



Bosco Menopause Policy

For all schools within the Bosco Catholic Education Trust

This Menopause Policy has been approved and adopted by the Bosco Catholic Education Trust

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1. Bosco Catholic Education Trust Mission Statement

The Bosco Catholic Education Trust (“Bosco CET”) is a Christ-centred family of Catholic academies, within the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, working together as one body to provide an outstanding education for all. As Catholic schools, we endeavour to develop confident, compassionate and faithful young people. Through partnership, collaboration and mutual support, we seek to enable all those entrusted to our care to become the person God called them to be.

“Serve the Lord joyfully”

2. Introduction

Three in four women experience menopause symptoms. One in four have severe symptoms and between 75 and 80% of menopausal women are in work. You are not alone!

Whilst menopause is not a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010, sex, age and disability are all characteristics which provide protection against unfair treatment of employees going through the menopause.

People from the non-binary, transgender and intersex communities may also experience menopausal symptoms; for the avoidance of doubt, although this policy refers to women, it applies to anyone who menstruates.

Experiences and perceptions of the menopause may also differ in relation to disability, age, race, religion, or sexual orientation. 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.

3. Policy Statement

Bosco CET is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works here and recognises that women may need additional consideration, support and adjustments before (perimenopause), during and after the menopause.

The menopause is a natural part of every woman’s life and marks the end of her reproductive cycle. For many reasons, it may not be an easy time in a woman’s life and so it is imperative that workers who require additional support during this time are treated with understanding, dignity and respect.

This 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.

All employees are expected 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; it is vital that an employee does not feel in any way at a disadvantage due to their menopausal symptoms or status.

4. Aims

The aim of this policy is:

- To educate and inform all staff about the potential symptoms of the menopause, and how they can support their colleagues at work.
- To understand the menopause and related issues, and how they can affect colleagues.
- To raise a wider awareness and understanding among the workforce.
- To outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available.
- To create an environment where women feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms, ask for reasonable adjustments and additional support at work.
- To enable women to continue to be successful in their roles or studies.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- Assure women that we are a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs during menopause.

5. Definitions

Perimenopause

The perimenopause is the period in a woman's life when she starts to experience hormonal fluctuations and changes to her periods. The average time for a woman to be perimenopausal is between four to five years. During this time, periods may become increasingly heavy and irregular, meaning it is vitally important for a woman experiencing symptoms to be close to toilets and shower facilities. For some women, the symptoms during this time can be worse than the actual menopause.

Menopause

A woman is described as being menopausal when they have gone 12 months without a period and when her ovaries are no longer responsive. The average age for a woman to reach the menopause in the UK is 51.

Post-menopausal

This is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when a woman has not had a period for 12 consecutive months. The average time for women experiencing symptoms of the menopause is five years, but many women experience symptoms for up to ten years and 3% of women will experience symptoms for the rest of their lives. Post-menopausal women have an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis.

6. Symptoms of the menopause

Symptoms may include, but are not limited to:

- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Brain fog, poor memory and concentration
- Creeping skin (formication)
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Hot flushes and night sweats
- Insomnia
- Joint aches and pains
- Loss of libido
- Low mood and mood swings
- Painful sex
- Palpitations
- Vaginal dryness and irritation

7. Workplace support

This policy recognises that there are many workplace factors which can make working life more difficult for women experiencing the menopause and which may make symptoms worse. Line managers and colleagues should take into consideration the following:

