

# BETTER BREAKS 2025-2026: IMPACT REPORT

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# INTRODUCTION

This report highlights the impact that the Better Breaks programme has made to children and young people with disabilities, and their families in 2025–2026. We are proud to have provided opportunities for families to connect, have fun, build friendships, and create lasting memories through play sessions, outings and support activities.

Thank you to the Scottish Government for funding the Better Breaks programme and making these opportunities possible. We extend our thanks to the organisations delivering

Better Breaks projects across Scotland, and to their dedicated staff and volunteers. Their commitment, creativity and hard work have helped families access meaningful short breaks and support throughout the year.

Most importantly, we would like to thank the children, young people and families who have taken part. Your enthusiasm, feedback and involvement continue to shape and strengthen the programme, ensuring it meets the needs of those it is designed to support.

# BACKGROUND

Across Scotland, **around 800,000 people** provide unpaid care to a family member, friend or neighbour. This is due to disability, physical or mental ill health, frailty or substance misuse. Caring roles are diverse, and anyone can become a carer at any point in life. Being an unpaid carer often reshapes every part of life and yet, too often, they go unseen.

Short breaks, or breaks from caring, offer unpaid carers the chance to rest and reconnect with themselves, those they care for, and other family and friends. From sustained periods of time away to brief pauses, this time can ease pressure, support physical and mental wellbeing, strengthen relationships, and help unpaid carers to continue providing care.

## Short Breaks Fund

The Short Breaks Fund supports third sector organisations to deliver breaks to unpaid carers. Three of the four Short Breaks Fund programmes are managed by Shared Care Scotland on behalf of National Carer Organisations and the Scottish Government. These

programmes are Time to Live, Creative Breaks and Better Breaks. The fourth, Take a Break Scotland, is managed by Family Fund. Each programme is shaped around the diverse needs of unpaid carers and the people they support.

## Better Breaks

The Better Breaks programme provides funding to third sector organisations to deliver short breaks for disabled children and young people, and their carers. The programme supports organisations to create short breaks that are flexible, inclusive and shaped around the needs of disabled children, young people and their families.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, funded projects provided a wide range of short break opportunities, including:

- Activities for disabled children and young people, both independently or alongside their carers.

- Opportunities for families to spend quality time together and create shared experiences.
- Breaks that included siblings, recognising the importance of supporting the whole family.

These breaks provided safe and welcoming spaces where children and young people could take part in activities, develop friendships, build confidence and try new experiences. Meanwhile, unpaid carers could take time for themselves, rest and recharge, or spend time away from their caring role in the knowledge that their child was supported.

# OUTCOMES AND PRINCIPLES

All Better Breaks projects were guided by five principles and four key outcomes. This helped to ensure that support was personalised, inclusive and responsive to what families wanted and needed. Through these outcomes, the Better Breaks programme has helped create positive changes for families, including increased opportunities for connection, confidence, independence and wellbeing.

A key element of Better Breaks is recognising that the benefits extend beyond individual participation. The programme supports both carers and the people they care for, while encouraging families to have a say in shaping the support and experiences available to them.

The guiding principles place disabled children and young people and their carers at the heart of support. It promotes personalised short breaks that improve wellbeing, enhance quality of life and strengthen caring relationships, while ensuring families are actively involved in decisions about the support they receive. The programme prioritises those with the greatest need, providing flexible and responsive opportunities that complement existing services rather than duplicate them. It also encourages collaboration, learning and the sharing of good practice to build a stronger understanding of how short breaks can make a meaningful difference to disabled children, young people, carers and families.





“We particularly appreciate the emphasis Better Breaks places on mutual benefit and targeted support, both of which resonated strongly with our organisational values. Overall, our experience was very positive, and we remain grateful for the continued trust and investment in our work.”

# AWARDS

Demand for the Better Breaks programme continued to grow in 2025–2026. **95 applications** were received, an **increase of 8%** from the previous year.

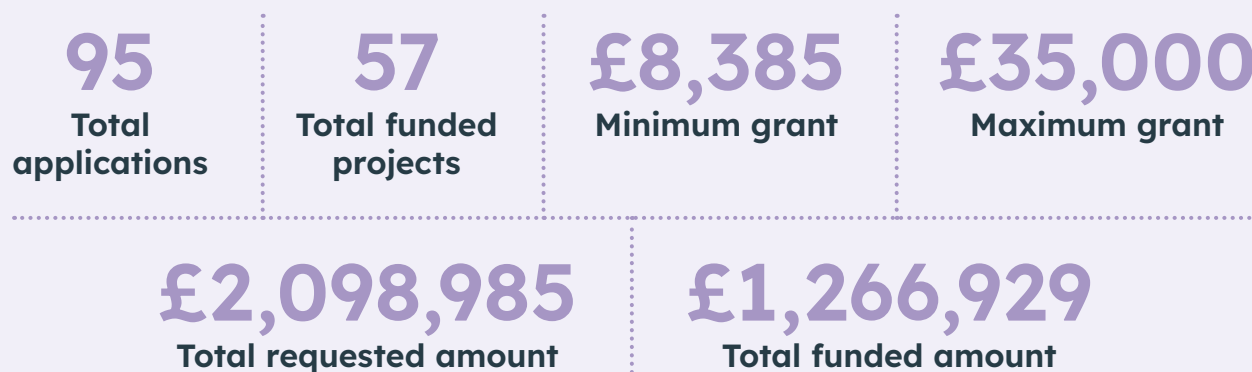
The total value of funding requested was **almost £2.1m**, significantly exceeding the available £1.2m budget. Based on the available fund, Better Breaks was **oversubscribed by £898,985**, highlighting the continuing need for investment in short breaks and the challenging funding environment in which third sector organisations operate. Notably, no applications requested less than £5,000, reflecting the ongoing impact of rising costs and real costs of delivering quality short breaks.

Just over half of applications came from organisations that have previously delivered Better Breaks projects. This demonstrates strong confidence in the programme and continued demand for established short break services.

