

Menopause Policy

Version 2

This policy has been implemented at NCLT following consultation with relevant recognised trade unions. Further policy review will be carried out in consultation with recognised trade unions.

This policy applies to all NCLT institutions.

   



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1.0 Overview

New Collaborative Learning Trust (NCLT) are committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here.

Menopause isn't always an easy transition but with the right support, it can be much better. Whilst every employee may not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work and their general wellbeing.

This policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. It is not contractual, and does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment.

This policy should be read alongside other policies, such as our policies on Flexible Working, Employee Health and Wellbeing, Equality and Diversity, Special Leave, Absence Management and Data Protection, where relevant. Policies can be obtained from SharePoint, Staff Shared Drive (primaries) or the Human Resources Department/School Business Manager.

The policy meets the requirements of the following:

- Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974
- The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, GB Regulations 4
- Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) introduced by the Equality Act 2010 (Eng, Scotland and Wales)
- Equality Act 2010

This policy applies to all staff and managers of NCLT.

2.0 Policy Aims

- To foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about menopause.
- Maintain confidentiality when discussing medical issues relating to the menopause.
- Ensure everyone understands what menopause is, are able to have meaningful conversations with confidence, and are clear on NCLT's policy and practices.
- Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause and how they can support employees at work.
- Ensure that employees suffering with menopause symptoms feel confident to discuss it and ask for support so they can continue to be successful in their role.
- Reassure employees that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require reasonable adjustments based on their individual symptoms.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- Take menopausal symptoms into consideration if concerns regarding performance are raised.
- Assure employees that we are a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs before, during and after the menopause.
- Consider that trans, non-binary and intersex employees may be affected in the same or similar ways and are covered by this policy.

3.0 What is the Menopause?

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 a person has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for those reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a person to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons. The average time for a person experiencing symptoms of the menopause is five years but many experience symptoms for the rest of their lives.

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 – the average time for a person to be perimenopausal is between four to five years. For some people the symptoms during this time can be worse than the actual menopause.

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

Menopausal symptoms can affect the following individuals in the same or similar ways:

- Women
- trans people – 'trans' is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth
- non-binary people
- intersex people – some people prefer the term 'differences in sex development' (DSD).

4.0 Symptoms

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

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically including, but not limited to:

- hot flushes
- poor concentration
- headaches
- panic attacks
- heavy/light periods
- anxiety
- loss of confidence
- dry eyes
- low mood
- poor sleep
- weight gain
- fatigue
- poor memory
- joint and muscle pain

5.0 Responsibilities

All employees should:

- Take a personal responsibility to look after their health (speaking to GPs or medical professionals about menopausal symptoms is a good place to start).
- Being open and honest in conversations with Line Managers/Human Resources, or whomever they feel the most comfortable with.
- Contribute to a respectful and productive working environment.
- Be willing to help and support their colleagues where they are aware of a colleague's menopausal symptoms.
- Understanding that adjustments may be necessary for colleagues as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

Line Managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and guidance.
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively, professionally and confidentially.
- Agree with the individual how best they can be supported, any adjustments required (in conjunction with HR – see below), undertaking an individual risk assessment and signposting staff to relevant organisations for further support from external agencies.
- Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates, in conjunction with HR.
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

Human Resources will:

- Provide guidance to managers and employees on the application of this policy.
- Create an environment where open discussion around the effects of menopause are discussed and seek to actively promote this policy.
- Support line managers and employees in discussions around any support that can be offered or any adjustments to be made and review the effectiveness of these adjustments.
- Record any adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented, providing details to the employee and line manager.
- Where adjustments may be unsuccessful, or symptoms are proving more problematic, consider a referral to Occupational Health for further advice may be appropriate.
- Signpost staff to relevant organisations for further support from external agencies.

6.0 Occupational Health Referral

If appropriate, and with the employee's consent, Human Resources may decide to refer the employee to Occupational Health, who may be contacted to:

- Carry out a holistic assessment of individuals as to whether or not menopause may be contributing to symptoms/wellbeing, providing advice and guidance in line with up-to-date research.
- Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice.
- Provide support and advice to HR and Line Managers in identifying reasonable adjustments, if required.

The Occupational Health Report will be shared with the employee and the employee has the right to view this in advance of the employer should they wish and to request amendments be made prior to its release also, if necessary.

7.0 Support Discussions

Symptoms of the menopause may impact on someone's performance. Simple changes to someone's role or working environment can help ensure the menopause does not become a barrier to performance. Certain aspects of a job or the workplace can represent a barrier for someone experiencing menopausal symptoms. As an employer, NCLT has a responsibility to consider and put in place reasonable adjustments to alleviate or remove these barriers wherever possible, so that employees experiencing significant symptoms can carry on performing in their role. Employees can be assured that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if such reasonable adjustments are put in place.

Some examples of possible symptoms and support are included below, however, these could differ significantly between employees and can fluctuate over time. It is therefore important to have regular discussions with the person concerned to ensure that the support still meets their needs and that these discussions are recorded and reviewed.

