



MacIntyre Academies

Menopause Policy

Version Number	Purpose/ Change	Responsibility	Date
V1	New Policy	Interim CEO	Oct 23

Person Responsible: Group Director
Type of policy: Non-statutory
Date of first draft and consultation: Aug 2023 and Sep 2023 (Ops Forum)

Date adopted by the Trust Board: Oct 2023
Date of implementation: Oct 2023
Date reviewed: n/a
Date of next review: Oct 2026

Menopause Policy

1. Purpose

At Macintyre Academies, we are committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all our colleagues. This menopause policy is intended to help employees feel able to ask for the adjustments they need to help them manage their symptoms at work.

2. Scope

This policy applies to everyone employed by the Trust. The Trust Board, Local Advisory Boards, Group Director, Principals and line managers have a duty of care to their staff and are responsible for the implementation of the policy.

Trans and non-binary employees may also experience the menopause and are covered by this policy.

This policy doesn't form part of any contract of employment and may be amended from time to time.

3. Introduction

MacIntyre Academies Trust are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. The purpose of this policy is to assist with creating an open and menopause friendly workplace where managers and those experiencing menopause feel comfortable discussing any issues associated with this, and to ensure the necessary help is known about and offered to those affected.

Experiences of the menopause range from feeling no or mild discomfort to having debilitating symptoms and finding it difficult to do everyday activities like going to work. Symptoms can have a significant effect on an employee's comfort and feeling of wellbeing in work including how they feel in work and about their work. We believe employees shouldn't have to mask their symptoms when they're working and try to cope on their own. You also shouldn't have to feel embarrassed talking about the menopause.

With the right support, it can be much better. Not everyone will have symptoms, but we aim to support those that do to improve their experience at work.

We expect all managers and staff to be respectful towards colleagues who experience symptoms related to the menopause and to recognise that they may require unique support or adjustments.

4. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the Trust's other policies which support an inclusive and supportive working environment both in work and when working from home, including:

MAT Flexible Working

MAT Equality and Diversity Policy

MAT Sickness Absence Policy

MAT Wellbeing Policy

MAT Capability Policy

MAT Data Protection Policy

5. Definitions

Menopause	This is when a woman's oestrogen levels decline and they stop having periods (for 12 consecutive months). This typically is around the age of 50 but could be earlier or later.
Perimenopause	This is the phase leading up to the menopause, when changing levels of hormones lead to menopausal symptoms. This typically starts in the mid to late forties but can be earlier.
Premature menopause	This happens when a woman's periods stop before the age of 45. It can happen when their ovaries stop making normal levels of reproductive hormones including oestrogen or because of certain medical treatments including some cancer treatments.

6. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Foster an environment in which our staff can openly and comfortably start and engage in conversations about the menopause.
- Ensure everyone understands what the menopause is and are clear about our policies and practices.
- Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause and how they can support employees at work.
- Ensure that employees suffering from menopausal symptoms feel confident to discuss these and ask for support and any reasonable adjustments they need to continue to work effectively.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms

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 on their physical and mental health. We want everyone to understand what the menopause is and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. We recognise that this is not just an issue for women and aim to raise awareness of it with our male colleagues as well.

7. What are the menopause symptoms?

The menopause produces a range of physical and psychological symptoms that can affect many aspects of life, all related to the changes in hormone balance. Everyone is different and not all will be affected in the same way or to the same extent.

Common symptoms include:

Hot flushes	Headaches	Poor concentration	Dry eyes
Anxiety/ Panic attacks	Low mood/ Depression	Lack of confidence	Fatigue
Poor sleep	Weight gain	Joint and muscle pain	Poor memory

On average, menopause symptoms last around four years but can last as long as 10 years.

All experiences are different. Some will experience symptoms over a relatively short period; others may experience symptoms for many years and can also experience different symptoms at different times during this transition. It is also commonly acknowledged that Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), medication which is often prescribed for menopause, can have side effects which cause problems at work. These include nausea, headaches and leg cramps.

8. Understanding the menopause.

Despite its potentially serious impact on 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.

Through training and raising awareness of the symptoms and related issues, we aim to 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 women a challenging time in their lives.

We may need to make certain things easier for employees going through it to ease their symptoms or to help them to manage them. Some small adjustments can make a big impact in helping employees carry out their daily role, feel supported in work and feel comfortable in the work environment. In doing this, we hope to have discussions and put arrangements in place which is part of our inclusive work culture.

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 their menopause symptoms, you could be disciplined.

For managers, recognising the symptoms of the menopause is vital to treating an affected employee fairly. It can explain certain behaviours that may not normally be displayed by an individual which are affecting their conduct, performance or attendance at work.

We will give managers specific training in handling all menopause related issues sensitively and with confidence. This is not just about legal compliance; good support at work leads to happier and better performing employees. 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 your School Business Manager or HR (HR@macintyreacademies.org).