The importance and impact of these projects are further strengthened by the long-term relationships staff build with children and young people over time. For families supporting a child or young person with certain disabilities, these trusted relationships are invaluable. They help provide reassurance that their child is not only safe and comfortable, but also actively enjoying the experience, giving families greater confidence in accessing short break opportunities.

Funding decisions were made in March 2025 by the Grants Allocation Panel (GAP). This voluntary panel includes unpaid carers; staff from third sector organisations supporting unpaid carers; experts from other grant-making bodies; local authority representatives; and a Scottish Government representative in attendance as an observer.

A full list of funded organisations can be found at the end of this report.



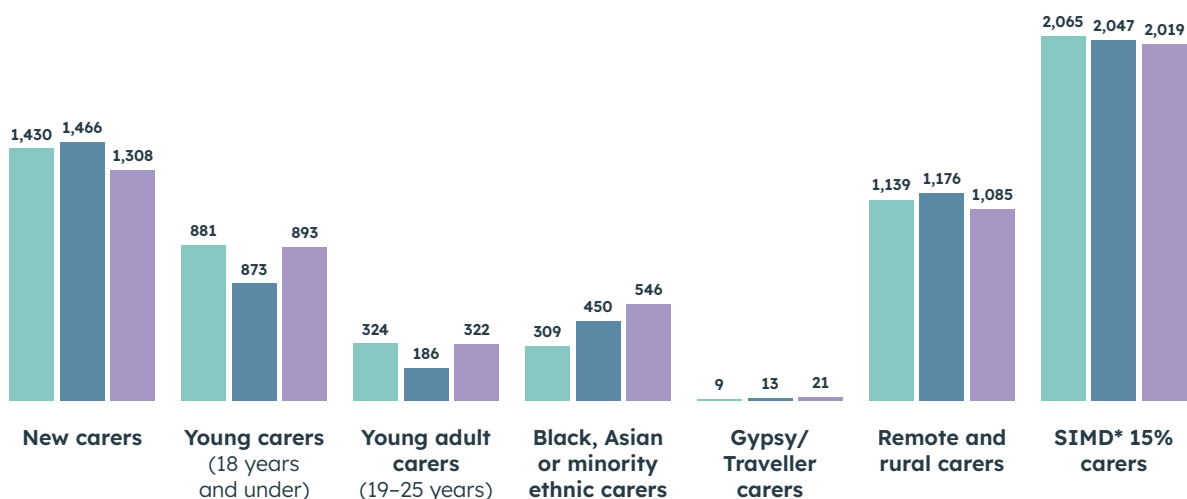
## Breakdown of beneficiaries

This section provides a breakdown of the beneficiaries reached by Better Breaks, highlighting key demographic carer groups, and the number of disabled children and young people by support need category. Please note that beneficiaries may be counted under more than one category.

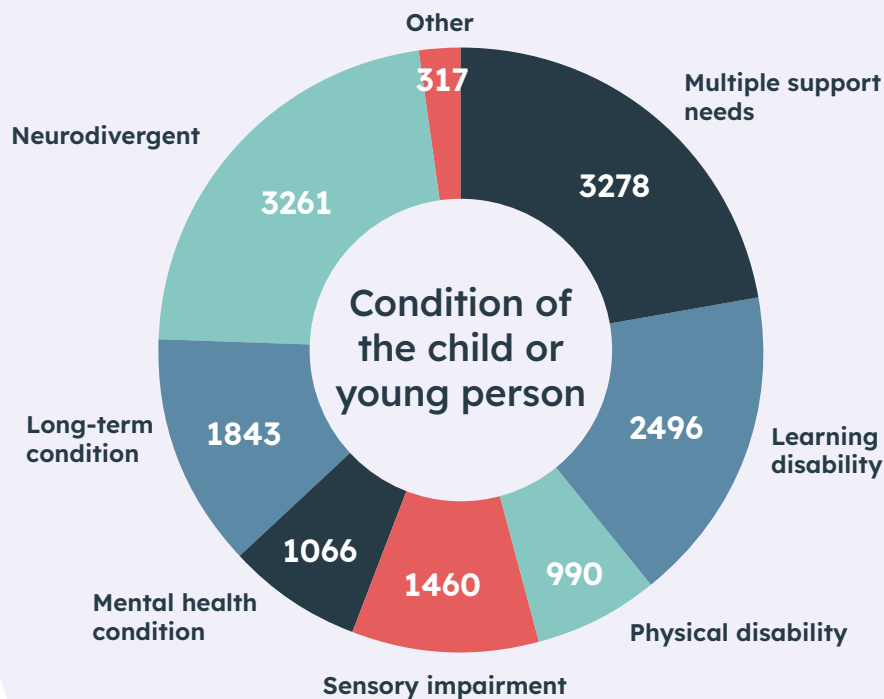


2023-2024 2024-2025 2025-2026

\* Scottish index of multiple deprivation



**Better Breaks supported 4,555 disabled children and young people**, reflecting the programme's commitment to meeting a wide range of support needs.



“Better Breaks funding has enabled our group to support and help carers, children and young people with disabilities to enjoy a fun-filled summer activities programme.”





SuperTroop



**40%** of funded organisations were led by unpaid carers.

We recognise that it is not only the experiences, circumstances and communities of the children, young people and families who benefit from funded projects that matter. It is equally important that organisations understand the unique challenges, aspirations and realities of disabled children and young people, as well as their unpaid carers and families. This supports the delivery of high-quality, equitable short breaks that meet diverse need and help overcome invisible barriers.

