

# Surrey County Council Gender Pay Gap Report

March 2024



## Gender Pay Gap Report at 31 March 2024

Under government regulations, employers with 250 or more employees, in England, Wales, and Scotland are required to publish their overall mean and median gender pay gaps each year. More information is available in the government's [Gender Pay Gap Guidance](#).

The 2024 gender pay gap analysis for Surrey County Council (SCC) reports disparities in pay between male and female employees. Specifically, the data shows that on average male employees were more likely to be paid more than female employees. Although this pay gap had been narrowing year on year, the council has seen an increase between March 2023 and March 2024.

This report aims to provide insights into the average pay gaps, distribution of pay across all quartiles, progress we are making and what continued actions we are taking to further improve the situation.

*Positive pay gaps percentages indicate that men are paid more than women, whilst negative pay gap percentages indicate that women are paid more than men.*

### Summary

In 2024:

- the mean pay gap was 9.43% (compared to 8.38% in 2023).
- the median pay gap was 11.38% (compared to 8.82% in 2023).
- females were more likely to receive a bonus and were more likely to receive a higher bonus amount than males.

Shown as a snapshot as of 31 March 2024, Surrey County Council's data was as follows:

**Table 1: Mean and median gender pay gap**

Measure	Female	Male	% Gap
Mean	£20.11	£22.20	9.43%
Median	£18.29	£20.64	11.38%

**Table 2: Quartile pay bands**

Gender	Lower quartile	Lower middle quartile	Upper middle quartile	Upper quartile	SCC workforce
Female	81.36%	77.00%	65.17%	65.81%	72.3%
Male	18.64%	23.00%	34.83%	34.19%	27.7%

**Table 3: Mean and median bonus\* gap**

Bonus gap	Female	Male	% Difference gap between Male and Female
Mean bonus payment	£1,806	£1,610	-12.19%
Median bonus payment	£1,559	£1,115	-39.80%

**Table 4: Bonus proportions**

Bonus proportion	Female	Male
Total employments in receipt of bonus payment	250	63
Total Relevant Employees	7080	2626
Bonus proportion	3.53%	2.40%

\*Bonus payments include:

1. Long Service Awards paid to staff for either 25 or 40 years of service, £150 and £200, respectively
2. Recognition Awards
3. Recruitment and Retention payments for social workers

## Covering statement

Having a gender pay gap does not necessarily mean there is an equal pay issue. Equal pay means that there should be no difference in the pay and contractual terms of a female and a male doing the same or similar work (or work of equal value) for the same employer. The gender pay gap report and methodology does not measure equal pay. Gender pay gaps may exist because of a propensity for roles and jobs to be traditionally dominated by a particular gender and for these roles to be either better paid or on lower pay scales.

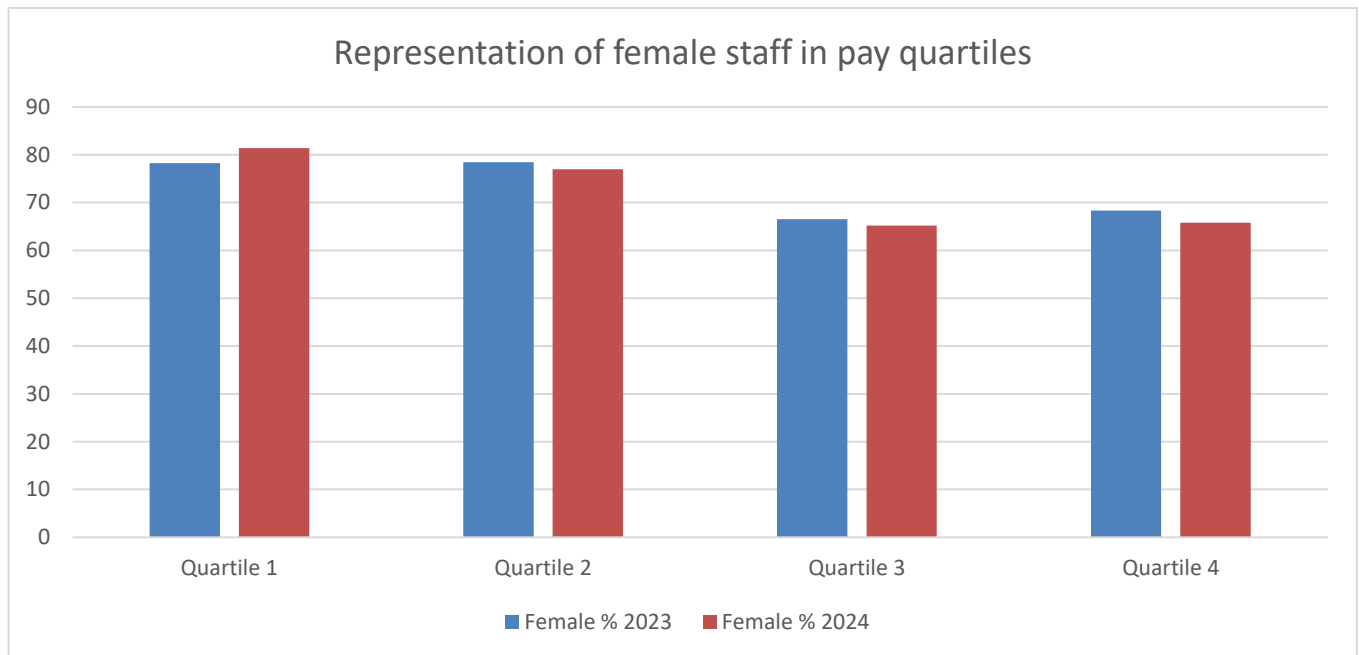
The 2024 Gender Pay data for Surrey County Council (SCC) shows that male employees were more likely to be paid more than female employees. Although this pay gap had been narrowing year on year, the council has seen an increase between March 2023 and March 2024.

