

BETTER BREAKS 2024-2025: IMPACT REPORT



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BACKGROUND

In Scotland, there are around 800,000 unpaid carers including roughly 30,000 young carers. Unpaid carers support family members, partners or friends because of disability, illness, mental health condition, addiction, or frailty.

Providing care can be physically and emotionally demanding, and short breaks can help. A short break is anything that gives carers the break they need from everyday caring

responsibilities. Short breaks not only help carers recharge but also improve their overall wellbeing and helps sustain the caring role.

Shared Care Scotland a national organisation committed to improving access to quality short breaks in Scotland. Shared Care Scotland operates three of the four funding programmes of the Short Breaks Fund, on behalf of the Scottish Government:

Better Breaks provides funding to organisations to develop and deliver short breaks for disabled children and young people and their carers.

Creative Breaks provides funding to organisations to develop and deliver short breaks for carers of adults, young carers, and the people they care for.

Time to Live provides funding to organisations (usually local carers' centres) to deliver microgrants to unpaid carers. These grants help unpaid carers take flexible, tailored breaks that suit their needs and circumstances.

A fourth programme, **Take a Break Scotland**, provides grants to parent carers – including unpaid carers and eligible kinship carers – of disabled or seriously ill children and young people aged 0 to 17. Administered by Family Fund on behalf of the National Carer Organisations and the Scottish Government, the programme aims to improve unpaid carers' health, wellbeing, and quality of life. Grants can be used flexibly to support short breaks that suit the individual needs and circumstances of each carer.

INTRODUCTION

This report assesses the impact of Better Breaks projects delivered between April 2024 and March 2025.

Through grants awarded to third sector organisations, Better Breaks supports the delivery of a wide range of short break opportunities, including:

- ▶ Activities for disabled children and young people, with or without their carers.
- ▶ Opportunities for families to enjoy time together.
- ▶ Breaks for young and sibling carers alongside the person they care for.

These funded breaks provide vital time away from caring responsibilities in a supportive and inclusive environment. Designed to meet the specific needs of children and young people, they promote wellbeing, resilience and social inclusion, offering life-changing experiences to families who often face barriers to mainstream activities.

All Better Breaks projects align with principles and outcomes that guide the programme's impact, ensuring that every funded initiative delivers meaningful short breaks. This report explores these outcomes, highlighting the difference Better Breaks has made in the lives of disabled children, young people and their unpaid carers.

St Andrews Botanic Garden Trust



Principles of the fund

- ▶ **Mutual benefit:** all projects should make a positive difference to the lives of carers and the people that they care for, improving their quality of life and wellbeing and supporting the caring relationship.
- ▶ **Personalisation:** all projects should ensure that carers and the people that they care for are actively engaged in the planning and decision-making about any short breaks. Projects aim to deliver short breaks that are genuinely personalised, providing the right break at the right time.
- ▶ **Targeted support:** all projects should seek to make a difference to people who most need it, including cared-for people with multiple support needs and/or whose needs are not met by current models of service provision; carers who have a substantial caring role; carers who are less likely to access current support; or carers whose needs are not met by current models of service provision.
- ▶ **Adding value:** all projects should complement, and not replace or duplicate, the range of services which local authorities, the NHS and other agencies already fund or provide.
- ▶ **Knowledge and understanding:** all projects should be open to sharing learning and practice and helping to build a common evidence base that increases our understanding of short breaks and how they support the caring relationship.

Outcomes

- ▶ Disabled children and young people will have more opportunities to have fun, develop friendships, and do activities they enjoy.
- ▶ Carers of disabled children and young people will have more opportunities to enjoy a life outside of their caring role.
- ▶ Carers of disabled children and young people will feel better supported to sustain their caring role.
- ▶ Disabled children and young people and their carers will have improved wellbeing.

AWARDS

Assessment

Better Breaks opened for applications in October 2023 and closed in November 2023, **receiving 88 applications** – a slight decrease from the previous round. Of these, 2 did not meet the criteria and 3 were withdrawn, leaving **83 eligible applications**. To fund all eligible proposals at this stage, an **additional £574,941** would have been required beyond the available budget.

To ensure a fair and robust selection process, independent assessors evaluated all 83 eligible applications. Assessments focused on alignment with Better Breaks principles and outcomes, as well as the organisations' capacity to deliver. This involved desk-based reviews and follow-up telephone discussions to gain a comprehensive understanding of each project's potential impact.

“The support provided at every stage of the application process is excellent. The assessment interview enables us to bring our project to life, and the assessor can clarify any questions they may have.”

Funding decisions were made by the Grants Allocation Panel (GAP), ensuring a fair and well-informed process. The panel included a diverse range of members, including 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.

Additionally, Shared Care Scotland's Operations Manager, Short Breaks Fund Manager and Better Breaks Grants Officer attended the panel but did not hold decision-making powers. This approach ensured that funding was allocated based on expert insight, unpaid carer lived experience, and a commitment to supporting high-quality short breaks for carers and the people they care for.

A total of **60 projects** were offered funding totalling **£1,218,551**. A full list of funded organisations can be found at the end of this report.

