

# Ysgol Bryn Gwalia



## Menopause Policy

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Last Review Date</b>                              | January 2022   |
| <b>Date to be reviewed by Senior Management Team</b> | April 2025   |
| <b>Date Adopted by Governing Body</b>                | April 2022   |
| <b>Head Teacher – Mrs Lorraine Dalton</b>            |  |
| <b>Chair of Governors – Mrs Janiene Davies</b>       |  |

## Introduction

Menopause is a normal part of every woman's life. This policy recognises that the menopause is an equality and occupational health and safety issue and that staff may need appropriate flexibility, support and adjustments during the time of change before, during and after the menopause.

Ysgol Bryn Gwalia has a positive attitude towards the menopause and will treat all individuals with dignity and respect during this time and ensure that the workplace does not make symptoms worse.

The School is committed to ensuring that women feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms openly, without embarrassment, and are able to ask for support and adjustments in order to continue to work safely in the organisation. For this reason, the menopause at work is an issue for all members of staff.

## The legislative setting

Ysgol Bryn Gwalia undertakes to comply with its legal obligations as set out below: 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.

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.

## Status

This policy sets out procedures for members of staff and managers to follow in providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. If Ysgol Bryn Gwalia wishes to amend the menopause policy, consultation and negotiation on proposed changes will take place with staff.

## Aims

- To create an environment where staff members feel confident enough to raise issues about their 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.

## What steps will we take as an employer?



Ysgol Bryn Gwalia will educate and inform managers and staff to be aware of how the menopause can affect working women, taking account of the particular circumstances in schools, and about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can support women experiencing them.

Where members of staff feel uncomfortable going to their line manager, we will ensure that an alternative contact is available. Confidentiality will always be respected.

Ysgol Bryn Gwalia will make adjustments where necessary to support individuals experiencing the menopause, and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse. These could include simple measures such as:

- leaving doors open
- ensuring that windows can be safely opened
- ensuring that it is possible to regulate the temperature in a classroom or other room by turning down radiators (as long as the temperature does not drop below 18 degrees Celsius, this will be comfortable for all occupants)
- provision of fans
- fitting blinds to windows
- establishing a system that allows cover for women who need to access toilet while they are teaching
- swift permission for absence to attend menopause-related medical appointments

This is not a definitive list of measures. Ysgol Bryn Gwalia will actively listen to women staff and union reps and take on board other suggestions.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

It is recognised that everyone who works at Ysgol Bryn Gwalia has a role to play in ensuring a comfortable working environment for all staff, including those experiencing the menopause.

#### All staff are responsible for:

- taking responsibility for looking after their health
- being open and honest in conversations with HR and occupational health
- contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment
- being willing to help and support their colleagues
- accepting and supporting any necessary adjustments their colleagues request or are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

### **Line managers**

The most important and valuable thing a manager can do is listen and, wherever possible, respond sympathetically to any requests for adjustments at work.

#### All line managers will:

- familiarise themselves with this menopause policy
- be aware of the potential impact of menopause on performance; if someone's performance suddenly dips, consideration will be given as to whether the menopause may be playing a part in this.
- provide a safe place to allow the member of staff to speak openly and honestly
- be ready and willing to listen and have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and confidentially and allowing adequate time for the discussion

- record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented, via an action plan
- ensure ongoing dialogue via a follow-up meeting
- ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to and reviewed as regularly as necessary.

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving particularly severe, the line manager may:

- discuss with the employee a referral to occupational health for further advice
- review occupational health advice, and implement any additional recommendations
- update the action plan and continue the review process.

## **Additional support and the role of the Occupational Health Service**

The role of occupational health is to:

- carry out a holistic assessment of the employee to ascertain whether or not the working environment may be exacerbating menopause symptoms
- discuss with the employee what adjustments would help
- signpost to other ;appropriate sources of help and advice.

## **Definitions**

Menopause:

Is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when she stops menstruating, and reaches the end of her natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for women reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness or other reasons.

Perimenopause:

Is the time leading up to menopause when a woman may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

Post menopause:

Is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

Symptoms of Menopause:

It is important to note that not every woman 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.

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 women also experience difficulty sleeping.

## **Overview and Guidance for Managers and Staff**

The menopause is a natural part of ageing for women. The medical definition of the menopause is when a woman has her last period. It usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, although it can occur any time up to a women's mid-60s. A premature menopause can occur, with periods stopping before the age of 40, either naturally or as an effect of a medical condition or its treatment. Around 1 in 100 women will experience a premature menopause and this of course can be at a time when still planning to conceive.

Around 30-60% of women experience intermittent physical and/or psychological symptoms during the menopause. These are associated with a decrease in the body's production of the hormone oestrogen. For some, symptoms include hot flushes, night sweats and related symptoms such as sleep disruption, fatigue and difficulty concentrating. Hot flushes are short, sudden feelings of heat, usually in the face, neck and chest, which can make the skin red and sweaty. Severe flushes can cause sweat to soak through clothing. Mood disturbances, anxiety and depression are also reported. Symptoms on average continue for four years from the last period, and 1 in 10 women experience symptoms for up to 12 years.

These symptoms can adversely affect the quality of both personal and working life. At work, they can cause embarrassment, diminish confidence and can be stressful to deal with. The menopause may be compounded by the development of other health conditions, as well as coinciding with caring responsibilities for ageing parents and relatives. Some women may also still have children living at home.

There is good reason to consider the needs of this group of workers. In 2016, the employment rate for women in the UK of nearly 70% was among the highest since records began in 1971. Over the last four years the number of women over the age of 50 has also increased: a trend predicted to continue. Employers have responsibilities for the health and safety of all their employees, but there are also clear business reasons for proactively managing an age-diverse workforce. Some employers have been slow to recognise that women of menopausal age may need specific considerations and many employers do not yet have clear processes to support women coping with menopausal symptoms.

These practical guidelines aim to help staff experiencing troublesome menopausal symptoms, and to support them and their colleagues and managers in tackling the occupational aspects of menopausal symptoms.

### **Symptoms Support**

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including, but not exhaustively or exclusively; support for women should be considered as detailed below:

#### **Hot Flushes:**

- Request temperature control for their work area, such as a fan on their desk (where possible a USB connected desk fan to ensure environmentally friendly) or moving near a window, or away from a heat source;
- Easy access to drinking water.

#### **Heavy/light Periods:**

- Have permanent access to toilet and wash facilities;
- Ensure sanitary disposable products are available in toilet facilities.

#### **Headaches:**

- Have ease of access to fresh drinking water.

#### **Difficulty Sleeping:**

- Consider homeworking if appropriate to the employees role, if fatigued to reduce travelling etc.
- Agree time out from others, when required.
- Identify a person for the colleague to talk to – outside of the work area;
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head'.

**Loss of Confidence:**

- Ensure there are regular Personal Development Discussions;
- Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues;
- Offer support and advice to the individual, which might help with confidence.
- Agree a time a protected time to catch up with work.

**Poor Concentration:**

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse, and adjust working pattern/practice accordingly;
- Be mindful of task allocation and workload;
- Provide books for lists, action boards, post-its or other memory-assisting equipment;
- Offer quiet space to work, if possible.

**Anxiety:**

- Promote counselling services provided by Local Authority.
- Identify a person for the colleague to talk to – outside of work their area;
- Be able to have short break from their work to undertake relaxation techniques;
- Undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises, or going for a walk.

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety. If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.

**Evaluation & Review**

This policy will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team and Governing Body and adopted by the Governing Body as per the schedule on the front page.