

Suffolk County Council: Gender Pay Gap Report 2022

1. Introduction from Jeanette Bray, Head of HR, Performance & Change

I am pleased to be able to report that Suffolk County Council's mean and median gender pay gaps have reduced in the last year, by 1.4% and 2.9%, respectively. This is despite the covid pandemic widening the gender pay gap nationally.¹ Our gender pay gap is now lower than the national median average of 15.4%. Overall, it has reduced by around 4% since reporting started in 2017.²

	Mean	Median
Mar-17	14.8	18.6
Mar-18	14.4	16.1
Mar-19	17.4	21.5
Mar-20	12.2	17.7
Mar-21	10.8	14.8

Suffolk County Council's gender pay gap is part of a national trend, linked in part to societal conditions and the employment law landscape, which are gradually changing over time. It is also related to the gender composition of our workforce. We have a high proportion of women working in lower paid roles (81%). Despite the fact we also have a high proportion of women in higher paid roles (66%), this adversely impacts the average pay of our female staff.

As explained elsewhere in the report, it is important to differentiate the gender pay gap with the matter of equal pay, which is an issue that Suffolk County Council does not have.

The steady and incremental reduction in our pay gap reflects the pay increases we have applied over the last few years but also our ongoing work to improve inclusion on the basis of legal sex, and to reduce disparity of outcome for our female staff. Pay increases in recent years have been weighted to increase the pay of lower paid staff more than the increases applied to higher paid staff. As our lower paid workforce is predominately female this has increased their average pay which in turn has reduced the pay gap overall. We are not complacent: we seek to ensure equality of outcome as far as possible for people of all genders and sexes. We will continue to strive to close the gap for as long as there is one.

The work we have been doing over the last year, and the work we commit to doing over the next year, is detailed in this report. There are fewer actions this year. In previous years, some of our actions have been more generally focussed on inclusion. We are still committed to this work. For the purposes of this report, we seek to focus our attention on the actions that will make the most difference to reducing the pay gap itself.

Several of our actions focus on positive action. We will apply positive action to target recruitment campaigns to encourage more women to apply for roles where they are under-represented (particularly the most senior roles), and, similarly, more men into roles where

¹ For information about the pandemic widening the gender pay gap, see:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/business/gender-pay-gap-widens-due-to-pandemic-impact-as-average-earnings-grow-b1945429.html>

² There was an anomaly in the 2019 reporting year. This was caused by firefighters, who are overwhelmingly male, receiving a month of back pay as well as their usual monthly pay in the reporting month for that year. This was explained in the report for that year. Data taken from the following month, where usual pay resumed, showed that the Council's narrowing pay gap continued in that year, but legally this is not the data that could be reported for that year.

they are under-represented (often front-line roles in our adult's and children's services). This will improve our representation of Suffolk's community, and bring benefits to our customers, and the culture of the organisation. It will also have an impact on our gender pay gap. Our quartile data shows a slow shift towards a greater proportion of women in senior roles, but we have not been succeeded, over the last year, in increasing the proportion of men in our lowest paid roles. Since 2017, the proportion of men in quartile 4 has increased by 2.6%, and the proportion of women in quartile 1 has increased by 3.2%.

Other actions focus on:

- Removing unconscious bias based on legal sex in recruitment.
- Supporting carers, who are disproportionately women. This is because national evidence suggests that carers often trade flexibility and part-time working for pay and career progression.³
- Providing more manager awareness about the menopause. This is because research shows a significant proportion of people with menopausal symptoms feel they may have to quit working altogether because of a lack of support.⁴
- Promoting a campaign around equal parenting, which seeks to encourage fathers and other partners to take up the enhanced parental benefits that Suffolk County Council offers. International research shows that much of the gender pay gap is linked to motherhood.⁵ Therefore, encouraging parenting to be shared more equally has a positive effect for women, but also for men, in reducing the fatherhood penalty⁶, and for children as well.⁷
- We also have an action around 'returnships', which seeks to enable people who have chosen to take a career break following parenthood to re-enter the world of work. This will not necessarily benefit Suffolk County Council's gender pay gap, but is a contribution we can make to improving equality and reducing disparity of outcome on the basis of legal sex in the wider community of Suffolk. It will form part of our longer-term recruitment and retention strategy.