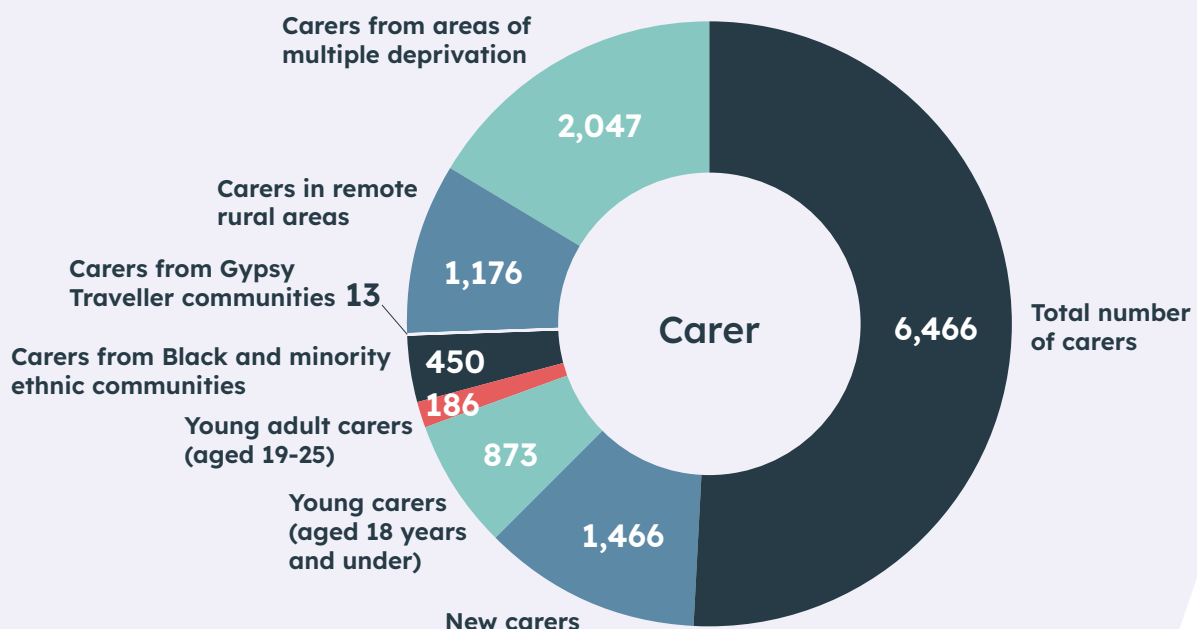


60 projects
funded

£1,218,551
distributed

Breakdown of beneficiaries

This section provides a breakdown of the carer population reached by Better Breaks, highlighting key demographic groups and areas of interest.



New carers represented approximately **22.7%** of all supported carers this year, reflecting a significant influx of families taking on new caring responsibilities. Notably, **13.5% of carers are young carers** (under 18), highlighting the growing number of children and teenagers in Scotland who are caring for siblings or family members. This underlines the importance of Better Breaks funding in supporting tailored projects for this demographic.

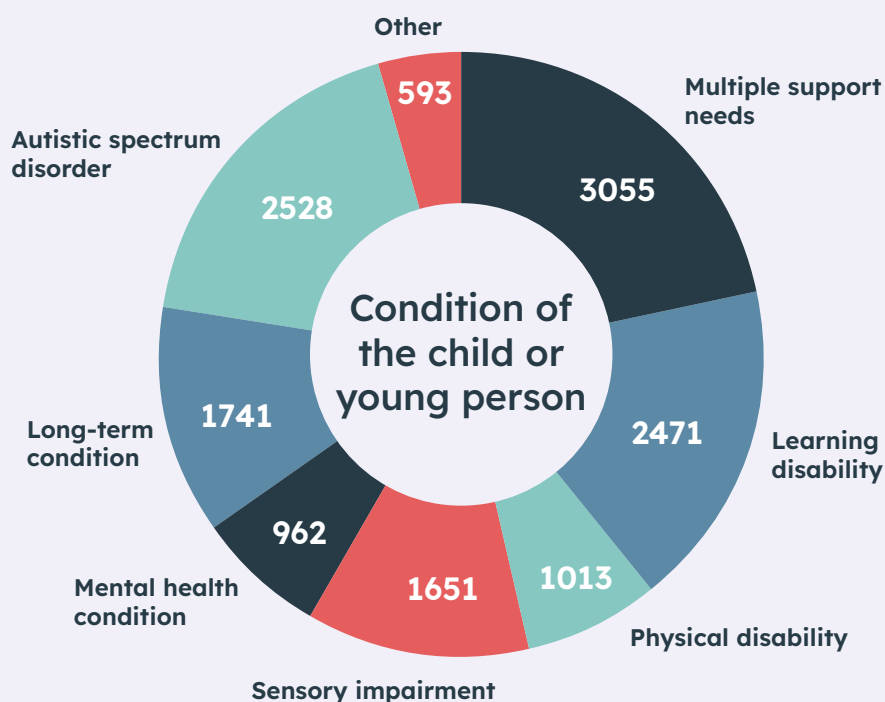
Importantly, **31.7% of carers supported come from areas of multiple deprivation**, demonstrating that the fund is effectively reaching some of Scotland’s most disadvantaged communities. The Short Breaks Fund gathers insights not only through data collection but also through engagement activities, such as public funding fairs and our own ‘Lunch and Learn’ session held in Eilean Siar in 2024. These metrics highlight a pressing need for more varied short break opportunities across Scotland, as unpaid carers continue to face significant barriers in accessing the support they need.

“The funding we received has provided much needed support and respite for the carers and the children who are part of the Sense Scotland Family. It really makes a big impact for the families we support.” Sense Scotland

