



QUANTOCK

EDUCATION TRUST

Menopause Policy

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POSTHOLDER RESPONSIBLE: Trust HR Lead

TRUSTEE COMMITTEE: People & Performance, Pay & Recruitment

DATE RATIFIED BY TRUSTEES: July 2023

AUDIENCE: All Trust Staff

This policy will be reviewed every two years on or before 31 August 2025

Summary of Changes

Version	Section	Description of Changes
July 23	All	Baseline document

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1 Principle

- 1.1 Quantock Education Trust recognises the importance of supporting our colleagues who experience menopausal symptoms and are committed to ensuring that appropriate adjustments and additional support is available to help colleagues feel comfortable at work.
- 1.2 The menopause is still very much viewed as a private matter and is rarely discussed openly. Many individuals also do not recognise that the symptoms they are experiencing could be due to the menopause.
- 1.3 We aim, as part of our desire to create an open, inclusive and understanding culture, to increase awareness of the menopause and the impact it has on individuals' lives.
- 1.4 This document includes information on the menopause, internal and external resources that can help support our colleagues and provides guidance to line managers on ways to support staff who may be experiencing symptoms.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

2 What is the menopause?

- 2.1 The menopause is a natural health event for most women and some trans men, non-binary and intersex people, that usually takes place in-between 40 and 55 years of age (the average age in the UK is 51), during which they have not had a period for 12 months and experience hormonal changes. It can also happen earlier or later. For many people, symptoms usually last about four years, but in some cases can last longer, sometimes up to 12 years.
- 2.2 The menopause is preceded by the perimenopause, during which the body prepares itself for menopause. The perimenopause can also last several years and can involve similar symptoms to the menopause itself. For the purpose of this document, any reference to the menopause includes the perimenopause. The perimenopause is not the same as premature menopause.
- 2.3 Premature menopause is when an individual experiences menopause early, either naturally or through surgery or illness.
- 2.4 Post-menopause is the time after menopause. A person who is post-menopausal may still experience menopausal symptoms for years to come.
- 2.5 Many who experience menopausal symptoms will have mild symptoms, but for others, symptoms can be severe and can greatly impact their day to day lives. While symptoms vary and each person's experience will differ, they commonly include:
 - Hot flushes
 - Night sweats and difficulty sleeping
 - Anxiety and panic attacks
 - Dizziness
 - Fatigue
 - Memory loss
 - Depression

- Headaches/migraines
- Dry eyes
- Recurrent urinary tract infections
- Joint stiffness, aches and pains
- Reduced concentration and focus
- Irregular and/or heavy periods

2.6 Three out of four people get symptoms, one in four troublesome enough to affect day to day life (NHS Employers, 2021). The physical and emotional impact of the menopause can be far reaching due to the symptoms outlined above and may have a significant impact in the workplace. For some individuals who are dealing with these symptoms, they may find their job more challenging which in turn may affect their wellbeing, confidence, and performance at work. It is important that Quantock Education Trust works to reduce the stigma around the menopause, increase our understanding and awareness of the topic and offer appropriate support while individuals go through this period in their lives.

3 Support for individuals

3.1 Quantock Education Trust encourage an environment in which colleagues can, if they want, have open conversations about the menopause. We expect everyone to be supportive of colleagues who may be affected by the menopause in the workplace.

3.2 Anyone affected by the menopause is encouraged to speak to their manager or HR department about their symptoms and the support they may need to reduce the difficulties the menopause can cause them at work. Early notification, where possible, will also help managers to determine the best course of action to support an individual's needs.

3.3 While many who go through the menopause will be able to carry on their working lives as normal, we recognise that others may benefit from adjustments to their working conditions to mitigate the impact of menopausal symptoms on their work. If you believe that you would benefit from adjustments or other support, you should speak to your line manager in the first instance.

3.4 Experiencing menopausal symptoms can be a sensitive and personal matter and as such, some individual's may not wish to discuss with their manager initially. In these circumstances, please speak in confidence to the HR department or a trusted colleague instead.

3.5 Each situation will be dealt with on a case by case basis and support could take the form of:

3.5.1 Flexible working: the Trust recognises that difficulty sleeping is a common symptom of the menopause. To reflect this, as well as the impact of other common symptoms, we aim to facilitate flexible working wherever possible. Requests for flexible working could include asking for:

- a change to the pattern of hours worked;
- permission to perform work from home; or
- a reduction in working hours.

