

# **Period Dignity Policy for Colleagues and Students (including Menopause)**

## **OUR TRUST'S PRAYER**

We thank you God of Love, for the gift of children.

Bless the work of our Trust, that in all we do  
young people may grow in wisdom and stature,  
and so come to know you,  
to love you and  
to serve you as Jesus did.

We make our prayer in his name who is God  
with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 LDST and our schools are committed to providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all our colleagues and students, and to ensuring that all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.
- 1.2 As a Trust that is committed to health and well-being, LDST recognises that additional consideration, support, and adjustments relating to periods, menstrual wellbeing and menopause may be needed and aims to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity according to their circumstances and needs.
- 1.3 LDST is also committed to ensuring that individuals feel confident in discussing periods, menstrual wellbeing and menopause; and asking for support and adjustments when needed.
- 1.4 Periods and menopause are a natural part of many women's lives, as well as many trans, non-binary gender fluid and gender non-conforming people.
- 1.5 Education is a key factor in breaking the stigma surrounding periods and promoting respect, understanding and open discussions about what people may experience when menstruating.
- 1.6 The right support can make wellbeing issues relating to periods and menopause much easier to manage in school and the workplace.
- 1.7 Whilst not everyone's wellbeing is affected by their periods or menopause, LDST recognises that supporting those who are affected will improve their experience at school and work.
- 1.8 Research shows that the majority of individuals are unwilling to discuss periods or menopause in their workplace or school nor ask for support or adjustments that they may need.
- 1.9 Menstruation should not be 'hidden'. As an organisation that puts well-being at the heart of its ethos, we want everyone to understand what periods and menopause are, and to be able to talk about it openly, without embarrassment. This is not just an issue for women and girls, everyone should be aware of this aspect of life.

## 2.0 Key Principles

- 2.1 LDST has a positive attitude to the menstrual wellbeing and dignity of our students and staff and will work proactively to make adjustments where necessary to support individuals experiencing difficulties with periods and menopause to ensure we remove barriers with

- 2.2 LDST will ensure everyone understands what periods and menopause are, can confidently have good conversations on these topics, and are clear on the Trust policy and practices.
- 2.3 LDST will educate and inform colleagues about menstrual wellbeing, and how they can support people with this at work, school, and home.
- 2.4 LDST recognises that periods and menopause are very individual experiences and that people can be affected in different ways and to different degrees. Therefore, different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed.
- 2.5 LDST will take the specific needs of individuals into consideration.

## 3.0 Aims

The aims of this policy are:

- 3.1 Foster an environment in which colleagues and students can openly and comfortably initiate conversations or engage in discussions about periods, menstrual wellbeing and menopause.
- 3.2 Ensure everyone understands what period dignity, menstrual wellbeing and menopause is and can confidently have open and supportive conversations and are clear on this policy and our practices.
- 3.3 Educate and inform colleagues and students about period dignity, menstrual wellbeing and menopause and how they can support individuals at school and work.
- 3.4 Ensure that anyone suffering due to their periods, menstrual wellbeing or menopause feels confident to raise the issue and ask for support and any adjustments.
- 3.5 Reduce absence due to lack of period dignity, menstrual wellbeing issues or menopause.
- 3.6 Assure people that LDST is a responsible employer, committed to supporting their needs and wellbeing.

## 4.0 Definitions

Term	Definition
Adenomyosis	A condition that causes the lining of the womb (the endometrium) to bury into the muscular wall of the womb.
Early Menopause	Menopause that happens before the age of 45.
Endometriosis	A condition in which cells from the lining of the uterus grow outside the uterus, causing heavy bleeding pain and health and fertility problems.
Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)	Treatment to relieve the symptoms of menopause by increases levels of hormones such as oestrogen.

