

Gender Pay Gap Report

March 2026

Education
Partnership
North East

Sunderland
College

Northumberland
College

Hartlepool
Sixth Form
College

H6

Introduction

The Government, under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, introduced gender pay gap reporting. The College Group now has a legal duty to report and publish data on gender pay on both the College Group website and via the Government Equalities Office.

The purpose of gender pay reporting is for organisations in the public sector with over 250 employees to report on and illustrate the difference between the average earnings of men and women in their organisation.

This year's report marks the seventh data return for Education Partnership North East since we merged with Northumberland College in March 2019. Sunderland College first reported in March 2018 in line with the new legislation. In 2019 Hartlepool Sixth Form College was first included in the data return.



Naomi Robson
Vice Principal Corporate Services

Equal pay versus gender pay

Whilst both equal pay and the gender gap deal with the difference (disparity) in pay women receive in the workplace, they are two different issues:

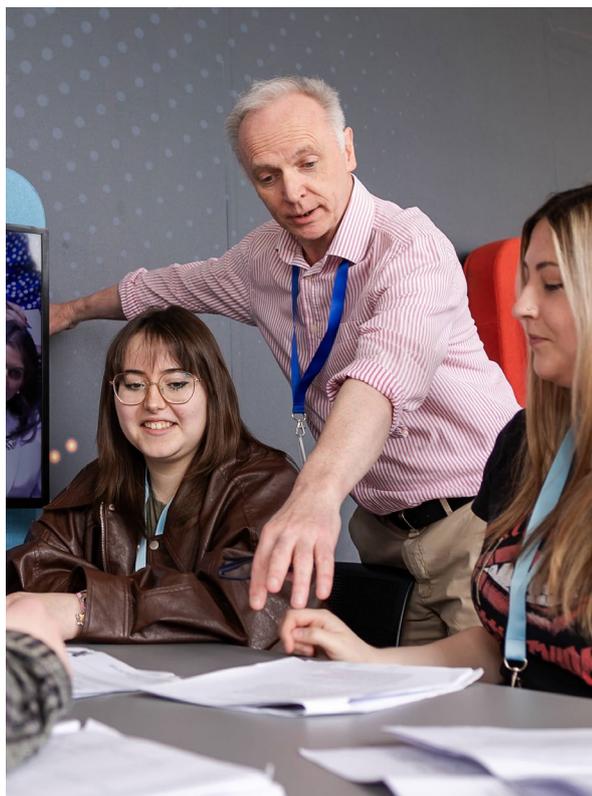
Equal pay: Means that men and women in the same employment performing equal work must receive equal pay, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Gender pay gap: Is a measure of the difference between men's and women's average earnings across an organisation or the labour market. It is expressed as a percentage of men's earnings.

As explained by the Equality and Human Rights Commission the causes of the gender pay gap are complex and can be overlapping. Factors include:

- Highest paid sectors are male-dominated
- Girls often do well at school, but tend to end up concentrated in employment sectors that offer narrower scope for financial reward
- Many of the highest paying sectors are disproportionately made up of male employees
- The effect of part-time work
- The difference in years of experience of full-time work, or the negative effect on wages of having previously worked part-time or of having taken time out of the labour market to look after family
- Unconscious stereotyping, with assumptions about women not wanting to accept promotion, or not being in a position to do so, particularly where they have caring responsibilities

Our approach



We have a strong focus on inclusivity, equality and diversity across our College Group which comprises of Hartlepool Sixth Form College, Northumberland College and Sunderland College. We recognise the benefits a diverse college community brings, the greater the mix of people, the greater the mix of knowledge, skills, perspectives and ideas that can be drawn upon.

Our pay approach is to treat all our staff fairly irrespective of gender and we operate structured salary spines for each job role across the group.

Since April 2020 all our college staff are paid the real living wage, ensuring that Northumberland College staff moved onto the model already adopted in Sunderland and Hartlepool.

We see ourselves as a supportive employer that offers a range of flexible working opportunities for our employees.

Within our sector there are specific subjects that are more difficult to recruit to which means that on occasion a Market Rate supplement is required. Areas such as multi-skilled trades and engineering predominantly attract male applicants and again this is reflective of gender imbalances that exist in these areas nationally.

Staff development is key for all staff and we are keen to offer career progression opportunities to all employees who wish to progress. Our job adverts are open to internal candidates to encourage internal movement and progression across the College Group and our different campuses and departments.



Background information

The regulations specify that the data must be a snapshot of 31 March 2025, this is taken from our payroll data. They advise that a pay period of a month equates to 30.44 days.

All employees who are paid are included in the calculations; permanent, fixed term and casual. Basic pay is comprised of allowances (including Market Rate Supplement payments).

The following are excluded from any calculations: overtime pay, redundancy or termination payments, or non-cash benefits such as those paid through salary sacrifice.