Employees should discuss such requests with their line manager in consultation with the HR department. Depending on the circumstances, requests may be approved on a permanent or temporary basis. A copy of the Flexible Working Policy is available from the HR department.

3.5.2 Temperature control: the Trust strives to achieve a comfortable working temperature for employees. We will allow flexibility within our dress code where reasonable. Desk fans will be provided upon request where other temperature control measures are providing inadequate relief.

3.5.3 A referral to our occupational health providers to ensure that an individual's working environment is not making their menopausal symptoms worse and to inform us of any further adjustments that should be considered, especially in the instances where the menopause is causing significant sickness absence or where it is directly affecting performance.

3.6 We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of all our staff and will consider any aspects of the working environment that may worsen menopausal symptoms. This may include identifying and addressing specific risks to the health and well-being of those going through the menopause.

4 Internal support

- EAP – the Employee Assistance Programme provided by Health Assured is a confidential support network for practical advice and counselling. The free service is accessible 24-hours a day, 365 days a year by phone on 0800 028 0199.
- Occupational Health - provide impartial and confidential advice on fitness for work and the type of support required to ensure those experiencing mental ill health can remain in the workplace or successfully return to the workplace. For more information please contact [insert title].

5 External support (specialist agencies and charities)

- Menopause Matters - [Menopause Matters, menopausal symptoms, remedies, advice](#)
- Manage My Menopause - [Manage My Menopause | Tailored menopausal advice provided by experts in post-reproductive health](#)
- The Daisy Network - [Charity for Women with POI | The Daisy Network](#)
- Menopause Café - [Gather to eat cake, drink and discuss menopause \(menopausecafe.net\)](#)
- Henpicked - [Home - Henpicked](#)
- Balance - [Balance - Homepage \(balance-menopause.com\)](#)

6 How can you stay healthy during the menopause?

6.1 We encourage you to speak with your GP to determine if you are experiencing the menopause and to explore what treatment/medication may be suitable for you to help ease your symptoms. There are checklists available such as the Henpicked Colleague support pack which can help prepare you for these conversations.

6.2 There are also other ways to ensure you look after your physical health as you go through the changes that menopause brings:

- Eat a balanced diet
- Refrain from smoking
- Limit alcohol intake
- Exercise regularly

7 Support for managers and colleagues

7.1 It is important that everyone within the Trust is aware of this guidance and understand the practical steps that can be taken to support a colleague who is experiencing the menopause.

7.2 What you should do:

- Make yourself and your team familiar with this document and our internal and external sources of support
- Create an environment where individuals feel comfortable disclosing health issues i.e. make conversations about wellbeing standard in one-to-one meetings and try and raise awareness of the menopause generally in your team to help breakdown the stigma and embarrassment some people feel about the topic
- Ensure you listen to the needs of each individual and be open to having discussions about the menopause, ensuring confidentiality where requested
- You may find that an individual chooses not to initially discuss their symptoms with you, try not to take this to heart and remain open to a discussion when/if they feel ready to talk
- Be aware that some individuals may seek to downplay symptoms, so encourage an open and honest discussion where appropriate
- If an individual does inform you that they are suffering with menopausal symptoms, then work with them to ensure the right support is provided. The menopause and the symptoms associated with it, should be treated as a long-term health issue, if you are not sure about what options of support are available, speak with the HR department
- Ensure that you check-in regularly with the individual to review the effectiveness of any support measures put in place and make any changes as necessary
- Treat all conversations about the menopause sensitively and handle all information disclosed confidentially

7.3 What you shouldn't do:

- Make assumptions about the menopause and how this may be affecting the individual
- Shy away from talking about the menopause
- Share personal information that has been disclosed to you without consent

- Provide medical or personal advice where it is not wanted
- Try to refrain from making decisions for the individual; instead signpost relevant help and agree together how to move forward

8 Risk Assessments and Reasonable Adjustments

8.1 We have a legal duty to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the workplace risks to the health and safety of our employees under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. This includes identifying the specific risks for those staff who are experiencing menopausal symptoms and consideration of reasonable adjustments to help ensure an employee's menopause symptoms are not being made worse by their job or work environment.

8.2 Individual risk assessments should be completed by line managers in consultation with staff to understand more about how menopausal symptoms are affecting staff at work and the adjustments that are needed. Risk assessments should be reviewed periodically and whenever appropriate.

