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Menopause Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 York St John University is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone and to foster an environment in which colleagues can openly and comfortably initiate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause and access support.
- 1.2 Menopause is a natural part of life, and it is not always an easy transition. With the right support, it can be much better. Whilst not everyone suffers with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work.
- 1.3 Menopause should not be taboo or 'hidden'. We want staff and students at York St John University to understand what menopause is, and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment.
- 1.4 The changing age of the UK's workforce means that there are more menopausal colleagues in the workplace. Research shows that colleagues may be unwilling to discuss menopause-related health problems with their line manager, nor ask for the support or reasonable alterations that they may need. Fostering age and gender inclusive workplaces will boost women's economic participation and help employers to tap into valuable skills and talent. If symptoms are very severe then the individual may have rights as a disabled person under the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.5 Small changes on a practical level can make a huge difference to the quality of working life for individuals experiencing the menopause and employers can reap the benefits in terms of better attendance and engagement and reduced employee turnover.
- 1.6 This policy sets out the framework for employees and managers on providing the right support to colleagues with menopausal symptoms at work.

2. Aim and Scope

- 2.1 To ensure everyone understands what menopause is, can confidently discuss it with colleagues and especially those they line manage, and are clear on the University's policy and practices, supported by Human Resources and Organisational Development.
- 2.2 To educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of the menopause and how they can support employees at work.
- 2.3 To ensure that employees experiencing menopausal symptoms feel confident to discuss them and ask for support and any reasonable adaptations so they can continue to be successful in their roles.
- 2.4 To reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- 2.5 To assure employees that we are committed to supporting their needs during menopause.
- 2.6 For employees experiencing symptoms it can be a difficult and stressful time as well as a very sensitive and personal matter. For the employer it is an employee health and wellbeing concern and could potentially be a disability equality issue. Menopause can affect transgender and gender diverse individuals. Some trans men and gender diverse people may experience natural menopausal symptoms.
- 2.7 Discrimination or harassment on the ground of menopause will not be tolerated.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 In this policy, menopause covers all three stages in the transition: perimenopause, menopause and post menopause.
- 3.2 **Menopause** is a biological stage in a person's life that occurs when they stop menstruating and have reached the end of their natural reproductive life. Usually, it is defined as having occurred when a person has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for people reaching menopause naturally). The average age for a person to reach menopause is 51 however, it can be earlier or later than this due to surgery, illness, or other reasons.
- 3.3 **Perimenopause** is the time leading up to menopause when a person may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before a natural menopause.
- 3.4 **Post menopause** is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a person has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Employees experiencing menopause

- All employees experiencing menopause are encouraged to:
 - Be open and honest in conversations with line managers/HROD and Occupational Health

- Speak to a named Wellbeing Champion who could support them with the menopause or speak to their line manager.
- Consider completing an individual Menopause Risk Assessment (insert line) which identifies symptoms that are relevant to that individual and ways of mitigating against those symptoms. Only the sections of the risk assessment that are relevant to the individual need to be completed.

4.2 All employees:

- All employees should:
 - Take personal responsibility to look after their health.
 - Contribute to a respectful and productive working environment.
 - Be willing to help and support their colleagues; and
 - When an individual has wished to share information with their colleague/s, respecting confidentiality and being supportive of any adaptations their colleague is receiving because of their menopausal symptoms.

4.3 Line Managers

4.2.1 All line managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and understand the support that they can provide to their team members.
- Attend any training that is provided to help manage and support team members with menopausal symptoms that affect them in the workplace.
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally.
- **Discussion with individual team members who may be affected by the Menopause**
 - Agree with the individual how best they can be supported, and any reasonable adaptations required.
 - Record adaptations agreed, and actions to be implemented.
 - Encourage the individual to complete a Menopause Risk Assessment which identifies symptoms that are relevant to that individual and ways of mitigating against those symptoms. Only the sections of the risk assessment that are relevant to the individual need to be completed.
 - Ensure ongoing dialogue and record dates of review meetings; and
 - Ensure that all agreed adaptations are adhered to.
 - Consider signposting the individual to the named Wellbeing Champion for additional support
- Where adaptations are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the line manager may:
 - Discuss a referral to Occupational Health for further advice and if appropriate, refer the employee to Occupational Health before reviewing Occupational Health advice and implement any recommendations, where reasonably practical; and
 - Discuss further with HROD with involvement of the employee.

