



Staff Menopause Policy

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Agreed:

	EIS
	Management
	Unison

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History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authorised by	Date
1.0	Local policy template for national bargaining policy as per Circular CC 06/22.	HR and People Development team	November 2022
2.0	Updates applied to introduction and webpage links as per Circular 06/22 – updated Annex.	HR and People Development team	March 2023

West Lothian College is an inclusive organisation and all policies, procedures, strategies, plans, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services are assessed to consider the impact on staff and students covered by the Equalities Act 2010 by the completion of an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA). Protected characteristics are defined as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership (in employment only), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. All college policies and procedures can be provided in an accessible format.

1 Introduction

West Lothian College is committed to ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect in a fair manner in their working environment.

West Lothian College is also committed to improving the wellbeing of its employees and recognises that women affected by the menopause may need additional consideration, support and adjustments during the time of hormonal change before, during and after the menopause.

West Lothian College will aim to provide appropriate support to those who are experiencing menopausal symptoms. It is important the college understands the difficulties and anxieties of employees currently going through this hormonal change and that this issue is managed by raising awareness, challenging discrimination, promoting a culture of openness and providing training and development for all line management and colleagues.

West Lothian College notes that people from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Menopause can also impact trans and non-binary people who may not identify as female. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of the menopause may be different for those among these communities.

Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status. It is important to recognise that for many reasons women's experiences of the menopause may differ greatly.

Although the policy refers to women, please consider that this policy refers to anyone suffering the symptoms of menopause.

2 Aims

The aim of the policy is to:

- Proactively promote the **Managers' Guidance (Appendix)** which provides direction and clarity on dealing with menopausal symptoms for those affected both directly and indirectly, e.g. partners, managers, and colleagues.
- Ensure that managers are aware of menopause related symptoms and how they can assist their employees. Managers take cognisance of the **Managers' Guide (Appendix)** which provides clarity for those affected by the menopause.
- Create an environment where those affected can feel comfortable enough discuss the issues around their symptoms.
- Ensure those experiencing menopausal symptoms suffer no detriment.

- Create a workplace that respects and values all employees and their differences, that promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination and harassment.
- Benefit the welfare of women members of staff, retain valued employees; improve morale and performance and promote the college as an employer of choice.

3 Scope

The policy applies to all West Lothian College staff.

4 Definitions

- The menopause is a natural transition stage. It is marked by changes in the hormones and when periods stop.
- The menopause may result in a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms and those with symptoms may encounter difficulties at work as a result.
- Each woman will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time. Menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families, and colleagues as well.
- Some women experience early menopause due to surgery, illness, cancer treatment (radiotherapy, chemotherapy etc.) or other reasons. As a result of these hormonal changes, many women will experience both physical and emotional symptoms.
- Perimenopause – a period of time before the menopause, in the years leading up to the menopause where there can be significant changes for women, including irregular and heavy menstrual bleeding and many of the classic symptoms associated with menopause.
- Post-menopause – a term used when a woman’s periods have stopped for 12 consecutive months. However, other menopausal symptoms may not have ended so soon. Problematic symptoms may continue for years.

5 Symptoms of Menopause

Those affected will experience only some or all of these symptoms (and others not on the list). Some people experience no noticeable symptoms, however 75% of women experience symptoms with 25% of those classed as severe. Symptoms tend to be experienced for around four years after the last period, however, this can last up to twelve years in some cases. 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 with.

6 Roles and Responsibilities

a. Line Managers – all managers should:

- i. Familiarise themselves with this policy and the **Managers' Guide (Appendix)** and available resources.
- ii. Be open to having discussions around the menopause whilst being sensitive to the personal nature of the discussion and maintaining confidentiality and professionalism.
- iii. Make use of the available guidance, agreeing arrangements with the affected woman with support plans and reasonable adjustments. Record the agreements to be implemented and ensure these are adhered to.
- iv. Line managers with appropriate support will undertake a gender sensitive risk assessment 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.
- v. Liaise with the HR and People Development team and occupational health provider where appropriate.
- vi. Set review dates and engage in ongoing conversations.

b. Employees – all employees are:

- i. Responsible for their health and wellbeing.
- ii. Encouraged to inform their manager (or an alternative contact, should they not feel comfortable speaking to their manager) if they are struggling with menopausal symptoms and need any support.
- iii. Responsible in contributing to a respectful and productive working environment, being willing to help and support their colleagues, and understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.
- iv. Responsible for contacting either the HR and People Development team or a trade union representative, regarding any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination experienced because of issues related to the menopause.

If an employee feels unable to speak to their line manager they can contact the HR and People Development team or a trade union representative.

