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# THE VIEW FROM HERE

Exam season is in full swing. SATs are largely complete at the primary schools but GCSE and A levels continue apace in our secondaries. Thank you to all colleagues who have worked so hard to prepare students for their public examinations. Increasing the number of students who leave school with at least a 4 in English and Maths is a priority because of the opportunities it unlocks and I look forward to the results in the summer when we can evaluate the success of our strategies – and more importantly celebrate the successes of our young people.

The other season in full swing is recruitment and this year, more than ever it seems to be particularly pressured. With a recruitment crisis in our schools, every year we see fewer and fewer candidates for jobs – especially for teachers in some shortage subjects. The aim, of course is to train, employ, retain and promote all of our own teachers. It is therefore particularly pleasing when we are able to recruit from our own trainees and promote from our own talent pool of colleagues. And whilst I know that a number of colleagues are moving on to take up posts in other schools and in other trusts, I hope the experiences you have gained have enriched your professional practice and enable you to take your next steps successfully.

Congratulations to the following taking on promoted posts within the Trust:

Laura Jenkins – Headteacher, Uffculme School

Rob Crocker – Interim Headteacher, Axe Valley Academy

Jon Scott – Deputy Headteacher, Holyrood Academy

Liz Bowker, Blanche Harrar, Claire Park – Associate Assistant Headteachers, Holyrood Academy

Amelia Griffiths – Head of KS2 Neroche Primary School

Thank you also very much to Kat Lemon from Holyrood Academy who has stepped up into an interim Deputy Headteacher role at Cullompton Community College and is doing such a good job they want her to stay until Christmas.

As I confirmed in previous communications, it is looking increasingly likely that the merger with The Castle Partnership Trust will go ahead. This brings many more exciting opportunities not least for staff development. As I write this we are just about to kick off a cross phase trust day on Computing which I hope will be the first of many. Keep an eye out for communications in respect of network meetings which we plan to set up for groups of people across all 10 schools in the new Partnership. Additionally, we have taken the decision to move the Summer 24 conference to the Autumn Term to enable us to launch the new Trust properly with all colleagues. This will take place on Monday October 30th. Details to follow. However, I will look forward to seeing you all at our Trust day on 30th June as we have planned.

Lorraine

**Chief Executive Officer, Uffculme Academy Trust**



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LORRAINE HEATH

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This term, at Axe Valley Academy has sped by. I am proud to note that our students are coping with their exams with a calm, purposeful spirit and great maturity. We are looking forward to being able to celebrate their time at Axe Valley with their Leavers events next term.

Our Pre-Loved Prom wear has been a delightful initiative and I am so grateful to our wider community for their support. We want all of our students to feel their very best at their Prom and I can guarantee after a few teary moments (from the staff!), that our Year 11s will look absolutely wonderful on the night.

We were thankful to be able to welcome Paul Hannaford back to Axe Valley Academy to talk to our Year 8, 9 and 10 students about the dangers of addiction, drugs and alcohol as well as involvement in gangs, knife crime and county lines. Through his own experiences as a former addict of over 20 years Paul conveys an incredibly powerful and hard-hitting message.

Year 8 and 9 students have taken part of a series of ten creative writing workshops. The leaders and story mentors from The Bank of Dreams and Nightmares have worked with the students to develop ideas and craft their thoughts into remarkable writing and ultimately a beautifully finished product. A book launch at Archway Bookshop is planned. We are delighted to be part of this wonderful project.

Our Year 7s have continued to fill us with pride. They have enjoyed being heard with their own publication 'Year 7 Out Loud'. This magazine will give future Year 7s an overview as to what it is really like to be a student at Axe Valley Academy. We look forward to sharing their work with you.

Our work with our feeder schools is absolutely key. Today as I write this, our Orchestra for a Day initiative is in full swing. Children from our feeder schools work with our staff and students to produce a concert at the end of the school day. This kind of work is invaluable, particularly as we have exceeded our Year 7 numbers again this year.



