ASTONLARK

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Gender Pay Gap

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Gender Pay Gap – Aston Scott Ltd and Lark (Group) Limited **

The Gap

The gender pay gap is a measure of labour market or workplace disadvantage, expressed in terms of a comparison between men's and women's average hourly rates of pay. This is distinctly different from equal pay as explained below.

REPORTING THE GAP

Last year, we published the Gender Pay Gap report for Aston Scott Ltd and Lark (Group) Limited. This report is based on the snapshot date of 5 April 2018, before both companies had merged, and so the figures are still presented separately.

In the report published in April 2018 (for the period ending April 2017), we set out that there would be several changes during 2018 that would begin to help the pay gap. Given the snapshot date, these initiatives will not have influenced the figures in this report. Examples of those changes are -

- **Job Review Exercise**
  We successfully aligned all job titles across the company in June 2018. This will now help us to review the pay brackets across job titles and locations.
- **A consistent approach to bonuses**
  The bonus scheme was reviewed and aligned in 2018 and is now based on performance reviews to ensure that there is a consistent approach across the company. Performance reviews were completed in January 2019, with the first bonus payments on the new scheme to be made on 23rd April 2019. The results of this change will not impact our Gender Pay Gap figures until the snapshot on 5 April 2020.

** note - this report does NOT include Lark Employee Benefits Limited, A H Bell & Co Limited, Michael James Insurance & Property Services LLP, Ingram Hawkins & Nock Limited or Pharos Insurance Brokers Ltd. At the measurement date of 5th April 2018, these companies were stand alone businesses with less than 250 employees and so not required to report on gender pay gap.

The Figures

At the 2018 snapshot date, of Aston Scott's 258 relevant employees 57% were female and 43% were male. Of Lark's 288 relevant employees, 56% were female and 44% were male.

	Aston Scott Ltd April 2017	Lark (Group) Limited April 2017	Aston Scott Ltd April 2018	Lark (Group) Limited April 2018
Mean Pay Percentage Gap (The gap between the average pay of males and females)	16.84%	31.75%	20.00%	33.7%
Median Pay Percentage Gap (The gap between the middle pay point of males and females)	10.02%	28.85%	10.7%	25.4%
Mean Bonus Percentage Gap (The gap between the average bonus of males and females)	-19.86%	57.33%	61.1%	
Median Bonus Percentage Gap (The gap between the middle bonus point of males and females)	26.83%	37.65%	58.8%	48.8%

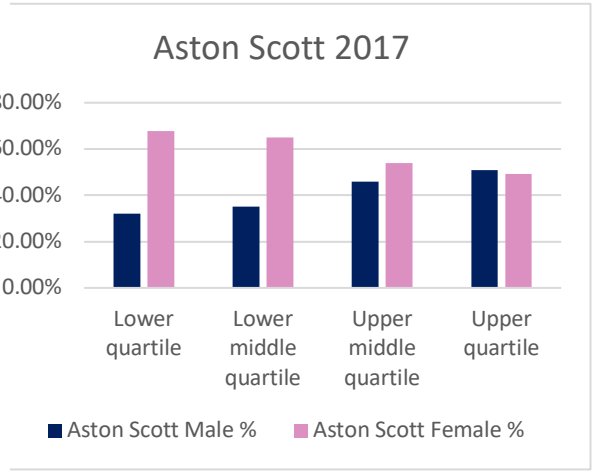
The mean averages show the percentage gap across both companies for pay and bonuses between men and women. They place the same value on every number they use, giving a good overall indication of the gender pay gap.

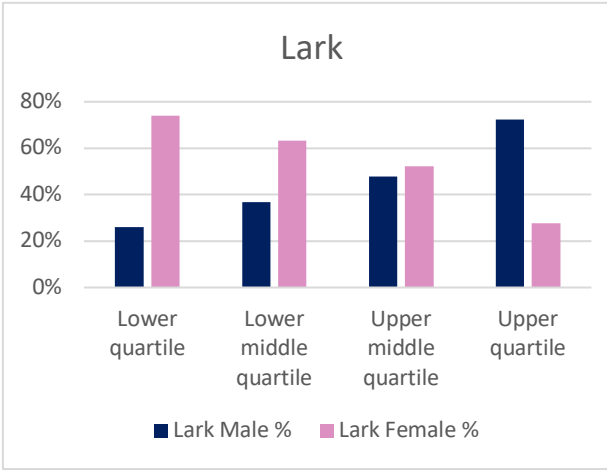
Median averages are useful to indicate what the 'typical' situation is i.e. in the middle of an organisation and are not misrepresented by large or small pay rates or bonuses as it shows the 'middle of the road.'

