

# Suffolk County Council: Gender Pay Gap Report 2024/25

## 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 4.1% and 8.9%, respectively. Our median gender pay gap is 4.9%, which is significantly better than the national median average of 14.3%. Overall, it has reduced by around 13.7% 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 (75.3%). Despite the fact we also have a high proportion of women in higher paid roles (68.9%), this adversely impacts the average pay of our female staff. Since 2017, the proportion of men in quartile 4 has increased by 8.6%, and the proportion of women in quartile 1 has increased by 6.6%.

There have been a number of specific pay factors reducing our gender pay gap over the last five years; higher pay awards for lower paid employees and the removal of spinal points in our grades which will have a significant impact on increasing the average pay of lower paid staff, who are proportionally more female and therefore the average pay of women has increased at a higher rate than men. As the changes to grades has now concluded, we will expect the speed of the reduction in gender pay gap to plateau and slow in coming years.

It is important to differentiate the gender pay gap, which compares average pay for all female staff to average pay for all male staff<sup>1</sup>, 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.

**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.

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

**Jeanette Bray**  
Head of HR

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<sup>1</sup> **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. 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 2023 was 14.3%. 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?

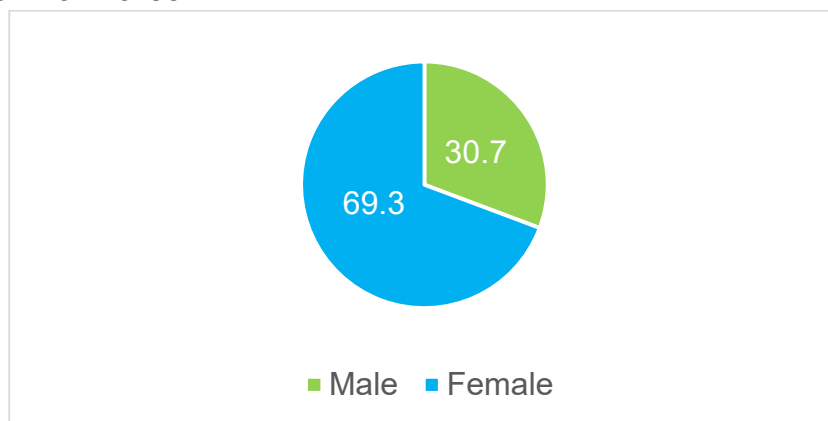
The Office for National Statistics prefers median earnings as an indicator for the average person in an organisation, because the median is not affected by extreme values, such as changes in the earnings of small numbers of very high earners. Hence them having only provided the median gender pay gap 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 2023

(excluding maintained schools)

#### Composition of workforce



#### Mean gender pay gap

SCC	SCC last year	Difference
6.2%	10.3%	4.1%

#### Median gender pay gap

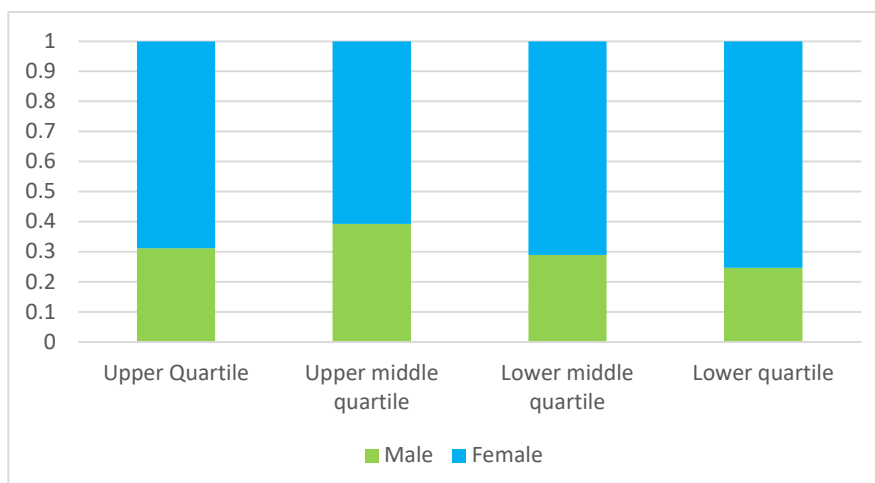
SCC	SCC last year	Difference	National average
4.9%	13.8%	8.9%	14.3%

#### Mean/median bonus gap/bonus proportions

SCC do not pay any form of bonus payments to staff

#### Quartile pay bands


Quartile pay bands	Male (31/03/2023)	Female (31/03/2023)	Male (31/03/2022)	Female (31/03/2022)
Upper quartile	31.1%	68.9%	33.0%	67.0%
Upper middle quartile	39.3%	60.7%	36.8%	63.2%
Lower middle quartile	28.9%	71.1%	25.8%	74.2%
Lower quartile	24.7%	75.3%	19.3%	80.7%




