Gender Pay Gap Report: 2024-25

Publication date: 30 March 2025

Gender Pay Gap data at: 31 March 2024

Open Fair Green

Gender Pay Gap Report 2024-25

Foreword

I want our vision for equality, diversity, and inclusion to make Cheshire East Council a welcoming place, where equality of opportunity, freedom, fairness, and equity are open to all. As an employer, I want to attract and retain talented employees from a wide range of backgrounds with diverse skills and life experiences.

Gender Pay Gap Reporting requires employers with 250 or more workers to publish specific data in relation to their workforce. As a public sector employer this demonstrates our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. These requirements include how large the pay gap is between male and female workers along with the distribution of male and female workers in the organisation. The gender pay gap measures the differences in the average earnings between men and women.

This is our seventh gender pay gap report and since reporting began the Council has reduced the mean pay gap between male and female employees by 1.2%. Looking back at the 2023-24 report, the mean pay gap has decreased from 11.4% to 10.2% This remains below the provisional 2023 ONS national public sector mean pay gap of 12.5%, recognising the revised data for 2023 has not yet been published.

The Council is committed to closing the gender pay gap and details of how this will be achieved are outlined in Section 3 and 4 of this report. I am committed to the comprehensive action plan that has been developed which includes support for women on career progression, support for young employees and actions to attract more male employees into occupational roles which have predominantly been performed by women. I am looking forward to fully involving Staff Network Champions, Brighter Futures Champions and other stakeholders in shaping the culture and equalities and inclusion agenda within the Council. As part of this, our apprenticeship programme will continue to be used to bring young people into the organisation as well as developing existing staff and enabling them to attain qualifications and career progression.

I will be working with my leadership team to close the gender pay gap.

Rob Polkinghorne
Chief Executive

1. Introduction

In April 2017, the Government introduced legislation requiring all employers with 250 or more employees[1] to calculate and publish six specific measures regarding the pay gap between men and women in their organisation. The six metrics required by the regulations are:

1. The difference in the mean hourly rate of pay.
2. The difference in the median hourly rate of pay.
3. The difference in the mean bonus pay.
4. The difference in the median bonus pay.
5. The proportion of male and female employees who were paid bonus pay.
6. The proportion of male and female employees according to quartile pay bands.

As the Council has more than 250 employees, it is a relevant organisation covered by the regulations and as such data was collected on 30th March 2024. This identified 3364 employees to be included in the Gender Pay Gap analysis of which 2546 (75.7%) were female and 818 (24.3%) were male.

The gender pay gap shows the difference in mean and median earnings between all men and women in the workforce. This is expressed as a percentage of men's earnings (e.g., women earn 10.2% less than men). Gender pay gap reporting is a valuable tool for assessing levels of equality in the workforce, female, and male participation, and how effectively our talent is being maximised.

The gender pay gap report measures the differences between the average pay of male and female employees, irrespective of job role or seniority. Gender Pay Gap is different from equal pay. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The Act states that men and women in the same employment performing equal work must receive equal pay.

[1] The definition of employees for the Regulations is the wider definition set out in the Equality Act 2010 and includes contracted employees, workers and those who are self-employed (where there is a requirement to personally provide the work).

2. Gender Pay Gap Reporting

The six metrics required by the 2017 regulations are shown in the tables and charts below. The calculations have been produced according to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 – Specific Duties and Public Authorities Regulations 2017. We have also provided additional commentary to explain the context and results for the Council.

Metrics 1, 2, 3 and 4:
Differences in mean and median hourly rate and bonus pay

Male & Female Difference	Mean (Average)	Median (Middle)
Gender Pay Gap	10.2%	8.3%
Gender Bonus Pay Gap	0%	0%

Metric 5: Male and Female Bonus Pay

	Female	Male
Proportion of employees receiving a bonus	0%	0%

The mean gender pay gap for Cheshire East Council is 10.2% This shows that female employees received 10.2% less average pay in comparison to male employees. The mean pay gap has decreased by 1.2% from 11.4% in 2023-2024.

