

# Menopause Policy

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 LSE is committed to building and maintaining a supportive and inclusive environment for its staff. An important part of this is ensuring that staff have awareness and understanding of the menopause, how this may affect those experiencing it, and what support is available.
- 1.2 Menopause happens as a result of changes in hormones and when periods stop due to lower levels of oestrogen. It usually affects women, as well as trans, intersex, and non-binary individuals, between the ages of 45 and 55 and therefore affects a significant proportion of the workforce. Menopause can also occur at an earlier age, or as a result of surgery or medical treatments, such as a hysterectomy or chemotherapy.
- 1.3 The symptoms experienced by an individual, which can be both physical and psychological, vary greatly. They can commonly include (but are not limited to) those listed below:

### **Mental health symptoms:**

- low mood/depression, anxiety, mood swings and low self-esteem
- problems with memory or concentration (brain fog)

### **Physical symptoms:**

- hot flushes, which can sometimes cause dizziness
- difficulty sleeping, which may be a result of night sweats
- heart palpitations
- headaches and migraines that are worse than usual
- muscle aches and joint pains
- recurrent urinary tract infections
- heavy and / or irregular periods

Some studies indicate that individual symptoms may be influenced by a number of factors, which include genetics, ethnicity, lifestyle, hormone treatments and pre-existing medical conditions or disabilities. Further information about menopause symptoms can be found on the [NHS website](#) and in the [Menopause Toolkit](#).

- 1.4 The menopause is a workplace issue because it can present health and wellbeing concerns that impact upon someone's ability to carry out their normal day to day work activities. Where health and wellbeing issues arise, they should be managed appropriately and with sensitivity.
- 1.5 This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Menopause Toolkit](#) which contains further guidance and information about supporting staff going through the menopause at work.

## 2. Policy Aims

- 2.1 This policy is intended to support an inclusive culture of open communication, understanding and support for those going through and / or experiencing challenges with the menopause.
- 2.2 It aims to ensure that:
  - LSE is fulfilling its commitment to the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and promoting an inclusive working environment.
  - Line managers and employees understand what the menopause is and how it can affect a colleague at work.
  - Those experiencing menopause, and their line managers, are able to have open communication about the challenges faced during menopause and the possible impact on work.
  - Line managers understand their responsibilities in supporting staff going through perimenopause and menopause and make work adjustments according to individual needs, as appropriate.
  - Appropriate steps are undertaken at work to prevent an employee's menopause symptoms being made worse.

## 3. Definitions

- 3.1 The word menopause is often used in reference to three transitional stages:
  - **Perimenopause** is the phase leading up to the menopause. During perimenopause, a woman, as well as trans, intersex or non-binary people, can have menopausal symptoms, although their periods have not stopped. This transitional stage can happen over several years.
  - **Menopause** happens when periods stop.
  - **Post-menopause** is the time after menopause, when there has not been a period for over a year. For some, symptoms of menopause may have decreased or stopped, but others can continue to have significant symptoms for longer.

For the purposes of this policy, the word 'menopause' is used to cover all three stages.

## 4 Principles

- 4.1 All staff are expected to take a supportive and inclusive approach in relation to the menopause and its effects on those within the School community. This includes contributing to an environment where employees feel comfortable in seeking support, without fear of judgment, discrimination or bias.

- 4.2 The School encourages staff to have open discussions about the menopause. This will help to support a culture of awareness and understanding. Discussions should be normalised and allow employees to have greater confidence in asking for, and receiving support, in the management of menopause symptoms at work. Despite this, managers should be sensitive to the fact that some employees may not wish or need to raise this.
- 4.3 Employees should be treated with respect and sensitivity when discussing issues regarding the menopause. This policy and guidance in the [Menopause Toolkit](#) can help both employees and managers in navigating discussions. Confidentiality should be maintained unless the employee has consented to their information being shared.
- 4.4 Staff and managers should be aware that menopause symptoms will affect individuals differently. For some, the transition period will be uneventful. For others, symptoms may be debilitating and for the rest, symptoms fall in between. Assumptions should not be made about the needs of staff who are experiencing menopause and managers should seek to clarify individual needs.
- 4.5 An employee must not be treated less favourably due to their menopause symptoms, nor should their work challenges or needs be ignored. Unprofessional behaviour and / or derogatory comments about the menopause are unacceptable. This includes exchanges in the form of jokes, 'banter', or any other insensitive communication, either in person or online. Such behaviour may constitute harassment and may be dealt with under the School's disciplinary procedures as appropriate.
- 4.6 Work adjustments should be discussed when menopause symptoms have been raised as an issue of concern or challenge for an employee, or where it becomes evident that symptoms are having an impact in carrying out their day-to-day work activities. Where menopausal symptoms have a 'long-term and substantial impact' on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, this may be considered a disability under the Equality Act 2010. Further information can also be found in the School's [Disability Policy](#). Reasonable adjustments (see section 9) must be considered and implemented for staff with disabilities in accordance with the Equality Act.
- 4.7 Where work / reasonable adjustments have been agreed to support employees, these should be implemented in a timely manner.