#### 4. SCC's progress on actions from our 2023-2024 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><b>Positive action</b></p> <p>a) <b>Recruitment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Analyse 2022 positive action campaigns for sex-based positive action initiatives, assess impact, what worked well etc</li> <li>➤ Use comply or explain tool to address under-representation of men</li> <li>➤ Ensure sex-based positive action is embedded into directorate EDI action plans</li> <li>➤ Identify specific priority roles for sex-based positive action (men front-line, women in senior roles)</li> </ul> <p>b) <b>Development:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue to apply positive action to prioritise development of women through training opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Positive action</b></p> <p>a) <b>Recruitment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Recruitment and HR Change Partners met to agree priority roles for positive action early in 2023. The priorities include attracting males into front-line roles in Family Support, Health and Social Work, attracting women into operational Firefighter roles, women into senior roles.</li> <li>➤ Since priority roles were agreed, the Recruitment Team have included positive action statements in our adverts for these roles and used imagery in our recruitment advertising of people from those underrepresented groups.</li> <li>➤ Positive action for priority roles is something that is discussed at the relevant Recruitment and Retention groups and directly with recruitment leads.</li> <li>➤ The HR Equalities Lead led a comply or explain workshop where Directorate EDI Leads were asked to feedback on the EDI actions they are working on in their directorate to address underrepresentation, including sex and gender.</li> </ul> <p>b) <b>Development:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Applicants for Senior Leader (Level 7) Apprenticeship we're asked to provide EDI information, which was then used to prioritise applicants from underrepresented groups, including women</li> </ul>
2.	<p><b>Addressing unconscious bias in recruitment</b></p> <p>a) Increase sex-based diversity on interview panels</p>	<p>a) In 2023, 73% of our interview panel members were women.</p>

	<p>b) Compliance with License to Recruit training completion for all interview panel members</p>	<p>b) For 2023, 77% of interview panel members had completed the Licence to Recruit e-learning. This has gone up from 31% completion.</p>
	<p><b>Carers</b></p> <p>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</p> <p>b) Analyse take-up of carers leave and implementation of new Carers Policy, both quantitatively and qualitatively (numbers and feedback/case studies)</p>	 <p>a) Following successful accreditation to Carer Confident Accomplished (Level 2 of 3) in 2022, we've reviewed the feedback provided through our application and continue to maintain the support offered to carers.</p> <p>b) Paid leave for carers was introduced in May 2022. Quantitatively, in the first year, 136 different staff members benefitted from 219 days of paid carers leave. 51 individuals provided overwhelmingly positive qualitative feedback. Individuals cited how valued and appreciated they felt, what a significant difference the policy made to their work-life balance but also the wellbeing of them and the people they care for and how proud they are working for an employer like Suffolk, with several individuals specifically saying the policy was actively retaining them.</p>
	<p><b>Menopause</b></p> <p>Seek to introduce gender-inclusive menopause training for managers</p>	<p>Unfortunately, the planned menopause training for managers arranged this year had to be cancelled. The Learning &amp; Development Team will be reviewing the requirement this year to find an appropriate solution.</p>
	<p><b>Returnships</b></p> <p>Pilot to be run this year</p>	<p>A Returnship pilot was successfully run this year, with three individuals participating in the pilot, two of which went on to secure employment with Suffolk. The pilot will now be reviewed to inform any decisions about a future / wider roll-out.</p>

<p><b>Equal parenting</b></p> <p>a) Assess take-up of doubled paternity leave, both quantitatively and qualitatively (numbers and feedback/case studies)</p> <p>b) Promote &amp; encourage take-up of the new paternity entitlement</p>	<p>a) 31 members of staff took paternity leave during the review period, of these 76% took up the offer of additional paternity leave. The average amount of leave taken was 15 days; amongst those who took up additional paternity leave the average was 17 days. Feedback from those taking up paternity leave and additional paternity leave was overwhelmingly positive, with individuals saying the enhanced paternity was “amazing”, that they felt “lucky” to be able to benefit from the policy and it made a significant difference to them being able to support their partner and new child.</p>  <p>This feedback featured in our submission to the Working Dads Employer Awards 2023, where Suffolk were joint winners in the “Parenting Policies” category, for the second year running.</p> <p>b) Following a successful campaign promoting and encouraging the take up of paternity leave, we saw a 95% increase from 21 to 41 individuals taking up paternity leave.</p>
<p><b>Parental policies</b></p> <p>a) Introduce a Fertility Leave Policy with paid leave for people undergoing fertility treatment</p> <p>b) Increase support in parental policies for issues around abortion, surrogacy and miscarriage</p>	<p>a) The Fertility Leave Policy was introduced in May 2023, allowing one week of paid leave for people undergoing fertility treatment.</p> <p>b) Additional support and clarification of existing support was added to our Parental Policies, covering abortion, surrogacy and miscarriage.</p>
<p><b>Childcare</b></p> <p>Explore potential childcare support, particularly for those in hard-to-fill roles</p>	<p>A review of child-care support identified the breadth of support already offered by Suffolk County Council, which was significantly more than many other employers. Nursery provision was specifically looked at but deemed not viable.</p>

## 5. SCC's Gender Pay Gap Action Plan 2024-25

SCC commitments for 2024-25 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 2025, when we are required to produce our next report.

1.	Explore offering places on the next cohort of Senior Leader Apprenticeship to only those from underrepresented groups, including legal sex and gender identity.
2.	As part of the Workforce Strategy, budget has been allocated for a Management Development Programme. Allocation of places will be prioritised for participants from underrepresented groups, including legal sex and gender identity.
3.	Explore additional gender-inclusive menopause training, support and guidance.
4.	Explore the opportunities to roll out the successful Returnship pilot across the Council.
5.	Explore broadening the definition of carers within the Carers Policy to give more flexibility around who can request Carer's leave.
6.	Continue to use positive action statements in our adverts and imagery in our recruitment advertising to attract candidates from underrepresented groups; for example women in senior roles and men in caring roles.