



# SCOTSPIRIT HOLIDAY VOUCHER SCHEME

THE IMPACT OF A UK HOLIDAY ON FAMILIES  
FACING TOUGH TIMES

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Family Holiday Charity and Qa Research would like to thank all families that have taken the time to complete surveys and talk to us about their holidays, thank you for sharing your experiences so openly. We would also like to thank the referrers that have supported the project and the evaluation.

The ScotSpirit Holiday Scheme has been possible thanks to support and funding provided by VisitScotland.



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## ABOUT FAMILY HOLIDAY CHARITY

Family Holiday Charity helps families get time away together, often for the first time ever.

We're here for children who've never seen the sea. For teenagers who can't remember when they last saw mum smile. For parents having to choose between a day out and a pair of school shoes. For young carers, grandparent carers and families facing illness, isolation, or bereavement.



Holidays open up new possibilities. There's time enough to share a laugh, watch the tide come in, and make happier memories. From a caravan on the coast, a woodland adventure, or a day out at a theme park. Whatever the weather, if it means time spent together, even a day's holiday helps build relationships, confidence and hope for the future.

*Family Holiday Charity - for holidays that make a lifetime of difference.*

Registered Charity: 800262 in England & Wales, and SC048203 in Scotland

**ScotSpirit Holiday Voucher Scheme:** [The impact of a UK holiday on families facing tough times](#)

## FOREWORD

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the ScotSpirit Holiday Voucher Scheme.

I'd like to pass on particular thanks to Visit Scotland and the Scottish Government for providing the funding for the ScotSpirit Holiday Voucher Scheme. As a result of their vision, at the time this report was published 596 families have been able to enjoy a holiday because of the scheme. For 50% of those families surveyed, it was for the first time ever.

I would also like to thank the team at Qa research. This is the second major project that we have successfully completed with them this year. The first being a review of England for Everyone, a similar scheme which took place in early 2022, delivered in collaboration with Visit England with funding from DCMS. It is really encouraging to see the positive impact found in that impact study reflected again here.

The work completed by Qa Research in these studies helps to explain and express the impact and benefit that a holiday has for a family, in particular for families facing tough times. It was incredible to see 91% of families from Scotland expressing that the holiday gave them an opportunity for new experiences. We are also delighted to be able to demonstrate the evidence of wider economic and social benefits, too as part of the report. And of course, we thank the families and referrers who have been so incredibly generous with their time to participate in this research.

The whole team here at Family Holiday Charity have been so moved by the stories and anecdotes shared by the families. Its heart-warming to hear of the difference the holidays have made to so many families from across Scotland. The journeys that they have been on together and the drive they have to keep going when faced with considerable challenges.

There are so many inspiring stories and so many moments that families have so kindly shared, that we feel truly honoured to have played a part in making happen. For us every child should get that opportunity laugh, play and smile. For every family to get that chance to get away and just relax and make those special memories to look back on over years to come.

I hope that reading this report, you too see the huge difference that holidays make to families. The overwhelming and lasting impact that something as straightforward as a few days away can have on us all.

If you would like to know more about the Charity, please do get in touch. And if you are moved to help, we welcome donations and support from individuals and partners alike. Any donation you kindly make will make a direct difference to a family just like those you read about in this report.



**Kat Lee**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Family Holiday Charity**

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## CONTENTS

1.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
2.	INTRODUCTION	10
3.	Aims & Objectives	11
4.	Methodology	12
5.	Key findings	14
6.	Case Studies	55
7.	Social Value Assessment	84
8.	Conclusions & Considerations	86
9.	Appendices – Social Value Engine	89

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

In April 2022 Family Holiday Charity commissioned Qa Research to measure the impact of a social tourism project in Scotland, the *ScotSpirit Voucher Scheme*.

Social tourism initiatives seek to remove barriers to participation in tourism. The *ScotSpirit Voucher Scheme* is a partnership project between Family Holiday Charity and VisitScotland. The partnership and funding of £350,000 was to enable 500 families in need in Scotland to take a short family holiday in Scotland.

The overarching aim of the project was to provide 500 families in need with a short break. Additional aims and objectives were to improve confidence and wellbeing in families and increase participation in sport/outdoor activities and culture. It was hoped that the project would help remove barriers to participation in tourism amongst disadvantaged families, and also have a positive impact in terms of the cost to the public purse of supporting these families via statutory support in the future.

## Profile of those accessing breaks

In total 32% of applications were on behalf of one-adult families whilst a majority of applications were on behalf of families with two or more adults (68%) although these weren't necessarily partners, this could be family members and grown-up children too.

The application data suggests around 2,312 people may have benefitted from a holiday under this funding by the end of October 2022. At the time of writing in mid-October 1,789 individuals had already taken a holiday.

- Half of the families being referred for a break had **never** had a family break before (50%).
- Six in ten families faced mental health issues (63%) and half experienced low confidence (51%).
- On average families being referred for a holiday were experiencing/had experienced four different challenges.

## Impact

### Making Memories

Many of the families who participated in the project faced multiple and complex challenges in their lives and it was clear that being able to create positive memories after a period of particular hardship (which is often ongoing) has been profound in many cases.

- 96% of families agreed the holiday had helped them to have more fun and create happy memories as a family.

## Family Bonding

The holidays clearly have an impact on family bonding, 95% agreed (with 77% *strongly* agreeing) that the holiday had enabled them to spend more quality time together as a family.

There is also positive indication this quality time may be sustained for many families on their return from their holidays.

- Six in ten families (62%) agreed that they had been spending more time together as a family since returning from the holiday.
- It was clear that the holidays have helped some families to realise and value the importance of spending quality time together, including realisation of the importance in spending one-to-one time with each child when possible.

Supporting relationships was a key theme, with referrers describing improved relationships between parents and children, and between partners/spouses. Referrers emphasised the importance of quality family time for families and being able to nurture these relationships away from the stress of the day to day.

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Almost all families agreed that the holiday had a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of their family (93%).

Whilst worries and anxieties are not magicked away by the holidays, holidays have clearly provided a period of respite and light relief for the families and provided children (and adults) the opportunity to take part in 'normal' fun activities.

A different setting has helped families relax, offering freedom and safety. Being able to relax and just enjoy time together clearly has a knock on effect on the wellbeing of many of the families.

## Confidence

- Over four-fifths of families (86%) agreed that the holiday had a positive impact on their family's confidence.

Families often spoke about how they'd grown in confidence in their ability as a parent/carer to manage a holiday away from home, and be assured that they could do it. This includes families who faced challenges whilst away, including navigating transport and issues on-site, they had managed to work through challenges thus increasing their confidence. This is important in the context of half of these families never experiencing a holiday before.

The holidays have also helped boost self-esteem. Parents/carers have been able to provide something for their children they wouldn't otherwise be able to. Children have been able to engage in different and new activities and have a sense of freedom they may not get at home.

## **New Experiences**

- Nine in ten families agreed that the holiday had given their family an opportunity for new experiences (91%).

It was clear through the discussions, that some families had quite limited and restricted experiences of engaging in activities together prior to the holidays, particularly outside of the house, and particularly as a family unit.

The holidays have therefore enabled families to have new and different experiences to the norm, and it was clear that this has also helped develop confidence and interest in pursuing more activities in the future.

- Over two-thirds of families (68%) agreed that their families are now more likely to take part in these kinds of activities going forward, as a direct result of the holiday.

## **Family Coping Mechanisms**

- Over four-fifths of families agreed that the holiday had helped to reduce their feelings of stress and worry (84%).
- Four-fifths of families also agreed that the holiday had a positive impact on their family's ability to deal with the challenges they face as a family (82%).

Comments highlight how the break in routine, and being away from stressors at home, has helped families to feel refreshed, take stock and able to return to face any ongoing challenges.

## **Community Activity**

- Three in ten families completing the survey, agreed that they had become more active in their local community since the holiday (31%).

Discussions and some of the questionnaire comments highlight a subtle shift in community engagement. This could be as simple as being present in the community more, by getting out of the house and going for walks, being visible, when prior to the holidays they would barely leave the house.

Some children had been very excited to go back to school and talk about their holidays with their teachers and peers – the holiday has provided a conversation-starter and again boosted self-esteem and feelings of 'normality'.

In some cases, children have returned from their holidays more willing and able to socialise with other children either at school or within social groups, again improving their sense of community belonging.

Some referrer comments also suggests some families are engaging more in groups and being more active in their community since their holidays.



## Looking Towards the Future

- Over four-fifths of families agreed that the holiday had helped them to feel more optimistic about the future (82%).
- Almost all families also agreed that they would feel more comfortable and confident in taking a holiday with their family in the future (94%).

Comments from families highlighted that the aspiration to have future holidays (or more days out if not holidays) is definitely there. Whilst many families spoke openly about hoping to take further holidays many also acknowledged this would be difficult or impossible to afford.

The holidays have clearly provided positive experiences for many families that they would like to replicate in the future. Now families have done this once, they often have increased confidence to take holidays, and do more as a family going forward.

Many families had also realised that they can have fun, and quality time as a family in an affordable low-cost way too and as such plan to do more outdoor activities together going forward.

It was clear that prior to the holidays, many families were so embedded in their daily challenges, including low finances, that a holiday was simply not on their radar. Many discussions highlighted that, despite what they were going through, many families did not know how much they needed their holiday until they had it. Now they have had a holiday, they've seen how valuable and enjoyable it could be.

Half of the families reached by Family Holiday Charity had never had a holiday and therefore were unaware of its potential value to their overall wellbeing. Once they have had a holiday, they appear to be more likely to prioritise this in their future spending plans, they now recognise the true value of a family holiday.

## Overall holiday experience

A large majority of families rated their holidays as between 7 and 10 on a scale of 1-10, where 10 is excellent (91%). Over four in ten families gave their holiday the highest rating of 10 out of 10 (44%).

Accommodation was also rated very highly, with 88% giving a rating of between 7 and 10, with over four in ten families giving a score of ten out of ten (43%).

## Activities on holiday

Families had undertaken a range of activities during their holidays.

- Almost nine in ten families had taken part in outdoor activities (88%) whilst almost two-thirds of families had taken part in sport either indoors or outdoors (65%).
- Almost two-thirds of families had also visited towns/villages near to where they were staying (65%).
- Over a third of those completing the post-travel survey had also visited tourist attractions during their holidays (35%) with almost a quarter taking part in cultural activities whilst away (23%).



Just less than half of families **were not** taking part in the types of activities they did on their holidays prior to the holidays (49%). This demonstrates how the holidays have provided families with new opportunities and experiences.

Positively almost seven in ten families (68%) agreed that their families are now more likely to take part in these kinds of activities going forward as a direct result of the holiday.

## Affordability

A majority of families were still spending some of their own money on food during the holidays despite receiving a contribution towards the cost of food and travel as part of the holiday offer, however this was largely less than £100.

Families were less likely to be spending their own money on travel and pre-holiday essentials, with a third or more families not spending any money on these.

- Whilst 82% of families spent some of their own money on activities/entertainment whilst away this also tended to be less than £100.
- Positively, a large majority of families said the money they had spent on the holiday was either within their budget (43%), or manageable (51%).

It was clear through wider comments made within the post-travel questionnaire and particularly through the qualitative discussions with families that the vouchers for food and travel were an essential component in many families being able to take these short holidays and helped with budgeting plans.

## Social Value

A social value calculation was undertaken to provide an independent assessment of the impact and value of the project for all stakeholders, not just the families taking the holidays and referral organisations, but value for the public purse. This piece of research has used the Social Value Engine, a tool accredited by Social Value UK <https://socialvalueengine.com/>.

- This found that **for every £1 invested in the ScotSpirit Voucher Scheme, this generated £11.18 (gross) value.**

Please see the full report for more detail on the Social Value Engine assessment.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

In April 2022 Family Holiday Charity commissioned Qa Research to measure the impact of a social tourism project, *the ScotSpirit Holiday Voucher Scheme*.

Social tourism initiatives seek to remove barriers to participation in tourism. The ScotSpirit Holiday Voucher Scheme is a partnership project between Family Holiday Charity and VisitScotland. The partnership and funding of £350,000 was to enable a target number of 500 families in need in Scotland to take a family holiday in Scotland.

Families had to be referred for a holiday and meet specific eligibility criteria, namely:

- are defined as adults with primary caring responsibility for at least one child under the age of 18 and their siblings.
- are referred by a professional working with them in a supporting role as a representative of a statutory agency or registered charity.
- will have a household income of less than £24,000 per annum.
- should not have been on a holiday together for 4 years.

The overarching aim of the project was to provide 500 families in need with a short holiday in Scotland. A large majority of these holidays were for 3-4 nights. Additional aims and objectives were to

- improve confidence and wellbeing in families, and
- increase participation in sport/outdoor activities and culture.