## **5 Responsibilities**

### **Employee responsibilities**

- 5.1 Employees have a responsibility to:
- Contribute to an inclusive working environment by ensuring that they maintain appropriate and respectful behaviour towards staff who are, or who may be perceived to be, going through the menopause and may require adjustments as a result.
  - Have an awareness and understanding of the menopause and of this policy.
  - Be as open as possible with line managers when affected by menopause symptoms and where this may be affecting their health, wellbeing or work.
  - Consider support and advice from their GP or Occupational Health where symptoms are having a negative effect on their health or work.
  - Speak to their HR Partner, another HR contact, an alternative manager, or their trade union representative, where appropriate, if they feel unable to discuss their menopause symptoms with their line manager in the first instance.

- Report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause in order for this to be addressed.

### **Manager responsibilities**

#### 5.2 Managers have a responsibility to:

- Have an awareness and understanding of the menopause and this policy.
- Promote awareness and understanding of this policy amongst their team and appropriately address any behaviour or conduct which could amount to discrimination, bullying and / or harassment (including the use of jokes or 'banter' in relation to menopause and its associated symptoms).
- Attend training on the menopause where necessary, in order to strengthen their understanding and ability to respond to the needs of staff, as well as access guidance in the School's [Menopause Toolkit](#).
- Facilitate discussions and respond sensitively to the needs of individuals – including the needs of those who may require alternative support due to intersectional impacts (i.e. for those employees with disabilities).
- Discuss and consider all reasonable support and work adjustments to support employees at work and ensure that this is implemented in a timely manner.
- Ensure that discussions regarding menopause symptoms and other health-related matters are treated confidentially.
- Support employees in informing their colleagues about individual circumstances, if appropriate
- Seek further advice from HR and/or Occupational Health where this may be needed.

### **HR responsibilities**

#### 5.3 HR has a responsibility to:

- Ensure that appropriate guidance, training and support is in place for staff and managers to manage menopause-related matters at work and monitor the effectiveness of this. Training and guidance for staff should incorporate information about conduct or behaviour which may lead to discrimination (both direct and indirect), bullying and / or harassment.
- Ensure that the menopause policy and any menopause related training is promoted to all staff.
- Signpost staff to further sources of support and guidance in relation to the menopause.
- Work with staff, trade unions and staff networks to support a positive approach to managing menopause symptoms at work.
- Providing appropriate guidance and support to managers in addressing complaints which are menopause-related, in accordance with agreed procedures.

## **6 Menopause and the law**

6.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires that employers ensure the health, safety and welfare of all its workers. This places responsibility on the School for assessing health and safety risks at work and minimising, reducing, and where possible, removing these risks for staff. Individual risk assessments should address any specific risks to employees suffering from menopause symptoms.

6.2 The Equality Act (2010) prohibits discrimination against people on the grounds of protected characteristics. Menopause itself is not a protected characteristic, but if an

employee experiences less favourable treatment due to menopause symptoms, it could be considered as discrimination on the grounds of age, sex and / or gender reassignment. In addition, if symptoms are severe enough to have a substantial and long-term effect on an employee's ability to carry out day to day activities, this could potentially be classed as a disability. Disability is also a protected characteristic, and the School is required to make reasonable adjustments to address any disadvantages that the employee may experience.

## **7 Support for the menopause**

The [symptoms](#) experienced by an individual can vary greatly and the impact of menopause on individuals can also include:

- feeling a loss of confidence in their skills and abilities
- feeling like they need to take time off work and hide the reasons for it
- having increased mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression.

