Gender Pay Gap

Aberdeenshire Council

Are there specific issues with gender pay within the Scottish public and private sectors?

The gender pay gap is a new indicator introduced in 2015/16. As the national rankings for that one year have not been published yet we do not have the benefit of national trend information therefore it is difficult to comment on specific issues at this stage.

The main issue causing the gender pay gap will be due to male-oriented and female-oriented jobs.

What are some examples of good or bad practice within Scotland or internationally?

Internationally, the leading countries in closing the pay gap are Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Rwanda which closed more than 80% of their gender gap (as at 2016). Nordic countries have the most positive attitudes to gender equality, underpinned by generous family orientated initiatives:

- mandatory shared parental leave (part of the parental leave of nearly 3 months is reserved for fathers only and if not taken, the time off is lost), this leave is in addition to their maternity leave
- generous parental leave benefits
- subsidised affordable childcare (families cover around 25% of the total childcare bill, people on low incomes or single parents less than that)
- post maternity re-entry programmes to try to help women return to work after childbirth.

Scotland and the UK have, to some extent, followed the idea of shared parental leave. This leave has been introduced in December 2014, it is an option that parents may take and it is calculated by reducing the maternity leave entitlement.

Work life balance with flexible working and appropriate care policies are in place in most public sector organisations; this being family friendly initiatives – parental and maternity leaves, shared parental leave as mentioned above, childcare vouchers, flexible working, and reduction of hours.

Although, the above policies are in place, more would need to be done to encourage mothers to return to work. UK child care costs are incredibly high - parents in Britain spend on average one third of their net household income on childcare, compared with an average of 13% in other major economies, and very often the cost of childcare becomes a barrier for females to return to work. Affordable child care can increase the number of working females and have a positive effect on reducing the pay gender gap.
More initiatives could be in place to support females in their career progression after return from maternity leave.

Positive discrimination in the oil and gas sector has helped fast track some female members of the industry.

**What are some examples of gender pay policies leading to more effective and successful businesses?**

The council’s own flexible working approach has enabled the council to recruit and retain female staff, particularly where the level of pay alone would not necessarily secure the talent required.

**What are the wider economic and social benefits of closing the gender pay gap?**

More equitable society. Will help towards closing the attainment gap.

**Can more be done to promote equal pay through the Scottish Business Pledge and the Fair Work Convention?**

External influence – gender neutrality in advertising (please note, most of the photos on SBP site illustrate males workers), promoting developing partnerships with gender parity focused partners could be helpful.

Mentoring schemes for women seeking leadership positions. Women continue to be penalised with lower pay and fewer promotions due to the gap in employment or inability to work full time.

Encouraging visible leadership by the top management in supporting women in top positions, regular communications on gender equality from senior management.

Continuing to encourage more females into roles perceived as male oriented, for example STEM roles, would help reduce the differential. It is also important that schools do not sustain perceptions that gender influences ability in certain subjects.

**To what extent has the Scottish Business Pledge changed employment practices as regards gender pay?**

Generally - Economic - sustainable economic growth by encouraging more females to return work, skills diversity, increased labour force participation. Social – equal access to health, education and political representation, increased quality of life at a professional and personal level.

Specifically Aberdeenshire Council as a public sector organisation has been a fair and transparent employer prior to the Scottish Business Pledge announcement. This has been evident in the application of the SLG Living Wage, fair job evaluation method, Modern Apprentice programmes with generous hourly rates and being one of Scotland’s leading councils with the female proportion of the top 5% of earners.
Unfortunately, there is not enough information published on how employment practices changed as regards gender pay in private sector companies.

**What are the enterprise agencies and local authorities doing to support gender pay equality and can more be done?**

Please see answers to questions above in relation to local authorities.

Enterprise Agencies – this is not high on the enterprise agencies agenda but there is a positive bias towards giving additional support to Women in Business events. Over the past few years more businesses have been created by women, than by men, in Aberdeenshire.

**What role can procurement policy play in promoting equal pay?**

Through for example the requirement for fair working practices to be stated as part of an Award Questionnaire, SMEs. Third sector and businesses can be encouraged to recognise and respect diversity and commit to a fair and equal pay policy.

**Are the devolved public sector bodies (including the Scottish Government, National Health Service and local authorities) examples of good practice?**

As already mentioned, Aberdeenshire Council as a public sector organisation have various family orientated policies encouraging work life balance, we apply the SLG Living Wage and have a fair and transparent method of job evaluation. We offer Modern Apprentice programmes with competitive rates of pay. Aberdeenshire has consistently been one of Scotland’s leading councils with the female proportion of the top 5% of earners. Overall, public sector organisations are subject to scrutiny and audit and are more transparent than private sector organisations.

*Aberdeenshire Council*