

Suffolk County Council: Gender Pay Gap Report 2023

1. Introduction from Jeanette Bray, Head of HR

Our gender pay gap has continued to close. Suffolk County Council's mean and median gender pay gaps have reduced in the last year, by 0.5% and 1.0%, respectively. Our median gender pay gap is 1.1% better than [the national median average of 14.9%](#). Overall, it has reduced by around 4.8% since reporting started in 2017.

Suffolk County Council's gender pay gap is 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 (80.7%). Despite the fact we also have a high proportion of women in higher paid roles (67.0%), this adversely impacts the average pay of our female staff. Since 2017, the proportion of men in quartile 4 has increased by 3.2%, and the proportion of women in quartile 1 has increased by 4.72%.

It is important to differentiate the gender pay gap, which compares average pay for all female staff to average pay for all male staff¹, with the matters of equal pay, which concern disparity of pay for people in similar roles. As we have a robust job evaluation process, we are confident that we do not have an equal pay issue.

We will continue to strive to close any equality-related pay gaps we have, for as long as they exist. We are committed to improving inclusion on the basis of legal sex, and reducing disparity of outcome for our female staff. More broadly, we seek to ensure equality of outcome as far as possible for people of all genders and sexes, and to be an employer of choice. The work we have been doing to this end over the last year, and the work we commit to doing over the next year, is detailed in this report.

Some actions from the last year which we would like to highlight are:

a) Changes to pay and spinal points that particularly benefit lower paid staff

In 2021-22², we reduced the number of spinal points in the grades for everybody except senior managers. Nobody was disadvantaged in their pay, and it meant some people had a greater incremental increase in one year. The bottom spinal points within these grades were removed, raising the entry salary point, which improved the lowest pay level within each grade. It also means everybody in these grades will progress to the highest paid point within the grade in less time. As we have more women in lower paid roles, we believe these changes will have particularly benefitted women, and so will have helped to close our gender pay gap.

b) Promoting equal parenting and a family-friendly, flexible working culture

We are happy to say that we were winners in 3 categories at the national Working Dads Awards this year. The categories were Flexible Working, Parental Policies, and Supporting Returning Fathers. We were the only organisation to win in 3

¹ **NB:** The legal requirements for gender pay gap reporting are based on legal sex, which currently in UK law has only two categories. We recognise and value the gender diversity and true identities of our staff. We have tried to use gender-inclusive language where possible, and to be clear about when we are talking about legal sex and when we are talking about gender. In various places, where we talk about women/men or female/male staff, we are referring to legal sex and not gender.

² The statutory reporting date for the gender pay is always the previous March, in this case 31/03/22.

categories. We were alongside big corporate organisations such as Nationwide, Aviva, Vodafone and John Lewis.

Subsequently, we took inspiration from other winners at the event, and used this to double our period of paid paternity leave, from 2 to 4 weeks.

Whilst it may seem counter-intuitive to improve benefits for fathers when trying to reduce disparity for women, [international research](#) shows that much of the gender pay gap is linked to motherhood, and women being associated as the primary carers for children. Therefore, encouraging parenting to be shared more equally has been proved to have a positive effect for women, as well as parents of other genders, and children. [Research](#) has also shown that mothers' incomes rise by 7% for each month that fathers have off on paternity leave. The [positive effects on health outcomes for all parties](#) feed into our statutory role in Suffolk.

c) Improving support for staff who are carers

This year, we have:

- Introduced a new Carers Policy, including 1 week of paid carers' leave,
- Supported the formation of a new carers staff network, and
- Achieved Carer Confident Level 2 Accomplished status, on the national scheme run by Carers UK.



This is because [research shows](#) that carers are still more likely to be women, and also that carers' careers often stall or plateau, linked to their caring responsibilities. Supporting all of our staff who are carers is really important to us; we also have statutory responsibilities to support carers in Suffolk. We seek to break down any expectations linked to gender or sex about who does, or should do, caring.

