



## Menopause Policy

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## 1 Principle

- 1.1 Shropshire Gateway Educational 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, whilst respecting staff confidentiality.
- 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 their people 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 (but not an exhaustive list):
  - 2.5.1 Hot flushes
  - 2.5.2 Night sweats and difficulty sleeping



- 2.5.3 Anxiety and panic attacks
  - 2.5.4 Dizziness
  - 2.5.5 Fatigue
  - 2.5.6 Memory loss
  - 2.5.7 Depression
  - 2.5.8 Headaches/migraines
  - 2.5.9 Dry eyes
  - 2.5.10 Recurrent urinary tract infections
  - 2.5.11 Joint stiffness, aches and pains
  - 2.5.12 Reduced concentration and focus
  - 2.5.13 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). and six out of ten enough to have a negative impact on their working life (NHS Employers, 2022) 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.
- 2.7 For those 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 Shropshire Gateway Educational Trust works 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, Whilst respecting an individual's confidentiality.

### 3 Support for individuals

Shropshire Gateway Educational 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 and believe in maintaining an individual's confidentiality at all times. If individuals wish to share with colleagues/friends at work that has to be their decision, but the staff member supporting the individual must do so with total confidentiality.

- 3.1 Anyone affected by the menopause is encouraged to speak to their manager or HR(\*\*\*\*\*) about their symptoms and the support they may need to reduce the difficulties (by making reasonable adjustments) 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.

- 3.2 It is important to note that transgender colleagues may also be impacted by the menopause and the Shropshire Gateway Educational Trust is committed to providing appropriate support to anyone affected.
- 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 reasonable adjustments or other support, you should speak to your manager or HR 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 HR 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: Shropshire Gateway Educational Trust recognises that difficulty sleeping is a common symptom of the menopause. To reflect this, as well as the impact of other common symptoms (e.g. needing access to toilet facilities easily), we aim to facilitate flexible working wherever possible and in line with the needs of the role. Requests for flexible working are covered under the flexible working policy (available on the SGET website).  
  
Employees should discuss such requests with their line manager. Depending on the circumstances, requests may be approved on a permanent or temporary basis. A copy of the Flexible Working Policy is available in on the SGET website.
  - 3.5.2 Temperature control: Shropshire Gateway Educational Trust strives to achieve a comfortable working temperature for employees. We will allow flexibility within our dress code where reasonable. There is an air conditioning system in operation in some parts of the buildings, chilled water is provided in various locations, and desk fans can be provided upon request.
  - 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 reasonable 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**

- 4.1 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 the Headteacher or HR.

#### **5 External support (specialist agencies and charities)**

- 5.1 Menopause Matters - [Menopause Matters, menopausal symptoms, remedies, advice](#)
- 5.2 Manage My Menopause - [Manage My Menopause | Tailored menopausal advice provided by experts in post-reproductive health](#)
- 5.3 The Daisy Network - [Charity for Women with POI | The Daisy Network](#)
- 5.4 Menopause Café - [Gather to eat cake, drink and discuss menopause \(menopausecafe.net\)](#)
- 5.5 Henpicked - [Home - Henpicked](#)
- 5.6 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:
- 6.2.1 Eat a balanced diet
  - 6.2.2 Refrain from smoking
  - 6.2.3 Limit alcohol intake
  - 6.2.4 Exercise regularly

#### **7 Support for managers and colleagues**

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



## 7.2 What you should do:

- 7.2.1 Make yourself and your team familiar with this document and our internal and external sources of support
- 7.2.2 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
- 7.2.3 If an individual does inform you that they are suffering with menopausal symptoms, then work with them to ensure the right support is provided. If you are not sure about what options of support are available, speak with your line manager or HR.
- 7.2.4 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
- 7.2.5 Treat all conversations about the menopause sensitively and handle all information disclosed confidentially and in accordance with the Shropshire Gateway Educational Trust's data protection policy.

## 7.3 What you shouldn't do:

- 7.3.1 Make assumptions about the menopause and how this may be affecting the individual
- 7.3.2 Shy away from talking about the menopause
- 7.3.3 Share personal information that has been disclosed to you without consent
- 7.3.4 Provide medical or personal advice where it is not wanted
- 7.3.5 Try to refrain from making decisions for the individual; instead signpost relevant help and agree together how to move forward

## 7.4 Example questions to ask:

- 7.4.1 What symptoms are you experiencing?
- 7.4.2 How are these symptoms affecting you day to day/at work?
- 7.4.3 What are you already doing to try and manage this?
- 7.4.4 What other ways can we help you at work in managing these symptoms?

## 8 Data Protection

Shropshire Gateway Educational 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.