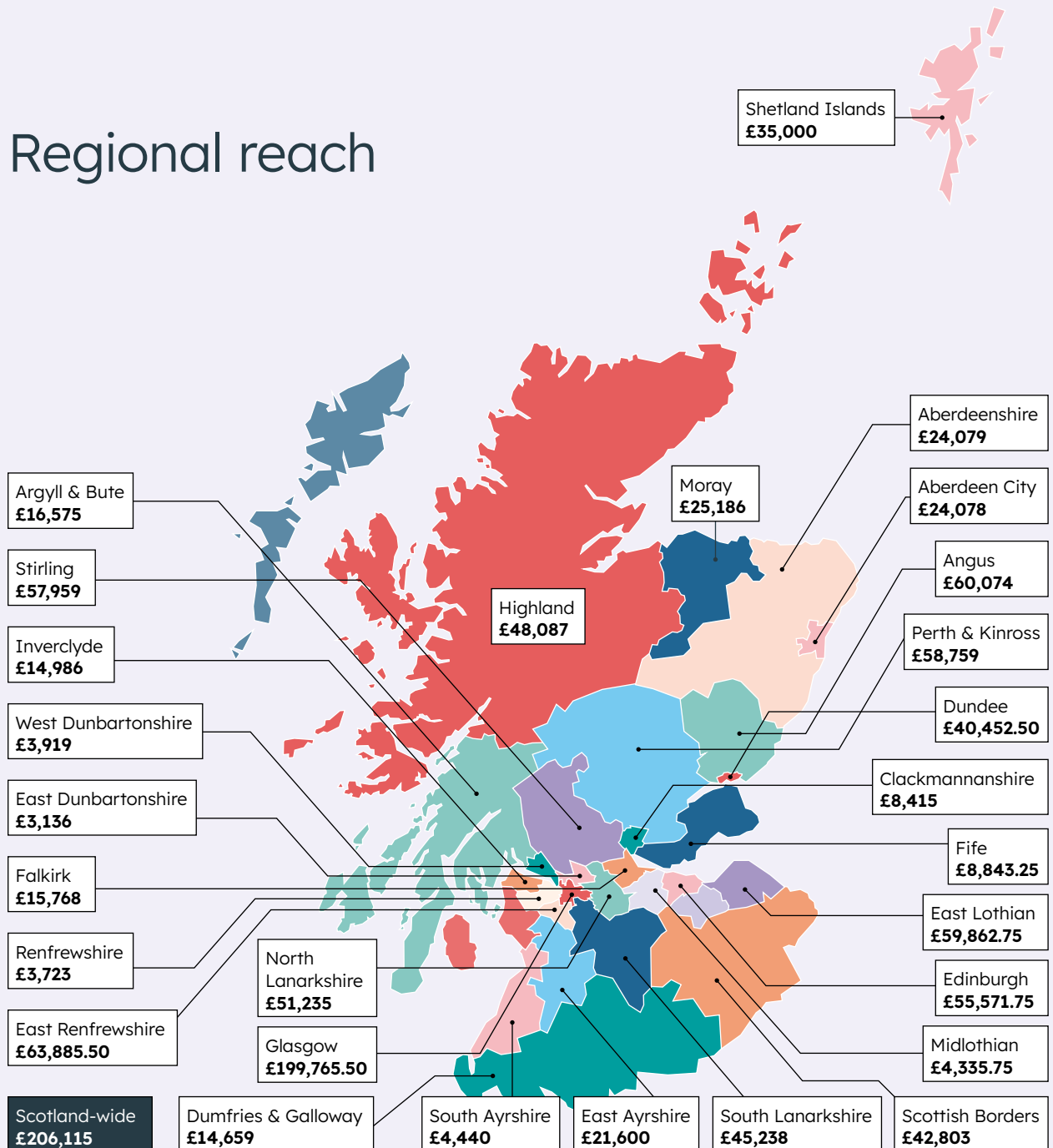
“The funding has allowed us to deliver a truly meaningful, consistent, and creative respite opportunity for both autistic young people and their carers.” Rig Arts

The chart below illustrates the number of cared-for disabled children and young people by support need category. It highlights the most prevalent support needs that Better Breaks projects experience. Among the most reported conditions are Autism Spectrum conditions and learning disabilities, each affecting over **2,400 individuals**. Mental health conditions and physical disabilities also feature prominently.

These findings reinforce the need for flexible, person-centred approaches in both funding and project delivery to meet multiple support needs of disabled children and young people in Scotland.



Regional reach



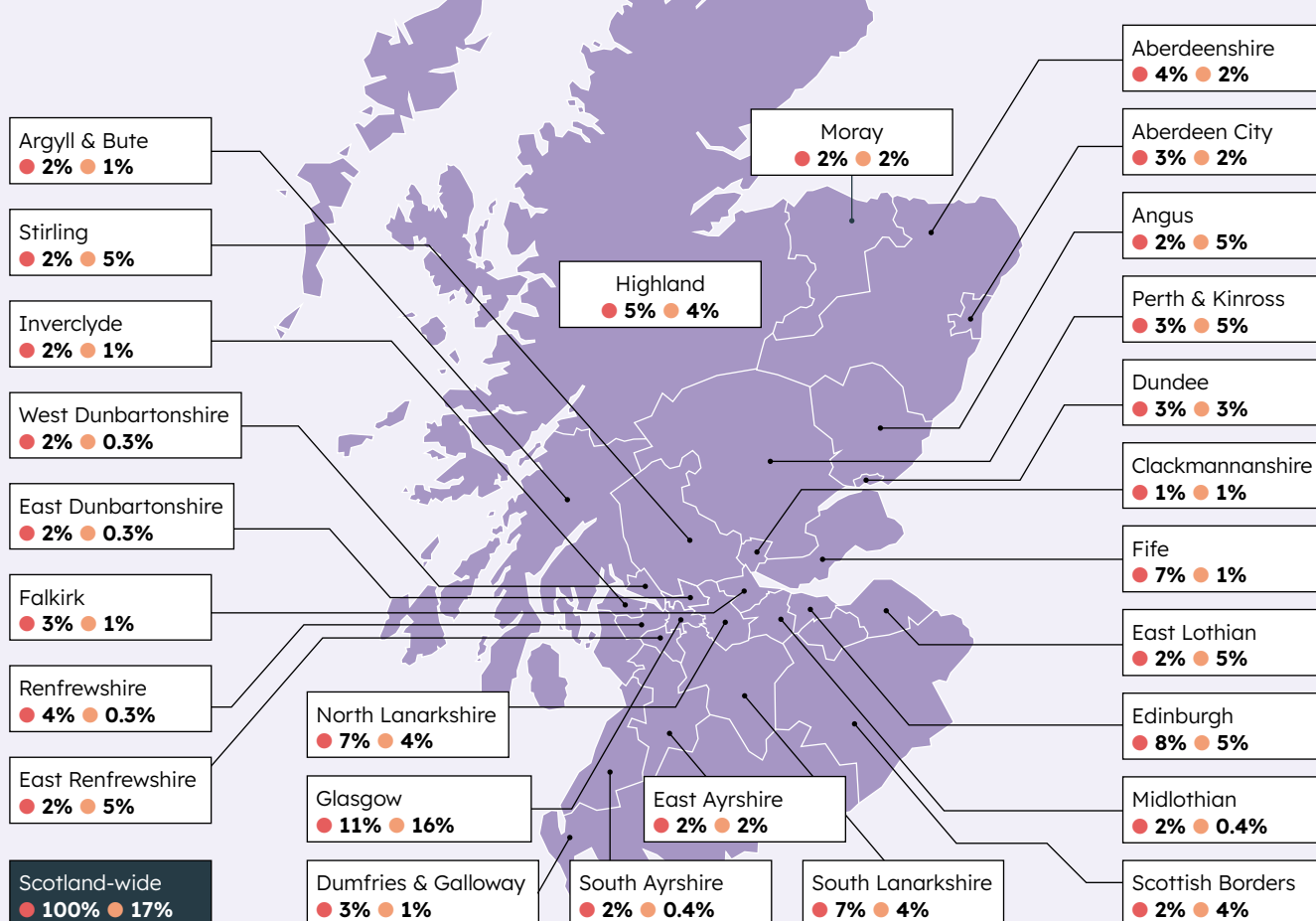
Better Breaks funding is distributed based on the merit of each individual application and how this measures against the criteria, principles and outcomes. Once funding decisions have been made, the team analyses how funding has been distributed across Scotland, ensuring that we're reaching as wide an area as possible.

