



# Menopause and the workplace Policy

Sept 2023

Policy statement:

Penpol School is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here.

We recognise that women experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support and adjustments. These symptoms can also affect transgender people, including non-binary people.

At Penpol we are committed to developing a workplace culture that supports workers experiencing the menopause in order for them to feel confident to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for reasonable adjustment at work.

The aim of the policy is to

- Make employers aware of their responsibility to understand how the menopause can affect staff, and how they can support those experiencing the menopause at work
- Foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably instigate conversations, or engage in discussions about the menopause in a respectful and supportive manner
- Raise wider awareness and understanding among all employees about the menopause
- Outline support and reasonable adjustments available
- Help to recruit and retain employees experiencing the menopause

This policy is part of our commitment to ensuring the health and safety and well being of all the workforce. It is part of our commitment to equality and diversity, creating a workplace that respects and values each other's differences, promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination and harassment. We also recognise that many of the changes to workplace culture and adjustments offered here may be of value to all staff.

Definition of the menopause:

The menopause is a natural transition stage in most women's lives. For some it will be medically induced. It is marked by changes in the hormones and the woman stops having periods. Women may have a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms whilst experiencing the menopause and peri-menopause and may often encounter difficulties at work as a result of their symptoms.

Each woman will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time, and menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues as well. This also applies to perimenopausal symptoms, which will be covered under the same considerations in this policy.

Some studies suggest that Black women may have more prevalent and severe symptoms.

Disabled women and those with pre-existing health conditions, may find that the menopause can aggravate their existing impairments and health conditions or even trigger new ones. Menopausal symptoms can in turn also be made worse by the disabled woman's impairment or health condition.

Some trans men may experience natural menopausal symptoms.

Some trans women may experience pseudo-menopausal symptoms related to their hormone therapy treatment.

Some non-binary people may experience menopausal symptoms.

At Penpol we recognise that for many reasons, peoples' individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.

Menopausal symptoms may include:

- Hot flushes – a very common symptom that can start in the face, neck or chest, before spreading upwards and downward, may include sweating, the skin becoming red and patchy, and a quicker or stronger heart rate.
- Heavy and painful periods and clots, leaving those affected exhausted, as well as practically needing to change sanitary wear more frequently. Some affected may become anaemic.

- Night sweats, restless leg syndrome and sleep disturbance.
- Low mood, irritability, increased anxiety, panic attacks, fatigue, poor concentration, loss of confidence and memory problems.
- Urinary problems - more frequent urinary incontinence and urinary tract infections such as cystitis. It is common to have an urgent need to pass urine or a need to pass it more often than normal.
- Irritated skin – including dry and itchy skin or formication, and dry eyes. Also vaginal symptoms of dryness, itching and discomfort.
- Joint and muscle aches and stiffness.
- Weight gain.
- Headaches and migraines.
- Menopausal hair loss.
- Osteoporosis - the strength and density of bones are affected by the loss of oestrogen, increasing the risk of the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis.
- Side effects from hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a form of treatment for menopausal symptoms for some people (although not suitable or appropriate for all).
- Menopausal symptoms may also exacerbate existing impairments and conditions that those affected may already be struggling to cope.

Support for employees experiencing the menopause:

At Penpol we are committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and support staff experiencing the menopause or perimenopausal symptoms.

All staff will be provided with information so that they are able to better understand the effects of the menopause and be comfortable about discussing and addressing the impact that it can have on employees in carrying out their roles.

We recognise that some employees experiencing the menopause may find that related symptoms may impact on their health and wellbeing, and we aim to provide as much support as is reasonably practicable for individuals. The menopause is a very personal experience and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to let their line manager or the alternative contact (see below) know if they are struggling with symptoms that may impact on their work, so that appropriate support is provided. Such information will be treated confidentially and in accordance with our data protection policy.

It is not necessary to have a formal diagnosis before being able to be protected by this policy.