There was hope that the project would help remove barriers to participation in tourism amongst families facing tough times, and also have a positive impact in terms of the cost to the public purse of supporting these families via statutory support in the future.

Family Holiday Charity appointed Qa Research as external evaluator to conduct a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the project and explore the extent to which the project has met the aims and objectives. Qa have been supported by Ann Hindley in this evaluation. Ann, of Cross Key Associates completed a Social Value Engine report for the project. This report presents the findings of the evaluation.

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### 3. Aims & Objectives

Qa Research was asked to explore the extent to which the delivery of the *ScotSpirit Voucher Scheme* project has met the required aims and objectives, namely to:

- provide 500 holidays to families in Scotland.
- reach families who would otherwise not participate in tourism.
- improve the confidence of individuals (adults and children) participating.
- improve the wellbeing of individuals (adults and children) participating.
- increase participation in sport, outdoor activities and culture.
- achieve a potential net benefit to the public purse in the future.

A further objective was to draw out lessons from the project which could indicate how social tourism initiatives could be improved in the future.

Whilst it was initially intended for all the holidays to have taken place by the time the evaluation report was due, Qa Research was asked to bring the reporting forward. Holidays will now continue into 2023 and as such this report provides an indicative evaluation based on data provided, and holidays taken by early October 2022.

## 4. Methodology

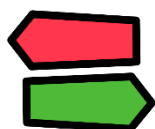
A range of methods have been used as part of this evaluation including gathering quantitative and qualitative data from families and referral organisations. Relevant open-source data has also been used to feed into the Social Value Engine report.

### Primary Research with Families

Anonymised application data has been analysed to be able to present an overall picture of families being offered holidays.

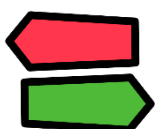
Qa Research, in conjunction with Family Holiday Charity and Ann Hindley, reviewed an existing post-holiday questionnaire for families. This was changed substantially to allow key project aims to be measured. Family Holiday Charity managed the administration of post-holiday questionnaires to referral organisations to complete with the families.

In total, 162 post-holiday questionnaires were completed by the data transfer date of 10<sup>th</sup> October. Using statistical rules, we can be 95% confident that the post-travel survey findings have a potential variance of no more than **plus or minus 6%** from the figure shown (this is based on 448 families that had travelled by this point). These standards specifically apply to 'confidence levels'.



#### Confidence levels

This indicates how representative findings are of the resident body as a whole. In this instance we have used 95% confidence levels – or put more simply– this requires that the chances of the sample group reflecting the wider population will be 95 out of 100. The confidence level is essentially a fixed value which must be looked at in conjunction with standard error.



#### Standard error

'Standard error' demonstrates how answers provided by sampled families potentially vary from the responses that would be obtained if all families had responded. In the research industry, commonly accepted levels of error are +/- 5% and +/- 3%.

In addition to the survey it was important for families to be able to feed back their opinions and experiences, in their own words, regarding the impact of the holiday. As such, Qa completed in-depth telephone interviews with 16 families that had taken a holiday. A broad range of families were interviewed.

These interviews were audio-recorded with consent, and those taking part were provided with a £30 e-voucher to thank them for their time. Those taking part in the interviews had the choice of feeding back views anonymously and were also asked if they would be willing for their story to feature as a case study. Case studies are provided in Section 6. All names have been changed.

A range of supporting quotes are presented in the report. These are all from different families or referrers and come from the depth interviews, as well as the post-travel survey responses. The case studies provide further details of individual stories.

## Primary Research with Referral Organisations

Some key questions for referral organisations were included in the post-holiday questionnaire, in order to capture insight from as many referrers as possible. In total 164 referrers had completed their questions within the post-break questionnaires by the cut off point for reporting.

When we had completed interviews with families consent was sought to speak to the referrer. It was not possible to speak to all referrers within the timescales for the work. Seven telephone interviews were also completed with those making referrals, to allow this key stakeholder group to give their views on the need and impact of the project in their own words.

## Social Value Assessment

This evaluation has used the Social Value Engine, <https://socialvalueengine.com/> a tool accredited by Social Value UK which is based on more than 360 peer reviewed financial proxies updated annually, to produce a figure for social return on investment. The assessment found that **for every £1 invested in the ScotSpirit Voucher Scheme, this generated £11.18 (gross) value.** Please read Section 7 of this report for further explanation of the Social Value Engine.

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## 5. Key findings

### 5.1 Profile of those accessing breaks

As discussed, families being offered the holidays must meet certain criteria to be eligible. Criteria relate to income; time since last holiday and having a dependent child under the age of 18 at home. Families also had to be referred for a holiday by a professional that has been working with the family. The application data for these families gives further insight into the range of challenges and situations experienced by those being put forward for holidays.

Application data has been analysed for families. In total, 32% of applications were on behalf of families that would be travelling with one adult whilst a majority of applications were on behalf of families with two or more adults (68%), though not necessarily partners.

- On average, families would be taking two children on the holidays, although 33% of families had three or more children going on the holidays.
- On average four people would be going on each holiday, although this reached as many as 10 people in one case.

The application data suggests around 2,312 people may have benefitted from a holiday by the end of October 2022, 1,789 individuals have already taken their holidays. Of those who had already taken their holidays at the time of writing, this equates to 792 adults and 997 children.

The programme has reached families across all Scotland, as indicated on the next table. Applications by area mirrors actual population levels, with the highest proportion of applications being for families in Edinburgh (19%), Fife (14%) and Glasgow (13%).

**Figure 1: Applications by area**

	No. of applications	% of applications
Aberdeenshire	6	1%
Argyll and Bute	25	4%
Clackmannanshire	2	0%
Dundee	3	1%
East Ayrshire	2	0%
East Dunbartonshire	1	0%
East Lothian	17	3%
East Renfrewshire	17	3%
Edinburgh	112	19%
Falkirk	21	4%
Fife	80	14%
Glasgow	79	13%
Highland	5	1%
Midlothian	14	2%
North Ayrshire	13	2%
North Lanarkshire	28	5%
Orkney	1	0%
Perth and Kinross	5	1%
Renfrewshire	41	7%
Scottish Borders	9	2%
South Ayrshire	14	2%
South Lanarkshire	32	5%
Stirling	1	0%
West Dunbartonshire	8	1%
West Lothian	56	9%
<b>Base</b>	<b>592</b>	

On the application form referrers were asked to select whether the families were experiencing or had experienced particular circumstances or challenges.

A list of 20 possible experiences were included, with experiences ranging from kinship care to domestic abuse, and school behaviour issues.

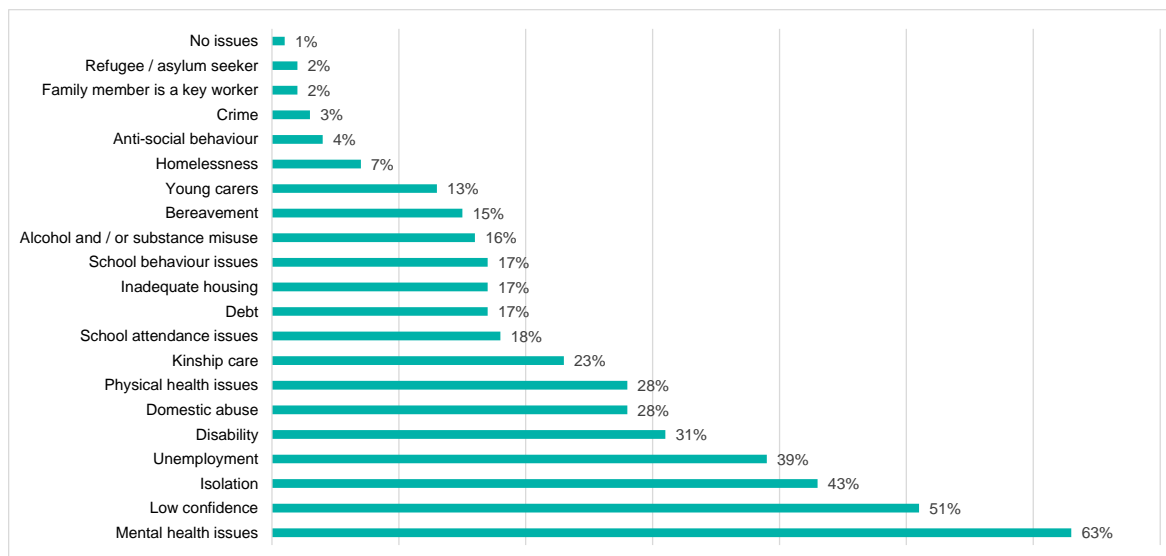
- On average, families being referred for a holiday under the ScotSpirit Voucher Scheme programme were experiencing/had experienced four different challenges.
- Around four in ten families (42%) were experiencing five or more of these challenges, demonstrating that life can be extremely difficult for these families.



The next table shows the breadth of challenges experienced by families. As seen

- over six in ten families faced mental health issues (63%),
- half of families experienced low confidence (51%).

**Figure 2: Challenges faced by families**

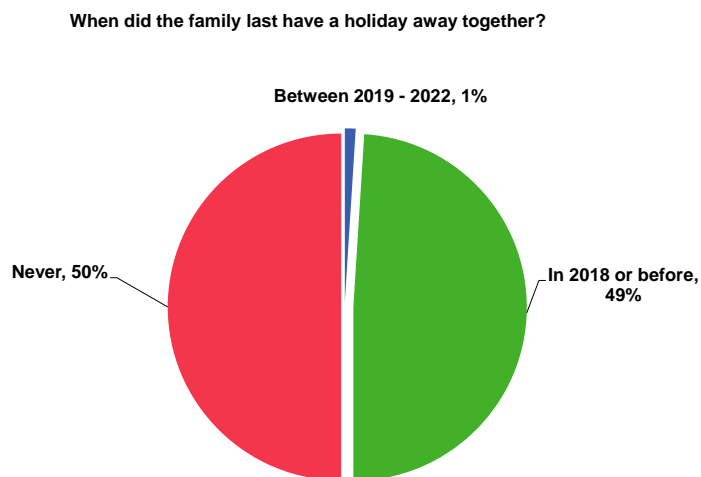


**Base: 592**

Four-fifths of the professionals had been working with the families they had referred for six months or more (80%) with a majority having a minimum of weekly contact with the families (65%).

Half of the families being referred for a holiday had **never** had a family holiday before (50%) as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Length of time since last holiday**



**Base: 587**

Referrer comments made within the applications suggest that the main reason families have been unable to take a holiday for some time (or ever) is lack of finance. Other recurring themes include:

- poor mental or physical health of parents (and sometimes children)
- bereavement
- relationship/family breakdown
- domestic abuse.

Over half of families would rely on public transport (58%) to get to and from their holidays.

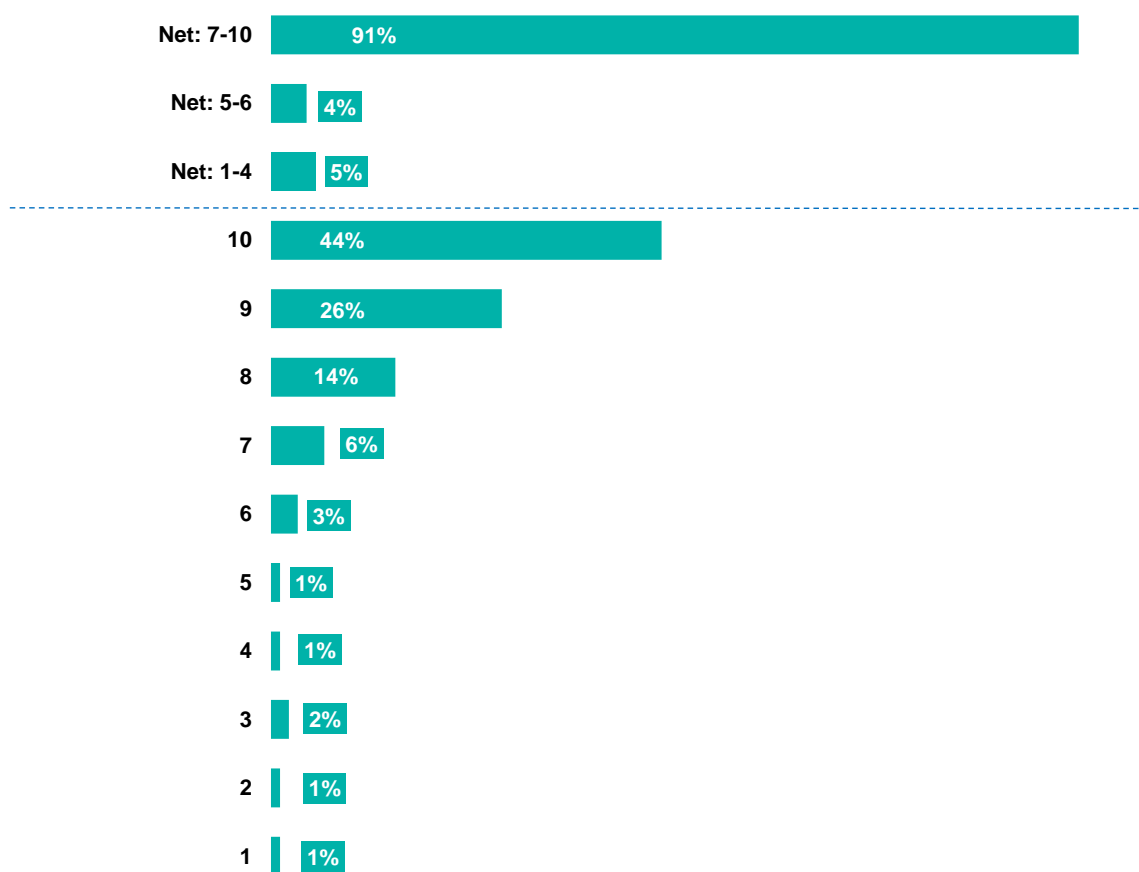
## 5.2 Overall holiday experience

### 5.2.1 Family perspective

- A majority of families rated their holidays as between 7 and 10 on a scale of 1-10, where 10 is excellent (91%).
- Four in ten families gave their holiday the highest rating of 10 out of 10 (44%).