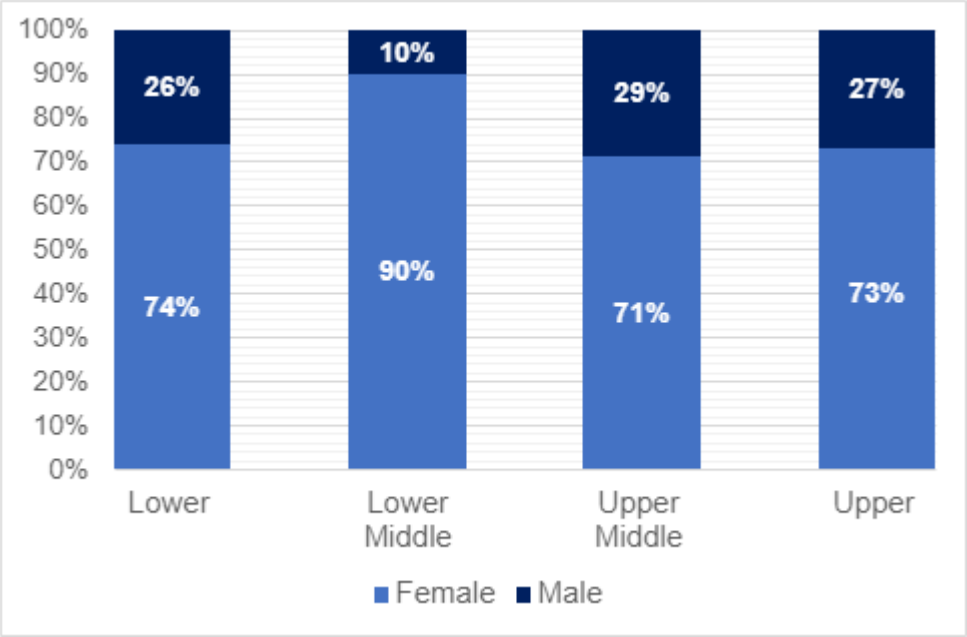
The median pay gap for Cheshire East Council is 8.3%. This has decreased by 0.3% from 8.8% in 2023-2024.

Cheshire East Council's gender pay gap is lower than the provisional ONS public sector mean and median pay gaps of 12.5% and 10.5% respectively for 2023. The final figures have not yet been published, but we will update this data when they are available See section 5 below for further detail.

Cheshire East Council's mean and median bonus pay difference is 0%. The Council no longer pays any performance related pay.

The pay gaps do not indicate that male and female employees are being paid differently for equal work. Equal work is defined as; 'like work is the same or broadly similar, provided that where there are any differences in the work these are not of practical importance,' 'work rated as equivalent under a valid job evaluation scheme; and 'work of equal value in terms of demands such as effort, skill and decision-making'. The Council operates a robust grading structure based on non-discriminatory job evaluation schemes to ensure that it complies with equality legislation and provides equal pay for work of equal value.

Metric 6: The proportions of male and female employees in quartile pay bands (to the nearest percentage)



The pay quartile analysis above shows that there is a higher proportion of female employees in the lower quartiles, and it is this distribution of employees that motivates disparities in the hourly rates of pay, and thus the mean and median gender pay gaps. There is a negative correlation between male and female employees in the upper middle, and lower quartiles; where the proportion of males has increased, and females decreased compared to last year. However, the reverse can be observed in the lower middle, and upper quartile.

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The distribution of full time and part time females, and full time and part time males in our workforce is illustrated below:

Status	Female	Male	**Total by Status**
Full time	1354	672	**2026 (60.2%)**
Part time	1192	146	**1338 (39.8%)**
Total by Gender	**2546 (75.7%)**	**818 (24.3%)**	**3364 (100%)**

The gender profile of Cheshire East Council's workforce reflects the occupational roles within the Council, including caring roles which are predominantly performed by female employees, many of these employees work in Care4CE. Many administrative roles are occupied by female staff. The majority of the Council's staff fall within the lower pay grades. This means that the overall pay gap is distorted, potentially reflecting workforce composition more so than any pay inequalities.