8.3 Reasonable adjustments will depend on the employee's specific circumstances (symptoms, job role, etc.). The frequency of review might differ from person to person, depending on how their symptoms and needs change. It's important to remember that the adjustments agreed might need to be reviewed as the employee goes through the different stages of the menopause.

8.4 The following steps should be considered when working with an employee to identify any adjustments at work to help them manage their symptoms alongside fulfilling their roles:

- Step 1 – Signpost - An employee with concerns about the menopause or perimenopause may already have talked to their GP and may have talked to the school/Trust employee assistance provision, but if not, it may be helpful to signpost them to these services.
- Step 2 – Discuss - The employee's line manager should be involved in confidential discussions with the employee, about their menopause or perimenopause concerns, the effects they are having difficulties with and how they might need support. A referral to Occupational Health should be considered as this will enable the line manager to discuss and plan with the employee any recommended adjustments which would help them manage their symptoms at work.
- Step 3 – Risk Assessment and Reasonable Adjustments - The line manager should discuss and agree reasonable adjustments with the employee in writing taking account of any recommendations provided by occupational health and ensure regular reviews take place to make sure the changes are working for both parties and to address any fluctuations or changes in the employee's symptoms.

8.5 Appendix I gives some examples of reasonable adjustments that may be helpful for various symptoms of the menopause, wherever they are operationally practicable to put into effect.

9 Data protection

9.1 The Quantock Education Trust will process any personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy and Workforce Privacy Notice. Data collected from the point at which we become aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

APPENDIX 1

Symptom(s)/ Hazard(s)	Reasonable Adjustments / Support
Hot flushes, daytime sweats, palpitations	<p>Look at ways to cool the working environment, for example provide a fan, move a desk close to a window or adjust the air conditioning. Provide easy access to cold drinking water and washrooms.</p> <p>Adapt normal dress code to improve comfort.</p> <p>Allow additional breaks or time out and access to fresh air.</p> <p>Arrange for cover to be available so staff can leave their post if needed. Consider temporary changes to duties, if possible, for example limiting the time spent in hot kitchens.</p> <p>Identify a cool/quiet room, if possible, where employee can take a break if required.</p>
Night time sweats and hot flushes, insomnia or sleep disturbance	<p>Consider offering flexible working such as temporary adjustments to work patterns or hours for example starting and finishing later. Recognise someone may take more short-term absence if they've had a difficult night.</p> <p>Carrying out risk assessments and making appropriate adjustments Consider the employee working from home on an ad hoc basis if they've had limited sleep.</p>
Heavy or irregular bleeding	<p>Provide easy access to washroom and toilet facilities.</p> <p>Allow for more frequent breaks to go to the toilet.</p> <p>Be understanding about someone working from home if they have very heavy bleeding.</p> <p>Make sanitary products available in washrooms.</p> <p>Make it easy to request extra uniforms if needed.</p>
Muscular aches and joint pain	<p>Make sure DSE assessment has been completed.</p> <p>Reduce the amount of manual handling required if appropriate and follow guidance and advice on manual handling.</p> <p>Make any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules.</p> <p>Enable someone to move around or stay mobile, if that helps.</p>
Headaches	<p>Make sure DSE assessment has been completed.</p> <p>Allow more frequent breaks from screen-based work.</p> <p>Consider moving desks to allow more access to natural light.</p> <p>Carry out a stress risk assessment if appropriate.</p> <p>Provide access to a rest room.</p> <p>Offer easy access to drinking water.</p> <p>Allow regular breaks and opportunities to take medication.</p>
Depression, anxiety, mood changes, loss of confidence, panic attacks, memory problems or difficulty concentrating	<p>Meet regularly to offer support and review/revise any adjustments that have been made.</p> <p>Signpost to employee assistance provision and counselling provision. Carry out a stress risk assessment (template available from the HR team) if appropriate.</p> <p>Consider temporary adjustments to shift patterns or working hours as well as workloads.</p> <p>Discuss flexible working or working from home however, consider the positive and negative implications for the employee of this.</p> <p>Identify a supportive colleague to talk to away from the office or work area, such as a wellbeing champion.</p> <p>Allow time when needed, to have some quiet time or undertake relaxation or mindfulness activities.</p> <p>Provide access to a quiet space to work.</p> <p>Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.</p> <p>Discuss whether it would be helpful for the employee to visit their GP, if they haven't already and/or discuss a referral to occupational health.</p>