I can confirm the data reported by Suffolk County Council has been calculated according to the requirements and methodology set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 and using the standard reports provided by our HR Management Information system software supplier.



Jeanette Bray
Head of HR, Performance & Change

³ For information about carers being disproportionately likely to be women, and the effect on their careers and pay, see:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840404/KCL_Main_Report.pdf

⁴ For information about menopausal employee's experiences, see for example: [One million women could quit due to lack of menopause support, research warns \(peoplemanagement.co.uk\)](https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/one-million-women-could-quit-due-to-lack-of-menopause-support-research-warns)

⁵ For information about the link between motherhood and the gender pay gap, see for example: <https://www.vox.com/2018/2/19/17018380/gender-wage-gap-childcare-penalty>

⁶ The 'fatherhood penalty' is a term coined by the UK charity Working Families; for more information, see: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/jan/14/fatherhood-penalty-risk-men-charity-motherhood-penalty>

⁷ For an example of research on the benefits children receive from involved fathers, see: <https://www.fatherly.com/health-science/science-benefits-of-fatherhood-dads-father-effect/>

2. Explanation of terms and legal requirements

What is the gender pay gap?

The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference between the **average** pay **all** men in an organisation receive, compared to the **average** pay **all** women in the same organisation receive. It is not the same issue as 'equal pay' (see below).

A positive pay gap means that females on average earn less than males. A pay gap of zero means the average pay of men and women is the same. A negative pay gap means that the average pay of female employees is higher than that for males.

What is equal pay?

Equal pay concerns people doing the same or similar jobs. There should be no substantive difference in remuneration for a woman and a man doing the same or similar work (or work of equal value) for the same employer. It is unlawful to pay people unequally due to their sex. Suffolk County Council does not have an equal pay issue. All roles are rigorously assessed against objective criteria for similarity, complexity and levels of responsibility by a job evaluation panel that includes representation from the trade union UNISON.

What is the national gender pay gap?

The median national gender pay gap in April 2021 was 15.4%⁸

Where a gender pay gap exists, there is an expectation that employers will take actions to reduce disparity. This will usually affect women. For instance, an organisation could increase the number of females in senior roles, and/or assess its policies, practices and procedures to remove any obstacles that have a negative effect on the pay of female employees (or potential employees).

What are the measures which must be published?

Public sector organisations who employ 250+ people are required to publish their gender pay gap, as at 31 March each year. The report must be published, on the organisation's website and on a dedicated government site, by 30 March the following year. The following measures must be published.

Mean gender pay gap	<i>The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of all male employees and that of all female employees. Mean = the total of all, divided by the number of individuals.</i>
Median gender pay gap	<i>The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of all male employees and that of all female employees. Median pay = the pay of the person who is in the exact middle position, if all people in that group are ranked, from highest to lowest pay.</i>
Mean/median bonus gap	<i>The difference between the mean/median bonus pay paid to male employees and that paid to female employees</i>
Bonus proportions	<i>The proportions of male and female relevant employees who were paid any bonus pay during the relevant period</i>
Quartile pay bands	<i>The proportions of male and female full-pay employees in the lower, lower middle, upper middle and upper quartile pay bands</i>

NB: the legal requirements mean we have to use two binary categories, linked to legally recognised sexes in the UK. We recognise and value the gender diversity and true identities of our staff.

⁸ Source, ONS data, available via the below link. It should be noted that the ONS data uses basic salary only, so is not calculated in the same way as the national requirements for gender pay gaps, including overtime and bonuses etc; if it were, the gap would be wider. The ONS data does not give the mean national gender pay gap; we were not able to obtain this.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygap/ntheuk/2021>

Which indicator is more useful, mean or median?

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) prefers median earnings as an indicator for how things are for the average person in an organisation, because the median is not affected by extreme values, such as changes in the earnings of small numbers of very high earners. Hence they have only provided the median gender pay gap in the source linked above.

However, as the mean gap captures the fact that the upper end of the earnings distribution is dominated nationally by men, the mean is also an important measure of women's labour market disadvantage.