**Figure 4: Overall ratings of holiday**

Question: On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is excellent, how would your overall holiday?



Base: 159

The best parts of the holidays for families were mostly related to:

- Spending quality time together as a family/reconnecting
- Making positive memories as a family
- Seeing the children enjoy themselves and have fun
- Relaxing/a break from everyday stressors and routines
- Activities and entertainment available on site
- Visiting new places/different surroundings

*"Being all together as a family - first time all seven of the kids had been able to go on a holiday together."*

*"Being away from our four walls and spending time together. Watching my son make new friends and have some colour about our cheeks."*

*"The family were more positive when I met them and when asked how their summer had been, they gave more examples of activities rather than saying "not much". They appeared excited to share the stories with me from their walks by the river, and were keen to show photographs of them together. The biggest change was their positive outlook and general mood".*

**Referrer**

*"Our family holiday was amazing from start to finish & we did not want to come home. My kids cried when they had to leave. The memories we made were amazing & watching their faces each day was very good. The best memories were when we spent time on the beach or at night in the entertainment area with my children taking part on stage. It allowed us freedom to be outside without worry or fear & allowed my children the opportunity to be children outside playing."*

*"The best moment was having the opportunity to visit beautiful Tummel Valley. It was stunning and the holiday was amazing. Me & my son got to spend quality time going long walks in the sunshine away from Glasgow."*

*"It was a week of not worrying about things at home or our homeless situation and a chance for us all to have fun and relax. "*

*"Being away from everyday life and the stress of it. We created better and good memories. I was able to have fun with my daughter and spend time with my brother and his son. Really enjoyed it. We needed this break after the stressful year we have had as a family and it helped me repair my relationship with my daughter."*

*"The best moment was how excited [child] was when he won a prize on stage for his dancing. I was so proud of him and it was lovely to see him feeling happy and that he had accomplished something special."*

*"It was nice to see as parents how excited they got over things they should as children."*

*"I felt like I had such a weight off my shoulders. I felt like it's going to sound like a really bad thing to say, but it felt like for the first time in a long time, I was actually free to actually enjoy my children. Because I wasn't worrying about the stresses of what's going on at home. I just felt like I was like, right, I'm going to embrace the whole situation, I'm going to embrace the whole holiday."*

When asked how the holiday could have been better for families, comments suggest families were largely happy with the holidays as they were. However, suggestions (made directly by families or researcher observations) can be grouped into the following key themes:

- **Sourcing suitable accommodation/location** – whether it comes down to research prior to breaks or discussions at the point of booking a minority of families had some issues with the suitability of the accommodation/sites for those with disabilities and additional needs.
- **Vouchers** – some families experienced stress relating to their food or fuel vouchers arriving very near to the point of the holiday, or late, it would be better if these arrived in a timely manner. There was also some preference for these being issued directly to families with further explanation of how vouchers can be used (e.g. can food vouchers be used online for food delivery to the sites which could help those travelling by public transport?)
- Some **housekeeping/maintenance issues** with accommodation.
- **Amenities/activities not as advertised.** Families perhaps need to be made more aware of logistics surrounding their breaks, such as the need to pre-book activities when relevant.
- **Length of holiday** – many families would have welcomed a longer holiday.

*“long walk uphill to check in and then had a long walk to the caravan. I asked if there a was a caravan closer to the check in and other facilities and explained that my daughter is diabetic and is not fit for all the walking, but was told there were no others available, except in the same far away area. The staff member did not appear to understand the importance of this”*

*“We were put under stress as had to phone several times as our fuel voucher had not arrived and they were saying it was sent but I had to keep phoning to advise we had not received it. We received the voucher when we were on our way.”*

*“More accessibility for disabled kids to take part in the activities. Entertainment was more focused able bodied kids.”*

*“We couldn't go for walks around the campsite thing, because the terrain was so uneven, where he's where he's got the hypermobility, his feet just buckle in.”*

*“My illness I hadn't mentioned that to [referrer], maybe if I had I would have had a closer caravan. but I was certainly not going to complain about that because that was my own problem. You know what I mean? And the fact I got the holiday for the kids was just... I was over the moon.”*

*“I'll be perfectly honest with you I would not recommend the cabins to people who've got sensory disorders or mobility issues. I don't want to sound ungrateful but I just don't want another family being in this position.”*

### 5.2.2 Referrer perspective

Referrers were keen to emphasise how excited and grateful families were on hearing that their holiday application had been granted. Generally, referrers had made the application to Family Holiday Charity to allow families to have quality time together, away from the pressures of their daily lives to give them the opportunity to re-connect with each other, often at a critical time or crisis point, to improve mental health, or to provide opportunities for socially isolated families



Some referrers commented that the holiday could be seen as a counterbalance to the effects of difficulties in their lives, by improving mental health and building resilience to cope with new challenges.

*"I just felt because she's got no other family or friends really. And finances are really difficult... just time away from usual stresses... have fun with her wee one, instead of everything else that she's having to think about going on, court cases and things like that."*

**Referrer**

*"The families that I refer have been families that I know, for a fact have never had a break since they had their children, they've never left the town that they live in, basically. And I think it's really great to open up their eyes to other things out there"*

**Referrer**

*"They've been living in temporary overcrowded housing for five years...they were offered a new house, it was going to be a new beginning for the family. It was exciting, it was their dream. And it got halted because the house wasn't ready. And it just sort of sent them in a downward spiral mentally. And I just felt they needed a break to just get away, refresh, recharge and try and look at the positives."*

**Referrer**



Referrers explained how they had supported families prior to the holiday, in terms of booking/organising the holiday and travel. Some families required no support, but others did, especially parents who lacked confidence or struggled with organisational skills.

*"I had to help quite a bit, because of the paperwork [the families] get quite nervous, so it is good that your team will speak with me as well as their referrer."* **Referrer**

*"They managed to sort a lot of it themselves. I was texting them the information to book, what time's your trains and do you want me to come to the station and help you, for this particular family they felt fine... they did really well. I've got other families that it would be a step by step process and a lot of intervention, but they really managed well. They really did most of it by themselves."* **Referrer**

The following table illustrates referrer's responses to the post-travel survey question around family support.

**Figure 5: Support provided by referrers pre-holiday**

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree with the following statement?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither /Nor	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Net: Disagree	Net: Agree
The family needed help and support with being mentally prepared and ready for the holiday	11%	29%	16%	30%	15%	45%	39%
The family needed a lot of help in choosing where to go and booking the holiday with the provider	4%	21%	14%	41%	20%	61%	25%
The family needed a lot of support to plan and prepare for their holiday eg. organising time off work, packing, transport	6%	21%	13%	43%	18%	61%	26%
The family needed help with budgeting for the holiday	8%	22%	19%	39%	12%	51%	30%

**Base: 162-164**

Responses from referrers were mixed in terms of how much support families required, however it seems referrers were more likely to be supporting families to be mentally prepared for the holiday, rather than supporting with budgeting and planning.

The following chart illustrates referrer's responses to the post-travel survey question on their overall experience of working with Family Holiday Charity this year.

## Figure 6: Referrers experience of working with Family Holiday Charity

Question: on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is excellent, as the referrer, how would you rate your overall experience of working with Family Holiday Charity this year?



Base: 164

- As illustrated, the experience has been very positive with the majority of referrers (98%) giving a rating of between 7 and 10.

Within the qualitative interviews, and post-travel feedback comments, referrers were generally very positive about the holiday application process and the advice and guidance they had received from Family Holiday Charity. There were a few comments regarding food vouchers that did not arrive on time or difficulties redeeming vouchers. Any other less positive comments related to the resorts themselves.

## 5.3 Activities whilst on holiday

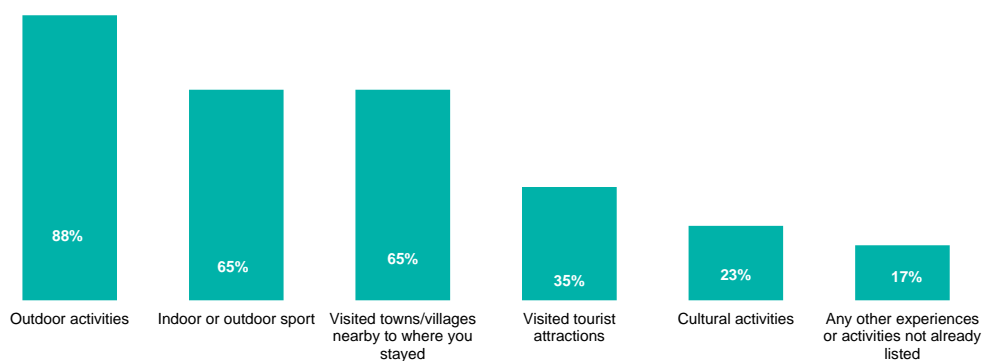
### 5.3.1 Family perspective

Families had undertaken a range of activities during their holidays.

- Almost nine in ten families had taken part in outdoor activities (88%) whilst around two-thirds of families had taken part in sport either indoors or outdoors (65%).
- Around two-thirds of families had visited towns/villages near to where they were staying (65%).

## Figure 7: Activities undertaken on holiday

Question: Did your family visit/take part in any of the following whilst on your holiday?



Base: 155

- Over a third of those completing the post-travel survey had also visited tourist attractions during their holidays (35%, rising to 50% of kinship carers) with almost a quarter taking part in cultural activities whilst away (23%).

It appears most of the holidays provided families with a range of activities on-site, and as such, there wasn't necessarily a need to leave sites, unless they wished to.

A few activities some families participated in included: crazy golf; bowling; nature walks; seeing marine wildlife such as seals and dolphins as well as activities like swimming (including open-water); going to the beach which many families did (sometimes for the first time).

Comments suggest families were generally happy with on-site offers and the fact that many sites were rural/coastal allowed people to benefit from being in nature without necessarily going far.

Cost was also a factor in not travelling further afield and visiting attractions for some families. This was a particular barrier for those travelling by public transport to more rural sites when the transport network was not necessarily conducive to getting out and about and the cost of taxis was prohibitive.

*"Travelling by train, spending time at the beach and the farm. We have not been on a train for over 10 years and we have never been to the beach or a farm."*

*"Myself & my son went to enjoy the peace & quiet of the countryside & enjoyed walks through the forest & seeing waterfalls. We felt no need to go elsewhere as we were happy to be there out in the open space of nature."*

Around half of families were not taking part in the types of activities they did on their holidays prior to the holidays (49%).

- This demonstrates how the holidays have provided many families with new opportunities and experiences.



