



ANNUAL REVIEW 2015/16  
**WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES**



## Foreword



Welcome to our Be the Difference Annual Review for 2015/16. This review looks back on the volunteering and fundraising activities of SSE Ireland employees during the fifth year of the programme.

As a business, we believe in doing the right thing, and the Be the Difference programme allows SSE Ireland employees to do just that.

It provides us all with an opportunity to give back to the communities in which we live and work.

What matters to employees matters to our business, and many of our team members use their volunteering days to help causes close to their own hearts. We are delighted to be able to help them be the difference in ways that are important to them.

As well as doing our bit for charities and community groups, the Be the Difference programme has a number of benefits for both our volunteers and the business.

Taking time away from the day job to contribute to a worthy cause can help employees recharge while boosting job satisfaction and pride in our organisation. The volunteering days can also serve as a great opportunity for team building, with employees often working together as a unit to get the job done. Employees may also get the chance to network with colleagues they

wouldn't necessarily interact with in their day-to-day roles, which is great for building inter-departmental relationships.

We're hugely proud of our volunteering record at SSE Ireland, with an average of 61% of employees taking part in the programme annually since it began. Last year, we donated 490 days or over 3,600 hours to 51 groups and 81 events. These figures go some way to demonstrating the scale of the effort made by our employees for worthy causes.

I would like to take this opportunity to say well done and thank you to all of our volunteers across the business for taking part and making a difference for so many charities and community groups. I also want to give a special mention to our Be the Difference Champions who worked with us throughout the year to spread the word and get people involved in the programme. You make our Be the Difference programme what it is!

Lastly, we are always looking for new ideas and causes for our volunteers, so if you know of a charity or community group that could use our help, let us know at [btd.ireland@sse.com](mailto:btd.ireland@sse.com), and we can work together to be the difference.

**Aoife Ryan**  
Head of Sustainability (Ireland)

## Proud to Be the Difference in 2015/16

**At SSE Ireland, we're proud to make a difference for the communities in which we live and work.**

Through our employee volunteering scheme, Be the Difference, every employee gets the chance to take a day away from their usual schedule to help a charity or community group of their choice.

The programme also helps volunteers support charities and community groups financially, through a matched funding scheme. Employees are entitled to apply for matched funding once a year, and successful applicants will have their fundraising efforts matched up to €300/£250.

2015/16 was another impressive year of employee volunteering at SSE Ireland, with 490 days donated to 51 different charities and community groups.

### 2015/16 by the numbers:

Volunteering days used	490
Charities supported	51
Events supported	81
Participation rate	55%
Hours donated	3,675

Read on to discover the stories behind the stats!





## Our Be the Difference Champions

**25 volunteers from across SSE Ireland act as our Be the Difference Champions, spreading the word about upcoming opportunities and encouraging their colleagues to take part in the programme.**

Our Champions are also on hand to answer any queries from team members or managers about volunteering or matched funding, as well as showing first-time volunteers how they can go about signing up.

Our Renewable Generation team had an exceptional participation rate of 131% in 2015/16, with the entire department

getting behind the programme and many team members using several Be the Difference days during the year.

**Carmel Brennan, our Champion for Renewable Generation, gave us her thoughts on this outstanding achievement.**

"We're very proud of our participation in the Be the Difference programme last year, with everybody getting involved at some level. A lot of the team went over and above in their volunteering and fundraising, some donating up to five days during the year. The enthusiasm of the management team for the

programme made a big difference, as they encouraged everyone to get involved and facilitated the days off for their team members."

**We also spoke to Ciaran Maguire, the team's Wind Generation Planning Manager, about the team's participation in the programme.**

"I'm delighted with the team's ongoing involvement in the Be the Difference programme. Many of our team members want to donate their time to causes close to their hearts, and it's great that the company supports them in doing so. As well as doing our

bit for good causes, the programme has a number of additional benefits for the team. The volunteering days are a great chance to meet new people and strengthen relationships with colleagues, in turn boosting morale and enhancing our overall team spirit.

"All in all, the Be the Difference programme is a fantastic opportunity provided by SSE for employees, and I would encourage everyone to take part and volunteer in whatever way they wish."



## The voices of our volunteers

**Our Be the Difference volunteers come from right across SSE Ireland and donate their time to a wide range of worthy causes. Many of our colleagues go above and beyond, using their own individual skills to help causes close to their hearts.**

These colleagues can claim back their volunteering hours in lieu through the programme, once they have approval from their line manager.

We spoke to two of our volunteers, Emma Jenkinson and Daniel Devlin, to find out more about their ongoing commitment to their chosen charities.

**Emma Jenkinson, Accounts Receivable Administrator**



**Tell us about your chosen charity**

The Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project was established in 2001 to befriend and advise people seeking asylum who were being housed at a local hostel, many of whom were under 18 and unaccompanied.

