

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**



Director of Legal & Governance, Graham Britten  
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**Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive**  
Louise Harrison

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To: The Members of the Executive Committee

9 March 2026

**MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND  
PUBLIC**

Please note the content of Page 2  
of this Agenda Pack.

To contact our Communication  
Team, please email  
[cteam@bucksfire.gov.uk](mailto:cteam@bucksfire.gov.uk)

Dear Councillor

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** of the **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY** to be held in **THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, THE GATEWAY OFFICES, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY, BUCKS. HP19 8FF** on **WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH 2026 at 10.00 AM** when the business set out overleaf will be transacted.

Yours faithfully



Graham Britten  
Director of Legal and Governance

**Health and Safety:**

There will be limited facilities for members of the public to observe the meeting in person. A recording of the meeting will be available after the meeting, at the web address provided overleaf.

Chairman: Councillor Monger

Councillors: Bailey, Hall, Hussain N, McLean, Priestley, Rouse and Stuchbury



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## **Recording of the meeting**

The Authority supports the principles of openness and transparency. To enable members of the press and public to see or hear the meeting, this meeting will be recorded. Please visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vIiv7bh1Q>

The Authority also allows the use of social networking websites and blogging to communicate with people about what is happening, as it happens.

## **Adjournment and Rights to Speak – Public**

The Authority may adjourn a Meeting to hear a member of the public on a particular agenda item. The proposal to adjourn must be moved by a Member, seconded and agreed by a majority of the Members present and voting.

A request to speak on a specified agenda item should be submitted by email to [gbritten@bucksfire.gov.uk](mailto:gbritten@bucksfire.gov.uk) by 4pm on the Monday prior to the meeting. Please state if you would like the Director of Legal and Governance to read out the statement on your behalf, or if you would like to be sent a 'teams' meeting invitation to join the meeting at the specified agenda item.

If the meeting is then adjourned, prior to inviting a member of the public to speak, the Chairman should advise that they:

- (a) speak for no more than four minutes,
- (b) should only speak once unless the Chairman agrees otherwise.

The Chairman should resume the Meeting as soon as possible, with the agreement of the other Members present. Adjournments do not form part of the Meeting.

## **Rights to Speak - Members**

A Member of the constituent Councils who is not a Member of the Authority may attend Meetings of the Authority or its Committees to make a statement on behalf of the Member's constituents in the case of any item under discussion which directly affects the Member's division, with the prior consent of the Chairman of the Meeting which will not be unreasonably withheld. The Member's statement will not last longer than four minutes. Such attendance will be facilitated if requests are made to [enquiries@bucksfire.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@bucksfire.gov.uk) at least two clear working days before the meeting.

Statements can be read out on behalf of the Member by the Director of Legal and Governance, or the Member may request a 'teams' meeting invitation to join the meeting at the specified agenda item.

Where the Chairman of a Committee has agreed to extend an invitation to all Members of the Authority to attend when major matters of policy are being considered, a Member who is not a member of the Committee may attend and speak at such Meetings at the invitation of the Chairman of that Committee.

## **Questions**

Members of the Authority, or its constituent councils, District, or Parish Councils may submit written questions prior to the Meeting to allow their full and proper consideration. Such questions shall be received by the Monitoring Officer to the Authority, *in writing*, at least two clear working days before the day of the Meeting of the Authority or the Committee.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1. To make all decisions on behalf of the Authority, except in so far as reserved to the full Authority by law or by these Terms of Reference.
2. To assess performance of the Authority against agreed organisational targets.
3. To determine matters relating to pay and remuneration where required by collective agreements or legislation.
4. To select on behalf of the Authority-the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, and deputy to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, or equivalent, taking advice from suitable advisers and to make recommendations to the Authority as to the terms of appointment or dismissal.
5. To consider and make decisions on behalf of the Authority in respect of the appointment of a statutory finance officer; a statutory monitoring officer; and any post to be contracted to “Gold Book” terms and conditions in whole or in part taking advice from the Chief Fire Officer and suitable advisers.
6. To act as the Employers’ Side of a negotiating and consultation forum for all matters relating to the employment contracts of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, deputy to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, or equivalent; and where relevant, employees contracted to “Gold Book” terms and conditions in whole or in part.
7. To hear appeals if required to do so in accordance with the Authority’s Policies.
8. To determine any human resources issues arising from the Authority’s budget process and improvement programme.
9. To determine policies, codes or guidance:
  - (a) after considering recommendations from the Overview and Audit Committee in respect of:
    - (i) regulating working relationships between members and co-opted members of the Authority and the employees of the Authority; and
    - (ii) governing the conduct of employees of the Authority
  - (b) relating to grievance, disciplinary, conduct, capability, dismissals and appeals relating to employees contracted to “Gold Book” terms and conditions in whole or in part.
10. To form a Human Resources Sub-Committee as it deems appropriate.

## AGENDA

### Item No:

**1. Apologies**

**2. Minutes**

To approve, and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 4 February 2026. **(Pages 5 - 22)**

**3. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting**

The Chairman to invite officers to provide verbal updates on any actions noted in the Minutes from the previous meeting.

**4. Disclosure of Interests**

Members to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in any matter being considered which are not entered onto the Authority's Register, and officers to disclose any interests they may have in any contract to be considered.

**5. Questions**

To receive questions in accordance with Standing Order SOA7.

**6. Budget Monitoring Report April 2025 - January 2026**

To consider item 6. **(Pages 23 - 36)**

**7. Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2025**

To consider item 7. **(Pages 37 - 98)**

If you have any enquiries about this agenda please contact: Katie Nellist (Democratic Services Officer) – Tel: (01296) 744633 email: [knellist@bucksfire.gov.uk](mailto:knellist@bucksfire.gov.uk)



# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Minutes of the Meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2026 at 10.00 AM.

**Present:** Councillors Bailey (Vice-Chair), Hall, McLean, Monger (Chair), Priestley, Rouse (part), Sherwell (Substitute for N Hussain) (part) and Stuchbury

**Officers:** S Tuffley (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), R Davidson (Director of People), D Buchanan (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), A Hussain (Head of Finance and Assets), A Carter (Head of Service Improvement), C Newman (Data Intelligence Team Manager) M Hussey (Principal Accountant) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

**Apologies:** Councillor N Hussain

**Online:** G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), P Scanes (Head of Response and Resilience), B Ackerlay (Group Commander Service Delivery South) and A Collett (Head of People Services)

The Chairman advised that although members of the public were able to attend and observe in person, following the meeting, a video recording would be uploaded to the Authority's YouTube Channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vIiv7bh1Q>

## **EX23 MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on Wednesday 12 November 2025 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## **EX24 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Chairman advised Members of the following matters arising from the previous minutes: -

**EX19 - RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES:  
OVERVIEW AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 5 NOVEMBER 2025  
- CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT POINCY AND  
FRAMEWORK** - A Member asked about the aggregate risk

and how would Members see that snapshot in relation to the range of risks that had been put forward over the last quarter or six months in a way that does not put the burden on officers. What would be the logistics and the mechanics to enable Member's to have that viewpoint. The Head of Service Improvement advised she would consider how officers display the total number of risks being considered by the organisation outside of the Corporate Risk Register that was being shared with Members. The Head of Service Improvement advised that this will be included in the next Risk Management update to Members.

**EX20 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – Q2 2025/26 – A**

Member felt it would be a good idea to hold a workshop before the Executive Committee budget meeting in February to look at the wholetime establishment and optimal number of firefighters – The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that work has commenced on the development of an analytical model to support a clearer understanding of resourcing requirements, including the wholetime establishment and the optimal number of firefighters. This work will not be sufficiently progressed in time for the forthcoming budget meeting, but officers will advise Members once it is complete.

**EX21 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT APRIL 2025 – SEPTEMBER 2025 -**

A Member asked about the construction of Westcott Training Centre and felt it would be good to have a progress summary at each meeting. The Director of Finance and Assets advised he was happy to bring regular updates on it. There was not a lot to say at present as there had been a lot of work in the background. He could confirm planning had been validated. The Planning Department were going to view the site themselves this week. Their target date for determination was 2 February 2026 – Regular updates will be provided as part of the Chair's announcements.

The Director of Finance and Assets updated Members that the determination deadline of 2 February 2026 has now been moved to the end of March to allow more time to carry out further work on ecology, including work in relation to a recently discovered badger sett.

A Member asked about the objection received from the Parish Council as they were key stakeholders that the

Authority would want to be supportive of the training centre.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised he had responded in full to the Parish Council, one of their primary concerns was around the air quality and smoke following a fire last year at Bucks Recycling which had caused a lot of anxiety amongst them when talking about doing live fires. There had been an independent report on air quality which said the impact would be very low.

**EX25 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

None.

The Chairman reminded Members that neither discussing or approving the Scheme of Allowances; nor discussing or approving the precept gives rise to a disclosable pecuniary interest.

**EX26 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) 2026/27 TO 2030/31**

The Chairman introduced the report and advised Members that this paper sets out the proposed revenue budget and capital programme through to 2030/31. In September 2025 the Committee was advised that a review was being undertaken as to how funding was allocated across local government, known as the Fair Funding Review 2.0. At the time, specific allocations were unknown and the Committee was presented with the outputs of two independent models that gave an indication of the range of possible outcomes.

Allocations to individual services was not published until the Provisional Settlement on 17 December 2025. Although the allocations were at the least-worst end of the modelled scenarios, they still show a significant decrease in non-council tax funding allocated to the Service over the next three years, from £12m in 2025-26 to just £9.7m in 2028-29.

The decrease is driven by an adjustment to the Service's funding need based on a notional level of council tax. To fully offset the decrease in non-council tax funding would require an increase in council tax of £9.46. However, the referendum limit for fire and rescue services was £5. For this Service, a £5 increase does not mean being able to grow like it did in previous years, it simply means being

able to afford the same number of staff that it had budgeted for currently.

The Chairman advised that alongside revenue budgets, officers had been carefully planning and saving over a number of years for major capital investment. These investments were about improving the day-to-day experience, safety and effectiveness of the workforce, and supporting the commitment to be an excellent, modern and agile fire and rescue service. Planned investment included a brand-new training venue at Westcott, up to £8m for the refurbishment/rebuilding of High Wycombe Fire Station and ongoing annual investment in operational equipment, ICT and vehicles.

The Head of Finance and Assets advised that focussing on some of the key assumption that underpin the revenue and capital budgets, as Members would be aware, the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had confirmed a multi-year settlement covering 2026 to 2029 which had been factored into the budget. Officers had again taken a zero-based analysis approach and had realigned budgets accordingly. In terms of council tax precept flexibility, fire services had again been given the flexibility to increase council tax by up to £5 for a band D property. The core spending powers published by MHCLG assumed that all services would increase council tax by this amount.

The Head of Finance and Assets advised that in terms of the Fair Funding Assessment (FFA), this now consolidates most grants including the Revenue Support Grant and business rates income. The only grants excluded from the FFA were the fire specific Pension Grant and the New Dimensions Grant.

The Head of Finance and Assets advised that included within the budget increase was the increase in revenue contribution to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service. The Authority's contribution had increased by £38k per annum to £1,052m for 2026/27. Furthermore, the annual contribution towards the renewals fund had increased from £50k to £90k to help fund the replacement of the command and control system.

The Head of Finance and Assets advised that in terms of key planning assumptions, officers had assumed a £5 increase each year from 2026 to 2031. In terms of Council

Tax growth, officers had assumed 1.6% from next year onwards, and also assumed a pay award of 4% in 2026/27 followed by 3% per year thereafter.

Looking at the capital programme, a five year plan had been set with several major investments including a new training facility at Westcott and up to £8m for refurbishing or rebuilding High Wycombe Fire Station and ongoing investment in operational fleet equipment and ICT. This resulted in a total capital budget of £8.4m for 2026/27.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that as the Chief Finance Officer, he was required to report on (amongst other things) the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. As had already been stated, the Fair Funding Review had a significant impact on the Authority's financial position. Given this position, his professional advice must therefore be for the Authority to increase Council Tax by the maximum amount allowable without triggering a referendum, namely an increase of £5 on a band D property. Although the reserves position showed a significant decrease in reserves over the medium term, he wanted to reassure Members that this was not because they were using reserves to balance the revenue budget, but because of the ambitious capital investment plans to ensure staff had the best facilities and equipment available to them.

A Member asked that if the capital programme goes forward then the Service may start to get some external revenue coming in from the Westcott project.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that officers had taken the prudent approach of assuming no external income would be coming in, but obviously the aspiration was once Westcott was up and running and bedded in for this Service, it would be offered out to other services. Hopefully, external income would be generated in the future.

A Member questioned whether it should be called 'flexibility' to raise council tax as the government were forcing Authorities to raise it. The Member was also struggling to reconcile the budget as described in appendix 1, the approved budget for 2025/26, with the budget that was approved. The approved budget for 2025/26 was £42.715m and not £42.989m that was in the appendix. There were also individual lines that do not reconcile. It

would be good to understand why that was and what movement had occurred.

The Member also stated there were some material areas in the budget that were moving. There was an additional amount of resource in 2025/26 put into the People Directorate taking the budget to £3.736m. There was also a significant amount of money taken out of the Delivery and Corporate Development budget £845k, but that seemed to be going back in next year, it would be good to understand this.

The Member would also like to know what the scrutiny process was for this year as he could not see what the zero-based budgeting had actually challenged and was there Member scrutiny? In last year's paper it set out what the Officer and Member scrutiny had led to, but that section had been removed in the report this year. Also, there should be scenarios in the budget for uplifting the Wholetime establishment to 330, and proper investment into On-Call stations and On-Call headcount, so Members could see what it would do to the budget.

(Councillor Sherwell joined the meeting)

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that with the point around being forced to raise precept, the Authority did not have any choice as it was the way the funding review had happened. As already stated, MCHLG were assuming that everyone was going to take the maximum increase. Flexibility was probably not the right word, but that was the word they used.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that with regard to the movement since last year's budget, if the Member was looking at the original papers presented to the Fire Authority, there was also presented a revised Appendix 1 because of the late notification of business rates and council tax from the billing authorities, which were received after the initial papers were published. It was updated to take account of those figures.

The Director of Finance and Assets would come back with the detailed movements across some of those lines mentioned. It may be to do with operational training moving from Service Delivery to the People Directory.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that the Member mentioned the underspend in the budget

Director of  
Finance and  
Assets

monitoring, predominantly it was driven by the treasury income, so it was factored in despite the forecast decrease in rates, the treasury forecast had been increased, as the cash balances were better than forecast.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that in terms of the scrutiny process, there was an information workshop held for Members in early January, where officers ran through some of the detail and explained some of those movements. In terms of scrutiny, it was done slightly differently this year. In previous years, officers were invited to put forward growth bids which Members then scrutinised. Because the Fair Funding Review was coming, officers were told not prepare any growth bids this year, so there was no real growth to scrutinise.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that in terms of the Wholetime scenario, 330 was not a number he recognised. A scenario of what 330 would look like could be shown, it would be negative reserves, and it would not be feasible at this point in time.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that in terms of the On-Call, officers had deliberately taken the approach that because there was a consultation that was active at the time the papers were prepared, it was closed now, but they did not want to pre-empt anything, so deliberately did not change any On-Call figures as it had been said all along it was not about savings, so in either scenario it was about re-investing.

A Member advised that as an Authority they had agreed to uplift Wholetime equivalents, but rather than saying 330, to look at what was plausible from a financial point of view according to the forecast.

A Member advised that he knew the scale of growth that was coming in Buckinghamshire. This Authority needed to be planning now so that it was in step with the growth that was coming, it does not want to be caught out.

The Chairman wanted to add further information on that point, the Authority had responded to the Regulation 18 and 19 submissions of the Milton Keynes City Authority. The Chairman had written to both the Corporate Director and the Cabinet Member for Planning at Buckinghamshire Council requesting a meeting and had been advised that they were not yet ready for such a meeting.

A Member supported the whole concept of raising Wholetime numbers, but in light of what the Chair had said, there was still a piece of work to be done by officers to better understand those figures, and the Director of Finance and Assets had told Members the Authority could not afford a number of 330 at this time.

A Member asked regarding Thames Valley Fire Control Service, what was the actual increase in percentage terms and regarding the annual contribution towards the renewals fund increasing, when was the decision made and by whom.

The Head of Finance and Assets advised that it was approved by the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee Members of all three Services back in December 2025. He was happy to share more details of what the budget consisted of and what the capital programme was.

Head of Finance  
and Assets

Councillor Rouse wished to propose an amendment to recommendation (b). Councillor Hall seconded it.

- 1) That the revenue budget should include a scenario analysis of increasing wholetime establishment up to 330;
- 2) A further scenario setting out the impact of implementing the current On-Call Improvement proposals and a scenario of investment where those proposals are not approved by the Fire Authority.

Members voted with a show of hands (3 for and 5 against).

The Chairman advised that the amendment failed.

**RESOLVED –**

That the recommendations below be approved for submission to the Authority:

It is recommended that:

- (a) the report and Statement of the Chief Finance Officer (see Section 7 of Annex A) be noted.
- (b) a Council Tax precept of £89.46 for a band D equivalent property (equal to an increase of approximately 10p per week) and the revenue budget as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.
- (c) the capital programme as set out in Appendix 2 be approved.

**EX27 THE PRUDENTIAL CODE, PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP)**

The Principal Accountant advised Members this was a technical paper and was presented annually to this Committee to approve the recommendations, with final approval at the Fire Authority meeting.

The Prudential Code was established to ensure the capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable, and the treasury management decisions were taken in accordance with good professional practice. The Prudential Indicators presented here demonstrated that the current plans for capital investment meet this criteria and present an acceptable level of risk to the Authority.

The Minimum Revenue Provision was a statutory charge to the General Fund (revenue budget), which ensured that the Authority had sufficient cash balances to repay borrowing upon maturity, reducing the refinancing risk.

The authorised limit for borrowing and other long-term liabilities had been set at £2.5m above the operational boundary limit to allow for effective management of cashflow and accounting for lease liabilities following the implementation of IFRS 16 Leasing.

This report supported the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which had been presented earlier and according to the MTFP, there were no plans for additional borrowing. However, in 2027/28 the Authority was forecasting to reverse the voluntary revenue provision set aside in 2015/16 of £3.5m to support the capital programme set out in the Medium-Term Financial Plan. This had been factored into the prudential indicators shown in the appendix.

A Member asked for some context as to why the authorised limit was £2.5m, what were the implications if it was higher or lower. Also, regarding the graph which provided an overview of gross borrowing from Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) across fire services in England, where this Service continued to have one of the lowest debts of any Fire Authority. What was the recent review of that debt position.

The Principal Accountant advised Members that the Authority currently had borrowing of around £4.5m and a lease liability of around £1.6m and to give the Authority a

buffer, in case there was a time in the year when the Authority had to borrow where the capital investments were in fixed term deals, there was a buffer of £2m in case short term borrowing was required. The other £500k was set aside as the Authority now had to account for all its leases, and the £500k allowed for the potential lease of Westcott.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that with regard to PWLB, the Authority was not planning to pay it down further this year, longer term outside of the MTFP, the Authority may look to external borrow, but that would be a consideration in the future.

RESOLVED –

That the Authority be recommended to approve:

1. The Prudential Indicators for 2026/27
2. The Minimum Revenue Provision policy statement.

**EX28 RESPONSE TO THE PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2026-27: CONSULTATION**

The Chairman advised Members that this paper showed the Service's response to the Provisional Settlement, the impact of which has already been covered in some detail under Item 6, the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Given the impact of the notional council tax adjustment on the level of funding receivable, it was perhaps unsurprising that the response to the allocation methodology and council tax referendum principles were the two key areas of disagreement. The Authority's response in relation to council tax referendum principles aligns with the response made on behalf of the sector by the National Fire Chiefs Council.

Due to the timing and length of the consultation and in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, the response was discussed with the Chairman and the Lead Member before submission. This paper detailed the content of the submission.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that there were only two Fire Authorities that had set a lower Council Tax precept than this Authority, one was West Midlands and one was Northamptonshire. West Midlands did quite favourably out of their Fair Funding Review and their non Council Tax income had gone up significantly.