9. Helping you through the menopause

If you are going through the menopause and are finding things difficult at work, please don't suffer in silence. It is important that, as an employee, you prioritise your personal health and wellbeing. We know that the menopause is a very personal matter, so we won't usually raise it with you even if we think you are displaying symptoms. We might ask how you are, in general terms and encourage you to be open with us. 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 and can do that if we know what's happening. If you are struggling with any

aspect of your role because of symptoms associated with the menopause, you should tell your manager, who will treat the matter with complete confidence. So that we can give you the best support possible we encourage you to be open and honest in these conversations.

We've included links to organisations that provide useful information about the menopause at the end of this policy and recommend that you access these if you need more information.

If you are unwell because of menopausal symptoms you are not expected to come to work. If you are unwell you should report your absence in line with the MAT Sickness Absence policy which will apply to your absence. A return to work meeting will take place upon your return from absence to ensure any necessary steps are taken to support you to remain in work.

10. Procedure

We have a four-step procedure that applies to discussions around the menopause and the action we'll take:

STEP 1

- Speaking with your GP or medical specialist about your menopause related concerns could be a good place for you to start. It will hopefully help you access evidence-based information about the menopause and inform our conversations with you about the workplace impact. Please speak to your School Business Manager if you need support to access a GP appointment.
- You can also talk to a member of HR or one of the trained Mental Health First Aiders in your setting or contact our Employee Assistance Programme Lifeworks.com or call 0800 1691920. You could also go straight to your manager instead, if you feel comfortable doing that.

STEP 2

Meet with your manager/ School Business Manager. You should expect to be able to have a private, friendly, honest and constructive conversation. Please let your line manager know if you would like someone from HR or a colleague to be at the meeting too.

During any discussions, your manager will consider your individual situation and evaluate if any adjustments can be made. Your individual needs will be addressed sensitively and confidentiality will be maintained. We will discuss ideas that could make things easier for you. Adjustments will depend on the symptoms you are experiencing and, if relevant, the budget we have available. Things that some employees may find helpful include:

Hot flushes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlling the temperature of your work area, such as providing a desktop fan, moving near • a window or away from a heat source; • Providing easy access to drinking water; • Allowing changes to our dress code; • Having access to a rest room for breaks if your work involves long periods of standing or sitting, or a quiet area if you need to manage a severe hot flush.
Heavy periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing you to work somewhere with easy access to toilets; • Asking for an extra uniform; • Providing access to sanitary products in toilets; • Providing storage space for a change of clothing.
Headaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing easy access to drinking water; • Providing a quiet space to work; • Providing noise-reducing headphones to wear in open offices.
Low mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having access to a quiet area.
Loss of confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having regular protected time with your manager to discuss any issues.
Poor concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusting work patterns; • Reviewing task allocation and workload; • Providing quiet spaces to work; • Offering noise reducing headphones to wear in open offices; • Reducing interruptions; • Agreeing protected time when you won't be disturbed.
Panic attacks and anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing mindfulness training or counselling for anxiety; • Agreeing to have time away from work to undertake relaxation techniques or going for a walk.

Please note: we've included these potential adjustments to help you and your manager consider how best to support you and what may be possible. However, we will consider each case individually and if there are other things you'd like us to consider to help you, please ask.

Your manager will record any adjustments agreed and any actions to be implemented and will review these from time to time to ensure that they remain suitable.

Your manager may need to discuss issues and possible solutions with other professionals including HR, School Business Manager, Principal and occupational health, particularly if the adjustments don't appear to be working or advice is needed on what is most appropriate for you.

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.

We will usually not talk to your colleagues, other than those mentioned above, about the menopause related difficulties you are having unless you ask us to or agree that we can.

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.

After your initial meeting with your manager, and periodically after that, we may carry out health and safety risk assessments and/or seek advice from occupational health or other medical professionals.

We are legally obliged by the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to an employees role or working conditions if they have a disability that places them at a disadvantage when performing their role and we will ensure compliance with our obligations in this regard.

You may also be entitled to make a flexible working request. Please read the MAT Flexible Working Policy.

STEP 3

Taking account of any specialist advice, we will agree with you the adjustments that we will make.

We will meet with you to make sure that the adjustments are working for you and for us. If any modifications are needed, or if anything new needs to be put in place, we will discuss that with you.

STEP 4

We will meet with you on an ongoing basis to check that your symptoms are being managed effectively. The regularity of these will depend on each individual need. You may find that your symptoms change over time. You don't have to wait for your manager to schedule a review.

If the adjustments are not working as well as you hoped, or you start to experience new symptoms, please tell us and arrange a further meeting with your manager.

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. We may need to consult with occupational health at various points to ensure everything is being done that should be done.

11. Other Support

As part of MacIntyre Academies Wellbeing offering, the following support is available:

Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provides external confidential support services for MacIntyre Academies' employees (and immediate family members living with them) to support with any challenges they may face in life, providing both practical and emotional support; from help with financial and consumer issues to counselling.

The services can be accessed by phone or online. The EAP helpline can be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The free phone number - 0800 169 1920 - will enable anyone who wants advice to contact a fully qualified and professional counsellor or another specialist advisor. They are able to lend a sympathetic ear, offer practical advice and provide professional counselling on a wide range of work related, personal or family problems. The EAP Helpline service is provided by a fully independent external organisation, Medigold, and all calls to the helpline, and advice provided, are completely confidential