Medical Menopause	Menopause that can occur at any age due to damage or removal of the ovaries through surgery or medical treatment.
Menarche	The first period.
Menopause	The time in a person's life, often between the ages of 45 and 55, when they haven't had a period for 12 months (having a regular flow of blood from their uterus). This can cause a variety of symptoms including, hot flushes, brain fog, vaginal dryness, weight gain, anxiety etc.
Menstrual Cup	A menstrual hygiene device inserted into the vagina to collect menstrual fluid during a period.
Menstrual Cycle	A four-phase reproductive process over approximately 28 days, beginning at puberty and ending at menopause.
Menstrual Wellbeing	A state of wellbeing in relation to the menstrual cycle.
Menstrual Hygiene	The process of managing a period cleanly and healthily.
Menstrual Leave	Time off from work for menstrual or menopause symptoms that is not classed as sickness absence.
Period Dignity	Refers to the accessibility and availability of essential care needed to support a period, in conjunction with the removal/breaking of stigma and taboo around periods.
Period Poverty	Limited or inadequate access to menstrual products.
Perimenopause	The time in a person's life when hormonal changes start happening in their body that will result in the menopause if they have a uterus. This can last from a few months to four or five years. Many people still experience periods during this time and so do not realise that they are in Perimenopause.
Period/Menstruation	The bleeding of menstrual fluid from a uterus that happens once a month when she is not pregnant or hasn't been through the menopause.
Period Underwear	Absorbent underwear worn during a period to soak up menstrual fluid.
Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)	A hormonal disorder causing hormonal imbalance, fluid-filled sacs on the ovaries, irregular periods, pain and other health and fertility problems.
Post-Menopausal	The term used to describe a menopausal person who has not had a period for over 12 months.
Premature Menopause	Menopause that occurs before the age of 40.
Pre-Menopause	The time in life before any menopausal symptoms occur.
Pre-Menstrual Syndrome (PMS)	A condition which causes physical, behavioural, and psychological symptoms in the Luteal Phase of the menstrual cycle.
Sanitary Towel	A piece of soft material worn to absorb menstrual fluid during a period.
Tampon	a small cylinder of cotton or other material that goes into the vagina to absorb blood during a period.
Toxic Shock Syndrome	A rare, life-threatening complication of bacterial infection which can be caused by incorrect use of tampons.
Uterine Fibroids	Muscular tumours that can grow in the lining of the uterus, sometimes causing heavy bleeding and pain.

## 5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Menstrual wellbeing is a very personal experience and can affect people in various ways. This means that different levels of support and assistance may be needed.

### Colleagues

5.1 All staff are responsible for:

- Taking a personal responsibility to look after their health.
- Being open and honest in conversations with managers, HR and Occupational Health.
- Contributing to a respectful and productive working and school environment.
- Being willing to help and support students and their colleagues, including being respectful of any reasonable adjustments that are in place.

Line Managers (Staff Only)

- 5.2 Managers must listen and, wherever possible, respond sympathetically to any requests for reasonable adjustments at work.
- 5.3 Managers should be aware that menstrual health is an often-misunderstood area and certain conditions such as endometriosis can take up to 10 years to be diagnosed. Therefore, staff should not have to wait for a diagnosis to receive support or be referred to Occupational health. However, colleagues should be encouraged to see their GP if they are experiencing health difficulties that may require medical treatment.
- 5.4 Many menstrual health conditions (including menopause) can be considered to be disabilities in certain circumstances, where the condition has a substantial impact on the individual's daily life. Therefore, managers should consider referring colleagues with menstrual health conditions to Occupational Health establish if the condition is a disability in the specific instance and what adjustments may be beneficial.
- 5.5 Any specific needs identified (including reasonable adjustments that are agreed) should be recorded on and reviewed regularly.
- 5.6 Confidentiality must be maintained at all times.
- 5.7 All line managers should:
- Familiarise themselves with this policy and guidance
  - Be aware of the potential impact of menstrual wellbeing on performance
  - If someone's performance suddenly dips, consider whether their menstrual wellbeing may be playing a part in this, as with other medical conditions
  - Be ready and willing to have open discussions about menstrual wellbeing, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation, and treating the discussion sensitively and professionally
  - On request of the employee, complete a Menstrual Wellbeing Adjustment Plan to identify potential issues and their remedies (Annexe 2)
  - Ensure ongoing dialogue and review dates
  - Ensure that all agreed adjustments are adhered to

## 6.0 Period Dignity

- 6.1 Education is a key factor in breaking the stigma surrounding periods and promoting respect, understanding and open discussions about what people may experience when menstruating.

- 6.2 Research from PLAN International outlines a toxic trio of period poverty, these are:
- Period Stigma
  - The high cost of period products
  - Lack of education
- 6.3 As such, Trust schools must:
- take a whole school approach to communicate about period dignity and related issues.
  - visibly promote the importance of period dignity
  - challenge negative views, gender inequality, stereotypes, and stigma around periods.
  - educate all pupils on period dignity, period equality and menstrual wellbeing.
  - Access the provision of free period products through the Government scheme (see 7.0).
- 6.4 Schools should support students by:
- providing Pastoral Care to address issues that affect young people in relation to period dignity.
  - providing appropriate support for pupils with SEN.
  - considering gender, culture, religion, and age range when planning and implementing provision for menstruating students
  - engaging with students when determining how and where period products are available
  - evaluating the impact of period dignity provision through student feedback

## 7.0 Government Period Product Scheme

- 7.1 All Trust schools should access the Government Period Product Scheme for schools in England.
- 7.2 The period product scheme is available to all state schools and 16 to 19 education organisations in England.
- 7.3 The scheme is run by PHS and provides free period products to students who need them in their place of study.
- 7.4 The initial scheme is available for schools to place orders until July 2024.
- 7.5 Further information can be found [here](#).
- 7.6 Please note, staff must not use products from the scheme.
- 7.7 Schools are required to report back to the Government about their use of the scheme
- 7.8 Resources and guidance are available for promotion of the scheme