Northamptonshire on their budget papers were discussing a precept increase of either £5 or £12. They had written to the government to ask for additional flexibility, but they had said they would not trigger a referendum. That was to give some context of how tight it was for some services. Officers would keep a watch on how it played out.

A Member asked if officers spoke to their counterparts in other services in the bottom section, should there be a co-ordinated approach to the Home Office to try and get more flexibility.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised the Authority had done a co-ordinated approach with the National Fire Chiefs Council and this Authority's response was based quite heavily on their response.

A Member asked if it was possible to get together with other Authorities who had the same sort of rate of growth in their areas, and pushing for some special treatment to actually get some resourcing in advance of houses actually physically being built and occupied.

The Director of Finance and Assets was not aware of other areas growing the same as this Service, a lot of services had seen a lot of growth in a lot of areas, but through the National Fire Chiefs Council, that was the main mechanism for co-ordination. In terms of long-term growth, it depended on where that growth was.

**RESOLVED –**

That the response to the consultation be noted.

**EX29 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT APRIL 2025 – DECEMBER 2026**

The Chairman advised Members that this paper sets out the latest in-year revenue and capital monitoring position as at the end of December 2025. The forecast was that the net revenue underspend would be £0.165m by the end of the financial year. The significant variances within this figure were an over-achievement of treasury income against the budget, lower than forecast employee costs due to vacant posts and a significant reduction in Airwave costs following a ruling by the Competition and Markets Authority.

All the above mean it will no longer be necessary to utilise the £0.5m transfer from reserves that was originally

forecast would be needed to balance the budget for the year. Since the last update to Members, the capital programme was showing an increase in the amount of budget that would be carried forward to 2026-27, and this was likely to increase further following subsequent information received in relation to the planning application for the proposed new training centre at Westcott.

The Head of Finance and Assets highlighted to Members the treasury table. As Members would see it showed what the treasury budget was for the year £600k, but the Authority had actually achieved £1.2m. That over achievement resulted in an underspend, but without that over achievement the Authority would not have that underspend and the reason for the over achievement was having capital funds available that had not been spent throughout the year.

When the budget was set last year, it was assumed that the average investment value was around £15m and the average rate of return was around 4% which would give the Authority £600k. In reality the Authority had funds in the region of £28m, which was nearly double because £6m related to Westcott. There were also additional pension grants that had not been paid out, and officers had tried to maximise those returns and the overachievement had a massive impact on the underspend. Treasury returns had always been used as a mechanism to increase capital reserves.

The Head of Finance and Assets advised that in terms of capital, there was a significant reduction in the capital programme and a significantly higher slippage, but that related to Westcott, as obviously officers were not expecting the planning permission to come through before the end of March.

A Member asked that virtually every month the underspend had been moving upwards, last reported it was £139k being projected, what do officers anticipate what the underspend will be at the end of the financial year prior to moving to reserves. Also, what would an increase of 30 firefighters on the Wholetime establishment cost.

The Head of Finance and Assets did not want to commit to a figure on the underspend at the end of year. 30 additional firefighters salary costs alone would be around £1.8m.

The Director of Finance and Assets agreed that overspends and underspend was equally as bad. An underspend could be a missed opportunity, and something could have been done with that money. Generally, at the end of the year, any underspend would go into the capital programme and that was why the Authority was able to afford Westcott and High Wycombe which was being planned for.

If Members looked at the table on page 101, the Authority was actually overspending on wholetime staff, and that was because the Service had been consistently above the establishment of 300 for the year. Where the Service tended to get underspend, was on support staff as it was budgeted for to have all support staff roles filled. Staff leaving the business and getting new staff in often leaves a gap and it was that gap that drives a lot of the underspend. Also, there were some posts that were challenging to recruit to. Coming to next week's Fire Authority meeting was the Annual Plan, which was quite ambitious in terms of what the Service wanted to deliver, and an updated position would be brought back in March.

**RESOLVED –**

That the provisional outturn forecast for the Authority as of 31 December 2025 be noted.

**EX30 MEMBERS' SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES 2026/27**

The Democratic Services Officer advised Members that the report in front of Members was the Members' Scheme of Allowances for 2026/27. The recommendation was for this Committee to recommend to the Authority that it adopts a scheme of allowances for 2026/2027 based on an uplift of 3.2%.

The recommendation was based on the indexation which had been in place since 2012, with the exception of one year, which was 2021/2022, and therefore aligned to the preceding year's annual pay award for employees on the NJC grey book terms and conditions. The draft Scheme of Allowances for 2026/27 was attached at Appendix 1 with the 2025/26 figures included for illustration of the 3.2% increase in line with the NJC employers' Grey Book pay award.

The Authority, in adopting its annual Scheme of Allowances, had a wide discretion and need only have regard to the recommendations of the independent

remuneration panels of both Milton Keynes City Council and Buckinghamshire Council and an update was provided in the report in the foot note on page 112.

A Member asked if the allowance amount paid to Members was reported on the website.

The Democratic Services Officer said it was and would share the link with the Member after the meeting.

A Member felt for transparency the allowance amount paid should also be reported on both Buckinghamshire Council and Milton Keynes City Council websites.

RESOLVED –

That the Authority be recommended to adopt the Scheme for Members' Allowances for 2026/27 (as shown in draft as Appendix 1).

### **EX31 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – Q3 2025/26**

The Data Intelligence Team Manager provided details on some of the highlighted measures. Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV), Fire Safety Audits and a much more in depth look at over the border mobilisations. Also, as requested at the last Authority meeting, more in depth analysis had been provided on attendance times.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that there was an example in the report where it took a crew 51 minutes to attend an incident and this was in relation to the Service being requested by the police to attend what they believed was going to be a deliberate arson attempt on a property. On route the crew were asked to go to a standby location and not go directly to the incident. The crew unfortunately did not book in to attend the incident until they had been sat at the standby location for quite a period of time and then made it to the incident.

A Member asked about Fire Safety Audits and how the rag thresholds were set.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that there was a bit of professional judgement in there, along with statistics and also what officers think should be able to be achieved with the resource available. The numbers in the report were based on if the Service had a full resource of staff with a bit of tolerance. 66 was the number that was felt could be achieved. The rag status was where the Service expected to be or if it was off, then further

Democratic  
Services Officer

investigation would be done as to why. Also, for reassurance, it would be reviewed in the next coming weeks, whether those numbers were reflective of what was needed, not just against the resource available but the risk as well.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer also pointed out that the Service needed to resource its risk-based inspection programme, which was a combination of yearly inspections for very high risk and also needed to allow for demand work including post fire incidents. Officers had challenged themselves around what they do and do not visit, making sure they were hitting the highest risk. That number was driven by being able to accommodate risk based inspections, but also what was reasonable to resource.

A Member asked about the fact that there were 3 out of 9 inspectors missing, how does the dashboard take into account the volatility of the workforce in terms of how you make your professional judgements.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that was where the commentary came in and allowed officers to explain where they would expect it to be, or why they were not where they expected to be.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer explained that it was really difficult to find replacements, so if the Service went to advert for a Fire Safety Inspecting Officer, it was highly likely there would not be any applications from qualified inspecting officers because the market was so challenging. Since the last inspection programme, the Service had tried to make itself more resilient in terms of having a pathway from apprentices up to inspecting officers. There was now an internal talent pipeline, with some grant funding to support it but there was more work to be done to make the Service more resilient. In next year's Annual Plan, it identified how the Service might use associates both internal and external to support peak demand periods. Also, officers were looking at roles that were only open to operational staff, could they be available to support staff and vice versa. There was a lot of work being undertaken to try and smooth out some of the challenges.

A Member felt that wholetime availability seemed to be on a downward trend and what was rising beside it was bank shifts and over the border mobilisations. How much does the Service spend per annum on bank shifts? Also,

Operational Leave Guidance changes, how had that been received in the Service? When should Members start to get concerned about Wholetime availability and what were the actions that would be needed to drive it back up.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised he was not concerned about wholetime availability, the Community Risk Management Plan, as agreed by the Authority, was for 12 immediately available Wholetime appliances and an average response standard of 10 minutes. The Service was consistently turning out those 12 appliances. The Service was also consistently exceeding the response standards.

One of the challenges the Service had in Q3 was a high level of sickness, so it did bring the 12 down on a few occasions and obviously it did have an incremental impact on the use of bank shifts. The bank costs would be about £800k by the end of the year. There was still some flexibility around the leave guidance. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer had written an open letter explaining to staff the situation and why it was needed.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised Members that looking at the figures for January 2026, there was 99% availability, only 7 bank shifts, and On-Call availability was 18.1%.

(Councillor Rouse left the meeting)

A Member asked about response times and the fact that around a third of calls were going over 10 minutes. It would be useful to understand the location of these incidents on a quarterly and accumulative level to see if there were any particular hot spots to inform the Service going forward.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that he had hoped to have A3 maps available to show this information but would be able to show it on a smaller scale after the meeting.

A Member asked about staff absence in wholetime and support staff and the obvious seasonal absence with winter flu etc., but this pattern was completely reversed with On-Call, which was predominantly over the summer months, why might this be.

The Director of People advised he could not comment on the summer months, but the sickness absence was high in November and December and interventions had been put in place to look at patterns that were emerging, more

control by line managers monitoring sickness absence, having early conversations and return to work discussions, and from an HR perspective, making sure it was being monitored through the People Delivery Group, but sickness absence over January had significantly dropped.

A Member asked for further data on Aylesbury's third pump and how many times it went out.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager asked the Member if he wanted to know how many times it went out, or how many times they had been fully available. How many times they had gone out was more important as it would show how many times the Service had utilised over the border.

A Member asked about energy usage and why the gas had gone up by a third from November.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that it was more to do with the fact that more gas meters came on during that period, so the number increased which an allowance was not made for. One thing officers would be looking at was seasonal trends, but the data was not available at the moment.

A Member asked that when the Service had a better view of its usage, would it be used to negotiate energy prices with suppliers.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that the Authority had a broker who negotiated energy prices on its behalf and they already had all the information. The real use of this data once all the smart meters were up and running was to look at trends day-to-day and take remedial action on a day-to-day basis.

A Member asked if batteries would start to be put in some stations, when officers had the information to reduce the requirement further.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that it was being kept under review, especially when the Authority undertakes a big development like the High Wycombe proposal, bringing it forward as officers were always looking improving the energy efficiency of the buildings. The new sustainably framework was being brought to the Overview and Audit Committee meeting next month, in terms of setting out the Authority's aspirations around improving its environmental impact.

**RESOLVED –**

That the report and recommendation below be approved for submission to the Fire Authority:

1. It is recommended that the Performance Management – Q3 2025/26 be noted.

**EX32 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of the Executive Committee will be held on Wednesday 18 March 2026 at 10 am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12.22 PM

DRAFT



# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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**Meeting and date:** Executive Committee, 18 March 2026

**Report title:** Budget Monitoring Report April 2025 - January 2026

**Lead Member:** Councillor Niknam Hussain

**Report sponsor:** Mark Hemming, Director of Finance and Assets

**Author and contact:** Asif Hussain, [ahussain@bucksfire.gov.uk](mailto:ahussain@bucksfire.gov.uk), 01296 744421

**Action:** Decision.

**Recommendations:**

1. That the provisional outturn forecast for the Authority as of 31 January 2026 be noted.
  2. That a transfer of £0.257m to the Future Funding Reserve to support resourcing the Annual Delivery Plan 2026-27 as detailed in Appendix A – Table 8, be approved.
- 

**Executive summary:**

The report in Appendix A sets out the Authority's revenue and capital spending position as of 31 January 2026, together with the projected outturn position for the financial year.

The budget for 2025/26 is £42.989m, with a forecast outturn of £41.976m, resulting in a projected underspend of £1.013m. The underspend primarily arises from lower direct employee costs due to vacant positions. Additionally, we have received confirmation of a reduction in Airwave costs, supplemented by one-off income and investment returns exceeding budgeted expectations. As a result, it will no longer be necessary to utilise the £0.501m transfer from reserves, as the additional treasury income will more than offset this requirement.

Following the budget-setting process, funding forecasts have decreased by £0.201m, primarily due to the removal of the Airwave grant (approximately £0.050m) and a significant reduction in the Pension Grant (approximately £0.150m). These changes, communicated only after the budget was approved, partially offset the expenditure underspend and additional income, resulting in an overall projected underspend of £0.311m, representing a 0.7% variance against the total budget.

The 2026–27 Annual Delivery Plan includes several projects that require additional resources to ensure successful delivery. As per recommendation 2, Table 8 sets out the fixed-term roles proposed to be funded in 2026–27 through the transfer to reserves from the 2025–26 underspend.

**Financial implications:** As set out in the main body of the report.

**Risk management:** Management of our financial resources is a key risk to the Authority and the performance reports to Committee inform Members of the main financial risks facing the Authority in year.

**Legal implications:** None.

**Privacy and security implications:** None.

**Duty to collaborate:** None.

**Health and safety implications:** None.

**Environmental implications:** None.

**Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:** None.

**Consultation and communication:** None.

**Background papers:** Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2028/29, Fire Authority Meeting 12 February 2025 <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/FIRE-AUTHORITY-AGENDA-AND-REPORTS-12-FEBRUARY-2025-INCLUDING-LATE-URGENT-ITEMS-1-2-AND-3.pdf> (pp.31-45) and [https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Item-8a\\_Revised-Appendices-1-and-2-Final.pdf](https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Item-8a_Revised-Appendices-1-and-2-Final.pdf)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
A	Appendix A – Budget Monitoring Report April 2025 – January 2026	None

## Appendix A

### Service Overview

Table 1 | Budget and forecast outturn for the end of the 2025-26 financial year

Subjective Area	Full Year Budget £m	Actual Year to Date £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Projected Year End Variance £m
Employee Costs	32.782	27.298	32.498	-0.284
Non-Employee Costs	10.207	6.262	9.477	-0.730
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>42.989</b>	<b>33.560</b>	<b>41.976</b>	<b>-1.013</b>
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>-42.989</b>	<b>-34.891</b>	<b>-42.287</b>	<b>0.702</b>
<b>Net Position</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-1.331</b>	<b>-0.311</b>	<b>-0.311</b>

- The total approved expenditure budget is £42.989m, with a forecast outturn of £41.976m, resulting in a projected underspend of £1.013m.
- The funding budget is £42.989m, while the forecast stands at £42.287m, resulting in a projected shortfall of £0.702m. This variance is primarily attributable to reduced grant allocations (£0.201m), although additional investment income has eliminated the need to draw the £0.501m from reserves that was originally planned.
- Taking both expenditure and funding into account, **the net position is a forecast underspend of £0.311m**

**Table 1.1 | Ringfenced Grant Funding**

Subjective Area	Full Year Allocation £m	Actual Year to Date £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Projected Year End Balance £m
Protection Uplift	0.288	0.176	0.200	0.088
New Burdens Remediation	0.117	0.000	0.000	0.117
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.405</b>	<b>0.176</b>	<b>0.200</b>	<b>0.205</b>

Ringfenced funding is allocated for specific purposes and received during the financial year. The Protection Uplift Grant is intended to enhance services’ protection capability and delivery, in alignment with locally agreed Integrated Risk Management Plans and risk-based inspection programmes. In November, the Service successfully secured additional protection grant funding to support remediation efforts for residential buildings identified with unsafe cladding.

**Table 1.2 | Treasury**

Treasury	Total £m
Average portfolio £15m x average rate 4%	
<b>Budget</b>	<b>0.600</b>
Portfolio as at 30 Sept £28.4m x 4%	1.136
Rate above average 4%	0.069
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.205</b>
<b>(+) Over / (-) Under Achievement</b>	<b>0.605</b>

Treasury is forecasting an over achievement of £0.605m driven by a slower-than-anticipated reduction in the market rates and the availability of higher-than-usual balances for investment, due to upfront payment of pension remedy grant funding and slippage on the capital programme. As a result, the Service no longer need to utilise the transfer from reserves of £0.501m.

## Employee Costs

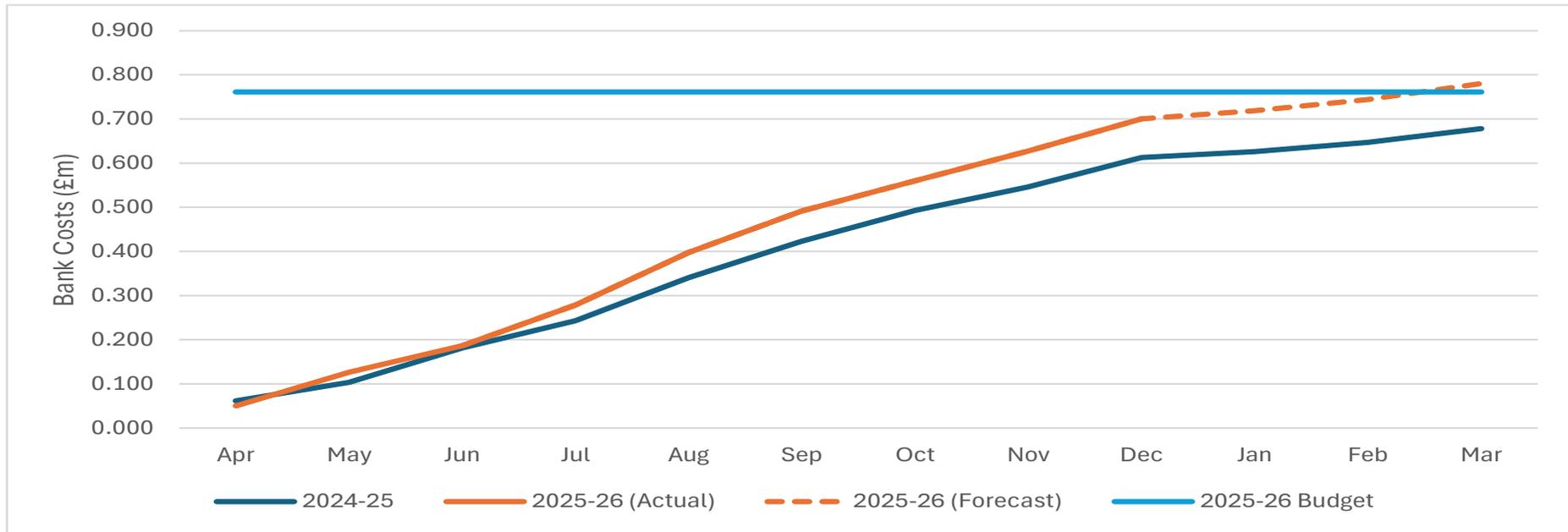
Table 2 | Direct and indirect employee subjective budgets

Subjective Area	Full Year Budget £m	Actual Year to Date £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Projected Year End Variance £m
Wholetime	22.758	19.278	23.024	0.266
On-Call	1.505	1.123	1.347	-0.157
Support	6.807	5.334	6.422	-0.384
Technicians	0.499	0.350	0.433	-0.066
Sessional	0.084	0.056	0.075	-0.009
Agency	0.025	0.124	0.132	0.107
Indirect Staff costs	1.104	1.034	1.065	-0.039
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>32.782</b>	<b>27.298</b>	<b>32.498</b>	<b>-0.284</b>

- **Wholetime £0.266m Overspend** - The overspend reflects current staffing levels exceeding the budgeted establishment. Since Q1, we have had several retirements/leavers that have reduced the overspend forecast for the year. A detailed workforce plan is provided on page 5 to illustrate the anticipated staffing trajectory.
- **On-Call £0.157m Underspend** - primarily attributed to vacant posts and associated allowances, which are activity and training-dependent.
- **Support £0.384m Underspend** - currently under budget due to vacant posts that are in the process of being advertised and recruited. To mitigate service disruption, some roles have been temporarily filled via agency contracts. Recruitment is expected to progress throughout the remainder of the year.
- **Agency £0.107m Overspend** - Agency costs have exceeded budget expectations, largely due to the temporary filling of vacant support roles. While this ensures continuity of service, it represents a short-term financial pressure. These costs are expected to decline as permanent recruitment is completed.

