



# Gender Pay Gap Report

2023-24



# Introduction



Welcome to our Gender Pay Gap Report for 2023-24, which we're pleased again shows a small reduction in our mean gender pay gap.

Our median gender pay gap shows a small increase. However, we're confident the initiatives we have put in place and our recruitment since this reporting period will translate into significant steps forward in next year's report as our approach embeds.

During the year we've embarked on a transformative journey to foster a more inclusive workplace and we've delivered on many of the initiatives outlined in last year's report. We know it's going to take time but we are beginning to see a real difference as the change reverberates across our business.

More women work at Portsmouth Water now than in 2022-23, an increase of 15% in female employees compared to an increase of 8% in male employees. With the increased gender diversity we achieved in 2023-24 we now have more than twice the representation of women (42%) than the industry average (20%).

Through vast improvements to our recruitment processes we're seeing a real difference in applicants, which is translating into a difference in appointees. Many of the latest recruits into senior positions since April 2024 have been women.

We're now in a strong position to attract the best talent and remove potential barriers to participation from

minority and marginalised groups and our hopes to increase the diversity of our people are being realised.

While our most senior positions remain less diverse, this is improving and our company-wide equity, diversity and inclusion training held during the year is creating good conversations and culture.

We do acknowledge we have more work to do to continue to shift the underrepresentation of women in the water sector and strive to become an 'employer of choice' in our communities.

On a more personal level I am delighted to have signed to mentoring for The Girls Network, supported by Portsmouth Water, and am sharing my experience with colleagues as we encourage more of them to join.

I confirm that the data in this report has been calculated according to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.

**Rebekah Holbrook**  
Chief People Officer



**Bob Taylor**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Introduction



I am of the firm belief that women and men should have equal opportunities, the same rates of pay and our company should be reflective of the communities we serve.

We have made many improvements to our gender representation since our last report, which in turn makes Portsmouth Water even more attractive as an equal opportunity employer.

We have significantly enhanced the working arrangements and benefits we offer employees, particularly our expanded family-friendly policies, universal bonus reward structure and support for hybrid working.

Our updated approach to recruitment, with anonymised CVs and reviews of adverts for gender bias, has made a step change and I'm delighted to have seen a 15% increase in the number of women we employed during the year.

Crucially, several of these new appointments have been women to senior, leadership roles in the organisation. This is where our gender imbalance has been most evident historically and we'll continue to support our female colleagues to be promoted to these senior roles, as well as recruit externally. The priority is to recruit the right skills for the role but, wherever possible, we'll seek to get the gender balance right.

I'm very proud of the equity, diversity and inclusion training we delivered across the business. Everyone

responded positively and it helps us better reflect and respond to the communities we work in.

I'm also a great champion of supporting young people into the wide variety of jobs the water sector has to offer and am delighted to see female apprentices joining ourselves and the contractors delivering our landmark Havant Thicket Reservoir project.

Our commitment is to be a fair and inclusive place for everyone and I look forward to building on this year's initiatives to report greater steps forward next year.

# Who we are...

Portsmouth Water has been the water supplier to Portsmouth and the surrounding areas since 1857. We work across South East Hampshire and West Sussex and at the time of this report we employed nearly 318 full-time employees, many from our local supply area.



**We have a long tradition of providing top quality drinking water for the lowest bills in England and Wales and have a strong reputation for efficiency and industry-leading service.**

# Gender Pay Gap Reporting

Since April 2017, along with all companies with 250 employees or more, we have been required by law to report on our gender pay gap under the Equality Act 2010.

The gender pay gap is the average difference between the pay of men and women working for an organisation. It reflects the overall percentage of women working in an organisation and/or the seniority of the positions and pay grade of those positions.

The gender pay gap is not the same as equal pay, where legally men and women performing the same work must be paid the same. We comply fully with the law on equal pay.

**This report covers all employees of Portsmouth Water from 6 April 2023 to 5 April 2024.**



# Our Gender Pay Gap

**Our MEAN gender pay gap is 19.69%**

(1.68% improvement from 21.37% in 2022-23)



The mean gender pay gap is calculated by adding up all the pay of our employees and dividing that figure by the number of employees. (The final figure can be distorted by a small number at the top or bottom of the pay scale).

**Our MEDIAN gender pay gap is 7.44%**

(An increase of 2.74% from 4.7% in 2022-23)



The median gender pay gap is the middle of the range of all employees' pay – it's a better figure to use when there is a large range between the lowest and highest paid.



