



New £100,000 short breaks fund launches for carers of autistic adults in Scotland

More than 250 families will be given the chance to have an adventure – or simply relax

A new £100,000 fund has launched to help parents of autistic adults to have fun, relax and take a much-needed break from their caring roles.

Over the next year, more than 250 families in Scotland will benefit from the Autism Short Breaks Project, delivered by Autism Initiatives, the National Autistic Society Scotland and Scottish Autism. The leading autism charities are encouraging families to be indulgent, adventurous and creative when planning their short break.

Richard Ibbotson, National Director at Autism Initiatives, said: "We recognise that caring for an autistic adult can be exhausting, and that's why we want to give carers a well-deserved treat. People can use this fund to go on a trip, buy equipment for a hobby, try something for the first time or go back to something they haven't been able to do for a long while."

Jenny Paterson, Director of the National Autistic Society Scotland, said: "It's not possible to look after someone else if you're not looking after yourself, that's why short breaks for carers are so important. The great thing about this fund is that it's really flexible. You decide when, where and what you want to do, and we'll make it happen!"

Gail McKeitch (57) has two sons with autism. Her eldest, Greg, requires 24-hour care. Gail's day starts at 7am, when she washes and dresses Greg, and ends after midnight when she settles him in bed.

She said: "I tell other carers that they need time to recharge their batteries – but sometimes I need to remind myself to take my own advice! "My husband and I had our first holiday in ten years this summer and it was wonderful to have that time together. Caring for your grown up child as if they are still a little child can be a very difficult thing to do, but we do it out of love. I'm glad this fund is specifically for the carers of adults, it will make a huge difference to families like mine."

Carers are being encouraged to apply for the first round of funding from the fund before 22 January 2016 by visiting autismshortbreaks.org.uk. Grants of up to £300 are available.

Funding for the Autism Short Breaks Project comes from the Creative Breaks Fund and provided by the Scottish Government. In total, the programme has awarded just under £1 million to 68 projects from Orkney to the Scottish Borders, which will benefit more than 4,000 carers and their families.

Mary Hamilton, support manager at Scottish Autism, added: "We are very pleased that the Scottish Government has created this fund and asked Scotland's three leading autism charities to manage it. We know how challenging caring for an adult with autism can be, and we are pleased to be working together on this."

Autism Short Breaks Project funding applies to families and carers of an adult with autism (over 16 years of age). The carer may be someone under the age of 16. To find out more and make an application, please visit autismshortbreaks.org.uk