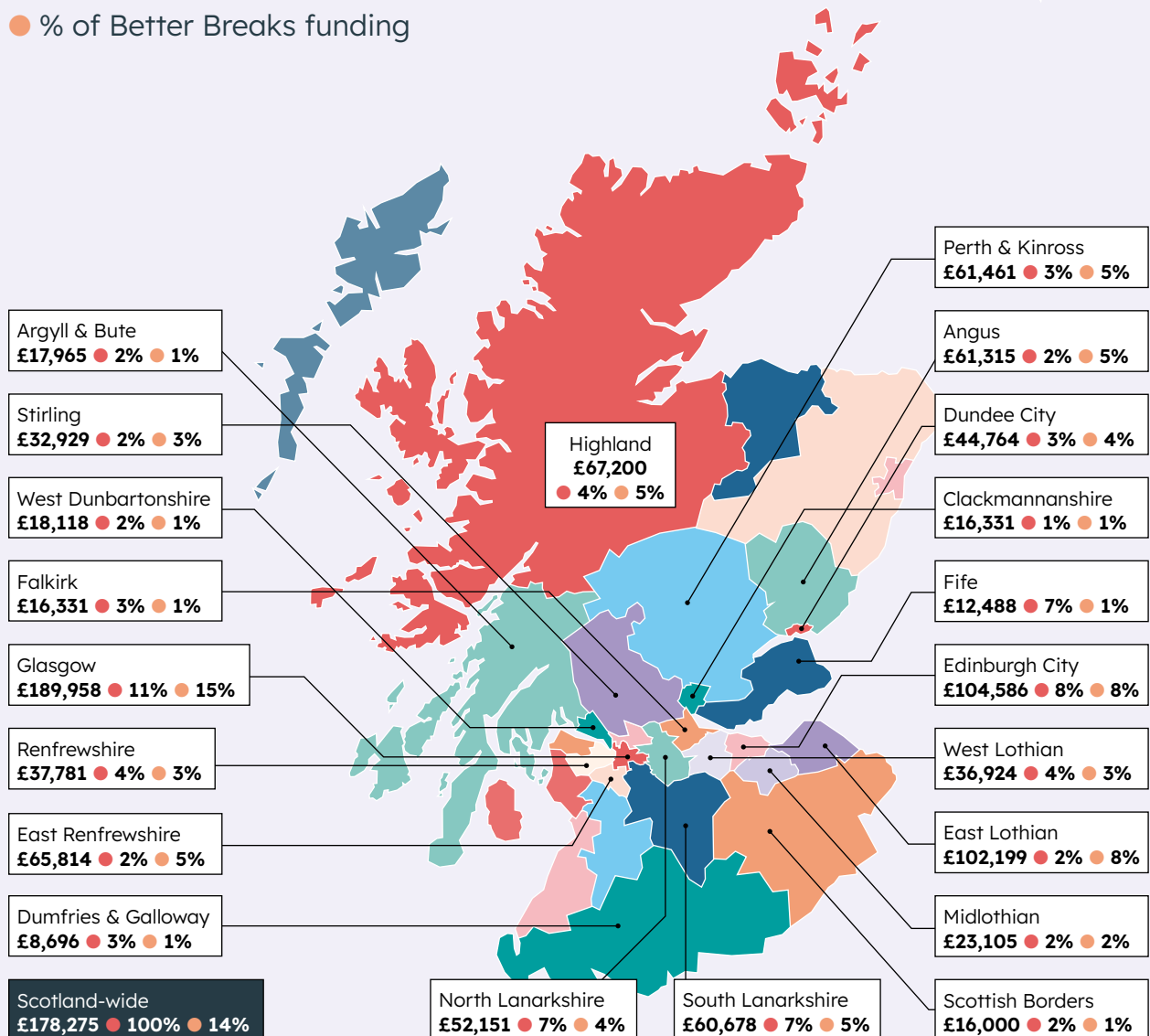
To better understand this, we have started collecting information about who leads the organisations we fund.

In 2025–2026, we are pleased to see that **40% of funded organisations were led by unpaid carers**. This means that at least 75% of their trustees and senior managers are either current unpaid carers or have lived experience of providing unpaid care. This level of representation helps ensure that services are informed by a deep understanding of the needs of the families they support, strengthening both the relevance and quality of the short breaks on offer. It was also encouraging to see that **28% of funded organisations were led by people with disabilities**.

# Beneficiary reach

● % of carer population\*

● % of Better Breaks funding



Funding was distributed across a wide range of local authority areas, with particularly strong investment in Glasgow, East Lothian, Edinburgh and Angus, alongside support for projects working across the Highlands and island communities.

This broad spread of funding reflects Better Breaks' commitment to making short breaks as accessible as possible. It also helped address gaps in provision in some areas, ensuring that carers and families living in communities with fewer local opportunities could still benefit from meaningful short break experiences and support.

\*% of carer population figures are estimated using the CPE

## Types of short breaks

Better Breaks funding supported carers and the children, and young people they care for, to access valuable opportunities to relax, have fun, build friendships and take a break from the daily demands of caring. Many

projects provided regular, ongoing support through clubs and playschemes, creating safe and welcoming spaces where beneficiaries could connect with others and enjoy activities tailored to their interests and needs.

### Types of breaks



**11%**

Befriending



**67%**

Clubs/  
playschemes



**47%**

Day trips



**32%**

Residential  
overnight



**7%**

Other

### Frequency of breaks



**51%**

Weekly

**7%**

Fortnightly

**23%**

Monthly

**21%**

Annually

**51%**

School  
holidays

**7%**

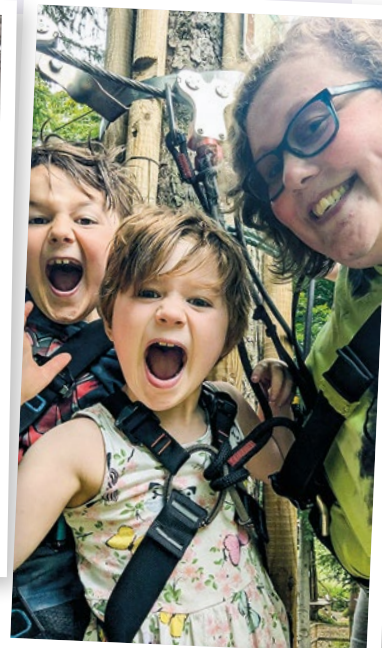
Other



PLUS Forth Valley



Perth & Kinross Association of  
Voluntary Service (PKAVS)