While our mean gender pay gap reduced in the year, there is still more to be done to reduce our median gender pay gap. Overall it's a step in the right direction but we expect to see a significant improvement across both measures in our next report given the recruitment and actions we have already taken in 2024-25 and as our new initiatives embed.

Overall in the UK, the gender pay gap for 2024 is estimated to be 7% ([Office for National Statistics](#)) down from 7.5% in 2023.

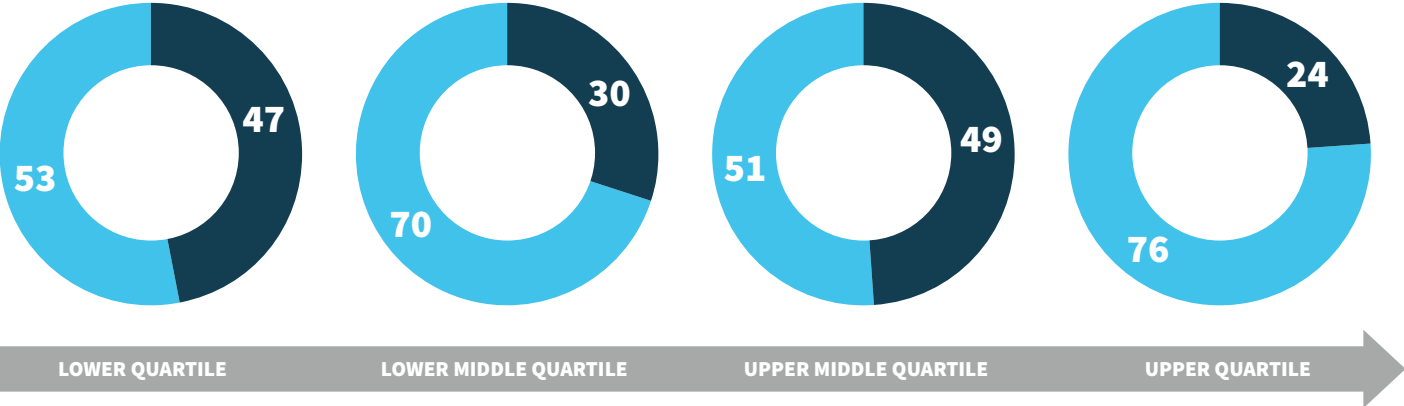
# How the Gender Gap varies across our workforce



During the period of this report our workforce was made up of 120 women and 198 men.

As part of our reporting, we've broken down the gender pay gap across our workforce – in four quarters of pay bands – ranging from Lower, Lower Middle, Upper Middle to Upper Quartile.

In 2023-24 men continued to make up the highest proportion in all four quarters. The percentage of women in the Upper Middle Quartile increased from 40% to 49%. However, the number of women in the Upper Quartile fell by 1% to 24%, with the lowest proportion of women still in this higher pay bracket. The number of women in the Lower Middle Quartile fell from 35% last year to 30% this year and the number of women in the Lower Quartile increased slightly.



\*Based on proportion of men and women in full-time employment.

MEN WOMEN

80 employees are in the lower hourly pay quarter. 42 are men and 38 are women. This means 53% are men and 47% are women.  
 79 employees are in the lower middle hourly pay quarter. 55 are men and 24 are women. This means 70% are men and 30% are women.  
 80 employees are in the upper middle hourly pay quarter. 41 are men and 39 are women. This means 51% are men and 49% are women.  
 79 employees are in the upper hourly pay quarter. 60 are men and 19 are women. This means 76% are men and 24% are women.

**The split continued to reflect the make-up of our company which historically has a higher number of men in senior and engineering and technical roles. However, the significant increase in the number of women in the Upper Middle Quartile creates more potential for women to progress from here to the Upper Quartile within Portsmouth Water, in addition to recruitment directly into the Upper Quartile.**

**The number of employees in our company increased by 10% in 2023-24 to 318 full time equivalent (FTE) roles and we expect it to increase significantly more in the next five years as we grow to deliver the large-scale investment outlined in our business plan for 2025-30.**

# Our Bonus Gender Pay Gap

We also report each year on the gender pay gap for bonus payments to employees.

## In 2023-24

### 19.4% of MEN received a bonus payment

(3.54% increase from 15.86% in 2022-23)



### 16% of WOMEN received a bonus payment

(6.38% increase from 9.62% in 2022-23)



### The MEAN overall of our Bonus Gender Pay Gap reduced by nearly a quarter to 70.67

(The sum of all the bonus pay of employees divided by the number of employees paid a bonus)  
(a reduction from 94.24% in 2022-23)



### The median Bonus Gender Pay Gap reduced to 0% (equal)

(the middle of the range of all employees' bonus payments)  
(a significant reduction from 80% in 2022-23)



This means, based on the median figures, that for every £1 a man received in bonus pay, a woman received £1.

