

# A snapshot of the impact Better Breaks had during 2016–2017

## About Better Breaks

Better Breaks provides grants to third sector organisations so they can develop and deliver short break projects and services for children and young people with disabilities (aged 20 and under) and their carers (adults and young carers).

Better Breaks is operated by Shared Care Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government. It is part of the Short Breaks Fund, which was set up to increase the range and availability of short breaks for carers and the people they care for across Scotland.

## 2016–2017 in numbers

### Applications



### Reach

Children and young people in **all 32 of Scotland's local authority areas** were supported



### Activities funded



## The outcomes of Better Breaks are to:

- give disabled children and young people more opportunities to take part in activities which are fun, stimulating and rewarding, including improving access to mainstream sports, activities and leisure services
- improve the wellbeing of carers and the children and young people with disabilities they care for
- give carers more opportunities to enjoy life outside their caring role
- support carers to continue caring
- raise awareness of the role of short breaks in supporting caring relationships
- develop an understanding of how important short breaks are to disabled children and young people and their carers
- help organisations that support carers develop their projects and services and increase the positive impact of their work



## Ways that Better Breaks made a difference to children and young people with disabilities and their families

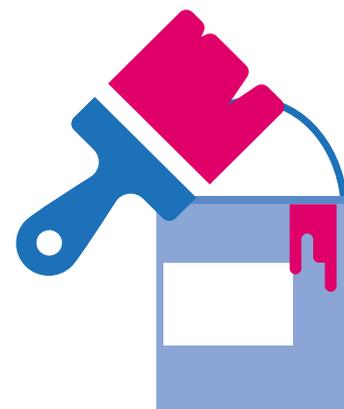
### ‘Me time’

A key theme to emerge from all projects was how they enabled carers to have a break to do something they wanted to do. As one mum said, “I was able to relax knowing Ross was well cared for and all his needs were met. This gave me time to meet with friends and family ... to get some painting done at home ... to spend some ‘me time’ relaxing”.

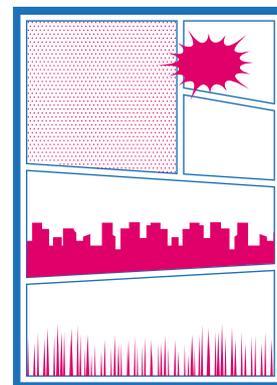
Some projects provided specific support sessions for families and carers alongside the service for young people. **Beeslack All Stars Disabled Sports Club** invited VOCAL, the Edinburgh carers’ charity, to come along to a Parents’ Natter Nite to explain what they provided and how they could help families. This introduction to VOCAL helped many of the parent carers take the first step towards getting the support they needed. Several followed up with individual meetings to discuss their specific situations.

### As individual as the children themselves

George has autism, poor leg muscle control and was non-verbal. He uses a bespoke picture exchange communication system (PECS) to communicate. Having learned about his interest in horses, **CLASP Cornerstone** worked in partnership with a local riding school to arrange riding lessons. CLASP staff taught the teacher at the stables how to use the PECS so they could communicate effectively with George. With his limited leg strength he had struggled with other sports, and this opportunity turned out to be brilliant. George was able to develop his own way of communicating with his horse, Spider. Regular riding sessions have helped George to become verbal, using words to describe the horse and its needs. His parents described this opportunity as “priceless”.

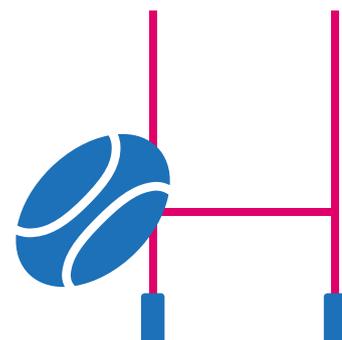


**RIG Arts** provided free art workshops for young people on the autistic spectrum, enabling them to create their very own comic strip. With support from a professional comic book tutor, they created their own characters and stories. Simon's parents felt the workshop was tailored to his specific needs and described it as "spot-on". The activities helped him develop his writing and drawing skills, as well as focus his thoughts. This enabled him to create cohesive stories and share his world in a safe and encouraging environment. His mum Emma felt the sessions were a sort of sanctuary for Simon. They enabled him to relax and build up an affinity with his peers while gaining confidence in communicating with others. She described this as "no mean feat for a child with Asperger's syndrome".



### Time to bond

Cameron's stepdad Gavin encouraged him to go along to **Trust Rugby International's** all-ability rugby sessions, where able bodied players and those with learning disabilities or difficulties can train and play together. As a volunteer rugby coach, Gavin witnessed the change participation made first-hand: "I have seen a fantastic change in Cameron. His confidence has grown more than my wife or I could have wished for. He is outgoing, bubbly and more confident than he has ever been. Our involvement with Trust Rugby has brought Cameron and me closer to a point that our relationship is the best it's ever been."



## Ways that Better Breaks made a difference to funded organisations

### Test and learn

Campsie View School used Better Breaks funding to pilot the **Campsie View Fun Club**, enabling children with learning disabilities to spend leisure time with their peers. The pilot followed an extensive consultation that involved parents and carers, the primary school head teacher and officers from East Dunbartonshire Council Education and Social Work departments. It showed there was a demand for the club and that it made a positive difference to the parents and their children. More importantly, it demonstrated that parents were willing to contribute to the ongoing costs of the club so it could continue after the pilot.



### Listen and learn

**SuPERkids** provides drama, dance and movement clubs for 5–18 year olds. During feedback, a group of teenage boys said they were keen to participate in drama but didn't like the choices on offer. Instead, they suggested a Harry Potter theme and a new film club was developed for the group. They worked hard over the following months to put together a Harry Potter-themed performance, and were thrilled with the results.



## Securing new funding

Thanks to the positive results **Mid Argyll Youth Development Services** achieved with their Better Breaks funding, they have been able to secure further resources to keep their pony club project for young carers running.

**RIG Arts** were able to use the success of their Better Breaks project to secure further funding from the RS McDonald Trust, which meant they were able to continue their project for a further year.

## What we learned

Success stories from the 2016–2017 round of Better Breaks funding have helped increase understanding about the benefits of different types of short breaks projects.

### Investing in staff and volunteers

**Disability Shetland** emphasised the importance of investing in staff – and particularly volunteers – by demonstrating the important role they play in helping ensure projects run smoothly.

**Scottish Disability Sport** successfully recruited carers as volunteer ‘ambassadors’ for their project. These ambassadors have played a key role in helping to involve new carers in the project.

### Developing good partnerships

The strongest message to come out of the project reports relates to the importance of good partnerships.

**Barnardo’s Inverclyde** used partnerships to secure discounts and cost-free access to services and events, making their budget go further.

Developing strong working partnerships with external companies and organisations was really important to **Bright Sparks Playgroup**, which organised trips to Amsterdam, Flamingo Land, and Center Parcs. As a volunteer organisation with no staff, they also highlighted the importance of having a designated lead facilitator for each event.

## Get in touch

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All names changed to protect individuals' privacy