Symptoms	Workplace Factors	Suggested Adjustments
Sweats, hot flushes, palpitations	Unable to take a break whilst teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow time out and access to fresh air. Ensure cover is available so workers can leave their posts if needed.
Night sweats and hot flushes; insomnia or sleep disturbance.	Rigid start/finish times and lack of flexible working options may increase fatigue at work due to lack of sleep.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider temporary adjustment of hours to accommodate any difficulties. Allow flexible working. Provide the option of alternative tasks/duties. Reassure workers that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload or performance management targets.
Urinary problems; for example, increased frequency, urgency.	Staff member may need to access toilet facilities more frequently and may need more frequent hydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow for more frequent breaks during work to go to the toilet. Ensure cover is available so staff can leave their posts if needed. Suggest sending a student to collect another staff member to enable a break if working alone. Ensure easy access to cold drinking water.
Irregular and / or heavy periods	Staff member may need to access toilet and washroom facilities more frequently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow for more frequent breaks during work to go to the toilet. Ensure cover is available so staff can leave their posts if needed.
Skin irritation, dryness or itching	Workplace temperatures and humidity may increase skin irritation, discomfort, dryness, itching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure comfortable working temperatures and humidity.
Muscular aches and pains	Lifting and moving, as well as work involving repetitive movements. Standing for long periods of time and remaining in a static position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider providing alternative lower-risk tasks. Give access to the manual handling e-Learning module.
Headaches	Artificial lighting, poor air quality, exposure to chemicals, screen work, workplace stress, poor posture, unsuitable workstations, or workplace temperatures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure comfortable working temperatures, humidity and good air quality; access to natural light and ability to adjust artificial light. Allow additional rest breaks.

Dry eyes	Workplace temperatures / humidity, air quality and excessive screenwork may increase dryness in the eyes, discomfort, eye strain and increase the risk of infection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure comfortable working temperatures, humidity and good air quality. • Allow breaks from screen-based work.
Psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, mood changes, stress.	Excessive workloads, perceived stigma around the menopause and any form of work-related stress. Loss of confidence. Performance and workplace relationships may be affected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address work-related stress, consider adjustments to workload. • Ensure a positive attitude and offer adjustments to workload and tasks if needed. Allow flexible/home working where possible. • Provide access to EAP counselling services.
Memory problems, difficulty concentrating	Certain tasks may become more difficult to carry out temporarily; for example, learning new skills, performance may be affected and work-related stress may exacerbate these symptoms. Loss of confidence may result.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure workers that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload or performance management targets. • Reduce demands if workload identified as an issue. • Provide additional time to complete tasks if needed, or consider substituting with alternative tasks. • Offer and facilitate alternative methods of communicating tasks and planning of work to assist memory. Provide access to EAP counselling services.

8. Line Managers Responsibilities

It is recognised that the menopause is a very personal experience and different adjustments and levels of support may be needed for different individuals. Line managers should seek to provide appropriate support and adjustments when needed to help women deal with issues arising from the menopause.

Line Managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy;
- Be aware of each person they are managing's unique and specific needs;
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally;
- Agree with the individual how best they can be supported, and any adjustments required;
- Record adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented;
- Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates;
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

- Follow up with your staff member to make sure the adjustments are helping or if further support may be needed.

Where adjustments are unsuccessful, or if symptoms are proving more problematic, the Line Manager should consider a referral to Occupational Health for further advice.

Guidance for Line Managers

Every woman is different, and it is not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines.

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling, or if a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow enough time to have the conversation;
- Find an appropriate room to speak confidentially;
- Encourage an open and honest conversation;
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported – offer them the Menopause Advice Sheet (Appendix 1);
- Discuss and agree any actions that may help;
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom;
- Ensure that designated time is allowed for a follow up meeting. Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor or break room.
- Recognise that brain fog / memory loss may require that any communication you have with your colleagues should be followed up in writing.

Discuss whether the member of staff has visited their GP. Depending on the discussion, this may be the next step suggested, particularly if the areas of difficulty are sleeping, panic attacks or anxiety.

If they have visited their GP, and are being supported by them, it may be helpful at this point to make an Occupational Health referral to give specific advice regarding the workplace.

9. Employees Responsibilities

It is recognised that employees have a responsibility for their health, safety and welfare but that workplace demands can complicate this. Employees can expect:

- access to toilets;
- access to drinking water;
- access to natural light;
- regulated temperatures.

Employees should:

- Engage in open and honest conversations with their line manager.
- Speak to each other, let the colleagues they work closely with know so they can support one another.
- Speak to a member of the senior leadership team or the trust board if they are not getting the support they need.
- Contribute to a respectful and productive working environment.
- Be willing to help and support their colleagues.
- Understand any necessary adjustments their colleagues are receiving as a result of their menopausal symptoms.