*"The girls confidently tried new things which has boosted their self esteem, [child] has now started swimming lessons following her holiday."*

*"my children want to do more activities together as a family especially swimming."*

*"we done quite a lot so on site there was a nice park there was there was a pond to feed the ducks, there was a swimming pool which we will definitely return to because they had a hoist to get him in the pool. It was amazing. It was really well adapted. We also went up to the Aviemore wildlife centre we basically had a day there "*

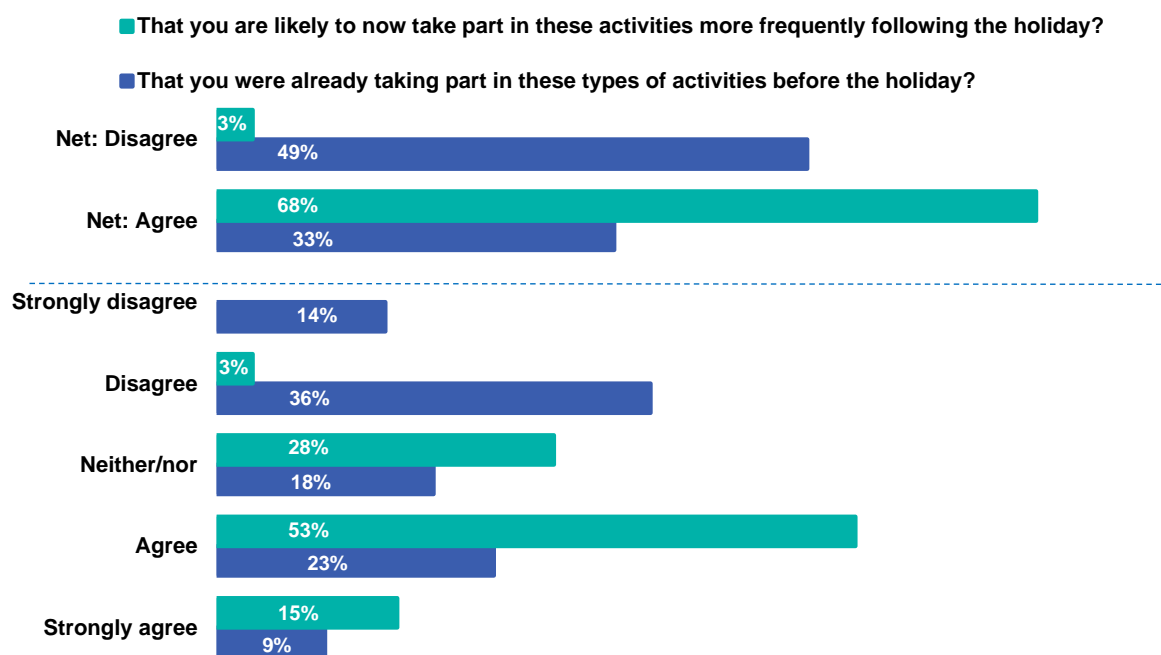
*"Getting walks together daily was good for us all as where we live, you cannot just leave the house and go for a walk. it is something we do not do together. It helped us have time to talk and bond while having fun."*

Positively, almost seven in ten families (68%) agreed that their families are now more likely to take part in these kinds of activities in the future as a direct result of the holiday.

*"my disabled son has been participating in a little more team games than he usually would".*

### Figure 8: Proportion of families already undertaking or being more likely to take part in these activities now

Question: on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.



Base: 160 & 158

Whilst 85% of families in Glasgow said their families were not taking part in these kinds of activities before the holiday, 85% said they would take part in these kinds of activities going forward which is a positive shift.

### 5.3.2 Referrer perspective

Referrers noted some of the activities and experiences that families had taken part in on holiday. For the children, the opportunity to spend more time outside and be able to run around was noted.

This was of particular importance for lower income families, often living in cramped accommodation, and without the finances to take their children out on day trips to wide open spaces.

Some referrers noted that families that had previously struggled to access activities and days out with their children (due to parental or child anxiety) had renewed confidence since the holiday. For families new to Scotland (including asylum seekers and refugees) the holiday had helped them to settle in and appreciate their new surroundings.

Having the opportunity to take a friend or family member (who doesn't live with them) has been very valuable for socially isolated families, for company, and also in cases where transport would have been problematic otherwise.

*"They feel more accepted, and accepting, of life in Scotland as this has opened their eyes to the beautiful scenery in the country."* **Referrer**



*"She has made friends with a woman that was in Women's Aid with her. She went on holiday with her so that was nice, because that woman really benefited get from going away as well.."* **Referrer**

*"They were very active. They went on the boat, the ferry from [the resort]. And they went into a nearby town or village or something I believe, for the day. They used the facilities, they went swimming, they were just really proactive, very child-focused. It was all about making memories if you like."* **Referrer**

*"Both children were really excited to tell me all about their adventures and how they had been to the beach, Ice skating and had fun at the club.."* **Referrer**



## 5.4 Affordability

### 5.4.1 Family perspective

As part of the holidays, families were provided with vouchers towards their food costs (£30 per person per day) and a fuel/travel voucher (either £30 per person for travel by public transport or to a value of £50 for fuel).

Questions were included in the post-travel survey to establish, roughly, how much of their own money families were spending on their holidays, and how affordable this was for families.

**Figure 9: Amount of Own Money Spent on Holiday**

Whilst on holiday, roughly how much did you spend of your own money on the following?	None	Less than £50	Between £50 and £100	More than £100 but less than £200	More than £200 but less than £300	More than £300 but less than £400	£400 or more
Food	6%	32%	37%	15%	9%	1%	1%
Travel	38%	39%	19%	3%	-	-	-
Activities/entertainment	19%	42%	24%	8%	6%	1%	1%
Purchasing pre-holiday essentials such as suit cases, suncream, beach towels	38%	46%	11%	4%	1%	1%	-
<b>Base: 159-161</b>							

As shown, a majority of families were still spending some of their own money on food during the holidays despite the vouchers, this was largely less than £100. It is noted that not all families redeemed the vouchers however, which may affect these results.

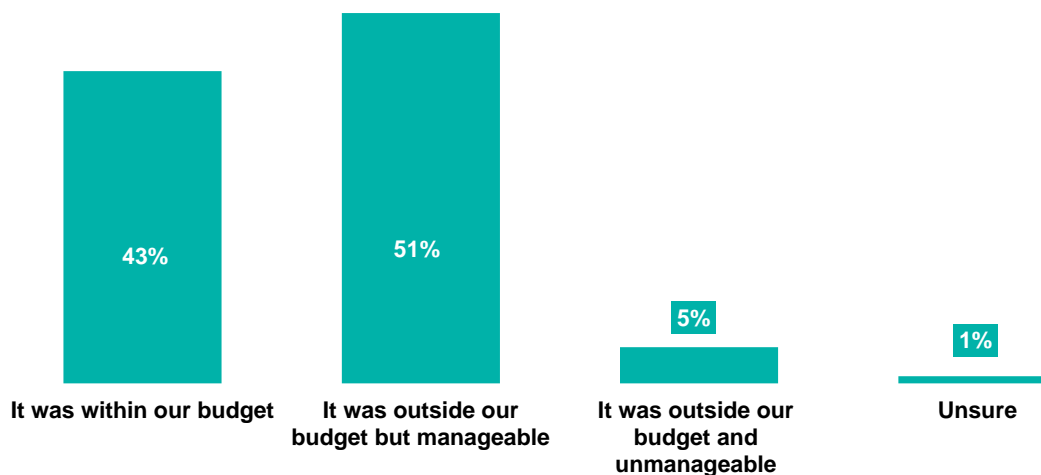
Families were less likely to be spending their own money on travel and pre-holiday essentials with almost four in ten families not spending any money on these.

Whilst 82% of families spent some of their own money on activities/entertainment whilst away, this also tended to be less than £100.

- Positively, a large majority of families said the money they had spent on the holiday was either within their budget (43%), or manageable (51%).

## Figure 10: Affordability of Holiday Spending

Question: how would you describe your holiday spending?



Base: 160

It was apparent throughout the interviews that families take budgeting seriously, they have to, and as such in most cases any additional spend was pre-empted.

Families being offered holidays where many activities, such as swimming, were already included in the cost has worked well in terms of reducing the pressure to spend. Many families discussed how their children were happy with the activities already included in packages, from pools to playgrounds and entertainment.

It was clear through wider comments made within the post-travel questionnaire, and particularly through the qualitative discussions with families, that the vouchers for food and travel were an essential component in many families being able to take these holidays and helped significantly with their budgeting plans.

It was clear that by providing these vouchers it was one less concern for families, and families were able to prioritise any spending of their own money on things like paid-for activities/occasional treats for their children including off-site trips to nearby visitor attractions and meals out, which they otherwise wouldn't have been able to afford.

*"We've not got much money and what we did was not what I say extravagant. We didn't go out and we didn't have five course meals and stuff like that. We had a KFC in Kirkcaldy. So it wasn't what I say an expensive holiday at all. But it hit home that you don't have to have lots of money to have fun do you? That really hit home. I mean, the fact that we had our food supplied for us, that meant that we could do stuff like deep sea world and bowling"*

Families generally viewed the amount offered for food to be generous, allowing for treats as well as essentials to be bought whilst away.

Despite this, an occasional comment was made regarding the expense on-site for any additional spend particularly at on-site grocery shops; distance to supermarkets that took the vouchers (particularly for those travelling by public transport), and at the bar on an evening when buying drinks if they were enjoying evening entertainment.

*"Thank you so much for giving us this experience and the contribution to the travel cost and food vouchers were so good as this gave me extra cash to spend whilst we were on holiday. It also eased the worry."*

Some families also found pester-power quite stressful to manage when children wanted to play on arcades on site. A handful of parents also incurred additional unexpected spend due to what they explained as the poor quality of food on site or for example having to spend more time outside of the accommodation than planned due to sensory issues.

*"I knew I would do it quite cheaply, you know, I'd take picnics and not go to fancy places. Just do everything free, you know. We went to the loch, played on the sand there, and we went for walks, we used the hotel facilities that were free. So, you know, you can do it cleverly if you've got no budget"*



*"Due to the increase in petrol prices the £50 fuel card was gratefully received as was the food voucher as this allowed me to spend money on tickets to a farm park for a day out that I maybe wouldn't have normally been able to afford."*

*"we could afford to have a meal at a restaurant as all other food and drinks were covered with the voucher so it was a nice treat!"*

### 5.4.2 Referrer perspective

Referrers described families' situations and it was clear that in addition to being unable to afford a holiday, many of the families were in acute financial distress.

Referrers were often supporting families with finance, debt and benefit issues, housing, and access to food banks. Some of the parents were unable to work due to poor health, or were carers for children with additional needs or disabilities.

Referrers noted that families really appreciated the grocery and travel vouchers as this took away some of the stress around finances during the holiday and prevented escalation of any existing financial issues.

*"They got food vouchers and travel, which I don't think they would have managed otherwise. That was a massive, massive bonus for them. And it meant that they could enjoy and do more things... travelling on the boat and things like that, it allowed them to do these kinds of things."*

**Referrer**

Some acknowledged they may not have been able to put so many families forward for the holidays, or some families would have been unable to take the holidays, without these additional vouchers.

*"I think, for me, when I do apply for these families, [finance] is something that I do keep in my mind that people don't do this if you're going to end up in debt or struggling."*

**Referrer**



*"It does help getting that food and travel voucher because that was a big thing, the holidays great, but when they realise they are getting that support as well, that's like a game changer."*

**Referrer**

Referrers did describe a few glitches with the supply of food vouchers to families, such as them going into spam, or some parents/carers finding it difficult to redeem them online, or not being able to redeem them in time for the holiday. In some cases, families paid for food out of their own money on holiday but were able to use the vouchers on their return home.

It was also noted that some money towards activities for families would be useful, as resorts can include amusement arcades or fairgrounds, which can be costly and difficult to avoid with young children. Other suggestions included a fund to support families with the cost of holiday items, such as suitcases, which some families did not have.

*"I think the finances, she managed to control that quite well. She knew that she didn't have a lot to spend while she was there, so when she went she just didn't take the kids to things that cost money and she focused on only doing the things that were free"* **Referrer**

## 5.5 Impact

### 5.5.1 Family perspective

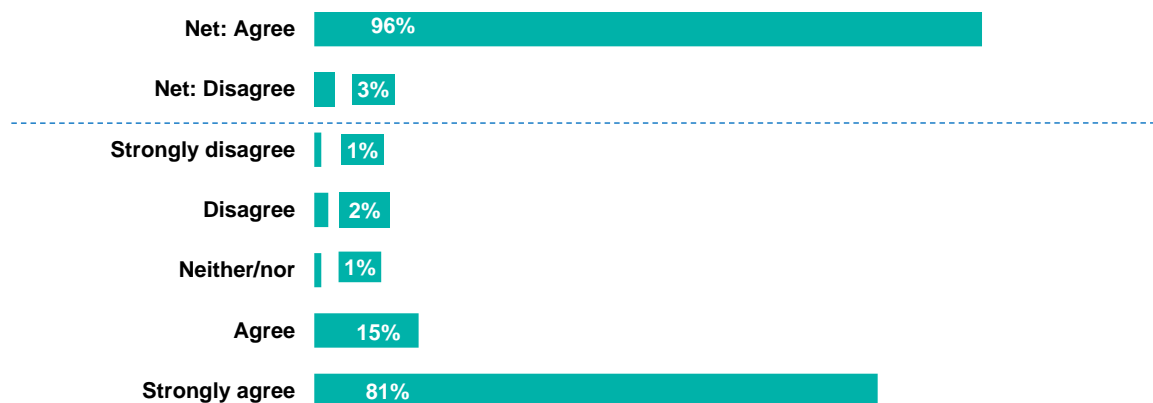
#### Making Memories

As mentioned earlier, families often referred to ‘making memories’, and positive memories, as being one of the best things about the holidays.

