



Take a Break

Scotland's short breaks fund for carers of disabled children and young people



Outcome Report 2025/26

Administered by:



Family Fund

Helping disabled children

Introduction

Being there for families is central to Family Fund's 2023-2028 strategy. For over 50 years we have strived to do just that. We are the UK's largest charity providing grants to families raising disabled and seriously ill children and young people. Several of the grant programmes we deliver support families of disabled and seriously ill children and young people in Scotland, including Take a Break.

The Take a Break grant programme is one of four grant programmes through which Scottish Government's Voluntary Sector Short Breaks Fund is delivered. The Short Breaks Fund was established in 2011, with the aim of supporting more carers to take a break from their caring role, by increasing the range and availability of short breaks throughout Scotland. Family Fund developed and have administered Take a Break Scotland on behalf of Scottish Government since 2011/12.

The programme is intended to support families raising a disabled or seriously ill child or young person, aged 0-17 years, by strengthening their access to a right to a break, through the provision of cash grants, supported by engagement and signposting.

Three other Short Break Fund programmes are administered by Shared Care Scotland. These are: Better Breaks, Creative Breaks and Time to Live.

In 2025/26 the Take a Break grant programme was open to applications from unpaid carers of disabled children and young people aged 0-17 years, between May 23rd to June 20th, 2025.

This report provides a review and analysis of the Take a Break programme for 2025/26.

Drawing on feedback from 688 grant recipients who responded to an impact and evaluation survey, it presents the performance of the programme against its core aims, which relate to promoting the health and wellbeing of parent carers.

In addition, through the survey, we chose to gather additional evidence which demonstrates the supplementary value that the programme delivers by also supporting children and young people's wellbeing, as understood utilising the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach. As such the report covers:

- Aims, outcomes and indicators
- Outcomes for carers
- Family-wide outcomes
- Children and young people's wellbeing outcomes
- 2025/26 grant statistics
- Added value
- Summary of 2025/26
- Carers' stories





Aims, outcomes and indicators

The Take a Break Scotland grant programme seeks to support unpaid carers of disabled children and young people under the age of 18 years, to protect their wellbeing and sustain caring relationships and to better enable carers to be:

- More able to have a life alongside their caring role
- As physically, emotionally and mentally well as they can be
- More aware of the entitlements, opportunities and resources available to support short breaks
- Supported to reduce the negative impacts of low income by enabling carers to maintain their own health and wellbeing which can enable the continuation of the caring role.

All carers applying to the programme had access to information which encouraged them to think creatively when planning their short break, and to apply for a grant which would support them to take a short break which was in line with their individual interests, circumstances and chosen outcomes.

Thanks to Scottish Government investment in the Short Breaks Fund, which increased from £8m to £13m, funding for the Take Break programme received a welcome uplift from £1.5m to £2.2m.

Nevertheless, the need for the support still significantly outstripped the available funding. We were therefore delighted to secure an additional £1.135m from Scottish Government in 2025 to address the negative impacts of child poverty by supporting more unpaid parent carers with a Take a Break grant to enable them to access a short break.



The agreed outcomes and indicators for Take a Break in 2025/26, and the results achieved, were:

Outcomes for carers

Outcome	Indicator/s	Result	Related Carer Quotes
<p>All carers are more able to sustain their caring role for as long as they are able and willing to do so</p>	<p>Percentage of carers reporting that the break has been beneficial for their health and wellbeing. Target – 85% plus</p>	<p>99% of carers reported that the break had been beneficial for their health & wellbeing.</p>	<p><i>“It allowed us to have some much-needed respite away from the stresses of day to day life.”</i> Carer, South Ayrshire</p> <p><i>“Myself and my youngest daughter (not disabled) went on a break while my disabled daughter went on holiday with her dad. Due to this break away and recuperating I was more calm, relaxed and more patient with my disabled daughter when I got home. This was a god send.”</i> Carer, Renfrewshire</p>
	<p>Percentage of carers who could not have afforded the break without a grant from Take a Break Scotland Target – 85% plus</p>	<p>84% of carers reported that they could not have afforded the break without a grant from Take a Break Scotland. A further 14% were unsure if they could have afforded the break.</p>	<p><i>I have used the funds and booked a long weekend away with friends that is due to take place in December. We are going to take advantage of the spa and lovely outdoor walks to take a well-deserved break before the madness of Xmas arrives. By giving me this chance to afford and plan in advance so I can prepare my twins is really good and helps me have something to focus on during the harder days.”</i> Carer, Fife</p> <p><i>Without the Take A Break Scotland grant we could not have afforded to rent a holiday house for the week for our boys to be safe and secure in. It really did make our family holiday this year.”</i> Carer, Angus</p>



