



04.07 Menopause policy

Blackberry Lane Pre-School and Nursery acknowledges that transitioning through the menopause can be a difficult and stressful time and employees can experience symptoms that can impact their work life and we are committed to supporting our staff in practical and reasonable ways. This policy sets out the support that will be provided when an employee is affected by the menopause or is experiencing menopause-related symptoms.

The aims of this policy are to:

- make line managers aware of their responsibility to understand the menopause and related issues and how they can affect employees and their work colleagues
- educate line managers about potential symptoms of the menopause and how they can support employees in the workplace
- raise wider awareness and understanding among employees
- encourage employees to talk about the menopause openly and confidently
- outline the support and reasonable adjustments that are available to employees
- reduce menopause-related sickness absence by supporting staff to remain in work.

We recognise that employees may need additional support and adjustments in the period before, during and after the menopause and aim to help staff according to their individual needs and circumstances. We seek to provide a work environment in which all employees are treated with respect and dignity, and which protects employees' health, safety and welfare and we therefore actively encourage our employees to discuss their menopausal symptoms and to ask for additional support and adjustments.

It should be noted that people from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms. Due to a variety of factors, the experience of the menopause may be different for those among these communities. Although the policy refers to women, please consider that 'people who menstruate' also require consideration. 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, people's individual experiences of the menopause may differ greatly. The menopause can also affect partners and families too.

Anyone can be affected by hormonal changes during their lives for a number of reasons, including pregnancy, fertility treatment, gender transitioning, conditions needing hormone treatment, and menopause. These can bring about symptoms which could affect a colleague at work.

Definitions and symptoms

The menopause is part of the natural ageing process for all women, although it can also be brought on as a result of other medical conditions or certain surgical interventions. It refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for twelve consecutive months, but it is best described as a "transition" rather than as a one-off event. After a woman has not had a period for a year, the time from that point is then considered to be the post-menopause, but this does not mean menopause symptoms cease. Menopause symptoms continue, on average, for four years from the last period and can continue for up to twelve years.

The perimenopause is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause and it can often last four to five years, although for some women it may continue for many more years or for others it may last only for a few months. During the time of the perimenopause, individuals may begin to experience symptoms due to changes in their hormone levels. These symptoms may vary in degree between different individuals. As individuals may still be having regular periods at the onset of these symptoms, many do not always realise that

they are experiencing the perimenopause and may not understand what is causing their symptoms. This can be a barrier to accessing support.

The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55. In the UK, the average age is 51, but it can happen much earlier. Many women experience the menopause before the age of 45 (early menopause) and some women experience the menopause before the age of 40 (premature menopause). Some women also experience a medical/surgical menopause which can occur suddenly when the ovaries are damaged or removed by specific treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery. Individuals who are non-binary, transgender or intersex may also experience menopausal symptoms.

It is important to recognise that, for many reasons, the menopause affects women's physical and psychological health differently. Symptoms vary in type, amount, severity and length between individuals. The menopause can often also indirectly affect individuals' partners, families and work colleagues.

The symptoms of the menopause can include:

- hot flushes and daytime sweats
- palpitations and night sweats
- fatigue
- sleep disturbances and insomnia
- headaches
- skin irritation
- muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains
- irritability and mood disturbances
- poor concentration levels
- forgetfulness and memory loss
- anxiety, depression, panic attacks
- weight gain
- loss of confidence
- changes in menstrual flow and regularity, including heavy bleeding
- recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs), including cystitis
- the need for more regular and/or urgent toilet breaks.

These symptoms can adversely affect how employees work, their relationships with work colleagues and their performance and productivity levels.

Some individuals seek medical advice and treatment for the symptoms of the perimenopause and menopause and others may try self-help measures and alternative therapies to cope with the symptoms. A common form of treatment is known as hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Many women find these treatments helpful for alleviating symptoms, but HRT is not suitable or appropriate for everyone. Some women using HRT may experience side effects which may also require adjustments in the workplace.

Communication

Blackberry Lane aims to create an environment in which employees feel confident about raising issues about their menopausal symptoms and asking for additional support and adjustments at work. Many employees still see the menopause as a private and personal issue and, for some, discussing the transition into menopause can be a difficult subject to be open about. We will therefore seek to promote a greater openness about, and understanding of, the menopause among line managers and staff and will encourage line managers to create a supportive and understanding team culture that removes any barriers to employees disclosing information to them. We will do this by:

- recording sickness absences that are related to the menopause as an ongoing medical issue rather than as a series of short-term sickness absences

- providing training to line managers so that they are knowledgeable to have open and sensitive conversations with employees about their menopausal symptoms (and how these might affect their work) and what they can do to support them
- treating the menopause in the same way as any other medical condition
- being accommodating to temporary flexible working requests that will help employees manage their symptoms, such as a later start and finish time
- putting in place measures to help employees to better manage their symptoms, leading to a reduction in sickness absence and an increase in wellbeing and productivity
- reminding staff to support their work colleagues, not to make inappropriate comments or jokes and to respect any adjustments put in place to help them with their symptoms.

Workplace adjustments

We are committed to ensuring that conditions in the workplace do not make menopausal symptoms worse and that appropriate support and adjustments are put in place. We will therefore work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support any employees who are transitioning through the menopause. We also recognise that the menopause is a very individual experience and that employees can be affected in different ways and to different degrees, and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed. These may include:

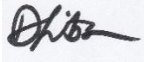
- adjusting workplace temperatures
- improving ventilation
- providing fans
- providing easy access to cold drinking water, rest rooms and toilet/washroom facilities
- access to a quiet room or area (short break) to help manage the onset of severe symptoms such as hot flushes
- allowing temporary changes to work/shift patterns
- reviewing workload/duties
- making sure employees can take regular and flexible toilet breaks
- permitting time off for attendance at medical appointments
- being flexible when applying the performance management, attendance or disciplinary procedures
- signposting or referring the employee to the Employee Assistance Programme

Blackberry Lane will also carry out risk assessments which take the specific needs of menopausal employees into consideration.

Line managers should apply individual discretion when assessing an employee's particular needs and circumstances and should act accordingly. Information about an employee's menopausal symptoms should be treated as confidential and line managers should expressly agree with the employee which (if any) work colleagues should be informed, by whom and on what basis.

Line managers should then record any agreed adjustments and review these at least annually. Symptoms of the menopause can fluctuate over time, so line managers should arrange regular follow-up discussions with the employee to ensure that the support and adjustments provided still meet their needs.

For many reasons, it may not be an easy time in a woman's life and so it is imperative that employees who require additional support during this time are treated with understanding, dignity and respect. The policy acknowledges that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the menopause and so it is intended as a support guide for all workers. We agree to work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support women experiencing the menopause and to ensure the workplace does not make their symptoms worse. Exclusionary or discriminatory practices will not be tolerated.

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| This policy was adopted by | Blackberry Lane Pre-School & Nursery | |
| On | February 2025 | |
| Date to be reviewed | February 2026 | |
| Signed on behalf of the provider |  | |
| Name of signatory | Mrs D Gibson | Ms C Lawrence |
| Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner) | Manager | Director |