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New Forest Care 



GENDER PAY GAP REPORT

Introduction

New Forest Care is a bespoke residential, education and therapeutic childcare provider, dedicated to providing unconditional care to the most vulnerable children. Our approach is flexible and adaptable, working in partnership with local authorities, parents and carers. We are advocates of our children, and putting their safety and well-being first is at the centre of our decision making. Our people are at the heart of this and so we understand the importance of being open and fair in how we pay them.



Children



Fairness



Dignity



Excellence



Teamwork



Sustainability

In 2023, the UK mean gender pay gap in the private sector was 12.8% (House of Commons Library, 2023). This year, we are proud to share that our mean gender pay gap is the lowest it has been since we started reporting our data and sits well below the UK average, at 8.30%. Reporting on our gender pay gap is something we always welcome as it allows us to monitor how recruitment, reward and progression decisions impact our commitment to achieving a diverse and inclusive workforce.

This report is based on a snapshot date of 5th April 2024, with bonus reporting based on the 12 months preceding this date. Our data takes into account basic pay, as well as other types of pay such as shift premium and allowances for extra responsibilities. It doesn't include overtime. Our bonus pay includes any additional pay relating to performance or incentives such as Ofsted Inspections and Recruitment i.e. Welcome and Referral bonuses.



We employ more females than males for the third year in a row

Our mean gender pay gap is at its lowest and continues to sit below the national average

We have an equal split of men and women in our upper Senior Management roles

This year we have carried out a review of our reporting criteria to ensure the data we report on is accurate. This has resulted in a slight change in the dataset. In addition, in May 2023 we saw the acquisition of OEA, our alternative Education provision and School on the Isle of Wight, which has been taken into account when calculating our gender pay gap for this year. Furthermore, with the continued impact of the cost-of-living crisis, inflation was the biggest influence on 2023 pay decisions in the UK (CIPD). From 1st April 2024, the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage increased by more than £1; the largest rise in a decade, which we have implemented across all roles and therefore this will also be reflected in this report.

We remain fully committed to improving our gender pay gap, and promoting a culture of support and recognition for all of our employees. We are proud to welcome people from all backgrounds and encourage our people to develop their skills with us in order to achieve their full potential. We know we still need to do more to close our gender pay gap, but we're taking steps in the right direction and seeing a positive difference.

I can confirm that the information contained in this report is accurate and has been calculated in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.



Richard Collier-Keywood
Chairman



Our Data

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This is our sixth year publishing our gender pay gap report. This year, we have carried out a review of our reporting criteria to ensure the data we report is accurate. This has resulted in a slight change in the dataset and therefore, it is difficult to directly compare this year's result to previous results.

Our headcount is similar to previous years, increasing marginally from 310 employees to 314 on the snapshot date. This widens the gap between our number of male and female employees as shown below. These are the figures used in our calculations.

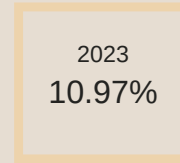
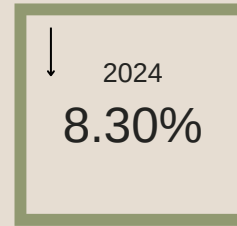


Our Gender Pay Gap

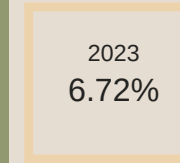
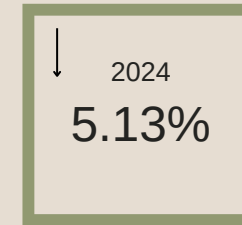
This year, we have seen a decrease in our mean (average) gender pay gap for hourly pay for full time employees, from 10.97% to 8.30%, making it the smallest gap since we started reporting on our gender pay gap. This is testament to our ongoing efforts to promote gender equality within NFC. Although we are proud to say we are closing the gap, we acknowledge that there is still work to be done to reach that equilibrium. In monetary terms, the mean hourly difference is £1.56 in favour of men, compared to £2.05 in 2023. It is also worth noting that a positive trend we see continuing from last year is a greater increase in the mean hourly rate for women compared to men, with an increase of 50p. Our median (mid-point) gender pay gap for hourly pay has also decreased this year, and sits at 5.13% in comparison to 6.72% in 2023.



