

Annual gender pay gap report 2024/25

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils (the Councils) are required by law to publish an annual gender pay gap report which analyses the pay of staff at an agreed point each year (31 March). This is a report providing the snapshot of the data as of 31 March 2024.

The Gender Pay Gap is the difference between the average earnings of men and women expressed relative to men's earnings regardless of the role they occupy. The Gender Pay Gap is different to Equal Pay, which ensures that men and women are paid equally for working in the same or similar roles (or work of equal value).

The mean gender pay gap is the difference between the average hourly earnings of men and women. For the snapshot data as of 31 March 2024, the Councils' mean gender pay gap is 7.57%

The median gender pay gap is the difference between the mid-point in the range of hourly earnings when sorted from highest to lowest. For the snapshot data of 31 March 2024, the Councils' median gender pay gap is 4.57%.

The Councils do not pay performance-related bonuses, and as such both the mean and median gender bonus gaps as of 31 March 2024 is 0%. In addition, the proportion of male and female employees receiving a bonus is 0%.

Pay quartiles by gender

Band	Males	Females	Description
A	36.9%	63.1%	Includes all employees whose standard hourly rate places them at or below the lower quartile
B	32.4%	67.6%	Includes all employees whose standard hourly rate places them above the lower quartile but at or below the median
C	32.4%	67.6%	Includes all employees whose standard hourly rate places them above the median but at or below the upper quartile
D	46.6%	53.4%	Includes all employees whose standard hourly rate places them above the upper quartile

The figures above have been calculated using the standard methodologies in the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.

The table above depicts pay quartiles by gender. This shows the Councils' workforce divided into four equal-sized groups based on hourly pay rates, with Band A including the lowest-paid 25 per cent of employees (the lower quartile) and Band D

covering the highest-paid 25 per cent (the upper quartile). This report included 582 staff members, with 146 in quartile A and D, and 145 in quartile B and C. In order for there to be no gender pay gap, there would need to be an equal ratio of men to women in each band. The percentage of women to men is higher in all bands.

What are the underlying causes of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils gender pay gap?

The law requires men and women to receive equal pay for:

- the same or broadly similar work;
- work rated as equivalent under a job evaluation scheme; or
- work of equal value.

The Councils are confident that the gender pay gap does not stem from paying men and women differently for the same or equivalent work. We have a robust, nationally approved job evaluation scheme which enables comparison of different roles across the organisation. The gender pay gap is the result of the roles and number in which men and women are employed within the Councils and the salaries associated with those roles. The Councils acknowledge that individuals within comparable roles may fall within different spinal column points due to length of service at the Councils. However, comparable roles fall within the same Grade, and individuals have the capacity to increase a spinal column point as part of the annual Pay Award process. Grades have a maximum cap to ensure individuals can catch up with those with a longer service at the Councils.

Across the UK economy as a whole:

- Men are more likely than women to be in senior roles (especially very senior roles at the top of organisations).
- Women are more likely than men to be in front-line and administrative roles at the lower end of the organisation.
- Men are more likely than women to be in specialised roles (such as technical and IT-related), which attract higher rates of pay than other roles at similar levels of seniority.
- Women are more likely than men to have breaks from work that have affected their career progression, for example to bring up children.
- Women are more likely than men to work part time, and many of the jobs that are available across the UK on a part-time basis are relatively low paid.
- Some occupations are still predominantly male (construction, waste) and others female (caring, administration) – the range of roles that are in house/outsourced within local authorities varies and can impact on figures. For example, waste contracts are usually outsourced whereas administrative functions are often kept in house.

This pattern from the UK economy is reflected in the make-up of the Councils' workforce, where the majority of front-line administrative services are women. However, the majority of line manager roles at the Councils are also made up of women and there are more women in the upper quartile than there are men.

Since the last report here have been 108 new starters at South and Vale, with 57.41% female and 42.59% male. Of those 108 new starters, 33 of them fall in Band A, the lower quartile group; 63.64% of which were female. Of the 108 new starters, 8 of them fall in Band D, the higher quartile group; 100% of which were male. This therefore positively impacts both the overall mean and median figures.

Upon reviewing the gender split between those who left during reporting previous figures and this report, 54.43% were female and 45.57% were male.

How does South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Councils gender pay gap compare with that of other organisations?

At the time of reporting, the mean gender pay gap for the whole economy (according to the reported figures in 2024 Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) figures) is 13.8 per cent, whilst in the public sector it is 12.9 per cent. At 7.57 per cent, the Councils mean gender pay gap is significantly lower than both. There has been a decrease in the mean gender pay gap in comparison to last year's South and Vale gender pay gap, whereby the mean was 9.27%.

The median gender pay gap for the whole economy (according to the 2022 ONS ASHE figures) is 13.1 per cent, whilst in the public sector it is 13.5 per cent. At 4.57% per cent, the Councils' median gender pay gap is significantly lower than both. There has been a decrease in the median gender pay gap in comparison to last year's South and Vale gender pay gap report, whereby the median 9.42%.

The Councils do not make bonus payments.

What is South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils doing to address its gender pay gap?

The Councils are committed to the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment for all employees, regardless of sex, race, religion or belief, age, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or disability. We have a clear policy of paying employees equally for the same or equivalent work, regardless of any characteristic mentioned above.

The steps that the Councils take to promote gender equality in all areas include the following:

Equality in Employment Policy

In January 2022, the Councils produced an updated Equality in Employment Policy. The policy details our Equal Opportunity Commitment across all aspects of employment (including recruitment, promotion, training opportunities, pay and benefits, discipline, and selection for redundancy), to avoid unlawful discrimination. Many of the items laid out in the Equality in Employment policy are detailed further below.