This year the fund has demonstrated a strong regional impact across Scotland, with **over £1m** allocated to specific local authority areas, **in addition to £206,115** that will benefit those living across Scotland. Glasgow City emerged

as the most significantly funded area, receiving **nearly £200,000**, followed by East Renfrewshire, Angus, East Lothian, and Perth & Kinross. These five regions collectively accounted for a substantial portion of the total funding. However, the data also highlights potential geographical 'cold spots': North Ayrshire, Orkney Islands, Western Isles, and West Lothian. Some beneficiaries in these areas are covered by Scotland wide projects, but the data suggests potential gaps in regional reach or accessibility that may warrant further investigation to ensure equitable support across all local authorities.

Beneficiary reach

- % of carer population*
- % of Better Breaks funding



To understand the distribution of Better Breaks funding in relation to carer populations, we look at carer data from the 2022 Census by local authority area. This is refined by applying weighting factors for rurality and levels of deprivation, helping to ensure a more equitable and informed allocation of resources. It is important to note that these figures are estimates based on the data currently available. Accurately identifying the total number of unpaid carers across Scotland remains challenging, as

many do not recognise themselves as carers or are under-represented in support systems.

This year's figures confirm that Glasgow received a significant share of the funding, which reflects its large carer population. However, the data also highlights areas for improvement. Fife, for example, received just 1% of the funding despite **representing 7% of Scotland's unpaid carers**. This suggests a need to actively encourage more applications from under-represented areas.

Types and frequency of short breaks

A wide range of activities were supported through Better Breaks funding, providing carers and the people they care for with opportunities for rest, connection and enjoyment.

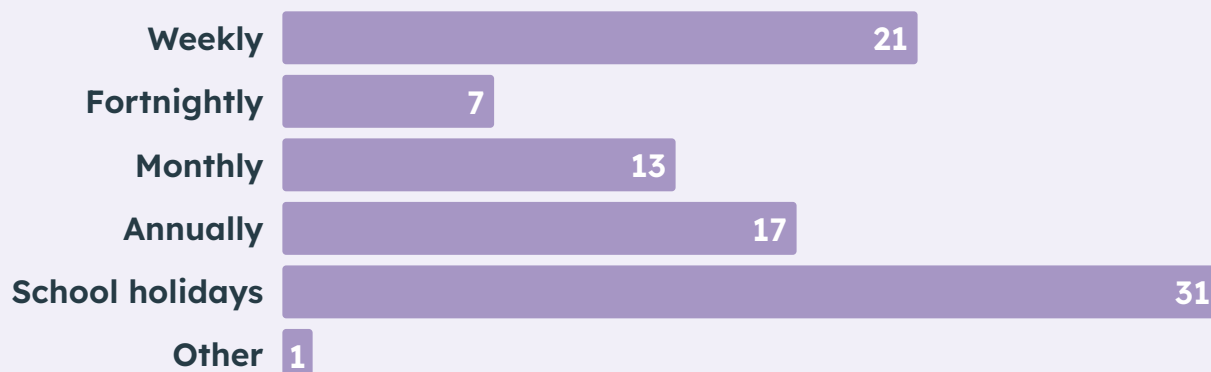
Over the reporting period:

- 33 funded breaks were in the form of clubs or play schemes, offering regular, structured activities and short breaks.
- 24 projects provided day trips, giving carers and families accessible short breaks.
- 24 projects offered residential overnight stays, enabling

extended time away from caring responsibilities.

- 10 initiatives focused on befriending, helping to reduce isolation and build peer relationships.
- 1 project – classed as ‘Other’ – was a musical short break, reflecting a unique or less common form of support.

The range of short break types demonstrates a commitment to flexible and tailored respite options that meet diverse needs of disabled children and young people and their unpaid carers.

