

About Better Breaks

- Better Breaks forms part of the Scottish Government's Short Breaks Fund
- the Better Breaks programme is focused on improving the range and availability of short break opportunities for disabled children and young people, particularly those with multiple support needs, including short break opportunities that families can enjoy together, or which allow parents and siblings to have time away from their caring responsibilities.
- the third round of one-year funding commenced in April 2014
- a total of 66 projects received funding
- the total amount of funding utilised was £1,303,387
- this enabled over 6,000 carers to benefit from a short break
- the Scottish Government committed a further £82,185 specifically for autistic children and young people and five projects were funded benefiting a further 306 carers
- including the previous rounds, a total of £3,754,217 has been awarded, benefiting over 15,000 carers



Who we supported

- 21 day facilities, playschemes or clubs ranging from youth clubs to sports clubs
- 8 activity breaks for the cared for person (and in most cases the carer as well)
- 5 befriending support
- 2 holiday breaks for families/carers and the cared for person
- 1 home-based service
- 21 multiple/other services including carer arranged/self identified break
- 8 supported leisure and activities
- 5 autism-specific projects focused largely on providing activity and holiday breaks for the cared for person as well as the carer



Background and facts

Short Breaks Fund – The Scottish gateway to personalised short break support for unpaid carers and the people they care for.

Launched in 2010 for one year, the fund has now been running for 5 and has proved to be a lifeline for many carers. During the past 5 years the Scottish Government, through Shared Cared Scotland has distributed £10,276,632 to 560 projects to deliver innovative, tailor made breaks to groups and individuals.

What is a short break?

Over the past five years the understanding of what a short break is has evolved. The traditional view of respite, while still important, has taken on many new forms. By seeking to provide a tailored solution for the needs of carers (and those they care for) we have found that this could be anything from the typical short holiday break to accessing funding to provide a resource which would enable a carer to get a break without even leaving their own home.

Get in touch

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Better Breaks

A summary of projects funded between April 2014 and March 2015

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Better Breaks: projects funded between April 2014 and March 2015



SNAP (Special Needs Action Project) provided weekend breaks, outings and activities for young people aged 8 to 18 with additional support needs. These enabled the young people to socialise with friends, try out new things and develop life skills. Carers also benefited from a break from their caring role. "One carer was really looking forward to going to a wedding without the usual anxieties that go hand in hand with attending an event like that with a child who has special needs. Others were going away for their own mini break. One was looking forward to an uninterrupted shopping trip into town, knowing that their child was being well looked after."

Top tip: "Think mainstream and out of the box! Just because we have a group of children who have specialist needs doesn't mean they have to have specialist activities. We access mainstream activities and facilities if we are away for weekend breaks."

Linn Park Youth Group used their funding to organise a two-night activity break for 13 young people and 13 parents/carers at the Calvert Trust, Kielder Forest. The Trust supervised all the activities, and in the evening everyone met up to get to know each other and share experiences. "The Kielder weekend was once again a fantastic success. All the kids had a great time enjoying the activities and socialising together in a safe and fun environment."

Top tip: "Don't underestimate the work involved in coordinating a trip like this!"



Firsthand Lothian provide flexible family respite through home-based support and respite for families with children with disabilities living in Edinburgh. Staff and volunteers are matched with children and deliver regular respite sessions, encouraging and enabling children to access activities in their local community. "D is lovely, we couldn't be happier. She is professional and patient and just brilliant. We've never seen our son make a connection with anyone else other than ourselves. She seems to really tap into him. The service has been a fantastic addition to our lives."

Top Tip: "Really encourage carers and children to think about what they want to do. They need to be in control of the service and able to change it if it's not working for them."

Watermill Wheelers provided fortnightly opportunities for carers and clients to have exclusive use of the Highland Cycle Ability Centre. Carers could relax whilst staff and volunteers assisted clients around the track on ordinary or specialised cycles. Some staff and volunteers were from the Watermill Foundation whilst others came from the local community. "My autistic daughter wasn't keen on physical activity and it was difficult to get her off her computer. But her and her sister love coming here. It is so good to be able to do something with them".

Top tip: "Increasing participation levels can be challenging. Promotional material, use of social media and word of mouth is key."

Perth Autism Support's Team Ranch project provided four activities weekends, three for children with autism under the age of 18 and one for young carer siblings. The camps were preceded by four months of social events so the children could get to know their fellow campers and build relationships with staff and volunteers. "The Teen Range experience allowed the family to see exactly how much work would be required to support their son during his P7 class trip to Dalguise. They were able to show the school exactly what information would be helpful to prepare him for the experience and how to support him during the actual trip."

Top tip: "Preparation is key! Make sure all activities are well prepared in advance so the children know exactly what to expect!"

Over the Wall support children with serious and life-limiting illnesses. They organised a weekend holiday camp which provided whole families with much needed respite from the pressures of daily life. The families got the opportunity to try new things, challenge each other, laugh and relax. "The kids absolutely loved the relaxed, crazy, fun atmosphere at camp. Our daughter so enjoyed being 'one of the crowd' she felt normal again. It was such a relief to be surrounded by people who 'get it' and to know that we are most definitely not alone."

Top tip: "Try to ensure parents get some time to themselves, to mix with other carers, whilst the children are occupied elsewhere. They really appreciate the opportunity to discuss shared concerns and experiences, and long-term friendships have been made over the years in this way – providing support networks well beyond the duration of camp."



Interest Link Borders provided one-to-one and group befriending for children and young people with learning disabilities. The focus was on improving quality of life and giving their carers the chance to enjoy a life outside of their caring role. The service was delivered entirely by volunteers. "Two years ago my son would never have been visiting castles or jumping out of trees on adventure activity challenges. But since meeting up with his buddy he hasn't looked back."

Top tip: "Consult with the families you are supporting to establish the level of need and the types of befriending they want (e.g. one-to-one or group). Use this information as the basis of your business plan and funding applications."

71 projects supported across Scotland



The Glee Club was a weekly drama, movement, music and dance club set up by East Renfrewshire Warriors. The parent-led committee worked with social work staff and a drama company to support young people with additional support needs, enabling them to confidently interact and make new friends in a fun and safe environment. The finale was a spectacular show. As well as having a huge impact on the young people, the club provided valuable respite for their carers: "Glee Club is the only time we have in the week outwith our caring role where we can spend time together to meet other families who share our caring experience". The parents used this respite time to develop a siblings club, and put their proposal to the local ASN school.

Top tip: "Make sure the drama company and support team can provide consistent staff throughout the project."