## Bank Costs

Chart 1 | Bank costs and forecast vs. budget



*Note: The figures presented above exclude National Insurance (NI) contributions.*

Chart 1 presents a comparative analysis of bank costs incurred up to Q3 of 2025-26 against the corresponding period in 2024-25. Bank costs for Q2 2025/26 are slightly higher than the previous year's costs for the same period. The operational leave policy has been revised which should see a reduction in bank costs in the future.

The budget setting process for 2025-26 identified a saving of over £0.300m that was reallocated to support other priorities. Current projections indicate that this saving may not be fully realised by year-end, subject to ongoing monitoring and review.

## Wholetime Establishment

Chart 2 | Wholetime Establishment Roadmap

### Global Establishment Actual and Planned

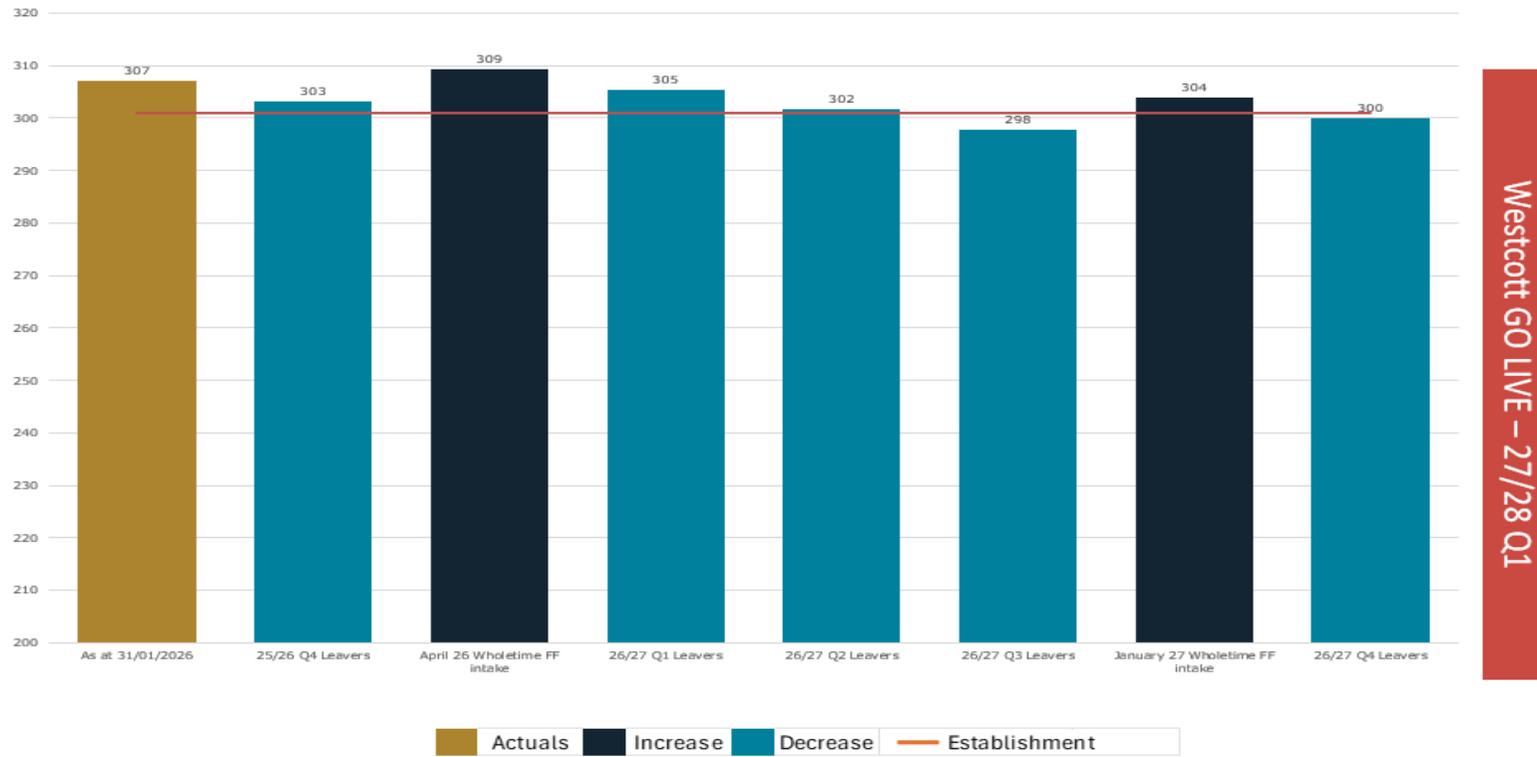


Chart 2 illustrates the wholetime operational establishment as of 31 January 2026 through to March 2027 taking into consideration projected retirees, leavers, transfers and recruitment of apprentices.

## Non-Employee Costs

Table 3 | Non-Employee subjective budgets

Subjective Area	Full Year Budget £m	Actual Year to Date £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Projected Year End Variance £m
Supplies and Services	5.221	4.257	5.233	0.013
Premises	2.378	2.128	2.469	0.091
Transport	1.337	1.494	1.352	0.015
Capital Financing	2.922	0.149	2.965	0.043
Income	-1.650	-1.766	-2.541	-0.891
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>10.207</b>	<b>6.262</b>	<b>9.477</b>	<b>-0.730</b>

- Additional Income of £0.891m** - primarily driven by higher-than-budgeted investment returns. This is due to the Bank of England base rate remaining static which has sustained stronger yields. However, economic indicators suggest a potential reduction in the base rate over the next 12 months, as part of broader efforts to manage inflation. We have seen the first reduction in the base rate in the last quarter. This may impact future investment income projections and will be monitored closely.

## Funding

Table 4 | Funding by source and forecast outturn position

Funding	Full Year Budget £m	Actual Year to Date £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Projected Year End Variance £m
Government Funding	-4.111	-3.612	-4.111	0.000
Fire Specific Grants	-2.237	-0.862	-2.038	0.199
Business Rates	-5.995	-5.284	-6.000	-0.005
Top-up Grant	-1.615	-1.356	-1.607	0.008
Council Tax	-28.530	-23.775	-28.530	0.000
Transfer to/(from) Reserves	-0.501	0.000	0.000	0.501
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>-42.989</b>	<b>-34.891</b>	<b>-42.287</b>	<b>0.702</b>

A funding shortfall of approximately £0.202m is currently projected for the 2025-26 financial year. This shortfall arises from two key changes in central grant allocations:

- Airwave Grant: A reduction of approximately £50k following the complete removal of this funding stream.
- Pension Grant: A significant decrease of approximately £150k compared to the previous year's allocation.

The pension grant shortfall is primarily attributable to an update in the data used within grant allocation methodology, which resulted in a lower overall award. Importantly, notification of these changes was received only after the annual budget had been set, limiting the opportunity to adjust financial plans in advance.

The impact of this funding gap and future outcome of the fair funding review is being assessed, and mitigation strategies will be considered as part of ongoing budget monitoring and medium-term financial planning.

It was originally planned to transfer £0.501m from reserves to support planned expenditure for 2025/26. However, due to the significant overachievement of treasury returns, this transfer is no longer required.

## Reserves

Table 5 | Reserves (including capital funding)

Reserve	Opening Balance (31 March 2025) £m	Use Of / (Contribution To) £m	Transfers Between Reserves £m	Projected Year End Balance £m
General Fund Balance	-2.040	0.000	0.000	-2.040
<b>Non-earmarked Reserves</b>	<b>-2.040</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-2.040</b>
Control Room Reserve (*)	-0.479	-0.050	0.000	-0.529
Future Funding Reserve	-0.205	0.205	0.000	0.000
Transformation Reserve	-3.298	0.000	3.298	0.000
USAR Reserve	-0.817	0.000	0.817	0.000
Workforce Planning Reserve	-1.175	0.000	0.935	-0.240
<b>Earmarked Reserves (Revenue)</b>	<b>-5.974</b>	<b>0.155</b>	<b>5.050</b>	<b>-0.769</b>
Usable Capital Receipts Reserve	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Revenue Contribution to Capital	-6.894	-1.041	-5.050	-12.985
<b>Earmarked Reserves (Capital)</b>	<b>-6.894</b>	<b>-1.041</b>	<b>-5.050</b>	<b>-12.985</b>
<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>-14.908</b>	<b>-0.886</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-15.794</b>

(\*) This figure represents this Authority's share of the joint control room renewals fund (which is held by Oxfordshire).

The projected balance in the Workforce Planning Reserve will be fully utilised during 2026-27 to fund temporary roles that will continue into that year as per the approved medium term financial plan.

## Capital Monitoring

Table 6 | Capital forecasts

Subjective Area	Full Year Budget £m	Actual Year to Date £m	Provisional Outturn £m	Projected Year End Variance £m	Projected c/fwd to 2026-27 £m
Property	7.408	0.439	0.539	0.000	6.869
<b>Total Property Portfolio</b>	<b>7.408</b>	<b>0.439</b>	<b>0.539</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>6.869</b>
Operational Red Fleet Vehicles	0.928	0.653	0.928	0.000	0.000
Operational White Fleet Vehicles	0.114	0.027	0.114	0.000	0.000
<b>Total Fleet Vehicles</b>	<b>1.042</b>	<b>0.680</b>	<b>1.042</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Operational Equipment	0.185	0.074	0.185	0.000	0.000
ICT Equipment	0.208	0.032	0.208	0.000	0.000
<b>Total Equipment</b>	<b>0.393</b>	<b>0.106</b>	<b>0.393</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8.843</b>	<b>1.225</b>	<b>1.974</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>6.869</b>

- **Property** - £6m is currently being forecast to carry forward into 2026-27 to reflect an early estimate of the split of expenditure across the two years for this project. The project is still forecast to be within the total budget. The additional £0.869m of carry forward into 2026/27 relates capital projects currently waiting for the outcome of the on-call improvement programme consultation and various options appraisal (including High Wycombe).

Details of planned delivery for Property Works and Operational Red Fleet Vehicles can be found on pages 10 and 11.

## Capital Monitoring – Property and Operational Red Fleet

Table 7 | Delivery progress

Complete
  On track
  Risk to progress
  - Not due to be started

Project	Start Date	End Date	Status	Commentary <i>(mandatory if risk to progress)</i>
<b>Property – b/fwd from 2024-25</b>				
Drill tower refurbishment	Apr-25	Mar-26	Complete	
Broughton – repair and resurface drill yard	Apr-25	Aug-25	Risk to progress	Works rescheduled for March 2026
Multiple sites – fire door replacement programme	May-25	Apr-27	On track	On-going programme of works
<b>Planned Property Works 2025-26</b>				
Newport Pagnell – roof, guttering & downpipes.	Apr-25	Mar-26	Complete	
Amersham – roof, guttering and downpipes	Apr-25	Mar-26	Risk to progress	Deferred to 2026-27
Stokenchurch – roof, guttering and downpipes	Apr-26	Mar-27	-	Deferred to 2026-27
Chesham – roof, front yard, M&E, refurbishment	Apr-25	Mar-26	Complete	
Brill – drainage	May-25	Jun-25	Complete	
Various sites – EDI/contaminants improvements	Jun-25	Mar-26	Complete	Works scheduled for 2025-26 completed
<b>Emergency Property Works 2025-26</b>				
West Ashland – male shower block and wall failures	Apr-25	Jul-25	Complete	
Broughton – drainage	Apr-25	May-25	Complete	
Broughton – heater / air-con Unit	Dec-25	Jan-26	Complete	
Various Sites – DSEAR improvements	Jun-25	Jun-25	Complete	
Waddesdon – shower room refurbishment	Jan-26	Jan-26	Complete	

Major Projects 2025-26				
Westcott – construction of new training centre	Apr-25	Mar-27		
High Wycombe – options appraisal	Aug-25	Dec-25		Options to be presented to Authority June 26
Operational Red Fleet				
Rural Firefighting Vehicle (x 2)	Apr-25	Sep-25		
Water Carrier (x 2)	Apr-25	Feb-26		

- **Broughton – repair and resurface drill yard** – quotations have been received to undertake the planned works, which are now scheduled for March 2026.
- **Amersham – roof, guttering and downpipes** – works deferred to 2026/27.
- **Water Carriers (x 2)** – The water carriers are expected to be delivered in February 2026, subject to any delays in the build process. The current vehicle will continue to be available until these new vehicles are in service.

## Detail to Support Recommendation 2

**Table 8 | Proposed Transfer to the Future Funding Reserve**

The Annual Delivery Plan for 2026-27 includes several projects that require additional resources to ensure successful delivery. Table 8 shows the fixed-term roles that would be funded in 2026-27 by the proposed transfer to reserves from the 2025-26 underspend.

Role	Rank/ Scale	Annual Cost £m	FTE	Term (Months)	2026-27 Cost £m
Operational Delivery Manager	Group Commander	0.132	100%	12	0.132
ICT Delivery Manager	Scale M	0.080	100%	12	0.080
MarComms Delivery Officer	Scale G	0.043	100%	9	0.032
Industrial Action Planning Officer	Station Commander	0.112	100%	3	0.028
<i>Less amount covered elsewhere [Note 1]</i>	-				-0.015
<b>Total Transfer</b>					<b>0.257</b>

- Operational Delivery Manager – responsible for delivering phase 2 of the On-Call Improvement Programme (OCIP). This role would be a continuation of the role used to deliver phase 1, ensuring a continued focus on improving the availability and resilience of our on-call front-line appliances and specialist vehicles.
- ICT Delivery Manager – additional ICT support is required across a range of projects including the new local training venue, the refurbishment/rebuild of High Wycombe fire station (including preparation for decant arrangements), the upgrade of the command-and-control system within TVFCS and managing associated interdependencies with the Emergency Services Network upgrade.
- MarComms Delivery Officer – this role would work support with tactical communications across all areas, including the OCIP, major capital projects, Prevention campaigns and engagement, and branding rollout.
- Industrial Action Planning Officer – The Thames Valley Fire & Rescue Services’ Concept of Operations for Industrial Action outlines a complex set of interdependent workstreams required to maintain safe and effective operational response across Thames Valley during periods of action short of strike or full strike action. To implement these arrangements effectively, an additional dedicated short-term resource is essential.

*Note 1 – this amount in relation to ICT work required on the new local training venue is already included within the approved business case for that project.*



# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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**Meeting and date:** Executive Committee, 18 March 2026

**Report title:** Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2025

**Lead Member:** Councillor Moriah Priestley, Lead Member - People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance

**Report sponsor:** Ronnie Davidson, Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development

**Author and contact:** Zak Ahmed, People Business Partner

**Action:** Noting

**Recommendations:**

1. The content of the Gender Pay Gap report 2025 is noted, and it is confirmed that the data will be submitted to the Government website (gov.uk) in line with statutory reporting requirements.
  2. The ethnicity pay gap 2025, as detailed in Appendix two, is noted.
- 

**Executive summary:**

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) requires public sector organisations with over 250 employees to carry out gender pay gap reporting. In accordance with the Regulations, the Authority is required to annually publish six pieces of prescribed data about the pay and bonuses of male and female workers within the organisation:

1. Mean gender pay gap in hourly pay
2. Median gender pay gap in hourly pay
3. Mean bonus gender pay gap
4. Median bonus gender pay gap
5. Proportion of males and females receiving a bonus payment
6. Proportion of males and females in each pay quartile

These calculations follow a UK Gender Pay Gap methodology set out by the Local Government Association, ACAS and the Government Equalities Office.

The gender pay gap is the difference between what males typically earn within the workplace, compared to what females earn, irrespective of role or seniority. It examines the difference in the average pay gap, expressed as a percentage of male

earnings. A gender pay gap is not unlawful, it is essentially a reflection of a workforce profile.

There is a gender-neutral approach to pay across all levels and roles within the Authority.

The gender pay gap report, as detailed in Appendix one, details the Authority's gender pay gap as at 31 March 2025.

For 2025, the mean (average) gender pay gap has increased from 9.6 per cent in 2024 to 11.5 per cent. The median (mid-point) gender pay gap has also increased, from 7.5 per cent in 2024 to 8.7 per cent.

While both the mean and median gender pay gaps have increased this year, this shift reflects several organisational changes at the time of reporting, and we have taken a range of actions to address this moving forward.

For the third year, ethnicity pay gap data has been provided, as detailed in Appendix two. For 2025, the mean (average) ethnicity pay gap is -1.32 per cent, this is 13.22 percentage points lower than 2023 (11.9 per cent in 2023). For 2025, the median (mid-point) ethnicity pay gap is 2.68 per cent.

This year's ethnicity pay gap results are encouraging, and momentum will continue with ongoing efforts to build on this progress and further strengthen equity and inclusion across the organisation.

To support enhanced transparency and more regular monitoring of workforce equality metrics, the Authority has introduced Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Quarterly Dashboard, included as Appendix four. This has been added to demonstrate the Authority's continued development of EDI data and reporting.

Going forward, Gender Pay Gap data will also be reviewed quarterly through the dashboard, enabling improved monitoring of trends and supporting timely and informed action where required.

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### **Financial implications:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **Risk management:**

The Authority will comply with the Regulations requiring public sector employers with over 250 employees to publish their gender pay gap data before 30 March each year.

The six pieces of prescribed data within the report will be published on the Government's website (gov.uk) and the full report published on the Authority's external website for a period of three years. Annually publishing the data in line with the Regulations will help the Authority monitor the effectiveness of the actions in reducing the gender pay gap over time.

With regards to the ethnicity pay gap, due to the requirement to protect confidentiality, different ethnic groups have been combined, and for 2025 the

categories include white British, other ethnic backgrounds and not known. Whilst it is acknowledged having fewer categories masks the variations between ethnic groups and provides pay gap data comparing the earnings of ethnic minority employees as a percentage of all white British employees, using the five-category breakdown, as defined in the 2021 Census of England and Wales, would result in many of the categories with insufficient numbers to be able to report the data.

To mitigate the risk associated with publishing improbable data, our data undergoes internal scrutiny and by providing contextual narrative, it supports the information provided within the report and highlights the activities we are engaging in to address pay gaps.

#### **Legal implications:**

Publishing the annual gender pay gap report ensures compliance with The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

Whilst the Regulations do not contain any provisions imposing a penalty for non-compliance, failure to disclose this data could result in enforcement action by the Equality and Human Rights Commission or challenge by way of judicial review.

Currently there is no legislative requirement for organisations to carry out ethnicity pay gap reporting. Whilst reporting is not mandatory, as part of our approach to improving inclusion and tackle inequality within the workplace, this data has been provided from 2023.

#### **Privacy and security implications:**

The report does not include any personally identifiable information.

#### **Duty to collaborate:**

All organisations employing over 250 employees have a requirement to carry out gender pay gap reporting.

#### **Health and safety implications:**

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

#### **Environmental implications:**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

#### **Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:**

Whilst both gender pay and equal pay deal with the disparity of pay within the workplace, it is important to note that gender pay is different from equal pay. The presence of a gender pay gap does not mean the Authority is discriminating against groups of individuals. The Authority is confident this gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work, i.e. an equal pay issue.

The report has identified there are pay disparities within the workplace. Whilst we are committed to addressing and reducing pay gaps and achieving a more representative workforce, figures are not expected to reduce significantly within the

short to medium term, as the issues driving pay gaps requires a longer-term commitment.

Work is ongoing to improve the breadth of diversity-related data available and the utilisation of this data, to identify inequalities, initiate activity and evaluate progress throughout the employment lifecycle. The service is committed to utilising updated Gender Pay Gap date regularly throughout the year to ensure progress.

The Authority strives to increase diversity in all areas of the organisation. A particular continuing priority is attracting and retaining a more diverse workforce and having better representation of employees at all levels across the organisation.

**Consultation and communication:**

Additional to the Fire Authority, other employers, job applicants, trade unions, media and the public will continue to pay close attention to annually published gender pay gap data. Due to the high-profile nature of gender pay, it is important that employees are made aware of the gender pay gap report for this organisation before 30 March 2026. Following approval for publication, the gender pay gap report will be communicated to employees in accordance with usual practice.

