

Liberty Academy Trust

Menopause Policy and Guidance

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1 Purpose

At Liberty Academy Trust, we are committed to the wellbeing of all employees as well as providing an inclusive and supportive workplace. We recognise that employees can experience significant life events during their career with us, one of which being the menopause.

Research from the Women and Equalities Committee found that three in five menopausal women were negatively affected at work and that almost 900,000 women in the UK left their jobs over an undefined period of time because of menopausal symptoms.¹ This means that too many women are leaving employment “at the peak of their experience” and this is therefore impacting on the number of women in the workforce – and in leadership roles, thus reducing diversity at executive levels.

Under the Equality Act (2010), menopause discrimination is covered under the three protected characteristics of: age; sex and disability discrimination. The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) also provides for safe working practices, which necessarily extends to the working conditions when experiencing menopausal or perimenopausal symptoms.

All employees have a responsibility in promoting equality and dignity in the workplace and to not discriminate.

This policy is dedicated to supporting those undergoing perimenopause or the menopause by aiming to:

- Recognise that the menopause is not a one-off event but a stage of a person’s life and should not be a taboo
- Promote awareness to all employees
- Set out guidelines on how we will support employees during perimenopause and menopause.

This policy is not contractual but aims to set out how we normally deal with the menopause in the workplace.

¹ www.committees.parliament.uk/work/1416/menopause-and-the-workplace/

2 What is the Menopause?

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.

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.

Premature menopause is when an individual experiences menopause early, either naturally or through surgery or illness.

Post-menopause is the time after menopause. A person who is post-menopausal may still experience menopausal symptoms for years to come.

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 can commonly include:

- Hot flushes or night sweats
- Sleep disturbance/tiredness or low energy
- Psychological that may be associated with menopause (e.g., anxiety, low mood, lack of confidence, difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness/foggy-headedness)
- Cultural (e.g., menopause-related beliefs, attitudes and feelings such as shame and embarrassment);in hospitable social environment at work
- Physical symptoms that may be associated with menopause (e.g., heart beating quickly or strongly; sore joints and bones; heavy or unpredictable menstrual bleeding)

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 colleagues across the Trust work together 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

Liberty Academy Trust encourages 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.

We're committed to taking all reasonable steps to make sure that we:

- Listen to you if you tell us about your perimenopause or menopause symptoms
- Keep information about your health confidential
- Support you if you're experiencing menopausal symptoms, making reasonable adjustments where needed
- Treating you with respect, not making judgements or assumptions about you based on your age or because you've told us that you're in menopause transition
- Treat any issues of bullying and harassment in relation to health issues associated with the menopause seriously

Anyone affected by the menopause is encouraged to speak to their line manager or School Menopause Ambassador 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.

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.

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 your HR Advisor or a trusted colleague instead.

We know that you might experience some, none, or all menopausal symptoms. If you do experience symptoms to the extent that they are affecting you at work, please talk to your manager, or another manager you feel comfortable with, about any changes we can make to help you.

Each situation will be dealt with on a case by case basis; reasonable adjustments we can make will depend on your circumstances, but the types of changes that might help could be:

- changing your start time if you're experiencing disturbed sleep
- providing more breaks
- working from home
- making sure you've got access to cold water while you're working
- making sure you've got easy access to toilet facilities

- making sure the temperature is comfortable, providing a fan or access to fresh air
- adjusting your work wear requirements
- giving you somewhere to store extra clothes or change clothes during the day
- giving you time off to attend medical appointments

Employees should discuss requests with their line manager in the first instance. Depending on the circumstances informal and/or temporary changes could be put in place to support in the short term, there is also the option of a formal flexible working request to make a permanent change to your working arrangement if required - see the Trust Flexible Working Policy

In some instances, a referral to our occupational health providers may be appropriate 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.

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.

It is also acknowledged that there may be employees whose partners are having a difficult time and may benefit from advice on how best to support their partner during the menopause. All available resources are open to all colleagues regardless of reason so please do make use of the available support and resources.

4 Internal Support

We have made a free and confidential wellbeing support service available to all staff. This is provided by our partner, School Advisory Service (SAS).

This includes wellbeing telephone support and access to a GP Helpline. The service also provides Menopause Support - Support from nurses who have attended recognised menopause courses.

To access the available support, call SAS on 01773 814403 or email nurse@uk-sas.co.uk

Our Intranet also provides links to a range of support for [mental health and well-being](#), as well as a page dedicated to the [Menopause](#).

The Menopause Ambassador for the Trust is: Lisa Thompson, Head of Data Systems and Analytics.

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 \(balance-menopause.com\)](#)
- Faculty of Occupational Medicine - [Advice on the menopause \(fom.ac.uk\)](#)

6 How can you stay healthy during the menopause?

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.

7 Support and training for managers and colleagues

Support is available for line managers as we acknowledge that it may be difficult for colleagues / managers to talk about issues related to the menopause.

Familiarise yourself with this guidance and understand the practical steps that can be taken to support a colleague who is experiencing the menopause.

What you should do:

- Make yourself and your team familiar with this document and our internal and external sources of support
- Attend webinars or other training we provide on the menopause, including the [Certificate in Menopause Awareness](#)
- 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 your local HR Advisor
- 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 and in accordance with Liberty Academy Trust's [Data Protection Policy](#)
- If you need further support speak with your HR advisor, the Trust Head of HR or the Trust Menopause Ambassador.

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 Data protection

- Liberty Academy Trust will process any personal data collected in accordance with its [Data Protection Policy](#)

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.