

Gender Pay Gap Report

Report for the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report outlines Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Information Regulations 2017) and details its annual Gender Pay Gap figures for 2021 and the differences in average earnings between its male and female employees.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the 2022 report (for 2021 data) for publishing on the Service's website and the Government website www.gov.uk

3 Background

In April 2017, the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017 came into force. This requires organisations, public, private and voluntary, with 250 or more employees to report and publish annual figures in relation to their gender pay gap.

The gender pay gap is an equality measure that identifies the difference in average earnings between women and men. Statistics generally show that on average, men occupy higher paid roles than women. It is important to note that the gender pay gap is not about women being paid less than men for doing the same role. Equal pay deals with pay differences between men and women who carry out the same or similar jobs, or jobs of equal value.

The overall UK average gender pay gap for all employees is determined by data received by the Office of National Statistics. This is published annually on the Government website.

However, the 2021 annual figure is currently unpublished due to the result of the challenges faced in collecting data under government imposed public health restrictions and falling response rates since the start of the pandemic. (Previous published data: 2020 -15.5% and 2019 - 17.3%)

The Service is required to publish figures using 31 March as a reference date and based on the following:

The mean gender pay gap – The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of male employees and that of female employees as a percentage.

The median gender pay gap – The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of male employees and that of female employees as a percentage.

The mean bonus gender pay gap – The difference between the mean bonus pay paid to male employees and that paid to female employees as a percentage.

The median bonus gender pay gap – The difference between the median bonus pay paid to female employees as a percentage.

Bonus proportions – The proportion of male and females receiving a bonus payment

The Service does not offer a bonus scheme and therefore are not required to report on bonus percentage figures.

Service Data 2021

For the purposes of statutory reporting requirements, the Service is required to publish figures based on individual employee contracts of employment and takes into consideration the various terms and conditions of employment within the Service. The figures below are based on established contracted posts within the Service as of 31 March 2021. This includes operational, non-operational and Brigade Manager contracts.

Total Employees:

Gender	Total				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Female	105	101	99	116	117
Male	610	557	551	536	548
Total	715	658	650	652	665

SFRS Mean and Median gender pay gap

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Mean (average)	8%	8%	6%	8%	4%
Median	11%	8%	0	2%	0%

	F 2017	M 2017	F 2018	M 2018	F 2019	M 2019	F 2020	M 2020	F 2021	M 2021
Mean - Average Hourly Rate	13.04	14.10	13.03	14.21	13.67	14.61	13.94	15.10	14.68	15.31
Median	12.01	13.53	12.53	13.67	13.94	13.94	14.00	14.22	14.51	14.51

	Gap				%				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Mean - Average Hourly Rate	1.06	1.18	0.94	1.16	8%	8%	6%	8%	4%
Median	1.52	1.14	0	0.23	11%	8%	0%	2%	0%

UK Data shows that female workers earn on average 15% less than male workers and the gender pay gap exists due to female workers occupying lower paid and less senior roles in both public and private sector organisations. Although the Service's gender pay gap is considerably lower than the national average, females are less represented in the higher salary bands which is reflected in the Service's overall data profile. There are essentially more males occupying higher level positions within SFRS.

The under-representation of females in the Fire and Rescue service is well documented. With more males in the workforce, it is inevitable that differences in pay are exacerbated, and this imbalance will continue until we see more women in operational and in senior level roles. Research shows that a more diverse and inclusive workforce helps organisations develop by bringing new skills, creativity and innovation. This report outlines initiatives that SFRS are involved in to help create that environment.

The above data for 2021 shows that overall male employees on average earn 4% more than female employees in the Service. This is a significant reduction of 4% in the gender pay gap from the previous year's figure of 8%. Male employees are on average earning 63p more per hour than female employees which again is a significant decrease from the 2020 data, whereby male employees were earning £1.16 per hour more than females.

The data shows 36% of employees in the lower quartile band are female, and 14% female are in the higher salary band. This is no change from 2020. There has however been a 1% increase in the female mid upper salary range from 2020 data to 16%. This is due to the outcome of a National Joint Council (NJC) green book non-operational employee salary review.

The median pay gap for the Service this year has decreased by 2% and sits at 0% indicating that there is no pay differential in mid earners within the Service between male and female employees. This is a positive reflection of middle range earners and indicates what 'most' people earn.

The data collected since the requirement to publish figures in 2017, has shown a steady increase in the Service's overall female recruitment figures in the high, mid upper and mid lower quartile bands however, the low quartile band has remained static.