Engaging with stakeholders is essential to ensure progress is made against the initiatives to lower pay gaps. We will increase engagement and buy-in to what we are trying to achieve and will ensure interventions are evaluated as appropriate.

Annual gender pay gap reports will be presented to the Joint Consultation Forum, People Delivery Group, Strategic Management Board and Executive Committee.

**Background papers:**

[Link](#) to Fire Authority approved Pay Policy Principles and Statement 2025/26:

[Link](#) to Fire Authority approved Gender Pay Gap reports:

[The Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties and Public Authorities\) Regulations 2017](#)

[Gender pay gap in the UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Report your gender pay gap data\(gov.uk\)](#)

[Ethnicity pay gap reporting. Guidance for employers](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Gender Pay Gap Report 2025	
2	Operational vs. Support Service Employees	
3	Ethnicity Pay Gap 2025	
4	EDI Quarterly Dashboard	

## Introduction

Regulations came into effect in 2017 that requires organisations employing over 250 employees to carry out gender pay gap reporting. The two sets of Regulations introduced mandatory gender pay gap reporting on employers; the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 and the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Reporting) Regulations 2017. Both sets of Regulations are similar, however the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 apply to public sector employers, including fire authorities.

Gender pay gap information must be published within 'the period of 12-months beginning with the snapshot date' (Regulation 2(2)). The snapshot date for public sector employers is 31 March each year.

## What is the gender pay gap?

The gender pay gap shows the difference between the average earnings of males and females, expressed as a percentage of male earnings, e.g. females earn 10 per cent less than males. The gender pay gap should not be confused with equal pay and this is explained in the next section. The gender pay gap is reported on both the mean (average) and median (mid-point) basis.

According to the Office of National Statistics (Source: ONS - Gender pay gap in the UK: 2025), the gender pay gap continues to slowly decline and over the last decade has fallen by approximately a quarter amongst both full-time employees and all employees.

In 2025, the UK gender pay gap among all full-time employees decreased to 6.9 per cent, down from 7.1 per cent in 2024. The gender pay gap is higher for all employees than it is for full-time employee as females occupy more part-time roles, which have a lower salary.

Data from the Office of National Statistics (source: ONS - Annual Survey of Hours and Earning (ASHE)), as detailed below, shows the gender pay gap for median gross hourly earnings in the UK, April 2015 to April 2025. When comparing the gap over this ten-year period, it is evident that progress on closing the gender pay gap is slow and therefore likely to take years to eradicate.

# Gender Pay Gap 2025



Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All	19.3	18.2	18.4	17.8	17.4	14.9	15.1	14.4	14.2	13.1	12.8
Full-time	9.6	9.4	9.1	8.6	9	7.0	7.7	7.6	7.5	7.1	6.9

There are several factors contributing to the UK gender pay gap and these include:

- A higher proportion of males working in senior positions
- A higher proportion of females working in part-time roles (therefore normally earning less than their full-time colleagues)
- Skills gap, lack of training and development opportunities
- Occupational segregation
- Lack of role models
- Family, childcare, and caring commitments
- Lack of opportunities for flexible working
- Attitude and culture
- Confidence

The gender pay gap is based on data at the snapshot date of 31 March 2025. For the Service in 2025 this has increased by 1.9 percentage points to 11.5 per cent (9.6 per cent in 2024) and has decreased by 7.9 percentage points from the first year of reporting (19.4 per cent in 2017). This is still positive and takes the Service 1.3 percentage points below the UK average gender pay gap of 12.8 per cent for 2025.

A number of key areas of activity have been identified, and the Service's plan on addressing pay gaps is detailed at the end of this report. Whilst the foundations for improvement have been laid through these initiatives, it is likely to be several years before there is any significant and sustained impact on parity within pay.

## Different to equal pay

Whilst both gender pay and equal pay deal with the disparity of pay females receive within the workplace, it is important to note that the gender pay gap is different to equal pay.

The principle of equal pay is that males and females who carry out the same job, similar jobs or work of equal value, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, should receive equal pay. Equal pay is a legal obligation. Whereas the gender pay gap examines the difference in the average pay gap between males and females expressed as a percentage of male earnings and is not unlawful.

Organisations which are fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 can still have a gender pay gap. This is often due to having more males in senior and highly paid positions and females in lower paid and part-time roles. The gender pay gap is a mechanism by which organisations can examine this data and take positive action to reduce the gender pay gap.

## **Equal Pay Audit**

An equal pay audit is the most effective way of checking the Service is complying with its equal pay obligations, ensuring it delivers a pay system free from bias. An equal pay audit involves comparing pay of employees doing equal work and has three main purposes:

- to identify any differences in pay between those doing equal work
- to investigate the causes of any differences in pay between those doing equal work, and
- to eliminate instances of unequal pay that cannot be justified

In 2020 an equal pay audit was undertaken within the Service. The snapshot date for the equal pay audit was 01 January 2020. The meaningful comparator data included base salary and 12-months' worth of allowance data for protected characteristics of gender, age, disability and ethnicity. For 2020, in addition to gender, analysis was also undertaken for additional protected characteristics of age, disability and ethnicity.

The equal pay audit confirmed the Service is achieving equitable pay between gender, and the other protected characteristics of age and race, however there was insufficient data on disability to be able to analyse effectively.

Following the Service's review of pay and allowances, an equal pay audit will be undertaken.

## **The reality of the gender pay gap**

A workforce, which better reflects the diversity of the public, that is flexible, diverse and inclusive, will create a stronger, more enriched and well-informed organisation, able to meet the expectations for a modern Fire and Rescue Service. The Service will attract, retain, develop and motivate talented people from all parts of the community.

The current limited gender diversity within the Fire Service is a national challenge. This is partly due to a lack of understanding about the role and skills required to be a firefighter by potential applicants. By embracing the need for change and consciously recognising this is a historically male-dominated

organisation, and by actively seeking to dispel these myths, it will help to break some of the barriers for females considering a career within the Fire Service.

Since 2020 the economic impact of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic contributed to widening the UK national average gender pay gap and impacted on working arrangements within many organisations. Whilst the short-term impact of the pandemic increased the UK average gender pay gap, in the longer term it may have helped. For many, the pandemic has been a catalyst to positive changes within the workplace due to the requirements to embrace alternative ways of working.

During the pandemic the Service faced many challenges in continuing to support and protect the communities of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, in addition to maximising the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees. Following the pandemic, the Service has remained committed to harnessing the benefits of flexible working, which was largely created by the requirement for alternative working arrangements. By embracing more flexible and responsive ways of working, it will lead to greater equality and encourage a more diverse workforce.

The gender pay gap is generally caused by an underrepresentation of female employees in higher paid or senior roles. To lower the gap, attention must be paid to the recruitment, retention and development of females into these areas, and a range of strategies adopted to support this.

By demonstrating an understanding of the factors contributing to the gender pay gap and committing activity to address the gap, it will ensure over time the gap is reduced and eventually eliminated. In addition, the workforce will better reflect the diversity of the community. Meaningful embedded change takes time, and we recognise this. The Service's aim is to achieve gender pay parity.

Many of the issues driving pay gaps requires a longer-term view. It has been recognised nationally that the gender pay gap is not going to be fully eliminated within the short to medium term.

## **Importance of recruitment and development**

Job applicants may look at an organisation's gender pay gap as part of their pre-selection process before choosing to work for an employer. To improve the Service's gender pay gap we need to address the attraction and retention of females within the Service and the career progression routes to the higher paid senior Operational and Support Services roles.

The Service continues with positive action to attract and recruit more females into Operational roles. As the Service nurtures these individuals and supports

them through their development and for some, promotions through the ranks to more senior roles, the Service will start to see the impact of this positive action and further reduce and eventually eliminate the gender pay gap.

## Terms and conditions

The Service's Pay Policy statement is reviewed and updated annually. Its purpose is to provide transparency to the pay policy adopted. The 2025/26 Pay Policy (approved by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 12 February 2025) sets out levels of and elements of remuneration for 2025/26 to which this report relates.

The majority of employees are employed under contracts with either the terms and conditions of the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services Scheme of Conditions of Service, 2004 "the Grey Book" incorporated, or with the provisions of the local terms and conditions of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority Scheme of Conditions of Service for Support Services employees.

Pay and allowances differ under each set of terms and conditions. A number of allowances and additional payments are available for Operational employees, for example with the different duty systems, specialist roles, temporary promotions, opportunity to undertake additional hours through the bank system. Whilst some allowances are paid to Support Services employees, the majority are paid to limited groups, with the majority being males. This directly influences the gender pay gap.

During 2022/3 the Fire Service saw a national pay dispute and threat of industrial action. This culminated in a pay settlement of seven per cent paid March 2023, backdated to July 2022, plus an additional five per cent payable from July 2023. The seven per cent increase to salary was reflected in the gender pay gap and due to this, 2023 saw the biggest increase to hourly pay since first reporting.

## Culture review

In November 2022, Nazir Afzal OBE published the [Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade](#). This report highlighted that women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic, LGBTQ+ and neurodiverse employees experience poor treatment at work and do less well in their careers. Issues were also identified with leadership and employees fearing to speak out about abuse.

Following the Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade there have been media reports into allegations at other Fire Services around the country.

Reports on inappropriate behaviour within the Fire Service continues, and this will have a negative effect of diversifying the make-up of the workforce, as individuals will question whether the Fire Service is a sector in which they would want to work.

An organisation's culture is developed over a period of time and will influence experience and behaviour within the workplace. There are clear challenges within the Fire Service and a need to change and reshape the culture. By changing the culture and diversifying the workforce it will help encourage diverse perspectives, in an environment that supports the skills, experience and knowledge that everyone can bring to the workplace, therefore ensuring issues are eradicated. The Service needs to listen, learn and lead, and encourage and support individuals to speak up and challenge unacceptable behaviour. The Service needs to foster shared beliefs and an inclusive culture, governed by fairness. In an environment where employees feel safe, valued, able to bring their whole self to work, and encouraged to reach their potential.

A report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) [Values and culture in Fire and Rescue Services](#), published March 2022, focused on the values and culture of all 44 Fire and Rescue Services in England and evidence collected through inspections since 2018. This report indicated that evidence had been repeatedly found in many of the 44 Fire and Rescue Services of poor culture and behaviour, reports of racist, homophobic, and misogynistic behaviour and allegations of bullying and harassment and a lack of fairness and diversity.

The Service welcomed the recommendations made within this report and continues to make improvements and to learn from best practice. The culture of this Service is taken extremely seriously, and we strive to make sure our employees and the public we serve are treated with the dignity and respect deserved.

## **Benchmarking**

With organisations being required to publish their gender pay gap data in the public domain (gov.uk website), this allows greater comparison with other organisations and the Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures. Greater transparency in pay will help to attract and retain talent and will provide the information to allow organisations to improve workplace practices, policies and procedures that will promote gender equality and ensure any remedial action is prioritised.

When compared to the 32 Fire Services, as detailed on [Compare employers' gender pay gaps for 2024-25 reporting year](#), Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service is ranked 27th with a mean gender pay gap of 9.6 per cent for 2024-25. The range between the 32 Fire Services is (-) 16.64 per cent to 13.29 per cent. A negative pay gap indicates that females earn more on average than males, and a positive pay gap indicates that males earn more on average than females. Of the 32 Fire Services, only seven have reported bonus gender pay gap data. This indicates that bonus arrangements were not in operation within the majority of Fire Services in 2024.

The benchmarking data demonstrates widely different mean and median gender pay gaps within broadly similar organisations. To mitigate the risk associated with publishing improbable data, our data undergoes internal scrutiny and by providing contextual narrative, which is not a mandatory requirement, it supports the information provided within the report and highlights the activities we are engaging in to address gender imbalance.

## Comparison data

Additional comparison data has been provided on Operational versus Support Services employees (Appendix three). This data also drills down into age and employment status. What this data shows is that whilst there are fewer females in Operational roles, gender disparity is greater within Support Services employees roles.

## Mean pay gap

**Support Services employees:** For 2025, the mean hourly pay gap has increased to 17.7 per cent, from 14.6 per cent. This meant that for 2025, male employees earned £4.39 per hour more than females.

When looking at age, and those under the age of 40 and over the age of 40, the data shows that the majority of females are within the aged 40 and over group.

For 2025, the mean hourly pay for this group increased from 7.9 per cent to 19.2 per cent. This will be due to the appointment of the Director of People and twice as many males in senior roles than females (Grade N and above). For 2025, the pay gap is still high for the group below the age of 40, at 14.7 per cent.

**Operational employees:** There has been a gradual decrease to the pay gap since first reporting, despite the increase in 2024. For 2025, the mean hourly pay gap was -2.8 per cent. This meant that for 2025, male employees earned £0.67 less per hour than females.

# Gender Pay Gap 2025



When looking at age, the split between those aged over and under 40 is similar for males, however for the few females in Operational roles, two-thirds are below the age of 40. The mean hourly pay gap for the group below the age of 40 was 1.8 per cent, which meant that within this group, for every £1 earned by males, females earned 98p. This is a decrease in the pay gap, where females earned 3.31 percent less than males in 2024. For those aged 40 and over, the hourly pay gap fell by 0.4 percentage points to 5.2 per cent, which meant that for every £1 earned by males, females earned 95p.

## Median pay gap

**Support Services employees:** There has been increase to the pay gap over a six-year period, and for 2025 the median hourly pay gap was 13.0 per cent, from 6.8 per cent in 2019. This meant that for 2024, male employees earned £2.99 per hour more than females.

When looking at age, the data shows that the hourly pay gap for the group aged 40 and over increased from 2.1 per cent to 13.2 per cent in 2025, which meant that females earned 86.8p for every £1 earned by males within this group. In the group aged 40 and below, the hourly pay gap decreased from 7.6 per cent to 2.0 per cent in 2025, which meant that females earned 98p for every £1 earned by males within this group.

**Operational employees:** Whist the pay gap shows a gradual decrease in trend over the seven-year period, for 2025 the pay gap is 11.6 per cent, which is an increase by 4.1 percentage points from the previous year. This meant that for 2025, males earned £2.52 per hour more than females, whereas for 2023, females earned 5 pence more for every £1 earned by males.

Breaking the data down into age indicates there is a negative pay gap for those aged 40 and over (-6.2 per cent), which meant that for every £1 earned by females, males earned 93.8p. In the group aged 40 and below, the hourly pay gap increased from in 2025 to 28.5 per cent which meant that females earned 72p for every £1 earned by males in comparison to 2024 where the pay gap was 0.76 per cent.

## Pay quartiles

**Support Services employees:** In 2025, 34 per cent of all females were in the lower quartile, compared to 15.0 per cent of males, whilst an average of 31 per cent of all males were in the upper quartile, compared to 21 per cent of females.

**Operational employees:** In 2024, 21 per cent of all females were in the lower middle quartile, whilst 17 per cent were in the upper quartile a decrease of 3.0 percentage points from 2024. Males were evenly distributed among the four quartiles, although there were fractionally fewer in the lower middle quartile. The highest number of all males were in the upper middle quartile, at 26.0 per cent.

## Contributing factors

Several factors influenced the pay gap. Firstly, there are more males in senior leadership roles, particularly at Grade N and above, which typically attract higher pay. Secondly, a greater proportion of females work part-time compared to males (7 females for every 3 males), which impacts overall hourly earnings.

Although there has been a gradual shift since 2017/2018 with more females in management grades (J+), there are still more males in the highest-paid positions.

Whilst the number of female operational employees has increased in 2025, the highest proportions of females was in the lower quartile. Operational employees are more likely to move between quartiles due to temporary promotions as they develop into more senior roles. Operational employees are more likely to move between quartiles due to temporary promotions and as they develop into more senior roles. Approximately 38% of males and 62% of females remained in the same quartile in 2024/2025 as in 2023/2024, 17% of males and 21% of females moved up at least one quartile. More females than males moved down to a lower quartile in the last 12 months.

Aside from the Chief, the operational portion of the senior leadership team is entirely made up of males.

## What information must be reported

The gender pay gap calculations are drawn from specific data each year and based on full-pay relevant employees. To be included as a full-pay relevant employee, the employee must be:

- Employed on the snapshot date; 31 March each year
- Paid their usual full-pay in the pay period ending on the snapshot date

# Gender Pay Gap 2025



The table below details the total number of employees in scope for 2025 compared to the previous six years:

Year	Total number of employees in scope	Males	Females	Total
2025	Full-pay relevant employees	399	105	504
	Relevant employees	415	108	523
2024	Full-pay relevant employees	388	100	488
	Relevant employees	400	101	501
2023	Full-pay relevant employees	381	91	472
	Relevant employees	414	97	511
2022	Full-pay relevant employees	375	89	464
	Relevant employees	403	95	498
2021	Full-pay relevant employees	371	92	463
	Relevant employees	404	100	504
2020	Full-pay relevant employees	340	82	422
	Relevant employees	384	93	477
2019	Full-pay relevant employees	353	87	440
	Relevant employees	365	90	455
2018	Full-pay relevant employees	377	78	455
	Relevant employees	392	81	473

**Full-Pay Relevant Employees** - This is the number of employees who received their normal full-pay within the snapshot date. This informs the mean and median hourly pay gap calculations and the proportion of employees within the Quartile Pay Bands.

For 2025, the number of full-pay relevant employees increased by 2.84 percentage points for males (eleven males) and increased by 5.0 percentage points for females (five females) from the number of employees detailed for 2024.

**Relevant Employees** - This is the number of employees employed by the Service on the snapshot date. This informs the mean and median bonus pay gap calculations. For 2025 the number of relevant employees is higher than the full-pay relevant employees.

The difference in numbers between relevant and full-pay relevant employees is due to 19 employees not receiving their usual full-pay within the pay period (for 2024 this was 13 employees).

For 2025, the number of relevant employees increased by 3.75 percentage points for males (fifteen males) and increased by 6.94 percentage points for females (seven females) from the numbers of employees detailed for 2024.

The overall number of relevant employees has increased by 10.57 percentage points (fifty employees) since 2018. When compared to the gender specific data, the number of relevant employees has increased by 5.87 percentage points for males and 33.33 percentage points for females. For full-pay relevant employees, the overall number has increased by 10.77 percentage points (49 employees). When compared to the gender specific data, the number of full-pay relevant employees has increased by 5.84 percentage points for males and 34.62 percentage points for females.

The change in employee numbers will directly influence the reportable data and the gender pay gap.

Whilst the Service continues to increase the percentage of females employed, for 2025 the gender split for employees shows that overall females continue to be under-represented within the Service.

Below details the standard information to be disclosed by organisations as part of the gender pay gap reporting as detailed in Schedule 1 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

**Pay:** This refers to the ordinary pay received by each full-pay relevant employee in the pay period at the snapshot date. Ordinary pay includes basic pay, allowances, paid leave and shift premium pay and calculated before deductions are made at source. This data examines:

- The difference in the mean hourly pay between male and female relevant employees as a percentage of male pay
- The difference in the median hourly pay between male and female relevant employees as a percentage of male pay
- The proportion of male and female full-pay relevant employees in the lower, lower middle, upper middle and upper quartile pay bands
- Ordinary pay does not include overtime, expenses, benefits in kind, arrears of pay, salary sacrifice schemes (such as childcare), tax credits or redundancy pay

Ordinary pay, expressed as hourly pay, is used to calculate the mean and median gender pay gaps and the pay period informs the calculation for ordinary pay. For those employees who do not work a consistent working pattern, e.g. 37-hour week, our calculation has been averaged over a 12-week period as per Local Government Association, ACAS and Government Equalities Office guidance.