Mean gender pay gap

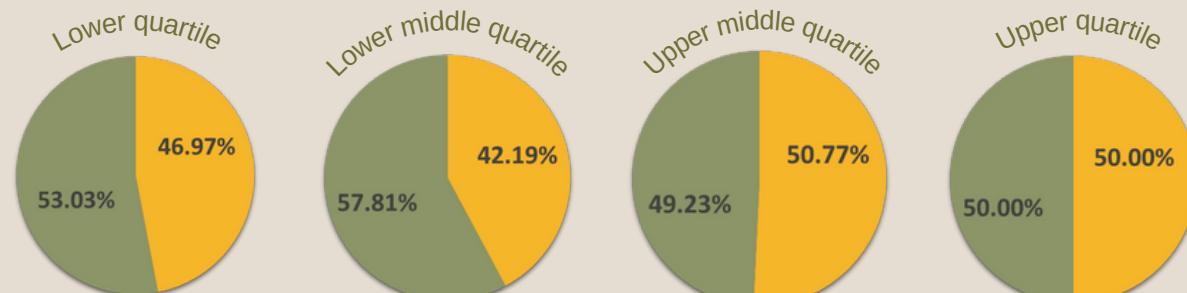


Median gender pay gap



We have seen a shift this year in the balance of men and women in upper Senior Management roles (our upper quartile which focuses on higher earners). This shows a completely even split of 33 men and 33 women who represent this section of the business. Having 50% of each gender within this quartile demonstrates that our recruitment and internal promotions have resulted in more women applying and being successful in appointments to senior positions.

Our upper middle quartile also shows a reduction in the gap between the number of men and women in upper management positions, closing in at 50.77% for men, and 49.23% for women. This is a huge improvement from last year and we look to continue to impact this positively. We find an increase in the number of women in more senior positions across the company due to welcoming another female into the senior leadership team within Education, the appointment of a new female Director and the acquisition of our school and alternative provision on the Isle of Wight.

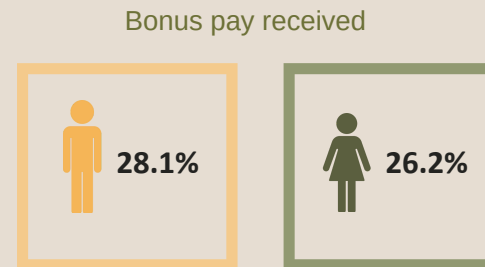


The pay quartiles represent a quarter, or 25% of the workforce, ranked by pay. The pay quartiles are then broken down by gender.

However, despite this achievement we still recognise that we need to continue to balance the representation of men and women in our lower quartiles (which currently represent more women) in order to reduce our gender pay gap further. Our lower middle quartile highlights the biggest gap, with 27 males compared to 37 women. This gap is still an improvement on last year's data (26 men and 40 women); however, we will continue to look at our practices and understand what we can do to improve this further.

Our Gender Bonus Gap

This year we have seen a decrease in the proportion of people who received a bonus but this is still comparable for both males and females. 2023 saw 50% of men receiving a bonus, whereas 2024 shows only 28.1% having received this. We see a similar drop in the female data, dropping from 47.5% to 26.2%.

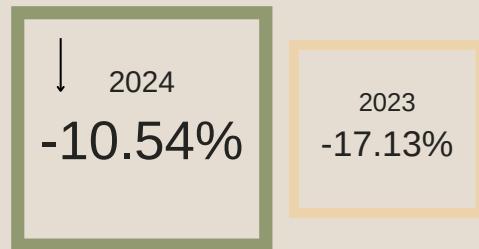


This is largely impacted by the removal of 'Thank You' rewards from our data for this year. In July 2022 we ceased paying 'Thank You' rewards through PAYE and instead commenced issuing these in the form of Amazon vouchers. As these vouchers are driven by colleague nominations instead of a direct reward from the company, in this form they are no longer assessable under our reporting data. Therefore, these rewards were last reflected in our 2023 data which is why we have seen a considerable drop in the percentage of employees who received a bonus in this reporting year.

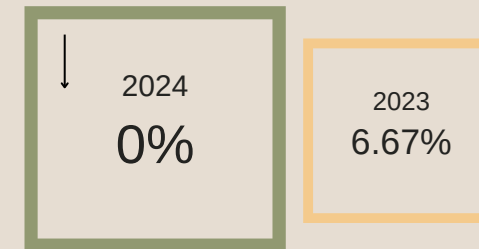
Whilst the percentage of men receiving a bonus was slightly greater, sitting at 28.1% for men compared with 26.2% for women, more women than men actually received a bonus (44 women and 41 men). This can be easily explained due to the fact that we employ more women than men which has reduced the percentage.



Mean bonus gender pay gap



Median bonus gender pay gap



In addition, the mean (average) gender pay gap for bonus pay between men and women has decreased from -17.13% to -10.54% in favour of women, showing another improvement for NFC in closing the gap. A further positive is that our median (mid-point) gender pay gap for bonus pay currently sits at 0%, which is what we're aiming for. This is £500 for both men and women. We continue to support all our staff to strive to achieve their best and continue to review our bonus and reward schemes, year-on-year.

One change that will impact our gender pay gap reporting in the future is the introduction of long service awards, which were introduced from 1st July 2024. In recognition of the following key milestones with NFC; 5, 10 and 20 years' service, our people receive a monetary reward through our partnership with a company called 'Prezzee'. Those who reach a key milestone will be given the opportunity to choose a Prezzee gift card from over 300 different retailers.

