



What are we doing to close our gender pay gap

March 2024



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.

Our people strategy launched last summer and set out the direction of travel and work priorities for a new People Services for the coming years. The people strategy is built around six strategic themes/objectives, one of which is that our workforce is respectful and inclusive. With the launch of our new People Services operating model, from April, we will be developing a broad EDI strategy that will put a spotlight on inclusion being the golden thread that weaves through the fabric of our organisation. Our new operating model creates a strategic people function that is dedicated to future-proofing the organisation by aligning its design with the needs of tomorrow, utilising workforce analytics and insights to strategically deliver our future workforce and expertly build the leadership cadre required to deliver a high performing inclusive culture. Two dedicated roles have been created to help us set the direction of travel and be better resourced to move forwards with EDI matters, such as actions to address our gender pay gap. We want everyone to see that Lancashire County Council is a great place to work and that all our employees experience this.

We also continue to monitor the progress and impact of embedding more flexible ways of working across the organisation. We were already forward thinking and introduced flexible working as a 'day one' right when we launched our Working Flexibly Policy and Procedure in November 2021, more than two years in advance of the legislative changes that will bring this into effect in April.

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 11.8% and our median is 18.1%, compared to 11.5% and 17.4% in 2022.

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



An agreed pay and grading structure, called the Lancashire Pay Spine, has been in place since we undertook an equal pay review in 2010, and most 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 2022/23 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 leaving the council exceeded the numbers that joined over this period (70 male leavers to 55 new starters, and 447 female leavers to 375 new starters).

More females also 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 (39 male leavers to 35 new starters, compared with 164 female leavers to 124 new starters). 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 so 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 2022/23 by gender and grade to look for any trends.

The data has shown that:



- 182 questionnaires were completed in total.
- 65% of the respondents indicated that they were female, 29% 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.
- 23% of female respondents said that they did not feel that they have had the opportunity for promotion to progress their careers, with the greatest number of responses coming from those undertaking roles at Grades 4 to 8 on our pay spine (in pay quartiles 2 and 3).
- 13% 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 4 to 8 on the pay spine (in pay quartiles 2 and 3).

Staff survey

The staff survey is an annual online survey that was conducted between 2 and 20 October last year. Links to the survey were sent to 12,892 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 a response rate of 46%, which was slightly lower than the 49% response rate in 2022.

In terms of the key overall findings:

- 65% of female respondents agreed that they have the opportunity to progress their careers with the council if they choose to (compared with 59% of male respondents).
- 88% 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 2023 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 15.7% (our mean gender pay gap, as at 31 March 2023, is 11.8%).



- The median gender pay gap for Lancashire as a place to work is 15.3% (our median gender pay gap, as at 31 March 2023, is 18.1%).

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>Using the data to provide insights, understand work preferences and aspirations - why our female employees work the way that they do and what motivates them</p>	<p>Using pulse surveys, focus groups and our Change Influencer network, we want to understand more about why our employees work the way that they do. In particular we want to engage with our female workforce to understand if part time working is something employees 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 applying for other job roles or progressing their careers within the council. Or is work for some employees not about career progression.</p> <p>Our findings from this will be used to inform future action planning.</p>	<p>January 2025</p>
<p>Conclude the review our recruitment policy and continue the development of our employer brand</p>	<p>A review of our recruitment policy commenced last year and is still ongoing to help us address the recruitment and retention challenges we continue to face as a council.</p> <p>We are keen to develop newer approaches to recruitment and talent acquisition to help us target and interact with potential candidates to showcase our employer brand and promote the range of flexible working options we have and opportunities 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</p>	<p>January 2025</p>



What we will do	How are we going to do this	When we will monitor our progress
	<p>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>We are committed to supporting our employees in their career development and will look at career pathways and succession planning through the implementation of our people strategy.</p> <p>We expect our managers to discuss career development and skills needs as part of the ongoing performance 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, taking account of their workforce and business plans.</p> <p>We will also continue to promote our coaching and</p>	<p>January 2025</p>



What we will do	How are we going to do this	When we will monitor our progress
	mentoring offer to support employees in their development, to reach their potential and plan for their future work goals, alongside opportunities for work shadowing.	
Support the establishment of employee network groups for parents, working carers, and younger workers	<p>Employees have expressed an interest in setting up three new employee network groups – one for parents, another for working carers, and third for younger workers within our organisation – that we will help to establish and support.</p> <p>We will also ask employees for view on 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>	January 2025
Continue to promote a better understanding of the menopause for employees and managers	<p>As a People Service, 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. We know that menopausal women are the fastest growing population at work, as 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>Regular menopause lunch and learn sessions are now</p>	January 2025



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	running once a month, with each session focussed on a specific topic. The menopause peer support forum on MS Teams that was set up to give those affected by the menopause a chance to talk to each other and share their experiences continues to be a welcomed source of support.	