**Bonus:** Bonuses paid to full-pay relevant employees in the 12-month period ending on the snapshot date (31 March). Year on year bonuses will vary and a small movement could have a big impact on the data. This data examines:

- The difference in the mean bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees in the 12-months before the snapshot date
- The difference in the median bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees in the 12-months before the snapshot date
- The proportion of male relevant employees who were paid bonus pay and that paid to female relevant employees in the 12-months before the snapshot date

## Reportable data

In accordance with the Regulations, the Service is required to annually publish six pieces of prescribed data about the pay and bonuses of males and females employed by the Service:

### 1. Mean hourly gender pay gap

The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay for male and female full-pay relevant employees, as a percentage.

The mean gap provides an overall indication of the size of the gap. A high mean indicates that the remuneration structure disadvantages females.

The mean (average) gender pay gap for 2025 is 11.5 per cent, this meant that male employees earned £2.77 per hour more than females. This is 1.9 percentage points higher than 2024. Male hourly pay has increased by 6.77 percentage points (£1.53) and female hourly pay has increased by 4.55 percentage points (£0.93). Whilst the hourly pay for females has steadily increased since 2018, it is still lower than the hourly rate of pay for males. Whilst for 2024 the gap between the hourly rate of pay was the smallest since first reporting, the pay gap between the hourly rate of pay for males and females has increased to and continues to be over two pounds.

Since first reporting, the average hourly rate of pay for males has increased by 33.26 percentage points (£6.02) and for females increased by 46.3 percentage points (£6.76).

# Gender Pay Gap 2025



Year	Male hourly pay £	Female hourly pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2025	24.12	21.35	2.77	11.5
2024	22.59	20.42	2.17	9.6
2023	21.92	19.32	2.59	11.8
2022	19.52	16.90	2.62	13.4
2021	18.87	16.27	2.60	13.8
2020	19.41	15.77	3.64	18.8
2019	18.18	15.43	2.75	15.1
2018	17.36	14.47	2.89	16.6
2017	18.10	14.59	3.51	19.4

In comparison, for 2024 the mean (average) gender pay gap was 9.6 per cent. This meant that male employees earned £2.17 per hour more than females.

## 2. Median hourly gender pay gap

The difference between the median hourly rate of pay for male and female full-pay relevant employees, as a percentage.

The median (mid-point) gender pay gap for 2025 is 8.7 per cent. For 2025, male employees earned £1.89 per hour more than females. This is 1.2 percentage points higher than 2024.

The median hourly pay for males and females continues to increase, however the hourly rate of pay for females is still lower than the rate of pay for males.

Since first reporting, the average hourly rate of pay for males has increased by 38.8 percentage points (£6.10) and for females increased by 41.8 percentage points (£5.88).

Year	Male hourly pay £	Female hourly pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2025	21.84	19.95	1.89	8.7
2024	20.36	18.84	1.52	7.5
2023	19.96	18.27	1.69	8.46
2022	17.80	15.72	2.08	11.7
2021	16.93	15.40	1.53	9.0
2020	17.83	15.10	2.73	15.3
2019	16.55	14.83	1.72	10.4
2018	16.16	14.26	1.90	11.8
2017	15.74	14.07	1.67	10.6

# Gender Pay Gap 2025



In comparison, for 2024 the median gender pay gap was 7.5 per cent. This meant that male employees earned £1.52 per hour more than females during this year.

### 3. Mean bonus gap

The difference between the mean bonus paid to male relevant employees and female relevant employees.

For 2025, the mean bonus gap is again 100 per cent. This meant that males were the only employees to receive bonus payments during this reporting period.

Year	Male bonus pay £	Female bonus pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap % *
2025	1.81	0	1.81	100
2024	0.31	0	0.31	100
2023	2.50	0	2.50	100
2022	2.25	4.29	-2.04	-90.6
2021	0.93	0	0.93	100
2020	13.29	1.29	12.00	90.2
2019	83.81	167.89	-84.08	-100.3
2018	235.71	327.16	-91.45	-38.8
2017	230.04	354.01	-123.97	-53.9

*\* Negative pay gaps occur when females earn more on average, positive pay gaps are used when males earn more on average*

### 4. Median bonus gap

The difference between the median bonus paid to male relevant employees and female relevant employees.

For 2025, the median bonus gap is again 100 per cent. This means that only male employees received a bonus payment for this reporting period.

# Gender Pay Gap 2025



Year	Male bonus pay £	Female bonus pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2025	125	0	125	100
2024	125	0	125	100
2023	125	0	125	100
2022	125	408	-283	-226.4
2021	125	0	125	100
2020	125	120	5	4.0
2019	750	675	75	10
2018	1000	750	250	25
2017	500	1000	-500	-100

## 5. Bonus Proportions

The proportion of male and female employees who were paid a bonus during the relevant 12-month pay period:

Year	Gender	Number of employees	%
2025	Males	6	1.45
	Females	0	0
2024	Males	1	0.25
	Females	0	0
2023	Males	2	0.48
	Females	0	0
2022	Males	5	1.2
	Females	1	1.1
2021	Males	3	0.74
	Females	0	0
2020	Males	7	1.82
	Females	1	1.08
2019	Males	32	8.8
	Females	18	20.0
2018	Males	38	9.7
	Female	22	27.2
2017	Male	44	10.8
	Female	20	24.7

# Gender Pay Gap 2025



In the 2025 reporting period, no bonus/merit award payments were made to employees, however Long Service Award payments continue to be included in the bonus payment calculations and was paid to six male employees within this reporting period.

## 6. Quartile Pay Bands

The proportions of male and female full-pay relevant employees in the lower (L), lower middle (LM), upper middle (UM) and upper (U) quartiles and the equally distributed pay bands.

To determine quartiles, employees are ranked in order of their hourly rate of pay; from lowest to highest, and divided into four equal groups, according to the guidelines.

For the seven consecutive year, the highest proportion of females is within the lower quartile, representing 42 per cent of the total female workforce, this is up from 39 per cent in 2024. In comparison, the percentage of the total male workforce in the lower quartile is 21 per cent, which is the lowest representation of males within the four quartiles and the same as 2024 at 21 per cent.

The highest proportion of males is within the upper quartile, representing 27 per cent of the total male workforce. In comparison, for females the upper quartile has 18 per cent of the total female workforce.

The equal highest proportion of males is within the upper middle quartile, representing 27 per cent and for females the second highest proportion is within the lower middle quartile at 22 per cent.

Size of the change to quartiles from 2024:

Quartile changes	% for males	Total for males	% for females	Total for females	Overall total
Up	15.8%	63	8.6%	9	72
Down	10.8%	43	3.8%	4	47
Same	65.4%	261	75.2%	79	340
Not full-pay relevant	8.0%	32	12.4%	13	45
Total full-pay relevant employees		399		105	504

# Gender Pay Gap 2025



Size of the change to quartiles from 2023:

Quartile changes	% for males	Total for males	% for females	Total for females	Overall total
Up	21.6	84	9.0	9	93
Down	16.8	65	5.0	5	40
Same	56.4	219	67.0	67	286
Not full-pay relevant	12.9	50	19.0	19	69
Total full-pay relevant employees	-	388	-	100	488

Size of the change to quartiles from 2022:

Quartile changes	% for males	Total for males	% for females	Total for females	Overall total
Up	25	95	15	14	109
Down	8	32	2	2	34
Same	50	189	63	57	246
Not full-pay relevant	17	65	20	18	83
Total full-pay relevant employees	-	381	-	91	472

Size of the change to quartiles from 2021:

Quartile changes	% for males	Total for males	% for females	Total for females	Overall total
Up	18	69	13	12	81
Down	17	62	9.0	8.0	70
Same	54	202	70	62	264
Not full-pay relevant	11	42	8.0	7.0	49
Total full-pay relevant employees	-	375	-	89	464

The majority of male and female employees do not move between the quartile pay bands. For 2024, 56.4 per cent of males and 67 per cent of females remained in the same quartile, and for both male and female employees, more went up a quartile pay band, with fewer going down, which indicates there were more permanent promotions during the year.

# Gender Pay Gap 2025



For 2024

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	103	27	84	19	19	16	122
Upper Middle (UM)	105	27	86	17	17	14	122
Lower Middle (LM)	97	25	80	25	25	20	122
Lower (L)	83	21	68	39	39	32	122
Total	388	-	-	100	-	-	488

For 2023

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	104	27.3	88.1	14	15.4	11.9	118
Upper Middle (UM)	95	24.9	80.5	23	25.2	19.5	118
Lower Middle (LM)	97	25.5	82.2	21	23.1	17.8	118
Lower (L)	85	22.3	72.0	33	36.3	28.0	118
Total	381	-	-	91	-	-	472

For 2022

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	100	26.7	86.2	16	18.0	13.8	116
Upper Middle (UM)	98	26.1	84.5	18	20.2	15.5	116
Lower Middle (LM)	93	24.8	80.2	23	25.8	19.8	116
Lower (L)	84	22.4	72.4	32	36.0	27.6	116
Total	375	-	-	89	-	-	464

# Gender Pay Gap 2025



For 2021

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	99	26.7	85.3	17	18.5	14.7	116
Upper Middle (UM)	100	27.0	86.2	16	17.4	13.8	116
Lower Middle (LM)	96	25.9	82.8	20	21.7	17.2	116
Lower (L)	76	20.5	66.1	39	42.4	33.9	115
Total	371	-	-	92	-	-	463

For 2020:

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	94	27.6	88.7	12	14.6	11.3	106
Upper Middle (UM)	90	26.5	85.7	15	18.3	14.3	105
Lower Middle (LM)	90	26.5	85.7	15	18.3	14.3	105
Lower (L)	66	19.4	62.3	40	48.8	37.7	106
Total	340	-	-	82	-	-	422

For 2019:

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	92	27.1	86.0	15	17.6	14.0	107
Upper Middle (UM)	92	27.1	86.8	14	16.5	13.2	106
Lower Middle (LM)	85	25.0	80.2	21	24.7	19.8	106
Lower (L)	71	20.8	67.0	35	41.2	33.0	106
Total	340	-	-	85	-	-	425

# Gender Pay Gap 2025



For 2018:

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	99	26.3	87.6	14	17.9	12.4	113
Upper Middle (UM)	104	27.6	91.2	10	12.8	8.8	114
Lower Middle (LM)	95	25.2	83.3	19	24.4	16.7	114
Lower (L)	79	21.0	69.3	35	44.9	30.7	114
Total	377	-	-	78	-	-	455

For 2017:

Quartile	Male	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Female	% of total gender	% of total quartile	Total quartile
Upper (U)	107	27.3	90.7	11	13.8	9.3	118
Upper Middle (UM)	105	26.8	89.0	13	16.3	11.0	118
Lower Middle (LM)	100	25.5	84.7	18	22.5	15.3	118
Lower (L)	80	20.4	67.8	38	47.5	32.2	118
Total	392	-	-	80	-	-	472

## **The Service's plan on addressing pay gaps:**

The Service is committed to addressing and reducing pay gaps and will strive to achieve a more representative workforce, by increasing diversity, improving inclusion, and tackling inequality within the workplace.

The Service is committed to:

**Leading transformation:** The Service will ensure that all employees are aware of the promise to the public and our people, our values and the behaviours expected within the workplace, ensuring actions and decisions align with the principles of integrity, compassion and respect. We strive to improve the Service's performance through building a diverse workforce and ensuring employees understand how the Service operates, to be as effective as possible within their role. This will be achieved through a commitment to:

- Equality, diversity and inclusion and the achievement of initiatives identified in the HMICFRS action plans and EDI objectives
- Taking the culture of the Service seriously, making improvements where appropriate and learning from best practice
- Ensuring the 2025-30 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) supports more detailed annual and departmental delivery plans, capturing the key elements of what success looks like for the Service and reaffirming our commitment to invest in improvements, reflecting our promise to provide an excellent, modern and agile Fire Service for the community
- Commitment to review Gender Pay Gap data quarterly to realign focus and monitor trends
- Transparent approaches to pay and reward
- Up to date and fit for purpose policies and procedures, that are clearly communicated, employees are aware of and trust their robustness, and managers are appropriately trained in their application
- Encouraging and supporting individuals to speak up and challenge unacceptable behaviour

**Attracting talent:** The Service is committed to ensuring its resourcing attracts, selects, and recruits the right calibre of people to deliver its corporate priorities, aligned to workforce planning requirements. The Service will ensure it retains the skills and capability needed and employs them productively to support its corporate objectives. We are committed to establishing the right working arrangements and conditions of employment for all employees. This will be achieved through a commitment to:

- Positive action and community engagement. To engage, encourage and support those from under-represented groups in seeing the Fire Service as an employer of choice
- Exploring flexible working opportunities on a case-by-case basis to support the recruitment and retention of under-represented groups
- Continually reviewing and updating recruitment processes. Using fair and transparent processes and ensuring any learns are fed into future recruitment activity
- Communication and branding. Ensuring processes and communication tools are appropriate for the audience and respect the importance of neutrality, fairness and valuing diversity
- Recognising and valuing difference, due to culture, race, ethnicity, personality, thinking styles, generation etc.
- A working environment which enables employees to feel safe, valued, able to bring their whole self to work, and encouraged to reach their potential

**Supporting development:** The Service strives to create a sustainable workforce through medium to long term strategic planning, treating employees as assets enabling the Service to plan for the future with regards to the workforce requirements. This will be achieved through a commitment to:

- Improving the breadth of diversity-related data available and the utilisation of this data, to identify inequalities, initiate activity and evaluate progress throughout the employment lifecycle
- Improving understanding and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion through training and education
- Regular systematic and rigorous strategic workforce and succession planning processes and horizon scanning of likely future external and internal challenges, to ensure the Service continues to meet workforce capacity requirements and build capability
- Encouraging all employees to reach their potential and encourage high performance and continuous improvement
- Supporting employees throughout their career, helping them to grow and excel in a dynamic and respectful environment
- Leadership and management development programmes to improve the effectiveness of existing managers as well as provide development opportunities and pathways for future managers and leaders
- Enhancing the skills, knowledge, and performance of employees through development tools, e.g. structured conversations, mentoring, coaching, 360-degree feedback



**Bucks Fire &  
Rescue Service**  
*Making a difference together*

# Gender Pay Gap Comparisons: Operational vs. Non-operational

September 2025

by Val Telford

# Contents



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# Introduction

The gender pay gap shows the difference between the average earnings of males and females, expressed as a percentage of male earnings.

The gender pay gap calculations are drawn from specific data each year based on numbers of relevant and full-pay relevant employees.

**Relevant employees** are those employed by the Service on the snapshot date (31<sup>st</sup> March). The main annual Gender Pay Gap report includes all employees including sessional (casual) but excludes members, agency staff and contractors.

To be included as a **full-pay relevant employee**, the employee must be:

- Employed on the snapshot day of 31<sup>st</sup> March each year
- Paid their normal full pay in the pay period ending on the snapshot date

**Pay** refers to the ordinary pay received by each full-pay relevant employee in the pay period ending on the snapshot date. **Ordinary pay** includes basic pay, allowances, paid leave and shift premium pay and calculated before deductions are made at source. Ordinary pay does not include overtime.

Ordinary pay, expressed as **hourly pay**, is used to calculate the mean and median gender pay gaps, and the pay period informs the calculations for ordinary pay. For those employees who do not work a consistent weekly working pattern such as 37 hours (non-operational) or 42 hours (operational), the calculation has been averaged over a 12-week period as per Local Government Association, ACAS and Government Equalities Office guidance.

**Bonus:** Includes bonuses paid to full-pay relevant employees in the 12-month period ending on the snapshot date. Merit awards were stopped in 2019/2020, but honorariums and long service rewards have continued.



## Introduction continued

For this report, the data was split into two separate groups of data –one for **operational** employees and one for Support employees, referred to in this report as **non-operational** employees.

Three pieces of information about the pay of males and females within each group were examined and compared against each other alongside the overall data used in Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service's (BFRS) annual gender pay gap reporting.

Since the merit award scheme was stopped, the only payments qualifying as '**bonus payments**' for non-operational employees were honorarium. An honoraria can be considered through the appraisal scheme or, where appropriate, in instances when an employee is asked to undertake part of the duties of a higher graded post or duties outside the scope of their post which are particularly onerous.

Similarly, the only 'bonus payments' remaining for operational employees were long service awards.

As very few of these 'bonus payments' were awarded, the pay gap is skewed and, as a result, adds no value to the report. For this purpose, it has been excluded.

Therefore, the three pieces of information provided are:

- 1) The mean hourly gender pay gap
- 2) The median hourly gender pay gap
- 3) The quartile pay bands

The **operational** group contains more males than females, and almost all ranks from Station Commander upwards are entirely made up of males.



## Terms of reference

The data used in this report is sourced from BFRS's HR & Payroll system and is based on the snapshot date of 31<sup>st</sup> March each year from 2019 to 2025.

Unlike with the main annual Gender Pay Gap report, referenced on page 3, only employees within the core employee groups are included. These are Wholetime, On-Call and Support.

**Operational** employees' pay data includes employees on Wholetime, day-crewed, flexi and On-Call contracts and includes all ranks from Apprentice Firefighter to Brigade Manager (Chief Fire Officer). In last year's report the Chief Fire Officer was included in the non-operational (Support) pay data.

**Non-operational** employees' pay data includes employees that are primarily in back-office roles and range from Apprentices to Director level.

Employees have been separated into these groups based on their primary role at BFRS. Where an employee is primarily in a non-operational role, but has an additional On-Call contract, the employee is included in the non-operational employees' group only. All pay relating to additional roles is included in whichever group the employee's primary role belongs to.

Some figures used in the report may appear higher due to rounding.



## Non-operational employees pay gap



# Non-operational employees pay gap

## Pay

Non-operational employees operate on a structured payscale based on local terms and conditions of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority Scheme of Conditions of Service for Support employees. There are few allowances available, and overtime is limited to specific employees/teams. Most of the employees eligible for overtime are male.

Unlike with operational employees, there are few promotional/advancement opportunities for non-operational employees. They may have the opportunity to advance by changing roles for a higher graded position (usually within a different department), or if their own role changes and requires a job evaluation, or should a manager leave the organisation, and they have the relevant skills and experience to apply for the position. Succession plans are in place for some key management roles, but such positions are likely to be made available to both internal and external applicants. In some departments, such as finance, opportunities are available for staff to progress via the formal qualifications route.

## Make-up of non-operational employees

	Relevant employees			Full pay relevant employees		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2018/2019	43	67	110	43	66	109
2019/2020	54	68	122	51	65	116
2020/2021	55	71	126	53	70	123
2021/2022	54	68	122	54	67	121
2022/2023	57	72	129	55	69	124
2023/2024	57	76	133	56	75	131
2024/2025	64	77	141	62	76	138

The non-operational group has typically had more females than males. In 2024/2025 it was 55% female to 45% male.



# Non-operational employees pay gap continued

## Mean hourly gender pay gap

The below table shows mean hourly gender pay gap for non-operational employees each year since 2018/2019.

In 2024/2025, the percentage gap was 17.7, which was an increase of 3.1 per cent from the previous year (2023/2024). The positive 17.7 per cent pay gap means that for every £1 that male employees earned, female employees earned 82p.

	Male hourly pay rate £	Female hourly pay rate £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2018/2019	18.17	15.83	2.34	12.9
2019/2020	19.10	15.61	3.49	18.3
2020/2021	19.27	16.12	3.15	16.4
2021/2022	19.87	16.79	3.08	15.5
2022/2023	22.90	18.96	3.93	17.2
2023/2024	24.07	20.57	3.51	14.6
2024/2025	24.86	20.46	4.39	17.7

The trend-line in the below chart demonstrates that there was a gradual incline in the gender pay gap over the seven-year period despite some minor fluctuations year on year.





