

# What are we doing to close our gender pay gap

**March 2023**



## Introduction

We remain committed to addressing our gender pay gap and accept that actions need to be taken for us to understand and address the disparities in pay across our organisation. We accept that slight improvements year on year isn't something that we can rely on and that bigger strides need to be taken, where possible, to change the gender distribution of our workforce.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit in 2020, our ability to actively progress the actions we set ourselves were impacted as efforts were focussed on supporting our services, particularly our key frontline services, with their COVID-19 response.

The last few months have seen the launch of Oracle Fusion (a new cloud-based HR and Payroll system), with greater management information and reporting functionality, and a scheduled review of our Working Flexibly Policy and Procedure has taken place to assess how well the move to more flexible ways of working are being embedded across the organisation. These were two key actions for 2022 that we will continue to monitor the progress and impact of going forward.

As we return to 'business as usual' we are optimistic that the improvements we have made, along with the actions we are planning for 2023, will start to take shape and will help us to address the pay disparities we are seeing across our workforce.

## Data analysis

We have looked at the data we have available to us, both within and outside of the organisation, to try and identify the reasons for the difference in pay between our male and female workforce.

Our mean and median gender pay gap figures have always been different since we first started publishing our gender pay gap data in 2017. This year our mean is 11.5% and our median is 17.4%, compared to 11.8% and 15.3% in 2021.

As our mean is always lower than our median, this suggests that our dataset is skewed due to a much higher presence of female earners in our lower and lower middle pay quartiles (pay quartiles 1 and 2). Much of our female workforce are in cleaning, caring and catering roles that traditionally attract lower levels of pay than the lowest paid roles in more male dominated work areas such as highways maintenance, that form part of pay quartiles 2 and 3.

## Our pay and grading structure

We have had an agreed pay and grading structure, called the Lancashire Pay Spine, in place since we underwent an equal pay review in 2010, and the vast majority of posts within the council are paid in accordance with this pay spine.

We use job evaluation schemes to establish the relative levels of posts in grades within the Lancashire Pay Spine according to the requirements, demands and responsibilities of the role. We also undertake evaluations for new job roles that



arise and where a job significantly changes as part of a restructure (or reorganisation) of services so changes in roles are reflected, where necessary, in the grade of the role and ultimately the pay that is attached to the grade.

Other nationally agreed pay and grading scales are used in the case of our teaching roles and for employees who are paid in accordance with Soulbury Committee or Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Worker terms and conditions.

We are confident that no pay discrimination exists within the pay and grading structures that we use and that pay differentials can be objectively justified through the use of our job evaluation schemes.

## **Our starters and leavers**

We have analysed our new starter and leaver data for 2021/22 by gender and grade, to identify any trends.

At the Foundation Living Wage rate of pay, which is our minimum level of pay within the council, the numbers of males and females joining the council exceeded the numbers that left over this period.

However, more females left their employment with us than joined at the next level of our pay spine (Grade 3) and whilst this pattern is replicated by males the numbers overall are much lower. Posts at this level are mainly residential care assistant roles, which are typically part time and undertaken by a predominantly female workforce.

## **Exit questionnaires**

Employees leaving their employment with us are asked to complete an exit questionnaire in order that we can understand their reasons for leaving. Completion of the questionnaire is voluntary and can be completed and submitted anonymously or completed in the form of an exit interview with their manager. Questions about promotion opportunities, and opportunities for promotion to progress their careers, form part of the questionnaire.

We have analysed the anonymised exit questionnaire data for 2021/22 by gender and grade to look for any trends.

The data has shown that:

- 333 questionnaires were completed in total.
- 68% of the respondents indicated that they were female (26% of respondents indicated that they were male and 6% chose not to disclose this voluntary information on the equal opportunities monitoring section of the questionnaire).
- 38% of female respondents said that they did not feel that they have had the opportunity for promotion to progress their careers (with 49% of the responses coming from those undertaking roles at Grades 5 to 7 on our pay spine (in pay



quartiles 2 and 3); 30% from those undertaking roles at Grade 8 and above (in pay quartile 4); and 21% from those undertaking roles up to and including Grade 4 (in pay quartiles 1 and 2)).

- 12% of female respondents said that they did not feel that they have had opportunities to access and attend career development training, with the greatest number of responses coming from those undertaking roles at Grade 8 and above of the pay spine (in pay quartile 4).

## Staff survey

The staff survey is an annual online survey that was conducted between 3 and 23 October last year. Links to the survey were sent to 12,527 employees who were working in council services at that time (teachers and teaching staff were excluded). Two separate surveys were used – one survey for those who regularly use a computer or electronic device in their work and a shortened survey for those who don't. Active promotion and targeted support resulted in an improved response rate of 49%, which was a 12% improvement on the response rate for 2021.

In terms of the key overall findings:

- 69% of female respondents agreed that they have the opportunity to progress their careers with the council if they choose to (compared with 61% of male respondents).
- 89% of female respondents agreed that if they need flexibility in their work, they can normally find a solution (compared with 90% of male respondents).

## External data sources

We have also looked at externally published workforce data, from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and other sources, to compare our workforce population with the workforce population living and working in Lancashire.