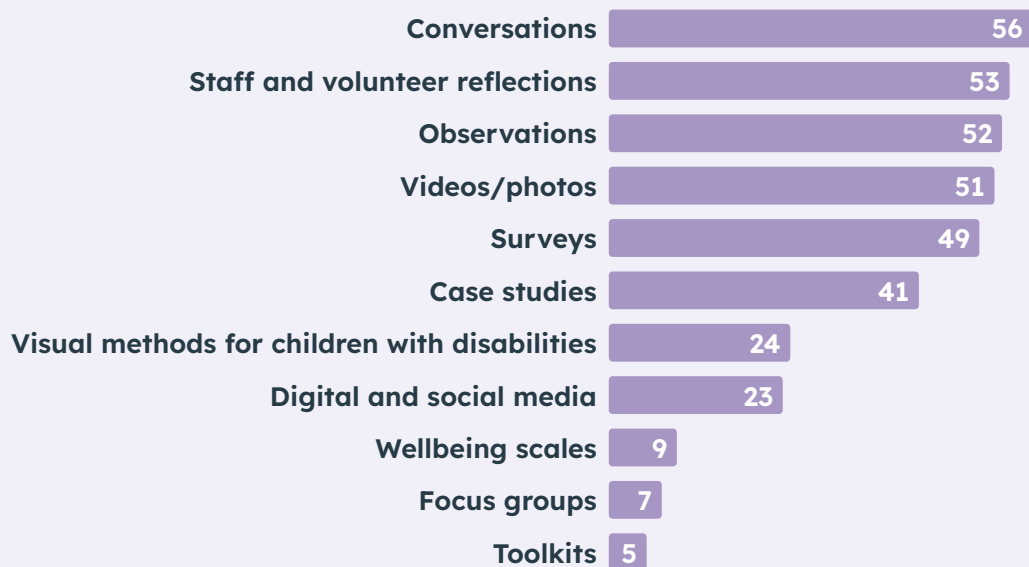


Short breaks were delivered at varying times and frequencies to suit the diverse needs of carers and the people they support. School holidays accounted for the largest share, with **31 funded breaks** offering much needed respite during the holidays. Weekly activities accounted for **21 breaks**, providing consistent and regular support. Monthly breaks were also common, with **17 breaks** delivered over the period.

Fortnightly sessions accounted for **13 breaks**, balancing regularity with flexibility. Annually, **7 breaks** were provided, often as more significant, one-off residential short breaks.

This distribution shows a strong emphasis on regular and school holiday-based short breaks, reflecting the importance of dependable, planned support for unpaid carers.

Evidence gathering



The Short Breaks Fund plays a key role in building the evidence base for the value and impact of short breaks in supporting caring relationships. Grant holders contribute to this by monitoring and evaluating their projects, ensuring effectiveness and alignment with Better Breaks outcomes.

Funded organisations submit progress reports mid-way through their project and an end of grant impact report at the end of their activities. The Short Breaks Fund offer free workshops for grant holders from Evaluation Support Scotland to increase their skill in gathering outcome-focused evidence. One-to-one calls with our Grant Officers and opportunities to connect and collaborate with other projects are enabled, all of which strengthen evaluation practices.

The Short Breaks Fund team carefully review the data and insights gathered,

and shares this with key stakeholders to improve short breaks practice. This process also highlights gaps in support for carers and those they care for, ensuring future services can be further developed to meet their needs.

Qualitative and informal evaluation methods remain dominant as the preferred forms of evidence gathering this year. This reflects a strong emphasis on storytelling, relationships and lived experience. Less prominent use of structured tools such as scales and toolkits may indicate gaps in evaluation capacity or confidence. While some projects have adapted methods to improve accessibility, including visual tools, these remain underutilised compared to traditional approaches. The Short Breaks Fund team will continue to support projects in adopting more robust, mixed-method evaluation practices to strengthen evidence and impact.

CASE STUDIES

Support Help and Integration in Perthshire (SHIP) (SCIO)

Project name: Holiday Club Respite

Funding amount: £33,674

SHIP delivered a flexible, inclusive holiday club which gave disabled children and young people a safe, engaging space to socialise and have fun, while their families received vital respite. Sessions ran during school holidays, with morning and afternoon options to accommodate varying needs. Activities were entertaining and structured to promote social inclusion, confidence-building, and community engagement, including local outings to parks and attractions. Families were actively involved in shaping the programme. Through feedback forms, monthly committee meetings and informal 'coffee and chat' sessions, parents and carers influenced session design, timings, and activity choices. This collaborative approach has strengthened trust and ensured the clubs meet real, lived needs.

Impact and feedback

- ▶ **10,200 hours of respite delivered.**
- ▶ **670 family members supported.**

- ▶ Services ran across 1 week in April; 5 weeks in Summer; 1 week in October and 10 half-day sessions at Christmas.
- ▶ **100% of families** reported improved mental wellbeing.
- ▶ Families noted increased capacity to manage responsibilities, attend appointments, and reconnect with other family members.

The clubs offered families 'breathing space' and significantly reduced stress during school holidays. One parent shared:

"Having SHIP has changed my life. I didn't realise how on edge I was until I got a break. My son absolutely loves going, which means I can relax, focus on my daughter, and even catch up on housework. These moments help me recharge and be a better parent."

SHIP's holiday clubs have proven to be a lifeline for families navigating the challenges of additional support needs. By offering tailored, flexible support, SHIP not only enhances the lives of disabled children and young people but also strengthens relationships within the wider family.



Epilepsy Scotland

Project name: Weekend Getaways for Young People with Epilepsy

Funding amount: £13,031

Epilepsy Scotland delivered two residential weekends: one at PGL Dalguise and a creative retreat at Netherurd Garden House. These getaways provided young people living with epilepsy opportunities to build confidence, independence and social connections while offering much needed respite for parents and carers.