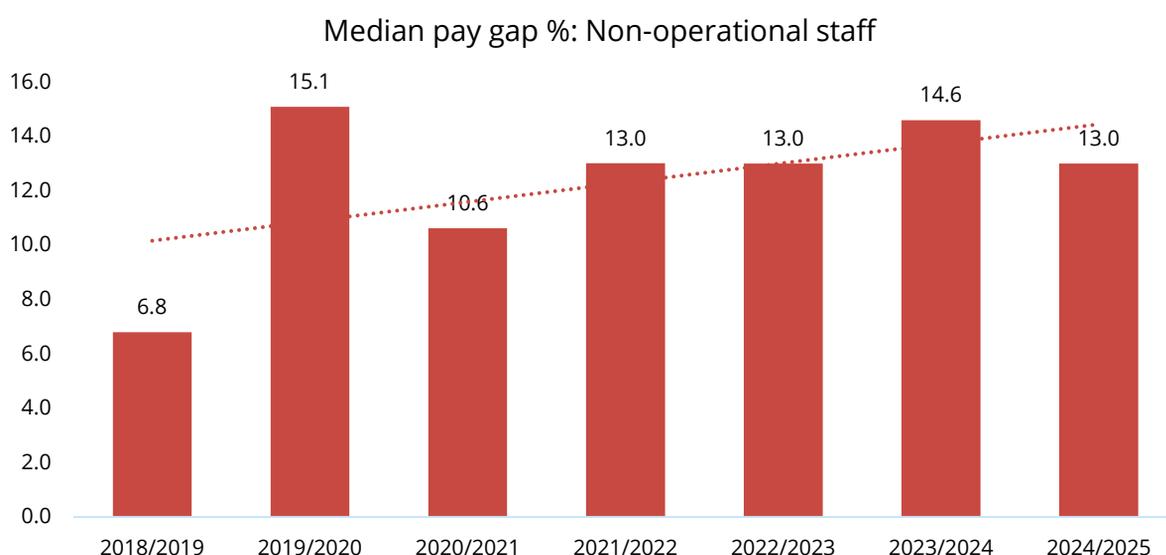
## Non-operational employees pay gap continued

### Median hourly gender pay gap

The below table shows median hourly gender pay gap for non-operational employees each year since 2018/2019.

	Male hourly pay rate £	Female hourly pay rate £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2018/2019	15.88	14.80	1.08	6.8
2019/2020	16.90	14.35	2.55	15.1
2020/2021	17.23	15.40	1.83	10.6
2021/2022	18.06	15.71	2.35	13.0
2022/2023	21.01	18.27	2.74	13.0
2023/2024	22.06	18.84	3.22	14.6
2024/2025	22.94	19.95	2.99	13.0

The median hourly pay gap for non-operational staff fell by 1.6 per cent in 2023/2024, compared to 2023/2024, bringing it in line with the gaps seen in 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. The chart below displays a more pronounced upward trend in the median pay gap across the seven-year period, when compared to the mean pay gap on page 8.





# Non-operational employees pay gap continued

## Quartiles

The following table shows the distribution of full pay relevant employees across the pay quartiles by gender. In 2024/2025, 34 per cent of non-operational females were in the lower quartile compared to just 15 per cent of males, whilst 31 per cent of all males were in the upper quartile compared to 21 per cent of females.

## Number of employees

	Lower		Lower middle		Upper Middle		Upper	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2018/2019	4	23	13	15	14	13	12	15
2019/2020	6	23	13	16	15	14	17	12
2020/2021	6	25	13	18	18	13	16	14
2021/2022	6	24	15	16	17	13	16	14
2022/2023	6	25	13	18	17	14	19	12
2023/2024	6	26	12	21	19	13	18	15
2024/2025	9	25	14	21	21	14	19	16

## Percentage of total gender

	Lower		Lower middle		Upper Middle		Upper	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2018/2019	9%	35%	30%	23%	33%	20%	28%	23%
2019/2020	12%	35%	25%	25%	29%	22%	33%	18%
2020/2021	11%	36%	25%	26%	34%	19%	30%	20%
2021/2022	11%	36%	28%	24%	31%	19%	30%	21%
2022/2023	11%	36%	24%	26%	31%	20%	35%	17%
2023/2024	11%	35%	21%	28%	34%	17%	32%	20%
2024/2025	15%	33%	23%	28%	34%	18%	31%	21%

The number of males in the lower quartile has increased over the seven-year period.



# Non-operational employees pay gap continued

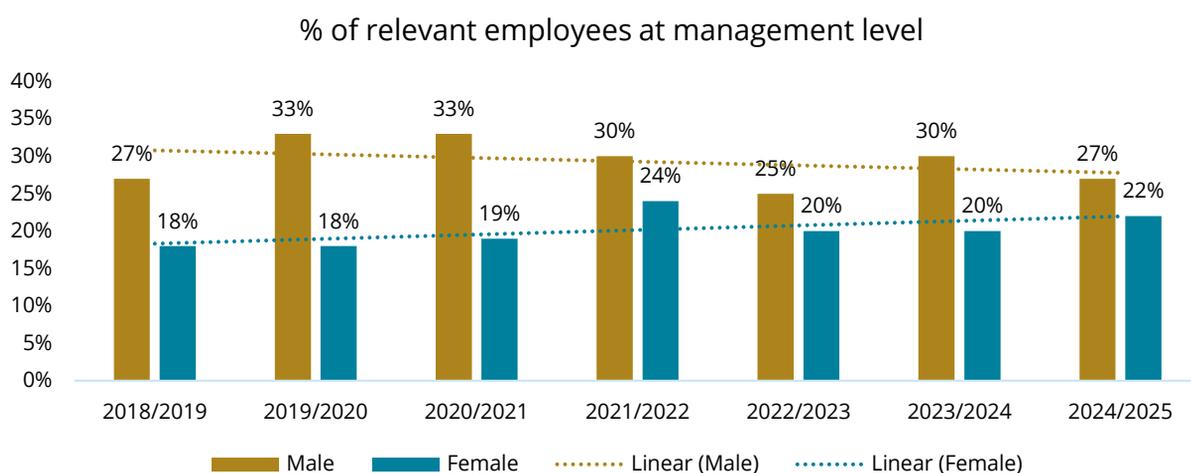
## Contributing factors

There are number of factors that may have contributed to the positive 17.7 pay gap in 2024/2025.

### 1. More males in senior roles

Whilst the number of non-management and management roles have remained consistent over the seven-year period, the distribution of males and females within them have recently changed, as illustrated below.

Since 2017/2018, there has been a gradual shift, with more males now in the non-management grades (A – I) and more females in management grades (J+). However, there are still more males than females in the top roles.



## Quartile changes since 2023/2024

Quartile changes	Female	Male
up	65%	35%
down	50%	50%
same	57%	43%
not full pay relevant	40%	60%

- 65% of the employees who moved up at least one quartile were female.
- There was a 50-50 split between males and females who moved down at least one quartile
- 57% of females remained in the same quartile as last year (2023/2024)



# Non-operational employees pay gap continued

Contributing factors *continued*

## 1. More males in senior roles *continued*

The senior leadership team contains a mix of operational and non-operational employees. Comparing the non-operational members only, there are twice as many males in the senior roles than females (Grade N and above).

## 2. More females than males with part-time hours

For every 3 male non-operational employees that work part-time hours, there are 7 females. This is explored further on page 14.

## 3. More males than females with additional roles

There are a small number of non-operational employees who have **secondary roles** at BFRS and, on the snapshot date in 2024/2025, these were made up of four females to one male. Only the male employee actively completed hours during the snapshot period.

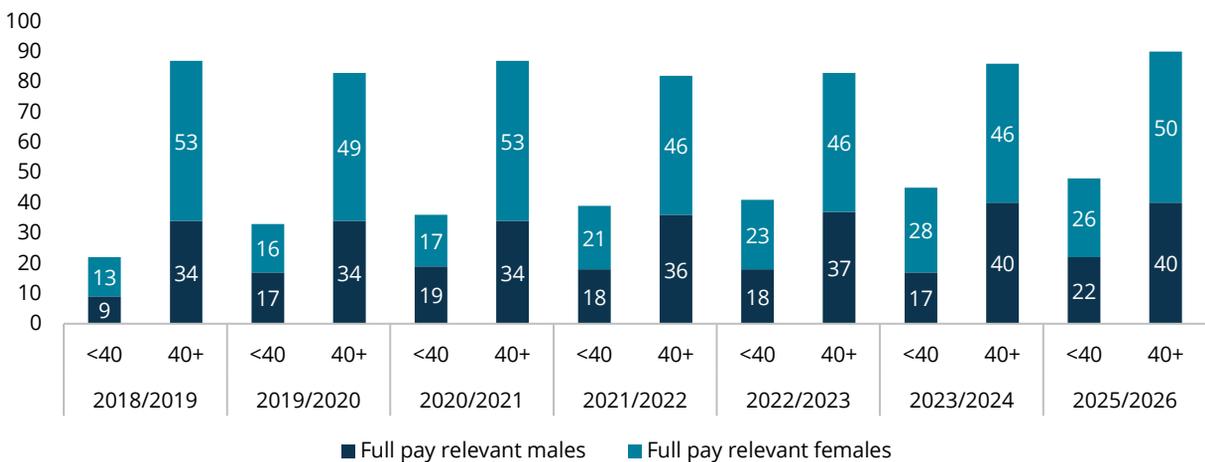
# Non-Operational employees pay gap continued



## Breakdown of employees by gender and age range

To understand whether age plays any factor in the gender pay gap. Full pay relevant employees were categorised into those aged 40 and over and those below the age of 40. The number of female non-operational employees outweighed that of males, and a higher proportion of non-operational employees fell within the 40 and over age bracket, as illustrated below.

Full pay relevant employees by age range and gender



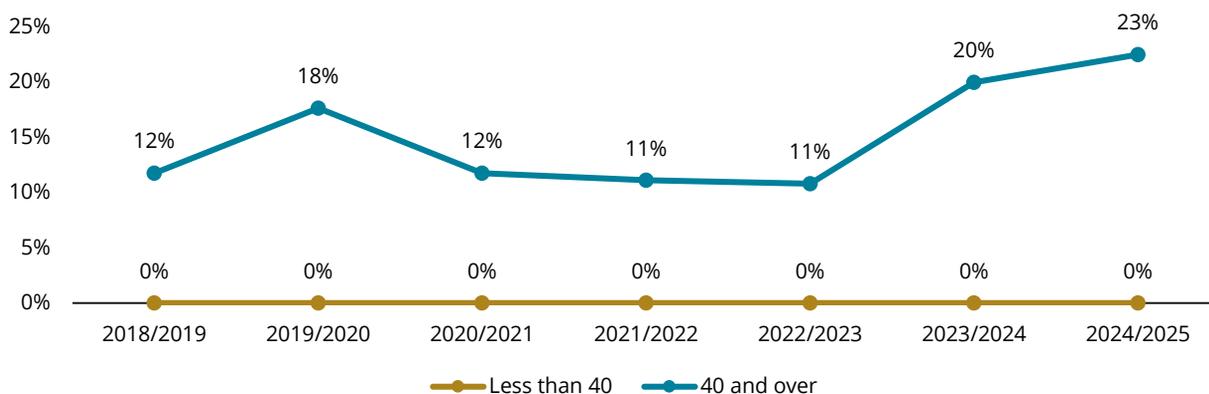


# Non-operational employees pay gap continued

## Part-time hours by age range

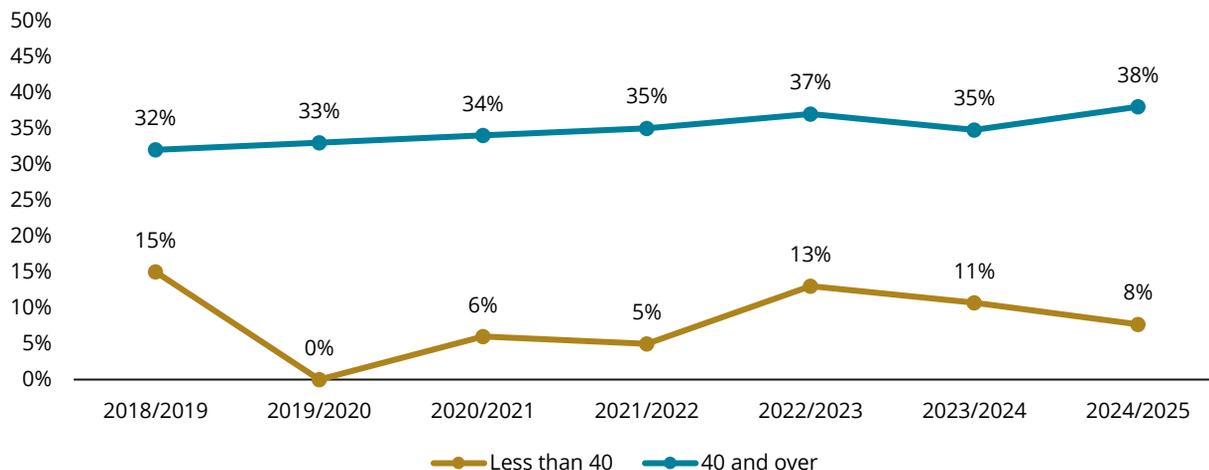
The number of part-time males aged 40 and over saw a 3% increase in 2024/2025 from the previous year (2023/2024), although there are still no males under the age of 40 working part-time hours.

Percentage of males on part-time hours



Part-time non-operational females aged 40 and over increased by 3% in 2024/2025, whilst the number of females under 40 on part-time hours reduced by 3% when compared to 2023/2024.

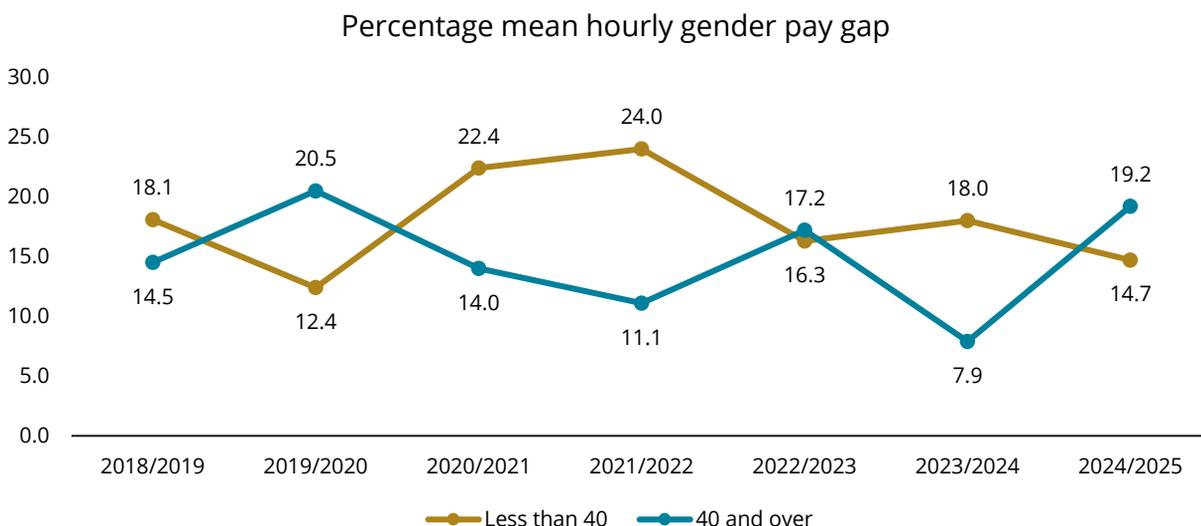
Percentage of females on part-time hours





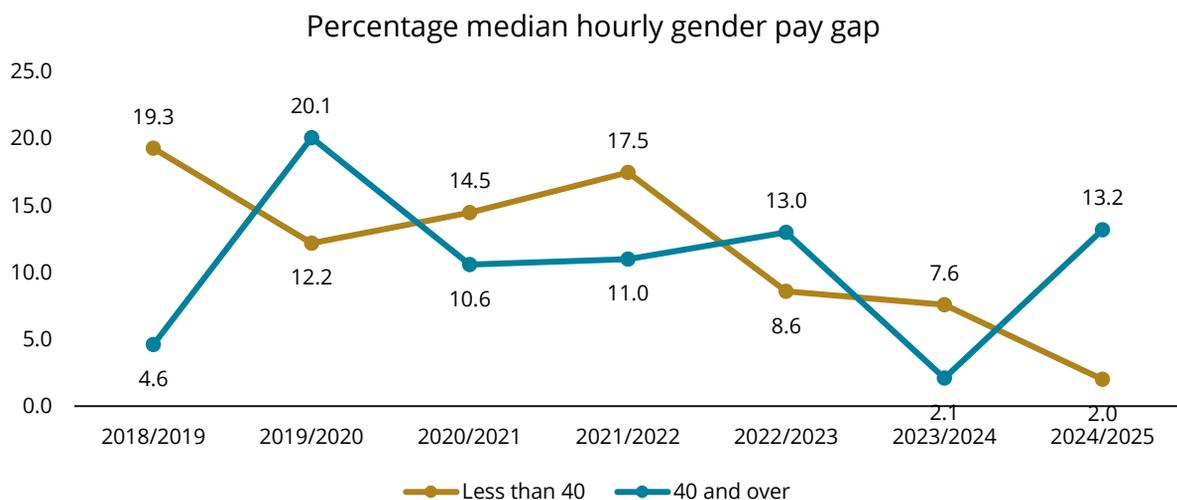
# Non-operational employees pay gap continued

## Mean hourly gender pay gap by age range



In 2024/2025, the mean hourly gap increased by 11.3 per cent to 19.2 per cent for employees aged 40 and over meaning that females earned 81p for every £1 earned by males. For the group below the age of 40, females earned 85p for every £1 earned by males, equating to a 14.7 per cent pay gap in 2024/2025, a reduction of 3.3 per cent from 2023/2024.

The median hourly pay gap reduced to 2 per cent for employees under the age of 40, a 5.6 per cent drop from 2023/2024. Employees aged 40 and over saw an 11.1 per cent increase to 13.2 in 2024/2025.





# Non-operational employees pay gap continued

## Part-time hours by gender and age range

In 2024/2025, the number of part-time males aged 40 and over saw a marginal increase when compared to 2023/2024, as illustrated below (bottom left table). There was one less part-time female under the age of 40, whilst those aged 40 and over increased by three, accounting for 38% of all non-operational females.

% males on part time hours

	Less than 40	40 and over
2018/2019	0%	12%
2019/2020	0%	18%
2020/2021	0%	12%
2021/2022	0%	11%
2022/2023	0%	11%
2023/2024	0%	20%
2024/2025	0%	23%

% females on part time hours

	Less than 40	40 and over
2018/2019	15%	32%
2019/2020	0%	33%
2020/2021	6%	34%
2021/2022	5%	35%
2022/2023	13%	37%
2023/2024	11%	35%
2024/2025	8%	38%

Number of males on PT hours

	Less than 40	40 and over
2018/2019	0	4
2019/2020	0	6
2020/2021	0	4
2021/2022	0	4
2022/2023	0	4
2023/2024	0	8
2024/2025	0	9

Number of females on PT hours

	Less than 40	40 and over
2018/2019	2	17
2019/2020	0	16
2020/2021	1	18
2021/2022	1	16
2022/2023	3	17
2023/2024	3	16
2024/2025	2	19



## Operational employees pay gap



# Operational employees pay gap

## Pay

For most operational roles, appointments are offered under the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services Scheme of Conditions of Service (known as the Grey Book) and any other local terms and conditions, which the Authority may, from time to time, adopt in relation to the appointment, save where such provisions are amended by a contract of employment.

## Make-up of operational employees

The operational group contains more males than females, and almost all ranks from Station Commander upwards are entirely made up of males. Females made up approximately 8 per cent of the operational workforce in 2024/2025, a one per cent increase from 2023/2024.