On average, women in English local authorities were paid 3.5% less than men according to mean pay and 1.7% less than men according to median pay (Local Government Association 2025).

The majority of SCC's workforce in 2024 (72%) was female. This figure broadly reflects the position for the entire local government workforce in England, for which 74% of employees were female in June 2024 (ONS 2024). The South East reports a female local government population of 77% and for all Shire Counties the figure was 81%.

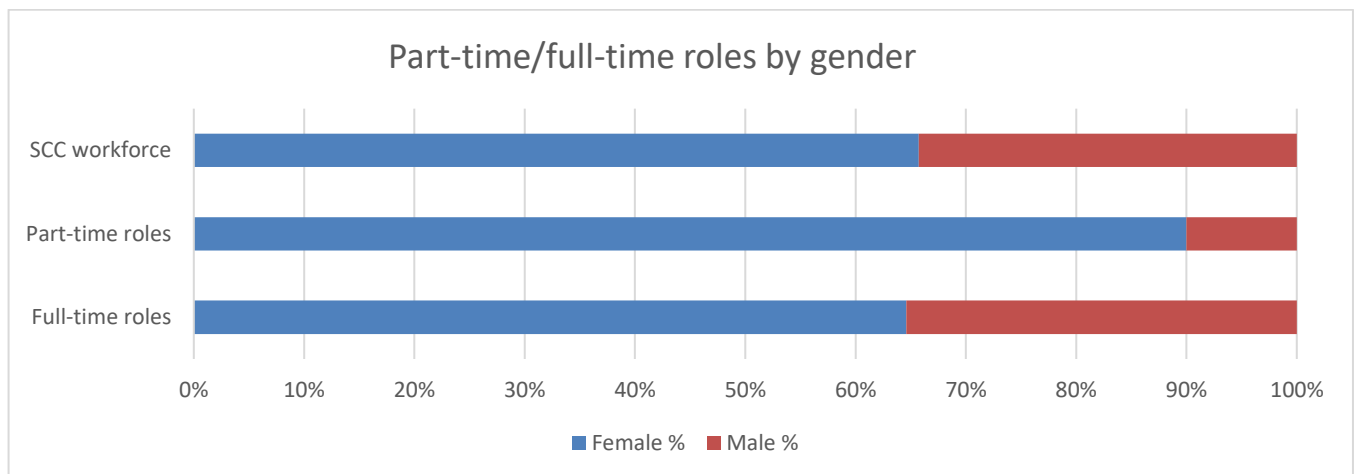
Surrey County Council's pay policy is gender neutral, ensuring that men and women should receive equal pay for work of equal value. The Council's pay and grading process and structure assesses the knowledge and skills for a role alongside the complexity and responsibilities which are required. Pay is determined by role, and not by the individual employed.

There were changes in both the lower and upper quartiles of SCC staff between 2023 and 2024, with an increase of female staff in the first quartile (3.15%) and a decrease of female staff in the fourth quartile (2.54%). These changes have had a negative impact on the Council’s pay gap.