Stirling Carers Centre

# CASE STUDIES

## Scotland Yard Adventure Centre ('The Yard')

**Project name:** Fun & Friendship Youth Clubs

**Funding amount:** £18,907

The Yard delivered 'Fun & Friendship Youth Clubs' for disabled children and young people across Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian and the Scottish Borders. Over the course of the year, **84 young people** attended **91 youth club sessions in Edinburgh**, providing opportunities to build confidence, make friends and enjoy activities shaped by their own interests and choices. At the same time, **207 carers** received regular, reliable respite breaks, helping them recharge, spend time with family and support their wellbeing.

### Impact:

- ▶ **76%** of young people reported feeling less isolated and making new friends.
- ▶ **86%** of young people said they had more fun in their lives and felt happier overall.
- ▶ **76%** of carers said they felt well supported by The Yard's staff.
- ▶ **81%** of carers felt that The Yard provided a strong sense of community.

## Carer story: Alice and Jack\*

Alice's son Jack, aged 20, is autistic and attends The Yard's 18-25's club every fortnight. The club provides Jack with a safe and supportive environment where he can socialise, have fun and be himself. For Alice, the regular two-hour sessions offer a reliable short break from caring, giving her valuable time to spend with her three other children or focus on her own wellbeing. As Alice explains:

**“It's wonderful having a regular break because you can plan. It's a short period of time, but it's regular and recurring, and it makes me very happy to know that Jack is doing something nice.”**

The club has also helped Alice build connections with other parent carers who understand the realities of caring for a disabled child. These friendships have strengthened her support network, reduced feelings of isolation and provided a source of encouragement and understanding. For Jack, the club is somewhere he feels safe, accepted and happy. He looks forward to every session and enjoys spending time with staff, volunteers and peers. Together, the benefits for both Jack and Alice demonstrate how regular, accessible short breaks can improve wellbeing, strengthen family relationships and provide meaningful support.



\*Names have been changed to protect anonymity

# Dunbartonshire Disability Sports Club SCIO

**Project name:** Residential Disability Sports Camp

**Funding amount:** £18,118

Dunbartonshire Disability Sports Club (DDSC) delivered a three-night 'Residential Disability Sports Camp' at the Scottish National Sports Centre, Inverclyde. The camp brought together **46 disabled children and young people** and **44 parents and carers** from West Dunbartonshire for an inclusive short break filled with sports, social activities and opportunities for relaxation.

The residential camp provided separate programmes for children and young people and for parents and carers, ensuring everyone could benefit from activities tailored to their needs. Children enjoyed football, dancing, racket sports, arts and crafts, mini Olympics and nature-based activities. Meanwhile carers accessed respite opportunities including massages, wellbeing activities, spin classes and social time with peers. Family events such as quizzes, karaoke and a disco brought everyone together to celebrate and create lasting memories.

## Impact:

- ▶ **44** parents and carers accessed 18 hours of respite and wellbeing activities.

- ▶ **100%** of children and young people said they had fun taking part in activities with friends.
- ▶ **42%** of children and young people reported making new friends during the camp.
- ▶ **100%** of carers reported experiencing meaningful relaxation and enjoyment during the residential.



## Carer story: Family B\*

For Family B, the DDSC Residential Disability Sports Camp provided a rare opportunity to enjoy a break without the usual challenges of planning around their eldest daughter's complex needs. By working closely with the family in advance, DDSC ensured that accommodation, food and facilities met their daughter's requirements, allowing the family to relax and enjoy time together away from home for the first time in years.

While the children took part in sports and social activities with trusted staff, the parents were able to unwind, connect with other families and enjoy time free from the pressures of daily caring responsibilities. The experience helped build their confidence in their daughter's independence, reduced feelings of isolation and created positive memories for the whole family. Reflecting on the weekend, the mother described the opportunity to spend time with other parents who understood their experiences as simply "**amazing.**"

\*Names have been changed to protect anonymity

## able2sail SCIO

**Project name:** Young People's Sailing Programme 2025

**Funding amount:** £15,495

able2sail delivered a weekly sailing programme for disabled young people across the west of Scotland. Based at Kip Marina, the project provided a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment where young people could develop sailing skills, have fun and build lasting friendships.

The project was designed with young people and families from the outset through a co-design 'Sailing Hang' event, helping participants become familiar with equipment, meet staff and reduce anxiety about trying something new. Beyond sailing, the project encouraged independence through skills such as travelling by train to the marina, managing tickets and supporting peers throughout the journey. For carers, the programme provided valuable and regular short breaks, knowing their young person was safe, supported and enjoying fun activities.

### Impact:

- ▶ **16** young people took part in the structured programme, with **over 25 young people** attending sailing opportunities throughout the project.
- ▶ **More than 30** sailing sessions were delivered between April and September.
- ▶ **24** carers benefitted from regular respite while young people participated independently.

## Carer story: Family C\*

One family described able2sail as a turning point during a particularly difficult period. Initially unsure whether their son would manage the demands of sailing, they were reassured by the experience and understanding of the able2sail team. The adapted yacht, professional skipper and supportive volunteers created an environment where their son could participate safely and confidently.

As their son became increasingly engaged in the programme, the family experienced benefits far beyond the sailing itself. Knowing he was secure, enjoying himself and developing new skills gave them the confidence to spend time focusing on the rest of the family and on their own wellbeing. They spoke about the emotional relief that came from seeing him return home after each session, full of energy, pride and happiness.

Mum explained that the programme allowed a rare opportunity to "**be me rather than mum**" for a few hours. The regular, reliable nature of the sessions meant she could plan ahead, take time for themselves and step away from the constant demands of their caring role. Seeing their son's confidence grow and develop independence provided an additional boost, helping them feel optimistic about his future.

