



**TITLE: MENOPAUSE POLICY**

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			Initial Issue
<b>Approved By</b>	Management Board	<b>Date Approved</b>	23 March 2022
		<b>Review Date</b>	23 March 2027
<b>Superseded or Obsolete Policy / Procedure(s)</b>		<b>Owner</b>	
		Human Resources	

**1. Purpose of Policy**

Carlow College, St. Patrick's (hereafter Carlow College) is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all staff. The purpose of this Policy is to assist with creating an open and honest workplace where managers and employees can discuss any issues associated with the menopause, and to ensure the necessary support is known and offered to employees when needed.

The menopause is a natural process and for many can be positively managed through lifestyle adjustments. With the right support, it can be much better. Whilst many may not suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work. Menopause should not be taboo or 'hidden.' The College wishes everyone to understand what menopause is, and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. This Policy sets out the guidelines for members of staff and Line Managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work.

**2. Definitions**

**1.2. Menopause** is defined as a biological stage in a person's life that occurs when they stop menstruating and reaches 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 those 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.

**1.3. Perimenopause** is the time leading up to menopause when an individual may experience changes, such as irregular periods or other menopausal symptoms. This can be years before menopause.

**1.4. Postmenopause** is the time after menopause has occurred, starting when an individual has not had a period for twelve consecutive months.

**3. Scope of Policy**

This policy applies to all staff and Line Managers.

## **4. Policy Statement**

Menopause needs to be normalised, acknowledged, and accepted across all levels of the College. By having conversations regarding the menopause, its impact at an individual level and the challenges it presents in the workplace, progress can be made towards furthering an inclusive organisational culture. Carlow College recognises that staff may need additional consideration, support and adjustments during this transitional time before, during and after the menopause and will ensure that staff are treated according to their circumstances and needs. The College wishes to ensure that individuals feel confident in discussing menopausal symptoms and asking for support and adjustments in order to continue with their role within the College. The College is committed to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect in their working environment. The College is also committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of the workforce. Self-management is also important and positive changes to an individual's lifestyle are encouraged as this can help reduce some menopause symptoms. This policy is supported by guidance notes for managers and employees and should be read in conjunction with this policy.

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

### *5.1. Line Manager Responsibilities*

- Line Managers are responsible for implementing the Policy within their area of responsibility.
- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and Guidance.
- Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menopause, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally.
- Use the Appendices as a guide for signposting and review with the individual, before agreeing how best they can be supported, noting any adjustments required.
- Liaise with Human Resources to seek guidance regarding any adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented.
- Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates.
- Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to.

### *5.2. Human Resources Responsibilities*

- Offer guidance to Line Managers on the interpretation of this Policy and Guidance.
- Attend training sessions, and develop briefing sessions, for staff.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy in respect of related absence levels and performance.

### *5.3. Staff Responsibilities*

All College staff members have the following responsibilities:

- to ensure they understand and adhere to this Policy and associated practices and procedures.
- To take personal responsibility to look after their health.
- To be open and honest in conversations with Line Managers/HR and Occupational Health.
- To be mindful of policies such as Dignity and Respect and Staff Code of Conduct.

- Contributing to a respectful and productive working environment.
- Being willing to help and support their colleagues.

#### *5.4. Trade Union Representatives and Shop Stewards*

- Our Trade Union Partners have a responsibility to support and advise and provide guidance on the *Menopause Policy*, practices, and supports available.

#### *5.5. Occupational Health*

Occupational Health is available as a resource for advice, support and guidance to Line Managers, HR and employees if issues are not resolved following assessment and implementation of the guidance.

Occupational Health will carry out a holistic assessment of individuals as to whether menopause may be contributing to symptoms/wellbeing and will provide advice and guidance in line with up-to-date research. Occupational Health may:

- Signpost appropriate sources of help and advice.
- Provide support and advice to HR and Line Managers in determining and agreeing reasonable adjustments, if required.

### **6. Associated Documentation**

- *Appendix 1 Information on Menopause*
- *Appendix 1.2 Guidance for Line Managers*
- *Appendix 1.3 Menopause Policy: Confidential Colleague Discussion – Template*

### **7. Referenced Policies**

- *Dignity and Respect Policy*
- *Equality Policy*
- *Performance Management and Development Policy*
- *Sickness Absence Management Policy*
- *Staff Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy*
- *Sickness Absence Management Policy*

Employees may also refer to the College's Wellbeing Handbook.

### **8. Monitoring and Review**

The Policy will be formally reviewed every five years by the HR Office to reflect any legislative/organisational changes. Staff will be informed through regular email communication and through the staff portal regarding any updates to same.

## Appendix 1: Information on Menopause



### Information on Menopause

#### 1. Introduction

The experience of the menopause can vary significantly between individuals; some experience hardly any symptoms whereas others can experience severe symptoms. It is important to recognise that variation exists in age of onset of symptoms and the severity and longevity of symptoms experienced. In many cases, it is an individual experience, not comparable with colleagues of the same age or stage of menopause.

#### 2. Effects of Menopause

Physical symptoms of the menopause can include the following:

- hot flushes
- insomnia
- fatigue
- poor concentration
- headaches
- skin irritation
- urinary problems
- brain fog

As a result of the above, or as an extension of hormonal imbalance, individuals going through the menopause can also experience psychological difficulties, including:

- depression
- anxiety
- panic attacks
- mood swings
- irritability
- problems with memory
- loss of confidence

It is also commonly acknowledged that Hormone Replacement Therapy medication, which is often prescribed for menopause, can have side effects, which cause problems at work. These include nausea, headaches and leg cramps.