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A look at our social media gives a view of how much we achieve as a school on a daily basis. I do hope you will be able to give us a follow to see all the wonderful things that happen here: Facebook | Twitter: @AxeAcademy | Instagram: studyataxevalleyacademy

As I am sure you are all aware, I will be leaving Axe Valley to become Headteacher at Uffculme School in September. Huge congratulations to Rob Crocker, who will be Interim Headteacher here. I am extremely proud of the improvement journey we have been on and I genuinely feel the school is in a really strong place. I am completely confident that Rob and all of our staff will continue with the improvement work and continue to secure the best education for our wonderful young people. I hope everyone is able to recharge over the half term break as we prepare for a typically busy Summer Term.

**Laura Jenkins, Headteacher**



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**LAURA JENKINS**

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The sunny weather brings a different and more optimistic outlook for schools, doesn't it? Even though recruitment is a challenge we all face, alongside the existing challenges of preparing our students for exams, making sure they are happy and cared for, preparing for inspection and any number of other things....facing these challenges in some nice weather, with plenty to look forward to, always makes it easier.

Indeed, there is plenty to look forward to at Holyrood over the course of the coming half term, with House Competitions, Sports Day, Activities Days, Celebration Day/Prom and Sixth Form Leavers' Lunch to name just a few things! It is also exciting to start working on next year's improvement plan, at the centre of which will sit student attendance. I am looking forward to working with colleagues across the Trust so that we can all learn from one another so that children attend school more often next year.

In terms of leadership, it's all change at Holyrood (well, some change). I would like to offer my congratulations to Rob Crocker, our current DHT/DSL, who is joining Axe Valley as Headteacher from September. Jo James, DHT has also been successful in gaining a DHT position at Taunton Academy - congratulations Jo! We are really pleased to have appointed Saffron Lee (from Richard Huish College) and Jon Scott (from Axe Valley) as new Deputy Heads to join Jon Black and the rest of the SLT at Holyrood. I am really looking forward to working with our new Senior Leaders to continue to drive the school forwards.

We are looking forward to seeing our 200 Year 9 DofE Bronze students undertaking their expedition next month – a first for the school. This has been recognised as we have been awarded



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the Spirit of DofE Trophy as the school with the most sign-ups across the Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards in the South West! I would like to congratulate and thank our entire DofE Team and all staff volunteers who make these amazing experiences possible for our students. I must finish by offering my sincere thanks and congratulations to Karen Seib. Karen leads our DofE provision and has done for many years. Her service was recognised by an invite to the Coronation Concert at Windsor Castle – what an honour!

**Dave MacCormick, Headteacher**



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**DAVE MACCORMICK**

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We have been enjoying the warmer weather at Neroche recently and being able to use our extended learning space outside. The school grounds are looking lovely and seeing the children playing as a whole school on the field is wonderful to see.

We have an exciting new development in the village and many of our Neroche families have been able to enjoy the redeveloped village playpark. The Broadway Parish Council have worked tirelessly over the last 2 years to plan, fundraise and organise the redevelopment of the village playpark for the local children. We were thrilled to be asked as a school to support the project, gaining children's voice and views about their vision for the space and ensuring that the new instillation of equipment met the wide range of needs the children have. As a school, we supported the fundraising for the project and a member of our school community in Year 6 planned and ran her own fundraising events to add to the money raised. The park is now complete and we were invited to attend the official opening and be the first to enjoy the new facilities in a private playtime before the park opened to the wider community. Our Eco Councilors were selected as the official representatives to attend the opening and Kaitlyn one of our Year 6 pupils helped the Parish Councillors cut the official ribbon. The park is now being enjoyed by many and it is lovely to hear it in use at the end of the day.

Neroche marked the King's Coronation with a homemade crown parade and red white and blue day. Children proudly wore their crowns into school and our PFA kindly provided prizes for the winning crowns. The PFA organised a fantastic coronation cake sale at the end of the day and children and families were able to design and purchase their own coronation mementos featuring their own child's drawing and portraits of the King. Our new PFA is gaining new members all the time and continues to work hard on behalf of the school as they develop more and more events and support for the school curriculum.