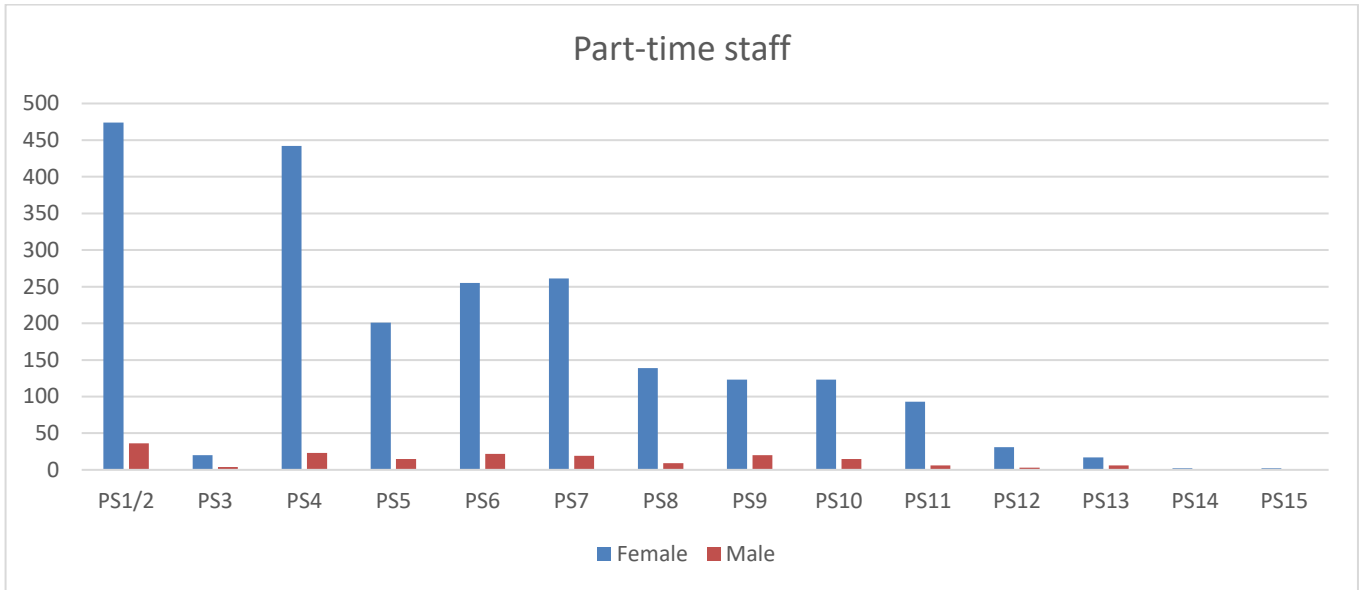


Women in lower paid roles were also more likely to be part-time, as demonstrated by the number of part time employments (contracts) there were in the lower grades compared to higher graded roles.

Overall, part-time roles were significantly more likely to be held by women:

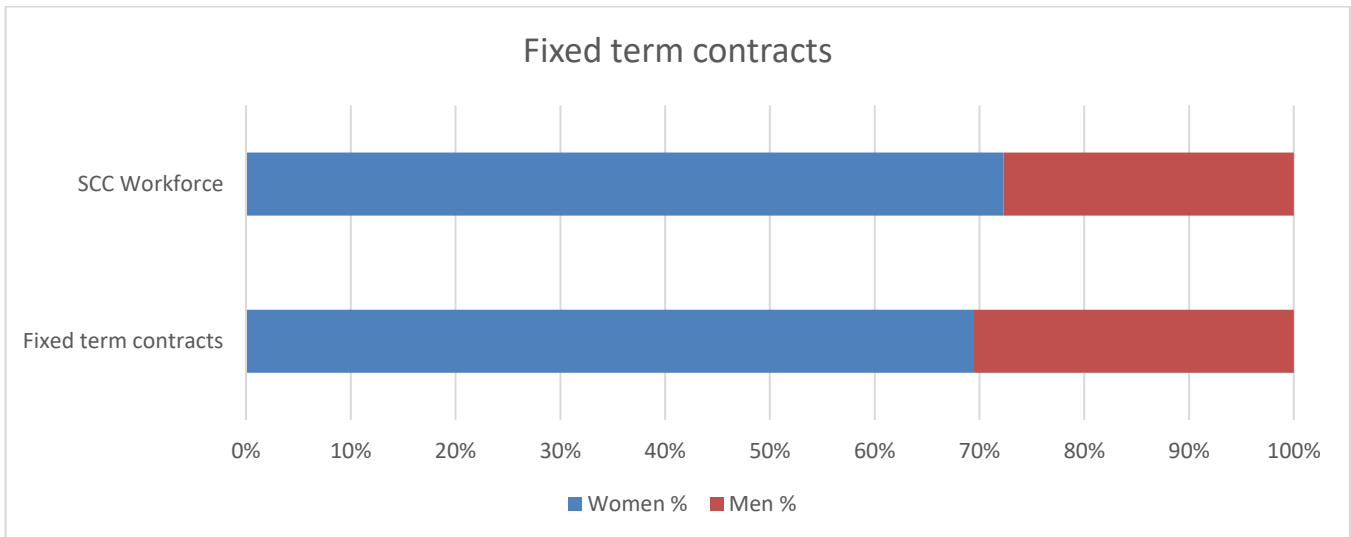


Further analysis shows that 1792 part-time female staff (82%) were in PS1/2 to PS8 roles, compared with only 179 male, part-time staff. This disparity heavily influences the pay gap.

