not always be accompanied by physical symptoms such as hot flushes. Managers and individuals should familiarise themselves with the breadth of the symptoms in [this accompanying NHS guidance](#).

As a single employer, GLT will provide appropriate support to colleagues who are experiencing symptoms associated with the menopause, whilst supporting line managers within our Trust by providing guidance. For those experiencing the menopause it can be a difficult and stressful time, with varying symptoms both physically and mentally, therefore, it is important line managers understand the experiences of colleagues currently going through this change and that this issue is managed by raising awareness, and providing training and development for all line management and colleagues.

2. Aims:

The aims of this policy are to:

- Provide guidance so that line managers and colleagues have an awareness of the symptoms and effects of menopause and how they can impact on a colleague's health and wellbeing and attendance at work,
- Provide direction and clarity on what to consider in order to support colleagues who raise menopause related concerns, either for individuals experiencing symptoms of the menopause or those who are affected indirectly, for example, line managers, partners and work colleagues.
- Create an environment where colleagues feel confident to raise and discuss their symptoms privately and confidentially with their line manager or another colleague, make sure these conversations are handled sensitively and supportively and, if necessary, put reasonable adjustments at work in place.
- Encourage an agreed number of colleagues to act as Menopause Advocates, and support any training requirements to ensure the role is able to provide support and guidance to line managers and colleagues.

- Ensure line managers consider menopause related absence and a colleague's well-being in order to reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms, and consider a range of reasonable adjustments in order to retain and support staff in the workplace.
- Create awareness that the menopause and its symptoms can affect any colleague at any time, and highlight that supporting and creating a positive open environment can help prevent a colleague losing confidence in their skills and abilities, feeling like they need to take time off work, having increased mental health conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression or leaving their job.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Employees

All employees are responsible for:

- Proactively taking personal responsibility to look after their health and wellbeing, accessing guidance and support where available;
- Being open and honest in conversations with line managers, HR and Occupational Health when needed;
- Accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments for themselves or their colleagues
- If a member of staff feels unable to speak to their line manager, they can speak to another manager within the department/school or School HR Lead, Trust HR or their Trade Union;

3.2 Line Managers

All line managers must:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause at Work Policy and Guidance (this document);
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause symptoms, providing a safe and confidential place to allow the colleague to speak openly, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Be aware of the potential impact of the menopause on performance and confidence of the colleague, considering appropriate risk assessments in terms of health and safety and/or managing stress in relation to their job role where needed;
- Confidentially record support and adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented;
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to;
- Ensure ongoing conversations take place and set review dates;
- Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more **severe**, consider, discuss and action a referral to Occupational Health for further advice, if agreed;
- Review Occupational Health advice, and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical;
- Discuss and consider support from the Employee Assistance Programme;
- Give due consideration to requests for leave to attend menopause-related medical appointments.
- Recognise that the menopause and perimenopause is an individual experience and therefore there is no "one size fits all" solution.
- Seek support and guidance from HR where required.

3.3 GLT Head of Human Resources (HR)

- The Head of HR has overall responsibility for providing advice regarding this policy.
- The Head of HR is responsible for supporting the headteacher to ensure that this policy and its guiding principles are understood by managers, staff and that it is implemented in a

supportive way for colleagues requiring support. In practical terms this responsibility will often be delegated to the Regional HR Partners who will advise on the support and guidance provided through this policy and through referral to Occupational Health where considered appropriate.

- The Head of HR will maintain an agreed number of Menopause Advocates, providing appropriate training and support for those new to their role or by putting refresher training and / or collaborative forums in place.

3 Headteacher's responsibilities (for TSS staff read CEO)

- To ensure this policy is implemented and that line managers are aware of their responsibilities, and are suitably trained to support employees.
- To ensure that all employees have access to this policy and that new employees are made aware of it.
- Actively demonstrate recognition of the effects and symptoms of the menopause by creating an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing any issues and asking for help.
- To ensure alternative contacts are available to those experiencing menopause symptoms if they are not comfortable discussing issues with their line manager.

Occupational Health

The role of Occupational Health is to:

- Carry out a holistic assessment with the staff member to ascertain whether or not the working environment may be exacerbating menopause symptoms;
- Discuss with the staff member what adjustments would help;
- Signpost to other appropriate sources of help and advice.

4. Menopause and the Law

The menopause relates to the law through the:

- Equality Act 2010, which protects workers against discrimination;
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, an employer must, where reasonably practical, ensure everyone's health, safety and welfare at work.

Whilst the menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, if a colleague is put at a disadvantage and treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms it is important to note that this has the potential to be discriminatory if related to a protected characteristic such as age; disability; gender reassignment or sex. The symptoms of menopause can reach the definition of a disability under the Equality Act 2010, specifically where an individual has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term effect upon their ability to undertake day to day activities.

Menopause at Work Guidance

Understanding the Menopause and Providing Support

It is important to understand what the menopause is and how it can affect colleagues, alongside understanding what support is available for colleagues and how that support will be implemented and reviewed.