- 96% of families agreed (with 81% *strongly* agreeing) that the holiday had helped them to have more fun and create happy memories as a family.

#### Figure 11: Level of Agreement that Holiday Helped create Fun and Happy Memories

Question: the holiday helped us to have more fun and create happy memories as a family.



Base: 160

Many of the families offered holidays had been through traumatic events and it was clear that being able to create positive memories after a period of particular hardship (which is often ongoing) has been profound, something which families are extremely grateful for.



*“Before I went on holiday I felt I had the weight of the world on my shoulders. The holiday brought me back down to earth and made me realise the positives in my life and how wonderful all my family are.”*

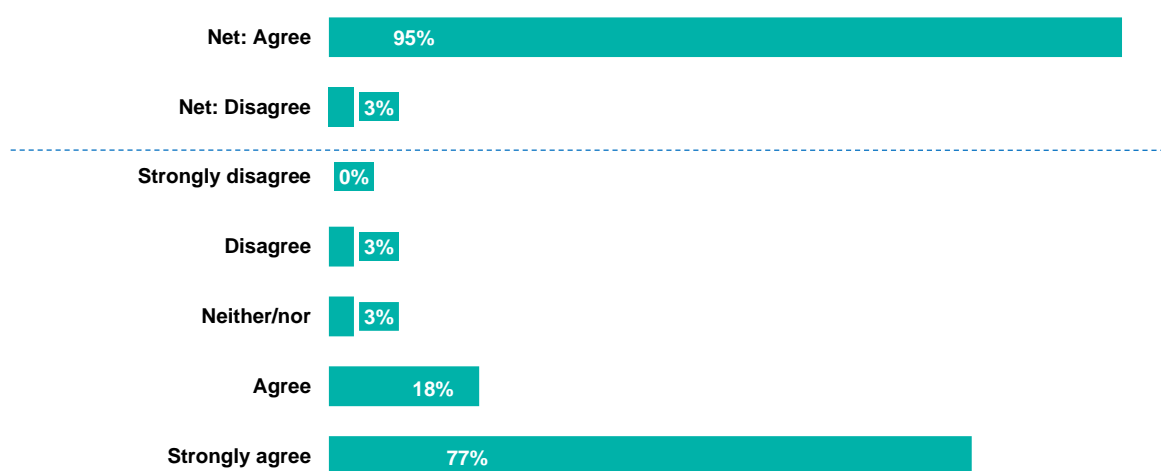
## Family Bonding

The holidays also clearly have an impact on family bonding.

- 95% agreed (with 77% *strongly* agreeing) that the holiday had enabled them to spend more quality time together as a family.

### Figure 12: Level of agreement that holiday enabled quality time as a family

Question: the holiday enabled us to spend more quality time together as a family.



Base: 159



*"There was no fighting or arguing and we are getting on better as a family since we returned."*

*"I felt able to reset on the holiday. This improved my tolerance levels and my patience. Spending time together was such a nice thing that it has made me want to be able to continue the stress free time at home by not reacting as much and as quickly."*

*"It helped us bond more and had fun as a family. We listened to each other and we all joined in the activities together."*

*"bonding time as sisters because at home they tend to go into their own little spaces. Whereas when they were stuck in a caravan together they had to go old school and draw together and play board games again together."*

*"I had a bit of one to one with my eldest, which, unfortunately is quite rare at the minute because everything is so focused on my youngest. It was really nice actually to have that, to have that little bit of time away from my youngest, it was nice, it was really nice actually, to focus on having a chat with my eldest, we went for walk through St Andrews, done a bit of stuff that he wanted to do"*

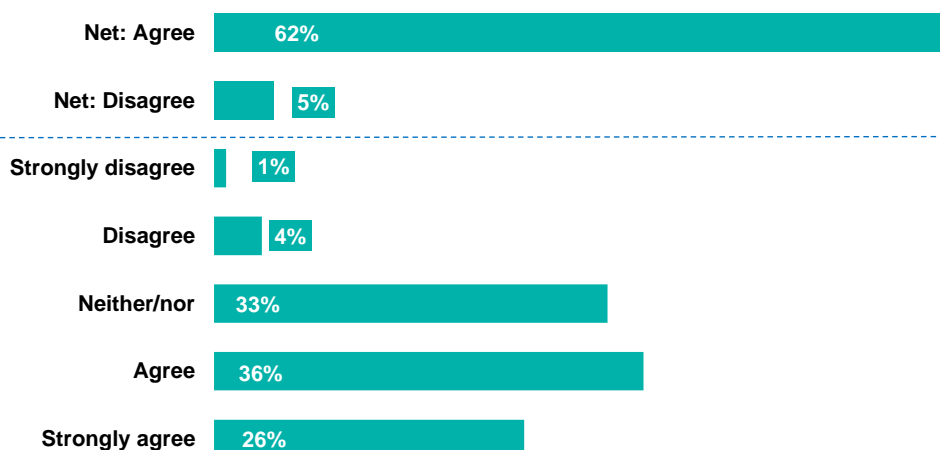
There is also positive indication that this quality time may be sustained for many families on their return from their holidays.

- Six in ten families (62%) agreed that they had been spending more time together as a family since returning from the holiday.
- This figure rises to 79% of families with experience of alcohol and/or substance misuse.

It should be acknowledged, that some families may have already been spending a lot of time together prior to the holidays, which would have an impact on how they responded to this question.

### Figure 13: Level of agreement that families have spent more time together since the holiday

Question: we have spent more time together as a family since returning from the holiday.



Base: 159



It was also clear from comments and discussions, that the holidays have helped some families to realise and value the importance of spending quality time together and being present with one another.

Some families were spending more time playing board games, having regular movie nights, and so on. Communication has often improved within families and some families discussed how the holidays had made them realise they need to spend quality time with each of their children, which can sometimes be challenging.

*"I will now make a point of spending time with my oldest child when the youngest 2 are in bed as he was able to tell me he feels left out sometimes."*

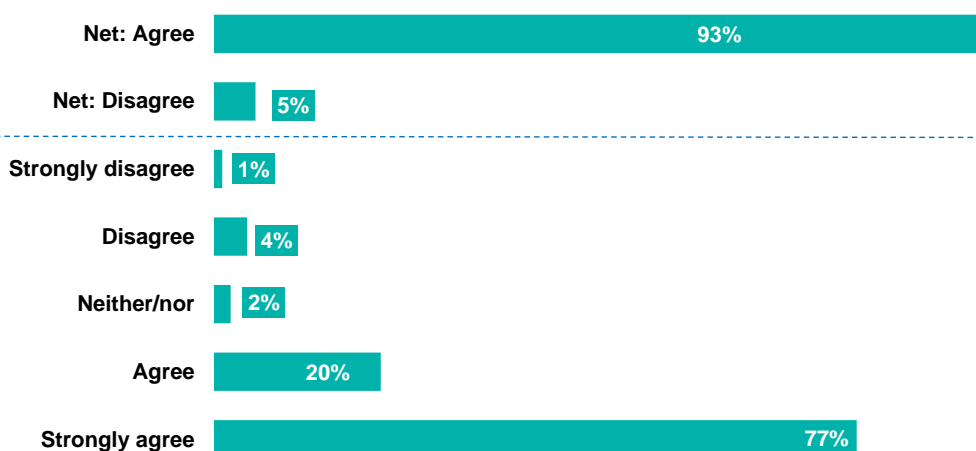
*"I'm trying to do more things like board games nights and stuff like that. So rather than having them like doing their own thing, I'm trying to make a point of like, no, you're not watching films. No, you're not watching films individually we can watch them together as a family, or we don't have to have TV on and stuff like that, we can do board games we can do activities together?"*

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Almost all families agreed (with 73%, *strongly* agreeing) that the holiday had a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of their family (93%).
- 93% of families that were experiencing mental health issues prior to the holiday also agreed there had been a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

**Figure 14: Level of agreement that holidays have had a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing**

Question: the holiday had a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of my family



Base: 158

As outlined earlier, families are largely facing multiple challenges in their lives, and can understandably be somewhat consumed by these challenges.

The holidays have provided families with a physical break away from their usual routines; a multitude of appointments and responsibilities; and stressors and ongoing reminders about the challenges they face.

Holidays have provided a period of respite from these worries, a change of scenery and an opportunity to take-stock and reassess in a more relaxed (for most) setting.

*"Each day I would get up, have my coffee then just go outside walking. It was very peaceful & helped both me & my son being in a beautiful place listening to waterfalls & the nature itself. It was a fantastic experience for both our mental health."*

*"helped me to get over the fear of taking my children on holiday and helped to give me a boost in my mental health."*

*"I experience mental health difficulties and can be distracted by lots of different things meaning I can't give my entire time and focus to the children. Being away on holiday allowed me to give the time and attention to the children. This made me feel happy and calm and allowed me to press the reset button."*

*"It provided us as a family with opportunities that we not have been able to do otherwise. I suffer badly with poor mental health at times which ultimately impacts on the children as we very rarely are able to go out and take part in group activities. Not having to worry about the cost of paying for food and the added expense of the holiday relieved a lot of pressure meaning I was also able to enjoy the experience."*

*"it got me out of quite a dark state"*

*"What I needed was just a good bit of relaxation. It's helped me mentally as well. Because lately I've been feeling well... sometimes I feel low, it depends on my moods and things like that. But actually, for me myself, I really really needed that, 100% sure"*

*It's a lot of anxiety and stuff like that within the house so to be able to get away and have that break just to not think about it just to think like okay, we're not gonna worry about what's going on with the house we'll deal with that when we come back"*

*"It has helped me & my children's emotional & mental health as we were unable to spend time outside as a family due to fear & worry & not going further than our garden. It has gave me confidence knowing that my children were very happy during this holiday & now I feel more able to allow them more freedom outdoors to enjoy activities. My children seem more happy & confident since this break & knowing this has helped them & me has made me happy"*



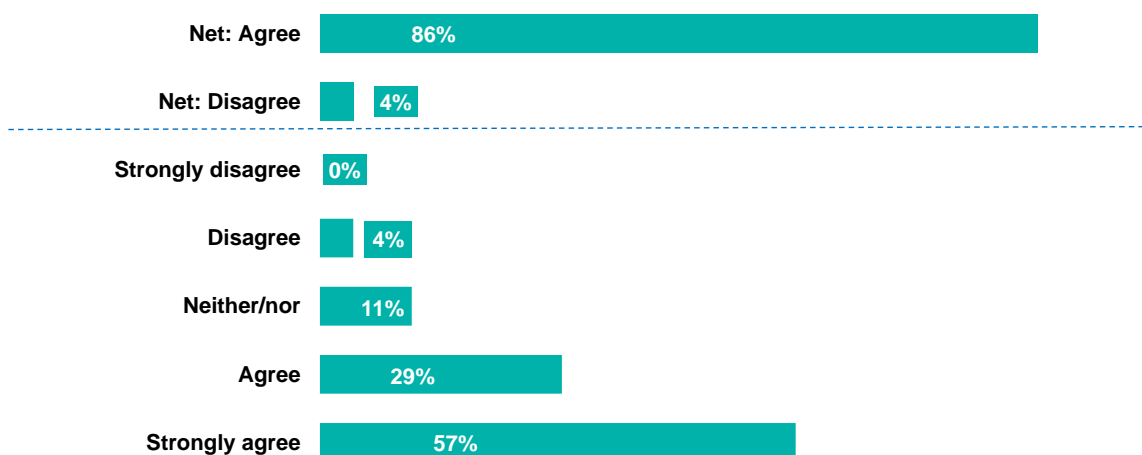
## Confidence

- In total over four-fifths of families (86%) agreed that the holiday had a positive impact on their family's confidence.

This rises slightly to 89% agreement amongst families that were experiencing low confidence prior to the holidays.

### Figure 15: Level of agreement that holidays have had a positive impact on confidence

Question: the holiday had a positive impact on our family's confidence



Base: 159

The holidays have helped develop confidence in a number of ways. For many families, taking the holiday in the first place has taken them out of their comfort zone. As highlighted earlier, many families had never had a holiday before, or if they had this was now many years ago (often pre-children). Therefore, taking a holiday was something families weren't necessarily familiar with, and to some extent, families have largely been braving the unknown on these holidays.

*"I felt the holiday boosted my confidence in using public transport and now knowing I can take my kids places alone."*

It was also clear, through the discussions with families, that there could sometimes be a lot of apprehension about taking these holidays.