Outcome	Indicator/s	Result	Related Carer Quotes
<p>All carers are more able to have a life alongside their caring role</p>	<p>Percentage of carers reporting that the break has been beneficial for their health and wellbeing. Target – 85% plus</p>	<p>96% of carers reported that the grant provided opportunities for them to do activities with their children that they wouldn't normally be able to do together.</p>	<p><i>"We had the opportunity to go have a family holiday first one ever, thanks to the family fund. We got to enjoy time together as a family, do things we've never been able to do before such as the likes of swimming. This certainly took the financial pressure off us and one less worry. So grateful we were awarded."</i> Carer, East Dunbartonshire</p>
	<p>Percentage of carers reporting that they feel better able to balance their caring responsibilities with their other responsibilities. Target – 30% plus</p>	<p>96% of carers reported that, following their break they felt better able to explore and do the things they wanted to do alongside their caring role.</p> <p>97% of carers reported that following their break, they were better able to balance their caring responsibilities with their other responsibilities.</p>	<p><i>"We were able to enjoy (as a whole family) a short break away (staying in a caravan) which allowed both our children to spend time together and be able to visit loved family members who live hundreds of miles from us."</i> Carer, Perth and Kinross</p> <p><i>"It helped me ground myself more and have some relaxation to enjoy spending time with all the children. I feel more refreshed and more ready to face what's still to come."</i> Carer, Dundee</p> <p><i>"We used the grant on family days out and activities for my disabled son. This was so my husband and I could spend some time with our other son. We feel like a weight was lifted, we had things to look forward to and memories were made. Our boys were happy and that made us happy as parents."</i> Carer, Perth and Kinross</p>

Carer Outcomes

99% of 667 carers said that the grant had benefitted them. 96% of carers said that, following their break, they felt better able to explore and do the things they wanted to do alongside their caring role.

"For me, being a single mother of 2 and myself having a mobility disability, is difficult to keep up with bills and food and trips and exploring the surrounding areas. Not knowing what to do and how to do it, I was praying for a sign, and this grant was the answer of my prayers."

Carer, East Dunbartonshire

"The biggest difference this Take a Break Scotland grant has made for me as a carer is giving me the chance to pause, breathe, and reconnect with myself and my family. Caring for a child with complex needs can be emotionally and physically exhausting, and this grant allowed me to have a meaningful break from the constant demands of my caring role. It helped reduce my stress levels, restored some balance to my daily life, and allowed me to feel more relaxed and reenergised. I felt truly supported and valued as a carer, knowing that I was not alone and that there are resources available to make our lives a little easier. The time away reminded me of the importance of my own wellbeing, not just that of my child. I am incredibly grateful for this support. It has made me a stronger, more patient, and more hopeful carer."

Carer, Falkirk

"I am the main carer for my disabled young person. I find things very stressful on a daily basis and struggle to ever find time to do anything for myself. With the break away, I had a chance to not worry about cleaning or cooking and that was such a blessing! I had time to do things I wanted like watch the tv and get a foot massage and it was great! Just a change of scenery was brilliant!"

Carer, East Dunbartonshire

"My husband and I have been married ten years this year and been together 20 years this year also. We used the take a break grant to book a romantic holiday next year just for me and him as we never have time together. The kids all got to pick which family member they would like to stay with while we away and turns out they will be going away for the week with grandparents while we're away. So nice break for us all. If it wasn't for take a break I don't know when me and my husband would have the opportunity to do this and its gave us something special to look forward too."

Carer, Dundee



“By me having a rest, I felt I was able to return with more energy to meet the demands of my relentless ongoing caring role. I cannot put into words the massive benefit I got from going away. I put my photos in an album (first time I’ve ever done this) and take it out to look at it to make me smile when things are a bit tough.”

Carer, East Dunbartonshire

Family Wide Outcomes

We asked carers to tell us the biggest difference the Take a Break grant made for their family.

Carers told us it was important to have something to look forward to as a break from the normal routine and spend time together as a family. 94% of 688 carers agreed their break had helped them to spend more quality time together as a family.

“The Take a Break Scotland grant has made a meaningful difference to our family. It allowed us to enjoy a much-needed break from our daily routine, which is often very demanding due to our child’s disability. This grant enabled us to spend quality time together as a family, away from the usual stresses and pressures of care. Our disabled child benefitted emotionally and physically by being in a new environment that offered sensory stimulation, calm, and enjoyment. This had a positive impact on his mood, sleep, and overall wellbeing. It also gave us, as parents, the opportunity to relax and recharge, which is rare due to the level of care our child requires. Additionally, his sibling was able to join in and feel more included, strengthening their bond. The experience has helped us create happy memories together and feel more connected as a family. We are truly grateful for this support.”

Carer, Falkirk

Carers felt that Take a Break grants provide a valuable opportunity to do activities with their disabled children that would otherwise be inaccessible. 89% agreed their break had helped them spend days out and time away together as a family.

“We had a lovely break away to Sundrum castle and as a family we all had the most amazing time relaxing and doing lots of activities together that we all enjoyed very much Alfie had the best time at the swimming and one of my older children actually gained the confidence to go down the big slide by himself which we were all very proud of him.”*

Carer, West Lothian

Take a Break grants helped carers to feel like they were able to care better for their child and offer opportunities that they could not normally offer.