3. Suffolk County Council data as at 31 March 2021 (excluding maintained schools)

Composition of workforce⁹



Mean gender pay gap

SCC (2020/2021)	SCC last year (2019/2020)	Difference
10.8%	12.2%	-1.4%

Median gender pay gap

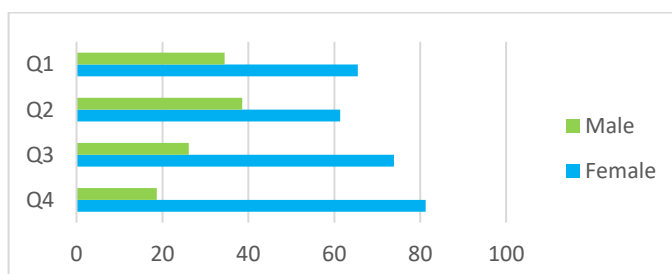
SCC (2020/2021)	SCC last year (2019/2020)	Difference	National average
14.8%	17.7%	-2.9%	15.4%

Mean/median bonus gap/bonus proportions

SCC do not pay any form of bonus payments to staff

Quartile pay bands

Quartile pay bands	This year		Last year	
	Male (31/03/2021)	Female (31/03/2021)	Male (31/03/2020)	Female (31/03/2020)
Upper quartile (£18.96+ per hour)	34.5%	65.5%	35.7%	64.3%
Upper middle quartile (£14.29 - £18.95 per hour)	38.6%	61.4%	39.8%	60.2%
Lower middle quartile (£11.26 - £14.27 per hour)	26.1%	73.9%	24.1%	75.9%
Lower quartile (£0.00 - £11.26 per hour)	18.7%	81.3%	18.8%	81.2%



⁹ The breakdown of our workforce by legal sex has been obtained from a report run on our staff in January 2022; i.e., not at the same time as the gender pay gap data. The legal requirements force us to use two binary categories, linked to legally recognised sexes in the UK. We recognise and value the gender diversity and true identities of our staff.

4. SCC's progress on actions from our 2020-2021 Gender Pay Gap Action Plan

SCC is committed to reducing our gender pay gap. To this end, we made a list of commitments last year which would contribute to reducing the gap. This is what we've achieved:

	What we said we would do:	What we have done:
1.	We will identify any actions arising from the Staff Survey 2020 results, specifically linked to gender and / or flexible working are identified and tracked.	<p>Analysis was undertaken of results from the staff survey 2020, both in terms of specific questions linked to equality issues, and in terms of whether people from particular protected characteristics had a different response from the overall average.</p> <p>A comparison was also made with previous staff survey results, to determine progress and direction of travel. This was provided at both a corporate and directorate level.</p> <p>Corporately, the results for women were very favourable – 90% agreed that they are treated fairly on the basis on gender, which was higher than the corporate average, and 89% of those who had recently been pregnant or on maternity leave felt they had been treated fairly.</p> <p>All directorates now have their own action plans linked to their staff survey results, and we are continuing to emphasise the importance of these including specific actions to address results affecting particular protected characteristics.</p>
2.	We will include "Returnships" in the scope of the annual submission for prioritisation and funding of our aspirational work programmes.	This has been explored. We have carried over an action in relation to this in the next year's action plan (see below).