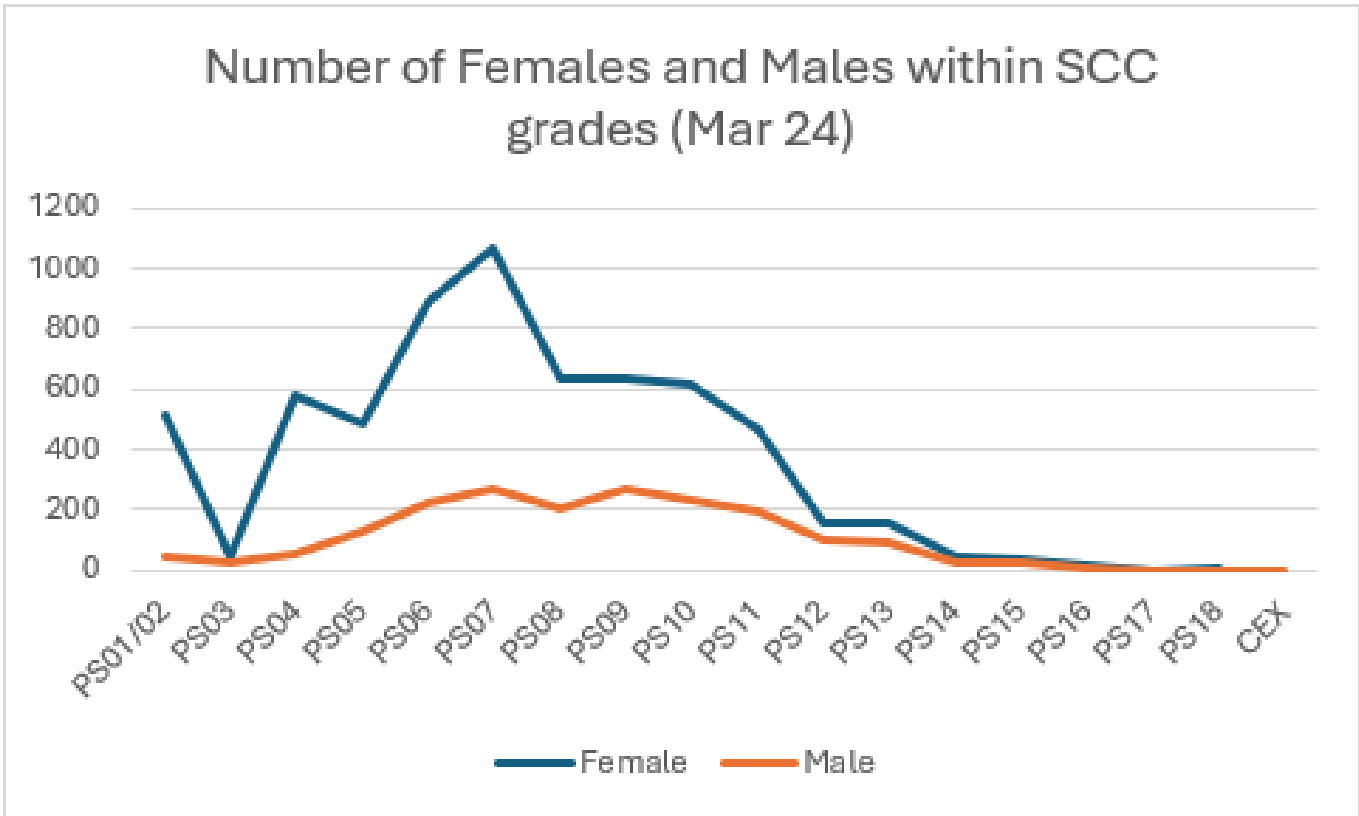


Research indicates that women are less likely to hold part-time senior roles compared to men, and this can be due to organisational cultures which do not support part-time working in senior roles, difficulty in maintaining a work-life balance and unconscious bias reinforced by stereotypes that deter employers from creating and appointing to senior part-time roles ([Chartered Management Institute 2025](#)).

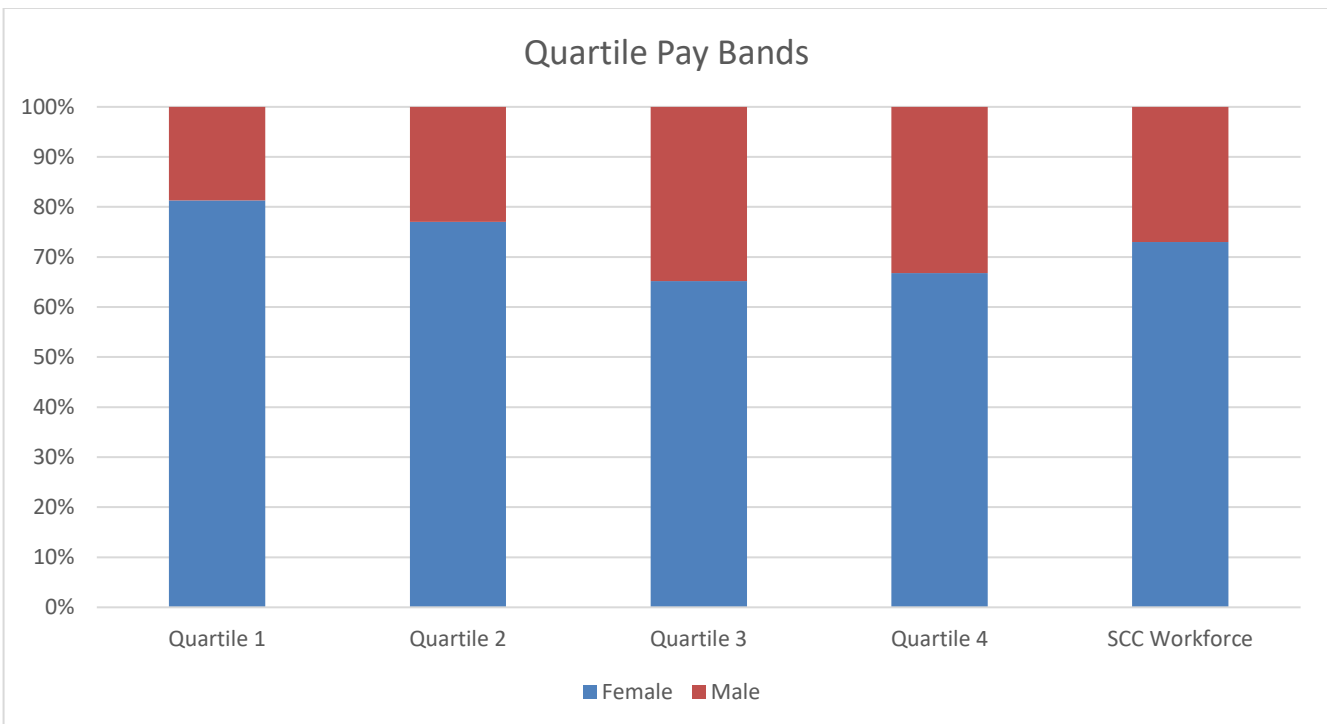
The proportion of staff on fixed term contracts in March 2024, broadly reflects the gender representation of the overall workforce:



In comparing the male and female grading position for our most common roles (PS1-PS18), there were more females in each grade than males, except for PS14 and PS17 where the figures were equal:



Female employees were also overrepresented in the two lower pay quartiles, and male employees overrepresented in the upper two quartiles, thus negatively impacting the gender pay gap. 79.2 % of employees in the lower two pay quartiles were female despite being 72.34% of the overall workforce, whilst male employees made up 34.5% of staff in quartiles three and four, despite representing 27.66% of the total workforce:



Surrey County Council has historically had a high percentage of women in Leadership roles though in 2023/24 four female Executive Directors left the Council, including the Chief Executive. At the point in time that this pay data is taken, a male interim Chief Executive was in post.

In line with previous years, the 2022/23 pay award provided a higher % pay increase to staff on lower bands. Due to the over-representation of female staff in lower pay grades, these weighted pay deals contributed towards the reduction in the gender pay gap.

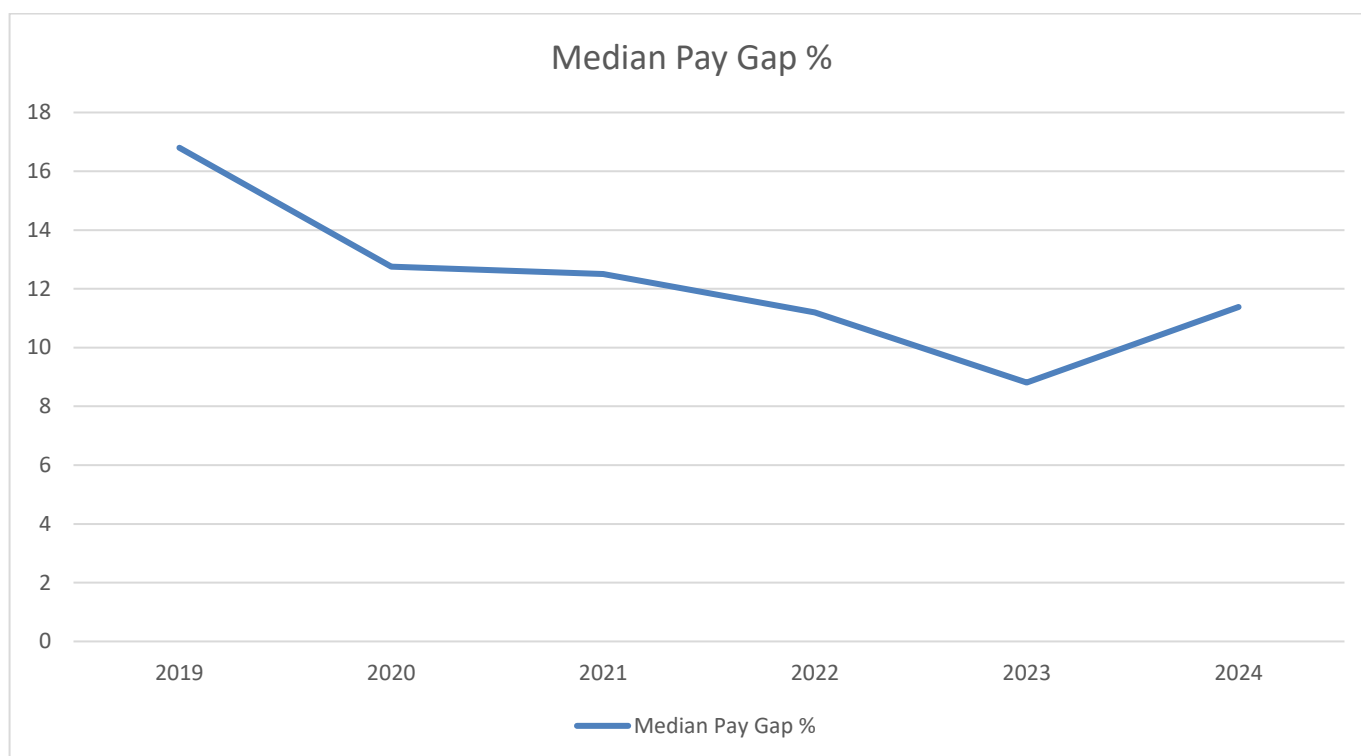
Similar to 2022/23, the Council's 2023/24 pay deal adopted a 'bottom loaded' award which gave a higher percentage increase to the lowest grades (7%), and a lower percentage increase to those in the higher grades (4%). However, the pay deal was *less* weighted towards the lower pay grades than in previous years, in acknowledgement that employees in middle to higher grades had not received a meaningful pay increase over several years (this applied to grades PS14 and above). As a consequence, the 2023/24 pay award had less impact in closing the gender pay gap than in previous years.