We are all very proud of our Year 6 children and the way in which they approached their Year 6 SATs. Thanks to Miss Griffiths' careful pastoral support for the class, they approached the experience with confidence and maturity. We received an external Local Authority monitoring visit and they were impressed with the school's approach to SATs and the children's positive attitude. The children enjoyed having breakfast with their friends at school every morning and Mr Marriott unleashed his hidden talent of breakfast waffle toasting! The children enjoyed a well deserved post SATs party and talent show to celebrate. The wide range of talent on show was impressive and I know Mrs Warwick who was at Neroche at the time, enjoyed some of the talents being showcased.

One of our core values, shine bright, has been a focus this half term and it has been wonderful to celebrate with the children their achievements both in and outside of school. We now have 3 recently awarded black belts in karate. To achieve an official black belt at such a young age is impressive. 3 of our children travelled to Derby to take part in a National grading opportunity with the aim of achieving



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the highly valued black belt. All 3 were successful and have now gained their black belts. Well done to Maria, Elspeth and Ethan for this fantastic achievement. Alex in Year 6 had the opportunity to show some of his prize sheep at the Devon County Show. Alex, complete with his white show coat, conducted himself well in front of the official judges at the show and entered not only junior classes but competed alongside experienced adult handlers in a wide range of categories. We are very proud of his talent and the impressive knowledge he has on sheep. Ethan, one of our Year 5 pupils is achieving well in motor racing and at a young age is competing at a high level, winning a range of titles in national events. Ethan and Alex have impressed the whole school community with assembly presentations on their talents. We have a number of children who are playing for the Broadway and Horton cricket teams and they are enjoying the fine weather on the weekends as they compete on a weekly basis.

The Neroche staff continue to organise events both in and outside of the classroom to enrich the learning and the curriculum. Year 4 have enjoyed a trip to Charmouth and learnt all about rocks and fossils. Year 1 have a trip to Lyme Regis planned to learn from first hand experiences all about a contrasting coastal town and geographical human and natural features. Year 6 are busy planning their outdoor pursuit residential for later on in the term and our youngest children have enjoyed a village walk to the local church. Year 4 enjoyed a Victorian school day and although they enjoyed their day of dressing up in different outfits, having to write lines, complete exercise drills and chanting facts, they are glad to have Miss Beer and Mrs Lloyd back to their usual smiling selves and are now realising how much better off they are living in 2023.

Mrs Dellow has now qualified as an official ELSA teacher which is a huge benefit to the school. Mrs Dellow already offers fantastic social and emotional support to the children at Neroche in her SEMH Teaching Assistant role, but this has now been strengthened even further by her hard work to gain the ELSA qualification. Through her ELSA training she has been able to also impart her Forest School leader knowledge and expertise to support other settings and we have enjoyed showcasing our Forest School provision to others who are interested in what Mrs Dellow is doing at Neroche. Our Eco Council supported Mrs Dellow in fundraising and applying for a grant to add solar power to our Hedgehog Hut and this system has now been ordered which will add a power source to the Hut.

We are looking forward to Miss Millard returning to Neroche after half term. Miss Millard has been greatly missed while being on Maternity Leave and she has spent some time this half term keeping in touch with Neroche and the children. Mrs Glibbery has now started her Maternity leave and we are waiting for news on the arrival of her new baby. We have successfully appointed a new teacher for Year 5 in September and are all looking forward to welcoming Mrs Dunn into the Neroche family.

I hope everyone across the trust enjoys a well earned break over half term.

**Ali Collins, Headteacher**



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**ALI COLLINS**

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## UFFCULME PRIMARY SCHOOL



The Spring term at Uffculme Primary School ended with the usual Easter festivities, led by Reverend Gudrun Thomas. Our Year 5 children read with such maturity and confidence during our Easter service with their retelling of the Easter story. It was such an amazing occasion, bringing the whole school community together in one place for the very first time post-pandemic. It really was a special feeling. We also held the annual PTFA Easter Raffle which managed to raise over £400.

The Summer term has been an exceptionally busy one so far, but it has also been a very successful one. As will be the case in most schools, we have reached exam season. For us, this began with the Year 6 SATs a couple of weeks ago. I must say, I was blown away by the incredible attitude and resilience of every single child in the year group. You may have noticed that there have been several reports in the news regarding the Reading paper and how children across the country have been affected. However, our children approached the tests with maturity and did not put too much pressure on themselves and really did take it all in their stride. A big well done to them all – we are proud of each and every one of our Year 6 children. The news coverage served as a reminder of the incredibly high expectations placed on children and young people these days, but we feel proud as a school that we have contributed to instilling a sense of resilience so that our children are not phased when encountering challenges such as these.