## 8.0 Health and Safety in relation to Period Products

- 8.1 Schools must provide learners with safety information for each product in an accessible format before they use the product. This is particularly important for internal-use products, such as tampons.
- 8.2 To minimise the risk of injury from use of period products, schools must:
- Confirm with students and/or their parents or carers if they have experienced an allergic reaction to period products or their materials previously, before providing products
  - Provide all students with the relevant safety and usage information for each product that they are using
  - provide expiry dates with each individual product
  - keep a record of the batch numbers of products supplied
  - follow safety guidelines when stocking products
  - make sure all products remain individually wrapped
  - dispose of any expired products – products past their expiry date must not be provided to students

### Toxic Shock Syndrome

- 8.3 Incorrect usage of period products can, in some cases, result in Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS).
- 8.4 TSS can also be a result of using a product for longer than the manufacturer recommends.
- 8.5 Symptoms of TSS develop and worsen quickly, so it is important for staff and students to be aware of the most common symptoms. These include:
- a sudden high fever
  - flu-like symptoms (such as dizziness, sore throat, exhaustion)
  - vomiting
  - diarrhoea
  - dizziness
- 8.6 Medical advice must be sought as soon as possible if a student is experiencing a combination of these symptoms.

## 9.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Requirements

- 9.1 Schools must not discriminate against students who identify as transgender or non-binary who have periods (or who may later have periods).
- 9.2 Schools must also make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantage and be mindful of the SEND code of practice.
- 9.3 Schools must also consider the gender, culture, religion, and age range of students when considering period dignity provision.
- 9.4 Religious and cultural beliefs concerning periods and the use of period products can restrict access to certain types of period products.
- 9.5 Students from some backgrounds may be less aware of internal products such as tampons and menstrual cups and how these should be used.



- 9.6 Understanding religious and cultural beliefs and building relationships between the school and local faith communities will help:
- make sure schools are providing individuals with products which meet their needs
  - individuals, parents and carers feel comfortable with the way(s) in which products are provided

## 10.0 Toilet Breaks for Students who are Menstruating

10.1 Students who are menstruating must be afforded toilet breaks in a manner that preserves their dignity, minimises disruption to education and does not single them out.

## 11.0 Period Dignity and Menstrual Wellbeing Education

- 11.1 Schools must ensure that the teaching on period dignity and menstrual wellbeing is inclusive and focuses on equality, health and hygiene, self-esteem, respect and understanding.
- 11.2 Schools must provide a safe and secure learning environment to assist all students, including those who are menstruating to reach their full potential.
- 11.3 The aim of period dignity and menstrual wellbeing education within Trust schools is to:
- Inform students about the facts of menstruation and menopause
  - Break the stigma/taboo surrounding periods and promote respect and understanding
  - Address challenges related to menstruation such as pain, anxiety, fear, embarrassment, and myths
  - Inform students about menstrual wellness (physical and emotional)
  - Allow open discussions about what people may experience when menstruating
  - Support good health and prevent young people wearing the wrong product, substituting for a poor-quality product or toilet roll, or wearing a product that is no longer safe.
  - Encourage the uptake of free period products in school when needed
  - Help to keep young people in school during menstruation and increase concentration in class through not having to worry about lack of period products or leaking
  - Promote confidence for students to participate in sports and other extra-curricular activities when menstruating by having access to appropriate products
  - Build general self-esteem and self-confidence of menstruating pupils
  - Provide advice/care for pupils with sensitive period related issues
- 11.4 The majority of lessons regarding period dignity and menstrual health should be delivered to all students as part of the science and PSHE curriculum. However, there are circumstances that mean that students need to be taught in separate

groups based on those who do or may have periods in the future and those who do not.

## 12.0 Other provision for those who experience period poverty

- 12.1 People who are experiencing period poverty may be able to access free period products at their local food bank. Our schools are able to provide food bank vouchers and referrals as needed. A food bank search is available [here](#).
- 12.2 Schools can opt to run their own donation and 'honesty box' schemes for colleagues, should they so wish, providing appropriate health and safety and equality considerations are addressed.

## 13.0 Menstrual Wellbeing Adjustment Plan for Staff

- 13.1 The adjustment plan (Annex 3) will enable managers to consider the specific needs of individuals with menstrual wellbeing issues, including menopause.
- 13.2 Particular issues to consider may include:
  - Temperature
  - Ventilation
  - Toilet facilities
  - Access to cold water
  - Access to very short-term classroom cover (for a toilet break or some fresh air)
- 13.3 Please note, any request for flexible working as an adjustment must be dealt with under the LDST Flexible working Policy.

