It’s the law that men and women should be paid the same for doing the same, or similar, jobs. It began with the Equal Pay Act of 1970 and was confirmed in the Equality Act of 2010. However, in 2020 the gender pay gap still exists - women are being paid an average of 15% less than men and research suggests that the covid-19 pandemic might make it worse.

The gap had been narrowing. But during lockdown, many families reverted back to the traditional set-up of mothers doing more childcare than fathers. Research shows that the gap between the amount of time men and women spent on childcare grew - with mothers doing around one-and-a-half hours a day more than fathers.

Experts believe that we are at a "coronavirus crossroads": unless more is done to support working mothers, the gender pay gap could widen too. The Fawcett Society, a gender-equality charity, says that the pandemic could have a “devastating” impact on equality in the workplace.

In October, an MP for the Labour Party, Stella Creasy, led the call for change by presenting a new bill to parliament. If it is passed, businesses with over 100 employees will have to publish information about how they pay men and women. This would stop businesses from keeping their gender pay gap a secret and may prompt them to fix it if they have one.

"While women first started asking about equal pay in 1883, they still don't have it. We have started the conversation and now we need action," Ms Creasy said. "It is better for everyone in society when we go to work with a fair wage."

The Equal Pay Implementation and Claims Bill will be discussed in Parliament on January 15th 2021.

Want to know more about this? Look here! fawcettsociety.org.uk
CHALLENGE: how is this issue developing in the news?

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?
- Who is involved? (people, countries, groups etc)
- Where did this happen? Is it still happening?

WHAT HAS HAPPENED?
- How long has this been going on for?

NEWS SCALE
Is this a big issue for you? Mark your opinion on the scale below with an X. What about working mothers? Where would they put their X? What about business owners?

SMALL ISSUE
BIG ISSUE

PERSPECTIVE FLIP
What would Person A think about this issue? How are they affected by the issue? Now flip to Person B and think about the same questions. Are any perspectives missing?

LINKS
- A school subject?
- A different news story?
- NEWS CONCEPT: justice?
- Your life?
- A woman being paid unfairly
- A highly paid man
- ?

CHALLENGE: how is this issue developing in the news?
First, limber up by thinking about everything you learnt last week:

• What was the key information about this issue? (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?)

• Why was this issue news? (How big was this piece of news? How many people does it affect? Is it global or local news?)

• What did you think about it? Did everyone you talked to have the same opinion?

• What have you seen about this in the news? How is this issue developing?

Then, take a ride through this week’s activities.

Pay discrimination is when employees performing similar work do not receive similar pay. Women have a legal right to ask male colleagues what they are being paid if they suspect this is happening in their workplace.

Research by the Fawcett Society shows that 60% of women in workplaces across the UK either don’t know what their male colleagues earn or believe they (the women, that is) are earning less than men who are doing the same job.

The Bank of England’s research shows that ending the gender pay gap could put an extra £600 billion into the economy.

Many big businesses have been criticised for having a gender pay gap and so have been forced to respond. The BBC gave more than 700 female employees a pay rise in response to one female employee’s complaint about inequality.

With more people working from home during lockdown, workers are less likely to find out if they are being paid unfairly compared with someone else.
1. This issue is about more than money. Can you explain the bigger picture?

2. What do you think the consequences should be for businesses that don’t pay their workers fairly?

3. Look at the facts on the previous page.
   - Which one surprises you the most? Why?
   - Other than women, who else might benefit if the gender pay gap is closed?

Support your answers with a fact and explain why.

Experts think that pay discrimination is made worse by “a culture of secrecy”.

Only 24% of workers say that people talk openly about what they earn and only 40% of women know that they are entitled to be paid equally for doing equal work.

- Why do you think salaries aren’t discussed more openly?
- Why might some companies feel it is acceptable to pay women less?

The bill for equal pay doesn’t get approved?

All men shared information about their salary?

Women started getting paid more than men?

Challenge: can you spot this issue in the news? How has the issue developed since last week?