The young people experienced a wide range of activities that they expressed interest in including nature walks, bird watching, star gazing, animal-assisted therapy, canoeing, archery and more.

During both trips, disabled children and young people bonded over shared experiences such as medication routines, which helped normalise their conditions in a safe and supportive environment.

Impact on cared for

- ▶ 90% reported reduced isolation.
- ▶ 96% made new friends.
- ▶ 81% continued contact with friends beyond the trips.
- ▶ 100% felt supported in living with epilepsy.

One young person shared:

“Before the residential my confidence was low, but at the end of the weekend my confidence is high. I don’t want to say goodbye to my roommates!”

Impact on carer

The weekends provided parents and carers with vital respite. Families reported using this time to rest, reconnect with partners or other children, travel or enjoy personal time, often for the first time in years.

A parent reflected:

“It takes pressure off me as the sole provider of care and alleviates my worries about his social isolation.”

Spotlight: Journey to independence

A young person with epilepsy, autism, learning disabilities and cerebral palsy faced significant barriers accessing inclusive youth activities. Through Epilepsy Scotland’s one-to-one support and carefully structured experiences, they progressed from short trips to attending their first overnight residential without their mum.

Their mum shared:

“I was so anxious, but I knew they were in safe hands. They came back proud, confident, and already asking to go again. It gave me a break I’ve not had in years.”

These residential weekends demonstrated Epilepsy Scotland’s commitment to creating safe, enriching environments where young people with epilepsy can thrive, connect, and grow while enabling carers to rest, recharge and feel supported.



Stirling Carers Centre

Project name: Families Project

Funding amount: £33,321

This project delivered a programme of recreational and leisure activities for disabled children and young people and their families in the Stirling area. The focus was developed following conversations with families who relayed that the cost of transport, time to organise, entry fees and specialist staff were among the main reasons parent carers were struggling to spend meaningful time as a family. This funding has allowed these barriers to be removed and helped families enjoy quality time together away from the stresses of caring. A wide range of activities were delivered, such as 'Jump and Joy', 'Wacky Play', bowling, pumpkin picking, and pantomime. After school sport classes for the children helped children physically and mentally. During these sessions, carers were supported to come together and reduce isolation through shared experience in a relaxing setting.

Impact

Tailored support and flexibility

- ▶ The wide range of activities catered to diverse family needs, including evening sessions, age-specific events, quieter sessions, and physical activities.

- ▶ Pre-arranged adjustments (e.g. noise levels, sensory considerations, travel times, etc.) helped families feel more relaxed and comfortable.

Family-centred approach

- ▶ Opportunities to take a break as a whole family is uncommon in the area but proved highly impactful, improving family relationships and reducing stress.
- ▶ Siblings were included in activities, allowing them to enjoy time as children without the burden of caring responsibilities.

A sibling said:

"It's just made things better for me. I've made new friends and now feel less stressed."

Carer empowerment and choice

- ▶ Group events with flexible and optional participation reduced anxiety and gave families control over their experience.
- ▶ Open conversations with families before events ensured individual needs were met.

One carer said:

"Thank you so much for this, it's been absolutely awesome fun! Really enjoyed it and everyone has been so friendly!"



IMPACT, ACHIEVEMENTS, LEARNING AND CHALLENGES

Grant holders share what they have learned over the course of the funding period, along with how they plan to apply these insights to strengthen both their short breaks practice and their wider organisational development. The following themes have emerged from the reports submitted to the fund during this period.

Impact for carers

- ▶ 100% reported getting a break from their normal routine.
- ▶ 88% were able to relax.
- ▶ 80% connected with other carers.
- ▶ 75% felt less isolated and enjoyed the social support provided.
- ▶ 65% enjoyed celebrating their child's achievements.

“Thank you for a great day out. For the first time I was able to relax and enjoy the fun. My son was smiling all day playing with the bubble machine and feeling them land on him I could tell he was having fun.”

“I can leave her and know she will be fine. I had some time to spend with my younger child which is very rare and he really enjoys having time with me away from his sister.”



Impact for disabled children and young people

- ▶ 100% participated in fun activities and felt included.
- ▶ 100% were given the opportunity to socialise with peers.
- ▶ 100% were given opportunities to develop friendships.
- ▶ 100% developed confidence to try new things.
- ▶ 93% developed new skills.
- ▶ 95% had improved physical wellbeing.
- ▶ 100% had improved emotional wellbeing.

“My friends make me feel amazing.”

“I can now speak with confidence. Before I would only communicate with face and hand gestures.”

“I can act myself in front of the group”





Achievements

Increased engagement across services

- ▶ Carers actively accessed a wider range of services offered by funded organisations, with effective signposting to additional support when needed.
- ▶ Disabled children and young people benefitted from a tailored, person-centred approach and were introduced to enriching new experiences that broadened their horizons.

Volunteer and staff development

- ▶ Targeted training and hands-on project delivery increased volunteers' and staff members' confidence in supporting disabled children and young people.
- ▶ Development of wellbeing support for staff and volunteers meant they felt valued, listened to and better supported to handle challenging situations.

Empowerment of carers

- ▶ Carers reported increased confidence in their caring roles and a greater sense of control in navigating complex support systems.
- ▶ Feelings of isolation were reduced as carers became more connected, both to services and to each other.

Promoting independence in disabled children and young people

- Disabled children and young people developed key life skills, including social confidence, communication and personal independence.
- Many children and young people experienced their first time away from home, building resilience and trust in new environments.

Family inclusion and confidence

- Tools such as daily diaries and social media updates provided families with insight into their child's activities and progress, boosting parental confidence.
- Families reported increased bonding and a willingness to engage in shared leisure activities, contributing to stronger family units.