The Carer Confident benchmarking supports our recruitment and retention work. It enables us to promote ourselves as an employer of choice for carers, who make up 1 in 5 adults in the wider community. The benchmarking also gave us feedback, which we will use to continue to improve our support to working carers.

Statutory declaration: I can confirm the data reported 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



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Bray'.

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 2022 was 14.9%. 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 of 31 March each year. The following measures must be published on the organisation's website and a dedicated government site, by 30 March the following year.

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>

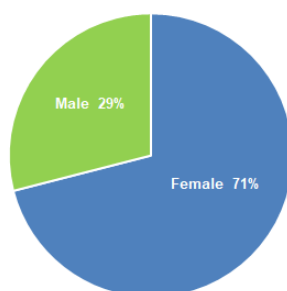
Which indicator is more useful, mean or median?

The Office for National Statistics prefers median earnings as an indicator 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 them having 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 of 31 March 2022 (excluding maintained schools) to be updated

Composition of workforce³



Mean gender pay gap

SCC	SCC last year	Difference
10.3%	10.8%	0.5%

Median gender pay gap

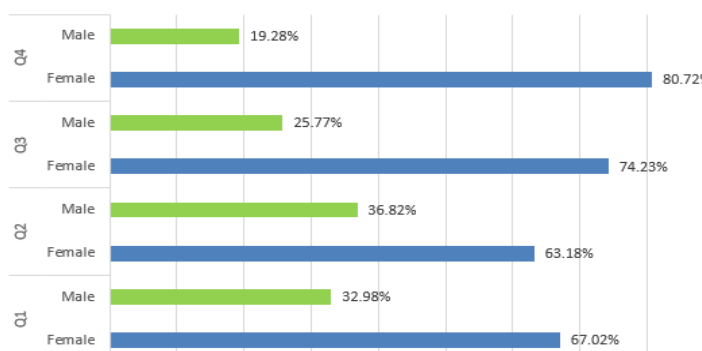
SCC	SCC last year	Difference	National average
13.8%	14.8%	1.0%	14.9%

Mean/median bonus gap/bonus proportions

SCC do not pay any form of bonus payments to staff

Quartile pay bands

Quartile pay bands	Male (31/03/2022)	Female (31/03/2022)	Male (31/03/2021)	Female (31/03/2021)
Upper quartile (£20.24 per hour +)	33.0%	67.0%	34.5%	65.5%
Upper middle quartile (£15.11 - £20.23 per hour)	36.8%	63.2%	38.6%	61.4%
Lower middle quartile (£11.69 - £15.11 per hour)	25.8%	74.2%	26.1%	73.9%
Lower quartile (£0.00 - £11.69 per hour)	19.3%	80.7%	18.7%	81.3%



³ The breakdown of our workforce by legal sex has been obtained from a report run in January 2022; i.e., not at the same time as the gender pay gap data. The legal requirements require 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 2022-2023 Gender Pay Gap Action Plan

SCC is committed to reducing our gender pay gap. This is what we've achieved on the commitments we made last year:

	What we said we would do:	What we have done:
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. (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 are beneficial to progression and leadership. Where there is assessment criteria, give extra weighting to women, especially those who intersectionally are also under-represented because of sexual orientation, race or disability. Provide guidance so managers can apply this appropriately.</p>	<p>a) We have been very successful in implementing a positive action culture over the last year, to address under-representation across various protected characteristics. We set ourselves a target of at least 84 positive action initiatives to be supported by HR across the business year (April 2022-March 2023). As of January, we have already far exceeded the target, with 141 positive action initiatives supported this business year. We have presented to other councils nationally as an exemplar of good practice in this area.</p> <p>88/141 (62%) of the initiatives included targeting on the basis of gender, often but not exclusively of males, as they are under-represented in many parts of the organisation. However, as per the evidence in measure 3, representation of males was the main area where we failed to see improvements in the comply or explain audit. Therefore, this is an area in which we need to step up our efforts. We also need to ensure that our methods are the most effective to attract the targeted groups, ensuring that we do not rely only on statements in job adverts, but make best use of other methods too.</p> <p>Having more males in front-line roles not only benefits our gender pay gap, but is part of our wider commitment to being representative of Suffolk's communities. In particular, our children's services jobs benefit from having positive male role models in place.</p> <p>b) We undertook analysis of positive action principles we had applied to a Women in Leadership course in 2021. Criteria for assessing applications for the course included weighting for under-represented groups, on the grounds of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation and having recently been on maternity leave.</p>

