



Menopause Policy

Version 2.2

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<p>Implementation Date:</p>	<p>Summer Term 2024</p>
<p>Review Date:</p>	<p>Summer Term 2027</p>
<p>Target Audience:</p>	<p>Staff</p>
<p>Related Documents:</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing Policy Special Leave Policy</p>

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POLICY STATEMENT

We are here to make great schools and happier, stronger communities so that people have better lives. We do this by:

- Always doing what is right
- Trusting in each other and standing shoulder to shoulder
- Doing what we know makes the difference

Doing what is right means always acting with integrity, in the interests of others and being honest, open and transparent.

This policy recognises that the menopause is an equality and occupational health and safety issue and that there may need to be appropriate flexibility, support, and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause. The Education Alliance (TEAL/the trust) has a positive attitude towards the menopause and will treat all individuals with dignity and respect during this time, ensuring the workplace does not aggravate symptoms. We are committed to ensuring that we all feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms openly, without embarrassment, and are able to request support and adjustments in order to continue to work safely.

1. PURPOSE

TEAL acknowledges that time before, during and after the menopause can be significant, challenging and can affect levels of confidence and self-esteem. Staff can feel too embarrassed to seek help and to share the difficulties they are experiencing. We aim to reduce the stigma and embarrassment and through sharing concerns, joint solutions can be found. We are also aware that the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires that we ensure the health, safety, and welfare of our staff. In addition, in line with the Equality Act 2010, we have a duty not to discriminate and staff should be treated with respect in terms of their age and gender. Any detrimental treatment of staff related to the menopause could represent direct or indirect sex discrimination and conditions which are linked to the menopause require reasonable adjustments.

The aim of this policy is to encourage staff to talk more openly about the menopause, and to encourage managers and staff to work together to seek solutions to challenges and difficulties staff 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 and perimenopause is unique to that individual. We intend to reduce sickness absence due to menopausal symptoms and retain valued staff, assisting them to maintain good levels of health and wellbeing, confidence, and self-esteem. Staff will be supported to thrive and be successful at TEAL, and we are committed to equality of opportunity, including access to learning, development, and progression.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Executive Team** is responsible for approving this policy.

Headteachers are responsible for monitoring the application of this policy within their respective schools.

The **HR Department** is responsible for overseeing the introduction, implementation, monitoring, and review of this policy and will report to the Executive Team and headteachers as required. The HR

Department will also provide advice, guidance, and support in the implementation of this policy, acting as a point of contact for staff, managers, headteachers and the Executive Team. The HR Department will ensure that this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.

Managers must ensure they respond sensitively, supportively, and professionally to staff experiencing challenges relating to the menopause. Managers are encouraged attend relevant training, and to seek advice and guidance from the HR Department as and when required, and to look to jointly solve problems, considering potential workplace adjustments as appropriate. Managers should listen and respond sympathetically. They should familiarise themselves with this policy, be aware of the potential impact the menopause can have, and provide a safe place for staff to speak openly and honestly.

Employees are responsible for looking after their health and being open and honest, contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment, and being willing to help and support colleagues. The ethical leadership framework supports this, and by encouraging staff with menopausal symptoms to talk to others and seek support, we hope we are able to alleviate symptoms, anxiety, and worry.

3. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

TEAL is committed to:

- Promoting equality and diversity in its policies, procedures, and guidelines, adhering to the Equality Act 2010.
- Delivering high quality teaching and services that meet the diverse needs of its student population and its workforce, ensuring that no individual or group is disadvantaged.
- Conditions linked to the menopause may meet the definition of an 'impairment' under the Equality Act and require reasonable adjustments.

This policy aims to ensure that staff experiencing the menopause are not disadvantaged at work, with supportive measures in place to effectively manage the risks and issues associated with the menopause.

When this policy is reviewed, equality information will be shared with the Executive Team and the Joint Consultation and Negotiation Committee, to ensure we are able to check for any unintended disadvantages linked to TEAL policy and practice.

4. STAGES AND SUPPORTIVE MEASURES

There are various stages to the menopause, as follows:

- Perimenopause is the time around the menopause, where menopause symptoms may occur, but periods/menstruation has not stopped (the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause, which can last up to 5 years, and can include a variety of symptoms)
- Menopause is often referred to as the day an individual has not had a period/menstruation for 12 months (this usually occurs between the ages of 45-55, although around 1% do experience the menopause before the age of 40)
- Medical/surgical menopause. It is possible that ovaries can be damaged by treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery which can mean that the menopause can be experienced at any age, and for some the loss of fertility can be extremely hard to bear. In such circumstances, we should offer confidential counselling and emotional support via the Employee Assistance Programme, signposting to external services, and/or support via the Occupational Health Department.
- Post-menopause is where individuals may continue to experience symptoms associated with the menopause for several years. Longer term adjustments may be required and it is also

recognised that there can be an increased risk of some health conditions post-menopause, including cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and urinary tract infections.