The initiative has since expanded and now helps people living in Direct Provision by finding accommodation, funding further education and just giving general support at a very difficult time in their lives. A drop-in service is still held every Monday evening.

**What do you do for them?**

I have been involved with the Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project for about 10 years now. I normally work on the attendance register, which involves making note of everyone who attends and registering new people. I've always loved that bit, as I get to meet people from all over the world and hear their stories.

There is also a huge party at Christmas, with those with young children coming to meet Santa. For many, this is the only Christmas party that they will attend, so we really try to make it a big deal.

**What does the charity mean to you?**

It really has become a huge part of my life. Initially I was just befriending those who attended, but now, not only am I a volunteer, but so are my mom and my eldest son. It's become a bit of a family affair. Even if I can't make every Monday session, there is

always a way to help out, even by just being a voice at the end of the phone. Many of these young people do not have any relatives here, and in a way we've all become one (very) big family.

**Daniel Devlin, Home and Business Moves Advisor**



**Tell us about your chosen charity**

ChildLine is a 24-hour private and confidential service offering free counselling to children and young people 365 days a year. The service just recently celebrated its 30th birthday and has helped millions of children and young people since its foundation. A child contacts ChildLine every 25 seconds.

**What do you do for them?**

As a ChildLine counsellor, I speak to children and young people in crisis who are looking for advice, guidance and help. We're trained to develop the skills needed to offer comfort, support and practical advice.

As well as taking calls, we also answer emails and live chats. In 2014/15, 71% of counselling sessions took place through either live chat or email.

These methods have become popular, not only due to ease-of-access, but also because a lot of young people may be nervous about calling us, and the online channels can offer a further level of comfort and anonymity.

**What does the charity mean to you?**

My volunteering work with ChildLine means a lot to me because of its importance to the children and young people who call us. I believe that there is nothing as important as child safety, protection and wellbeing, and now that I'm involved in the area, I don't think I will ever give it up.

Working for ChildLine has been an incredibly rewarding experience. Hearing the change in someone's voice as they feel assured about what we have just discussed is a nice feeling. Speaking with young people and knowing that our conversation has made a difference in their lives, no matter how small, is what makes it all worthwhile. It is the most important thing I have ever been a part of.



# Ways we used our days

From collections to clean-ups, and from packing to playgrounds, here are just some of the ways our volunteers donated their days last year.

## Flower power

A number of colleagues in our Dublin offices used their Be the Difference days to sell pins and flowers for Daffodil Day, the Irish Cancer Society's flagship annual fundraising day. As a result of their efforts, we raised nearly €2,000 for the charity.



## SSE scores for the ISPCC

Over 30 SSE Ireland employees gave up their weekend lie-ins to volunteer at the Irish Open International kickboxing event, which takes place in aid of the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC). The volunteers helped out by scoring matches, selling merchandise and acting as stewards.

The Irish Open International is organised by a volunteer group lead by SSE Ireland's own Roy Baker. SSE employees contributed more than 40 days to the 2016 event, which raised in the region of €20,000 for the ISPCC.



## A zoo-per effort

Some of our Belfast-based Retail colleagues spent their volunteering days cleaning up at Belfast Zoo. Their work was appreciated by the zoo staff, visitors and animals alike, and the enthusiasm and effort of the volunteers was remarked upon by Belfast City Council.



## Getting into the swing of things

In January, a group of employees from our Great Island CCGT plant in Co. Wexford used their Be the Difference volunteering days to help the Duncannon Village Renewal Committee with maintenance work for the local community.

The volunteers braved tricky weather conditions on the day to work on two different projects. One group of team members cleared an unsightly area of hedgerow and a wire fence close to a block of holiday apartments, while others cleaned the local playground and tidied up litter at the beach.



## Running like the wind for Children's Ark

Our 5k Tournafulla and Rathcahill Wind Farms Run took place in June as part of the 2015 Global Wind Day celebrations. The event raised over €1,000 for the Children's Ark Unit at University Hospital Limerick. SSE Renewable Generation employees used their Be the Difference days to donate their time to organising and running the event.



## Wishing to help

A number of our Dublin-based employees used their Be the Difference volunteering days to help the Make-A-Wish Foundation when they came to our offices in March. The team joined Make-A-Wish representatives to put together hundreds of orders consisting of collection boxes and fundraising items in the lead-up to the Foundation's annual Wish Day.





## So many fun ways to fundraise

As well as lending their time and skills to good causes, many SSE Ireland employees raise vital funding for their chosen charities and community groups. Through our matched funding scheme, the company can boost their fundraising efforts by matching the amount collected up to a maximum of €300/£250.

Check out some of the fun ways our colleagues raised funding last year...