## Median pay gap

Statistically, the median is the middle number in a sorted list of numbers and can be more descriptive than the mean or average. The median pay gap is "the difference between the hourly pay of the median full pay relevant man and the hourly pay of the median full pay relevant woman" (HM Government: [Making your gender pay gap calculations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/making-your-gender-pay-gap-calculations)) and is useful in indicating what the 'typical' pay situation is.

A positive pay gap percentage means that men are paid more than women at the midpoint of pay for an organisation, whilst a negative percentage means that women are paid more.

In 2024, the median for SCC was 11.38%. Whilst the organisation saw a drop in median pay gap of 8% between 2019 and 2023, in 2024 this gap increased by 2.56% to 11.38%.



## Mean pay gap

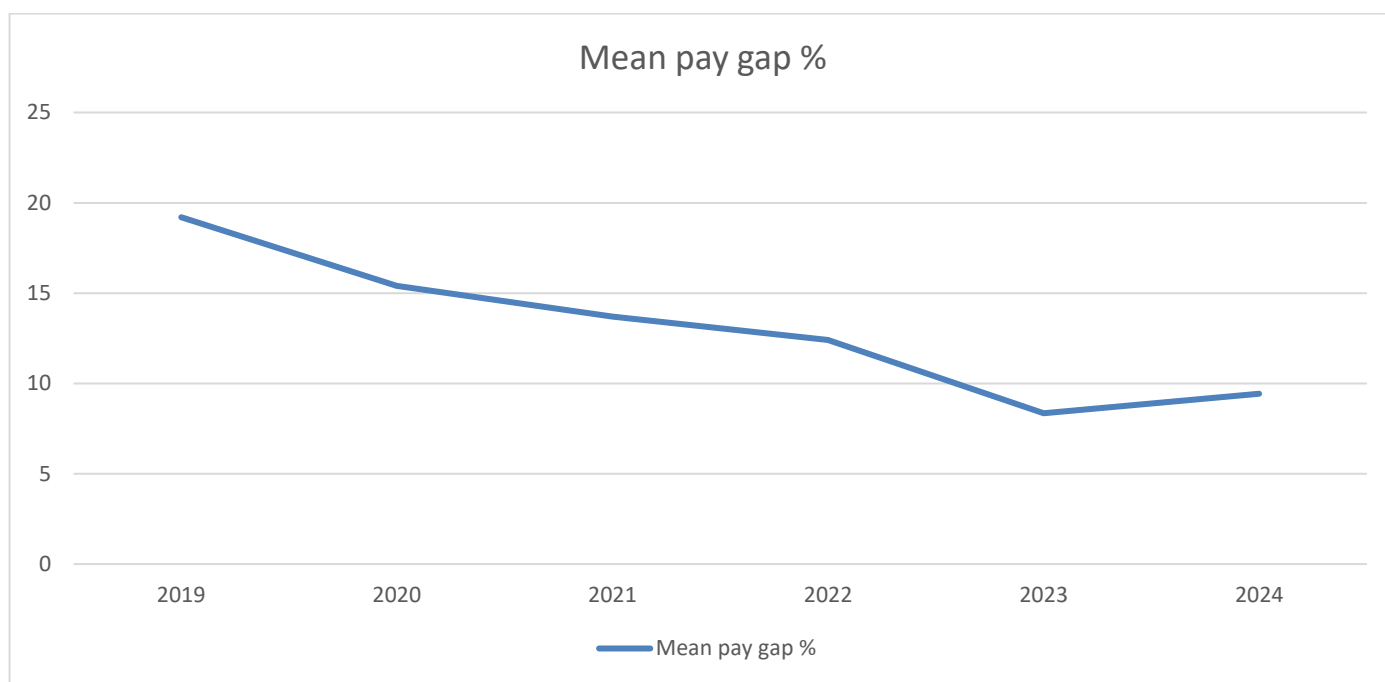
The mean pay gap reports the average pay for men and women within an organisation and can be useful “because they place the same value on every number they use, giving a good, overall indication of the gender pay gap” (HM Government). It should be noted, however, that very high or very low hourly pay can dominate or distort the figure. For example, mean averages can be useful where most employees in an organisation receive a bonus but could be less useful in an organisation where most of the bonus pay is received by a small number of board members. Here, at Surrey County Council, our Corporate Leadership Team (equivalent to a typical Board) do not receive bonuses. Bonuses issued are comprised as follows:

1. Long Service Awards paid to staff for either 25 or 40 years of service, £150 and £200, respectively.
2. Recognition Awards.
3. Recruitment and Retention payments for social workers.