\*Names have been changed to protect anonymity.



# ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND LEARNING



## Achievements

### Making a real difference for families

Throughout the year, Better Breaks funding helped thousands of carers, disabled children and young people access meaningful short breaks that improved wellbeing, reduced stress, and created opportunities. Projects that provided breaks for families to enjoy together included strategies and careful consideration of how caring responsibilities could be reduced. This enabled both the child and unpaid carer to spend quality time together that was distinct from their usual responsibilities and routines.

### Helping communities become more inclusive

The programme has also played an important role in strengthening community connections. Through local clubs, activities, trips and events, carers, disabled children and young people developed confidence to get out into their communities, visit new places and take part in activities.

Many organisations worked closely with local businesses, venues and community groups, helping to raise awareness of the barriers disabled people and their families can face.



Dundee and Angus ADHD Support Group

**Around a third** of projects reported that this engagement sparked positive conversations about accessibility and inclusion, leading to improvements such as staff training, greater understanding of disabled people's needs and discussions around facilities, including Changing Places toilets.

## Families shape their short breaks

A key strength of Better Breaks projects is the emphasis on choice and flexibility. Carers, disabled children and young people were encouraged to share their views and help shape the support they received. Projects listened to what families wanted and adapted activities to meet individual needs and preferences. This person-centred

approach ensured that short breaks were meaningful, relevant and tailored to what mattered most to each family, giving people greater choice, control and ownership over their experiences.

## New experiences and lasting memories

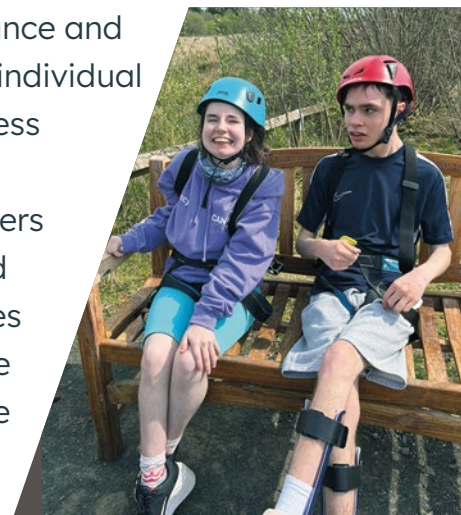
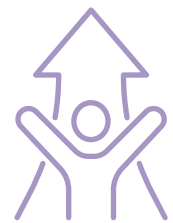
Across Scotland, carers and disabled children and young people enjoyed activities they may not otherwise have been able to access, including outdoor adventures, arts and crafts, swimming, horse riding, music sessions, theatre trips, sports activities, wellbeing sessions and family days out. These experiences helped people build lasting confidence, discover new interests, develop skills, and become more involved in their local communities.

## Challenges

### Responding to increasingly complex needs

Many organisations reported that the needs of carers, disabled children and young people are becoming more complex, requiring greater flexibility and more personalised support. Projects worked hard to adapt their activities so that everyone could take part and benefit from a positive short break experience. Organisations adjusted session times, changed

venues, provided clearer information in advance and tailored support to individual needs. This willingness to listen and adapt helped reduce barriers to participation and ensured that families continued to receive welcoming, inclusive and responsive support.



## Making every pound go further

Like many other organisations, Better Breaks projects faced rising costs throughout the year. Increased expenses for staffing, transport, venue hire and activities meant organisations had to think creatively about how they delivered support. Projects demonstrated excellent resourcefulness, working closely with venues and activity providers. This helped to secure the best value possible, making use of discounted or complimentary carer tickets, and planning activities outside peak times where appropriate. These approaches supported organisations to maximise the impact of available funding while continuing to provide high-quality and accessible short breaks for families.

## Meeting growing demand for short breaks

Demand for these short breaks remained high throughout the year, reflecting their vital role in supporting carers and families. Many projects received more referrals and applications compared to places available, resulting in waiting lists for some services. While this highlights the ongoing need for investment in short breaks across Scotland; organisations worked hard to ensure as many families as possible could benefit. Some projects introduced taster sessions,

developed pathways into other groups and signposted families to alternative opportunities while they waited for a place. These approaches helped families stay connected and access support sooner.

## Adapting to staff and volunteer challenges

Recruiting and retaining skilled staff continued to be a challenge for some organisations, particularly where roles required specialist experience or knowledge. Meanwhile, many projects reported a significant decline in volunteer numbers, placing additional pressure on teams. Despite these challenges, organisations showed remarkable resilience and commitment. Projects adapted delivery models, supported existing staff and explored new approaches to volunteer recruitment. Some found success by encouraging former participants and service users to volunteer. This brought valuable lived experience, enthusiasm and understanding to their roles, while helping to inspire the next generation of disabled children and young people.

# Learning



## The impact of short breaks

While providing a break from caring remained a key outcome, organisations reported that Better Breaks delivered a much wider range of benefits for families. Children and young people developed new skills, increased their confidence and independence, and had opportunities to build friendships and explore new experiences.

Carers spoke about feeling less stressed, more connected and better able to sustain their caring role. Siblings benefitted from spending quality time together and taking part in shared activities. Whole families also experienced improved wellbeing and stronger relationships. These wider outcomes demonstrate that short breaks are much more than time away from caring responsibilities.

### Learning in action

For parent carers involved in Carers of West Lothian's 'Fun for All' project, speaking with peers and staff resulted in unforeseen, additional benefits. They reported building understanding, and for some, acceptance with being an unpaid carer alongside their family role. Through this process, they discovered other sources of support that could help both with their caring responsibilities and their family's wider needs.