### Review Schedule

Policy Author	Trust HR Manager
Policy Approver	LDST Board
Current Policy Version	1
Policy Effective From	11 July 2023
Policy Review Date	July 2026

### Revision Schedule

Version	Revisions	By whom
1	Reviewed and updated in line with KCSIE 2023.	THRM

## Menstrual Wellbeing Adjustment Plan for Staff Only

Section 1 – Initial Review	
Colleague Name:	Line Manager Name:
Date of Meeting:	
Details of Menstrual Health Issues:	
Is an Occupational Health Referral Required:	YES / NO
If an OH report is available, what does it recommend:	
<b>Agreed Adjustments:</b> (e.g. fan, access to fresh drinking water, additional toilet breaks)	

<b>Colleague's Signature:</b>	<b>Line Manager's Signature:</b>
<b>Date adjustments implemented:</b>	
<b>Agreed Review Date:</b>	

Section 2 – Review Record				
Review Date:	Amendments Made:	Reason for Amendment:	Colleague Signature:	Line Manager Signature:

## **Annex 2**

# **Supporting a Colleague with a Menstrual Health Condition (including Menopause) – A Manager's Guide**

LDST recognises that everyone is different, and it is, therefore, not feasible to set out a structured set of specific guidelines for supporting a colleague with a menstrual health condition. However, this guide provides some helpful suggestions to consider.

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 a male employee wishes to speak about a family member, please ensure that you:

- Allow adequate time to have the conversation.
- Find an appropriate room to preserve confidentiality.
- Encourage them to speak openly and honestly.
- Suggest ways in which they can be supported (see symptoms below) – hand out the LDST Menopause Advice Sheet if applicable (appendix 2).
- Agree actions, and how to implement them.
- Agree if other members of the team should be informed, and by whom.
- Ensure that dedicated time is allowed for a follow up meeting. Do not rely on quick queries during chance encounters in the corridor or staff room.

## **Symptoms Support**

The following support options may be considered:

### Hot Flushes

- A fan on the desk
- Moving near a window, or away from a heat source
- Easy access to drinking water
- Encourage use of the staff room for breaks

### Heavy Periods

- Access to toilet and washroom facilities
- Ensure sanitary products are available in toilets, wherever possible

- Understand that on occasions there may be a need for a member of staff to go home to address a personal hygiene issue.

#### Urogenital Problems

- Access to suitable toilet facilities.
- Access to suitable washing facilities.
- Allowing more frequent breaks to go to the toilet including procedures for during lesson times.
- Providing easy access to drinking water.

#### Headaches/Pain

- Ease of access to fresh drinking water.
- Use the staffroom as a quiet place to work when not teaching or when time out is required.
- Have time out to take medication if needed.

#### Low Mood

- Agree time out from others, when required, without needing to ask for permission with due consideration for safeguarding.
- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – away from the work area.
- Identify a 'time out space' to be able to go to 'clear their head'.

#### Loss of Confidence

- Ensure there are regular Personal Development Discussions.
- Have regular protected time with their manager to discuss any issues.
- On a case-by-case basis agree the best way of supporting the member of staff.

#### Poor Concentration

- Discuss if there are times of the day when concentration is better or worse.
- Review task allocation and workload.
- Provide books for lists, action boards, or other memory-assisting equipment.
- Offer quiet space to work.

#### Anxiety

- Identify a 'buddy' for the colleague to talk to – away from their work area.
- Be able to have time away from their work to undertake relaxation techniques, with due consideration for safeguarding.
- Encourage the colleague to undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.



### Panic Attacks

- Agree time out from others, when required.
- Identify a 'buddy' outside of work area.
- Encourage the colleague to undertake mindfulness activities such as breathing exercises or going for a walk.

### Muscular Aches and Bone and Joint Pain

For individuals experiencing these symptoms, moving, and handling or adopting static postures may be more uncomfortable.

- Making any necessary adjustments through review of risk assessments and work schedules.

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, if this hasn't already been done.

## Menopause Advice Sheet – A guide for staff seeking extra support

### Don't Suffer in Silence ...

#### **Advice and support**

Whilst some women go through this natural stage without any requirement for intervention, others experience more difficult symptoms. These can pose significant challenges to daily living, leading to the need to seek help from a healthcare practitioner or to consider self-help alternatives. If you are struggling to cope, please seek a professional opinion from your GP or Occupational Health.

#### **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.

#### **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.

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.

**Please Note:** From 1 April 2023, a new prescription prepayment certificate (PPE) is available to allow people to receive a year's worth of HRT for the cost of two single NHS prescription charges (currently £18.70).