Salary Quartile Bands – Overview 2021				
	High	Mid (Upper)	Mid (Lower)	Low
Female	14%	16%	4%	36%
Male	86%	84%	96%	64%
Salary Quartile Bands – Overview 2020				
	High	Mid (Upper)	Mid (Lower)	Low
Female	14%	15%	6%	36%
Male	86%	85%	94%	64%

*See appendices for 2017-2019 Salary Quartile Bands.

Salary Quartile Bands – Breakdown 2021						
	Hour Rate Range	Female	% Female	Male	% Male	Total
1 High	£16.08-£58.81	24	14%	142	86%	166
2 Mid Upper	£14.51-£16.08	27	16%	139	84%	166
3 Mid Lower	£14.51	6	4%	161	96%	167
4 Lower	£6.45-£14.51	60	36%	106	64%	166
		117	15%	548	85%	665

Salary Quartile Bands – Breakdown 2020						
	Hour Rate Range	Female	% Female	Male	% Male	Total
1 High	£15.77 - £56.81	23	14%	140	86%	163
2 Mid Upper	£14.22 - £15.77	25	15%	138	85%	163
3 Mid Lower	£14.22	9	6%	154	94%	163
4 Lower	£9.36 - £14.22	59	36%	104	64%	163
		116	17.8%	536	82.2%	652

*See appendix for Salary Quartile Bands – Breakdown 2017-2019

The above salary quartile band tables indicate that in 2021 86% of male employees were the highest earners in SFRS, the same as in 2020. Female high earners have remained at 14%. The 2021 lower quartile figures indicates that this is the Service's largest female percentage area of 36% and predominantly equates to support staff employees. Operational roles offer higher rates of pay at entry point in comparison to support staff posts. There is also a higher rate of part time females in this quartile, which indicates that females are more likely to take advantage of the Service's family friendly policies.

The 2021 mid upper quartile band data indicates 16% are female, which is an increase of 1% from 2020, these are in support staff specialist roles attracting mid-range salaries for specialist skills. In SFRS it is recognised that females are under-represented in operational roles and SFRS are addressing this in its recruitment processes and in its 2022 on call targeted recruitment campaigns.

Commitment to reducing the Gender Pay Gap

The Service is committed to ensuring and achieving an inclusive workforce to encourage female representation at all levels of the organisation. SFRS is also committed to the principles of fairness, equality and inclusion and to ensure that these principles are embedded in the Service. Inclusive employment policies and procedures are essential to the success of the Service's recruitment processes and are subject to equality impact assessments to determine differential impact upon female and other protected characteristics. SFRS focus on attracting women into the Service by ensuring targeted positive action awareness sessions. Improving the diversity of the people it employs is important to SFRS and its priority is to recruit and retain a talented and diverse workforce to improve its cultural competence and attract broader experience.

New Initiatives that support reducing the Gender Pay Gap

2021 data indicates a reduction in female representation and the highest proportion of the Service's female workforce are currently employed on non-operational terms and conditions of employment in corporate services. It is evident, as with all fire and rescue services, that there is progress to be made in attracting females to the operational service.

The Service's People Strategy sets out a clear focus and direction of how it is committed to developing its staff throughout their employment and how it aims to be deliberately developmental, inclusive and diverse and intentionally innovative to achieve an adaptable, flexible and resilient workforce and supporting health and wellbeing at work.

Service recruitment processes have been adapted to incorporate apprenticeship schemes for both operational and non-operational roles to encourage a different career pathway and attract diversity. SFRS are committed to continue with a programme of positive action work focusing on targeted campaigns to achieve a workforce that is more reflective of its communities. Virtual taster sessions were trialled during the pandemic offering a question and answer facility and applicants were able to access this facility outside of normal working hours. The Service's On Call sustainability review focuses on attraction and attention to future proof the service and adapt to progressive ways of working.

The Service has pledged to support the Armed Forces Covenant within its recruitment strategy, including Career Transition Partnerships, establishing a tailored employment pathway for veterans, service leavers and supporting the employment of armed forces spouses and partners. Advertising job opportunities through the armed forces, friendly recruitment agencies and charities and recognising relevant military qualifications in its recruitment / application processes.

The Service continues to ensure that its policies support family and work life balance working practices offering flexible working opportunities. SFRS maternity and adoption leave policies offer individuals enhanced benefits and along with career break schemes, parental and paternity leave, builds its reputation as being an inclusive employer.

The Service actively promotes campaigns and initiatives supporting, International Women's Day, White Ribbon, Time to Talk and the HeForShe Movement and has an ongoing calendar of events encouraging inclusivity. Internal staff networking groups are actively encouraged to help inspire positive change and are encouraged to participate in the Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Committee. Working group initiatives over the past 12 months are employee led and connect colleagues who have a common interest in sharing their experiences, supporting others and contributing to the Service's understanding of issues arising from its equality groups.

