

JOHN TAYLOR MULTI ACADEMY TRUST



Menopause Policy

Policy owner: Barbara Mahoney, JTMAT COO

Implementation date: November 2021
Reviewed: July 2022, September 2023
Next review date: July 2024

1. Overview

- 1.1 We are committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all our staff. Whilst this policy is written for female staff, the trust has capacity to support male colleagues who are affected by the issues of menopause in their professional and personal lives.
- 1.2 We recognise that many members of staff will experience menopause and that for some it will have an adverse impact on their working lives.
- 1.3 We aim to create an environment in which all our employees feel informed about the menopause and are comfortable and confident talking about its impact. If you are going through the menopause, you'll have help in coping with its effects so that you can continue to do your job successfully.

This policy should be read alongside our policies on Flexible Working, Equal Opportunities, Managing Attendance and Data Protection. We aim to fulfil our responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, requiring us to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all our valued staff. In addition, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, we have a duty to treat colleagues with respect in terms of gender and age, and not to discriminate. We also recognise our duty to make reasonable adjustments where necessary and appropriate under this act.

- 1.4 This policy does not form part of your employment contract, and we may update it at any time.
- 1.5 This policy should be ready alongside the JTMAT Menopause Guide for Managers.

2. What is the menopause?

- 2.1 The menopause is a natural biological process when menstrual periods stop that signals the end of a woman's ability to conceive a child. It usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55, but it can be earlier (sometimes much earlier) or later. Perimenopause is the time of hormonal change leading up to this, when a woman may experience symptoms. Post-menopause is the time beyond menopause
- 2.2 The menopause produces a range of physical, cognitive and emotional symptoms that can affect many aspects of life. Every experience is different and not all will be affected in the same way or to the same extent.
- 2.3 Common symptoms include:
 - Hot flushes
 - Headaches and/or migraines
 - Poor concentration and brain fog
 - Dry eyes
 - Anxiety
 - Low mood
 - Lack of confidence

- Panic attacks
- Poor sleep
- Weight gain
- Fatigue
- Poor memory and inability to find the right words
- Joint and muscle pain
- Genito-urinary symptoms and frequent bladder infections

On average peri-menopause symptoms are experienced for between 2 years and a decade, but symptoms can be experienced for between 2 and 15 years in total.

3. Understanding the menopause

3.1 Despite its potentially serious impact on a woman's everyday life, the menopause is still not spoken about as freely as some other physical or mental health issues. We aim to do things differently so that the menopause becomes a normal part of the health and wellbeing conversation, without embarrassment or stigma.

3.2 Through training and raising awareness of the symptoms and related issues, we promote an organisation-wide understanding of what the menopause means for those going through it. This is essential to building a culture of openness, trust, sensitivity and respect around what is for many, a challenging time in their lives.

3.3 We need you to be aware that the menopause may affect those you work with in the ways set out above. Sometimes you will need to make certain things easier for them. That might include simply accepting that some adjustments need to be made to a person's role, their working environment or their working day.

We may not be able to tell you about any menopause-related issues that a particular colleague is experiencing. We need you to accept that and respect their privacy.

If you treat a colleague badly (including making unwanted comments or jokes) because of her menopause or its symptoms, you could be disciplined.

3.4 For managers, recognising the symptoms of the menopause is vital to treating an affected employee fairly. It can explain certain behaviours that you might otherwise put down to personal behaviour or poor performance.

If you think that someone who reports to you may be going through the menopause and it is affecting their performance, and you're not sure what to do, please contact HR. Women who don't get the right support can lose confidence in their ability to do their job (some even decide to leave) and may find that their mental health suffers.

4 Helping you through the menopause

4.1 If you are going through the menopause and are finding things difficult at work, please don't suffer in silence.

- 4.2 We know that the menopause is a very personal matter, so we will not raise it with you even if we think you are displaying symptoms. We might ask how you are, in general terms. You can then decide whether to talk to us about the menopause or not. We would encourage you to do so because we will want to support you.
- 4.3 The Trust encourages everyone to talk more openly about menopause, and to support line managers and colleagues to work together to seek solutions to challenges and difficulties women might experience or face. We also aim to ensure that conditions in the workplace do not aggravate menopausal symptoms, and that appropriate adjustments and support are easily accessible. We aim to achieve a fair and consistent approach, whilst also recognising that each individual experience of the menopause is that individual.
- 4.4 The Trust will raise awareness of the impact of the menopause and ensure that line managers recognise the symptoms and how to support those experiencing menopause. When seeking solutions, risk assessments and accessing support from Occupational Health and the Trust's HR Team can assist in enabling the colleague's specific needs and issues to be fully considered and potential options explored. Where actions and adjustments are agreed, line managers should make a note of them.
- 4.5 Your conversation with your manager will be confidential. They will probably need to discuss issues and possible solutions with others including HR, other managers if appropriate, your GP and occupational health. Those people will be subject to duties of confidentiality.
- 4.6 We will work hard to balance your needs with those of your colleagues, however on occasions we may not be able to find a solution that works for everyone.
- 4.7 We will not talk to your colleagues, other than those included in 4.5 above, about the menopause-related difficulties you are having unless you ask us to.
- 4.8 We will keep notes of the things we discuss and will comply with our data protection responsibilities in respect of the information that passes between us. That's in line with our Data Protection Policy.
- 4.9 You may find that your symptoms change over time. You should tell us if that happens so that we can look at making further or alternative adjustments. Once your symptoms pass we would expect you to tell us, and we may discuss with you removing the adjustments that had been put in place.

5. Some resources

- 5.1 The NHS website has some good, basic information about the menopause:
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- 5.2 The British Menopause Society:
<https://thebms.org.uk>

- 5.3 Women's Health Concern:
<https://www.womens-health-concern.org>
- 5.4 Menopause Matters:
<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk>
- 5.5 The Daisy Network:
<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>

6. Responsibilities

Trust Board

- Approving policy
- Ensuring legal obligations are met
- Reviewing data and metrics to ensure female talent is retained in the organisation

Trust Senior Leaders and Headteachers

- Ensuring implementation and monitoring of this policy
- Role modelling behaviours consistent with fostering an inclusive and supportive working environment
- Addressing any behaviour which may be considered to be inappropriate or discriminatory
- Ensuring reasonable adjustments are implemented where required
- Support female senior leaders experiencing menopause

Line Managers

- Developing an awareness and understanding of menopause, its symptoms and impact at work, including reading the guidance for managers
- Creating and maintaining team environments where colleagues feel comfortable to speak openly about menopause
- Respond sensitively, supportively and professionally to colleagues experiencing challenges relating to the menopause
- Be pro-active in finding effective solutions to the challenges presented
- Seek advice and guidance from the Trust's HR Team and Occupational Health as necessary

Trust HR Team

- Overseeing the implementation, monitoring, and review of this policy to ensure fair and consistent operation
- Provide advice, guidance and support to the Trust, senior leaders, line managers and colleagues
- Report to the CEO, Trust Board and Headteacher groups as required.

Colleagues

- Take personal responsibility for their personal health and wellbeing, accessing support from a medical professional as necessary
- Be open and honest with their line manager or the Trust's HR Team about their menopause experience to enable appropriate support to be offered

- Engage in a meaningful way with Occupational Health or other third parties to help in supporting themselves at work
- Treat all colleagues with respect and dignity

7. Data Protection

The organisation will comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. Employee data will be processed by the organisation in accordance with the principles of that legislation, as necessary for the performance of the employee's contract of employment and/or the conduct of the organisation's business. The organisation will ensure that personal information about an employee, including information in personnel files, is securely retained.