I would like to say a huge thank you to all the adults that helped with the facilitation of the tests, led brilliantly by Mrs Hayman. These tests are not without their pressures, but the team delivered them in a calm manner and with enthusiasm, creating an almost perfect environment to sit the tests.

The last two weeks has also seen our Year 2 children sitting their SATs tests, the last Year 2 cohort to do so as these SATs become optional from next year. Again, the children have taken these all in their stride and have shown great confidence when sitting the papers, applying everything they have learnt from their educational journey so far.

Recent weeks have been dominated by the coronation of King Charles III. The whole school took part in a Crown Parade around the village. It was incredible to see so many members of the local community come out and support the parade by waving at our excited children. This was epitomised by the number of people spread throughout the village square, stopping the traffic in their tracks. The event had such a strong community feel to it and the children really enjoyed being part of it.

Children also created portraits of King Charles for our new 'Artists of the Term' gallery in our Meeting Room space. Tree planting concluded our celebrations. Each class planted a fruit tree (either an apple, cherry, or plum tree) on the far side of the school field. These trees will create a Coronation Orchard which will serve as a reminder of this special and momentous occasion. What is most exciting is that the children will be able to see their trees grow and one day, bear fruit to either eat or cook with.

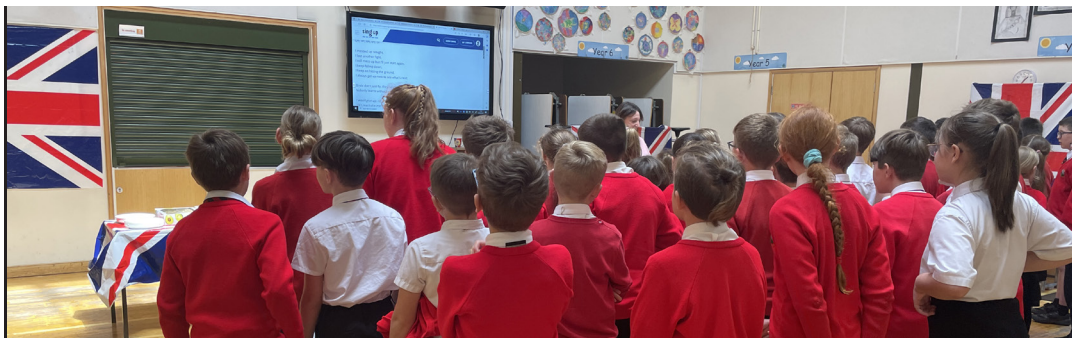


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On the eve of the coronation, we also held a special event to commemorate formally opening our new classroom building. This event was an opportunity to celebrate the project with some special guests from outside, and within, the Trust. We took the opportunity to thank all those who were influential in bringing this project to life, such as those working centrally within the Trust, those working for Devon County Council and the large building team who had to overcome the complexities of building directly on top of an old swimming pool. We were keen to keep the event child-centred, so we had some beautiful renditions of Reach and Try Everything from our Year 5 & 6 children. We then needed to cut the ceremonial ribbon, and we asked our youngest and eldest children, Sophie and Layla, to do the honours. Their names are inscribed on a plaque outside the classrooms. The whole event served as a reminder of what can be achieved through the power of collaboration and the simple fact is that being part of the Trust ensured this project came to fruition.

Our success and celebrations have not stopped there! On the Sporting field, our Year 5/6 girls football team were crowned East Devon Football Champions. The girls went unbeaten all afternoon, drawing 1-1 in the final against Withycombe School, before scoring all 3 penalties to come out on top. As a result, the football team qualified for the Devon finals on the 18th of May. I am delighted to share with you that the girls went on to also win this competition, meaning that they are Under 11 County Champions! We believe that this is the first time the school has ever won the event. Their performances showed amazing resilience as the team were beaten in the final last year. Going one better this year shows how strong our girls football team is. Not only did they work well as a team and display tremendous skill, but they were courteous and gracious in their success, showing how they live and breathe our school vision...everything with HEART!