An alternative point of contact is available to employees experiencing the menopause should they not feel comfortable discussing their problems with their line manager, (particularly if they are male). This is **Tasha Lamb**. Employees may also prefer to discuss their problems with an alternative manager, or use the support offered by S.A.S as part of our well being package.

Employers should make allowances should there be an additional need for sickness absence by employees experiencing the menopause in order to manage their menopausal symptoms. Absence will be recorded as related to menopausal symptoms and employers will consider such absence as an ongoing condition requiring the consideration of reasonable adjustments and flexibility in absence procedure triggers.

At Penpol we recognise the potential impact of menopausal symptoms on performance by employees experiencing the menopause. Managers will seek to support staff sympathetically rather than moving directly to capability or disciplinary procedures.

We will ensure that gender sensitive risk assessments are undertaken to consider the specific needs of employees experiencing the menopause and to ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. The risk assessment will assist with the identification of any potential adjustments that may be required.

- Common areas in particular to consider are:
- workplace temperature and ventilation
- access to adequate toilet and washing facilities
- access to drinking water

- uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- working times and break times
- workplace stress and workload
- bullying and harassment

Employees who are experiencing the menopause can apply for the following adjustments:

- Control over environmental factors – with provision of desk fans on request, review of office seating plans so that affected employees can be near the window or open doors, or away from direct sources of heat such as radiators, fitting blinds to windows, greater access to chilled drinking water, and to toilets and washing facilities.
- Flexibility over uniform and dress codes should they exacerbate symptoms such as hot flushes and sweating, and provision of additional spare uniforms.
- Changing/washing facilities for staff to change clothes during the working day.
- Flexible working arrangements including options for flexitime (to work around symptoms or adjusting start and finish times for example), shift-swapping, and homeworking etc.
- Flexibility around the taking of breaks, or increased breaks during the working day, and if required providing cover as necessary for these breaks.
- Flexibility around attending medical appointments.
- Temporary changes to the employee's duties, such as undertaking fewer high-visibility work like formal presentations or meetings or on reception because it can be difficult to cope with symptoms such as hot flushes, or assessing how work is allocated or whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day.
- Provision of private spaces for women to rest temporarily, to talk with a colleague or to phone for personal or professional support.

This is not a definitive list and any alternative suggestions put forward by members of staff will be considered.

Confidential support is available via our S.A.S programme of support if this is appropriate.

## Responsibility of Employers:

Employers (with the support of HR where requested) should encourage employees to discuss the impact of their menopausal symptoms on their work-life and encourage them to access the support and adjustments offered. They should promote a positive attitude to discussions around women's health issues.

Employers should be ready and willing to have open discussions about the menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treat the discussion sensitively, confidentially and professionally.

Employers will consider all requests for support and adjustments sympathetically and will not discriminate against those employees who are experiencing the menopause, and put in place the required support or adjustments in a timely manner. All employees must be treated fairly and consistently. Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up any support available to employees experiencing the menopause.

We will take seriously and investigate any complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.

All requests for support or adjustments must be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the data protection policy.

Employers will support employees in informing their colleagues about the situation if appropriate.

## Responsibility of Employees:

All staff should take a personal responsibility to look after their health.

Employees are encouraged to inform their manager (or the alternative contact, should they not feel comfortable speaking to their manager) if they are struggling with menopausal symptoms and need any support, so that they can continue to be effective in their jobs.

Employees experiencing the menopause are encouraged to seek support through their GP, the employee well being package and other external organisations (see sections below headed 'Self-management for staff experiencing the menopause' and 'Further Information') as well as participating in the menopause support group.

All staff have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and productive working environment, be willing to help and support their colleagues, and understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

Employees should report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause.

If an employee is found to have harassed, victimised or discriminated against another employee in relation to the menopause, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

Places to find further information:

Alternative contact: Tasha Lamb

NHS information:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause)

[www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk)

[www.dasiynetwork.org](http://www.dasiynetwork.org)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause)