“As a carer and a mum of 5 children ranging from 16 to 3 I struggle daily to find activities for us all to do together or just even getting them to want to do things sometimes is hard work so I feel that the family time we spent together really meant a lot to me as far as sometimes not being able to spread my time between them all.”

Carer, West Lothian

“Being able to get away for a break with a change of scenery with our autistic daughter is a lifesaver. It is very much needed to have the chance of a small break once a year to recharge my batteries & renew my energy for the year ahead. It was amazing to relax for a long weekend away in a new place away from all my everyday worries. To feel so relaxed doesn't happen often.”

Carer, Glasgow

“It let me and my wife enjoy a relaxing week where we knew our son was safe and able to be himself and enjoy the outdoors and the fresh sea air. Normally we can't afford a holiday overlooking the sea but with this grant we managed to book a caravan with a veranda looking over the sea.”

Carer, Dumfries and Galloway

Take a Break grants also enabled families to do things together that were financially otherwise out of reach. 80% of 688 carers agreed Take a Break Scotland has helped them manage better financially.

“We booked a holiday to Dunoon and used the grant to go on day trips to Oban and Inverary. Whilst we were at both places, we were able to visit the Jail and go sightseeing which we could not have afforded if we didn't have the grant. My myself and the rest of the family loved seeing different parts of Scotland and visiting new places. We were very grateful that we got accepted 1s time for the grant.”

Carer, South Lanarkshire

“Well, my son is in P5 now, and during P4 he learned about Loch Ness. And because his autism is more logical and not creative at all, it was difficult for him to visualise things based on a description. And because of this fund we were actually able to visit the Loch Ness and the surroundings. It was such a precious moment to see the joy in his eyes, and I was amazed by him, because he was telling me so many interesting facts about Loch Ness and «Nessie». Without this fund I wouldn't afford this experience for him, and because of that I don't know how to thank you.”

Carer, East Dunbartonshire



Children & young people's wellbeing outcomes

Whilst the purpose of the Take a Break Scotland programme centres on improving and sustaining parent carers' health and wellbeing, the breaks it provides often strengthen familial relationships and support other family member's mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Utilising the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach, we asked parent carers who had received a grant about the impact that their break had on any children in their family. 688 grant recipients responded to our impact and evaluation survey. Here we provide evidence regarding the impact of the programme on the wellbeing of children, across the eight wellbeing indicator domains, which are: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included.

Included

56% of 688 carers reported that as a result of their Take a Break funded break, their disabled child was more included.

"The take a break fund benefitted my family by giving us a chance to be able to go away for a short break as a family to somewhere that was safe for our youngest son how is autistic as well as his big brother helping both feel included."

Carer, Stirling

"She felt included in something we couldn't usually do and she has always wanted to attend as we wouldn't have the funds to have extra support. She got to just be a teenager for one day and it was all about her."

Carer, Renfrewshire

"We went to Thurston manor caravan, and we spent days at the beach enjoying the lovely weather. My disabled daughter stumbed for hours as she was so happy with the feeling of the sand and sea in her toes. We relaxed, enjoyed entertainment and arcades and the entertainment team were fab with her. She was so included and we loved our time away."

Carer, West Lothian

Active

52% of 688 carers reported that as a result of their Take a Break funded break, their disabled child was more active.

"To use the fund towards a family caravan holiday, was just fantastic. Although a change of scene does come with challenges, overall, the benefits outweigh these. We are able to try new things, visit new places, get fresh sea air and exercise without it being a battle."

Carer, Edinburgh

“The grant allowed us to take our grandson who is a full-time wheelchair user, who needs full time care, to a caravan park that had an outdoor heated pool. This was such a benefit to him as it allowed him to have fun and exercise out of his wheelchair.”

Carer, South Lanarkshire

“We were able to relax in an enclosed caravan park where I could be sure both boys were safe playing. Both boys are disabled but one learned to ride his bike on this trip and it has given him so much more confidence and much needed outdoors exercise. This was in Southernness holiday park, and we will certainly be returning when we can.”

Carer, Glasgow

Nurtured

51% of 688 carers indicated that, as a result of their Take a Break funded break, their disabled child was feeling more nurtured.

“The grant was used to pay for transport and accommodation so that each member of the family, the disabled one and the carers, time for themselves and one on one with other members of the family away from home. It allowed our daughter to feel nurtured by time with mum and dad having fun and chatting.”

Carer, Falkirk

Achieving

36% of carers indicated that as a result of their Take a Break funded break, their disabled child was achieving more.

“I used the grant for 2 nights in a hotel 30mins away with my 2 children. It was far enough to feel like a change of scenery but close enough to get home if anything happened. We enjoyed getting to ride the subway, go to a museum, and managed to go out for dinner. These were all huge achievements for my son.”