This could relate to uncertainty about how children would manage with change/behaviour; or managing their (often multiple) children in a new/unfamiliar place. as well as concerns about using public transport.

Families often spoke about how they'd grown in confidence in their ability as a parent/carer to manage an outing and a holiday away from the home, and be assured that they could do it, and that their fears and anxieties were either unwarranted or they could overcome these and deal with any challenges faced.

*"I have gained more confidence that I can take my daughter out more to activities and manage her behaviours better. I don't get so stressed about things as much."*

Often families were pleasantly surprised to find their children adapted very well to the holidays and relished the opportunities presented to them, including socialising with other children and making friends amongst those that may normally struggle with this.

A clear benefit for many families was that being offered a holiday has boosted children's self-esteem, by providing them with something their families are unable to afford themselves. The holidays have given them the same experiences as many of their peers.

*"[Child] is more confident and willing to take part in activities that he maybe would not have thought he could manage before. This is a positive step as he finds change or activities that he is not familiar with to be a big challenge due to his additional support needs."*

*"this has been an great confidence boost to me as I don't really do well in crowded places but the kids were so excited I didn't really think about anything else."*

*"The children have more confidence at trying new activities "*

*"It has really given me the confidence to go other places an not be afraid to do things that I'm unfamiliar with"*

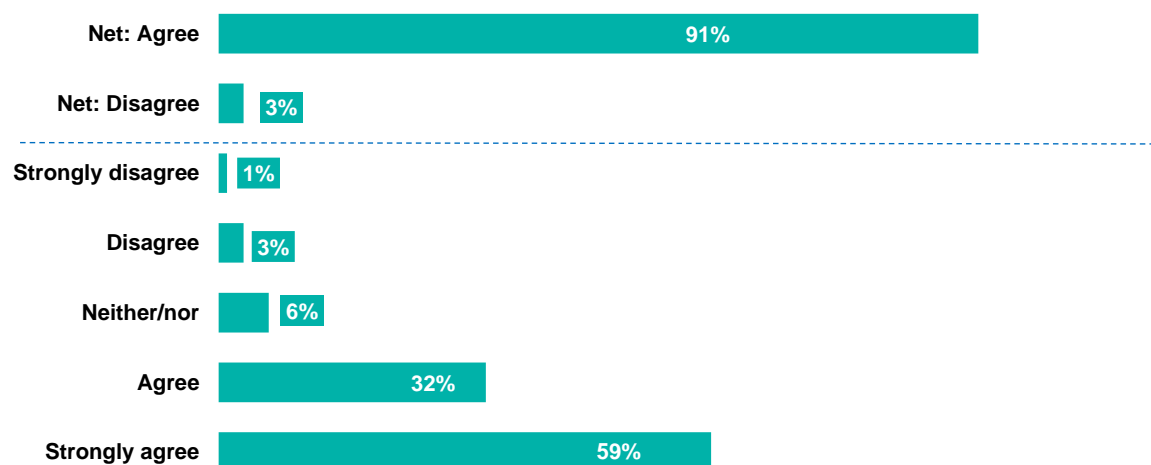


## New Experiences

- Nine in ten families agreed that the holiday had given their family an opportunity for new experiences (91%).

**Figure 16: Level of agreement that holidays provided an opportunity for new experiences**

Question: the holiday gave our family an opportunity for new experiences



**Base: 159**

It was clear, through the discussions, that many families had quite limited and restricted experiences of engaging in activities together prior to the holidays, particularly outside of the house, and particularly as a family unit.

*"The holiday helped improve our sense of happiness and enjoyment in life. We usually don't go anywhere because we cant afford to."*

For many families, the most they would do outside of the home as a family is visit the local park.

The holidays have therefore enabled families to have new and different experiences to the norm, and it was clear that this has also helped develop confidence and interest in pursuing more activities in the future or simply to get out of the house more even just for a walk.

*"We spend more time together and we are looking at other places we can go for day trips."*

- Over two-thirds of families (68%) agreed that they are now more likely to take part in these kinds of activities going forward, as a direct result of the holiday.

For example, whilst many families in the discussions would take their children swimming very occasionally, if ever, seeing children enjoy swimming on the holidays has stirred interest in undertaking this activity more in the future, when funds allow. Several families were now arranging or looking into swimming lessons for their children as they had enjoyed swimming on holiday so much.

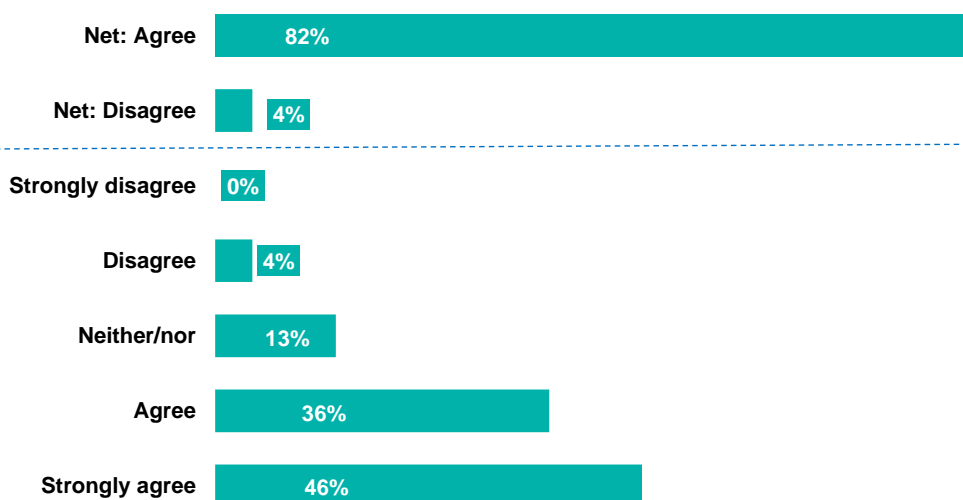
*"We are all a bit more upbeat and excited. Money is a constant worry but getting out and enjoying outdoors together is free."*

## Family Coping Mechanisms

- Four-fifths of families agreed that the holiday had a positive impact on their family's ability to deal with the challenges they face as a family (82%).

### Figure 17: Level of agreement that holidays have had a positive impact on ability to deal with challenges

Question: the holiday had a positive impact on our family's ability to deal with the challenges we face as a family



Base: 159

Six in ten families that had experienced domestic abuse *strongly* agreed with this statement (64%), with a further 19% agreeing with it (net agreement of 83%), which suggests the holidays are having a positive impact for families that have experienced this trauma.

Comments highlight how the break in routine, and being away from stressors at home, has helped families to feel refreshed and able to return to face any ongoing challenges. Holidays had also opened up dialogue between different family members which was an important step in moving forward.

*"we have come home refreshed and ready to face day to day life as a family."*

*"Before going on holiday I felt really low and stressed but now I feel more focussed and we are communicating better."*

*"The kids talked about how they felt about our situation they were able to open up, which was good."*

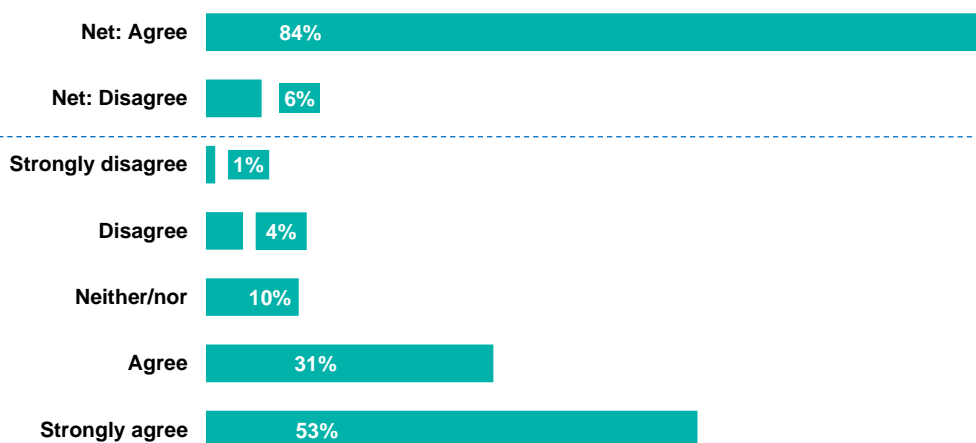




- Over four-fifths of families also agreed that the holiday had helped to reduce their feelings of stress and worry (84%).
- This figure rises to 100% of families that have experienced homelessness and 96% of families that were experiencing debt.

**Figure 18: Level of agreement that holidays have helped reduce stress and worry**

Question: the holiday helped to reduce our feeling of stress and worry



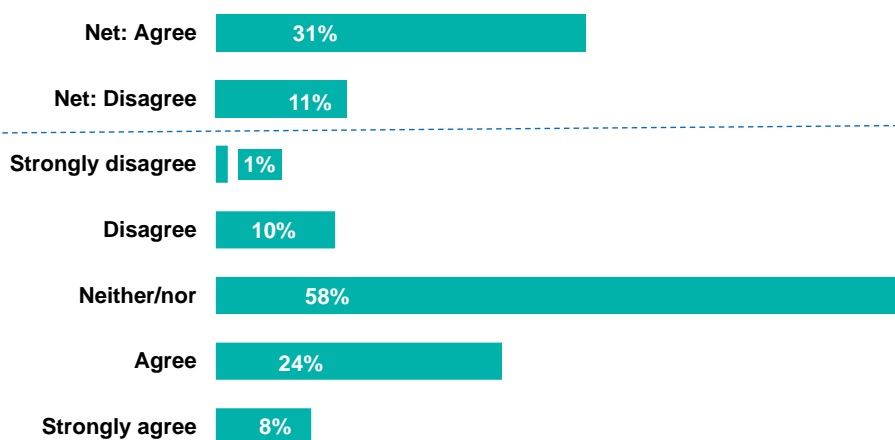
Base: 159

## Community Activity

- Three in ten families completing the survey agreed that they had become more active in their local community since the holiday (31%).

**Figure 19: Level of agreement that families are more active in the community**

Question: we have become more active in the community since the holiday



Base: 160

- In total 41% of families experiencing unemployment agreed they have become more active in the community since the holiday.

Families often found this a difficult question to answer within the qualitative research or would often say that their level of community activity has not changed since taking the holiday.

Discussions and some of the questionnaire comments do however, highlight a subtle shift in community engagement, particularly a sense of belonging, even if this wasn't recognised by families themselves. A shift for someone could be as simple as getting out of their house more, attending more groups, and being visible in the community. It could also be as simple as children being excited to tell their peers and teachers about their holiday, giving them a conversation starter and shared experience they may not have ever had before.

In some cases children have returned from their holidays more willing and able to socialise with other children, again improving their sense of community belonging.

Discussions with referrers, and some of the questionnaire comments do however, highlight a change in mindset, including an increased likelihood to try new things, and a new found confidence.

*"the mum is now doing volunteering in the community and hopes to find employment, and is spending more time with her son "* **Referrer**

*"Mum has become more confident in taking her daughter out and about in the community. She is doing small train trips with her daughter in preparation for travelling further afield."* **Referrer**

There are also examples whereby taking the holidays has boosted children's self-esteem and feelings of 'normality', and in some cases children have returned from their holidays more willing and able to socialise with other children, again improving their sense of community belonging.

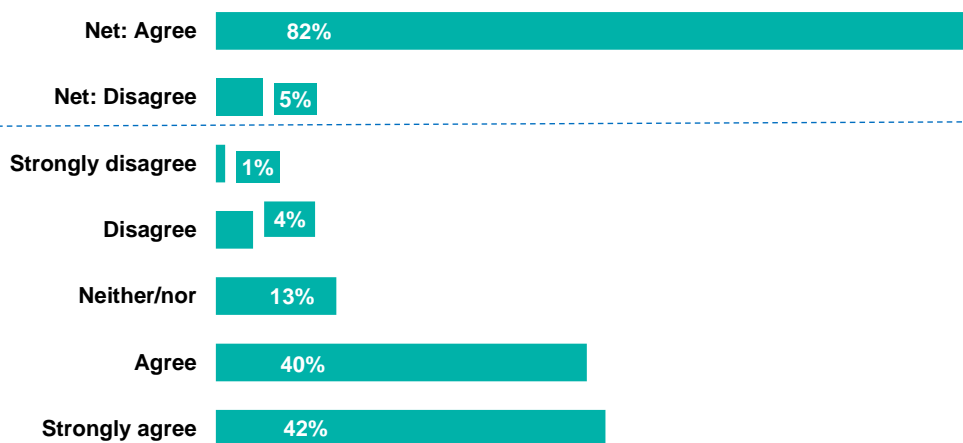
*"[child] won a prize at the talent show and he was over the moon to tell everyone about this! It has really boosted his self esteem and he feels he has something to be proud of and excited to share with others".* **Referrer**

## Looking Towards the Future

- Over eight in ten families agreed that the holiday had helped them to feel more optimistic about the future (82%).

