

The British Veterinary Union (BVU) was very disappointed to see the results of the SPVS Salary Survey, which showed female veterinary surgeons on average earn 21% less than their male counterparts for the same amount of experience. This pay inequality begins as soon as veterinary surgeons qualify, with male vets being offered on average 11% more in their first year at work. Additionally, this large gender pay inequality appears to be increasing, considering the SPVS Salary Survey 2017 showed the difference between male and female veterinary surgeons to be 19%. Such differences in pay based on gender are unacceptable, and the BVU urges you to contact us if you think you are the victim of pay inequality in your workplace.

The Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970, prohibiting any less favourable treatment between men and women. It is now covered by the Equality Act 2010. Equal pay law is clear and straightforward - women must be paid the same as men for doing the same work. The RCVS 2019 Survey of the Veterinary Profession identified over 60% of those working in the veterinary profession are women, which makes the results of this survey additionally upsetting.

TUC (Trade Union Congress) analysis shows that on average, women currently work for free for two months each year as a result of the pay gap. The Fawcett Society estimates that at the current rate of progress, it will take 60 years for women's pay to catch up with that of men. It is clear from this and from the trends seen in the SPVS survey results that there is much work to be done. The BVU therefore calls on employers to acknowledge and take responsibility for gender pay inequality in their businesses and to proactively work towards resolving these issues in a shorter timeframe than the predicted 60 years.

Section 77 of the Equality Act 2010 bans contract terms that prevent workers from discussing their pay to establish whether there is pay discrimination. Workplaces with increased transparency are less likely to have pay inequality and therefore the union encourages employees to discuss their pay awards. The union also wants to see veterinary employers make their salary pay scales freely available to employees, so that gender pay discrimination cannot continue to be hidden in secret individual salary agreements.

Numerous studies report women are still responsible for the lion's share of childcare, which puts additional pressure on veterinary workers who are also mothers with young children. However, where women work part-time, because of childcare or other responsibilities, they should still not be paid less for this work and if they are this is likely to be considered as sex discrimination under the law. The BVU wants to see employers take far more active steps to support women such as increasing support after maternity leave (for instance by offering flexible working as a day one right), creating targeted programmes to help women access promotion and career progression, and introducing compulsory equal pay audits.

Fair pay outcomes are much more likely to be achieved where a collective approach is taken through a trade union. The BVU supports veterinary employees challenging their employers where gender pay inequality exists, and negotiating for pay equality and salary transparency. Where employers fail to improve, the union will support you to work collectively. Up to 6 years of back pay plus interest can be recovered, so employers

must be aware of the financial penalties they face by choosing to pay their female veterinary employees less than their male counterparts.