3.	We will run a Springboard programme in 2021/2022 and additionally a Women in Leadership programme, which will be specifically advertised to parental leave returners.	Both programmes successfully took place in 2021-2 as a pilot with a total of 100 attendees over both courses. The application process to obtain a place on the programmes was specifically designed to prioritise those female staff who are under-represented by virtue of being in particular ethnic groups, disabled, and/or LGB+. Weighting the criteria to prioritise applications in this way was successful and the intention is to apply similar positive action in future to other types of development programme. Following conclusion of the pilot, a review will be undertaken to explore the outcomes and make recommendations on whether there is value in running further offerings of the programme. This will also be dependent on budget.
4.	We will develop “Welcome Back” resources for parental leave returners, including the details of courses, support and resources relevant to them, as well as details of the Suffolk Coaching and Mentoring Partnership. We will also develop associated support and guidance for managers.	A Pagetiger resource has been developed and will be published shortly. This brings together a number of disparate sources of information and support for those who are planning their return to work from parental leave. It has been designed to be user-friendly, and to be able to be accessed from a mobile phone, without the need for the employee to log into their work computers.
5.	We will further develop and advertise the new parent “buddy” scheme.	We have developed the existing parental buddy scheme, broadening its remit to support parents at any stage of the parenting journey (not only new parents), and to link them in with other parents who may be able to offer tips (rather than only with other new parents). We have created forms to help the matching process. We have trained a number of prospective mentors as part of this process. We are finalising supportive arrangements before formally relaunching the scheme shortly.
6.	We will run a campaign promoting the idea of balance in childcare, and our options for shared parental leave and enhanced paternity leave.	We attempted to run this campaign, but were hindered by lack of people coming forwards to participate. This was despite an incentive of free professional quality photographs of the employee with their children being included in the offer. We have carried over this action to this year’s action plan (see below) as something we still want to do, but may need to approach in a different way.

7.	We will identify any actions arising from the analysis of the gender of apprentices, graduates and interns.	There was no graduate intake last year. The apprenticeship split was 21% male, 79% female (230 in total). The intern split was 25% male, 75% female (8 in total). Since these roles are unlikely to provide opportunities to increase the % of women entering into more senior roles, we will instead concentrate our efforts on getting more male interns into front-line roles in services where men are under-represented (particularly ACS and CYP).
8.	We will undertake further analysis, by grade and specifically in senior roles, of the gender at each stage of our recruitment process (application, short list, appointment).	Our recruitment data for 2020 shows that, for roles between grade 3 and 6 we have a high percentage of female applicants (between 73-81%). Applicants who are female are more likely to be shortlisted and appointed at these grades. The application rate for females against roles grades 7+ decreases to between 45-60%. Further work is required to compare our 2020 data to 2021, in order to identify any trends and anomalies. We will also highlight this data to recruiting managers for roles at G7+.
9.	We will undertake further analysis, by directorate, of the gender at each stage of our recruitment process (application, short list, appointment).	In our recruitment data for 2020, for both ACS and CYP there is significantly more female applicants compared to male (85% female in CYP and 80% female in ACS), and for both directorates a person who is female is more likely to be interviewed and appointed if female. The case in Corporate Services is similar, however the percentage gap is smaller (63% female applicants). 20% of applications for Fire and Public Safety roles were from females – this includes both uniformed and non-uniformed roles. For Public Health, there were some anomalies. For example, male applicants made up 34% of all applicants, 24% of those shortlisted and 41% of those appointed. This suggests male applicants are less likely to be shortlisted but more likely to be appointed. The opposite applies to female applicants.

		Further work is required to compare our 2020 data to 2021, in order to identify any trends and anomalies. We will also highlight this data to directorate management teams.
10.	We will participate in the "Carer Confident" benchmarking scheme, run by Carers UK, to identify any further support we can offer to Carers.	<p>In order to achieve Level 1, the things that were identified that we need to do better were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To help staff identify if they are a carer 2) Signpost them to external as well as internal sources of support <p>To achieve this, it has been decided to publish a new Carers Policy, which brings together a range of support we already offer. The policy will be published internally soon.</p>
11.	We will seek opportunities to collaborate, where any intersectional correlations between race and gender are identified, across our Gender Pay Gap actions and Race Equality Plan.	<p>Examples of work that has been mindful of intersectionality and/or cross-refencing between plans are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive action for women's development courses, that prioritised for example women from particular under-represented ethnic groups. - Positive action being emphasised in both plans - The same actions being taken forwards with regards to staff survey results and recruitment data analysis, and others. - Our Workforce Equality report for this year includes some intersectional data, often cross-refencing legal sex in particular with another protected characteristic. Directorate equality reports provided internally have also taken the same approach. <p>We are continuing to be mindful of the need to consider intersectionality in our data and actions.</p>
12.	We will explore where positive action across all protected characteristics can be incorporated into policy and practice to further enhance diversification in our workforce.	We have begun to apply positive action in both recruitment and development. Examples around development have already been given. One example around recruitment concerns vacancies that were advertised for Family Support Practitioners. Positive action was applied, aiming particularly to encourage men and also some specific ethnic groups to apply, since they are under-represented both in the service and in the overall organisation.