		<p>The results were that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 100% of the people on the course were women; ➤ 21% of delegates in the first cohort were minority ethnic, compared to 8% of staff; ➤ 22% of people on both courses were disabled, compared to 7% of staff; ➤ 6.7% were from a minority sexual orientation, compared to 2.3% of staff; ➤ 14.6% had been on maternity leave in the last 5 years, compared to 6.3% of the wider working age population. <p>As this was so successful, it has been agreed to carry on this principle for other similar opportunities. Guidance is provided as needed for the situation in order to apply it consistently and fairly.</p> <p>We had a senior leadership development opportunity in the summer of 2022, where we applied the same principles. Targetted groups included women, disabled people, people from particular under-represented ethnicities and religions, younger people, and people from minority sexual orientations. 50% of people who obtained a place on the course were women. This is in line with broader population statistics, but not our internal demography. Therefore it is something we would seek to improve in future, especially as we are seeking to address existing imbalance.</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.</p>	<p>As of January 2023, when this report is being drafted, the full analysis has not yet taken place. It will take place by the end of March, when the report is published, which is line with our commitment for this year.</p> <p>Interim analysis of particular initiatives and for particular characteristics in the staff data is showing success for our positive action initiatives in increasing the diversity both of our applicant pools for particular jobs, and of our staff more broadly.</p>