Carer, East Dunbartonshire

“We can never afford any family holiday without this grant. We loved this family time together without any stress of cooking cleaning or doing other household things. Had whole time for my son & he loved the whole attention. He explored different foods which is big achievement for him as he is very very fussy eater. I can never thank you enough for giving us the quality family time.”

Carer, North Lanarkshire



Healthy

23% of carers indicated that, as a result of their Take a Break funded break, their disabled child was healthier.

"We used the grant for a weekend away at a caravan park in Scotland. My daughter loves the outdoors and open spaces it gave us all a break and helped our health and wellbeing."

Carer, North Lanarkshire

"The grant allowed us to have a family holiday, this improved my sons health and wellbeing, mood and confidence."

Carer, South Lanarkshire

"We got to experience days out together, make core memories & picked sports equipment for the house we can use together, helping keep the regulated, healthy and fit."

Carer, North Ayrshire

Safe

13% of carers indicated that, as a result of their Take a Break funded break, their disabled child was safer.

"We managed to get a break away in a secluded safe area for my son."

Carer, Glasgow

"We used the grant towards an outdoor swing seat for our son. This has allowed for a peaceful little corner where he sits and looks at the trees. It allows him to be outside in a space that is safe and familiar to him, and this benefits him in so many ways."

Carer, West Dunbartonshire



Respected

11% of carers indicated that, as a result of their Take a Break funded break, their disabled child was feeling more respected.

"Family time together. It brought us closer and the kids respect each other a bit more. We all feel a little less stressed having got a break from the daily life role. Just nice and relaxed."

Carer, Highland

Responsible

10% of carers indicated that, as a result of their Take a Break funded break, their disabled child was more responsible.

“That I can trust my child. That my boy can be more independent.”

Carer, Scottish Borders

2025/26 Grant Statistics

A total of 8,780 grants were awarded to support unpaid carers of disabled and seriously ill children and young people aged 0-17 years to access a short break.

Applications received

Total Applications	9,279
First time applications	4,465
Repeat applications	4,814

Grants made to carers

	Summer	Winter	Total
Total grants	5,601	3,178	8,780
First time grants	4,034	0	4,034
Average grant value	£349	£349	£349
Total grant spend	£1,957,900	£1,109,850	£3,067,750

Age of child

Age at application	Summer	Winter	Total
0 to 5	1,555	594	2,149
6 to 10	3,027	1,664	4,691
11 to 15	2,573	1,567	4,140
16 +	626	428	1,055



How did carers use their grants to access breaks?

Carers accessing Take a Break are encouraged to use their grant flexibly, in a way that best meets their individual needs and circumstances and their own desired outcomes. As the programme supports parent carers, it is unsurprising that year on year the majority use their grant to help fund a family break, outings and day trips or recreational items, memberships or season passes which support the whole family to benefit from a break. Others choose to fund activities or items for the cared for young person, as their participation provides an opportunity for them to experience a break. However, for some it provides a rare opportunity to do or purchase something completely for themselves, which provides them with a short break. We can see the diversity of the types of breaks accessed by carers using their Take a Break this year reflected in the examples below:

family breaks



"It enabled us to have a fantastic family break together, spending quality time together making memories and having fun. We enjoyed so many activities on our week break it was great for our mental and physical health. We are so grateful."

Carer, East Dunbartonshire

"We were able to take a short break to visit family in Northern Ireland which resulted in mum and dad having a break as well due to family being able to watch child to let mum and dad get a bit of rest."

Carer, Edinburgh





"This year we done day trips, Edinburgh Zoo, walked up the Pentlands hills, visited the museums in Edinburgh, Colinton walk to Spylaw park and the dell. The funds helped with transport and packed lunches. We all got some long overdue exercise, and it took the children's minds off unfortunate events. My mum was terminally ill and had started deteriorating in May unfortunately she passed in July but thanks to the take a break grant the kids and myself were able to go to the dell and the Pentland hills (her favourite places) have a picnic and enjoy the beautiful scenery in her memory."

Carer, Perth and Kinross



"It benefited us as I was able to take another adult out on days out with us and have that extra person there for my older kids if my youngest child is as too overwhelmed, kicked off or needed to leave. It gave us the chance to enjoy days out while me being my son's person and being able to take him away to calm down while my older kids still got to continue with a family friend or my son's father."

Carer, West Dunbartonshire

Outdoor play equipment

"I ordered a trampoline; this has been helpful for our family as there are some days we can't leave the house. Both kids are getting exercise, playing together on it and creating a bond with each other, it's been used to self-regulate, burn off some energy and most of all brought fun into our garden."

Carer, South Ayrshire





Bike/trike

"The confidence in both children to at least try things they wouldn't normally has grown and the child that can now ride his bike seems happier for it."

Carer, Glasgow



Garden equipment

"Seeing my son happy and safe outside and having funds to buy him equipment for our garden where he loves to be. Without this grant I would be unable to buy him outside equipment that has benefited and further my son's communication and needs."

Carer, South Lanarkshire

"The grant allowed me to make my garden safe and also allowed me to buy items that helped my kids stay active in a safe place."