A positive pay gap percentage means that on average, men are paid more than women in an organisation.

In 2024, the mean pay gap for SCC was 9.43%. The organisation saw a reduction in mean pay gap of 11.15% between 2019 and 2023 though in 2024 this gap increased by 1.08%.





## Factors affecting the gender pay gap

There have been several organisational and workforce changes during the 2023/24 financial reporting year which have contributed to the increase in the gender pay gap for 2024.

These include:

- Four female Executive Directors (who were all members of the Corporate Leadership Team), including the Chief Executive, left the council. At the point data is collected for this reporting period, a male occupied the Chief Executive position.
- An increase in female staff within the lower pay quartile and decrease in the upper pay quartile.
- A significant over-representation of female staff in both part-time roles and lower paid roles
- A more evenly distributed pay award was made which whilst still paying a higher percentage to lower paid staff (who are predominantly female), also paid a percentage increase to higher paid staff (who had not received an award in 2022/23) resulting in a higher cash award for medium to higher paid staff.
- There were significantly less Bank staff recruited.
- Several residential care homes for older adults were closed in 2023/24, resulting in the loss of approximately 160 staff, the majority of which were female. The result of this, and the reduction in Bank staff, means that as the volume of lower paid employees reduced, the mean and median hourly rates increased, which contributed to an increase in the pay gap.
- Whilst females were still more likely to receive bonus payments, and these payments were more likely to be higher than males, the number and value of bonuses received by males in 2024 increased significantly compared to 2023. This had the effect of increasing the mean and median hourly rate for males for 2024 which, in turn, contributed to the increase in pay gap.

## What are we doing to tackle the pay gap?

SCC has undertaken targeted work into this critical area, which has led to a decrease in the pay gap over the previous 5 years. The increase in the gender pay gap in 2023/24 demonstrates that we cannot be complacent and that more actions are needed.

The Council's efforts to further reduce the gender pay gap are part of our broader annual plan for workforce equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). This plan underscores our commitment to ensuring that 'no one is left behind' by fostering a workforce that is both diverse and inclusive. We welcome colleagues from all aspects of our communities, including those from minority and under-represented groups, making Surrey County Council a great place to work for everyone. We remain focused on enhancing diversity within our leadership and higher-paid roles. Recognising that protected characteristics cannot be viewed in isolation, SCC adopts an intersectional approach to address inequalities for all underrepresented and minority groups. As an example, SCC will also be publishing disability and ethnicity pay gap reports for 2024.

The Pulse Survey and other sources of workforce data, such as Exit Surveys, provide valuable intelligence to help us identify areas where we can improve the experience, opportunities, and development of female staff.

We acknowledge that no single action can close the gap entirely. Our goal is to create an environment where women feel developed, empowered, and rewarded, and have the confidence to pursue promotions and further career development with the same chances of success as men. While this is particularly relevant to our female employees, within the context of this gender pay gap report, this is also the case for all our employees.

It should be noted that narrowing and closing pay gaps requires a medium term approach, and therefore many of the actions listed below will be implemented over a number of years, and will have a positive impact of the experience and opportunities available to all under-represented or minority groups through the application of an intersectional approach to our EDI work.

The evidence-based actions listed below reflect best practice, including interventions recommended by the [Government Equalities Office](#) and the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#).

These actions include:

### **Joining SCC**

- We continually review our recruitment and selection processes to ensure they are more inclusive and accessible. We have issued an *'Inclusive and effective recruitment guide'* which supports hiring managers to attract and recruit a more inclusive and diverse workforce, breaking down any stereotypical norms should they exist. This guide was completed with input from our Inclusive Staff Networks, including the Women's Network, and is included in our new Recruitment SharePoint Site which was published in summer of 2024.
- The three EDI Employee Experience Reviews (for disabled, LGBTQ+ and minority ethnic staff) undertaken in 2022/23 commended the changes made to our recruitment processes, and the Recruitment Team has made significant progress in implementing the additional changes recommended by these reviews.
- We use structured, with standardised questions and scoring criteria, and we provide question themes in advance to shortlisted applicants.

- Evidence shows that women are less likely to negotiate their starting salary, particularly when salary information is not included in job adverts. SCC includes salary information within its adverts and has standardised processes for agreeing pay for appointed candidates.