**Figure 20: Level of agreement that families are more optimistic about the future**

Question: the holiday has helped us feel more optimistic about the future

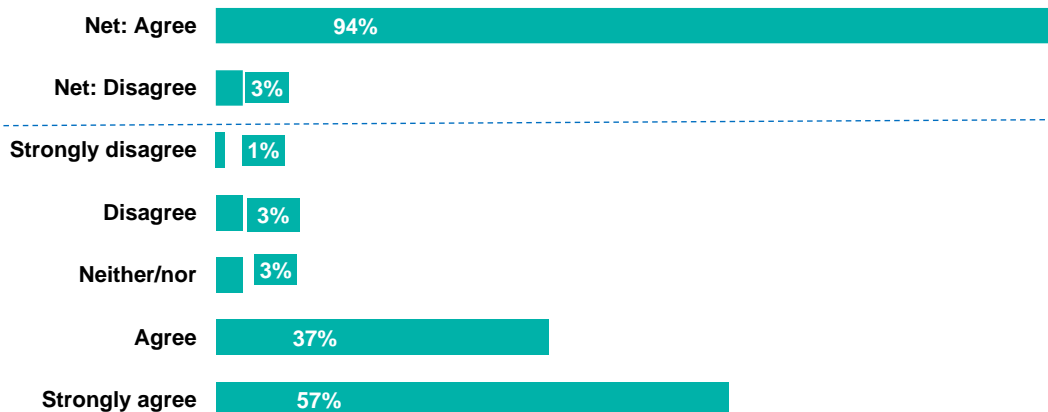


Base: 159

- This figure increases to 100% of families that have experienced homelessness and 95% of those experiencing alcohol/and/or substance misuse who agreed that the holiday had helped them to feel more optimistic about the future.
- Almost all families also agreed that they would feel more comfortable and confident in taking a holiday with their family in the future (94%).

**Figure 21: Level of agreement that families are more comfortable and confident about taking a family holiday in the future**

Question: after having this holiday I would feel more comfortable and confident in taking a holiday with my family in the future



Base: 159

- In total, 100% of families with experience of alcohol/substance misuse; anti-social behaviour; crime; homelessness and kinship care; being a refugee or asylum seeker all agreed that they would feel more comfortable and confident taking holidays with their families in the future.

Comments from families highlighted that the aspiration to have future holidays (or more days out if not holidays) is definitely there. Whilst many families spoke openly about hoping to take further holidays often of a similar nature, many also recognised it would be challenging to afford to do so.

The holidays have clearly provided positive experiences for many families that they would like to replicate in the future. Now families have done this once, as shown, they often have increased confidence to take holidays and do more as a family going forward, even if this is just making the most of the outdoors more.

It was clear that, prior to the holidays, many families were so embedded in their daily challenges, including low finances, that a holiday was often simply not on their radar. Indeed many parents did not recognise how much they needed the holiday until they had it.

Now they have had a holiday, they've seen how valuable and enjoyable it could be, and some families were already considering how they could make this happen again in the future. Aspirations have been set.

*"The holiday did help alleviate stress and worry because we were in a different atmosphere which helped us hope for the future and possible arrange another holiday at the same place in the future."*

*"It allowed us to get out of Perth and away from everyday stressors that are around for us in that area. It was the kids first caravan holiday and they really enjoyed it, we are saving to try and go on another caravan holiday next year."*

*"We had all suffered two close recent bereavements. My confidence was very low and now I feel I can do things and not use excuses not to do things. Proved to myself I can take my children on holiday and a disaster will not happen."*

*"I didn't think I needed it until I was actually there. I was so focused on the kids getting away and having a break, I felt like that's what they needed. I didn't realize how much I needed it as well, that did throw me a bit."*

*"Never thought I would be able to take the kids away but made me realise that everything can be achieved if you at least try."*

*"we want to go back to Reems Bay because we really loved it. So that's something that we are looking forward to going back to and we'd want to go somewhere else as well just for experiences"*

*"it's really helped me as well. I'm actually going to be planning on another wee caravan holiday next year. Now that's shown us that actually, a good trip like that, a good few days is what we actually need."*

*"it's kind of given me the kick up the arse I needed to really push to get us relocated, to get settled. And also to try and, I don't know how, but to save up and do little breaks here and there. I definitely think that the kids need it. We've not got much money and what we did was not what I say extravagant."*

*"Next year would be great. So then because people have been telling me if you buy the Sun papers you can get half prices so that's what I'm going to start doing. And once I've sorted like a few bills, once that's all sorted, then I can start saving up for our next wee break."*



## 5.5.2 Referrer perspective

The following table illustrates referrer's responses to the post-travel survey question around the impact of the holiday for families.

**Figure 22: Level of agreement amongst referrers of impact of holidays**

Question: on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree or disagree with any changes you have personally noticed in the family since they got back from their holiday?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither /nor	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Net: Disagree	Net: Agree
The holiday helped the family to have more fun and create happy memories	74%	21%	1%	2%	2%	4%	95%
The family had the opportunity for new experiences	61%	31%	4%	3%	1%	4%	92%
The holiday had a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of the family	67%	25%	4%	2%	1%	4%	93%
The holiday had a positive impact on the family's confidence	57%	31%	9%	2%	1%	3%	88%
The family seem to be more comfortable and confident about taking a holiday together in the future	54%	38%	4%	3%	1%	4%	92%
The holiday had a positive impact on the family's ability to deal with the challenges they are facing as a family	46%	39%	10%	4%	1%	4%	85%
The holiday enabled the family to spend more quality time together	37%	42%	14%	6%	1%	7%	79%
The family seem to be more optimistic about the future	33%	46%	17%	4%	1%	5%	79%
The family seem to have reduced feelings of stress and worry	37%	41%	14%	7%	1%	8%	78%
The family have been spending more time together as a family since returning from the holiday	27%	38%	32%	4%	0%	4%	64%
The family have become more active in the community since the holiday	11%	25%	52%	11%	1%	12%	36%
No changes noticed	2%	10%	10%	55%	22%	77%	13%

**Base: 161-163**

As illustrated above, referrers were most likely to agree that the holiday helped the families to have more fun and create happy memories, provided the opportunity for new experiences, and had a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. Impacts around increased community activity and spending more time together as a family were less evident. Positively, only 2% of referrers had observed no change.

Within the qualitative interviews, referrers described the range of impacts for families in more detail. Supporting relationships was a key theme, with referrers describing improved relationships between parents and children, and between partners/spouses.

*"First of all they said that the wee one slept all night, because he's in his own wee room in a cot and he slept all night, they actually got sleep, which was major for them. And because of that they just enjoyed their holiday so much."* **Referrer**

Improvement in these relationships sometimes translated into improved child behaviour, and engagement with school, on the return from holiday, although this was not always sustained.

The holiday can provide families with a positive reference point to return to if problems reoccur.

Positive impact around mental health and emotional well-being, and increased confidence, for parents and children were frequently mentioned by referrers. Exposure to a new experience, such as a holiday, has enabled some parents with their own mental health issues to feel more confident and for children to develop their resilience and become more independent.

*“If they do feel a bit rubbish and a bit down they can bring the photos out and just remember the holidays. They don't really have a lot of these memories of them all together.” Referrer*

*“The main thing I would say is building memories... and just encouraging them to really try different things that they wouldn't normally do... and also for children to be responsible themselves and do things themselves” Referrer*

*“It definitely has improved her mental health. I was out seeing her at the start of the week, and she was a lot more relaxed... I felt she was coping a lot better. It's the most relaxed I've seen her just before the kids have gone back to school.” Referrer*

A few of the families were kinship carers, and the holidays had been a clear benefit for them and went some way to acknowledging and recognising this important role.

*“The holiday allowed the family to have the opportunity of going on holiday which would not have been achievable without the help of the family fund due to their family circumstances. This has helped the family to feel more supported and provide recognition as a kinship carer and the role they carry out.” Referrer*

From the perspective of referrers it was evident that the impact of the holiday would be sustained longer for some families than others. The post-holiday 'glow' could fade fairly quickly for families with multiple and complex pressures.

*"This family found the holiday quite stressful due to Mum's decreasing mental health and the behaviour of the children with baby not settling. They were grateful to be offered the holiday but they did need time without the children on their return.." Referrer*

However, for others, the holiday provided a valuable re-set for families to continue in their daily lives with renewed resilience and confidence.

A fresh perspective on parenting techniques, and increased confidence in the role of parent the was also noted by referrers.

*"She is back to being a mum the children can rely on ,because she has proved she can get them organised for a holiday and ensure all different needs are met" Referrer*



Feelings of self-worth were also enhanced, this is particularly important for parents living in poverty who can feel guilty that their children have to go without.

Doing things differently on holiday could sometimes translate into making changes on returning home. Referrers gave examples of parents who seemed to be more confident about getting out and about after the holiday, or making changes in other areas of life.

*"Mum was happy and self assured following the break. She felt good that she was able to provide a holiday for her son." Referrer*

*"Mrs [name] expressed an increased confidence in her ability to parent her children, in the absence of her deceased husband. She also reports that her confidence in driving out of the local area has also increased." Referrer*

*"They've got more involved in some things. They go to their local church. And they've got their church family now. But one of the things that came out, I think, is accepting the fact that the wee one needs to go to nursery... all of a sudden, she's accepting it, she has been for a visit and she's doing it. So I think her mood is better. So therefore, she's able to see things clearer." Referrer*



In some cases, the holiday has enhanced relationships with referring organisations, particularly relationships with social workers, where it can be difficult to gain trust and maintain a positive relationship.

*"I think as well, getting a holiday through social work, makes them realise 'oh she is there to support us for the good things as well'... because really, you don't want to be in their lives all the time, and being able to offer a holiday, that's a huge thing." Referrer*

## 6. Case Studies

This section contains 11 case studies to provide greater insight into how holidays have benefitted particular families. When possible, a referrer viewpoint is also included. All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

### Case Study 1: Cat

#### Family Perspective

Cat lives with her husband John and their almost two-year old son in a one-bedroom house in Edinburgh. Cat and John are in their early forties and are both in recovery from substance misuse. Cat experienced an abusive childhood and lives with depression. The couple have been together for over a decade and addiction developed after learning that the couple would not be able to conceive a child together as Cat explained:

*“that caused my life to sort of spiral and I took John with me, but then a year and a half into our recovery I found out I was pregnant. So we've got a wee miracle baby and he's going to be 2 in September”*

The family have joined their local church and John is now working full-time at the church café, after around 20 years of not working.

*“He's a chef by trade and he said he would never go back into a kitchen but now it is so good to see you know, like getting up in a morning and having that passion for life”*

As well as managing their recovery the housing situation is an ongoing challenge for the family. There is no room for a bed for their son and the couple take it in turns to either sleep with their son in the bedroom, or sleep on a sofa bed in the living room. Their son usually awakes several times a night which makes the family tired. Just prior to being awarded a holiday the family experienced a disappointment with a new house they had hoped to secure which would have provided them with much needed larger space, they were initially told they had secured this house and shortly after had this offer withdrawn.

Cat was receiving support from a therapist and she was referred to the charity Circle due to her self-acknowledged concerns about becoming a parent, Cat was worried about how she would be as a parent given her own experiences and challenge with addiction and was worried about the impact her own medication (methadone) could have on her unborn child. Circle have supported the family since Cat was pregnant.

*“if I'm stuck with anything or I'm just feeling unsure of a decision or that I can phone Davinia and she'll help me talk it through. I get worried a bit like the choices I make because I've not made good choices in the past. So it was like, they're like a sensible adult to talk it through with. Yeah and Davinia's that sensible adult for me!”*

Prior to having her son Cat acknowledged that they were a very isolated and insular couple, and would rarely go out.

*"before we had G we were really isolated we didn't go out and do anything. And it's something that really worried me. Because I'm really bad for like isolating myself, like when the country went into lockdown nothing changed in my life. And I was thinking, why is everybody moaning about being in the house? What's so bad about being in the house? But to me, like being in my house is my safe place".*

Since Circle became involved and the couple had their child, and joined the church the couple have been getting out more. Days out provided by Circle have helped improve the couple's confidence to go to different places.

The family had never been away on a holiday before, the couple had not managed to have a honeymoon and they were delighted to be considered for a holiday through Family Holiday Charity which they called their "honey holiday".