10. Employee Assistance Programme

Bosco CET is proud to offer all staff free access to an Employee Assistance Programme (“EAP”) with CareFirst.

Balancing the pressures of work with the needs of home and personal life can be stressful. The EAP provides a confidential wellbeing service offering advice, support and guidance on a number of matters including legal advice, family issues, money worries, physical health, mental health and more.

This service includes:

- A 24-hour helpline: share a problem with someone who listens with care before getting real, practical and actionable advice.
- Counselling: working through problems with a fully qualified counsellor.

To access the Employee Assistance Programme, employees can visit the link www.carefirst-ifestyle.co.uk and then enter username: **bosco** and password: **employee**.

The 24-hour phone line for employees to call and speak to a counsellor for in the moment support is **0808 168 2143**.

Appendix 1 - Menopause Advice Sheet

How to talk to your GP about Menopause

If you are suffering from menopausal symptoms to the point they're getting in the way of you enjoying life, it's time to talk to your doctor. But, sometimes, that's easier said than done.

We all know how difficult it can often be just to get an appointment, and then it's often only ten minutes. And talking about symptoms can be hard, let alone if you feel rushed or unprepared. So, what can you do? We've put together some helpful, straightforward tips to help you get the best from your appointment.

Don't wait. It is all too common for women to feel they must simply 'put up' with menopausal symptoms as a part of life, but if they are affecting you, there are things you can do, and support available. There is no need to wait until symptoms feel unbearable.

Read the NICE guidelines. This stands for National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and these guidelines are what your doctor will use to determine the type of conversations to have with you and treatments to offer. There are [guidelines](#) for patients, which are useful to read before you see your GP, so you know what to expect.

Prepare for your appointment. It's easier for your doctor to understand what's going on if you provide them with all the information. That may sound obvious, but blood tests to say where you are on the menopause transition aren't always available or accurate – your hormones can fluctuate daily during this time. So, your doctor will be thinking about what to recommend for you, based on your symptoms.

Keep a list of your symptoms, your menstrual cycle, hot flushes, how you're feeling, and any changes you've noticed. Write them down and take them to your appointment. Your doctor will thank you for it, and it's more likely that together, you'll find the right solution faster. And, if you have any preferences about how you manage your symptoms, tell them that too – for example, if you'd like to try hormone replacement therapy (HRT), or not.

Ask the receptionist which doctor is best to talk to about menopause. They are often the font of all knowledge at a surgery and can help you find the best person to speak to – it might not be your usual GP, it could be someone who has had special training in the subject.

Ask for a longer appointment. If you don't think your standard appointment will be long enough, try to book a double appointment, as some surgeries do offer this.

Don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion. If you don't feel you've received the help you need, ask to speak to someone else. Don't be put off, you know how you're feeling, and how it's affecting you.

Ask if there is a menopause clinic in your area. Occasionally, there are regional clinics, specifically devoted to menopause. If there is one in your area, and you think this would be helpful, ask for a referral.

Take your partner or a friend with you. The chances are, you spend your life supporting others and, during menopause, it's your turn to ask them for support. Your partner, or a friend, will know how the symptoms are affecting you. They could support you at the appointment, and find out how they can continue supporting you.

What to expect from your doctor

There are certain things a GP should – and should not – do during your appointment.

They should:

- Talk to you about your lifestyle, and how to manage both your symptoms, and your longer-term health.
- Offer advice on hormone replacement therapy and other non-medical options.
- Talk to you about the safety and effectiveness of any treatment.

They should not:

- Tell you that it's just that time of your life. Yes, menopause is a natural stage, but please don't feel that means you should have to put up with every symptom without help.
- Tell you they don't prescribe HRT. It's up to you what you want to try, and for them to say whether it could be right for you, depending on your medical history.
- Impose unnecessary time restrictions, such as they will only prescribe this once, or for a year or two. This is an ongoing conversation, and if your symptoms persist, you will still need help to manage them.

Remember, your GP is there to help and support you, and you should feel comfortable and confident in talking to them about your symptoms, and any help you need. Don't think you have to struggle through menopause when there is help and support available.