**Fraser Wallace, Headteacher**



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**FRASER WALLACE**

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At Uffculme School we continually emphasise to students the importance of working hard at all we do; joining in and making the most of all the opportunities that are available to them; and being respectful, accepting and kind to others. As we approach the tail end of the academic year it is great to see students investing in and bringing to life these core values which we all know lie at the heart of them becoming the amazing young people we know they can be.

Inevitably a lot of the focus in the last few weeks has been around encouraging the students to work hard and do their best in whatever they are doing. And this applies in so many areas. For the older year groups this is in their public exams. Today as I write our Year 11 students are sitting their GCSE exams in Science and Geography, and tomorrow all of Year 10 will sit the final paper of their GCSE RE course. Whilst their individual results are always unknown, we are confident in both year groups because of the hard work and effort they have put in to prepare for their exams. Students recognise that there is a direct link between the effort they apply to their studies and the outcomes they achieve. What better life lesson is there for them to learn at this time.

Over the coming weeks Year 10 will go on to complete mid-course exams in all their other subjects and Year 9 will take their End of KS3 assessments – all part of helping them to see the link between, “what you put and what you get out”.

But it is not just in exams that students have demonstrated in very practical ways their understanding of working hard and trying their best. This weekend seven teams of Year 7 students take part in the Exmoor Challenge Youth Event walking 27 miles in a day. All of them completed the challenge successfully and were a real credit to the school. Excellent preparation for more challenging walking events in future years and an early experience of what they can achieve with the right preparation and hard work.

At the other end of the scale we saw the results of this level of application and effort with the successful completion of the Ten Tors event. Across all four events (the 35-mile, 45-mile and 55-mile routes plus the Jubilee Challenge) all our teams successfully completed the event with no students having to withdraw, despite the many blisters and sore feet. And it was great to see so many staff and parents in attendance at the finishing line to celebrate their success.

Running alongside all this hard work and effort students have also shown how much they value the principle of joining in and participating in the opportunities afforded to them. A large number of Year 10 students recently took part in the Geography trip to North Wales, where despite some overnight snow on the upper slopes, all of them made it safely to the top of



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Snowdon. Whilst many Year 9 students took part in this year's Ecology residential to Dartmoor, looking at habitat both on the moor and the shoreline and including a fascinating workshop on Evolution and Inheritance at Dartmoor Zoo – a real opportunity for our keen biologists and those hoping to take separate sciences next year for their GCSEs.

Many students also chose to join this year's French Exchange to Lillebonne – an opportunity to enjoy a wonderful time in France, seeing the sights of Paris whilst spending time with their host families, and of course, practicing their French language skills, before returning ready to host their partners and introduce them to Devon.

And students also had the opportunity to showcase their talents at this year's Devon County Show as part of an invitation to the Music Department to perform on the bandstand stage. The talents of our Soul Band, Choir and soloists were greatly admired by all who heard them.

On a different note I wanted to congratulate Laura Jenkins on her appointment as headteacher of Uffculme School. I have been fortunate enough to be part of Uffculme School for nearing 25 years and it is an amazing place to be part of. I wish her every success in her new role and am confident that she will continue to strengthen the values which make the place so special.

**Alan Blackburn, Headteacher**



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## ALAN BLACKBURN

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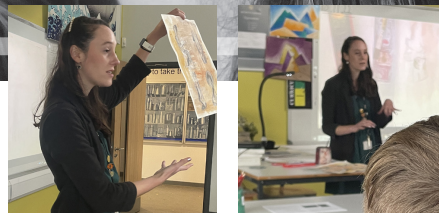
West Country  
Training School Alliance



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The West Country Teaching School Alliance offers two distinct School Direct routes into teaching, both of which are accredited by the University of Exeter. Trainees who successfully complete the course receive their PGCE qualification from the University.

## **What is School Direct?**

School Direct is a one-year full-time course leading to a Post Graduate Certificate in Education with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and credits towards a Masters degree. Schools in the Alliance are experienced in delivering Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and are committed to developing new entrants into the profession. By selecting this route into teaching, trainees can state a preference for which school they would like to train in. Trainees will spend the majority of the year in this lead school as well as benefiting from a contrasting second school placement of approximately 10 weeks. All placements are organised by the WCTSA and trainees are consulted on which schools they would like to train in. All trainees also undertake cross-phase placements in primary and post-16 settings during the course of their School Direct training; these placements are also arranged by us.