Information from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), downloaded from the ONS website, contains a gender pay gap analysis of hourly earnings (excluding overtime) across the United Kingdom. The data from the 2022 provisional data set shows that for all employee jobs (both full time and part time) that:

- The mean gender pay gap for Lancashire as a place to work is 14.6% (our mean gender pay gap, as at 31 March 2022, is 11.5%).
- The median gender pay gap for Lancashire as a place to work is 14.8% (our median gender pay gap, as at 31 March 2022, is 17.4%).

## Action plan

Our action plan for the coming 12 months is set out below.



## Action plan

What we will do	How are we going to do this	When we will monitor our progress
<p>Champion the benefits of working for us, including flexible working and career development opportunities</p>	<p>We host a dedicated page on our Job Site that we want to develop further to actively promote the benefits of working for the council to potential candidates, in particular the opportunities that are available to our employees for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flexible working – for dedicated part time work, job shares, term time roles and flexibility in terms of working hours and work location; and</li> <li>• training, learning and development (including apprenticeships and funded qualification training).</li> </ul> <p>We will continue to promote our family friendly policies (for parents and working carers) along with the fact that we are a Foundation Living Wage employer, so offer a competitive minimum level of pay that exceeds the National Living Wage.</p>	<p>January 2024</p>
<p>Review our recruitment policy and processes, and develop our employer brand</p>	<p>A review of our recruitment guidance was undertaken last year, and a review of our recruitment policy is now underway to help us address the recruitment and retention challenges we are facing as a council.</p> <p>We are looking to develop newer approaches to recruitment and talent acquisition to help us target and interact with potential candidates to showcase our employer brand, which include:</p>	<p>January 2024</p>



What we will do	How are we going to do this	When we will monitor our progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headhunting, to directly engage with potential candidates and encourage applications for hard to fill roles.</li> <li>• Holding virtual recruitment sessions, to target interest in certain roles (for example, adult social care roles).</li> <li>• Host and attend recruitment events and job fairs throughout Lancashire and beyond, to increase our geographical footprint.</li> </ul> <p>Through this targeted approach to recruitment, we will be able to promote the range of flexible working options we have to potential candidates along with the opportunities we have for career progression.</p> <p>We will also work with managers to challenge gender norms in our service areas and look at way of encouraging more men to consider a career within the care, catering and cleaning sectors, and to increase the number of females we have in highways and engineering roles.</p>	
<p>Look at career pathways and succession plans to support our employees with their career development</p>	<p>The diversity of our workforce features as a key part of the improvement journey we have embarked on, to create a council for the future. We are committed to supporting our employees in their career development and will look at career pathways and succession planning through the development and implementation of our People Strategy.</p> <p>We expect our managers to discuss career development and skills needs as part of the ongoing performance</p>	<p>January 2024</p>



What we will do	How are we going to do this	When we will monitor our progress
	<p>engagement discussions they have with employees.</p> <p>We will continue to promote the wide range of learning and development opportunities we have on offer, both in-house and externally in the case of apprenticeship and funded qualification training.</p> <p>We will encourage managers to consider options for employees to "act up" into higher graded roles or be paid more money for taking on higher-level duties and/or responsibilities where situations arise, subject to the use of fair selection criteria. This will enable employees to gain valuable experience to better equip them to apply for future job promotions if they choose to do so where these become available. This will also help services in terms of developing their career pathways and succession plans.</p> <p>We will also continue to promote our coaching and mentoring offer to support employees in their development, to reach their potential and plan for their future work goals, alongside opportunities for work shadowing.</p>	
<p>Understand work preferences and why employees work the way that they do</p>	<p>Using pulse surveys and our Change Influencer network, we want to understand more about why our employees work the way that they do. For example, if someone works in a part time role, is this because part time working is something they choose to do as it fits in with their personal lifestyle/caring responsibilities or are other job roles seen as being too restrictive (in terms of working hours, how and when work is undertaken) and is this preventing them from</p>	<p>February 2024</p>



What we will do	How are we going to do this	When we will monitor our progress
	<p>applying for other job roles or progressing their career within the council.</p> <p>Our findings from this will be used to inform future action planning.</p>	
<p>Establish employee network groups for working carers and younger workers</p>	<p>We are looking to establish two new employee network group, one for our working carers and another for younger workers within our organisation.</p> <p>We will also ask employees if they would welcome the development of a women's network group that could be used to help identify any barriers or perceived barriers to recruitment and progression within the organisation.</p>	<p>February 2024</p>
<p>Continue to promote a better understanding of the menopause for employees and managers</p>	<p>With the support of our Wellbeing Team, we are working to promote a better understanding of the menopause and its symptoms throughout the organisation, to support an environment in which our employees can openly and comfortably hold conversations about the menopause and be supported at work. Menopausal women are the fastest growing population at work, and this is reflected in our own workforce, so we feel it is important to recognise this and make sure that our staff can access appropriate support when they need this. With national figures indicating that 1 in 10 women suffering with menopause symptoms will quit their jobs, we want to do all we can to help support our female employees in work.</p> <p>A menopause guide and workshops were launched in 2021</p>	<p>February 2024</p>





What we will do	How are we going to do this	When we will monitor our progress
	<p>to coincide with World Menopause Day, with guidance and information for both employees and managers, and a peer support forum on MS Teams has been set up to give those affected by the menopause a chance to talk to each other and share their experiences. A menopause statement has recently been added to our menopause resources to reinforce our commitment to supporting individuals who are experiencing menopausal symptoms and to improving their experiences at work.</p>	