<p>3.</p>	<p>Use the new 'did you know' document + 'comply or explain' approach to question underrepresentation 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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>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>The 'did you know's document was produced to summarise key challenges around under-representation, both corporately, and for each directorate, since the challenges vary in different parts of the organisation. The document is highlighted to managers at the start of a recruitment process when they contact HR, to encourage them to adopt a mindset that is open to positive action.</p> <p>The comply or explain audit is a new tool that was agreed corporately, to bring accountability to address under-representation at a directorate level. Key measures of under-representation were set, linked in the first instance to the commitments in our action plans around race, sex and disability equality. Directorates had time to take action to improve measures before the audit was run, in October 2022.</p> <p>The results of the audit were that, overall, 76% of measures had improved. This was a great achievement in a relatively short space of time. However, only 40% of the legal sex measures had improved. This concerned failure to improve, and in some cases worsening, under-representation of men in many parts of the organisation. This has been highlighted as something needing more attention. Directorates will be reporting back to a Strategic Equalities & Inclusion Board meeting in February with their explanations and intentions behind how to address areas of non-improvement.</p> <p>A good news story from the audit is that Fire increased their representation of women, who are under-represented in their service, by 29%.</p> <p>In addition to this, all directorates have now completed their directorate equality plans, and were directed to include positive action measures around legal sex as part of this. Checks will happen to ensure this – the plans are iterative and can amended as needed.</p>
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5.	<p>Seek to achieve Carer Confident Level 2.</p>	<p>We achieved Carer Confident Level 2 Accomplished status in November 2022.</p> <div data-bbox="1355 188 1525 309" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Employers for Carers, an arm of Carers UK, who run the scheme, say the following on their website about what this level means:</p> <p>Level 2: Accomplished in providing carer support</p> <p>To achieve Level 2, you will be able to show that your organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a process/support in place to help carers identify themselves in the workplace. • Includes carers in the development of policies/guidance and processes to support carers within the workplace. • Has well documented policies and/or guidance in place which cover caring/carers. • Provides a range of practical support for carers in the workplace. • Communicates support available for carers throughout the organisation. • Enables carers to feel comfortable in accessing available support both from within and outside the organisation. <p>In order to achieve this, we took a number of steps, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The introduction of a new Carers Policy, pulling together information and support for carers, including a new entitlement of up to 1 week of paid carers' leave ➤ Supporting the formation of a new carers staff network. <p>The Carer Confident benchmarking supports our recruitment and retention work. It enables us to promote ourselves as an employer of choice for carers, who make up 1 in 5 adults in the wider community. We are using the logo on our advertising. The benchmarking also gave us feedback, which we will use to continue to improve our support to working carers.</p>
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		<p>Some anonymised quotes from our staff who are carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Being a carer is hard; feeling supported at work makes a lot of difference.” - “I think I'm very fortunate to work for a progressive organisation like SCC.” - “The new leave entitlement will change things significantly for me, meaning I can not stress when my daughter has appointments.” - “The Carers Policy sounds very promising and helpful, I find it really hard juggling.” - “Policy looks great and should have a positive impact. I learnt a few things too.” - “It’s a really nice thought to have the information in one place. Some of the information I was not aware of, so I consider it useful.” - “This is a positive policy, and a good step forward for SCC. Hopefully, other organisations will follow suit.” - “It is really encouraging to hear of SCC’s recognition and flexibility to carers.”
6.	<p>Increase training and awareness for managers around supporting the menopause – buy it in or access free resources.</p>	<p>We have explored some different options this year. We have struggled to get what we are looking for this year; hence this item has been carried over to the next plan (see action 4 in the next section).</p> <p>The women’s staff network is putting on various events about health issues which particularly (but not solely) affect women. In partnership with Suffolk GP Federation, an event about cervical screening was held in January 2023. There are plans to hold another event around endometriosis in March 2023.</p>
7.	<p>Explore other ways of promoting equal and balanced parenting in SCC, since the communications campaign attempted in last year actions did not have sufficient engagement.</p>	<p>There is much research about how encouraging active fathers benefits mothers, and women in employment. Mothers’ incomes rise by 7% for each month of their partner’s paternity leave.</p> <p>We were winners in 3 categories at the national Working Dads Awards this year. The categories were Flexible Working, Parental Policies, and Supporting Returning Fathers. We were the only organisation to win in 3 categories. We were alongside big corporate organisations such as Nationwide, Aviva, Vodafone and John Lewis.</p>

We took inspiration from other winners at the event, to subsequently double our period of paid paternity leave, from 2 to 4 weeks. Since being doubled on 1 September 2022, to November 2022, there was an 83% full take-up rate of the new 4-week entitlement.

The new entitlement and corporate messaging around equal parenting also seems to be encouraging **any** take-up of paternity leave. In the previous year, there were only 21 people who took paternity, whereas there were 7 in 2 months over this time period. Over the coming year, at that rate there would be 42, or double the previous.

This addresses the underlying disparity we identified from an analysis of our 2021 data. It showed a gender skew in the uptake of any parental benefit, which could not be fully accounted for by the breakdown of staff. 29% of SCC's staff are male, but only 15.5% of those taking parental leave took paternity leave. Therefore, we would expect to see around twice as many individuals taking paternity leave. This is in line with the doubled uptake we have seen since we increased paternity leave, and promoted the entitlements more.

Some anonymous quotes from staff who have taken the leave:

- It allowed me to share the load. It allowed me to be more present for my wife, who has undergone a major change in her body, her identity, and all of the pressure that comes with being a mother, and breastfeeding. It boosted my wife's mental well-being.
- I recognise how lucky I am to have had 4 weeks at 90% pay, whereas most of the people I know have only had 2 weeks, and not always paid. I am very grateful to SCC for that.
- The policies felt inclusive, with lots of mention not only of the pregnant person, but also the impact on, and input of, partners. The policies recognise diversity within our staff. I appreciate this as a father, because there's a lot of hidden discrimination built into society.
- Paternity leave feels quite modern. In talking to my son's granddads, they didn't have the opportunity to do that – they have a regretful tone when speaking about it. This policy change could have a really big impact on the welfare of children, and of both parents.
- It felt like having a month was an important milestone. It really took the pressure off, you're better adjusted. You learn a lot in the first few weeks. I had time to do that, and support my partner. It was really reassuring for my wife. You have a lot of guilt as the father: I did none of the growing them in the womb, none of the delivery, and then to be there for a couple of weeks and then be "I'm off again", you feel like, "Well, how much of this have I actually done?!" I want to be a hands-on dad and do my fair