- Those undergoing treatment for conditions such as endometriosis and infertility may experience menopausal symptoms whilst receiving treatment

The menopause can result in temporary psychological issues, such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, mood swings, irritability, issues with their memory and loss of confidence. It can also result in physical symptoms, such as irregular menstrual cycles, heavy bleeding, hot flashes, excessive sweating during the night, affecting sleep, frequent urinary tract infections and fatigue. TEAL has a range of resources that may be helpful, which can be accessed via HR. Those resources can be helpful for employees experiencing the menopause, and for colleagues and managers wishing to increase their knowledge and understanding to enable them to support colleagues more effectively. Training is also available for managers.

TEAL will educate and inform managers and staff to be aware of the impact of the menopause, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and the potential symptoms of menopause, as well as the ways in which we can support those experiencing menopausal symptoms. Where employees feel uncomfortable talking about their menopausal symptoms with their line manager, they can contact the HR Department, who will be happy to support them sensitively and confidentiality will always be respected.

When seeking solutions, risk assessments and wellness action plans can assist in enabling the individual's specific needs and issues to be fully considered and potential options explored. They may include issues such as temperature, ventilation, access to toilet facilities and cold water. Supportive measures may include leaving doors and windows open (where feasible and safe), provision of fans, fitting blinds to windows, cover arrangements to enable access to toilet facilities and cold water, and the potential for flexible working arrangements. TEAL has a variety of roles and risk assessments will be individual and specific to the person and their circumstances.

Employees are encouraged to suggest ways in which they can be supported at work, and where actions and adjustments are agreed, managers should make a note of them (e.g. via a risk assessment and/or a wellness action plan) and the manager and employee should jointly monitor the achievement of actions and adjustments and their impact on the issues initially highlighted. These documents can be updated and reviewed as and when necessary. Where adjustments do not have the desired impact, and symptoms remain the same or worsen over time, the line manager and employee may agree to an occupational health referral. The Occupational Health Department can assess, provide advice and guidance, and signpost to other appropriate sources of help and advice.

Schools will ensure that a range of products are placed in staff toilets, to ensure employees are able to manage emergency situations discreetly.

It is recognised that some women going through the menopause may experience a dip in performance linked to menopausal symptoms. We aim to have an inclusive, open environment where staff are able to reach out, make suggestions and have open discussions about the menopause. Employees should feel comfortable in raising any concerns they may have about their own performance, and TEAL will manage anyone in this situation flexibly and supportively.

5. SUPPORTIVE ORGANISATIONS

There are a number of specialist organisations who can offer support to individuals before, during and after the menopause, including the following:

- TEAL's Employee Assistance Programme is able to provide specialist and confidential advice and counselling 24/7 and menopause resources can be accessed via their website (details available from HR)
- NHS Guidance on Menopause provides comprehensive advice on symptoms and treatment options available: www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause
- Menopause Exchange Helpline can be contacted on 020 8420 7245 and their newsletters provide information and advice: www.menopause-exchange.co.uk
- Education Support provides support 24/7 at 08000 562561 or via text on 07909341229. Useful resources can be accessed at: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/blogs/teaching-and-menopause>
- British Menopause Society provides a wealth of information and guides on the menopause and all aspects of post reproductive health: thebms.org.uk. This is primarily aimed at health care professionals and the Women's Health Concern is the patient arm of the British Menopause Society providing factsheets, articles, FAQs and further reading links: www.womens-health-concern.org
- Daisy Network is a charitable organisation providing support and guidance for all experiencing premature menopause: www.daisynetwork.org.uk
- Menopause Matters provides easily accessible information about the menopause, including treatments available and what steps to take: www.menopausematters.co.uk
- Menopause Café is a discussion group to gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause in a friendly and easily accessible way: www.menopausecafe.net
- Henpicked is an online community providing 'lunch and learn' videos with industry wide experts: www.henpicked.net
- Simply Hormones provides blogs and articles about the menopause and the opportunity to sign up to receive a free menopause survival kit, newsletters, and updates: www.simplyhormones.com
- Simply Hormones – Menopause: A Guide for Men provides information and helpful hints to help men understand more about the menopause: www.simplyhormones.com/men-and-the-menopause
- www.theros.co.uk – this is the Royal Osteoporosis Society, with information including factsheets and information regarding bone health, fitness, and activity.
- www.managemymenopause.co.uk – this provides expert advice on the menopause.
- www.thebms.org.uk – this is the British Menopause Society, and it has a range of information, including how to find a specialist.