	Relevant employees			Full pay relevant employees		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2018/2019	300	22	322	291	20	311
2019/2020	311	20	331	287	17	304
2020/2021	330	24	354	320	22	342
2021/2022	330	24	354	322	22	344
2022/2023	329	23	352	326	22	348
2023/2024	344	25	369	332	25	357
2024/2025	350	31	381	337	29	366



# Operational employees pay gap continued

## Mean hourly gender pay gap

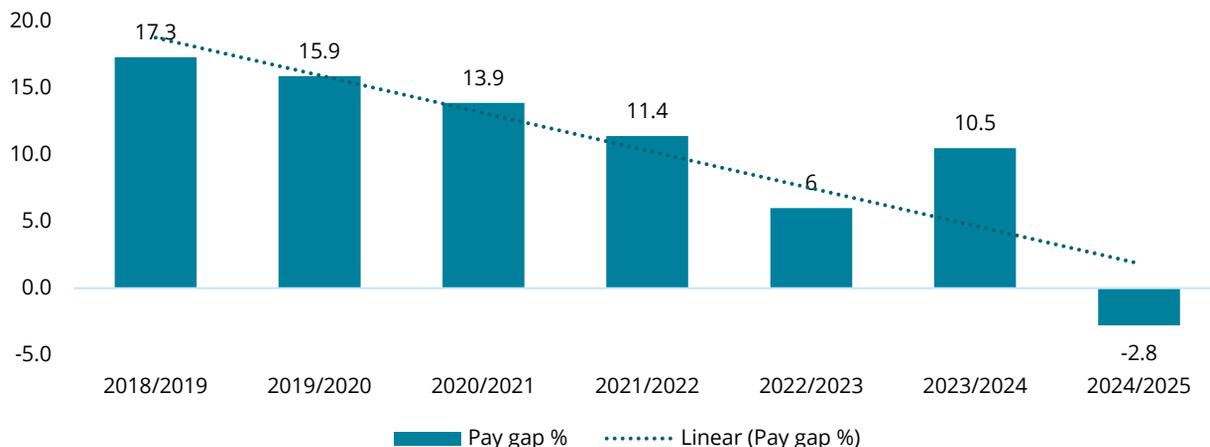
In 2024/2025, the percentage gap fell to -2.8, which was a reduction of 13.3 per cent from 2023/2024. The negative 2.8 per cent pay gap means that for every £1 that female operational employees earned, males earned 97.2p.

	Male hourly pay rate £	Female hourly pay rate £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2018/2019	18.95	15.67	3.28	17.3
2019/2020	19.49	16.40	3.09	15.9
2020/2021	18.74	16.13	2.61	13.9
2021/2022	19.44	17.22	2.22	11.4
2022/2023	21.76	20.45	1.31	6.0
2023/2024	22.34	19.98	2.36	10.5
2024/2025	23.95	24.62	-0.67	-2.8

A negative pay gap indicates where females earned a higher amount than males.

The operational mean hourly pay gap has been steadily reducing year-on-year since 2018/2019, as seen in the chart below. By reaching a negative pay gap, it means that for the first time, females earned more than males. The re-classification of the Chief's role from Support to Operational is likely the main contributing factor to this.

Mean pay gap %: Operational staff





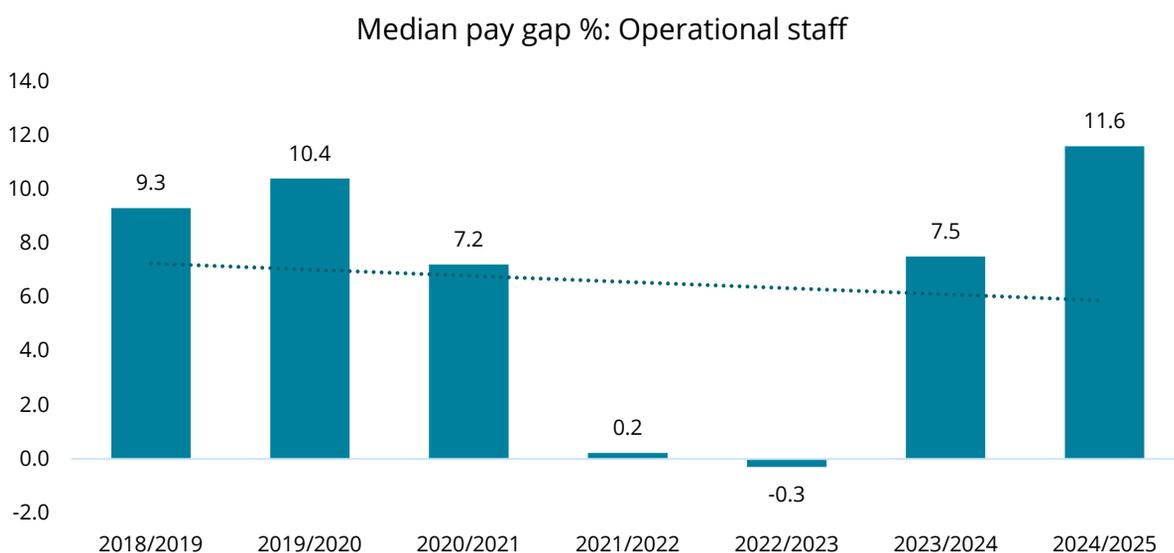
# Operational employees pay gap continued

## Median hourly pay gap

The median hourly pay gap for operational employees increased by 4.1 per cent to 11.6 per cent in 2024/2025. This means that on average, for every £1 males earn, females earn 88p.

	Male hourly pay rate £	Female hourly pay rate £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2018/2019	16.60	15.06	1.54	9.3
2019/2020	17.88	16.02	1.86	10.4
2020/2021	16.80	15.58	1.22	7.3
2021/2022	17.75	16.95	0.80	4.5
2022/2023	19.56	19.61	-0.05	-0.3
2023/2024	20.27	18.75	1.52	7.5
2024/2025	21.80	19.28	2.52	11.6

A negative pay gap indicates where females earned a higher amount than males.



Despite the increase in pay gap in 2024/2025, the trend-line continues to show a gradual downward trend over the seven-year period.

# Operational employees pay gap continued



## Distribution of quartiles

	Lower		Lower middle		Upper Middle		Upper	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2018/2019	73	5	69	9	74	3	75	2
2019/2020	71	5	69	7	71	5	76	0
2020/2021	77	8	80	6	80	6	83	2
2021/2022	81	5	79	7	79	7	83	3
2022/2023	82	5	81	6	79	8	84	3
2023/2024	83	6	78	11	87	3	84	5
2024/2025	80	12	85	6	85	6	87	5

In 2023/2024, the highest proportion (41 per cent) of all female operational employees were in the lower quartile whilst 17 per cent were in the upper quartile, a decrease of 3 per cent from 2023/2024.

Operational males were quite evenly distributed among the quartiles, although there were fractionally fewer in the lower quartile. The highest number (26 per cent) of all males were in the upper quartile, an increase of 1 per cent from 2023/2024.

	Lower		Lower middle		Upper Middle		Upper	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2018/2019	25%	26%	24%	47%	25%	16%	26%	11%
2019/2020	25%	29%	24%	41%	25%	29%	26%	0%
2020/2021	24%	36%	25%	27%	25%	27%	26%	9%
2021/2022	25%	23%	25%	32%	25%	32%	26%	14%
2022/2023	25%	23%	25%	27%	24%	36%	26%	14%
2023/2024	25%	24%	23%	44%	26%	12%	25%	20%
2024/2025	24%	41%	25%	21%	25%	21%	26%	17%



# Operational employees pay gap continued

## Contributing factors

The number of both male and female operational employees increased overall in 2024/2025. The highest proportion of females was in the lower quartile.

Operational employees are more likely to move between quartiles due to temporary promotions and as they develop into more senior roles. Approximately 38% of males and 62% of females remained in the same quartile in 2024/2025 as in 2023/2024, 17% of males and 21% of females moved up at least one quartile. More females than males moved down to a lower quartile in the last 12 months.

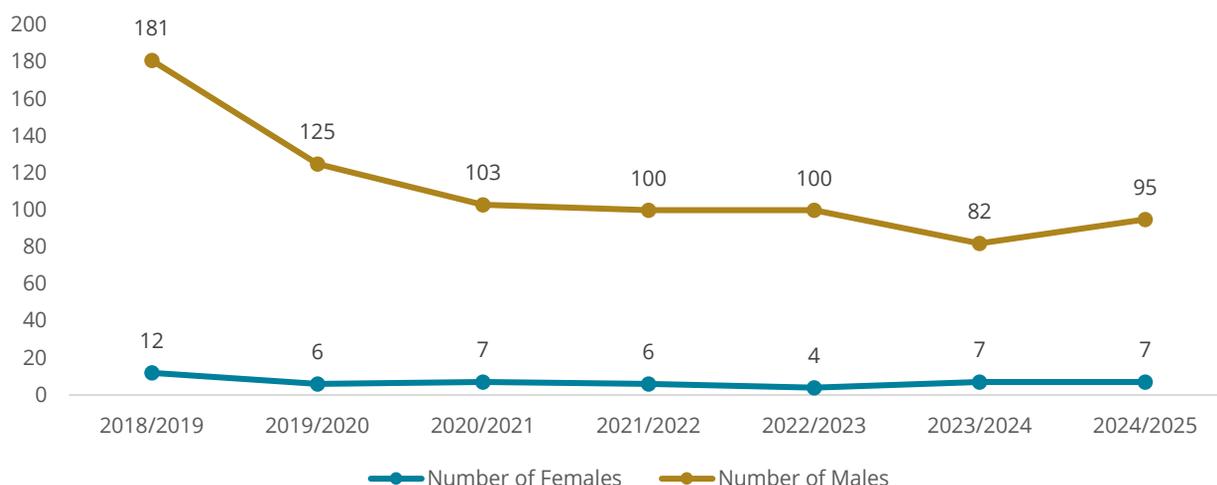
Aside from the Chief, the operational portion of the senior leadership team is entirely made up of males.

Quartile changes	Female	Male
up	21%	17%
down	21%	14%
same	38%	62%
Not full pay relevant	21%	7%

## On-Call hours

- The number of male On-Call employees who worked during 2024/2025 increased by 16% from 2023/2024 whereas the number of females remained the same.
- In 2024/2025, On-Call females worked 59% more hours than in 2023/2024, whilst males worked 42% more hours.

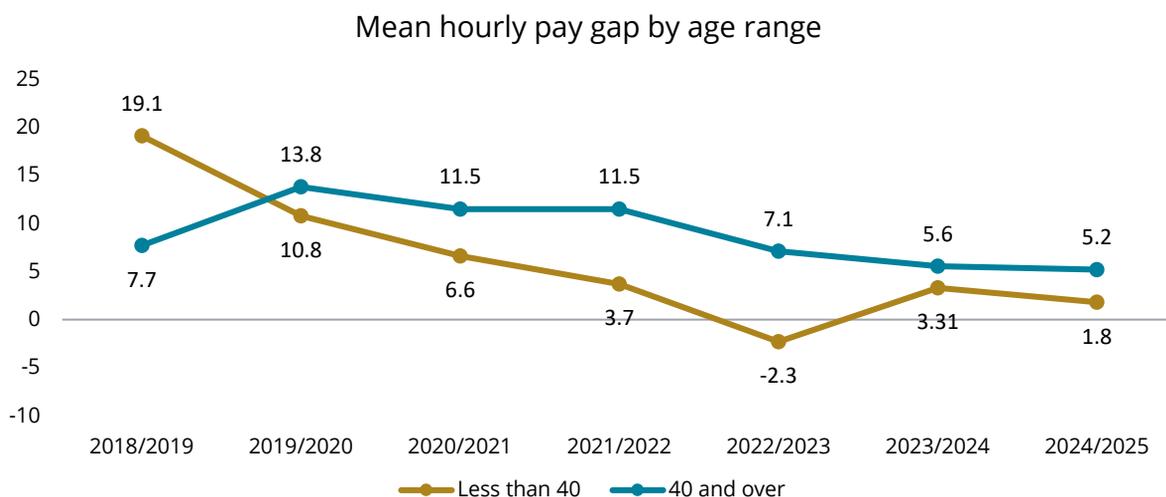
On Call employees who worked in period





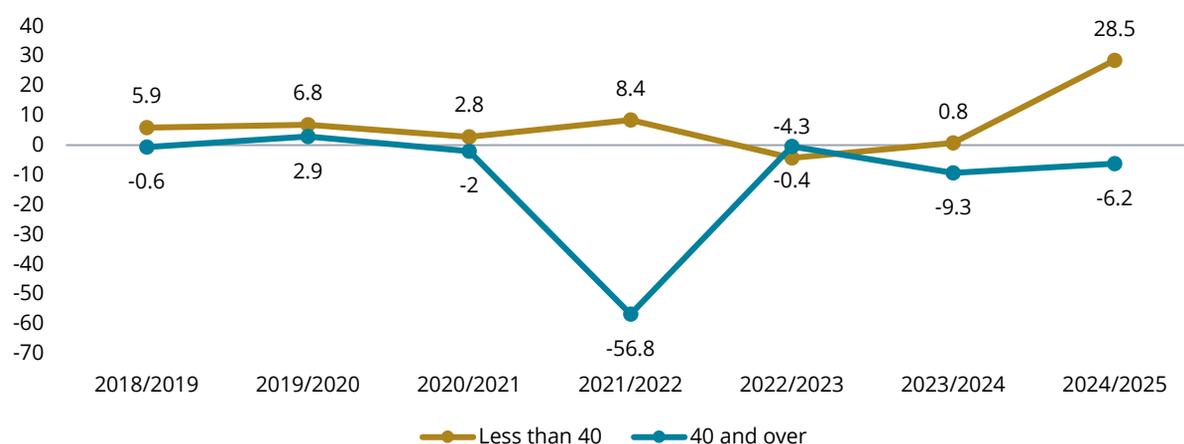
# Operational employees pay gap continued

## Mean hourly pay gap by age range



The mean hourly pay gap for those aged below 40 dipped by 1.5 per cent in 2024/2025 from 2023/2024. This means that in 2024/2025, females earned 98p for every £1 earned by males. The pay gap for those in the group aged 40 and above fell by 0.4 per cent in 2024/2025 to 5.2 per cent. This means that for every £1 earned by males, females earned 95p.

## Median hourly pay gap by age range



The median pay gap for those aged below 40 increased by 27.7 per cent to 28.5 per cent in 2024/2025, whereas in the 40 and over group, the pay gap increased by 3.1 per cent. The pay gap for that group has been negative for the last five years meaning that females earn more than males.



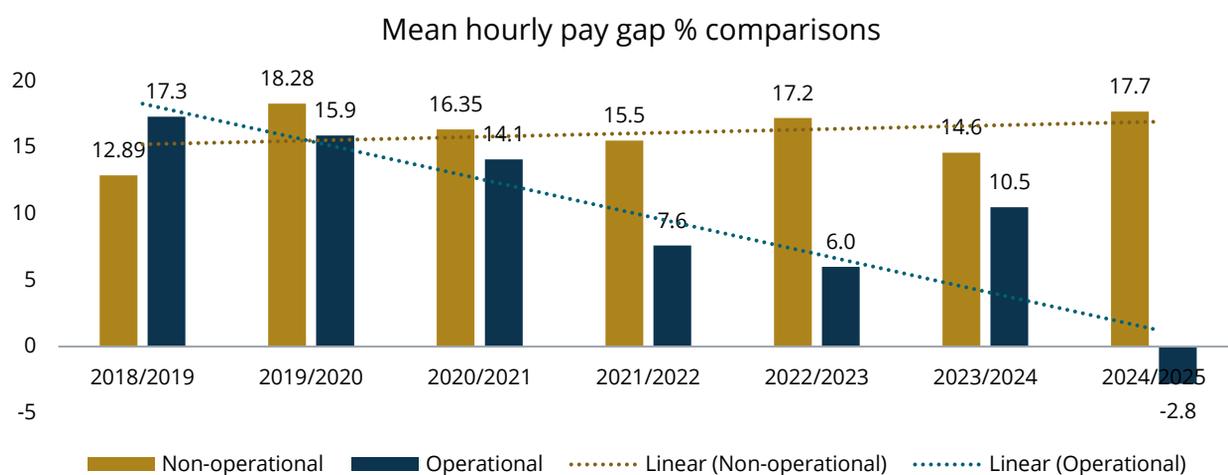
## Operational vs. Non-operational



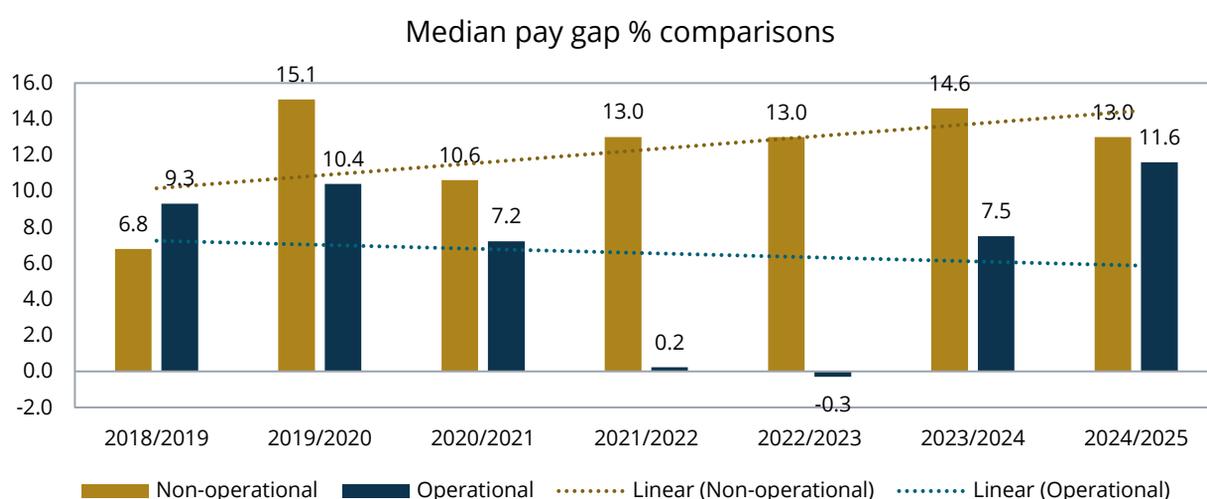
# Operational vs. Non-operational

## Hourly pay gap comparisons

The following chart shows the mean (top chart) and median (bottom chart) hourly pay gap comparisons between operational and non-operational employees.



Both the mean and median hourly pay gaps have reduced for operational employees in 2024/2025. The mean gap dropped into a negative figure which means that for every £1 females earn, males earn 97p. The median gap was similar for both operational and non-operational employees with only 1.4 per cent difference between the two.



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## Pay gap reporting on ethnicity

The ethnicity pay gap is the difference in average earnings between all ethnic groups. Currently there is no legislative requirement for organisations to carry out ethnicity pay gap reporting. Whilst reporting is not mandatory, as part of the Service's approach to improving inclusion and tackle inequality within the workplace, this data has been provided from 2023. In reporting this data, we have followed guidance for employers as detailed on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

Using the principles of the gender pay gap reporting, data has been based on the snapshot date of 31 March 2025 and captures three pay statistics:

1. Mean ethnicity pay gap – the difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of all white British full-pay relevant employees and that of full-pay relevant employees from other ethnic backgrounds
2. Median ethnicity pay gap – the difference between the median hourly rate of pay of all white British full-pay relevant employees and that of full-pay relevant employees from other ethnic backgrounds
3. Quartile pay bands - the proportions of full-pay relevant employees from white British and other ethnic backgrounds in the lower, lower-middle, upper-middle and upper quartile pay bands

In addition to the pay statistics above, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has also recommended reporting on two additional statistics:

4. Proportion of the total workforce from other ethnic backgrounds
5. Proportion of employees who have disclosed their ethnicity

Whilst gender pay gap reporting compares the data of two groups (males and females) ethnicity pay gap reporting is more complex and involves more groups, some of which have fewer numbers.

Combining different ethnic groups into the five categories as defined in the 2021 Census of England and Wales is something the Service will aspire to as diversity within the workforce improves:

- Asian or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- White
- Other ethnic group

As there is a requirement to protect confidentiality, different ethnic groups have been combined and for 2025 the categories include:

- White British
- Other ethnic backgrounds
- Not known

Whilst it is acknowledged having fewer categories masks the variations between ethnic groups and provides pay gap data comparing the earnings of ethnic minority employees as a percentage of all white British employees, using the five-category breakdown results in many of the categories with insufficient numbers to be able to report the data.