Broader wellbeing outcomes

- Improved emotional regulation and enhanced wellbeing were observed in many disabled children and young people.
- Several families formed lasting connections through the project, leading to ongoing peer support and reduced social isolation beyond the funding period.

These achievements demonstrate that short breaks go far beyond respite. They support empowerment, inclusion, creativity and systemic change. The breadth of impact includes individual

growth, stronger families, skilled volunteers and better-prepared communities. These achievements affirm the wider social return of short breaks investment.

Learning



Projects overwhelmingly highlighted **the value of being inclusive (93%)** and **flexible (85%)**, indicating that adaptable, person-centred support is essential for meeting the complex and varied needs of families. These qualities helped ensure better participation and made services more accessible and welcoming to all.

The importance of peer support (67%) also featured strongly, showing that shared experiences among

parents, carers and young people foster connection, reduce isolation and build resilience. **Wider engagement (47%)** and **increased community input (37%)** were recognised as critical to strengthening networks around families and ensuring activities reflect local needs and strengths.

Over a quarter of projects mentioned early intervention as a vital principle, suggesting room to further embed preventative approaches in service design. Similarly, **improved sleep (35%)** — a known indicator of reduced stress and enhanced wellbeing — was acknowledged as a valuable outcome, particularly for families under sustained pressure.

These findings underline that effective short break support is not just about time away from caring; it is about creating inclusive, adaptable and connected spaces where families can thrive.





Challenges

Better Breaks projects encountered a range of delivery challenges in the reporting period:

- Increased demand **(53%)**
- Increased costs **(42%)**
- Funding limitations **(40%)**
- Staffing/volunteer shortages **(38%)**

These pressures reflect a sector grappling with rising expectations from families amidst constrained resources. Projects also reported significant issues with **transport barriers (28%)** and limited or inflexible **SDS budgets (15%)**, both of which limit accessibility and flexibility for families trying to engage in short break activities.

Engagement (22%) and **venue availability (20%)** remained notable concerns. While **transitions between**

services or age groups (8%) appeared to be a lesser concern, it remains a challenge for some.

The overlap between staffing issues and rising demand highlights the strain on services, with many projects operating at or beyond capacity. The cost-of-living crisis has also exacerbated the impact of increased costs, making it more difficult for organisations to maintain the same level of provision. Overall, the data reflects a sector that is highly committed but increasingly stretched, underscoring the need for sustained investment and support to meet growing needs. Despite these challenges, this is the first year since COVID that no Better Breaks projects required extensions beyond the funding period, indicating a strong return to stability, improved project planning and adaptability to challenges.



Over the Wall

Contribution to outcomes

Better Breaks projects were expected to meet at least three of the four outcomes:

OUTCOME 1: Disabled children and young people will have more opportunities to have fun, develop friendships and do activities they enjoy

All **60 projects** met this outcome

How projects met this outcome:

- Organising a wide range of inclusive activities to ensure disabled children and young people could have fun in ways that suited their interests and needs.
- Providing regular social events where disabled children and young people could connect with peers, build friendships, and enjoy shared experiences.
- Fun practical life skills sessions and residential stays without carers. Helped disabled children and young people build confidence and independence.

OUTCOME 2: Carers of disabled children and young people will have more opportunities to enjoy a life outside of their caring role

56 projects met this outcome

How projects met this outcome:

- Some projects arranged dedicated activities for carers, including social events, peer support groups, and workshops, offering space for connection, learning, and emotional support.
- Regular and one-off short breaks were provided, either through direct care for children, young people, or siblings, or by offering inclusive family activities, giving carers valuable time to rest or recharge.
- Holiday camps and weekend residential breaks gave carers extended periods of respite.

OUTCOME 3: Carers of disabled children and young people will feel better supported to sustain their caring role

53 projects met this outcome

How projects met this outcome:

- ▶ Carers were given opportunities to connect with others in similar situations, allowing them to share experiences, offer mutual support, and build lasting friendships.
- ▶ Projects provided information and signposting to other relevant services, helping carers access additional support tailored to their needs.
- ▶ Carers were actively consulted throughout, ensuring that the short breaks offered were meaningful, appropriate, and helped them sustain their vital caring roles.

OUTCOME 4: Disabled children and young people and their carers will have improved wellbeing

59 projects met this outcome

How projects met this outcome:

- ▶ Many projects adopted a person-centred approach, tailoring activities to meet the physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing needs of both disabled children and young people, as well as their carers.
- ▶ In-house support services were utilised, helping to address wider health and wellbeing needs through counselling, advocacy, and practical assistance.
- ▶ Several projects reported better sleep patterns in disabled children and young people which enabled carers to get more rest.

Supporting grant holders

Shared Care Scotland provides support to Short Breaks Fund grant holders to enhance short breaks delivery even further across Scotland. In 2024 this included:

- ▮ Mid-year review calls (on request) to offer guidance and address challenges.
- ▮ In-person Shared Care Scotland annual conference, providing networking and learning opportunities.
- ▮ Project visits to both newly funded and existing organisations, fostering collaboration and deeper understanding.
- ▮ Free Evaluation Support Scotland workshops, equipping organisations with tools to measure and improve project outcomes.

This tailored support helps grant holders maximise the effectiveness of their short break projects, ensuring the best possible experiences for unpaid carers and those they care for.

“I have a much greater understanding on how to report effectively and how to really get the best feedback to support our outcomes. I have new ideas on how move forward and really make sure our charity is learning along the way.”

“Shared Care Scotland events are undoubtably the best networking opportunity of the year for carers and providers.”



Connecting with communities

Members of the team visited Eilean Siar to promote Shared Care Scotland's work, raise awareness of the Short Breaks Fund and engage local partners in the Respite initiative. Over three days, they met with local businesses, carers and third sector organisations, highlighting the importance of short breaks in remote communities. A 'Lunch and Learn' session provided valuable dialogue on access to short breaks, particularly in light of Eilean Siar's status as a Better Breaks 'cold spot.' The visit also included a meeting with Neil Gray MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, who heard directly from unpaid carers about the challenges of island-based care.