## Small opportunities can make a big difference

Many grant holders reflected on the importance of providing opportunities that families may not otherwise have access to. Whether it was trying a new activity; visiting somewhere new; spending time with peers who share similar experiences; or simply having a chance to relax; these seemingly small opportunities often had a significant impact. Projects found that positive experiences helped to build confidence, encouraged families to engage more with their communities, and helped people feel more optimistic about the future. For many participants, Better Breaks acted as a stepping stone to wider opportunities, ongoing support and increased community involvement.

### Learning in action

The DASH Club summer programme focused on building families' confidence to access venues and activities within their local communities that they otherwise may not have used. Drawing on learning from earlier programmes, the organisation recognised that carers were much more confident taking their child to places and activities that the child had already experienced through DASH, opening up new opportunities and creating a more carer friendly local community.



Ability Shetland

# IMPACT FROM OUTCOMES

The outcomes achieved through Better Breaks demonstrate the positive difference the programme has made to the lives of disabled children and young people and their carers. The following section highlights the impact of Better Breaks against each of its key outcomes and showcases the experiences of those who have benefitted from the programme.

## Disabled children and young people had more opportunities to have fun, develop friendships, and take part in activities they enjoy.

At the heart of Better Breaks is the belief that every child and young person should have opportunities to enjoy meaningful experiences, pursue their interests, and connect with others. Throughout the year, the children and young people took part in a wide range of activities designed around their interests, abilities, and support needs.

- **81%** tried new activities.
- **96%** took part in fun activities and felt included.
- **84%** enjoyed being outdoors.
- **89%** developed friendships, sometimes for the first time ever.

The Saturday Club Café demonstrated the outcome by reporting at the end of the project, L\* had formed friendships with other children attending the club and was increasingly confident trying new activities without staff support. L's parent told us that the holiday club had become **"the highlight of the holidays"**, explaining that L was happier, calmer, and more socially engaged at home. They also shared that seeing L experience friendship, fun, and inclusion gave the whole family renewed confidence and optimism about the future.

**The difference made:** Children and young people experienced greater social connection, increased confidence, and more opportunities to participate in activities they enjoy.

**"It was so much fun racing with my dad...I liked the outside games, I felt a bit scared to climb the rope, but I did it...I have made a friend, which is normally very hard, we both love WWE. Being outside playing with everyone, made me feel good."**



The Saturday Club Café SCIO

\*Names have been changed to protect anonymity

## Carers of disabled children and young people had more opportunities to enjoy a life outside of their caring role.

Caring for a disabled child or young person can be rewarding but also demanding, often leaving little time for carers to focus on their own needs and interests. Better Breaks provided carers with valuable opportunities to take a break from their caring responsibilities, knowing their child was safe, supported, and having a positive experience. Some carers also took part in the short break and reported it was a welcome break with their family, with the support from staff or volunteers.

- ▶ **65%** of carers enjoyed a guilt-free break.
- ▶ **91%** reported receiving respite from the short break provided.
- ▶ **91%** were able to relax.
- ▶ **82%** connected with other carers, family or friends.

Tailor Ed reported that while the children enjoyed their activities, parents and carers also experienced a much-needed break. Caring for a child with additional needs can be deeply rewarding but also exhausting, especially during the long summer holidays. Tailor Ed's 'Short Break Club'

offered parents a few hours each week to relax and recharge, knowing their children were safe, happy, and cared for. Many parents stayed at the venue to connect with other carers, while some took the opportunity to do personal tasks or simply enjoy some quiet time. This supportive atmosphere helped families feel less isolated and more connected, with several parents forming new friendships that extended beyond the club. One dad shared that joining in play sessions with his son was transformative. He said it shifted his mindset from “**caring for to playing with**”, allowing them to bond in new and joyful ways.

**The difference made:** Carers were able to recharge, maintain personal relationships and interests, and enjoy meaningful time away from their caring responsibilities.

“Thank you so much. I know the event is for kids, but I also benefit as it allows me to socialise with other parents who totally ‘get it’, and the no judgement zone makes it a totally relaxing event for everyone.”



## Carers of disabled children and young people felt better supported to sustain their caring role.

As well as providing respite, Better Breaks helped carers feel more supported in their daily life. Feedback showed that carers felt less isolated and more confident in their ability to continue providing care, knowing that support was available when needed.

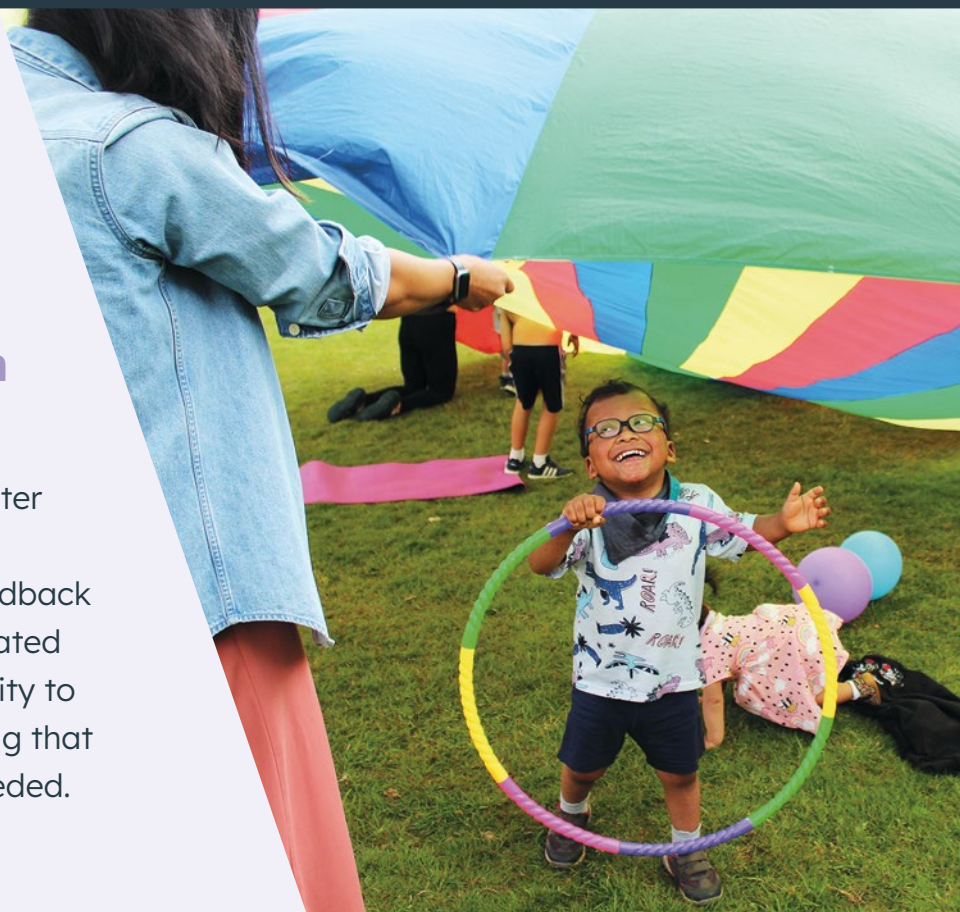
- ▶ **100%** saved money on short break activities provided.
- ▶ **91%** increased skills that they could use beyond the project.
- ▶ **61%** reported more confidence in social situations.