Carer, Glasgow

Hot tub

"It allowed us to get a hot tub and some toys for the garden; we are often restricted during the school holidays as it is often a challenge to find somewhere we can go where everyone can enjoy and relax. So, it was so nice to have a wee haven on the door step."

Carer, Angus



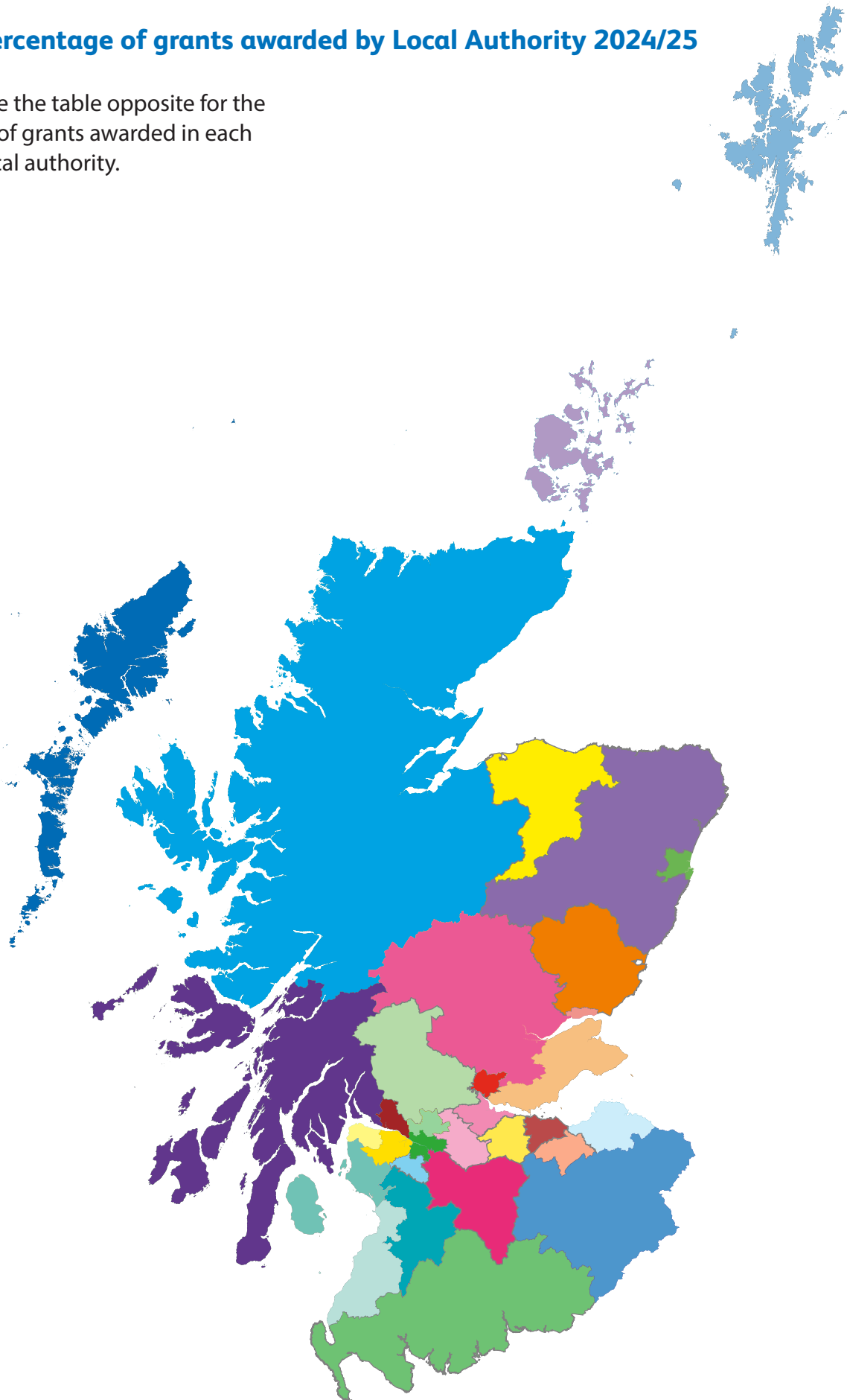
Grants awarded by Local Authority

Scotland	Grants awarded in 2024/25	Grants awarded in 2025/26		
	Total 2024/25	Summer 2025/26	Winter 2025/26	Total 2025/26
Aberdeen City	2.4%	2.9%	2.7%	2.8%
Aberdeenshire	3.5%	3.5%	3.7%	3.6%
Angus	1.7%	1.7%	1.3%	1.5%
Argyll and Bute	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
City of Edinburgh	5.5%	5.5%	5.6%	5.5%
Clackmannanshire	1.0%	0.7%	0.9%	0.8%
Dumfries and Galloway	2.7%	2.2%	2.5%	2.3%
Dundee City	2.9%	2.7%	3.4%	2.9%
East Ayrshire	3.0%	2.6%	2.8%	2.7%
East Dunbartonshire	1.8%	2.2%	1.7%	2.0%
East Lothian	2.1%	1.7%	2.0%	1.8%
East Renfrewshire	1.3%	1.3%	2.0%	1.6%
Falkirk	3.8%	2.8%	3.5%	3.1%
Fife	6.8%	6.7%	7.0%	6.8%
Glasgow City	16.6%	16.3%	15.4%	16%
Highland	3.7%	4.0%	4.1%	4.0%
Inverclyde	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%
Midlothian	2.3%	2.2%	2.0%	2.1%
Moray	1.3%	1.7%	1.4%	1.6%
Na h-Eileanan Siar	-%	0.01%	-%	0.01%
North Ayrshire	3.2%	2.7%	3.2%	2.9%
North Lanarkshire	8.8%	9.0%	8.9%	8.9%
Orkney Islands	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Perth and Kinross	2.6%	2.1%	2.6%	2.3%
Renfrewshire	2.9%	3.1%	3.2%	3.2%
Scottish Borders	1.3%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
Shetland Islands	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
South Ayrshire	1.7%	2.2%	2.0%	2.1%
South Lanarkshire	7.7%	7.2%	7.2%	7.2%
Stirling	1.1%	1.2%	1.0%	1.1%
West Dunbartonshire	1.6%	2.2%	1.5%	1.9%
West Lothian	3.6%	5.0%	3.7%	4.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



Percentage of grants awarded by Local Authority 2024/25

See the table opposite for the % of grants awarded in each local authority.



Added Value

We always look for opportunities to expand the help provided to those supported by Take a Break and aim to provide wider support to carers raising disabled or seriously ill children and young people across Scotland. Additional support provided via our wider charitable activity in 2025/26, up to December 2025 included:

- Family Fund's First Contact Team (FCT) answered approximately 3,630 calls from carers in Scotland.
- Family Fund's FCT provided 165 instances of information and support to carers in Scotland.
- 5,763 grants with 6,811 grant items awarded via Family Fund's main Scotland grant programme.
- 10 grants in Scotland have been provided with Family Fund Mobility Support (Funded car leases, in conjunction with Motability).
- 202 grants in Scotland have been provided through the Your Opportunity programme for 18-24 year olds
- 478 grants in Scotland were provided via the Children in Need Emergency Essentials Programme.

Summary

