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ASTON LARK LIMITED

Gender Pay Gap Report

Snapshot Date: 5th April 2022

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Message from Group CEO Peter Blanc



At Aston Lark we recognise the importance of equality, for gender and all other diversities.

We are committed to encouraging a culture where employees succeed because of their contributions to the business, irrespective of gender, race, religion or any other diversity. We encourage mutual respect amongst colleagues to create an inclusive culture.

Being an inclusive employer is fundamental to our business strategy and Aston Lark has taken decisive steps towards becoming an even more inclusive employer since our last report and this latest snapshot date. Our Inclusion & Diversity Committee is now very well embedded across the company, with a number of sub-network groups supporting a wider section of representation amongst our employees. We have increased the number of development programmes and now offer Women in Insurance mentoring programmes alongside Women in Leadership Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications.

In 2022 we launched our first Early Careers Programme, to enable young talent from all backgrounds to access an apprenticeship scheme offering both personal and professional development. We are extremely proud of this programme, which is why we have pledged to provide pathways into the insurance profession for at least 50 school and university graduates annually.

Whilst we have not seen as much progress with reducing the gap from 2021 to 2022 as we would like, there has been a modest improvement in the mean pay gap, alongside both mean and median bonus figures.

We are working hard to improve the representation of women in more senior roles and, whilst this takes time to be represented in our reporting data, we are delighted to see that 66% of the staff we are currently supporting in their quest for professional qualifications or who are participating in management development programmes run by the group, are women.

On 21st April 2022, we became part of Howden, the international insurance broking group. Howden's 'People First' strategy, alongside their culture of trust and empowerment enables employees to be their very best and our employees now have access to even more inclusion and diversity networks which will provide further networking and support opportunities.

Gender Pay Gap Analysis – 5th April 2022

This report is for Aston Lark Limited, the only entity within the Aston Lark Group that employs more than 250 employees.

As a UK company with more than 250 employees, we are required to report our gender pay gap. A gender pay gap report provides a 'snapshot' of pay balance, by gender, as at 5th April 2022. It quantifies the difference between the average and median earnings of men and women, irrespective of role or seniority.

The gender pay gap is different from equal pay; the gender pay gap measures the differences between the average and median pay of male and female employees irrespective of job role or seniority.

Equal pay issues focus on pay differences between male and female employees performing the same or similar work, or work of equal value. For example, where an employer delivers the same pay for employees in comparable roles, but the leadership team is comprised of 80% males, assuming these are higher-paid roles, this will generally give rise to a gender pay gap but not an equal pay issue.

Aston Lark determines pay based on role requirements including, but not limited to, accountability, responsibilities, specialised or technical expertise, location, education, qualifications, years of experience, working hours and individual performance.

We are confident that our pay gap is not a result of paying men and women differently for the same or similar work, or work of equal value.

Reporting the Gap

In 2022, our Gender Pay Gap for snapshot date 5th April 2021 was published prior to the submission deadline in March 2022.

In 2021, Gender Pay Gap for snapshot date 5th April 2020 was published in Autumn in line with the extended submission deadlines, and in 2020, reporting the Gender Pay Gap (snapshot date 5th April 19) was suspended due to the operational impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Previously Aston Lark had reported on Aston Scott Limited and Lark (Group) Limited separately based on the snapshot date of 5th April 2018 (just before both companies merged in July 2018).

This report solely reviews data for Aston Lark Limited, which is the only group company with more than 250 employees.

Interpreting the data

The mean gender pay gap is an average comparison. It is calculated by adding together the hourly pay rates of male full-pay relevant employees and dividing this figure by the number of male full-pay employees to determine the mean hourly pay rate for men.

The same figure is calculated for women. The calculation then subtracts the mean hourly pay rate for women from the mean hourly pay rate for men, divides the result by the mean hourly pay rate for men and multiplies the result by 100. This gives you the mean gender pay gap in hourly pay as a percentage of men's pay.

The median gender pay gap is a comparison of the middle of the hourly pay rate range for men and women. It is calculated by arranging hourly pay rates for male full-pay relevant employees from highest to lowest and taking the hourly pay rate for the middle-ranked man. This same figure is calculated for women. The calculation then subtracts the median hourly pay rate for women from the median hourly pay rate for men, divides the result by the median hourly pay rate for men and multiplies the result by 100.

These same calculations apply for bonuses, but use any bonus paid within the 12-month period up to the snapshot date.