Traditional male roles found in services such as Refuse Collection are not part of the Council's workforce as at 31 March 2024. This may have contributed to the high proportion of female employees, at 75.7% of the overall workforce.

3. Closing the gap

Some of the Council's workforce objectives to support employment outcomes are outlined below. In line with the Council's Workforce Strategy, and considering previous reports, an action plan has been drafted to help to reduce our gender pay gap. The objectives for this action plan are outlined at Section 4.

- The Council has developed a policy to raise awareness of the menopause, and to encourage open conversations between managers and employees to seek to provide the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work. The council have developed a short e-learning module on Learning Lounge, which covers what the menopause is, things you can do and menopause in the workplace.

- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board, which meet bi-monthly, is chaired by the Executive Director Adults, Health and Integration. and has developed a strategy with clear objectives. Each Directorate also has their own Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group.

- Staff network forums/groups provide peer support to staff that identify with one or more of the protected characteristics. Each of the staff forums/groups meet regularly and provides its members with an opportunity to influence what happens in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion at Cheshire East Council. This includes the Women's Staff Network which is a friendly and supportive social space for women to share their experiences and talk about what matters to them. There is also a group for those who identify as male. Work has been undertaken to ensure that staff who are involved in organising/running staff groups are able to take appropriate paid time off work to complete this valuable work.

- The agile working policy shapes our future ways of working, to develop a hybrid and more flexible working style which will support and retain staff, the policy will be subject to reviews as necessary considering changing circumstances. This is promoted as part of the employee offer in recruitment campaigns.

- The Council continues to review recruitment processes and advertising to ensure that equality and diversity is supported, working to attract staff from across the community and from outside the gender norms for specific roles.

- The Council have hosted our own jobs fairs with partner organisations as well as participating and attending a series of local and regional recruitment fairs. This has widened the Council's recruitment methods, ensuring that the Council is accessible as an employer to all communities through targeted promotion.

- The Council's Apprenticeship scheme continues to attract young people into the Council each year. The scheme is also used to develop existing members of staff and offer career progression and development. The gender breakdown of apprentices within the Council is as follows:
    - The Council employ 25 external recruited apprentices, 18 female and 7 males.
    - The number of Cheshire East Council employees undertaking an apprenticeship qualification is 85 including 67 females and 18 males.

- A range of leadership and management programme is being developed to address identified skills gaps by offering informal and formal development from first line management through to aspiring senior leaders. This will be supported by access to formal management qualifications through apprenticeship standards providing new development opportunities.

- The Council reviews its employment policies, practices, and procedures regularly. The vision for workplace culture reflects the commitments outlined within our employee deal which creates a safe, positive, and flexible workplace with skilled managers that encourage staff well-being, equality, and opportunities.

- Annual events, such as International Women's Day, International Men's Day and Crewe Pride continue to be held to inspire the workforce to take an interest in the diverse range of job roles and development opportunities available. We promote that your employees are actively aware of with opportunity to assist with the events.

- There are Brighter Future Champions across the Council who are a key link between staff and the Council and play an important role and help shape our future working arrangements. The gender breakdown of the Brighter Futures Champions is 20 males and 61 females.

4. Gender Pay Gap Objectives 2025 - 2029

The Council is developing an updated People Strategy for the period 2025 – 2029 which will align with our Cheshire East Plan 2025 - 2029. The current Council gender profile is 75.7% female and 24.3% male.

