



# Menopause and Perimenopause Policy and Procedure

## INTRODUCTION

Old Rayne Preschool aims to provide a safe environment where all employees are treated fairly and with dignity and where staff feel confident enough to raise issues relating to the menopause.

Women who choose to disclose that they are experiencing the menopause will be supported. This support will include the consideration of reasonable adjustments to help reduce the potential impact menopausal symptoms can have on women while they are at work. Each staff member's individual experience of the menopause will be respected, and a proactive stance will be taken to promote a greater understanding of the condition in order to eradicate any exclusionary or discriminatory practices.

References to menopause throughout the policy should be assumed to also include women experiencing perimenopause.

## 1. AIM, PURPOSE, AND OUTCOMES

The aim of this policy is to:

- Support women experiencing the menopause and help them to minimise the impact it can have on them
- Create an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for adjustments at work
- Ensure all staff know and understand what the menopause is and have access to a policy where help and support within Old Rayne Playgroup which is clearly defined
- Inform staff and managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, what the potential consequences can be and what support is available.

## 2. SCOPE

### Who is the policy intended to benefit or affect?

It is important to recognise that for many reasons individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly. A person's experience and perception of the menopause

may differ because of one or more of the relevant protected characteristics named in the [Equality Act 2010](#), namely, age, disability, trans status (gender reassignment), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Although this policy talks about women in relation to the menopause, gender neutral terminology has also been used in recognition of the fact that the menopause can impact trans, intersex and non-binary people who may require the same level of support and flexibility in the workplace as others with similar symptoms. Old Rayne Playgroup takes care to ensure your personal information is only accessible to authorised people. Our staff have a legal and contractual duty to keep personal health information secure, and confidential.

### 3. PRINCIPAL CONTENT

**Menopause** is defined as a biological stage in a woman's life that occurs when they stop menstruating and is a part of ageing. Normally it is defined as having occurred when someone has not had a period for twelve consecutive months. The average age for a woman to reach menopause is 51, however it can be later than this and can be affected by surgery, illness, or other factors.

#### 3.1 Definitions

**Premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency** is when the menopause is experienced before 40 years of age. This affects around 1 in 100 women.

**Perimenopause** is the time leading up to menopause when women 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. During this stage, menopausal symptoms can start to ease for many women.

#### 3.2 Symptoms of Menopause

How long menopausal symptoms can last varies greatly. On average they will last for around 4 years after a woman stops having periods, although some people can experience them for much longer. Not everyone will notice or experience a symptom, but research shows that approximately 85% of women do experience some symptoms, of which 25% could be classed as severe.

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

- mood changes
- memory and concentration loss
- headaches

- panic attacks
- heavy or light periods
- no or infrequent periods
- anxiety
- loss of confidence
- sleep difficulties
- hot flushes or excessive sweating
- joint and muscle stiffness
- out of character behaviour

Some women may not initially realise that they are experiencing the menopause and may try to ignore, or even misdiagnose their own symptoms. Staff who have any concerns about changes to their health or wellbeing should seek medical advice from their GP.

### **3.3 Staff wishing to disclose that they are experiencing the menopause**

- If a member of staff would like to disclose that they are experiencing the menopause and discuss what support might be available to them, they should arrange to speak to Sophie Startin in the first instance.
- It should be noted that there is no obligation on staff to disclose that they are experiencing the menopause.
- Where a member of staff has previously disclosed that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms and where reasonable adjustments were agreed, they should notify their manager if they are aware of the fact that they have reached the end of the menopause. This will help to determine whether any agreed adjustments remain appropriate.
- It is important to note that symptoms can sometimes reoccur after they have seemingly stopped for a period of time. In this instance staff may wish to inform their manager of the reoccurrence of symptoms and discuss what support they might require.

### **3.4 Management support**

The role of a manager in supporting staff experiencing the menopause is important. People can experience the menopause in a multitude of ways. Some women may not need any additional support whereas some may have more severe symptoms and could require support at work to help them cope with the impact of their symptoms.

If a member of staff wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling, managers should listen and respond appropriately, using the guidance within this policy.

As with any health-related condition, sympathetic and appropriate support from the manager is crucial in order to provide employees with the support that they need.

### **3.5 Management within Old Rayne Preschool should:**

- Read and understand this policy
- Help staff experiencing the menopause to feel supported, and to be effective in their

role

- Ensure staff are aware of sources of help, information, and support (see Appendix 1 and 2)
- Be prepared to have open discussions with staff and treat the conversation sensitively and professionally
- Be aware of sources of support both for themselves or for staff requesting any reasonable adjustments
- Be understanding and make fair decisions, in line with this policy, with respect to requests for reasonable adjustments
- Ensure an ongoing dialogue and review arrangements regularly to check that any reasonable adjustments agreed remain appropriate and adequate
- Managers have an important role to play in ensuring that anyone experiencing menopausal symptoms gets the same support and understanding as if they had any other health or wellbeing issue.