Managers need to be sympathetic to the potential, and cumulative, impact of menopausal symptoms on the confidence and performance of employees and provide appropriate support.

### **7.1 Line management support**

Employees are encouraged to speak with their line manager about any support or work adjustments they require to help them at work. Managers must respond in a sensitive and professional manner and give due care to the needs of the employee and any support that can be offered. Employees will need to be able to clarify and discuss any particular challenges that they are facing. Guidance for these discussions is provided in the [Menopause Toolkit](#).

Work adjustments and the need for any individual risk assessment should be discussed with the employee with a view to agreeing the most appropriate support. Examples of potential adjustments and support that may be given include:

- Flexible working arrangements, which can include flexibility in start and finish times.
- Flexibility around the taking of breaks, or increased breaks during the working day, and if required, providing cover as necessary for these breaks.
- Where uniform is required, changing the material and/or flexibility in required dress. E.g. using natural fabrics and having the ability to remove outer layers.
- Allowing temporary homeworking arrangements.
- Flexibility in attending clinic, hospital, or GP appointments in seeking advice relating to the menopause.

Further examples are provided in the [Menopause Toolkit](#).

Any agreed work adjustments should be recorded and shared between the line manager and the employee. This should include any agreed dates of review in order to ensure that the agreed support remains effective.

Managers should also recognise that symptoms may influence an employee's choices in relation to their career development or goals. (For example, where symptoms are having a negative impact on an employee's confidence). Where appropriate, managers should

allow opportunities for an employee to discuss how symptoms may be affecting their choices and discuss what appropriate support could be provided. These discussions could take place during a 1-2-1 meeting or as part of a CDR discussion, with the aim of supporting employees to reach any longer-term goals.

## 7.2 **Support from other internal contacts**

An employee may initially choose to approach someone other than their line manager for support. Options include their [HR Partner](#) (or other HR contact) or another manager within their work area. These contacts can provide advice and can help facilitate discussions with the line manager, if this would be helpful to the employee. Employees can also seek advice and support their trade union, which can include support from a trade union representative in relation to any sensitive discussions related to the menopause. Staff can also seek advice and support from internal staff networks, such as [LSE Power](#) and [Spectrum](#) in order to access peer support or discuss their experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

## 7.3 **GP support**

An employee's GP may help in providing advice and treatment options for menopause symptoms. GP advice may also include information about the risks and benefits of [Hormone Replacement Therapy](#). Employees experiencing menopausal symptoms are encouraged to seek advice from their GP and discuss any advice or recommendations they have received with their manager.

## 7.4 **Counselling Services**

The [staff counselling](#) service and the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) may also provide a useful source of support for employees.

## 7.5 **Occupational Health**

Occupational Health can provide independent medical advice on how the School can support an employee with menopausal symptoms at work and make recommendations for adjustments or support. It is important to note that where straightforward work adjustments have been identified and can be readily implemented, this can be done without an Occupational Health referral. Employees and managers can seek further advice from their HR Partner as needed.

Employees who are referred to Occupational Health will undergo an assessment with an Occupational Health Adviser. This can only be carried out with the prior consent of the employee. Following the assessment, the employee will have the option of reading and commenting on the report from the Occupational Health Adviser, before it is finalised and sent to the referring manager.

The HR team will facilitate the referral of the employee to Occupational Health and will liaise directly with the service on behalf of the referring manager.

## 7.6 **Support and advice from external organisations**

There are several external organisations that provide advice and support for the menopause. A list of external organisations is also provided in [Menopause Toolkit](#).

# 8 **Risk Assessments**

8.1 An individual risk assessment can be used to ensure that the working environment or work practices are not exacerbating an employee's menopause symptoms. It will also

help managers to consider an individual's specific needs and what potential changes may help them manage their symptoms when carrying out their work. For example, potential changes could relate to local temperature, ventilation or ensuring that there is a suitable space available for any necessary breaks. If a uniform is required, it could mean adjustments to workwear.