## **We offer two different options for School Direct:**

### **School Direct Distance Secondary (fee paying)**

Trainees are based in schools for the entire academic year and are treated as a member of staff from Day 1. This route is more suited to those who have some experience of working with young people and have good subject knowledge.

### **School Direct @Exeter Secondary (fee paying)**

Unlike University based PGCE programmes, School Direct@Exeter trainees have the benefit of being in school from Day 1. They join their lead school at the start of the academic year and remain at this school undertaking school based learning tasks until the University course begins.

## **For more information:**

# wctsa.org



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JEN KNOWLES

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MENOPAUSE

WELLBEING AT UFFCULME ACADEMY TRUST



### **What is menopause?**

Menopause is a natural stage of life which marks the end of a woman's menstrual cycle, due to lower hormone levels. It means that a woman's periods will eventually stop.

The menopause typically happens between 45 to 55 years of age and for many women, symptoms can last around 4 years, but in some cases symptoms can last longer.

Perimenopause occurs where women experience early menopause symptoms but continue to have periods.

It is important to remember that everyone will experience the menopause differently and for those experiencing symptoms, it can be a stressful and difficult time which should be handled sensitively.

### **What are the common symptoms of menopause and perimenopause?**

Whilst every woman has a different experience, the main symptoms associated with menopause and perimenopause include:

- Changes in your periods – changes in the normal pattern of your periods, this is usually the first sign of the perimenopause. Eventually, your periods will stop altogether.
- Mental Health symptoms – changes to your mood, frequent mood swings or low self-esteem, suffering with anxiety and even problems with memory or concentration (brain fog).
- Physical symptoms – changes in body shape, weight gain, skin changes, hot flushes where you have sudden feelings of hot or cold in your face, neck and chest, suffering headaches and migraines that are worse than usual, a reduced sex drive, difficulty sleeping and some women experience heavy bleeding with the subsequent issue of anaemia. Other physical symptoms may occur.

In the working environment it is important for employees to feel that they are supported and that they can openly discuss any difficulties they are experiencing whereby their symptoms are affecting their performance to carry out their job.

### **What things you can do to help ease the symptoms of menopause?**

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is a safe and effective treatment that involves taking oestrogen and/or progesterone to help relieve symptoms of the menopause such as hot flushes, night

sweats, mood swings and vaginal dryness.

Like most forms of medication, there will be common side effects associated with taking HRT.

To consider whether HRT is suitable for you, you will need to contact your GP.

### **Lifestyle measures may help to relieve menopause symptoms.**

- Undertaking regular exercise may help to reduce hot flushes, improve sleep and is a good way of boosting your mood and keeping your bones strong.
- Having a healthy balanced diet can help to support in minimal weight gain and support healthy bones.
- Cutting down on caffeine, alcohol, spicy foods and giving up smoking if you smoke, can help to reduce hot flushes, and reduce the risk of developing other serious health conditions, such as heart disease and cancer.
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of talking therapy which can help with low mood and feelings of anxiety caused by menopause and perimenopause. CBT may also help to relieve physical symptoms such as hot flushes, joint pain and ease sleeping problems.
- Being transparent with your family, friends and managers simply being able to openly talk about the menopause, your symptoms and experiences with your close friends and peers can be invaluable.

### **What should I do if I feel that I am struggling?**

The best advice that can be given to anyone experiencing menopause symptoms is to simply, not suffer in silence. Discuss your symptoms with your family, friends and is necessary GP. Furthermore, if you feel like your symptoms are impacting your work life, discuss your position with your employer.

### **How do I book a wellbeing session to discuss ways in which I can deal with menopause?**

Simply use the following Wellbeing booking link to book your appointment, please make a note when booking that you are requesting a session to discuss menopause.

<http://www.uffculmetrust.org/wellbeing>



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**AMANDA WOODWARD**

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[www.uffculmetrust.org](http://www.uffculmetrust.org)