

Gender Pay Gap Report

Report for the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report explains Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Information Regulations 2017) to publish our annual Gender Pay Gap figures.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to Service Management Team is asked to note the contents of the 2021 report (for 2020 data) for publishing on 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 an organisation with 250 or more employees to publish annual statutory figures in relation to their gender pay gap. This information must be published by 31 March annually on both the government website and the employers' websites.

The gender pay gap is an equality measure that shows the difference in average earnings between women and men. Used to its full potential, gender pay gap reporting is a valuable tool for assessing levels of equality in the workplace, female and male participation, and how effectively talent is being maximised. The gender pay gap is different from 'equal pay' which deals with any pay differences between men and women who carry out the same or similar jobs, or jobs of equal value.

The UK average gender pay gap for all employees as determined by the Office of National Statistics for 2020 is 15.5% (17.3% in 2019).

The required figures are calculated using a specific reference date called the “snapshot date”. This date was set nationally by Government as 31 March 2020. All identified organisations are required to use this date.

The Service is required to provide and publish figures 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 is not required to report on bonus percentage figures.

4 Service Data

For the purposes of statutory reporting requirements, the Service must publish figures based on individual employee contracts of employment. The figures below are based on established contracted posts within the Service. This also includes wholtime / retained firefighter dual roles and secondary employment contracts.

Total Employees

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

Service Mean and Median gender pay gap

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

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

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

The Service believes that the gender pay gap does not arise from paying men and women differently for the same work. However, the gap exists as a result of the job roles in which they work and the salary that these roles may attract, especially within the support staff departments. There are essentially more males occupying higher level positions within the Service. The over-representation of men in fire and rescue services as a whole is well documented. With more males in the workforce it is inevitable that differences in pay are exacerbated and this imbalance will continue until there are more women in operational and senior level roles.

Firefighting is traditionally seen as a male occupation and the recruitment of female firefighters remains challenging. A range of measures to attract a more balanced range of applicants, and to increase the attractiveness of a career within the Service for females, are in place and this has resulted in the percentage increase in female post holders.

The pay structure of uniformed employees is agreed at a United Kingdom level by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authorities' Fire and Rescue Services and is based on sound principles that preclude inequalities. All Service support staff posts are evaluated using the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Job Evaluation Scheme and the SFRS Job Evaluation Policy. This is a robust evaluation process based on the NJC Job Evaluation Scheme which assesses the demands and responsibilities of roles and assigns pay grades using gender neutral, evidence-based criteria. Given the above processes, SFRS are confident that there are no differences in pay rates for different genders occupying equivalent roles.

The national reported average gender pay gap is 15.5% which is significantly higher than that reported in the Service. The above tables for 2020 show that female employee's on average earn 8% less than male employee's in the Service. This is an increase of 2% in the pay gap from the previous year's figure of 6%.

Data from 2020 indicates that male employees are on average earning £1.16 more per hour than female employee's in the organisation. This is an increase from our 2019 data, whereby male employees were earning 94p per hour more than females. This is likely to be attributed to the increase in females recruited into the lower salary quartile band in 2020.

The data shows 39% of our employee's in the lower quartile band are female, which is an increase of 10% from 2019 and a significant contributing factor to increasing the gap. This does, however, indicate that the numbers of females recruited into the Service in 2019/20 has increased which is a positive overall result. The current data also shows a positive increase of 2% in the higher salary band of female employees to 14% and in the mid upper range of a 1% increase from 2019 data.

The median pay gap for the Service this year has increased 2% since 2019 where it was 0%. This indicates an annual increase in the pay gap of 23p per hour based on the middle band hourly rate of pay of our employees. This equates to an overall 2% increase in our average 2020 gender pay gap figure from 6% in 2019 to 8% in 2020. This is due to an increase in females recruited in the lowest salary quartile band from 15.2% in 2019 to 17.2% in 2020.

The data collected since the requirement to publish figures in 2017, has shown a steady increase in our overall female recruitment figures in the high, mid upper and mid lower quartile bands however, our low quartile band for 2020 has seen an overall increase of 10% from 2019. This is attributed to the success of our on-call recruitment campaigns throughout 2019 and early 2020.

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

The above salary quartile band tables indicate that in 2020 86% of our male employees were the highest earners in the Service. This is a reduction of 2% from 2019 data. Female high earners have increased from 12% in 2019 to 14% in 2020. The 2020 lower quartile figures indicate that this is our largest female percentage area of 36%. This predominantly equates to our 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 our family friendly policies.

The 2020 mid upper quartile band data indicates 15% are female, which is an increase of 1% from 2019, these are in support staff specialist roles attracting mid-range salaries for specialist skills. In SFRS it is recognised that females are underrepresented in uniformed roles and SFRS are addressing this in all its recruitment processes and in its 2021 on call targeted recruitment campaigns.

5 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. Our recruitment processes focus on attracting women into the Service by ensuring targeted positive action awareness sessions. Improving the diversity of the people we employ is important to SFRS. Our priority is to recruit and retain a talented and diverse workforce.