7 Links to Other Policies

- a) Flexible Working Policy and Procedure
- b) Your Attendance Matters Policy and Procedure
- c) Harassment Policy and Procedure

8 Further Sources of Information

- a) An Employee Assistance Programme is available to all staff which can offer confidential advice and counselling services for matters relating to menopause in addition to a range of personal issues and work-related concerns such as: bereavement, financial concerns, relationship problems, depression, bullying and stress. The direct family members of employees can contact the EAP line for support (except for financial and legal advice). Support is delivered by a team of trained wellbeing and counselling practitioners.

There is no charge for this service and the Employee Assistance Programme operates 24 hours, 7 days a week and can be contacted as follows:

Via phone: UK Freephone number: 0800 028 5148

Employees also have access to the EAP website which includes useful information.

Online: <https://wlcouncil.optimise.health/>

- b) Further information can be found here:

- i. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause>
- ii. <http://menopausematters.co.uk>
- iii. <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/help-and-advice/factsheets/menopause>
- iv. <https://thebms.org.uk>
- v. <https://www.daisynetwork.org>
- vi. <https://menopausesupport.co.uk>
- vii. <https://www.menopausedoctor.co.uk/>
- viii. www.menopause-exchange.co.uk

9 Further Reading

- i. <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/menopause.php>
- ii. <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/symptoms.php>
- iii. <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/physical.php>
- iv. <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/heavyperiods.php>
- v. <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/diet.php>
- vi. <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/weightgain.php>
- vii. <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/oestrogens.php>
- viii. <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/cvd.php>

- ix. www.thebms.org.uk
- x. www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause
- xi. www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause
- xii. www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng23/ifp/chapter/About-this-information

10 Appendix: Managers' Guidance

Everyone who is affected is different and, as such, it is difficult to set out specific guidelines. When conversations occur with those who are affected either directly or indirectly, ensure that you:

- allow time and space for the conversation – find an appropriate place where confidentiality can be maintained
- be open to the discussion and encourage the staff member to honestly share their issues
- suggest reasonable adjustments (see below)
- agree any actions and record in a suitable confidential manner
- discuss whether other team members should be informed and who should undertake this
- arrange a follow up meeting at a suitable time and place.

Reasonable Adjustments

The following list of reasonable adjustments have been suggested by the CIPD in their '[A guide to managing menopause at work: guidance for line managers](#)' (2021):

- Sleep disruption and/or night sweats
- Recognise someone may take more short-term absence if they've had a difficult night.
- Consider a change to shift patterns or the ability to swap shifts on a temporary basis.
- Carrying out risk assessments and making appropriate adjustments.
- Offer a flexible working arrangement, for example a later start and finish time.
- Where a role permits and the manager can support it the member of staff could work from home for a short period if symptoms have been significant, for example disrupted sleep pattern.

Hot flushes and/or daytime sweats

- Look at ways to cool the working environment, for example provide a fan, move a desk close to a window or adjust the air conditioning.
- Provide easy access to cold drinking water and washrooms.

- Adapt uniforms to improve comfort.
- Limit the time wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face masks (subject to any COVID-secure measures required).
- In customer-focused or public-facing roles, it may help to have access to a quiet room for a short break so as to manage a severe hot flush.

Heavy or irregular periods

- Provide easy access to washroom and toilet facilities.
- Allow for more frequent breaks to go to the toilet.
- Be understanding about someone working from home if they have very heavy bleeding.
- Make sanitary products available in washrooms.
- Make it easy to request extra uniforms if needed.

Headaches and fatigue

- Consider a temporary adjustment to someone's work duties.
- Provide a quiet area to work.
- Provide access to a rest room.
- Offer easy access to drinking water.
- Allow regular breaks and opportunities to take medication.

Muscular aches, and bone and joint pain

- Make any necessary temporary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules.
- Allow someone to move around or stay mobile, if that helps.

Psychological issues (for example loss of confidence, poor concentration, anxiety, and so on)

- Encourage employees to discuss concerns at one-to-one meetings with you and/or occupational health.
- Discuss possible adjustments to tasks and duties that are proving a challenge.

- Address work-related stress by carrying out a stress risk assessment recommended by the HSE.
- Signpost to an Employee Assistance Programme or counselling services if available.
- Identify a supportive colleague to talk to away from the office or work area, such as a wellbeing champion.
- Allow time when needed, to have some quiet time or undertake relaxation or mindfulness activities.
- Provide access to a quiet space to work or the opportunity to work from home.
- Have agreed protected time to catch up with work.
- Discuss whether it would be helpful for the employee to visit their GP, if they haven't already.