Our reporting on our Bonus Gender Pay Gap considers several types of bonuses and reward payment.

We introduced a new bonus scheme for all employees in June 2024 with all graded employees eligible for a bonus worth 6% of their salary. Bonuses were paid to all employees, including those on maternity, adoption and shared parental leave. This new approach will be reflected in our Gender Pay Gap figures in our next report for 2024-25.

A new 'on-the-spot' reward payment scheme to recognise merit as it's deserved is being introduced in 2025.



# Change is happening

While our mean gender pay gap is heading in the right direction, we have introduced many new initiatives during 2024. Some are already having an impact and we expect others to result in a significant improvement in our gender pay gap reporting next year.

We're bringing about positive change in our equity, diversity and inclusion within Portsmouth Water and how people in our communities view our organisation as a place to work, establishing us as an employer of choice.



Change is happening

# Equity, diversity and inclusion

During 2023-24, 79% of our employees took part in a three-hour training session on equity, diversity and inclusion. This started with our Board and executive team and focused on raising awareness so we can reduce unconscious bias and inequity in our workplace.

This commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion was welcomed by our employees with the annual employee survey showing:

- 93% of employees found the equity, diversity and inclusion training useful and now feel they understand their role in building an inclusive workplace.
- 56% of employees now agree our policies make adequate provision to guide inclusion (up from 40% the previous year).
- 49% agree senior leaders are doing enough to address issues relating to diversity and inclusion (up from 33% the previous year).

We are building on this improvement and will continue to offer training sessions for the remainder of our employees and everyone who joins the company.

We have also appointed a new Internal Communications and Engagement lead who is continuing to promote equity, diversity and inclusion across the company and raise awareness.



# Lara Stoimenova's role on Portsmouth Water's Board



**Lara Stoimenova**  
Board member

Lara Stoimenova, a competition and regulatory economist with more than 20 years' experience, has been a non-executive director on the Portsmouth Water Board since 2022. Female representation on the Board currently sits at a third. Lara also mentors young women through the Stemettes programme.

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Senior leadership gender representation at Portsmouth Water has grown and I am hoping this creates a pipeline to move more women to Board level. We still have a way to go but the company has done a great job of expanding diversity and inclusion and the training we completed was a great reminder, a good exercise and a real eye-opener.

Portsmouth Water has really closed the gap on family-friendly policies and we must make sure that doesn't fall off the priority list and we make the right support and training opportunities available for everyone, including coaching and mentorship.

We often focus on equity but should not forget about inclusion. True inclusion means letting everyone speak and listening with an open mind, it's more a change of behaviours and cultures and Portsmouth Water is aware of that.

During my career I have had to deal with many challenging situations. However, I have also been inspired and championed by great people who have paved the way for me. My focus now is to lead by example and support other women on their career paths.

Change is happening

# Recruiting new employees

We have transformed our approach to recruitment in 2023-24, removing potential barriers to applicants from minority and marginalised groups.

We are now in a much stronger position to attract the best talent, having introduced gender decoding, to make sure the wording in our adverts is gender-neutral and inclusive.

We have also introduced:

- Non-branded CVs, where details of gender, agencies, any bias and background details which are not relevant to the role are removed
- Automatic responses to applicants, outlining our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion and how this is embedded in our recruitment
- Monitoring of the number of female applicants
- A commitment to readvertise senior leadership vacancies if we do not initially receive any female applicants

- Interviews carried out by more than one interviewer, with the interviewers drawn from the most diverse range of Portsmouth Water employees as possible.

Our monitoring has shown the number of women applicants is increasing overall, from an average of 10% of applicants per role being female to around 40% of applicants. We expect this new approach to recruitment to create a more diverse workplace over time.

In 2024, we have recruited several women into senior positions in our Finance, IT, Asset Management Teams, Regulation and Legal teams and we expect to see this increase reflected more fully in next year's report.

Our next steps include delivering unconscious bias training for our hiring managers and introducing a new recruitment system which will help embed many of our initiatives and objectives around equity, diversity and inclusion.

Change is happening

# Recruiting senior leaders

Increasing female representation in senior and leadership roles and on the Executive Team and Board is vital to encourage women to join Portsmouth Water and progress their careers.