Our Commitments

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To help us close our gender pay gap and build a more inclusive NFC for everyone, we are taking tangible, sustainable actions to improve our culture. We know that this will take time, and we're continuing to focus our efforts to champion greater diversity across the company. The following are just some of the positive changes we have implemented since our last report.

Working Flexibly

In 2024, the law around requesting flexible working changed. Employees are no longer required to have 26 weeks continuous service to make a formal flexible working request; this can now be requested from day one of employment. We've welcomed this change and incorporated it into our Flexible Working Policy. This should enable our people to have more flexibility in the hours they work and help support working parents or those with caring responsibilities. It opens up the chance to be more diverse as a company, giving more people an increased likelihood to obtaining a work life balance that works for them.

New Policy for Carers

A further policy that we have adopted is the Carers Leave Policy. We know that some of our people balance work with caring responsibilities – whether for sick, elderly or disabled relatives, partners or friends. Carers Leave entitles people to take one week's unpaid leave in a 12-month period, if providing or arranging care for someone with a long-term health need. Empowering our people to be able to request this should mean that we encourage inclusivity and diversity in the workplace.



Long Service Awards

As mentioned previously in this report, this year we introduced an additional benefit; long service awards. These came into effect from 1st July 2024 to recognise our people who have reached 5, 10 and 20 years' service. As well as rewarding our people, this will provide us with an insight into retention for both men and women. Analysing the results will help us to put actions in place to rectify any imbalances, and open conversations around what we can improve on. It will also be interesting to see whether this additional benefit has any bearing on retention.

Ofsted Bonus

To further reward our people, Residential Care Workers (as well as Registered Managers, Team Leaders and Shift Leaders/Senior Support Workers) will also receive a monetary bonus where an 'Outstanding' or 'Good' Ofsted rating is achieved following an inspection. This came into effect from April 2024, so next year we will see an increased shift in the percentage of employees receiving a bonus. Depending on the number of men and women employed at this level, we will also see a shift in our mean (average) gender pay gap for bonus pay. With this new bonus, it will reward everyone for their efforts in making our homes the best they can be!

New Pay Policy

Since our last report, we have introduced a Pay Policy that sets clear and transparent parameters for pay and bonus decisions, requiring any negotiated awards to be reviewed by a panel consisting of both men and women, in order to provide additional checks to ensure fairness.

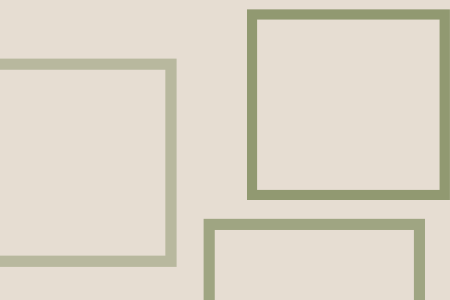


Social Media

We have recently made a social media plan and started implementing some changes to our social media platforms, looking at how we utilise these in order to reach larger target audiences. Some examples are:

- Posting to social media more frequently in order to be more active on the accounts and push the NFC brand out there further.
- Engaging with prospective talent pools more (i.e. responding efficiently to questions under our socials)
- Broadening where we share job advertisements and brand initiatives, through different groups such as Facebook.
- Sharing information and social initiatives such as International Women's Day to show our ongoing support to groups and promote our beliefs and values. We want to be able to show people that diversity and inclusion is a priority for NFC.
- Celebrating the NFC culture by making our posts bespoke and including pictures from the homes and different sites to give people a real feel for what it is like to work at NFC. This can be demonstrated through pictures of our farm life, celebrations that the children and homes are having, and off-site activities.
- We have also started advertising on LinkedIn for more senior roles. Using multiple platforms to engage new talent pools means that NFC will be able to recruit more diversely, reaching candidates that we could not before.

We hope all of the above changes will help our recruitment movement and contribute positively to next years data.



Our Action Plan

Short to Mid-term plans

We believe that closing our gender pay gap requires cultural change in order to remove barriers to the full and equal participation of women in the company. We will continue to drive change across NFC in the following ways:

- Continue to analyse available data to understand the causes of our gender pay gap. The types of data that we will look at may include:
 - Recruitment processes, including the proportion of men and women applying, being shortlisted for and appointed to posts;
 - Starting pay for men and women;
 - Promotion rates for men and women;
 - Proportion of mothers returning after maternity leave, and those still in employment two years after returning;
 - Proportion of men and women who have taken up flexible working, and the levels within the company at which take-up is occurring.
- Shared Parental leave enables eligible mothers, fathers, partners and adopters to choose how to share time of work after their child is born or adopted, but take up remains low for both men and women, both nationally and at NFC. We will continue to promote shared parental leave across NFC to encourage take-up among men.
- We will continue to review pay structures for all roles.

Long-term plans

- Improve representation of females in all positions.
- Research into why a lower proportion of women are receiving bonuses and what we can do to keep rewarding all of our people.
- Continue to stay up to date with policy changes and keep all of our people trained in equality and diversity, including ways on reducing bias.