### **3. Communication and who to speak to**

It is important that, as an employee, you prioritise your personal health and wellbeing. If you are struggling with any aspect of your role because of symptoms associated with the menopause, you should report any concerns you may have to your Line Manager, who will treat the matter with complete confidence. To ensure we can provide you with the best support possible we encourage you to be open and honest in these conversations. Alternatively, your Line Manager may meet with you to have a discussion if they notice a change in your behaviour or performance.

We understand that you may feel uncomfortable discussing personal information with your Line Manager. If this is the case, you are encouraged to discuss your situation with another senior member of staff, a representative of the HR department or your Union Shop Steward.

During any discussions, your Line manager will consider your individual situation and evaluate if any adjustments can be made. Your individual needs will be addressed sensitively, and confidentiality will be maintained. Managers will also arrange follow up sessions in order to evaluate the effectiveness of any adjustments put in place.

### **4. Training**

The College will ensure that all levels of management are trained on the effects of menopause, how to hold discussions with employees who are experiencing menopause and adjustments that can be made to an employee's role in order to remove or lessen any effects the employee is experiencing.

### **5. Behaviour of others**

There is an expectation on all employees to conduct themselves in a helpful and open-minded manner towards colleagues.

The College maintains a **zero-tolerance** approach to bullying and harassment and will treat all complaints seriously. If you feel that you have been mistreated in any way by a colleague because of matters related to the menopause, please make your concerns known to your Line Manager or member of the Human Resources team.

## Appendix 1.2. Guidance for Line Managers



### Guidance for Line Managers

#### 1. Introduction

One of the most valuable things a Line Manager can do is listen and respond sympathetically if issues relating to menopause are reported. These conversations can assist to identify support at work which can make a real difference with how employees cope with menopause. This may enable them to continue working well, productively and to remain at work. It is important to note that employees experiencing menopausal issues (directly or indirectly) may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to approach their manager however, if a manager is aware of the symptoms associated with the menopause and how this can affect a person, this can greatly assist in promoting an environment where employees feel more confident to approach their manager and seek support, if required.

#### 2. Adjusting your role

To assist employees in their daily duties, Line Managers should explore adjusting an individual's role or working environment with the aim of reducing the effect that the menopause is having on them. A discussion with the employee should be conducted to identify potential issues while acknowledging that the menopause affects everyone in different ways so no adjustment should be made without fully discussing it with the employee first.

Examples of adjustments include:

- changing the employees working location so they are closer to toilet facilities, away from hot and cold spots around the office or to ensure greater access to natural light
- allowing changes to our normal rules on work wear
- implementing further temperature control, such as access to a fan
- assessing how work is allocated and whether the employee is affected at points of the day
- allowing additional rest breaks
- considering flexible working hours or allowing the individual to work from home temporarily. Subject to Health and Safety legislation.

Once the adjustments are agreed, they should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

The College is legally obliged by the *Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2015* and *The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 ('the Acts')* to make reasonable adjustments to an employee's role or working conditions that places them at a disadvantage when performing their role and we will ensure compliance with our obligations in this regard. While the *Equality Law Acts* do not expressly provide protection for menopause or perimenopause as such, individuals who suffer discrimination in the workplace that is related directly or indirectly to them having

menopausal symptoms may be able to seek legal remedies if alleging that they have suffered unlawful discrimination or harassment on the grounds of sex, disability or age. The College is also legally obliged by the *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005*.

### **3. Discussing Menopause with Employees**

If an employee wishes to speak about their symptoms, or just to talk about how they are feeling (they may not recognise themselves that they are symptomatic), or if an employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation.
- Ensure that your meeting location is private.
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly.
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported.

### **4. Self-Care Products**

The College, to support individuals will provide self-care products in staff toilets. This will be managed by our Facilities Department.

### **5. Employee Assistance Programme**

The EAP is provided by VHI Corporate Solutions. The EAP is a Confidential & Specialist Information and Counselling service and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. These services are also available for family members to avail of.

#### **How can I access the EAP?**

- You can free-phone 1800 995 955 or
- Email an enquiry to the specialist information service: [eap@vhics.ie](mailto:eap@vhics.ie) or
- Access the following link <https://vhi.healthhero.com> (username Carlow Col).

### **6. Queries**

Any queries or requests in relation to this Policy should be directed to your Line Manager in the first instance. For further information or queries in relation to the above, you can contact the HR Office at:

- [hr@carlowcollege.ie](mailto:hr@carlowcollege.ie)
- T: 059 91 53 293 or 059 91 53 288

**Appendix 1.3. Menopause Policy: Confidential Colleague Discussion – Template**



**Menopause Policy: Confidential Colleague Discussion (Template)**

**This form must be submitted to the HR Office**

<b>Employee Name</b>			
<b>Name</b>		<b>Job Title</b>	
<b>Department</b>		<b>Line Manager Name / Title</b>	
<b>Date of discussion</b>			
<b>Summary of Discussion</b>			

<b>Agreed Actions / Adjustments</b>			
<b>'Please liaise with Human Resources to seek guidance regarding any adjustments agreed, and actions to be implemented.'</b>			
<b>Referral to Occupational Health Yes / NO</b>			
<b>'Please liaise with HR if a referral to Occupational Health is required.'</b>			
<b>Date of next Review Meeting:</b>			
<b>Employee Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	
<b>Line Manager Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	
<b>Please submit form to the HR Office</b>			