The regulations require us to report on six specific calculations and they also outline the methodology we have to use and what is included in each calculation. These are listed below;

1. Mean average gender pay gap
2. Median average gender pay gap
3. Mean average bonus gender pay gap
4. Median average bonus gender pay gap
5. Proportion of males receiving a bonus payment and proportion of females receiving a bonus payment
6. Proportion of males and females when divided into four groups ordered from lowest to highest pay

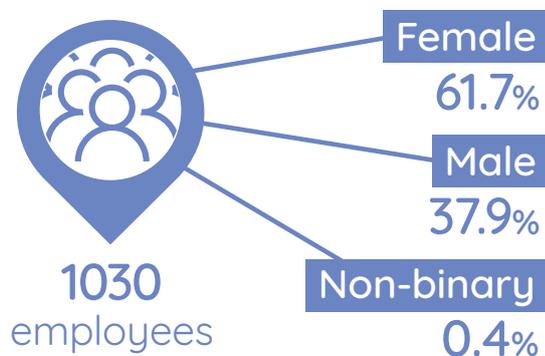
The regulations split employees into two different categories for this reporting, these are called **relevant employees** and **relevant full-pay employees**.

A relevant employee is someone employed by the College Group as at the 31 March 2025. This equates to a total of 1030 employees of which 392 are males (37.9%) and 635 are females (61.7%) and 3 non-binary (0.4%). This split of male to female staff is common in the FE sector. This is the second year that non-binary employees have been included in relevant employees.

A full-pay relevant employee is someone who is employed by the College Group and is receiving “full pay” during the specified pay period. If an employee is paid less than their usual rate of pay or zero (i.e. due to sickness or maternity for example) then they are not classed as a “full-pay relevant employee”.

Within our College Group relevant full-pay employees equated to 918 employees in total of which 356 are male (38.8%) and 562 are female (61.2%). No employees who identified as non-binary were full-pay relevant.

Gender split at EPNE



Overall outcome

The results are calculated based on full-pay relevant employees and show that there is an increase in the mean gender pay gap of 0.1%, and an increase in the median gender pay gap of 3.7%.

Gender pay gap				
				
Mean	2025	£16.54	£17.78	7%
	2024	£16.43	£17.64	6.9%
	2023	£15.27	£16.58	7.9%
	2022	£14.81	£15.82	6.4%
	2021	£14.71	£15.71	6.4%
	2020	£14.44	£15.34	5.9%
	2019	£14.26	£15.28	6.7%
Median	2025	£14.74	£17.59	16.2%
	2024	£14.80	£16.92	12.5%
	2023	£13.96	£15.71	11.1%
	2022	£13.42	£15.02	10.7%
	2021	£13.68	£14.80	7.6%
	2020	£13.55	£14.80	8.45%
	2019	£13.55	£14.80	8.45%

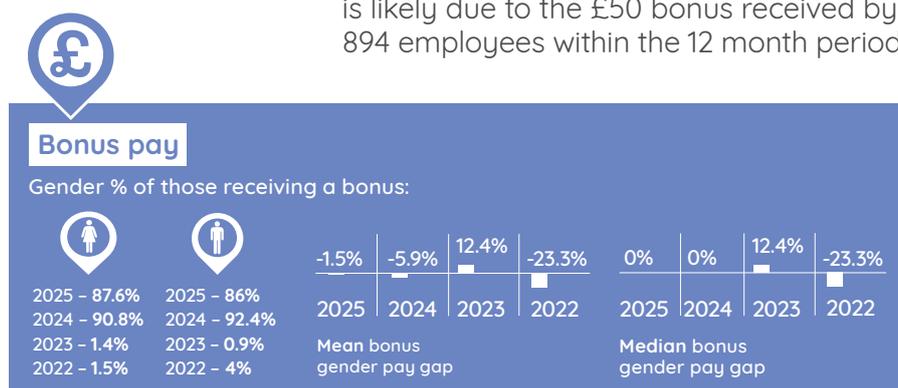
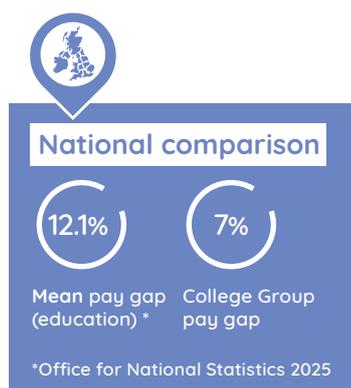
In 2025, the Office for National Statistics recorded the mean average pay gap as 13.4% for all employees, and the median was recorded as 12.8% for all employees. A further breakdown of the tertiary Education sector reports a mean average pay gap of 12.1% and median average pay gap of 17%. EPNE's mean and median pay gaps are both lower than this.