We are extremely grateful to the carers who have shared their experiences of accessing and utilising a Take a Break grant in 2025/26. From listening and learning to parent carer's experiences, we can develop a deeper understanding of the needs of families raising disabled and seriously ill children and young people, particularly in relation to short breaks support. It also helps us to identify any areas for improvement in the service we provide and to effectively advocate for improved short breaks support for families raising disabled and seriously ill children and young people. In September 2025, we had the opportunity to meet with the then Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing, Tom Arthur MSP alongside parent carers who had been supported by Take a Break Scotland. The meeting was a profound reminder of the importance of the programme.





As previously indicated, this year 84% of carers reported that they could not have afforded their break without a Take a Break grant. An additional 14% were unsure if they could have afforded their break without a grant. Despite our communications reflecting the continued need to prioritise awards to eligible first-time applicants, the number of applications received rose from 6,524 in 2024/25, to 9,279 in 2025/26. The average value of grants awarded was £349, a modest increase to help reflect rising costs. However, in response to our survey, 15% of respondents indicated that the grant had not been sufficient to cover the cost of their chosen break, indicating that an increase in the average grant award value would be preferable in 2026/27.



Finally, whilst we continue to strive to make improvements wherever we can, Family Fund's 2025/26 Take a Break Impact and Evaluation survey received 688 responses, with high- levels of satisfaction being reported:

- 99% of respondents indicated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the application process
- 100% of respondents indicated that they would advise other parent carers with similar caring responsibilities to apply for a Take a Break grant via Family Fund.
- 97% of respondents indicated they were offered the funding for the break they needed through Take a Break Scotland
- 88% of respondents indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed that Take a Break Scotland had helped them to better access information and support regarding the short breaks available to carers in Scotland.

"Amazing supports as always for families that really struggle. Always helpful and polite to deal with. Amazing at what you do, wish we could send all you away just for a thankyou."

Carer, Stirling



Colette's story

Colette and her partner Steven are parents to Georgia, who is five. The family live near Glasgow and Colette works as a part time nanny, while Steven is Georgia's full-time carer.

Georgia has a diagnosis of autism and is pre-verbal with high support needs. She also has Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) and professionals think she may have Global Developmental Delay. Georgia needs support with most tasks, is not yet toilet trained and often uses a wheelchair or buggy to allow her to mobilise to new places.

Tell us about your family

Colette said: *"While Georgia isn't verbal with language she loves watching Disney films and can sing along to several Disney songs. She understands the stories and has favourite characters.*

She's got a great sense of humour and likes slapstick humour, like people walking into walls or whatever.