Sense Scotland told us that **100% of families** reported feeling better supported to sustain their caring role. One family, who came along to 3 events this year said that the advice and information they had gained through talking to the family adviser and other parents/and carers at these events had been invaluable. They had learned about the Independent Living Fund at one of the trips and, with support from Sense Scotland, they had been able to access funding for their son to pay for arts and music sessions – two of his favourite pastimes. These sessions improved his skills and his confidence,

doing things he really enjoyed. They also gave the family some further respite, they got the chance to relax and get some more free time.

**The difference made:** Carers reported feeling more supported, less isolated, and better equipped to continue in their caring role.

**“I think the families programme is amazing, such a variety of things to do as a family and we are all excited about joining in all the days out. It’s giving my kids a chance to socialise and have fun with their friends. It really does bring them on socially and improves their mental health. It has helped us financially as well not having to stress about the costs of days out.”**



Sense Scotland



Interest Link Borders

## Disabled children and young people and their carers experienced improved wellbeing.

The combined impact of enjoyable activities, social connections, respite opportunities, and ongoing support contributed to improved wellbeing for both participants and their carers. Children and young people benefitted from increased confidence, greater independence, and a stronger sense of belonging, while carers experienced reduced stress and improved emotional wellbeing.

Families consistently reported positive changes in mood, confidence, and family relationships. The opportunities provided through Better Breaks helped create a more balanced and positive home environment, benefiting everyone involved.

- ▶ **96%** reported better emotional wellbeing.
- ▶ **68%** felt less isolated in their caring role.
- ▶ **67%** enjoyed celebrating their young person's achievements.
- ▶ **75%** reported the project had a positive whole family impact.

Include Me 2 reported that a 16-year-old participant had previously struggled with anxiety and low confidence, limiting their participation in social and group activities. Their parent, who faced the challenges of providing care, reported feeling exhausted and isolated. Through Include Me 2's project, the young person joined a range of inclusive activities, including a cooking club, creative sessions, and social groups. Gradually, they developed new friendships, improved their social skills, and gained confidence to try new experiences. Their improved mood and engagement were noticeable at home, with the family reporting happier interactions and reduced tension. Meanwhile, the parent benefitted from regular respite, knowing their child was in a safe, supportive environment. Staff provided guidance and practical support, as well as opportunities to connect with other carers, which helped reduce stress and feelings of isolation. As a result, both child and parent experienced improved wellbeing.

**The difference made:** Improved wellbeing was experienced across the family, with participants and carers reporting greater happiness, confidence, resilience, and quality of life.

**“Having the respite gives me help with my mental health, makes me feel more supported, and gives me more ME time. It really does improve my wellbeing.”**

# SUPPORTING GRANT HOLDERS

Support for organisations that are funded through Better Breaks stretches further than the grant itself. A part of the fund's support offer in 2025 was a 'Break Together' event in Dundee. Funded organisations from across Scotland came together to share experiences, exchange learning, strengthen relationships and explore new and innovative approaches to delivering short breaks.

The event was extremely well received, with attendees highlighting the benefits of connecting with peers, reflecting on practice and gaining fresh ideas to enhance their work. One grant holder reflected:

**“Super session, good facilitation and range of information. The tailored fund sessions were a good idea and the group work exercise beneficial.”**

## Sessions included:

- » **Funding and applications:** gaining a clearer understanding of funding deadlines, Better Breaks application processes, end of grant reporting requirements, and approaches to strengthening future funding applications.
- » **Networking and collaboration:** building relationships with other short breaks providers, sharing knowledge and experiences, and developing connections with organisations facing similar opportunities and challenges.
- » **Engagement and inclusion:** learning practical approaches to involving parents, engaging young carers and carers from ethnic minority communities, and reinforcing the message that carers have the right to seek support without guilt.
- » **Accessibility and language:** reflecting on accessibility barriers and exploring the use of more inclusive, positive and person-centred language.
- » **Ideas and inspiration:** hearing impactful stories from funded projects, exploring new approaches such as group and residential breaks, and identifying opportunities for future development.

By providing opportunities for learning, reflection and peer support in addition to the funding, Shared Care Scotland helps grant holders maximise the reach, quality and impact of their projects. This investment in organisational development contributes to stronger, more sustainable short breaks services and better outcomes for unpaid carers and the people they care for across Scotland. Ability Shetland expressed:

**“Through the networking events, we have been able to make meaningful connections, resulting in shared learning and development opportunities that benefit both those who access our support and those providing it.”**

# ORGANISATIONAL BENEFITS OF FUNDING

Through Better Breaks funding, organisations have grown stronger, developed valuable local networks, and made a lasting difference to the families they support.