Symptom	Examples of Workplace Factors which Could Worsen or Interact with Symptoms	Suggested Support
Daytime sweats, hot flushes, palpitations	Lack of access to rest breaks or suitable rest break areas. Hot flushes and facial redness may cause individuals to feel self-conscious or the sensation may affect concentration or train of thought.	Be flexible about breaks. Allow time out and access to fresh air and fresh drinking water. Ensure a quiet area/room is available. Provision of a fan.
Urinary problems; for example, increased frequency, urgency and increased risk of urinary infections	Lack of access to adequate toilet facilities may increase the risk of infection and cause distress, embarrassment and increase stress levels. Staff member may need to access toilet facilities more frequently, may need to drink more fluids and may feel unwell.	Ensure easy access to toilet and washroom facilities. Allow for more frequent breaks during work to go to the toilet. Ensure easy access to supply of cold drinking water. Take account of peripatetic workers schedules and allow them to access facilities during their working day.
Night time sweats and hot flushes. Insomnia or sleep disturbances	Rigid start/finish times and lack of flexible working options may increase fatigue at work due to lack of sleep.	Consider temporary adjustment to hours to accommodate any difficulties. Consider flexible working on a temporary or permanent basis if appropriate. Reassure workers that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments.
Irregular and/or heavy periods (which may also cause the employee pain)	Lack of access to adequate toilet facilities may increase the risk of infection and cause distress, embarrassment and increase stress levels.	Ensure easy access to toilet and washroom or shower facilities. Allow for more frequent breaks during work to go to the toilet.

	Staff member may need to access toilet facilities more frequently, may need to drink more fluids and may feel unwell.	Ensure sanitary products are readily available. Take account of peripatetic workers schedules and allow them to access facilities during their working day. Provide short term cover if necessary so workers can leave their posts if needed.
Skin irritation, dryness or itching	Unsuitable workplace temperatures and humidity may increase skin irritation, dryness and itching. There may be discomfort, an increased risk of infection and a reduction in the barrier function of skin.	Ensure comfortable working temperatures and humidity. Ensure easy access to toilet and washroom or shower facilities.
Muscular aches and bone and joint pains	Lifting and moving, as well as work involving repetitive movements or adopting static postures, may be more uncomfortable and there may be an increased risk of injury.	Make any necessary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules/tasks and keep under review. Consider providing alternative lower-risk tasks. Follow Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance and advice on manual handling and preventing MSDs (musculoskeletal disorders).
Psychological symptoms, for example: Depression Anxiety Panic attacks Mood changes Loss of confidence	Excessive workloads, unsupportive management and colleagues, perceived stigma around the menopause, bullying and harassment and any form of work-related stress may exacerbate symptoms. Stress can have wide-ranging negative effects on mental and physical health and wellbeing. Performance and workplace relationships may be affected.	Carry out a stress risk assessment and address work-related stress. Create a Wellness Action Plan. Reassure workers that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments. Ensure that managers understand the menopause and are prepared to discuss any concerns that staff may have in a supportive manner. Ensure managers have a positive attitude and understand that they should offer support and possible adjustments if needed. Ensure that staff are trained in mental health awareness. Raise general awareness of issues around the menopause so

		colleagues are more likely to be supportive. Ensure a quiet area/room is available. Provide access to counselling services.
Headaches	Headaches may be triggered or worsened by many workplace factors such as artificial lighting, poor air quality, exposure to chemicals, screen work, workplace stress, poor posture/unsuitable workstations/uniforms/workplace temperatures.	Ensure comfortable working temperatures, humidity and good air quality. Ensure access to natural light and ability to adjust artificial light. Allow additional rest breaks. Ensure a quiet area/room is available. Carry out Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and stress risk assessments.
Dry eyes	Unsuitable workplace temperatures/humidity, poor air quality and excessive screen work may increase dryness in the eyes, discomfort, eye strain and increase the risk of infection.	Ensure comfortable working temperatures, humidity and good air quality. Encourage breaks from screen-based work. Carry out DSE risk assessments.

In addition, in some circumstances, it may be appropriate to make allowances for additional sickness absence related to the menopause or special leave taken as detailed in the NCLT Special Leave Policy. Absences that are known to relate to the Menopause will be recorded separately by the Trust.

8.0 External Agencies and Support

Below is some further information and links which may be useful.

General menopause information:

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidelines <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23>
British Menopause Society <https://thebms.org.uk/>
Women's Health Concern <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>
Henpicked – Menopause Hub <https://henpicked.net/menopause-hub/>

Guidance:

- How to have a good conversation with a GP: top tips: <https://henpicked.net/how-to-talk-to-your-gp-about/menopause/>
- National Institute of Medical Herbalists here's a link to find a qualified medical herbalist in your area: <https://www.nimh.org.uk/find-a-herbalist/>
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and menopause: <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/cognitive-behaviour-therapy-cbt-menopausal-symptoms/>
- Rebecca's review on CBT: <https://henpicked.net/cognitive-behaviour-therapy-help-menopause/>
- Information on hysterectomy: <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/hysterectomy/>

- Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) information and support on very early menopause: <https://www.daisynetwork.org.uk>
- NHS guidelines for taking vitamin D: <https://www.nhs.uk/news/food-and-diet/the-new-guidelines-on-vitamin-d-what-you-need-to-know>
- Complimentary/alternative therapies: <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/complementaryalternative-therapies-menopausal-women/>

Policy Status

Policy Lead (Title)	HR Director	Review Period	Every 3 years
Reviewed By	Trust Executive Team	Equality Impact Assessment Completed (Y/N)	Y

POLICY AMENDMENTS

Version	Approval Date	Trade Union Consultation Date (if applicable)	Page No./Paragraph No.	Amendment
Version 1	TET 09/11/2021	N/A		
Version 2 (Updated by LW)	15/06/2023 (via email)	07/03/2023 (Extended to schools)	3/1.0 3/2.0 4/3.0 5/6.0 6/7.0 6/7.0 7/7.0 8/7.0 8/7.0	Added Health and safety compliance. Additional wording 'before, during and after the menopause'. Timeframes and additional wording added. Additional wording 'with the employee's consent' and additional sentence re sharing of the report and possible amendments. Daytime sweats: Added provision of a fan to support. Heavy periods: Added 'which may cause pain'. Added 'create a Wellness Action Plan'. Added 'Symptoms of the menopause may impact on someone's performance'. Added 'Absences that are known to relate to the Menopause will be recorded separately by the Trust'.