As part of the People Strategy 2025-2029 one of the key priorities is to have an enabled and inclusive workforce. Our vision for equality, diversity and inclusion is to make Cheshire East Council a welcoming place, where equality, freedom, fairness, and opportunity are open to all. An action plan is developed to address the findings of this report, key objectives are outlined below:

- To ensure that the reduction of the gender pay gap is a central focus of the Council's EDI agenda.
- To ensure that progress is measured, and appropriate action is taken.
- To ensure that the gender pay gap is visible within the organisation and its services.
- To ensure that our recruitment, and promotion processes attract and select candidates from a wide range of backgrounds reflecting a balance in genders.
- To ensure specific training is inclusive and supports reducing the gender pay gap.
- To equip our managers with the knowledge and understanding of the gender pay gap and action plan to support positive changes and good practice.
- To ensure specific policies support the Council in reducing the gender pay gap.
- To ensure transparency.
- To understand any barriers that exist when entering local government and Cheshire East Council in specific job roles.
- To coach and mentor our young employees to support growing our own talent and improving recruitment and retention to support reducing our gender pay gap.
- To explore the options available to use positive action measures in recruitment.
- To equip our managers with the knowledge and understanding of the gender pay gap and the action plan to support positive changes and best practice.

Specific corporate actions will also be addressed within service people development plans to support service specific issues including:

- Transformation.
- Recruitment and retention.
- Targeted development programmes.
- Agile and flexible working.
- Structure reviews.

- Enhanced succession planning and career pathways, including apprenticeships
- Improving links with education institutions to publicise the Council as a career opportunity.

Reporting against progress will take place at the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Board on a regular basis.

Progress:

- The mean pay gap 2023-24 is 10.2%. This has decreased by 1.2% from 11.4% in 2022-23.
- The median pay gap 2023-24 is 8.3%. This has decreased by 0.5% from 8.8% in 2022-23.
- The headcount breakdown between 2022 – 23 and 2023-24 remains unchanged at 75.7% (75.6% in 22/23) female and 24.3% (24.4% in 22/23) male.
- Measuring the uptake of relevant training by hiring managers. This is now possible via Learning Lounge.
- EDI e-learning training has now been made mandatory for all staff, with all managers being able to monitor the uptake by their staff via Learning Lounge.
- An updated EDI policy and procedure has been approved and launched, promoting the standing of the staff networks within the organisation.
- Communication of case studies and success stories from services.
- Increase in external communication and support.
- GPG objectives will be incorporated into directorate/service workforce plans.
- Updated recruitment packs have been developed to promote Cheshire East as an employer of choice.
- Updated and improved employee offer including a new benefits platform offering a range of white goods, salary sacrifice bicycle and car schemes.
- A Cheshire East People Strategy for 2025 – 2029 is in development.
- New apprenticeship standards will continue to be used to attract, retain and develop our workforce.
- Feedback from apprentices is sought on a regular basis to proactively identify and resolve issues at the earliest opportunity thereby ensuring quality standards are maintained. This supports our aim to grow and retain our employees.

- Preparing an exercise to promote the importance of employee EDI data and encouraging employees to update their personal records so that we can effectively use anonymised data to Promote Fairness, Enhancing Diversity, Improve policies and practices as well as meeting legal requirements.

5. ONS - Private and Non-Profit Sector Gender Pay Gap

ONS Provisional 2023 Public, Private and Non-Profit Sector Gender Pay Gap

Table 13.12 Gender pay gap (%) ^ - For all employee jobs^^: United Kingdom, 2023

Description	Code	Gender pay gap median	Gender pay gap mean
Public sector		14.0	11.5
Private sector		18.9	15.6
Non-profit body or mutual association		17.3	15.6

ONS Final 2022 Public, Private and Non-Profit Sector Gender Pay Gap

Table 13.12 Gender pay gap (%) ^ - For all employee jobs^^: United Kingdom, 2022

Description	Code	Gender pay gap median	Gender pay gap mean
Public sector		14.9	13.0
Private sector		19.7	16.5
Non-profit body or mutual association		17.6	14.6

NOTE: The data shown above represents the most up-to-date figures taken from the ONS website.

NOTE: 2024 Data will be available in due course.