

Submission - Sheila Wild - Equalities Professional

1. What are the main causes of a gender pay gap? Occupational segregation, pay discrimination, the undervaluing of women's work and the unequal distribution between men and women of domestic and family responsibilities. Of these, the undervaluing of women's work is the one that tends to get overlooked, with for example, women in caring roles not having the emotional demands of the job taken into account when rates of pay are being set.
2. What initiatives can be undertaken to reduce a gender pay gap? At government level, the encouragement both of pay transparency – and not just on grounds of gender – and good equal pay practice, such as regular equal pay audits. At employer level, carry out regular equal pay audits – this not only protects against equal pay claims, but also helps to identify the causes of any pay gaps. An employer can really only get to grips with their own gender pay gap, and any equal pay issues, by carrying out regular equal pay audits.
3. What are your views on making it a disciplinary matter if staff discuss salary? Making discussion of salaries a disciplinary matter flies in the face of the increasing expectation of pay transparency, and is also potentially in breach of the equal pay provisions whereby subjecting someone to a detriment for raising the issue of equal pay can amount to victimisation. Moreover, if an employer's pay system is fair – and most employers like to see themselves as being fair – why would you discipline someone?
4. Do you think companies should adopt "pay transparency" i.e. allowing staff to request information on pay levels broken down by gender? Why should it be necessary for staff to ask? Why aren't rates of pay out in the open? The fact that they are not suggests that an employer has something to hide.
5. Do you think a pay gap is more likely in gender dominant industries i.e. construction, politics, nursing, teaching? Yes, but the dominance of one sex or the other may not be the cause of the gap – we must be careful not to confuse correlation with causation. We can really only identify the causes by digging a lot deeper into the figures. And, as an aside, a high degree of gender segregation is also associated with the undervaluing of women's work.
6. Do you think that the gender pay gap is exacerbated when employers base a starting salary on someone's previous earnings? Particularly in cases where a woman has taken time off to have children. Starting salaries should not be based on previous earnings. The employer should be paying a rate for the job. Whether or not a woman has taken time out to have children is relevant only if it should affect her ability to do the job – in which case the job would not be offered to her.
7. Do you think asking about salary history should be banned? I think it's unnecessary and should be discouraged.
8. How do you think closing the gender pay gap can help the economy? There is ample evidence to show that closing the gender pay gap will boost GDP. How much it does so will vary from one economy to another.
9. Is there any evidence that women face particular barriers to promotion? Yes, and if a woman earns less than a male candidate for promotion, he may well be preferred over her – this is because employers often read pay as a proxy for ability, whereas it is actually only a measure of what the previous employer was prepared to pay. Other

barriers: recruitment processes that lack transparency and don't fish in a big enough pool; over-emphasis on the possible impact of child-bearing and domestic responsibilities generally; prejudicial attitudes to women

10. Do you think paternity and maternity statutory rights factor into the gender pay gap? Yes, of course. So long as women have to struggle to be good workers as well as good parents, and men don't, there's going to be a gender pay gap.
11. Do you think the reason for a gender pay gap is because women take on childcare? It's one reason, but certainly not the only one.
12. Do you think within today's society that, in statutory terms, it is easier for the mother to be the primary care giver? Yes, but the main determinant is who within the couple is the higher earner. It makes economic sense for the higher earner to keep on working or to keep on working full-time, and in an increasing number of couples the women is the higher earner. Over time we will see more men becoming the primary care-giver.
13. Do you think paternity and maternity leave should be on a more equal footing so that there is greater choice for fathers who want to be the primary care givers? Yes
14. Do you think a culture change is required to encourage more men to take career breaks to look after children? Yes. The message that there's nothing unmanly about being a hands-on dad is one that needs much wider promotion.
15. How long do you think women can take out of the work place before it starts to hit their future progression? It shouldn't affect their progression at all! The whole point of maternity leave and the right to return to work is that women should not suffer any career detriment through having had children. If women are being hit, then the arrangements for leave and return, including take up by, and payments to, both sexes need to be re-examined and improved.
16. What barriers do you think women face in relation to promotion and progression in the workplace? See answer to 9 & 10.