## **9 Reasonable Adjustments**

- 9.1 It is important to be aware that where symptoms have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an employee's ability to carry out day-to-day activities, this could be classed as a disability. Reasonable adjustments must be discussed and implemented to comply with the School's duties under the Equality Act. Managers can seek advice from their HR Partner or the Staff Disability and Mental Health Adviser.
- 9.2 Reasonable adjustments do not mean changing the basic nature of an employee's role but could involve making adjustments to remove or reduce the challenge(s) that the employee faces in carrying out their duties. Examples of reasonable adjustments are given below. There is also further guidance on reasonable adjustments and examples of work adjustments within the [Menopause Toolkit](#).
- 9.3 Reasonable adjustments should be discussed with the employee and can include:
- Changing an employee's working pattern, either on a temporary or ongoing basis. (see also the [Flexible Working Policy](#) and the [Blended Working Policy](#).)
  - Introducing additional breaks throughout the working day.
  - Changes to their work area, e.g. moving to sit by a window or providing a desk fan.
  - Providing an employee with additional time to complete tasks.
  - Providing a locker for the employee to store a change of clothes.
  - Temporary changes to the employee's duties - for example, where there may be difficulty in carrying out public facing, highly visible, or mobile duties.
- 9.4 Agreed adjustments will depend upon the needs of the individual, as well as operational practicality, affordability and any health and safety considerations. Specific adjustments may be recommended by a medical professional (e.g., GP, Occupational Health Adviser) or be agreed as an outcome of an individual risk assessment. Where adjustments are agreed, these should be recorded by the manager and shared with the employee. Managers can also seek advice from their HR Partner or the Staff Disability and Mental Health Adviser.

## **10 Menopause and sickness absence**

- 10.1 Where menopausal symptoms result in an employee being too ill to attend work, their absence should be reported in accordance with the Sickness Absence Policy. Informal discussions with an employee about menopause-related sickness absence (e.g., during a return-to-work meeting) can be used as an opportunity to review whether the employee requires support or work adjustments in the management of their symptoms.
- 10.2 Sickness absence which is menopause-related can be recorded as such in the HR self-service system of MyHR by entering a note in the comments section. This should then be considered separately by managers when reviewing sickness absence levels and in considering possible support for the employee. This support may include increasing the number of absences that could trigger further action under the School's Capability-

Health Procedure for Professional Services Staff or the Academic Annex.

- 10.3 Sickness absence related to the menopause may be classed as disability and reasonable adjustments should be applied when considering an employee's sickness absence in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments will depend on individual circumstances and managers can seek guidance from the HR Partner if required.
- 10.4 Formal processes should only be triggered after all reasonable attempts have been made to understand the symptoms and how these are impacting an individual's ability to attend work, and reasonable adjustments have been put in place and trialled.

#### **Time off for medical appointments**

- 10.5 Managers should allow employees to take reasonable time off work to attend medical appointments in relation to the menopause. Where possible, staff are encouraged to book medical appointments outside of their core working hours, or at the beginning or end of the working day. However, time off to attend medical appointments should not be unreasonably refused, and managers should be as flexible as possible about how such arrangements are handled.
- 10.6 In line with the Sickness Absence Policy, if an appointment means an absence of a half-day or more, it should be recorded as sickness absence in the normal way.

### **11 Further guidance and resources**

- 11.1 The School will maintain appropriate guidance and resources for staff in relation to the menopause which can be found in the [Menopause Toolkit](#).
- 11.2 Staff and managers may also find it helpful to refer to the following policies when considering possible support options:
  - [The Flexible Working Policy and Procedure](#)
  - [The Disability Policy](#)

## Review schedule

Review interval	Next review due by	Next review start
3 years	19/02/2029	01/10/2028

## Version history

Version	Date	Approved by	Notes
1	19/02/2026	JNICC	

## Links

Reference	Link
Menopause Toolkit	<a href="https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Human-Resources/Menopause-Toolkit/Menopause-Toolkit">https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Human-Resources/Menopause-Toolkit/Menopause-Toolkit</a>
Flexible Working Policy	<a href="https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/Services/Policies-and-procedures/Assets/Documents/fleWorPolPro.pdf">https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/Services/Policies-and-procedures/Assets/Documents/fleWorPolPro.pdf</a>
Disability Policy	<a href="https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/services/Policies-and-procedures/Assets/Documents/schPolDis.pdf">https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/services/Policies-and-procedures/Assets/Documents/schPolDis.pdf</a>

## Contacts

Position	Name	Email	Notes
HR Policy and Employee Relations Manager	Beno Azebiah	b.azebiah@lse.ac.uk	

## Communications and Training

Will this document be publicised through Internal Communications?	<b>Yes</b>
Will training needs arise from this policy	<b>Yes</b>
If Yes, please give details:	