### Reportable data

The table below details the total number of employees in scope:

Year	Total number of employees in scope	White British	Other ethnic backgrounds	Not known	Total
2025	Full-pay relevant employees	424	47	33	504
	Relevant employees	439	49	35	523
2024	Full-pay relevant employees	409	35	44	488
	Relevant employees	419	36	46	501
2023	Full-pay relevant employees	388	46	38	472
	Relevant employees	413	52	46	511

The ethnicity pay gap calculation is based on full-pay relevant employees. To be included as a full-pay relevant employee, the employee must be:

- Employed on the snapshot date; 31 March each year
- Paid their usual full-pay in the pay period ending on the snapshot date

**1. The mean ethnicity pay gap:**

Year	White British hourly pay £	Other ethnic backgrounds hourly pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2025	23.45	23.76	-0.31	-1.32
2024	22.01	21.94	0.07	0.33
2023	21.74	19.14	2.59	11.9

The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay for full-pay relevant employees, as a percentage. The mean gap provides an overall indication of the size of the gap. A high mean indicates that the remuneration structure disadvantages employees from other ethnic backgrounds.

The mean ethnicity pay gap for 2025 is -1.32 per cent (or -31 pence), this is 0.99 percentage points lower than 2024, where the pay gap was 0.33 per cent.

**2. The median ethnicity pay gap:**

Year	White British hourly pay £	Other ethnic backgrounds hourly pay £	Pay gap £	Pay gap %
2025	21.24	20.67	0.57	2.68
2024	20.24	19.19	1.05	5.19
2023	19.76	18.26	1.50	7.59

The difference between the median hourly rate of pay for full-pay relevant employees, as a percentage.

The median (mid-point) ethnicity pay gap for 2025 is 2.68 percent (or £0.57), this is 2.51 percentage points lower than 2024, where the pay gap was 5.19 per cent.

**3. Pay quartiles:**

2025:

Quartile	White British	% of total group	% of total quartile	Other ethnic backgrounds	% of total group	% of total quartile	Not known	% of total group	% of total quartile
Upper (U)	107	21.2%	84.9%	11	2.2%	8.7%	8	1.6%	6.3%
Upper Middle (UM)	103	20.4%	81.7%	9	1.8%	7.1%	14	2.8%	11.1%
Lower Middle (LM)	108	21.4%	85.7%	14	2.8%	11.1%	4	0.8%	3.2%
Lower (L)	106	21.0%	84.1%	13	2.6%	10.3%	7	1.4%	5.6%
Total	424			47			33		

2024:

Quartile	White British	% of total group	% of total quartile	Other ethnic backgrounds	% of total group	% of total quartile	Not known	% of total group	% of total quartile
Upper (U)	103	21.1	84.4	11	2.3	9.0	8	1.6	6.6
Upper Middle (UM)	101	20.7	82.8	5	1.0	4.1	16	3.3	13.1
Lower Middle (LM)	99	20.3	81.1	14	2.9	11.5	9	1.8	7.4
Lower (L)	106	21.7	86.9	14	2.9	11.5	2	0.4	1.6
Total	409			44			35		

2023:

Quartile	White British	% of total group	% of total quartile	Other ethnic backgrounds	% of total group	% of total quartile	Not known	% of total group	% of total quartile
Upper (U)	105	22.2	89.0	7	1.5	5.9	6	1.3	5.1
Upper Middle (UM)	94	19.9	79.7	9	1.9	7.6	15	3.2	12.7
Lower Middle (LM)	96	20.3	81.4	10	2.1	8.5	12	2.5	10.2
Lower (L)	93	19.7	78.8	20	4.2	16.9	5	1.1	4.2
Total	388	-	-	46	-	-	38	-	-

The proportions of white British, other ethnic backgrounds and not known full-pay relevant employees in the lower (L), lower middle (LM), upper middle (UM) and upper (U) quartiles and the equally distributed pay bands.

For 2025, the highest proportion of white British employees is within the lower middle quartile, representing 21.4 per cent of the total group. For 2024, the highest proportion of white British employees was within the lower quartile.

In comparison, the highest proportion of employees from other ethnic backgrounds is within the lower middle quartile, representing 2.8 per cent of the total group for 2025.

The category representing not known data again has the highest proportion of employees within the upper middle quartile, representing 2.8 per cent of the total group for 2025.

#### **4. Proportion of the total workforce from other ethnic backgrounds:**

For 2025, the proportion of the total workforce from other ethnic backgrounds is 9.4 per cent, an increase reduction from 2024 (7.2 per cent).

#### **5. Proportion of employees who have disclosed their ethnicity:**

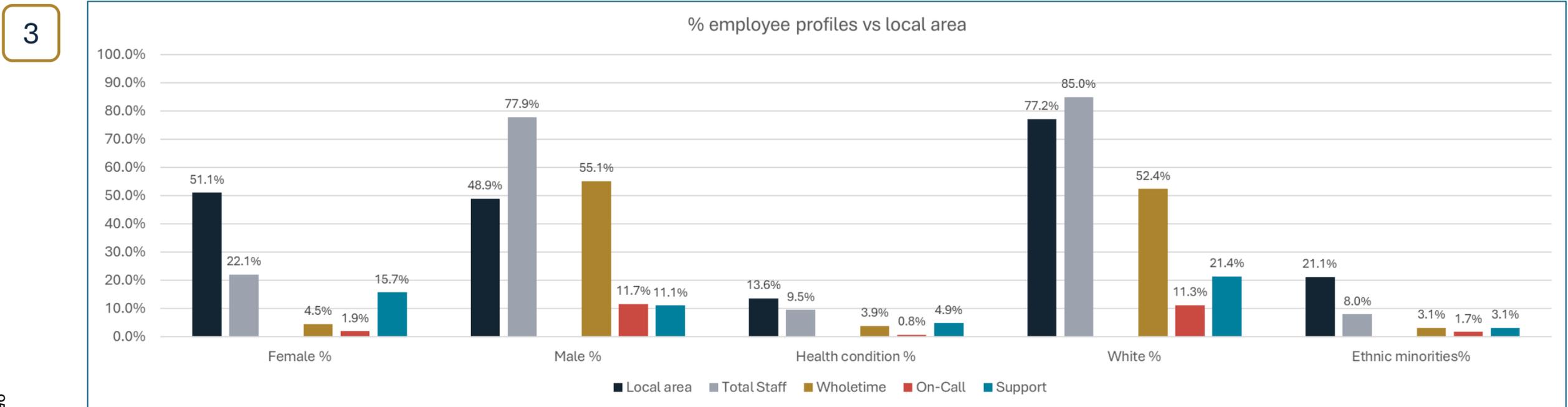
For 2025, the proportion of employees who have disclosed their ethnicity is 93.3 per cent, this is an increase in percentage in comparison to 2024 (91 per cent).

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# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Data Q3 2025/26

1	Employee profile / Establishment	Current FTE	Budgeted FTE	Actual
	Wholetime	307	301	307
	On-Call	57.3	96	70
	Support	126.6	137.1	138

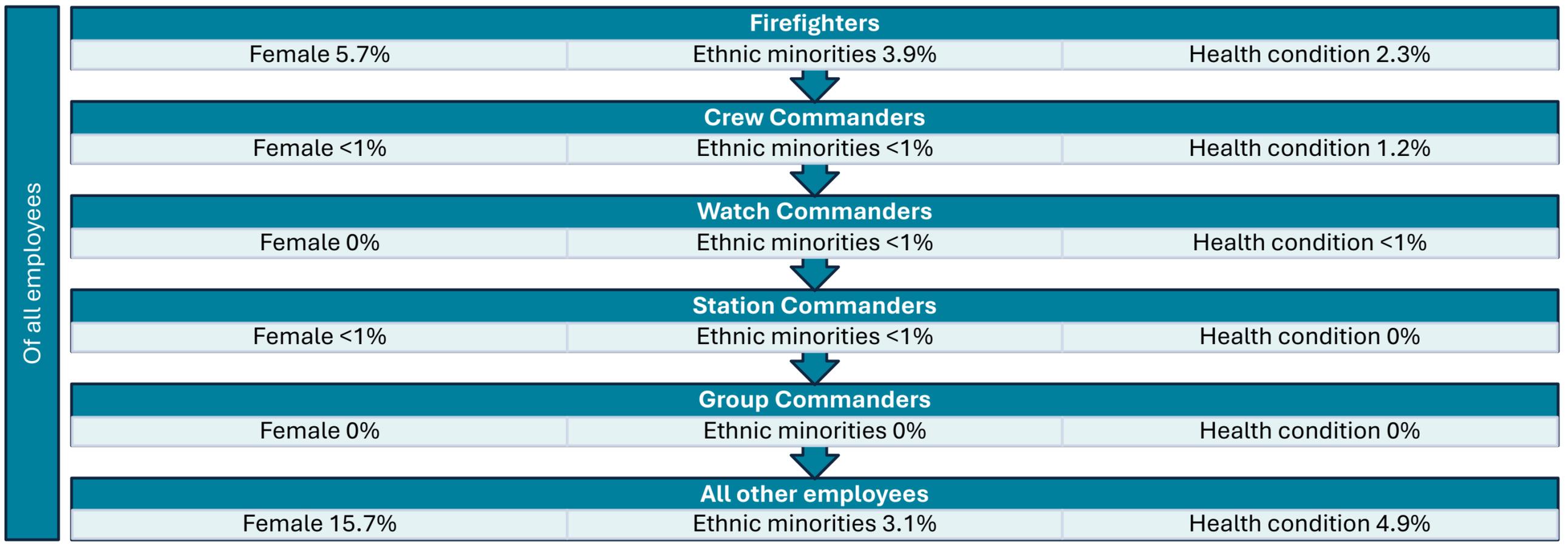
2	Employee data (where provided)	Female	Male	Health condition	White	Ethnic minorities
	Wholetime	23	284	20	270	16
	On-Call	10	60	4	58	9
	Support	81	57	25	110	16
	Of all employees	114	401	49	438	41



*Equality,  
Diversity and  
Inclusion Data  
Q3 2025/26*

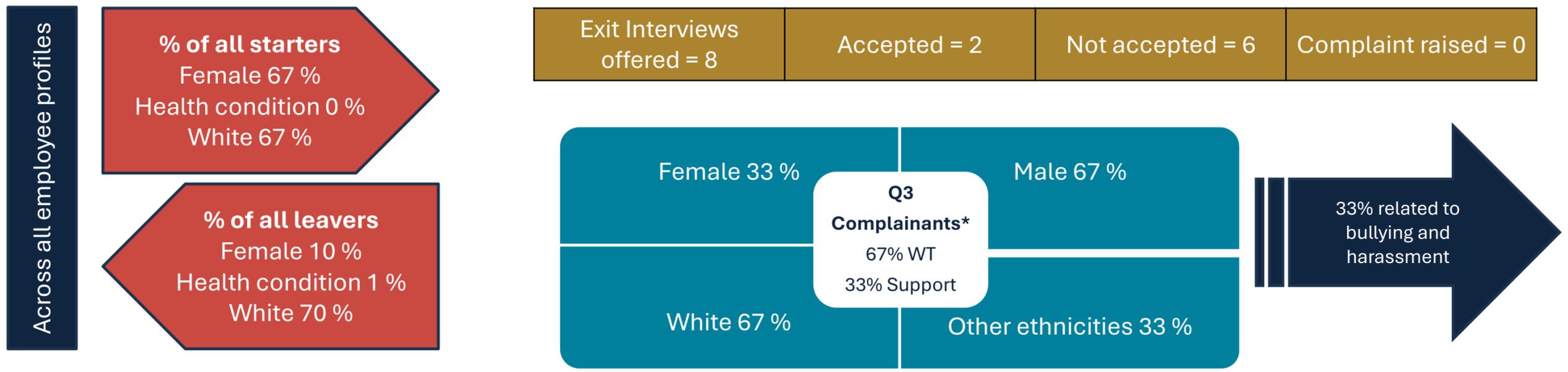


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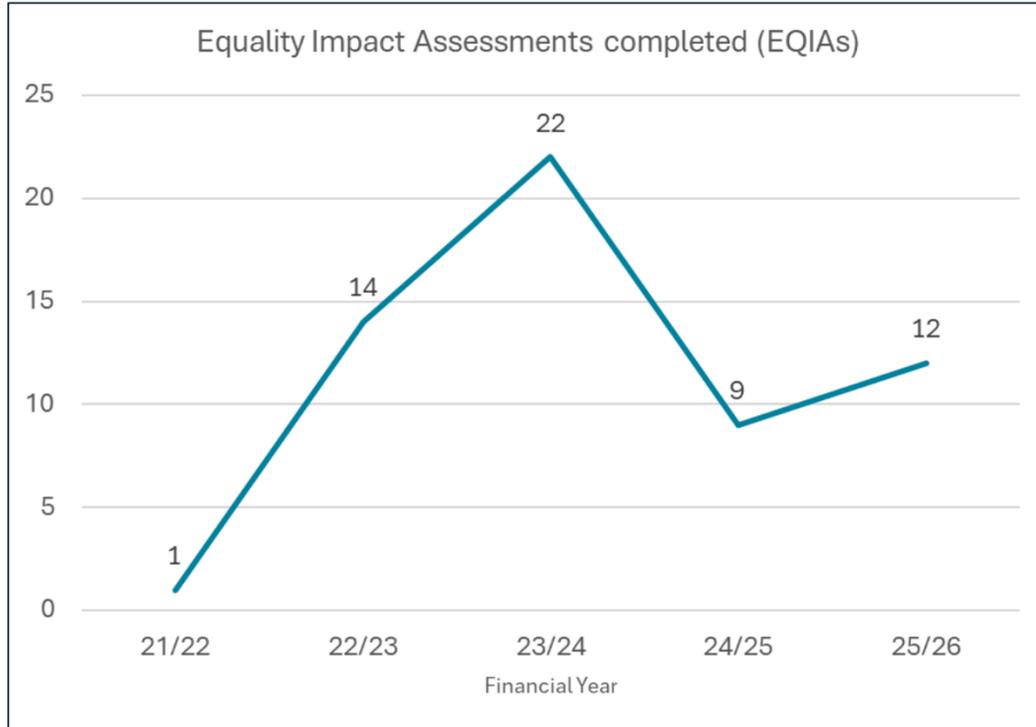


*Equality,  
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Q3 2025/26*

2



1

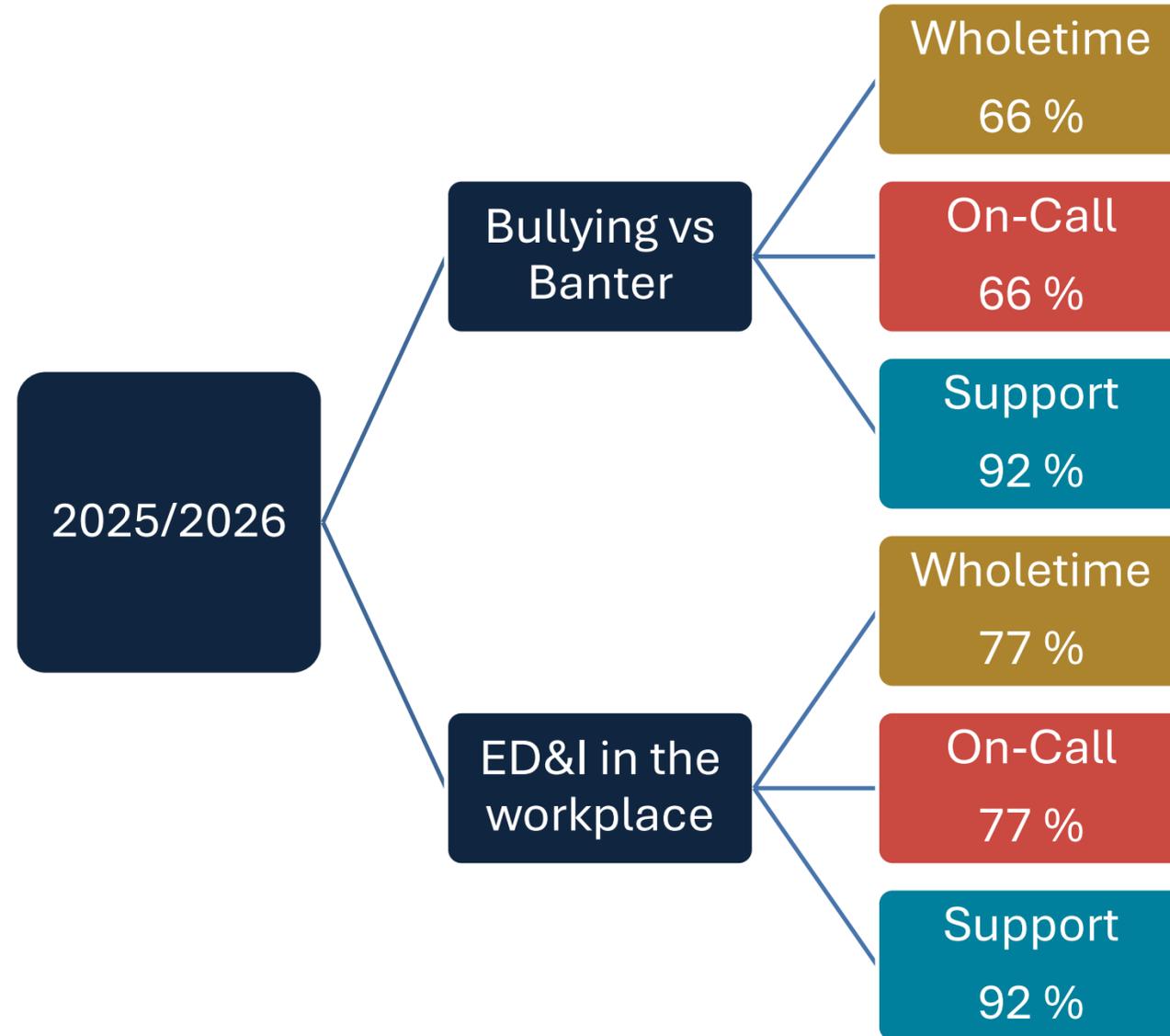


2

Assessment and Development Centre candidates (Support and Operational) 2025 Q1-Q3			
	Supervisory Manager	Middle Manager	Strategic Manager
Female	19%	17%	0%
Male	81%	83%	100%
White	86%	100%	100%
Ethnic minorities	5%	0%	0%
Health condition	5%	0%	0%

3

### Mandatory EDI eLearning packages



*Equality,  
Diversity and  
Inclusion Data  
Q3 2025/26*



## Apprenticeships - Wholetime

1

	2022 Cohort 6 & 6a	2022-2023 Cohort 7 & 8	2023 Cohort 9	2023 Cohort 10 & 11	2024 Cohort 12	2025 Cohort 13
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Black or Black British</b>	2.7%	1.7%	0.0%	2.4%	1.7%	16.7%
<b>Mixed</b>	5.0%	4.2%	3.0%	5.9%	8.3%	0.0%
<b>White</b>	88.4%	89.5%	5.0%	75.7%	91.7%	83.3%
<b>Other Ethnic Groups</b>	40.0%	1.7%	90.1%	1.8%	60.0%	0.0%
<b>Not stated</b>	1.6%	0.4%	1.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Not captured</b>	1.9%	2.1%	1.0%	10.1%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Male</b>	87.6%	86.5%	87.1%	83.4%	58.3%	66.7%
<b>Female</b>	9.3%	10.5%	9.9%	12.4%	41.7%	33.3%
<b>Unspecified</b>	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%	4.1%	0%	0.0%

## Apprenticeships - Support

2

	Of all current Support employee apprentices
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>	14.3%
<b>Black or Black British</b>	0%
<b>Mixed</b>	0%
<b>White</b>	85.7%
<b>Other Ethnic Groups</b>	0%
<b>Not stated</b>	0%
<b>Not captured</b>	0%
<b>Male</b>	28.6%
<b>Female</b>	71.4%
<b>Unspecified</b>	0%

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Inclusion Data  
Q3 2025/26*