### Gearing up for good causes

From 15-17 September, nearly 30 employees from our Renewables, Generation and Retail teams cycled over 300km across Ulster to raise €25,000 (£18,000) for Marie Curie NI, the Irish Cancer Society, and the Alzheimer's Society of Ireland. The SSE Tour of Ulster took the cyclists along a mountainous route, from SSE's Gartnaneane Wind Farm in County Cavan to our Slieve Kirk Wind Park in County Derry~Londonderry, passing a number of other wind farms and landmarks along the way. In total, the participants pedalled more than 6,000km or 3,750 miles over the three days, which is equivalent to cycling between Slieve Kirk Wind Park and our Coomacheo and Curragh Wind Farms in Cork more than 11 times!

### Raising more than the roof

In the lead up to Christmas, our workplace choir, the SSE Airs, and the High Hopes Choir, Ireland's first choir comprised entirely of people affected by homelessness, performed at a special Christmas concert for charity. The two choirs performed festive choral

favourites to a packed audience at St Andrew's Church in Dublin, raising €5,000 for Focus Ireland, the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) and Penny Dinners Cork. SSE added to the funds raised on the night with a €100,000 donation for the three charities.

### Red Oak gets Red Hot

In February, SSE supported the Irish Heart Foundation's Red Hot Campaign, with team members taking part in several fundraising events organised by our Healthy Working Lives team. In the lead up to Valentine's Day, many employees came to work dressed in red and donated vital funds to help in the fight against heart disease and stroke. Throughout the week, employees shopped at a 'pop-up boutique' in the Red Oak Café, picking up stylish accessories donated by their colleagues. The Café also hosted a bake sale, with some delicious romance inspired goodies on offer. There was also a staff photo competition called 'Red Hot Snaps', which proved very popular.

### Renewable Generation pitch in for LauraLynn

Last summer, colleagues from our Renewable Generation team took on their counterparts from GB in a Be the Difference charity football match in Scotland. Unfortunately the SSE Ireland team came up short on the scoreboard, but they did anything but that off the pitch, raising over €1,700 for LauraLynn Children's Hospice, which provides care and support for children with life-limiting conditions and their families.



The SSE Airs - raising more than the roof



Renewable Generation pitch in for LauraLynn



SSE Tour of Ulster - gearing up for good causes



## What Be the Difference means to a charity

Since the launch of our volunteering programme, we've made a difference for over 120 charities and community groups across Ireland and Northern Ireland, volunteering at more than 430 events.

Our charity partners are best placed to explain what that difference means to them.

"We were absolutely delighted to enlist the support of SSE for our very first Paint the Town Pink campaign, which ran throughout October for Breast Cancer Awareness month. Action Cancer is the only charity in Europe that offers free breast screening to women who fall outside of the national screening programme (aged 40-49 and over 70).

We receive no government funding, so support from businesses such as SSE is really invaluable to us. We were thrilled when a member of staff from their Belfast office got in touch with us to request a Pink Fundraising Box of Love!

Everyone in SSE got behind the campaign, which was great to see, and helped to raise lots of money as well as awareness. SSE employees are fully engaged with helping Action Cancer, with some members supporting through other events as well, such as the Bra Walk last June."

**Rebecca Dalzell, Corporate Fundraising Assistant, Action Cancer NI**

"The ISPCC is delighted that SSE supports the Irish Open kickboxing tournament every year, which raises significant funding through ticket sales to support our ISPCC ChildLine service.

ChildLine is the only 24-hour listening service which seeks to support and empower children and young people in Ireland. Last year, ChildLine had conversations with over 420,000 children and young people who contacted the service for help and advice with wide-ranging serious issues, including abuse, violence, exploitation, addiction and suicide.

That is an astounding 1,150 contacts from children each day, on issues that no child should encounter. The support from SSE allows us to keep our ChildLine service open and our vital night service operating. Thanks to everyone at SSE for their support."

**Paul Halpin, Regional Fundraiser, Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children**



## It's easier than ever to Be the Difference

Since the launch of SSE's volunteering scheme in 2010, our team members have donated their time to over 2,500 projects, making a real difference to the communities in which they live and work - and now it's easier than ever to get involved!

In April 2016, we launched a new internal portal, allowing employees to sign-up and view all of the opportunities currently available on a single, easily accessible database.

Employees can also use the portal to suggest new ideas for volunteering days and promote the projects that are close to their hearts.

It's that simple. Just sign-in, sign-up and voila you're volunteering!

Volunteering

Matched funding

Celebrating success

What's hot



# Be the difference

Through our Be the Difference programme, each of our employees has the opportunity to take a day out of their usual working life to support a charity or community group of their choice.

**From crushing boxes to crunching numbers, we're here to help!**

If you know of a charity or community project that could use our help, let us know at [btd.ireland@sse.com](mailto:btd.ireland@sse.com).

## **Be the Difference by volunteering**

Colleagues can use one paid day each year to volunteer for a charity or community group.

## **Be the Difference by fundraising**

Colleagues, individually or in teams, can apply for up to €300/£250 matched funding to support their fundraising activities.

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