A delegate from the 'Lunch and Learn' session shared:

Eilean Siar visit

"I really enjoyed the morning. The staff leading the event were so friendly, which made it an enjoyable and engaging experience. The discussions were incredibly informative."

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who welcomed us during our visit. Eilean Siar is a truly special place, and the team are grateful for the opportunity to connect, learn and support the incredible work being done around short breaks in this community.

Additional benefits of funding to organisations

Additional benefits of funding to organisations included:

- ▶ Increased reputation **(68%)**
- ▶ Strengthened community connections **(58%)**
- ▶ Ability to expand capacity **(55%)**
- ▶ Upskill staff and volunteers **(43%)**
- ▶ Support to receive other additional funding **(28%)**



Better Breaks development

In 2024 the Better Breaks application process was enhanced by introducing a streamlined, online form. This new format allowed multiple people from the same organisation to complete different sections at their own pace, improving accessibility and efficiency.

The same online platform was also used to collect mid-year and end-of-year grant impact reports, ensuring consistency and ease of reporting for grant holders.

To strengthen understanding of the applicant experience, an online applicant survey was conducted. Additionally, grant holders were invited to share feedback through the end-of-grant impact report, providing valuable insights to inform future improvements.

Tailored feedback sessions were offered to all unsuccessful applicants, supporting them to strengthen future applications.

Ongoing and future improvements

- ▶ **Multi-year funding:** the team continue to explore multi-year funding and are aware this would be transformational to organisations.
- ▶ **Funders' fayres:** the team regularly attend funders' fayres, particularly in geographic or thematic 'cold spots', to increase awareness and support for applicants who may be under-represented.
- ▶ **Eligibility screening:** the team added new criteria at the start of the application form to help reduce ineligible applications and save time for both applicants and assessors.
- ▶ **Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) monitoring:** the team began capturing DEI data to better understand the audience being reached.

“Every year, we speak with families to explain that we can’t guarantee their place beyond March due to the short-term nature of funding. This uncertainty adds stress to families already facing complex challenges. A 3-5 year funding model would ease that pressure. For our organisation, longer-term funding would also free up valuable time around two months annually, that could be redirected to directly supporting families instead of fundraising and reporting.”

SUMMARY

Better Breaks funding has delivered a range of additional benefits that extend well beyond planned respite care. Families reported increased confidence in accessing wider community services and activities, leading to stronger social connections and reduced isolation. Disabled children and young people developed greater independence, emotional resilience and self-expression through creative and social experiences. Meanwhile volunteers and staff gained valuable skills and career inspiration through meaningful engagement. The programme also empowered carers by improving access to information, building peer support networks and helping them feel more in control of their family's wellbeing. These unexpected but powerful outcomes highlight the transformative impact of short breaks funding on individuals, families and the wider community.

Better Breaks projects faced several challenges throughout delivery, including staffing or volunteer shortages, particularly in recruiting experienced support workers and volunteers to meet the diverse needs of disabled children and young people. Many projects also navigated the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis, which affected families' ability to participate fully and increased demand for subsidised or free activities.

Transport and accessibility issues were reported, especially in rural or remote areas, which created further barriers for some families. In addition, unpredictable health needs and caring responsibilities often meant lower or last-minute attendance. Despite these challenges, projects showed adaptability and commitment, ensuring that meaningful and inclusive short break experiences could still be delivered to those who needed them most. No project extensions were required, reflecting greater confidence, adaptability and operational resilience amongst funded organisations, suggesting that services are recovering well from the disruption of the pandemic and are better equipped to manage timelines.

Thank you to the Scottish Government for providing vital funding that enables short breaks for disabled children, young people and their carers. This investment makes a meaningful difference to families across Scotland, enhancing wellbeing, building resilience and quality of life.

A heartfelt thank you to our funded organisations 2024–2025 for their dedication and commitment in delivering short breaks. Your work has provided invaluable support to disabled children and young people, and carers across Scotland.



Thank you to our funded organisations who delivered short breaks in 2024–2025

77th Glasgow Disabled Scouts
Aberlour Child Care Trust
Ability Shetland
Adoption UK
Angus Carers Association
Angus Special Playscheme
Barnardo's
Beachcombers
Borders Additional Needs Group
Buddies Clubs and Services (Glasgow West) Ltd
Can Do
Charlie House
Cosgrove Care
Deaf Action
Dundee United Community Trust
East Ayrshire Leisure Trust
Edinburgh Leisure
Epilepsy Scotland
Firsthand Lothian
Geeza Break
Glasgow East End Community Carers
Hear My Music
Include Me 2 Club SCIO
Indepen-dance
Indigo Childcare Group
Interest Link Borders
Jack and Jill Support Group
North Argyll Carers Centre
North Berwick Youth Project
Over The Wall

PAMIS
Perth Autism Support SCIO
PlayPeace SCIO
PLUS (Forth Valley) Limited
Prader-Willi Syndrome Association UK
Quarriers Dumfries and Galloway
Rangers Charity Foundation SCIO
Reach 4 Reality
REACH Lanarkshire Autism
RIG Arts
SAMs Charity
Scotland Yard Adventure Centre (The Yard)
Scottish Disability Sport
SensationALL
Sense Scotland
SNAP (Special Needs Action Project)
Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Scotland
St Andrews Botanic Garden Trust
Stanmore House School
Stirling Carers Centre
SupERkids
Support Help and Integration in Perthshire
Team Jak Foundation
The Carrick Centre
The DASH Club
THE SATURDAY CAFE CLUBS (SCIO)
The Speech and Language Communication Co
Tourette Scotland
West Scotland Deaf Children's Society

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