Menopause symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically and, therefore, encouraging regular conversations to understand the impact of such symptoms and the support or adjustments that may be appropriate, is necessary to help resolve issues early.

One of the key requirements is to create an environment that is supportive and responsive to different needs, therefore where relevant, line managers and colleagues should ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to support individuals, providing support, advice, guidance and signposting for other services and resources, to colleagues where needed in support of their health and wellbeing.

It will be necessary at times to develop tailored interventions for colleagues, taking into consideration all of the different and at times unique symptoms and working environments and expert medical advice where appropriate.

Below are some examples of particularly challenging experiences for colleagues with menopause symptoms, and some suggested adjustments that could be made to support them. These examples are provided purely for illustrative purposes. Individuals must be treated on a case by case basis according to the type, severity and impact of symptoms raised by the affected individual.

Challenge: Stress related to workload, deadlines, responsibility and formal meetings, especially meetings involving senior colleagues; increased stress, anxiety or panic attacks when having to learn something new and/or give presentations

Possible adjustments:

- Ensure there are regular one to one discussions, consider additional performance management discussions to review progress and discuss any additional training or support that may be required to assist building confidence;
- Allow time with their manager to discuss any issues of concern;
- In some circumstances where it does not compromise work quality to an unacceptable level, it may be possible to provide agreed protected time to catch up with work following discussions.
- Promote counselling / talking therapy services provided by Occupational Health or the Employee Assistance Programme;
- Consider whether the individual is able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
- Promote mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk.

Challenge: Lack of access to appropriate toilet facilities, showers, cold drinking water or quiet rest areas and not being able to take regular rest breaks can make coping with heavy or irregular periods, hot flushes and transition-related fatigue difficult.

Possible adjustments:

- Have access to toilet facilities, establishing a system that allows cover for those that are teaching who may require facilities whilst they are in the classroom;
- Ensure sanitary products are available;
- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water;
- Offer a quiet space to work;
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

Challenge: Inadequate ventilation, high temperatures, humidity and dryness and confined workspace or crowding can have a negative impact on the experience of hot flushes.

Possible adjustments:

- Consider temperature control for work areas, such as providing a fan on the desk, or moving it near to a window, ensuring windows can be opened safely, or moving away from a heat source and/or turning radiators down;
- Ensure easy access to drinking water;
- Be prepared to adapt prescribed uniform, such as removing a jacket when in the classroom/office;
- Provide access to a rest room for breaks if work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area to manage a severe flush.

Challenge: Physical demands of the job role, headaches and difficulty sleeping can make heavy periods harder to manage, and exacerbate poor concentration and fatigue in being able to function at work.

Possible adjustments:

- Consider if flexible working would be appropriate, particularly when suffering from a lack of sleep;
- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly where possible;
- Review task allocation and workload;
- Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment;
- Offer quiet space to work;
- Have agreements in place in an open office that an individual is having 'protected time', so that they are not disturbed;
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.

Challenge: Muscular aches and bone and joint pain can make moving and handling or adopting static postures more uncomfortable.

Possible adjustments:

- Temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules;
- Support through Occupational Health;
- Adaptations to equipment, such as chair, desk, equipment used for a specific task.

Managing Sickness Absence and Performance Management

Headteachers, senior leaders and those with responsibility for operating the Trust's policies and procedures are required to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to HR policies and procedures where appropriate. However, where performance or attendance is cause for concern or is impacting operational effectiveness, appropriate action will need to be considered in line with the relevant Procedure.

As the menopause can be long term and affects everyone differently, managing absence from work and performance must be handled sensitively, taking into account adjustments that may be appropriate to support attendance and performance at work.

Line managers should seek advice from their School HR Lead or Regional HR Partner where appropriate.

Accessible Resources and Information

The information below is a number of sites, guidance documents and support that all colleagues can access. The intention of this information is to support discussions about adjustments, help to recognise symptoms and understand the impact menopause can have on colleagues and their ability to attend work and undertake their role.

NHS Menopause - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

The British Menopause Society - <https://thebms.org.uk/>

Talking Menopause - <https://www.talkingmenopause.co.uk/>

Menopause Matters - <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

My Menopause Centre - <https://www.mymenopausecentre.com/>

The Balance App - <https://www.balance-menopause.com/balance-app/>

Training Support for Menopause Champions - <https://www.menopauseexpertstraining.com/>

NASUWT

<https://www.nasuw.org.uk/advice/equalities/under-represented-groups/women/managing-the-menopause-in-the-workplace.html>

NEU

<https://neu.org.uk/menopause>

UNISON

<https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/women/key-issues/menopause/>

GMB

https://www.gmb.org.uk/sites/default/files/STS_FACTS.pdf

ASCL

<https://www.ascl.org.uk/Help-and-Advice/Leadership-and-governance/Health,-safety-and-safeguarding/Guidance-for-employers-on-supporting-staff-with-menopause>