Pay			Bonus		
Year	Mean	Median	Year	Mean	Median
2022	25.72%	22.22%	2022	62.54%	33.33%
2021	28.39%	22.44%	2021	70.55%	59.37%
Variance	2.67%	0.22%	Variance	8.01%	26.04%

Mean (or average) pay is 25.72% higher for male employees compared to average pay for females, which represents a 2.67% decrease compared to 2021.

Mean (or average) bonus pay is 62.54% higher for male employees compared to average bonus pay for females, which represents a significant decrease of 8.01% over last year.

Median (or middle) pay is 22.22% higher for male employees than females, which is broadly similar to the median gap reported in 2021.

Median (or middle) bonus pay is 33.33% higher for male employees than females, which again has decreased significantly by 26.04%.

Whilst we have seen notable improvements, there is still more work to be done in reducing the pay gap.

There are several factors which could be causing this gap, but one reason that particularly stands out is the large proportion of female part-time workers we have compared to male part-time workers.

Of our staff that work full-time, we have a broadly equal split of 54% male and 46% female colleagues for the company as a whole. However, when we consider the number of our staff who work less than full-time, we have a split of 9% male vs 91% female.

We are also able to see that there are fewer part-time employees in more senior positions, which by default are higher paying ones.

Allocations of part-time employees impacts the bonus gap calculations as the reporting uses actual bonuses paid rather than the full-time equivalent value (recognising that when considering bonus awards, such bonus is typically considered and compared based on a percentage of the individual's annual salary), so a higher percentage of women in part-time roles directly reduce the mean bonus value for females.

The report also clearly illustrates concerns with representation on women in senior positions, which by their nature are higher paying. Since the snapshot date, we have made some progress with expanding women in leadership roles, but we clearly have some work to do in this area as senior leadership positions are currently predominantly male.

And finally, the acquisitive nature of our business means we gain employees as we acquire additional businesses, and where in our sector historically we have seen more males, our mix of employees and pay structures will be influenced by the legacy employers.

Pay quartiles

The following data illustrates the percentage of men and women at Aston Lark within four equally sized pay quartiles as at 5th April 2022:

2022				2021			
Quartile	Male	Female	Total	Quartile	Male	Female	Total
Lower	37%	63%	100%	Lower	34%	66%	100%
Lower Middle	36%	64%	100%	Lower Middle	31%	69%	100%
Upper Middle	47%	53%	100%	Upper Middle	44%	56%	100%
Upper	72%	28%	100%	Upper	66%	34%	100%

There remains a higher % of female employees in the lower, lower middle and upper middle quartiles, and a higher percentage of men in the upper quartile. This remains reflective of a higher majority of females occupying support/business administration roles and the upper quartile being largely occupied by males within the management and executive team.

Percentage of employees receiving a bonus

Male

Year	%
2022	75.87%
2021	78.59%

Female

Year	%
2022	81.95%
2021	81.07%

Employees at all seniority levels are eligible to participate in the bonus scheme. We can see that whilst there has been a slight decrease overall, the percentage of female staff receiving a bonus in the 12 months to snapshot date is greater than that of male employees .

Summary

Since the 5th April 2022 snapshot date, we have significantly invested in the development of our female employees, and overall inclusion and diversity work within Aston Lark.

We continue to support the development of females into leadership roles through our leadership development programmes and, in recent years, we have seen a definite shift whereby participation in these has been higher in the female population compared with male employees.

In 2021, we set up a formal Inclusion & Diversity Committee, which has enabled creation of several employee networks including G.E.N.E. (Gender Empowerment Network for Equality). This group will shortly merge with the wider Howden Gender Balance Forum which is set to challenge assumed gender norms within the workplace, and provide support with issues that could affect career and pay progression for women that affects the Gender Pay Gap.

As we progress through 2023, we have already launched significantly enhanced family-friendly policies, and we will shortly be communicating a specific Menopause Pledge offering enhanced wellbeing support. We will also be launching **#AllOfUs**, a global campaign across the whole Howden Group to ensure we are able to attract and most importantly retain the very best talent.

In addition to the other programmes currently in design, I'm determined that our recruitment and internal promotion activities will work to eliminate our gender pay gap and we will do everything we can to ensure that our entire business is fully representative of the communities in which we work.

I can confirm the data contained in this report is accurate.



Peter Blanc – Group Chief Executive Officer

April 2023



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