

BDMAT

Menopause Policy

Issued: September 2024
Review Due: Summer 2029



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 BDMAT is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all its employees and recognises that women may need additional consideration, support and adjustments before (perimenopause), during and after the menopause.
- 1.2 It is estimated that between 75% and 80% of menopausal women are in work in the UK. It is therefore imperative that workplaces have a workable, informative and robust policy in place that is fully consistent with UK legislation.
- 1.3 The menopause is a natural part of every woman's life, and marks the end of her reproductive cycle. For many reasons, it may not be an easy time in a woman's life and so it is imperative that workers who require additional support during this time are treated with understanding, dignity and respect.
- 1.4 The policy acknowledges that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the menopause and so it is intended as a support guide for all workers. All stakeholders agree to work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support women experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse.
- 1.5 It should be noted that people from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of the menopause may be different for those among these communities. Although the policy refers to women, please consider that other people who menstruate also require consideration.
- 1.6 Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that for many reasons, people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.
- 1.7 The menopause can also affect partners and families too.
- 1.8 'Male menopause' is a misleading term because it suggests that hormone levels drop in a similar way to the female menopause and this is not true. Testosterone declines gradually and is unlikely to cause problems in itself. However, some men experience physical and emotional symptoms when they reach their late 40s to early 50s and these symptoms can interfere with everyday life and happiness. Men are advised to seek guidance from their GP and further

information can be found on the NHS website.
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/male-menopause/>

2.0 Legislation

- 2.1 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers. 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 menopausal women.
- 2.2 The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of certain 'protected characteristics' including sex, age and disability. Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all BDMAT staff and managers.

4.0 Purpose

- 4.1 This policy sets out procedures for members of staff and managers to follow in providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

5.0 Aims

- 5.1 The aim of this policy is:
- to create an environment where staff members feel confident enough to raise issues about their menopausal symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work;
 - 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;
 - to reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff in the workplace;
 - to educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of the menopause, and how they can support such staff at work;
 - to raise a wider awareness and understanding among the workforce; and
 - to outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available.

6.0 Definitions

6.1 *Menopause* is defined as a biological stage in a person's life that occurs when they stop menstruating and reaches the end of their natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when they have not had a period for twelve consecutive months. The average age to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

6.2 *Perimenopause* is the time leading up to menopause when a person may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

6.3 *Post menopause* is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a they have not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

7.0 Symptoms

7.1 It is important to note that not everyone will notice every symptom, or even need help or support. However, 75% of women do experience some symptoms, and 25% could be classed as severe.

7.2 Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, but not exclusively, hot flushes, poor concentration, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, and loss of confidence. Some also experience difficulty sleeping.

8.0 Roles and responsibilities

8.1 All staff are responsible for:

- taking a personal responsibility to look after their health;
- being open and honest in conversations with managers/HR team;
- if a member of staff is unable to speak to their line manager, or if their line manager is not supporting them, they can speak directly to the BDMAT HR Team or another member of the school's SLT;
- contributing to a respectful and productive working environment;
- being willing to help and support their colleagues; and
- understanding any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

8.2 All line managers should:

- familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy;

- be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- use the guidance in Appendices 1 and signposting and reviewing together, before agreeing with the individual how best they can be supported.
- record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented;
- ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates;
- ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to; where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Line Manager may:
 - discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice;
 - review Occupational Health advice, and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical; or
 - update the action plan, and continue to review.

8.3 BDMAT *HR Team and Executive*

- offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this Policy;
- attend training sessions, and develop briefing sessions, for staff; and
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in respect of related absence levels and performance.

APPENDIX 1 - Guidance for Managers Discussions with Employees

Managers should familiarise themselves with the menopause before conducting a meeting with a member of staff to discuss their situation.

Regular, informal conversations between manager and employee can enable discussions about issues related to menopause. One of the most valuable things a manager can do is listen and respond sympathetically if issues relating to menopause are reported. These conversations can assist to identify support at work which can make a real difference with how employees cope with menopause. This may enable them to continue working well, productively and to remain at work.

It is important to note that employees experiencing menopausal issues (directly or indirectly) may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to approach their manager however, if a manager is aware of the symptoms associated with the menopause and how this can affect a person, this can greatly assist in promoting an environment where employees feel more confident to approach their manager and seek support, if required.

If an employee wishes to talk about changes in health including symptoms of menopause it is important to:

- encourage the employee to discuss any relevant health concerns with their GP practice;
- maintain confidentiality when handling health information (seek a private room/office and ensure any records are stored in a safe and confidential manner);
- Allow the employee to be accompanied if they want it. This can be a trade union representative or a colleague;
- If the employee wishes to speak to another manager, this should be allowed;

- allow for sufficient time to have the conversation and encourage the employee to be open and honest when discussing any difficulties they may be experiencing;
- explore with them ways in which they can be supported;
- agree an action plan, record the outcome of the discussion and agree a review timeframe; and
- provide details of support and external services available.

External links

Menopause Matters

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

NHS Choices

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

The Daisy Network (support for early menopause/premature ovarian insufficiency)

<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>

Menopause Services NHS GG&C

<https://www.sandyford.org/sexual-health-information/fertility/menopause/>

The Menopause Exchange

<https://menopause-exchange.co.uk/>

Living Life (Online/Telephone guided CBT)

<https://breathingspace.scot/living-life/>

Women's Health concern

<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>

Remploy (mental health support service)

<https://www.remploy.co.uk/employers/mental-health-and-wellbeing/workplace-mental-health-support-service-employers>

Henpicked (community site for women over 40)

<https://henpicked.net/>

Menopause Café (gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss menopause)

<https://www.menopausecafe.net/>