She needs a high level of supervision and support, so for example she hasn't much danger awareness. She is still not toilet trained, it's extremely frustrating that services will only offer us nappies you take on and off with a tape. What she needs is nappy pants, not tape nappies.

We're on a low income, but I just have to pay for the more expensive pull ups because I want her to get toilet trained and that's what nappy pants are for. I don't understand why they'll only provide us with something that's basically helping keep her incontinent? With her arfid, getting her to eat is a constant challenge, and her behaviour can be hard to manage."

Our Take a Break grant

"We got our grant in December and used it for a very special trip to see 'Disney on Ice' in 2026 and for an annual Sealife Centre pass, which is one of Georgia's safe places. When I saw that Disney on Ice was one I just knew she would love it, but the money for a one-off trip like that would be totally beyond us. Having the freedom of the grant meant we could try for something which would be a risk in such a huge event stadium like the Hydro, but which I knew she would love.



It was very emotional watching her reaction to the show, she was dancing and singing, recognising the logos and characters, her face lit up. It gave us an escape from our normal life, our tried and test places, and she was just alive with it.

It's continuing that understanding for her as well and building up that confidence – it's your Disney characters but that it's an ice-skating show, and she's accessing that, which is a step in her learning too. You have to keep trying things, you find those interests and that's how you unlock new experiences for them.

"We also bought an annual pass for Sealife Centre – that's something that's calming for her that's got that sensory element to it that she can access again and again because it works for her. We can go whenever we like, sometimes that's as a break for all three of us but sometimes just one of us goes and the other parent can rest. The one-off cost is huge but the value we can get out of that as a family is tremendous."

A break from caring

"It's very full on being a carer and sleep is a challenge for us.

Georgia is five but she doesn't go to sleep until about 12am, and then she's up after 9am, but she wakes up multiple times a night. The trick is to get to her quickly and get her back settled or she can be up for hours. If you got Georgia to sleep too early, say 7 or 8pm, she would just wake up for the day at 3am, and then she absolutely exhausted by the afternoon and can't manage, so that's the pattern we have to use. We were given melatonin but due to her arfid, she knew it was in her milk and it affected her drinking that. She has a specific non-dairy milk which is one of her only sources of protein, so I can't risk her refusing that."

It's really hard being a carer but we try not to focus on that. There is still fun, joy and being able to do things as a family. That's what the grant gives you – the choice to do things you know will work for your family or something totally different without that fear and financial pressure of daily life.

I would say don't hesitate to apply because you can't miss out.

Sometimes you try things and it just doesn't work. So having the grant lets you dream a bit for your child and try something that might be the highlight of your year and an amazing memory."



Grace's story

Cynthia and her husband Dave live in Campbeltown in West Scotland, with their two daughters Jessica, aged 11, and Grace, aged 9. Grace has a diagnosis of Down's syndrome and is also awaiting an assessment for ADHD.



Tell us about your family

"We have two wonderful daughters, Jessica and Grace. Grace has Down's syndrome and is full of energy and life; she brings a smile to everyone she meets. Like most families, we have our own challenges.

Health wise, we are lucky that Grace doesn't have any heart issues, but she has had a few severe bouts of pneumonia and been hospitalised several times, including in the ICU on one occasion. Like all parents we have managing behaviours, personalities and different preferences with the girls, then you have the addition of appointments and sometimes hospital stays which is part of our parent journey.

Grace's condition affects her development and independence to go certain tasks. She goes to a mainstream school at this stage. She knows her numbers up to about 20, can write and read maybe 15-20 words by sight. She benefits from daily tasks like feeding for example, she can feed herself but she might make a mess or prefer me to help her with her food.

We do get some respite on a Saturday morning when she goes to a council SEN group for a few hours, but my husband often works away. So it's just us three a lot of the time. Grace is often awake at night so Dave and I are surviving on years of broken sleep which you just get used to."

She's a really active child, she spins a lot, she can pedal a go kart and she likes playing with her baby. We have challenges around behaviour, especially if she's tired. There are times she just won't do something if she doesn't want to, but I know her well and certain phrases will work.

When she was younger I was at home mostly focused on caring for the girls and helping Grace develop, but now I run my own self-catering cabin business and also have a part time job."





A total break, at a precious moment in childhood

"When we received the money, we spent some time discussing how best to use it. We considered taking some time for ourselves as parents, or having one-to-one time with either Jessica or Grace, or perhaps buying some equipment for the garden. In the end, we decided to spend the time together as a family and booked a trip for the four of us to Crieff Hydro in October, a beautiful hotel that really caters for families.

The journey was long for us (about four hours), and I don't think anyone slept much the first night! But despite that, we came away with some fantastic memories.

The hotel had bunk beds in the girls' room which was exciting, huge outdoor play areas, and activities that the girls could do provided by the hotel for a few hours in the morning, so we could sit with a coffee and be in a little adult bubble every day. That was perfect, just for us to rest in between the children's time.