The Service's internal policies support family and work life balance working practices offering flexible working opportunities such as job share and part time working hours. SFRS maternity and adoption leave policy offers individuals enhanced benefits and along with career break schemes, parental and paternity leave, encourage applications from females.

The Service created an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Committee over 11 years ago to drive forward gender equality initiatives and is chaired by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Corporate Services. This also includes a Fire Authority member on the panel who champions diversity. The Committee drive EDI initiatives forward at a strategic level.

6 Initiatives that support reducing the Gender Pay Gap

In terms of its recruitment processes the Service ensures that employees engaged in the interviewing process receive unconscious bias training. This has now been moved to our online learning and development system for all employees to undertake. This has also been delivered to the Fire Authority Members who actively play a part in the Service's executive recruitment processes. The Service's application selection process ensures that all personal information including gender is not visible to those making decisions until the interview stage.

The Service has an ongoing annual programme of events for firefighter taster days targeting Women, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender applicants. We have also incorporated a bootcamp into our Wholetime Recruitment Campaign to encourage reaching and maintaining fitness for our under-represented applicants.

On International Women's Day the Service promoted women working at our on-call stations using the Service's social media platforms and providing short insights into a day in the life of a female firefighter.

Following the successful roll out of Menopause training last year this has moved to our online learning platform available to all employees. The Service also have a Voices representative for menopause who will champion and initiate activities in the Service.

The Service has a dedicated health and wellbeing section which can be accessed via the online portal which includes support and advice on various related topics. This gives instant access to all employees with signposts to external support networks.

A number of our operational and non uniformed female employees have attended the National Women in the Fire Service Conference to encourage networking and development and we promote attendance at National events throughout the year.

The majority of our employees have undertaken Mental Health First Aid Training. This has been rolled out to all levels of management throughout the Service. This is a two-day Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training course. The Service are now offering a half day Mental Health Aware Course to raise further awareness.

As part of the Service's ongoing Health and Wellbeing Strategy, several health and wellbeing events were held throughout 2019/20 focussing on mental health, menopause and breast cancer along with other general health topics. This is an ongoing annual plan providing information to all employees on targeted government initiatives with regards to health.

The Service's career progression gateway assessment process has now successfully been embedded as part of the promotion process. The online access and reduction in attendance time has encouraged more participants to undertake the process.

Localised training for new firefighter recruits and reducing time spent away from home promotes work/life balance to those considering a career with the Service.

We continue to improve our pay system and have an ongoing review of support staff roles to ensure competitive salaries which focuses on improving the salary of employees on lower pay scales.

7 Ongoing work initiatives

A review is underway focusing on our On Call recruitment initiatives which will concentrate on strategies for increasing the number of female firefighters, including how we use social media and appropriate images. A programme of positive action events for females will also take place throughout the year. The Service's ongoing On Call sustainability review will include reviewing all aspects of pay and terms and conditions including flexibility of working hours. Focus will be on attraction and retention as well as future proofing a sustainable service.

The Service has introduced a buddy system at point of application for On Call employees to help with attraction, engagement and retention. Every On Call station has a nominated buddy who can provide advice and guidance throughout the recruitment process and forms part of our coaching and mentoring strategy.

The Service is using the National On Call Recruitment Campaign and branding for promotional activities. The national campaign has been designed to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds.

The Service has revised the employee personal development record process, and this is in its final development stage. Employees have a performance objective related to diversity and inclusion within their areas of responsibility. This system enables all employees online access and gives managers guidance and support to complete performance reviews.

A key element of this will help identify and support talent management. The new process will help to identify high potential within the Service and work will commence in 2020/21. Work is also in progress mapping out career progression for non-uniformed employees.

The Voices group had its inaugural meeting in January 2021. The Service was pleased to have a wide range of representatives come forward after a recruitment campaign in 2020. The Service now have Voices Representatives for:

Women

Women - menopause

Disability

Disability - mental health

Disability – dyslexia

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic

LBGT +

For International Women's Day in 2021 we are promoting the theme of 'choose to challenge' and the Voices Representatives and other employees have been invited to participate in promoting this.

The Service's positive action statement promoting its commitment has been updated and distributed internally and on our website.

SFRS has championed mental health awareness with an ongoing health and wellbeing strategy that is reviewed quarterly and supported at executive level. We continue to roll out Mental Health First Aid training to all our employees.

The Service is committed to ensuring that we encourage more flexibility across all roles which will enable people to work alongside caring responsibilities and attract and retain individuals that are representative of our community. Following the enforced working from home arrangements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been able to continue to be a productive and effective Service throughout this time and are putting plans in place to review our home working policy and flexibility surrounding this.

8 Summary

For 2020, the current National Gender Pay Gap Average sits at 15.5%, a decrease from 17.4% in 2019. Having completed this analysis for 2020, SFRS results do show an increased gap on the previous year. However, the Service has also seen an increase in representation of females in the higher pay bands and in the Service.

The report outlines areas the Service is working on to address the gap through retention and attraction initiatives. We will continue to address this moving forward via our recruitment strategies and internal review of processes.

9 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

10 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

11 Initial Impact Assessment

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

12 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

13 Background Papers

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