We are continuing to make many more key appointments at the top of our organisation, both within the timeframe of this report and the remainder of 2024, to increase the visibility of women in these leading roles, which are still heavily weighted with male representation.



# Carol Cairns joins the Executive Management Team



**Carol Cairns**  
Chief Asset Officer

Carol Cairns joined Portsmouth Water as Chief Asset Officer in May 2024, doubling female representative on the executive team. Carol is leading and creating a new directorate and in 2024 has recruited several women into senior leadership roles.

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I'm looking to create a better balance in my team. Most applicants are still male and we must recruit the best person for the role but the women who have applied have been excellent candidates. It is great to be able to offer the new family-friendly policies and hybrid working when recruiting, to offer a good balance of life and work. I'm more focused on the outcomes people are delivering than the hours. I think offering more flexibility is important and it's also important to have goals to report to and deliver against.

I have been a woman engineer in the water industry for most of my career and, as I've progressed, I've seen it's important for people to have role models. When I took my civil engineering degree there were 40 people on the course and only four were women. In my first role the only other woman was the secretary but it is improving, more young women are coming into the sector and we need to support that.

I have previously been a Women in STEM advocate, I promote and support women and mentor colleagues on an informal basis. I also encourage my male colleagues to talk about gender equity more through our People Network as we can't make the changes alone. And as a member of the executive team I try to bring a different perspective and positive influence to the debates.

Change is happening

# People and Culture Group

We launched a new People and Culture Group in 2024 for our employees, looking at equity, diversity and inclusion in our workplace and our ways of working.

It's sponsored by Chief People Officer and executive member Rebekah Holbrook with an allocated budget to support the group's activities and their input into our values and policies.

The group meets every couple of months and is open to all employees, with the membership currently predominantly female and an open agenda which is evolving to meet its needs. The group recently attended an equity, diversity and inclusion conference in 2024 and are planning participation in Portsmouth Pride in 2025.



Change is happening

# Wellbeing Group

During the year we also established a new Wellbeing Group, looking at issues such as mental health and sexual harassment and bullying. (The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 came into effect in October 2024, introducing a legal duty for employers to proactively take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment). This group is meeting quarterly and its agenda will evolve to meet employee needs as it becomes established.

## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS



Help is at hand and not far away. Talk to someone today and make the first step to feeling better. Your Mental Health Champions are here to listen and show you the way.

### Need professional support now?

Give our friendly BUPA support crew a ring on:

**0800 269 616**

for help with anything from personal issues to financial worries.

**Help is here 24/7**



MHFA England

### MEET THE TEAM...

<p><b>Rebecca Mariner</b> ✉ rebecca.mariner@portsmouthwater.co.uk ☎ 07425 776340</p>	<p><b>Lucie Spratt</b> ✉ lucinda.spratt@portsmouthwater.co.uk</p>	<p><b>Sophia Hunt</b> ✉ sophia.hunt@portsmouthwater.co.uk</p>
<p><b>Heather McCarthy</b> ✉ heather.mccarthy@portsmouthwater.co.uk</p>	<p><b>Kim Rowe</b> ✉ kim.rowe@portsmouthwater.co.uk ☎ 2325</p>	<p><b>Lee Cook</b> ✉ lee.cook@portsmouthwater.co.uk ☎ 07795 015769</p>
<p><b>Robert Hall</b> ✉ robert.hall@portsmouthwater.co.uk ☎ 07912 297494</p>	<p><b>Amanda James</b> ✉ amanda.james@portsmouthwater.co.uk</p>	<p><b>Tracy Ware</b> ✉ tracy.ware@portsmouthwater.co.uk ☎ 2242</p>
<p><b>Jason Bowles</b> ✉ jason.bowles@portsmouthwater.co.uk ☎ 07740 155864</p>	<p><b>Graham Baldock</b> ✉ graham.baldock@portsmouthwater.co.uk ☎ 07702 802458</p>	<p><b>Ian Adams</b> Independent Consultant ✉ ian.adams@portsmouthwater.co.uk ☎ 07976 830219</p>
<p><b>Samantha Gray</b> ✉ samantha.gray@portsmouthwater.co.uk ☎ 07825 654848</p>	<p><b>Rachel Dixon</b> ✉ rachel.dixon@portsmouthwater.co.uk ☎ 07809 659292</p>	<p><b>Paul Healey</b> Production Team Leader - Technical ✉ paul.healey@portsmouthwater.co.uk ☎ 07545 925501</p>
<p><b>Jade Lanzon</b> ✉ jade.lanzon@portsmouthwater.co.uk</p>	<p><b>Megan Harris</b> ✉ megan.harris@portsmouthwater.co.uk</p>	

11 February 2025

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# Aspiring to influence positive change



**Hayley Hewson**  
Deputy Company Secretary

Hayley joined Portsmouth Water in 2024 as deputy company secretary. Her role includes governance policy reviews, annual reporting, risk management and supporting the Board, Committees and Directors.