### **3.6 Principles for managing staff with symptoms:**

- Effective management of team members with menopausal symptoms can help to improve team morale, retain valuable skills and talent, and reduce sickness absence
- Good people management is fundamental to supporting employee health and well-being, spotting early signs of ill health or distress, and initiating early conversations about what support might be available.
- It is important for managers to recognise that other people can be indirectly affected by the menopause, for example, if a person's partner is experiencing insomnia and night sweats, they may also experience disrupted sleep and fatigue. If a person's partner experiences significant physical or psychological symptoms, they may be concerned for their wellbeing and feel increased levels of stress. In some cases, people can experience relationship problems or difficulties at home during this time. These issues can have an impact on staff in the workplace and managers should be understanding and supportive of staff members in these circumstances.
- It is also important to recognise that some staff members may not want to discuss the menopause. Any conversations should be kept strictly confidential and be dealt with sensitively, and information should only be shared when consent has been provided by the staff member concerned
- Everyone has different experiences and managers should not make any assumptions.

## **4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **4.1 Employees must:**

- Ensure they are familiar with this policy
- Communicate with their line manager as appropriate
- Comply with the policy
- Attend training or information sessions if required.

## 4.2 Managers must:

- Ensure they are familiar with this policy
- Ensure they communicate with staff effectively and sensitively
- Support the principles and procedures in the policy
- Undertake training as appropriate
- Provide current, relevant information and signposting to services and awareness training as appropriate
- Assist with communication of the policy throughout the organisation
- Provide advice and support on the application of the policy
- Monitor and review the policy
- Help to identify reasonable adjustments
- Ensure emergency contact details for staff are kept current.

## 5. PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS

- Staff should consider seeking medical advice from their GP in the first instance
- Staff should not feel that they simply have to 'put up' with menopausal symptoms as a part of life. The effects and effectiveness of treatments, including non-medical options, can be discussed with a GP
- GPs may also discuss lifestyle and how symptoms can be managed through changes that may help improve individuals longer term health
- Some GPs offer a double appointment if additional time is needed
- If an appointment with a GP proves unsatisfactory, consider requesting a second opinion or referral to another appropriate health professional or clinic
- There is a considerable amount of information available online about the menopause and links to some of this information can be found at the end of this document
- Make a list of symptoms both physical and mental, and noting feelings and changes that have occurred and preferences for treatment can be helpful prior to attending an appointment with a GP or other appropriate health professional
- Where appropriate staff could also consider and note potential reasonable workplace adjustments and discuss these with their manager.

### 5.1 Talking to a manager about the menopause

Staff should ask for a discussion in a location that offers a comfortable level of privacy and ensure that enough time is allocated to explain the situation. They should write down the issues to be raised beforehand and take this to the meeting, along with any suggestions about reasonable adjustments resulting from GP discussions or from other relevant research.

If necessary, staff may ask for someone to accompany them to help focus on the issues they need to raise. This should be agreed with the manager in advance.

If workplace adjustments are required, this will need to be discussed with the appropriate line manager.

## **5.2 Considering adjustments**

The following are examples of what might be considered to be a reasonable adjustment and should not be considered to be adjustments that will be automatically made. A risk assessment may also be deemed necessary to best support an employee's health and wellbeing in the workplace.

What is reasonable in the circumstances for individuals should be discussed and agreed between the staff member and their manager.

Examples of adjustments that might be considered to support staff experiencing menopausal symptoms could include the following (please note this list is not exhaustive and other adjustments may be required to be considered):

### ***Hot flushes***

- Considering some degree of temperature control, such as a desk fan or moving a person to a cooler area of the nursery or away from a heat source
- Offering easy access to cool drinking water
- Agreeing the need to sometimes move away from the floor to manage a hot flush, allowing a person to go to the coolest point (which may be outside), the bathroom or quiet room as necessary
- Providing access to towels/cloths for sponging down or drying
- Ensuring that meeting rooms are not occupied beyond the suggested capacity.

### ***Heavy / light periods***

- Supporting access to facilities both when nursery based and when off site on visits/ meetings/ training. This may mean preparation in advance to check available facilities
- Consideration of allowing a person to work from home when leaving the house and travelling is not feasible due to heavy periods.

### ***Headaches***

- Providing quiet areas as appropriate
- Considering the provision of noise reducing headphones to wear in open offices
- Allowing time to take medication.

### ***Difficulty sleeping***

Consideration could be given to flexibility in the work pattern.

### ***Low Mood***

- Consider allowing a person some time to help them refocus on their work
- Support an individual to seek support from their GP
- Consider the possibility of offering someone else to talk to, e.g., a colleague with experience of menopause

### ***Loss of Confidence***

- Offer regular one-to-one discussions with manager

- Consider protected time to catch up with work.

### ***Poor Concentration***

- Help with establishing if there is a pattern and considering adjustments if concentration is better or worse at certain times of the day
- Review workload with manager
- Support to make lists of work tasks
- Offer quiet space and try to minimize when others will disrupt staff when they need to concentrate and be mindful of diary planning and meeting times
- Consideration of noise reducing headphones.

### ***Anxiety and panic attacks***

- Support an individual to seek support from their GP or other appropriate health professional
- Consider offering a quiet room or space to practice relaxation techniques and mindfulness
- Consider offering some time out for a person to take a short walk or speak to someone they trust who can help.

## **EXTERNAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND ADVICE**

[www.rcog.org.uk](http://www.rcog.org.uk) [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

[www.balance-menopause.com/balance-app/](http://www.balance-menopause.com/balance-app/)

[www.menopausecafe.net](http://www.menopausecafe.net)

[www.acas.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing](http://www.acas.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing)

[www.henpicked.net](http://www.henpicked.net)

[www.sandyford.scot](http://www.sandyford.scot)

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

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

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

[www.healthandher.com](http://www.healthandher.com)

[www.womens-health-concern.org.uk](http://www.womens-health-concern.org.uk)

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