## **Working at SCC**

- There continue to be gaps in our data regarding protected characteristics, with a considerable number of staff with missing data or choosing not to provide this information. These gaps hinder a data driven approach to our EDI work and particularly impact our ability to adopt an intersectional perspective. A comprehensive campaign is planned for Spring 2025, with the aim of encouraging more staff to report their identities and protected characteristics. This will help us identify issues regarding inequity, diversity in roles and levels in the organisation and barriers to career development.
- We continue to implement the recommendations from the three commissioned reviews of the experiences of disabled, LGBTQ+ and ethnically diverse staff. These reviews adopted an intersectional approach and included a review of the experiences of specific cohorts of both our female and male staff. A comprehensive action plan to implement the recommendations has been developed and includes the following themes: inclusive recruitment; career development; developing under-represented staff; and flexible working. It is anticipated that as work progresses in these areas, the opportunities available to and experience of female staff will improve. Updated progress reports on this action plan are published on the staff EDI Hub each quarter.
- Our staff networks, including our Women's, Carers and Parents staff networks, continue to develop and grow and contribute to the development of policies and processes that may affect their members. For example, prior to the introduction of SCC's Hybrid Working Policy, all staff networks engaged with the Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that any detrimental consequences, such as parental and caring responsibilities were mitigated.
- Our adoption of hybrid working helps both female and male staff to work in more flexible ways. This has enabled our part-time staff, who are predominantly female, to consider increasing their hours or even taking on full time roles whilst balancing other responsibilities as they see this is increasingly possible through our supportive frameworks.
- We have established a Parent/Carer Steering Group where appropriate actions are agreed and implemented. This has included reviewing our flexible working policies and processes to make it easier for parents and carers to work in more senior and better paid/higher salaried roles. These policies and processes will be particularly beneficial to female staff, who are statistically more likely to have caring responsibilities (75.6% of mothers in the UK work (ONS 2021), whilst approximately 58% of working carers are female (Employers for Carers 2021)).
- The introduction of paid carers leave in 2024 will support this predominantly female section of the workforce to manage both their work and caring responsibilities. This will enable us to attract and retain carers and support their career development into more highly paid roles.
- We continue to promote flexible and part-time working, with a particular focus on senior roles and male employees, to ensure that all staff and all roles are able to work in this way. By doing so, it is anticipated that we will reduce the significant over-representation of both women in part-time roles, and the prevalence of part-time working within lower paid roles.
- Women's health in the workplace continues to be a key area of focus for the Employee Experience Team, with a particular focus on menopause and endometriosis and the support that SCC can provide as an employer, thus supporting the attraction and retention of female staff.

- Through 2024, we continued to rollout the reverse mentoring programme for Leaders, which helps support closing the gender pay gap by facilitating mutual learning between employees of different genders. For example, our junior female employees can mentor senior male employees on the unique challenges women face in the workplace. This can increase awareness, empathy, and understanding among our male leaders, leading to more inclusive working and management practices and opportunities for women.

### **Learning and development at SCC**

- An EDI Workforce Development Group has been established to plan, design and deliver training modules that will support the Council, its leaders, and staff to be more inclusive, with the aim of ensuring that *all* staff have a fair and equitable experience of working in SCC. This training will include a mandatory EDI module and Equality Impact Assessment training.
- A Career Development programme and hub has been launched in 2024, providing resources, training and support for staff wishing to progress their career at SCC, with a particular focus on staff from under-represented and minority groups who are under-represented in more senior (and higher paid) roles across SCC. This includes advice on CV writing, interview skills training and coaching. This work should be viewed within the context of the inclusive recruitment work, which is also progressing, with the aim of providing staff with both the skills *and* opportunities to progress within the Council.
- We continue to ensure that learning and career development opportunities are made available to staff who work part-time or flexible hours as they are not always aware or feel they are accessible. This will predominantly benefit our female staff who make up most part time roles, providing them with equal opportunities to develop long term careers and pursue promotion opportunities within the Council. This includes the promotion of 'job share' opportunities and collaborating with managers to consider creative ways for staff to continue to work part time whilst in more senior roles.
- We continue to develop and expand our apprenticeship opportunities and programmes. Evidence shows that lower paid apprenticeships (such as social care) are more likely to attract women, and that men are more likely to participate in apprenticeships for higher paid roles, such as management, engineering, and legal programmes. We promote and encourage staff from minority and under-represented groups to apply for our more highly paid apprenticeships, thus developing a diverse talent pipeline for a variety of roles across the organisation.
- In 2023 we proudly launched a pilot apprenticeship programme called "Women in Leadership" in conjunction with Raise the Bar Ltd. We also have female colleagues undertaking the Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship with the University of Birmingham.

### **Reward at SCC**

- Our employees are currently employed on local terms and conditions, which differ from the national Local Government framework. The Council is now undertaking a pay and reward programme which will include the adoption of the National Joint Council (NJC) Job Evaluation scheme which, it is felt, is a better fit for local government, and will support our planning for Local Government Re-organisation. Roles are being evaluated under this methodology with a view to moving to a new pay structure which will be in line with the national local government pay arrangements from 1st April 2026. This comprehensive review of pay across the Council, which will be equality impact assessed, will provide assurance that terms and conditions are equitable and fair for all staff.

### **Leaving SCC**

- We will do all we can to discourage people from leaving and determine what we can do to understand any reasons for leaving and try and overcome these reasons and persuade staff to stay. We already have retention schemes in place for our Children's Social Workers which not only provides continuity of service for our vulnerable children, but as these staff are mainly female, will have a positive effect on the pay gap.
- We will continually ensure the completion and analysis of Exit interview data. We will be paying particular attention to the reasons any female staff are stating they are leaving, taking the learning from this, and developing further actions where necessary or building on existing actions to encourage retention and promotion within the Council.

We will continue to work in collaboration with our Staff Networks in agreeing impactful actions to further reduce the pay gap.