Hayley has worked within listed companies (with a UK and internal focus), where gender equality is mandated and supported by key targets. She recently completed her master's degree in Corporate Governance and Law, where

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A real positive at Portsmouth Water is the attitude towards hybrid and flexible working which is widely supported throughout the business and can only aid in the future gender make-up of our workforce.

Making connections to women's and girls' groups and girls in engineering and education is important, to support the next generation of females in the water industry in their training and career choices.

To ensure future success, remuneration schemes should tie to a greater level of gender equality throughout the business.

the focus of her dissertation was gender in executive director roles.

She is a member of the company's People and Culture Group, where she aspires to aid in influencing positive change at Portsmouth Water, placing a greater focus on gender equality and a greater understanding of the benefits of a more diverse workforce.

Change is happening

# Updated policies

Our employees have started to benefit from new and updated family-friendly policies during 2024. These were at the top of their 'wish list' in our 2023 employee survey.



## Change is happening

### FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

Our policies to support families are now much more aligned with those of forward-thinking companies.

Our updated benefits are available to all employees from the first day of employment and include:

- **Maternity and adoption leave** – 26 weeks' full pay, plus three days paid leave for adoption appointments
- **Paternity leave** – full pay for four weeks
- **Fertility treatment** – five days paid leave for treatment and two days paid leave for partners supporting those having fertility treatment
- **Antenatal appointment support** – two days paid leave for partners to support
- **Parental bereavement leave** – full pay for two weeks
- Full bonus payments for the year for employees on these types of leave.

We have also introduced management guides on equity, diversity and inclusion; family-friendly policies and menopause to support our management teams.

In our 2024 employee survey, significantly more (70% up from 51%) agreed with the statement: *“I believe that provision for parental leave (for example, maternity, paternity, shared parental leave and adoption) is good”*.

### MENOPAUSE POLICY

Our menopause policy has been a key focus in 2023-24 and we have successfully implemented menopause awareness training for all our employees.

We've also introduced a comprehensive guide, flexible working arrangements and five additional paid days leave for those experiencing menopause or perimenopause symptoms.

These initiatives have led to a noticeable increase in open dialogue and a more supportive atmosphere within our organisation.

In our 2024 employee survey, significantly more (56% up from 40% last year) agreed our policies make adequate provision to guide a range of inclusion issues. This shows our efforts on policies such as menopause have been effective.



# A journey through menopause



**Kim Rowe**  
Customer Service Manager

Kim graciously shared her experience of menopause with the company on Menopause Awareness Day to highlight the challenges. She had always thought of menopause as a mid-50s phenomenon, marked by physical changes. But her experience was purely mental – brain fog, overwhelming anxiety, a lack of motivation, double guessing every decision and a sense of depression.

But Kim wasn't alone. She found solace and understanding in a local menopause support group. Sharing their stories helped to normalise her experiences and alleviate her feelings of isolation. Kim is now an advocate for women's health and campaigns for workplace support for women going through menopause.

“

It's so nice to see the world shifting towards openly talking about it. The training at Portsmouth Water has made it more accessible and easier to talk about and I felt it was most impactful for the men around our business. People are now very aware of it, and everyone will know someone who has gone, going through or starting on the menopause journey.

Change is happening

# Fair recognition

## Company value awards

We saw an increase in the percentage of women nominated for our company value awards in 2024, rising to more than half of nominations compared to around a third in 2023.

For the awards, employees are put forward through a nomination process, recognising their contribution and achievements to delivering our values of Excellence, Integrity and Future Focus during the year. The winners in 2024 were half women and half men.



## Progressive salaries

During the year, we made changes to the salary brackets for employees in the lower quartile salary bracket, more of whom are female, predominantly working in customer services. We reset the entry level salary to £24,000 and removed a ceiling on the salary band to allow progression into higher bands with more responsibility.

## Independent pay benchmarking

We carried out an independent pay benchmarking exercise in 2024 to make sure our pay and benefits are competitive and inclusive. The review concluded our pay at each grade is aligned to the market and the benefits we provide employees are generally in line with the market and valued by staff.