4.4 Occupational Health Services

- The role of Occupational Health is to:

- Carry out a holistic assessment of individuals as to whether menopause may be contributing to symptoms/wellbeing, providing advice and guidance in line with up to date research;
- Signpost to appropriate sources of help and advice.
- Provide support and advice to HROD and line managers in determining and agreeing reasonable adaptations, if required; and
- Monitor referrals due to menopause symptoms and provide additional signposting, where required.

4.5 Human Resources and Organisation Development (HROD)

- HROD will:
 - Offer guidance to managers on the interpretation of this Policy as well as signpost managers to support.
 - Signpost colleagues to the policy as well as encouraging staff to have open and honest conversations with their line manager regarding the impact their symptoms have on them as an individual.
 - Promote awareness of the symptoms associated with menopause transition encouraging open conversations and communicate the considerable organisational benefits of embracing an older female workforce.

5. Why may employees not reveal their menopause symptoms?

5.1 Employees may not initially wish to disclose their menopausal symptoms at work. In addition, those who take time off work because of the menopause may not tell their employer the real reason for their absence. This can be because they feel their symptoms are a private and personal matter, it might be embarrassing for them and the person they would be confiding in, they do not know their line manager well enough, or they are wary because their line manager may not understand or experience menopause or is younger or unsympathetic.

They may also worry that they will be subjected to sex discrimination or sexual harassment.

5.2 Other worries are that their symptoms may not be taken seriously, if they do talk that, their symptoms will become widely known at work, they could be thought less capable, and their job security and/or chances of career development opportunities could be harmed.

6 Symptoms of menopause

6.2 It is important to note that not everyone will notice every symptom, or even need help or support. However, many do experience symptoms, including some which may be classed as severe.

6.2.1 Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically. The most common are the following: hot flushes, poor concentration, headaches, panic attacks, heavy/light periods, anxiety, loss of confidence, difficulty sleeping and night sweats, feeling tired and lacking energy, mood swings, taking longer to recover from illness, aches and pains including muscle and joint stiffness, urinary problems, noticeable heartbeats, skin irritation, dry eyes and putting on weight. This list is non-exhaustive, and individuals may experience other symptoms.

6.2.2 An individual [Menopause Risk Assessment](#) can be completed which helps to identify the ways to mitigate against some of the common symptoms of the Menopause.

This can be tailored to an individual's symptoms and circumstances. For example, some individuals may need to leave a meeting at short notice.

7 Raising Concerns

- 7.1 If an employee wishes to discuss any issues of concern in terms of how the menopause is impacting on them, they should in the first instance speak to their line manager. Line managers should listen and treat any discussion confidentially and professionally. If an employee feels that they are not being supported by their line manager, then they should contact HROD for advice.

8 Other sources of support for a member of staff experiencing the menopause

- 8.1 Employees may wish to adapt their working pattern and make a request for flexible working [Flexible Working Policy](#). If the symptoms of the menopause impact to a great degree, the individual may view this as a disability. The Supporting Disabled Staff Policy [Supporting Disabled Staff Policy and Procedure](#) can be used to help support discussions around what reasonable adjustments the individual requires.
- 8.1.1 Colleagues may wish to speak to the University's trained [Wellbeing Champions](#), ([named Wellbeing Champion](#)) who can also provide wellbeing support and signpost staff to other appropriate help and advice.

9 External Sources of support

Some external sources of help and support for colleagues and managers include:

- [Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms, and treatment options.
- [The Daisy Network charity](#), which provides support for women experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency.
- **British Menopause Society**
<https://thebms.org.uk/>
- [Balance Me](#) a useful website which provides a useful library of resources, treatment options and access to a Balance Me App which can be used to log your symptoms. The App is free to use although there is also access to a monthly subscription App for more detailed tailored support.

NHS

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
www.nhs.uk/conditions/early-menopause

Guidance on Menopause at Work from the NHS
[HSWPG-menopause-at-work-March-2020 FINAL 0.pdf \(nhsemployers.org\)](#)

International Menopause Society

<https://www.imsociety.org/>

[My Menopause Doctor - A website that aims to provide necessary information to make informed decisions regarding treatment to help turn the menopause into a positive experience that does not negatively impact.](#)

Facebook Groups – [Perimenopause Hub](#), [MenoHealth](#), [Menosisters](#)