Sometimes we do split them up and Jessica often has to compromise as the big sister, but this was different. They had all this space to themselves and you get that lovely feeling when they're exploring together. In a sense Grace keeps her sister young as they do a lot of imaginary play. You realise what an amazing young person Jessica is becoming because of her patience and understanding with her sister. She'll be starting secondary school in August and it felt extra special in that way I suppose. Watching the two of them have such a magical time playing together was incredibly special for us as parents."



Louise's story

Our family

"In our family are myself, our daughter Louise, who is 12 and my husband, David. Louise has a diagnosis of autism and hyperacusis, which means she finds everyday sounds very uncomfortable and hard to tolerate. She also suffers from chronic migraines.

Her personality is very vivacious. She loves to be involved and wants to be part of everything.

Louise's autism affects her understanding of danger, so she has little awareness that she could hurt herself or any stranger danger. While she's such a friendly girl, she also has social and communication difficulties, so friendships can be really tricky."



Being a carer

"For me as a parent carer, as Louise hasn't gained the independence that the average girl of 12 might have, I still have to provide a high level of daily care and support. She needs to be taken everywhere, like school, clubs or appointments.

While her peers are now doing things on their own at weekends we still need to entertain her and do everything together as a family, as you might expect with a younger child."

Our one opportunity for a break

"For our grant, we chose to have a long weekend in December as a family to Haven Primrose Valley. There were so many activities Louise could participate in, and as she absolutely loves trying new things, it was ideal. The variety of all of the activities really appealed to her, especially the water related activities which are her absolute favourite. I can't stress enough how good it was to get away have a break from caring in every day life. To switch off and enjoy a change of scenery. This was the one holiday we had that year, the one opportunity.

Our daughter doesn't cope well with change so we did have to do a lot of preparation to support her to go away for three days but it was absolutely worth it."



Break of a life time

"We're so grateful to Family Fund and Take A Break Scotland for this support. It was amazing to get away. Have a chance to relax and recharge away from the daily grind and routines. We came home feeling that bit lighter and brighter. Even just having a short break as a parent carer, to forget all the daily routines and pressures makes an amazing difference.

Thank you so much - we made so many memories that will last for a lifetime."



Jane's story

Jane lives outside Glasgow in Clarkston with her husband Andrew, their older son Sorley who's 7, Murray who's 6 and their dog Ren.

Murray is autistic and is currently non-verbal, he requires a high level of supervision and support with daily life. Jane is his primary carer and also works part time as a teacher.



Our son's care needs

"Murray needs our care at all times apart from when he is at school. He attends a specialist learning communication centre attached to our local primary which is working well for him.

Our biggest challenge is probably understanding Murray's needs due to him not speaking yet. He can get quite distressed but we are always trying to understand and join him in his wee world. There are times when we just don't know what's wrong and how to help him which is heartbreaking.

Alongside autism, Murray also has a smaller kidney and needs to see the renal specialist in hospital. Those trips are very, very tense. Things like having his blood pressure or samples of blood taken can be upsetting for him.

People can talk about neurodiversity, in particular autism, like being a superpower. It certainly doesn't feel like a superpower at times. Sometimes I feel like I'm not doing enough, and there's fear and worry about what the future holds for my wee boy. Life is tiring, either through lack of sleep or juggling an already busy life of work and family life. However, Murray has definitely changed me as a person, for the better, he has taught me about real happiness, real patience and that love with no words."





Free by the sea

"Thanks to Take a Break we were able to enjoy a family night away to Crail in Fife. Murray loves water, playing with it, swimming, watching the dog splashing, so we chose somewhere with a swimming pool and right beside the sea.

Everyone in the family just got time, time to relax (as much as you can with a family) even the dog! We got fantastic weather, and just splashing in the water, you could see the utter joy on Murray's face! Free from frustration, just happy in that moment.

His big brother loves cycling so he enjoyed biking with dad. Often Sorley has to be withdrawn from an activity or leave somewhere because Murray is overwhelmed, so it's so important for him to have this special time too. We just couldn't have done without the Take a Break fund.

Caring for Murray is expensive, like his after-school care because he needs one to one support and personal care. The funding gives you the gift of time to just stop and enjoy as a family - without worrying about that you should have spent it on getting the windows replaced. It gives you those moments that you need so much – moments to stop and appreciate how far your child has come. Even if they're small steps, they're still really important."

The difference it makes

"Having a break 'away' from the boys isn't really possible for some carers, and there really is no one else who can look after Murray. My parents are in their 80s and can't do more than a few hours. But for us as parents, because they're happy, you do feel a wave of relief wash over you. Just that small step of them playing in the water together – him letting Sorley into his world, the dog's part of the game - you appreciate and drink in that moment. You realise – that wouldn't have happened 6 months ago. You bond and reflect on yourselves as parents and you feel better.

When your child has disabilities, at first it's like a grieving process, you can't help but make the comparisons. But eventually you learn to take the positives from moments like these.

This isn't the life we imagined, but we had time to stop and say, oh it's going to be alright. We're ok, we're ok."





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