Pay Scales transparency

The Councils are committed to operating a pay and reward system which is transparent, based on objective criteria and free from bias.

The Councils commit to reviewing our pay every year to ensure that there is no discrimination within the pay structure. All employees are able to access clear information regarding our pay practices. Any employees concerned about equal pay are encouraged to speak with their line manager and Strategic HR.

Every year following the pay review, which is agreed with the Trade Union under the principle of collective bargaining, pay scales are made available via the Councils' internal website. A breakdown of the process, including cost of living and increments is also provided. This allows all staff to easily view the structure of each pay grade, meaning staff are not discouraged from salary negotiations, and via the trade union play an active role.

Regardless of gender, the Councils' policies are that all staff will begin at the bottom of a grade's spinal column points. The Councils acknowledge that some roles have the ability to be awarded outside of the grade scales, regardless of gender. This process must be approved by a Head of Service and is still subject to the annual Pay Award process.

Vacant roles are advertised with pay scale included, so that all applicants (internal and external) can know what to reasonably expect when applying for a role.

Annual pay review

Every year the Councils undertake a pay review with trade union representatives to ensure fair and equal pay across all roles.

Job evaluation scheme

All roles are subject to formal job evaluation process, which includes the active involvement of the trade union, to ensure a fair structure. All staff can put forward a business case for their role to be reviewed against the job evaluation scheme, regardless of gender. This includes any negotiations to move to a higher spinal column point, which must be approved by the Head of Service. This process is also reviewed by the Councils' recognised trade union, UNISON. Any changes agreed will apply to all staff within the amended job role.

Equality Monitoring and Review

The Councils will take appropriate action to address any significant under-representation or barriers that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process. The purpose of this monitoring is to help the Councils ensure that their employment practices and opportunities continue to be fair and accessible to all. Equalities data captured through employee self-service is regularly reviewed, to ensure the prompts available continue to be representative of the workforce and wider community. This in turn allows the Councils to capture more robust equalities data for a variety of reporting requirements.

Recruitment

Job descriptions for all roles will be limited to requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Any candidates for employment (internal or external), or promotion, will be assessed objectively against the job requirements.

In line with the Equality Act (2010), the Councils, where possible, will make reasonable adjustments to their standard working practices to best support disabled job applicants and employees. This will help the Councils to always recruit and retain the best person for the job, irrespective of gender.

The Council have in 2024 renewed their Disability Confident Level 2 status.

Open and transparent reporting

To identify any barriers to gender equality and inform priorities for action, in 2016 the Councils introduced annual gender monitoring to understand:

- the proportions of men and women externally applying for jobs and being recruited;
- the proportions of men and women leaving the organisation and their reasons for leaving;
- the numbers of men and women in each-pay band;
- working patterns

In addition, the Senior Management Team receive quarterly updates on HR metrics which includes equalities data.

Flexible working

The Councils have had a long commitment to flexible working. The Councils' annualised hours policy applies to all officers below service managers, allowing staff to achieve a good work/life balance. Additional holiday allowance is given to senior managers and above as they cannot access annualised hours. As mentioned above, childcare arrangements can impact the gender pay gap, and these options give all staff greater flexibility day to day regardless of their personal commitments.

Hybrid working

In July 2021, with the support of the trade union, the Councils confirmed that the majority of staff are contractually entitled to work in a hybrid manner, as we seek to continue enhancing the flexibility available to our staff. By allowing staff to work from a wider range of locations, rather than solely the Council's main office, they can better achieve the desired work/life balance that can impact on the gender pay gap data. This also allows a wider pool of individuals to apply for a job at the Councils, further encouraging a wider variety to our staff population and reducing inequality. A hybrid working survey was carried out in 2022, which enabled staff to comment on how to continue improving the hybrid working offering and training for line managers on managing in a hybrid working environment is scheduled for autumn 2023.

Training and Culture

The Councils have an online learning platform, with a variety of modules focused on equalities added throughout the year. All staff have access to this training, which is widely communicated upon launch and checked for completion. All staff will be made aware of the Councils equalities commitments during their induction as well as undertaking diversity and inclusion training.

In addition, the Councils offer a range of activities, resources, and support to promote positive wellbeing including access to occupational health and an employee assistance programme, trained mental health first aiders, wellbeing activities, a wellbeing hour, wellbeing talks etc.

The Councils are currently developing a workforce strategy which will complement the diversity and inclusion strategy.

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Launched in Autumn 2022, the Diversity and Inclusion strategy highlights the Councils' committed actions for both staff and local residents. The following actions will aid in reducing the Councils' gender pay gap:

- Review HR policies/processes to ensure that all opportunities and processes are inclusive and accessible to all- there is an ongoing programme or policy renewals.
- Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded within the Councils' policies and procedures
- Set up a pool of diversity and inclusion champions to promote and support equalities vision across the Councils- there are currently 15 diversity champions
- Enhance existing recruitment practices to maximise inclusion- maintained Disability Confident Level 2 status, promotion of flexible working and wellbeing.

Strategic Workforce Strategy

In October 2023, the Councils' Strategic HR team rolled out a Workforce Strategy with an overall aim to have the right people in the right roles with the right skills. This includes subsection strategy themes to ensure dedicated resource is available across all areas. These themes are; organisational development, equalities diversity and inclusion, transformation, wellbeing, learning and development and talent acquisition and development.

A strategic workforce plan will directly impact both staff and candidates who wish to work for the Councils, thus having an overall impact on our gender pay gap reporting. By providing this workforce plan, the Councils are attracting and retaining talent, ensuring our staff work in an open, inclusive and transparent way and providing opportunities for individuals to develop their careers and skills to evolve in their roles.

I, Mark Stone, Chief Executive, confirm that the information in this statement is accurate.

Signed,