Bonus Payments

(Long Service/Standard Support Payments only)

These bonus payments are calculated on all relevant employees.

- At Christmas 2024, 894 staff received a £50 voucher bonus. 556 were female, 337 were male and 1 was non-binary
- Under the regulations, long service awards and standard support payments also fall into this category
- For long service awards across the group, the value of the awards is based on the length of service with 30 years being £200 and 20 years being £150. In the 12 month period covered 11 awards were paid – 10 were to females and 1 to males
- The standard support payment is paid to qualifying support staff at Hartlepool Sixth Form College. 4 staff college-wide are eligible for this payment and those staff who successfully apply for the payment receive a one-off payment of £320 (pro-rata for part-time staff). In the 12-month period covered, the College Group made 1 such payment, to a male
- Proportionally this means that 86% of males received a bonus and 87.6% of females received a bonus
- The average bonus received by males was £51.84 and by females was £52.61
- This equated to a mean bonus gender pay gap of -1.5% (difference of £0.77), meaning that females received more bonus than males
- The median bonus gender pay gap of 0% is likely due to the £50 bonus received by 894 employees within the 12 month period



Quartile Bands

As part of reporting, we are required as an employer to show the proportions of male and female full-pay relevant employees in four quartile pay bands, which is done by ranking hourly rate of pay and dividing the workforce into four equal quartiles (or as close as possible to this).

The below quartiles are based on full-pay relevant employees:

Employment quartile bands	Female		Male		Grand total
Lower Quartile	168	73%	62	27%	230
Lower Middle Quartile	142	62%	87	38%	229
Upper Middle Quartile	134	58.3%	96	41.7%	230
Upper Quartile	118	51.5%	111	48.5%	229
Grand Total	562		356		918

Why do we have a gender pay gap?

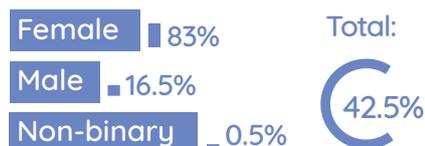
The make-up of staffing within the College Group has not changed significantly in the last year in terms of the male/female ratio and still employs a higher proportion of female than male staff, 61.7% to 37.9%, with 3 employees identifying as non-binary (0.4%).

There continues to be clear evidence of female employees accounting for a disproportionately higher number of colleagues in lower and lower middle quartiles.

2025



2024



2023



Part-time or term-time only
(excluding teaching staff)

More females occupy senior roles within the organisation, reflected in the upper middle and upper quartiles. There has been an increase in males in the upper quartile (previously 87), and a decrease of females in this quartile (previously 120).

The addition of a Talent Acquisition service within the organisation has begun to support a whole-group approach to inclusive recruitment practice and ensure equal access to opportunities.

Additionally, in some vocational subjects which have previously been hard to recruit to and hard to recruit females to (e.g. Construction), there has been an increase in female recruitment. However, in balance, within Engineering there continues to be a salary increase to attract potential talent, which includes historically male-dominated roles.

Conversely, you will see in our report that we continue to have higher proportions of females within quartiles 1 and 2. These are the quartiles which have lower paid salaries and include Catering and Administration (in common with the rest of the UK).

A dedicated workstream is underway to attract current students to Catering roles, which could increase workforce diversity over time. This initiative aligns with our broader approach to creating more inclusive recruitment pipelines and addressing representation in lower pay quartiles.

This year's gender pay gap reporting has also incorporated Student Ambassadors for the first time (5 male and 5 female). Their inclusion is due to increased working hours throughout the academic year, which brought them into scope for reporting. These roles are typically filled by students aged 18 or under and are paid at national minimum wage.

Additionally, there has been an increase in casual employees who were paid during the snapshot period, and therefore are now included in the full pay relevant data set. The inclusion of these employee groups has resulted in a higher proportion of employees in the lower pay quartiles being reflected in the overall figures.

Actions we will take:

The College Group is satisfied that the differences are not due to the underpayment of women in roles similar to male colleagues. We will continue to monitor this and will take the following actions:

- Continue to review and enhance recruitment processes to encourage more female applicants into male-dominated academic subjects and to consider ways to diversify applicants
- Conduct additional analysis, in line with Gender Pay Gap Service recommendations, to understand the underlying factors contributing to the gap and identify appropriate actions to reduce it further. The newly implemented People & Payroll system will support more detailed reporting and analysis
- Continue to monitor and review our existing processes for capturing exit data and carry out additional turnover data analysis, to understand reasons for leaving, to determine appropriate actions to encourage retention
- Continue to monitor trends within the workforce, including the impact of new hires, casual employees, and additional employee groups on pay quartiles, to ensure equitable practices are maintained



For and on behalf of
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Naomi Robson
Vice Principal Corporate Services

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