

# Building in better flexibility powers greater diversity



SSE promotes informal flexible working arrangements to make work-life balance easier for everyone, especially those with caring responsibilities.

This approach is helping the business attract and retain the talent it needs through enabling people to consider roles that they would not usually be able to apply for and supporting people once in role with a better work-life balance.

FlexibleFirst, a set of principles that offers SSE employees flexibility, has driven positive change. The proportion of employees who have the ability to work flexibly across SSE has increased from 36% in 2017 to 83% in 2023.

The approach continues to be developed and in November 2022, SSE announced significant improvements to its family leave offering. While previous enhancements to family policies focused on additional paid leave for primary carers, this year's enhancements have aimed to ensure that all new and prospective parents at SSE feel supported, regardless of personal or family circumstances and including where they are on the journey to becoming a parent.



**97%**

of women returned from maternity leave in 2022-23



**83%**

of SSE employees can work flexibly

## Supporting working families with new and improved policies:



Partner's Leave – an additional seven weeks' paid leave for partners of parents who take maternity or adoption leave. Together with Paternity Leave, this gives partners nine weeks' paid leave in total. Partner's Leave is separate from and in addition to statutory leave entitlements in the UK and Ireland.



Pregnancy Loss Leave – two weeks' leave at full pay for employees who suffer a pregnancy loss, including partners. Pregnancy Loss Leave is available in addition to any statutory leave that might apply in the UK and Ireland.



Leave for Fertility Treatment – up to two weeks' leave at full pay for those undergoing fertility treatment, including partners.

In addition, SSE extended its existing Gradual Return from Maternity or Adoption Leave Policy so that all new parents who take at least three months' leave (rather than just the birth parent or primary adopter) can return on 80% of contractual hours whilst still receiving full pay and benefits for a period of time.

SSE also enhanced the amount of paid leave available to partners to attend antenatal, adoption and fostering appointments.

These new measures complement SSE's existing family leave offering which already includes:



Maternity and adoption leave paid at full pay for the first 21 weeks and paternity leave at full pay for two weeks.



Both formal and informal flexible working arrangements to support work-life balance.



Provision of private and safe spaces for breastfeeding parents to express (wherever possible).

The positive impacts of SSE's family-friendly policies are clear. This year the number of women returning from maternity leave, for example, rose to 97% (up from 90% in 2021-22).

## Promoting part-time working to increase diversity

Positioning part-time working as a positive career option with opportunities for future growth is important in not just attracting talented women but in making them feel valued and able to progress once in role, leading to better retention.

In 2022-23, a targeted recruitment programme was launched by Airtricity, SSE's domestic customer business in Ireland, to promote part-time working opportunities. It actively encouraged part time applicants to its customer advisor roles, after realising there were limited part-time working opportunities being made available by Hiring Managers, despite a difficult recruitment market.

The pilot brought positive results. It both increased the number of potential candidates and brought diverse candidates into the hiring process that would not have applied previously – 340 applications were received and of the 19 offers accepted, 89% were female and 26% were ethnically diverse. Part-time working opportunities as careers are now available as standard and are fully embraced by the Airtricity business.