Other examples of adjustments include:

- Provide private areas for those affected to rest, recover or make a telephone call to access personal or professional support.
- Ensure working time arrangements are flexible enough to meet the needs of menopausal women. For example, they may also need more breaks during the day, or may need to leave work suddenly if their symptoms become severe.

Equality Impact Assessment

Before carrying out an EIA, you should familiarise yourself with the college's EIA Policy Statement and Guidance, along with further information and resources which are available on Sharepoint.

EIA covers **strategies, policies, procedures, plans, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services**, but will be referred to hereinafter as 'policy/practice'.

Policy/Practice (name or brief description):	Staff Menopause Policy
Strategy/Policy includes Equalities Statement of Inclusiveness?	Yes
Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (choose from the following options):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed new policy/practice • Proposed change to an existing policy/practice • Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice • Other (please give detail): 	<p>Proposed new policy</p> <p>To help raise managers' awareness of the organisational responsibility in understanding menopause and related issues and how this can affect all staff, their partners, families and work colleagues. To raise wider awareness and understanding among employees and to outline support and adjustments that are available. To ensure all staff are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment and ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of staff.</p>
Person responsible for the policy area or practice:	
Name:	Derek O'Sullivan
Job title:	Head of HR and People Development
An Equality Impact Assessment must be carried out if the policy/practice:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affects operational or strategic functions of the college • is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance) 	
Why the EIA is being carried out	<p>The policy affects the operational functions of the college.</p> <p>This policy is relevant as it recognises that menopause can have an impact on a person's work life, dignity and</p>

	privacy: for example, confidentiality issues if an individual does not want colleagues to know that they are experiencing the menopause or that it is affecting them in a particular way, e.g. concentration.
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Equality Groups

Relevant to the Policy/Practice, identify which of the undernoted equality groups are impacted upon:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Disability • race (including ethnicity and nationality) • religion or belief • sex • sexual orientation • gender reassignment • pregnancy and maternity • marriage or civil partnership 	<p>The Policy applies across all staff. In particular the management of menopause takes cognisance of the additional support required by staff experiencing this.</p> <p>The Policy applies across all staff. In particular the management of menopause takes cognisance of the additional support required by staff experiencing this.</p> <p>In the development of this policy the following has been considered:</p> <p>Impact of menopause can have different impacts on different groups for example, on family life – for example individuals can be indirectly affected by the menopause e.g. if their partner is experiencing insomnia and night sweats they may also experience disrupted sleep and fatigue or if their partner experiences significant physical or psychological symptoms (such as depression) they may be concerned for her wellbeing and feel increased levels of stress.</p> <p>There may also groups or groups that may experience social exclusion, for example transgender staff who are experiencing the menopause but have not told their manager or colleagues that they were assigned a different gender at birth.</p> <p>Issues of respect for and knowledge about different religious beliefs and cultural values. It is important to understand that not all religious and cultural groups have the same approach or attitude toward the menopause.</p>
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Record your assessment against the following statements:

Statement	Equality assessment
Detail the evidence of the needs of the identified equality groups and any gaps in information	The purpose of the Policy is to provide a clear support and guidance to staff experiencing menopause and to managers.
Will application of this	No

policy/practice lead to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups?	
If yes, how will the policy/practice be changed to contribute to advancing equality of opportunity	N/A
State how this policy/practice will foster good relations:	The policy will ensure that the college will ensure that staff experiencing menopause have access to support and that they are managed in a clear and supportive manner.
Will the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups?	No
If yes, how will the policy/practice be changed to contribute to advancing equality of opportunity	N/A
Which equality groups or communities have been consulted in the development and review of this policy/practice?	The Executive Leadership Team and Trade Unions were informed of the new national Circular implementing this new national policy.

<p>Equality Impact Assessment Outcome Select one of the four options below to indicate how the development/review of the policy/practice will be progressed and state the rationale for the decision. (Delete the options that do not apply):</p>	
<p>Option 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.</p> <p>Option 2: Adjust the policy or practice – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations.</p> <p>Option 3: Continue the policy or practice despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be mitigated</p> <p>Option 4: Stop the policy or practice as there are adverse</p>	<p>Option 1</p>

effects cannot be prevented/mitigated against.	
Monitoring	
When will the policy/practice next be reviewed?	Every three years
Publication of EIA	
Can this EIA be published in full, now? Please state Yes or No If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply:	Yes

Sign-off	
EIA undertaken by	
Name:	Virginia Toyi
Date:	14 November 2022
Accepted by person responsible for the policy/practice named above:	
Name:	Derek O'Sullivan
Date:	14 November 2022
Approved by Equalities Committee	
Date:	