The Service is actively trialing agile working arrangements to support flexible working practices. This is a positive outcome reflecting the need to be progressive to attract a diverse workforce following the impact of the pandemic. The Service has adapted to new ways of working and consulted with employees to gauge how best to support them, ensuring their health, safety and wellbeing. During the pandemic disruption to existing working arrangements to meet caring responsibilities has had a greater impact on females and the Service's response has been empathetic working around revised workloads and flexible hours. Benefits of these arrangements determined through consultation will be a key focus going forward. Online conferencing arrangements have enabled participants to work at home with less disruption to work life balance.

The Service's career progression gateway assessment process has now successfully been embedded as part of its promotion process. The online virtual access and reduction in attendance time has encouraged more participants to undertake the process and the Service has seen an increase in female applicants since its introduction in 2020 with 100% pass rate. A coaching mentoring and buddying strategy has been formally launched in the Service, which offers coaching from external organisations, supporting employees through their career paths. Funding has also been secured for females to participate in the Women in the Fire Service's Development Programme which helps women to identify clear, practical and realistic steps to develop self-confidence in their professional and personal lives.

SFRS are near completion of its non-operational pay grading system. Roles have been evaluated in consultation with employees to ensure fair and competitive salaries based on role responsibilities. This has had a positive impact on lower graded roles in the Service primarily occupied by female employees.

Ongoing initiatives

SFRS long standing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee drives forward gender equality initiatives chaired by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO).

SFRS annual programme of events for firefighter taster days targeting Women, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender applicants.

An establish fitness bootcamp lead by SFRS internal fitness advisors for Wholetime recruitment campaigns which encourages potential applicants from under represented groups to reach and maintain physical fitness.

Introduction of a buddy system at point of application for on call employees to help with attraction, engagement and retention.

SFRS use the national on-call recruitment campaign designed to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds.

Individual employee personal development records help identify and support talent management. Work is in progress mapping out career progression for non-operational employees.

SFRS Health and Wellbeing strategy reviewed quarterly and supported at executive level.

A dedicated employee health and wellbeing section accessed via our online portal includes support and advice on various related topics.

Summary

Through the Service's continual effort to address equality issues, 2021 results indicate a significant decrease in its gender pay gap from 8% in 2020 to the current 4%.

Whilst acknowledging the progress that has been made, the report outlines areas that SFRS are working on to address the gap through retention and attraction initiatives. The Service will continue to address this moving forward via its recruitment strategies and internal review of processes.

4 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6 Initial Impact Assessment

This report contains merely statements of fact / historical data. An Initial Impact Assessment is not, therefore, required.

7 Appendix

Salary Quartile Bands 2017-2019

8 Background Papers

www.gov.uk

Salary Quartile Bands 2017-2019

Salary Quartile Bands – Overview 2019				
	High	Mid (Upper)	Mid (Lower)	Low
Female	12%	14%	6%	29%
Male	88%	86%	94%	71%
Salary Quartile Bands – Overview 2018				
	High	Mid (Upper)	Mid (Lower)	Low
Female	9%	13%	3%	33%
Male	91%	87%	97%	67%
Salary Quartile Bands – Overview 2017				
	High	Mid (Upper)	Mid (Lower)	Low
Female	9%	10%	3%	36%
Male	91%	90%	97%	64%

Salary Quartile banks – Breakdown 2017-2019

Salary Quartile Bands – Breakdown 2019						
	Hour Rate Range	Female	% Female	Male	% Male	Total
1 High	£15.46 - £56.81	19	12%	144	88%	163
2 Mid Upper	£13.94 - £15.46	23	14%	139	86%	162
3 Mid Lower	£13.94	10	6%	153	94%	163
4 Lower	£9.17 - £13.94	47	29%	115	71%	162
		99	15.2%	551	84.8%	650
Salary Quartile Bands – Breakdown 2018						
	Hour Rate Range	Female	% Female	Male	% Male	Total
1 High	£15.15 - £55.69	14	8%	151	92%	165
2 Mid Upper	£13.67 - £15.15	22	13%	142	87%	164
3 Mid Lower	£13.67	9	5%	156	95%	165
4 Lower	£7.05 - £13.67	55	34%	109	66%	164
		100	15.2%	558	84.8%	658
Salary Quartile Bands – Breakdown 2017						
	Hour Rate Range	Female	% Female	Male	% Male	Total
1 High	£15.00 - £55.14	16	9%	163	91%	179
2 Mid Upper	£13.53 - £15.00	18	10%	160	90%	178
3 Mid Lower	£13.53	6	3%	173	97%	179
4 Lower	£4.00 - £13.53	65	36%	114	64%	179
		105	14.7%	610	85.3%	715