		<p>share of everything. The difference between 2 and 4 weeks in the early days is massive. You can't really put a value on it. I can't speak highly enough of it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I don't think you can beat the culture of the Council. I can be a fully involved father. As an employee here, you are really well looked after.
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>Pressures on budgets due to the unexpected war in Ukraine and resulting cost of living crisis have meant that it was not possible to do this in the way we intended to this year. However, we have carried over this action into the next plan (see action 5 in section 5 below), and intend to run a small pilot with 3 places for returnships as a first step from September 2023.</p>

5. SCC's Gender Pay Gap Action Plan 2023-24

SCC commitments for 2022-23 will build on our successful approach, and actions from previous years. 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>Positive action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Recruitment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Analyse 2022 positive action campaigns for sex-based positive action initiatives, assess impact, what worked well etc (<i>HR Equalities Lead, HR Recruitment Team</i>) ➤ Use comply or explain tool to address under-representation of men – (<i>Directorate equality leads, Directorate Management Teams (DMTs), HR Equalities Lead, HR Change Partners, HR Strategic Partners</i>) ➤ Ensure sex-based positive action is embedded into directorate EDI action plans (<i>Directorate equality leads, HR Change Partners, HR Strategic Partners</i>) ➤ Identify specific priority roles for sex-based positive action (men front-line, women in senior roles) (<i>HR Change Team, HR Recruitment Team</i>) b) Development: Continue to apply positive action to prioritise development of women through training opportunities (<i>HR Learning & Development Team, Workforce Development</i>)
2.	<p>Addressing unconscious bias in recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increase sex-based diversity on interview panels – (<i>Directorate equality leads, DMTs, HR Recruitment Team, Recruiting Managers</i>) b) Compliance with License to Recruit training completion for all interview panel members (<i>Directorate equality leads, DMTs, HR Recruitment Team</i>)
3.	<p>Carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assess feedback from Carer Confident accreditation in terms of next steps for improving practice, and work with the new carers staff network to implement (<i>HR Equalities Lead, HR Recruitment Team, HR Change Team, HR Advice Team, HR Learning & Development, carers staff network</i>) b) Analyse take-up of carers leave and implementation of new Carers Policy, both quantitatively and qualitatively (numbers and feedback/case studies) (<i>HR Equalities Lead</i>)
4.	<p>Menopause (carried over)</p> <p>Seek to introduce gender-inclusive menopause training for managers (<i>HR Learning & Development Team, HR Advice Team</i>)</p>
5.	<p>Returnships (carried over)</p> <p>Pilot to be run this year – (<i>HR Aspirational Work Programmes, HR Equalities Lead</i>)</p>
6.	<p>Equal parenting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assess take-up of doubled paternity leave, both quantitatively and qualitatively (numbers and feedback/case studies) (<i>HR Equalities Lead</i>) b) Promote & encourage take-up of the new paternity entitlement (<i>HR Equalities Lead, HR Advice Team, HR Support Team, HR Change Team, HR Strategic Partners, directorate equality leads, DMTs, Comms</i>)
7.	<p>Parental policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Introduce a Fertility Leave Policy with paid leave for people undergoing fertility treatment (<i>HR Equalities Lead</i>) b) Increase support in parental policies for issues around abortion, surrogacy and miscarriage (<i>HR Equalities Lead</i>)
8.	<p>Childcare</p> <p>Explore potential childcare support, particularly for those in hard-to-fill roles (<i>HR Change Team</i>)</p>