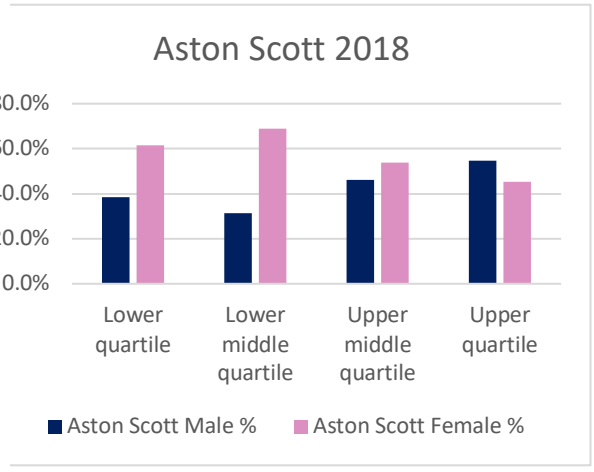
Within the snapshot date, to support the merger, both companies hired a number of support staff in HR, Finance and Marketing. These roles were mostly filled by females and were not senior roles and so, whilst unlikely to have had a significant impact, this development will not have helped to reduce the percentage gap. The Aston Scott bonus figures were largely distorted in 2017 due to a small number of larger payments.

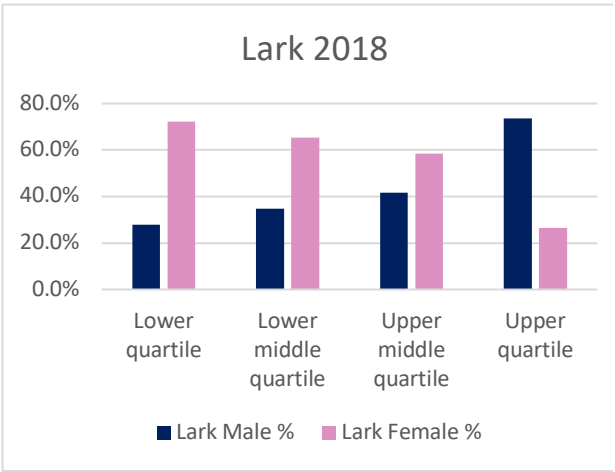
This means that the 2018 percentage is a more realistic indicator of the gap. However, as mentioned above, Aston Lark has since launched a new bonus scheme based on performance reviews, to ensure that payments are fair across the company. The effect of this will not be seen until the Gender Pay Gap snapshot of 5 April 2020.

Pay Bands (25% of workforce in each)









In both companies, there continue to be more females in the lower and lower middle pay quartiles. This could be explained by the fact that there are more women in business support and administrative roles. In Lark, the upper quartile is indicative of the fact that the management team is predominantly male dominated.

In July 2018, Aston Lark appointed a female independent Non-Executive Director and in January 2019, a female Director also joined the board. We hope that these changes will help to strengthen diversity at senior levels in the company.

Equal Pay

Equal pay refers to the level of salary and bonuses received by men and women performing the same role – it's often referred to as "equal pay for work of equal value".

Equal pay means that salaries and bonuses should not be influenced by gender but are based on individual performance, technical skills, qualifications and experience, taking account of local market conditions and any other external factors. We are confident that both Aston Scott and Lark are robust in their approach to equal pay and that there is no gender bias in Aston Lark, as people doing the same job are paid the same regardless of whether they are male or female.

CONCLUSION

This report has highlighted areas which we will continue to strive to improve upon as Aston Lark. We look forward to seeing the results of the harmonisation that we have worked towards throughout the merger in subsequent reports. Examples include:

- As a result of the career pathway being launched in 2018, the Aston Lark Learning & Development Team (L&D) also launched an ILM Level 3 programme in September 2018, which had 11 females and 3 males attending. The qualification enables individuals to gain a range of key management skills and help build their leadership skills. It is an opportunity for future leaders in the business. L&D will launch another ILM 3 and ILM 5 programme later this year and we hope that this will continue to provide opportunities for females to move up to the next level of management.
- L&D has recently launched a mentoring programme, which provides an additional level of developmental support for employees in order for them to grow as individuals and help them develop in their current role or for career progression. The programme is open to all, and we have 18 mentor/mentee pairings in the initial launch – 44% of mentees are female and 28% of mentors are women. We hope that this will develop leadership skills in females and encourage them to put themselves forward for more opportunities.
- Along with the HR team, L&D will deliver new management training to include unconscious bias, particularly when recruiting and completing performance reviews. We hope that this will ensure fairness is being applied to all aspects of our employees' lifecycle.
- Where possible, HR will work with managers to help provide more senior job shares and flexible working roles. We hope that this will encourage females, after maternity leave, to continue to work in management positions.
- In 2019, Aston Lark launched an LGBT committee as we are supportive of the development of all of our workforce and wish to ensure that all sections of the workforce are represented fully.

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

Peter Blanc - Group Chief Executive Officer

March 2019

ASTONLARK

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