13.	<p>We will also be exploring how COVID-19 has impacted on our working practices during 2020 and whether there are potential benefits of incorporating some of the practices forced upon us during the pandemic, such as greater flexibility in where and when individuals work, into a future hybrid approach to how we deliver our services.</p>	<p>We have done a lot to develop our new ways of working, including the views of staff, managers and unions in our plans. As an organisation, we endorse hybrid working on an ongoing basis, affording staff flexibility in terms of both location and hours, with some expectation that they do work in the office some of the time, to enable team working.</p> <p>As part of this work, some consideration has been given to the impact on different protected characteristics. We are shortly to send our staff a survey that will help to further shape our plans for the future. As part of this, we will be differentiating results by protected characteristic to determine if there are particular impacts for a certain group.</p>
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5. SCC's Gender Pay Gap Action Plan 2021-2022

SCC commitments for 2021/2022 will build on our successful approach, and continue to reduce our gender pay gap. We have listed which officers and teams will be responsible for each action. All actions are to be completed by 31 March 2023, when we are required to produce our next report.

1.	<p>Focus attention and activity on positive action in directorates:</p> <p>a) In recruitment – particularly in terms of getting more women into more senior positions, and more men into frontline roles in services they are under-represented in.</p> <p>(HR Recruitment Team, HR Strategic Partners, HR Change Partners, Directorate Management Teams, directorate equality leads).</p> <p>b) In development – particularly as regards courses or opportunities that will be beneficial to progression and leadership. Where there is assessment criteria and scoring, give extra weighting to women, and especially those who intersectionally are also under-represented because of their sexual orientation, race or disability. Provide guidance so managers can apply this appropriately.</p> <p>(HR Talent & Skills Team, HR Equalities Lead)</p>
2.	<p>Report on the success of positive action campaigns, relative to the proportion of that group in: existing staff in that role; the SCC or directorate population; previous applicant pools; and/or the Suffolk population. (HR Recruitment Team/ HR Equalities Lead)</p>
3.	<p>Use the new 'did you know' document + 'comply or explain' approach to question under-representation in directorates/specific recruitment.</p> <p>Each directorate will identify at least 3 areas of under-representation it will seek to address through positive action, using directorate, service or role-level data. These will be across the protected characteristics. For the purposes of reducing the gender pay gap, at least one will be to address either the under-representation of women in senior roles, or of men in frontline roles (unless the directorate can show that there is no under-representation on this basis in any of its services). The 3 areas will be included in directorate equality plans. Directorate equality leads will report back progress against the identified areas to the Strategic Equality & Inclusion Board. There will be challenge if progress is not made.</p> <p>(HR Recruitment Team, HR Strategic Partners, HR Change Partners, HR Equalities Lead, SCC Equalities Officer, Directorate Management Teams, directorate equality leads, Strategic Equality and Inclusion Board)</p>
4.	<p>Run reports on interview panels, to assess a) the gender balance and b) compliance with new requirements for panellists to be suitably trained. Reports to be shared with directorate equality leads and HR Strategic Partners, to enable oversight and action by Directorate Management Teams.</p> <p>(HR Recruitment Team, HR Strategic Partners, Directorate Management Teams, directorate equality leads)</p>
5.	<p>Seek to achieve Carer Confident Level 2.</p> <p>(HR Equalities Lead)</p>
6.	<p>Increase training and awareness for managers around supporting the menopause – buy it in or access free resources.</p> <p>(HR Talent & Skills Team, women's staff network, Suffolk Woman In Fire Together)</p>
7.	<p>Explore other ways of promoting equal and balanced parenting in SCC, since the communications campaign attempted last year actions did not have sufficient engagement.</p> <p>(HR Equalities Lead, Communications Team)</p>
8.	<p>Take a business case to the Corporate Leadership Team regarding funding for a new programme around 'returnships', to support people (often women) who have taken extended career breaks linked to parenting to re-enter employment.</p> <p>(HR Talent & Skills Team, HR Equalities Lead)</p>

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