Many organisations felt that the funding gave them the flexibility and stability needed to deliver meaningful support and create lasting benefits for families.

The funding has also helped organisations strengthen their presence within their communities and improved opportunities to develop staff/ volunteer skills and training.

Many organisations also saw wider benefits. **Over two thirds (68%)** felt their reputation had grown because of the work they were able to deliver. **More than a quarter (28%)** reported that families were going on to access other services and opportunities, helping them build broader support networks.



“We are extremely grateful for the support received through Better Breaks. The funding has been instrumental in enabling us to deliver a wide range of meaningful activities and opportunities for the young people we support. Quite simply, we would not be able to achieve the breadth or quality of our provision without this support, and it continues to make a significant difference to the experiences and outcomes of the children and families we work with.”

Cosgrove Care



# FEEDBACK AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Grant holders shared helpful feedback on how the Better Breaks programme could be made even stronger in the future. While organisations valued the funding

and support, they also highlighted areas where changes could make the process smoother and help them plan and deliver their work more effectively.

## Future improvements

Organisations said they would welcome earlier decisions on funding, rather than waiting until the end of March, as this would give them more time to plan activities, recruit staff, organise resources and provide families with clearer information.

We aim to trial separate workshops for new applicants and existing grant holders. A more tailored approach would help new applicants better understand the application process, while providing current grant holders with guidance and support that reflects their experience.

Some organisations also highlighted the need to review reporting requirements, with a view to making the process more proportionate and reducing administrative burden. This would allow organisations to spend more time focusing on delivering services and supporting families.

Providing multi-year funding would enable greater stability, allowing

organisations to plan, develop their services, and build stronger relationships with children, young people and families over time.

### What funded organisations said

**“We feel very privileged to have received continued support for our youth club project. The support and understanding from the SBF team, from application stage, through service delivery and into reporting is much appreciated. We are delighted to have taken up some of the evaluation training opportunities this year, which has enhanced our understanding and data recording.”**

**“The Short Breaks Fund team are always approachable and make the process as user-friendly as possible – it’s great to have a personal contact in place for what can be a fairly impersonal process!”**

**“Always brilliant, super helpful and understanding! Great team!”**

# SUMMARY

The 2025–2026 Better Breaks funding programme has continued to make a positive difference for third sector organisations, children and young people with disabilities and their families across Scotland. The funding has helped organisations expand their services, build stronger connections within their communities and provide more flexible, meaningful short break opportunities that respond to what families need.

Grant holders shared many examples of the difference their work has made, from improving family wellbeing and creating opportunities for children and young people to build confidence and friendships, to strengthening organisations through staff development, partnerships and increased capacity.

Third sector organisations across Scotland continue to operate in a challenging environment. Rising costs, increasing demand for support, workforce and volunteer shortages, in addition to growing complexity of need, are placing significant pressure on services. At the same time, many organisations are facing uncertainty around future funding, making long-term planning and sustainability more difficult. Despite these challenges, organisations have shown remarkable resilience, adapting their services,

strengthening partnerships and continuing to provide vital support to carers, disabled children and young people in communities across Scotland.

Overall, the learning from this year shows that Better Breaks is about more than funding activities. It is about supporting quality short breaks development and practice, helping short break providers to grow, helping families access invaluable short breaks, and creating opportunities for children and young people to take part, connect with others and enjoy experiences that make a real difference.

## What carers and cared-for people said

“Can we please have more events like these?! It was great just being allowed to be us and knowing our sister can take part and have fun meant we all had fun together.”

“I really enjoy the flexibility of the sessions and the creativity, when it was ‘movie night’, I felt comfortable and was able to participate in both my task and the movie. I like having options.”

“I love coming to group. I’ve met a lot of new people and I am very happy, they made me laugh and happy. I have made friends and we’ve even gone to watch films together. I am much happier about trying new things.”

# Thank you to the funded organisations who delivered short breaks in 2025–2026

|                                               |                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ability Shetland                              | able2sail SCIO                                             |
| Action for Children                           | Adoption UK Charity                                        |
| Angus Carers Centre                           | Angus Special Playscheme                                   |
| Barnardo's                                    | Beachcombers Playscheme                                    |
| Big Hearts Community Trust                    | Branch Out Together                                        |
| Buddies Clubs and Services (Glasgow West) Ltd | Can Do                                                     |
| Carers of West Lothian                        | Cosgrove Care                                              |
| COVEY (Community Volunteers Enabling You)     | Deaf Action                                                |
| Dunbartonshire Disability Sports Club SCIO    | Dundee & Angus ADHD Support Group                          |
| Dundee United Community Trust                 | Edinburgh Leisure                                          |
| Epilepsy Scotland                             | Falkirk & Clackmannanshire Carers Centre                   |
| Firsthand Lothian                             | Geeza Break                                                |
| Glasgow East End Community Carers             | Hear My Music                                              |
| Include Me 2 Club SCIO                        | Interest Link Borders                                      |
| Jack and Jill Support Group                   | LASC Childcare Services Ltd                                |
| North Argyll Carers Centre                    | North Berwick Youth Project                                |
| PAMIS                                         | Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Service (PKAVS) |
| PlayPeace SCIO                                | PLUS (Forth Valley) Ltd                                    |
| Rangers Charity Foundation SCIO               | REACH Lanarkshire Autism                                   |
| Reach4Reality                                 | The Yard                                                   |
| Sense Scotland                                | SNAP (Special Needs Action Project)                        |
| Speech Language Communication Company         | St Andrews Botanic Garden Trust                            |
| Stirling Carers Centre                        | SupERkids                                                  |
| SuperTroop                                    | Support Help and Integration in Perthshire (SCIO)          |
| Tailor Ed Foundation                          | Team Jak Foundation                                        |
| The DASH Club                                 | The Indigo Childcare Group                                 |
| The Saturday Cafe Clubs SCIO                  | Tourette Scotland                                          |
| West Scotland Deaf Children's Society         |                                                            |

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