# Building a team with a diverse range of backgrounds



**Maxine Foyle**  
Head of Transformation

Maxine joined Portsmouth Water in 2023 and leads on company-wide transformation. Her team is supporting the delivery of key programmes including SMART metering, Core IT Systems Transformation, security and resilience and capital delivery planning.

Having left school at 16, Maxine was running pubs by 19 and has gained experience in multiple sectors including software, finance, utility companies, kitchen design, international pallet distribution and pest control. Her aim is to bring energy and pace to organisations and her ambition is to become a Chief Information and Digital Officer.

“

Portsmouth Water has got a great culture. Most of the leadership team are future driven and Rebekah and Carol are great leaders and role models on the executive who are invoking good change in terms of gender. I didn't have a plan when I was younger but I can now draw on my wide experience and I mentor women in other teams to support them to progress their careers.

I am building my own team with a diverse range of age and backgrounds and as a team we talk about our behaviours, how we identify these and develop plans. I have had some great leaders support my career but I have also worked in some very masculine and toxic environments. I find Portsmouth Water to have a very healthy culture and environment.

## Change is happening

# Early education and career opportunities

We know there is a real need to encourage more girls, and boys, into the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) skills which will support future careers in the water sector and the long-term goals of Portsmouth Water.

We have a strong tradition of engaging with schools, colleges and Portsmouth University and we are building on this through new partnerships and creating more opportunities for apprenticeships.

### SHAPING PORTSMOUTH

We're continuing our engagement as a patron to [Shaping Portsmouth](#) to support engagement in education and careers. The organisation works with businesses like ours to support residents of all ages to explore their future, develop skills and connect into our diverse labour market.

In 2025 we are sponsoring the [Inspirational Women of Portsmouth Awards](#) which celebrate women who make a positive impact in their communities. Two of our apprentices will also join the Shaping Portsmouth Apprenticeship Bus in 2025, taking part in a three-day roadshow bringing apprentices from local businesses directly into senior schools to talk to young people about career choices.

### STEM SKILLS

Establishing links between our business and schools is vital to encourage the next generation into careers in the water sector.

We took part in an [EBP \(Education Business Partnership\) South](#) fair to engage 14 to 15-year-olds in a practical challenge to move water from A to B and learn more about the roles on offer in the water sector.



### RECRUITING MORE APPRENTICES

We have recruited five new apprentices, four young men and a young woman in our IT department during the year.



# Progressing in a male-dominated environment



**Frankie Peckham**  
Estimator for Business Markets, Assets

Frankie has worked for Portsmouth Water for more than 10 years, initially joining the Customer Services team and progressing to become a support officer and street works supervisor in the company's Infrastructure team. She has recently moved into the newly-formed Assets team as an estimator for mains diversions. She is a member of the company's Wellbeing group and a UNISON representative.

“

I wanted to develop into a more technical role and when I joined the Infrastructure team I was welcomed in despite being the only female in the team. When I qualified as a street works supervisor, I did have a bit of push back from the gangs, but most were great and I felt had the full support of the company to do my job, develop and train.

I'd like to see more women in this section of the business and I think they need to be 'home grown' so it would be good to raise more awareness of what we do and spark that interest, also with secondary school children at the point they are choosing their options.

I'm glad to be in Carol's team, we've talked about where I see myself in five years' time, my progression with more technical training and becoming a manager. She's also helping me to build my network in the industry.



# More positive change on the way

We are transforming the promotion of equity, diversity and inclusion at Portsmouth Water and we plan to continue the journey as we embed new practices and approaches, become a fairer company and an attractive employer to women.

We intend to repeat our employee survey on equity, diversity and inclusion in 2025 to make sure we are making a difference and continue to tackle the things which matter most to our employees.

## **Key initiatives already planned for 2025-26 include:**

- Bullying and sexual harassment training for all employees, online and face-to-face, with a focus on team managers to help them support their teams.
- Working with the [Women in Utilities Network](#) to support women's contribution to the utility sector and create opportunities for networking and mentoring.
- Exploring opportunities for more flexible working arrangements, for example job shares, nine-day fortnights, condensed working and shorter working weeks, considering the Employment Rights Bill published by the government in 2024.

Our next gender pay gap report will be published in 2026 and based on our improved recruitment approach and continued efforts to promote equity, diversity and inclusion in our work place, we expect to see a further positive reduction in our mean gender pay gap and a reduction in our median gender pay gap.

