



# The Athelstan Trust

## Menopause Policy

Date of Review	Approved by	Date of Approval	Next Review Date	Website
May 2022	N/A		May 2023	Y

### 1. Introduction

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 the employee at work.

A quarter of menopausal women will experience debilitating symptoms – from hot flushes and night sweats to increased anxiety – and for some it forces them out of the workplace completely. This means that experienced middle-aged women are leaving the profession in large numbers. These women are likely to be at the peak of their careers but without the right support at the right time, they are unable to reach their full potential. This policy sets out steps that can be taken to retain this talent within the Athelstan Trust.

### 2. Definitions

**‘Menopause’** – the point at which a woman’s oestrogen levels decline, and she stops having periods. Menopausal symptoms are typically experienced for several years so it is best described as a ‘transition’ rather than a one-off event.

**‘Perimenopause’** – this is the phase leading up to the menopause when a woman’s hormone balance starts to change, and when she may begin to experience menopausal symptoms. For some women this can start as early as their twenties or as late as their late forties.

### 3. Principles

Menopause isn’t openly talked about in the workplace; symptoms are personal and sometimes embarrassing. A large number of women find their symptoms negatively affect their performance at work and many women lose their confidence. At the Athelstan Trust we believe that the Menopause shouldn’t be a taboo, and everyone should feel confident to have a conversation with their line manager, especially when they need guidance and advice.

At the Athelstan Trust we aim to create an open culture where women feel comfortable to say they’re struggling with symptoms. The menopause needn’t be an awkward or embarrassing topic and it certainly shouldn’t mean that a woman needs to press pause on her working life. Often a few simple changes to someone’s working environment can make a world of difference – enabling someone experiencing menopausal symptoms to continue working and contributing to their full potential. Even just being able to talk openly can reduce the impact of someone’s symptoms.

### 4. Who is this policy for?

The Athelstan Trust aims to support all employees experiencing menopausal symptoms, as well as helping employees and line managers understand how they can support employees experiencing such symptoms.

## 5. Why this policy matters

The menopause is experienced by most women, usually between the ages of 45-55, although some women can experience it earlier than this, due to 'premature menopause' or surgery. Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically and are different for everyone. They can commonly include (but aren't limited to):

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- anxiety
- dizziness
- fatigue
- memory loss
- depression
- headaches
- recurrent urinary tract infections
- joint stiffness, aches and pains
- reduced concentration
- heavy periods.

The Athelstan Trust is putting in place this policy to ensure that it provides an inclusive and supporting working environment for women experiencing the menopause and in line with its role as a Flexible Working Ambassador.

This policy sets out the support available to women before, during and after the menopause. It is designed to ensure that women suffering with menopausal symptoms can feel empowered to ask for adjustments to ease their symptoms without embarrassment, that they can carry out their daily role in a safe working environment and they can have open discussions with colleagues and line managers so that they feel part of an inclusive culture at work.

## 6. Support and adjustments

**Desk Fans** - Fans can be obtained by sending an email request to the school finance office.

**Safe, supportive conversations** – The Athelstan Trust aims to facilitate an open and understanding working environment and so we encourage employees to inform their line manager or a female member of SLT that they are experiencing menopausal symptoms at an early stage to ensure that symptoms are treated and the necessary support can be made available.

**Medical support** – The Athelstan Trust encourages all employees to speak to their GP when they are suffering symptoms. The menopause support app, Balance, also offers extensive advice on all aspects of the menopause. If required a referral may be made to occupational health.

**Flexible working** - The Athelstan Trust is a Flexible working employer. Should an employee require changes to their working arrangements, they should contact their line manager in the first instance. Women experience menopausal symptoms differently and so adjustments would be considered in relation to the individual employee's needs.

**Sickness** – The Athelstan Trust has a sickness policy which is on the Athelstan Trust website. An employee should follow these procedures if they feel they are unfit to work, but they should also feel that they can be open about the reason for their menopause related absence with their line manager without fear of being discriminated against.

**Counselling** - Open discussions with supportive people in school will enable women experiencing the menopause to feel part of an inclusive culture. This will often lead to supportive adjustments. In some cases menopause can affect women's mental health and specialist counselling support may be required. The Athelstan Trust has in place an Employee Assistance Programme which includes counselling provision for employees.

## **7. The Role of Line Managers**

All Line Managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with this Menopause Policy.
- Be willing to have open discussions with employees about changes in their health including issues relating to the menopause, treat the discussion sensitively and recognise that each individual's experience may differ, ensuring confidentiality where requested by the employee.
- Refer to trained colleagues to discuss support and adjustments.
- Ensure on-going communication and agree a plan for review where appropriate.
- Implement any agreed adjustments.
- Ensure regular check-ins are in place to review any support and make necessary changes to an employee's working environment or patterns that are required from both the perspective of the employee and the school within the Trust.