- www.themenopauseschool.com – menstruation to menopause training.

Support and information can also be provided by the HR Department, Occupational Health Service and Trade Unions.

6. MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICY

The HR Department will monitor effectiveness and compliance of this policy.

7. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed within 3 years of the date of implementation via TEAL's JCNC.

Guide for Supporting Staff Before, During and After the Menopause

Introduction

This guide is based on the CIPD guide, 'The Menopause at Work', and the ACAS Guide to Menopause at Work. The CIPD report that of those who are negatively affected by the symptoms at work: 65% were less able to concentrate; 58% experienced more stress; 52% said they felt less patient with others; 30% had taken sick leave but had not felt able to say the real reason for their absence. The menopause is best described as a 'transition' rather than a one-off event and for some, symptoms last for several years. It is a natural stage of life, yet it can be a taboo subject. Often a few simple changes to a person's working environment can make a world of difference and reduce the impact of their symptoms.

We aim to help staff to talk more openly about the menopause and to encourage managers and staff to work together to respond appropriately to concerns.

We encourage staff to:

- Talk more openly about the menopause
- Seek joint solutions to the challenges and difficulties
- Provide support
- Access and signpost appropriate help

Recognise the symptoms

The menopause can cause a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms. Everyone is different and some of the websites detailed within the Menopause Policy include lists of possible symptoms. The Menopause Charity includes the following lists detailing some of the most typical symptoms:

Physical

- Heart Palpitations
- Difficulty in sleeping
- Feeling tired or lacking in energy
- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Headaches
- Tinnitus
- Dry mouth and eyes
- Sore gums
- Muscle and joint pains
- Breathing difficulties
- Needing a wee more often, or having leaks of urine
- Vaginal dryness, soreness
- More thrush, cystitis episodes
- Dry or itchy skin
- Thinning hair
- Poor sleep
- Hot flushes

- Sweating at night

Psychological

- Low mood
- Anxiety
- Feeling tense or nervous
- Memory problems
- Attacks of anxiety or panic
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in most things
- Feeling unhappy or depressed
- Crying spells
- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Loss of confidence
- Reduced self-esteem
- Brain fog

Seek solutions

Supporting those experiencing the menopause is crucial and simple steps to jointly find solutions to concerns raised include:

- Providing sensitive and confidential support
- Ensuring conversations are friendly, honest and in private so they are as relaxed as they can be in the circumstances and will not be disturbed
- Approaching conversations with empathy, building trust with regular reviews and informal one-to-ones
- Reassuring the member of staff and working together to ensure their symptoms are not made worse by their job and making changes to help their symptoms at work to be effectively managed
- Carrying out a risk assessment and as part of this process it may be helpful to consider access to a rest area; easily available toilets and cold water; more frequent breaks to go to the toilet and take medication; adjustable temperature and good ventilation; adapting uniforms/dress code (where appropriate) to provide comfort and make it easy to request extra uniforms if needed
- Discussing reasonable supportive measures tailored to the individual's specific needs. Examples of reasonable measures include access to a private area to make a phone call to access professional support or availability of a private rest area if their symptoms suddenly become more significant at work
- Carrying out a wellness action plan to ensure all needs are explored. The plan can be reviewed and updated as appropriate.

Provide support

- Regularly check in with staff and encourage them to discuss concerns with you.
- Ask the individual about what support they need and regularly check in with that question, as the support they need may change over time
- Provide information regarding the employee assistance programme, Occupational Health Service, and resources available on the People Portal or from HR

- Discuss whether it would be helpful to visit their GP, if they have not already accessed this support
- Identify a supportive colleague to talk to away from the work area, such as a Be Well Champion, a member of HR, or a trade union representative
- Address any work-related stress issues by carrying out a Wellness Action Plan

Refer to the appropriate help

- Managers, colleagues, and HR should signpost employees to specialist help where needed, and this policy includes a list of support services we can signpost colleagues to.

Appendix of policy updates following each review

June 2024

EDI data analysis has been added and consideration is underway in relation to how we embed this guidance more fully across TEAL. Trade unions requested that this be called a policy rather than guidance as they felt it gave more weight to the document. The document was originally a policy, therefore I have reverted back to policy rather than guidance, as per their request.