Cat felt the holiday reached them at a good point in time, they'd just had their hopes dashed of moving to a new larger house and this gave them something positive to focus on. It was also an opportunity to get away from home and the stresses this entails and put into practice some of the learning and skills they'd developed through their involvement with Circle:

*"John's been doing stuff through Circle as well, a bit like behaviour stuff and, and, like relationships, how to deal better with like confrontation and stuff. He's not a bad person. But I think that because he was like sharing the stuff that he was learning with me. So I think the two of us have benefitted from it. And that holiday really gave us a chance to put that into practice".*

The family took their holiday in Wemyss Bay and travelled by train which was around a two and a half hour journey for them. The couple were comfortable using public transport and this was their son's first time on a train.

*"it was good it was G' first time on the train and G is like obsessed with trains, cars, buses. So he loved it. It was like an experience for us".*

The family enjoyed their first ever family swim on-site and their son enjoyed the playground whilst Cat and John relaxed just watching him have fun.

*"there was a patio and it had a beautiful view over the water and all that and you can see the island of Bute and it had a brilliant wee play park".*

The family also had a day out to Bute, taking the ferry over and enjoyed exploring and a little shopping. This was the first time any of the family had taken a ferry and visited one of the Scottish islands. Cat is keen to do the North Coast 500 so felt like she made a start that day.

*“we got on the ferry and went over to Bute and like I've I really want to do like the North Coast 500 and stuff. So like I want to start ticking off islands in Scotland so that was my first island yeah, and we loved it”*

The family enjoyed a takeaway when they got back from Bute which they wouldn't have been able to afford had it not been for the food vouchers freeing up some spend for small treats.

The family also visited a waterfall near to the caravan site on their final day. Cat explained how having walks on their holiday has helped improve their confidence to get out more and enjoy nature together going forward:

*“me and John we really like our nature and wee walks and stuff. But like we spent, we were brought up in the country. So that's something that really we appreciate that walk was just beautiful. And G could just run up it itself. And then the wee falls, there was a wee stream all the way up. And then at the fall, and at the top of the caravan site, so there was no chance of him getting lost. So it was really like, brilliant. Brilliant. And that's the day that we came home. Like, it really gave us a confidence that we can go and do that. That was like that was our trial run if you know what I mean”.*

The best thing about the break for Cat was simply having quality time away with her family. An unexpected benefit for the family was that G slept through each night even though Cat had been worrying about how he'd cope in his own room for the first time. The family slept well which added to the enjoyment of the holiday.

*“He went in that room and he slept through every night. And I was amazed at it because I thought I was really going to struggle getting him into his own bed, but that proves to me that he needs his space just as much as we do”*

Cat added that the holiday helped to recharge the family:

*“it really gave us a chance to get away and recharge. Like I was feeling really tired because it's hard work juggling your recovery and motherhood and just life in general and I felt so tired and the holiday give us a proper time to recharge”*

In terms of the future the family would like to go back to Wemyss Bay again and are also keen to explore more of Scotland. Cat also mentioned having a day out on her own with G since coming back from the holiday, this was to somewhere she had once been with Circle on a day trip. She felt the support from Circle and the holiday had both helped build up her confidence to get out more as previously she was quite anxious about taking G out on her own.

As a final comment Cat added:

*“I would just like to say a massive thank you, to everybody that it made it possible, because you really helped me and our family”*

### Referrer Perspective

Davinia works for the Charity Circle and has been supporting this family for over a year. Much of the support has centred around building Cat's confidence as a new parent, especially given her own childhood experiences, ongoing recovery and mental health issues. The family have also been supported with efforts to try and secure new housing.

Davinia discussed how the family have been doing really and G is thriving. She felt the family could benefit from a holiday given the ongoing housing situation and the fact that they'd recently been let down on a new house they were already making plans for.

*"They're just trying to juggle to make the best out of the situation, they were in it through COVID. Mum, mum sort of suffered..becoming a parent can really bring home about their past, and how, how the guilt can come along. And trying to take that away from mum and trying to get her to move forward. And I feel it was just downtrodden all the time as a family. As I said, there was highs and lows in they were offered a new house, it was going to be a new beginning for the family. It was exciting, it was their dream. And it got halted because the house wasn't ready. And it just sort of sent them in a downward spiral mentally. And I just felt they needed a break just get away, refresh, recharge and try and look at the positives that it's gonna happen".*

Davinia feels the holiday did help to recharge the family and that it reached them at a good point in time.

*"They used the facilities, they went swimming, they were just really proactive, very child-focused. It was all about making memories if you like, and they just felt they were away from all their problems they were away from all the stressors and the triggers for that. And they just felt they had a really good break and well rested, probably physically and mentally"*

Davinia also believes that managing the logistics of the holiday has had a positive impact on the confidence of the parents, from organising the food to the travel she feels they did really well.

From a referrer perspective one of the most positive impacts from the holiday is that Cat is more open to G starting nursery. Previously she has been reluctant to let go although now the plan is for G to attend nursery two days a week and can see the benefits this will have for him. She thinks Cat having a more positive frame of mind thanks to the holiday has helped with this decision.

*"Before she went on holiday, for some reason, it was 'no I can't, I can't bear the thought of somebody else having him. I can't no I'm not leaving him', but I keep saying he's getting older now he's going to be two. You know, he really needs to play with other children, it'll be really good from him it'll be good for you. And I got in touch with her health visitor and spoke to her and all of a sudden, she's accepting it*

*she has been for a visit and she's doing it. So I think I think her mood is better. So therefore, she's able to see things clearer. Before she went, I would have said she wouldn't have done it 'til maybe next year"*

In this respect the holiday has helped the referrer with progress towards outcomes they're working towards with the family.

Davinia is aware the family aspire to take another break but thinks realistically the housing situation is the main sticking point and barrier to this happening in the short-term.

*"I think they'll work towards it but I think I think at the moment, I think the house is the first thing. And I think if that was to happen, and they're settled, I think that next thing would be another to think about going away again".*

However Davinia has observed that Cat is more engaged in Circle activities since having the holiday and she anticipates this will now continue.

## Case Study 2: Claire

### Family Perspective

Claire is in her late forties and is a single parent to her nine year old daughter and 4 year old son. The family live in West Lothian.

Claire and her partner broke up at the start of 2021 although continued to live in the same house for a number of months which was quite stressful for the family. She found the pandemic extremely stressful being at home with the children and without the support of a partner. Claire moved in with her parents for a short period during this difficult time.

*"I've faced a lot of challenges, financial challenges, and challenges keeping it all together. You know?"*

Claire has been struggling financially as a single parent, she currently works two days a week whilst her son is at nursery and receives universal credit. Claire has been feeling quite isolated for some time. She heard about Homestart through a friend and contacted them to see what support and help they may be able to provide the family with.

The family last had a holiday in 2017 and Claire cited finance as the main barrier preventing a more recent holiday. The activities Claire would do with her children at weekends or in holidays would be dependent on what they could afford, mainly this would involve going to country parks, play parks and sometimes the beach and soft play.

Claire was delighted to hear they could be awarded a holiday. Claire did not have any concerns as she knew if she planned carefully they could keep extra spend to a minimum whilst away:

*"because I knew I would do it quite cheaply, you know, I'd take picnics and not go to fancy places. Just do everything free, you know. We went to the loch, played on the sand there, and we went for walks, we used the hotel facilities that were free. So, you know, you can do it cleverly if you've got no budget"*

The family spent two nights away at a hotel in Aviemore, a couple of hours drive away for them. The family made the most of free activities including swimming although did drive out to visit Loch Morlich one day to play on the beach there.

The children enjoyed the novelty of staying in a hotel and for Claire too it was nice to be able to stay somewhere where meals were provided for them.

*"It was nice to be in a hotel and have breakfast, you know, lovely buffet breakfast, and not have to worry about cooking dinner and you know, washing up. And just that responsibility was taken away, and I could relax. That was the best thing for me. The kids loved just the excitement of staying in a hotel. You know, it was something"*



*different for them. And, obviously, they liked the activities, you know, the swimming and the soft play. They loved the breakfast too. They thought it was just a big feast. So and they loved the fact that where the room was it was quite a journey. The corridors and stairs and so they made fun of that."*

Claire felt the holiday had helped with her mental health and confidence. She also feels the holiday has brought the children closer together, even though they were a close family anyway.

*"they play better, so a good benefit"*

Claire feels the children got to have fun and try new activities such as tobogganing which they'd never done before. She feels the holiday has stirred new interests, they'd like to see more of Scotland now they've had this break and feels they will engage in different outdoor activities as the children get older now they've seen what's possible. Claire had already looked into future breaks.

*"Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Just to explore more of Scotland and then maybe do some hire bikes or you know, water sports, you know when they're a wee bit older. That definitely does just stir your imagination and you think wow there's loads to do"*

*"I was looking for a couple of days away in a caravan park, but I don't know if I can really afford it. So yeah, it's made me think, where could we go that's quite cheap?"*

Claire gave a life-satisfaction score of 4 out of 10 for how she was feeling just before the holiday, increasing to a 6 or 7 on return. She acknowledged that the positives that come with a break are good, but that they were soon back to the same routine and worries. When asked what the situation might have been had the family not had the break Claire answered:

*"Probably just less enthusiastic? Because you're just stuck in the drudgery of every day, so? Yeah, just [now] more open to ideas and trying things"*

### **Referrer Perspective**

Claire was quite isolated when she got in touch with Homestart, she was finding the recent break-up with her partner tough both emotionally and financially and was finding life as a single-parent for the first time difficult.

Claire started attending Homestart groups including a weekly walking group, giving her the opportunity to meet other parents and speak to staff and volunteers. Claire also completed a Steps to Success course through Homestart which has been concerned with helping her look to the future.

Elizabeth at Homestart outlined why this family was put forward for a holiday:

*"Mum had said she hadn't been away for four years and with everything that had happened splitting up with her husband and everything she hadn't really thought about having a holiday or how she would even finance a holiday you know, having*



*only her wage and she was self employed and only working part time when her son was at nursery, it wasn't earning enough to be thinking about taking the children away on holiday”.*

Elizabeth outlined how Claire planned her finances carefully, and limited spend on the holiday by making use of what was included in the break. Elizabeth feels the holiday has helped to build Claire’s confidence in her ability to manage her children on her own away from home:

*“I think it’s really built Claire’s confidence. And I think the thought of taking two kids away yourself, she hadn’t thought of like how she would manage it with behaviour and things but actually doing it, she’s realized that she would do it again, she said she would definitely go again”*

Elizabeth also feels the holiday has provided the family with happy memories and positively impacted on Claire’s mental health:

*“I think it kind of showed them that they had, you know, a lot of say happy times, and they’ve got happy memories. And I think just having that time away from everything that’s going on back home and just let her breathe a bit has helped”.*

When asked what the situation might have been had the family not had the break Elizabeth answered:

*“I think Mum would maybe have just been in a cycle of doing what she usually does and not quite aware of her capabilities and abilities as a single parent, you know, she maybe wouldn’t have realized that she can do it. She would have still been thinking oh no, I can’t, can’t afford it can’t manage on my own with them what if they play up and but she’s done it now. So she’s aware that she can do it on her own she doesn’t need that second adult there. I think that they are going to try and do more things on weekends and more things. together as a three, getting used to being a three and enjoying that time as a three.”*

### Case Study 3: Ceri

#### Family Perspective

Ceri has four children but two are grown up. Ceri had been a carer for her mother, and has some health issues of her own. The pressures of this and looking after the children on her own had taken their toll.

*"I really wasn't coping. I've got myself into a really bad state. Social work were involved. The kids were taken off me, I had to fight for them back."*

Ceri explained that she was feeling really low before the holiday, and this came at exactly the right time.

*"That holiday that I had really saved the day... came right at the right minute."*

Ceri took a family member on holiday for support as she was feeling anxious about the journey with the children. She had never travelled on holiday since she had children. However, her initial anxieties about the holiday were resolved when she found out she could take a family member with her.

The holiday, although only local, was an adventure for the children.

*"It's only like an hour away but to the kids, because we had to get two trains, it felt to them as though it was out of this country if you know what I mean. It was really brilliant...really good."*

Ceri received support from her referrer to plan the holiday so the only thing she had to worry about was spending money.

The holiday gave the family the opportunity to take part in lots of activities that they would not normally do.

*"We went to see the marina, and we had children's entertainment at night time, and we went to the beach...it's been a while since we went to the beach, so that was the first time at the beach for ages. We went swimming [at the resort pool] and my five year old can now swim... with armbands on, but she can swim because of that holiday."*

Ceri explained that life had been a bit up and down since they returned, but the holiday had given her the boost she needed to feel better and she had made some positive changes since returning.

*"I've been trying to stay out in the sun when it's sunny... usually I would be hiding away so I've been pushing myself out to do that. Yeah, doing more with the kids. doing more arts and crafts... I'm doing much more than what I used to do."*

### **Referrer Perspective**

Barbara is a Family Support Worker and she has been providing support to Ceri with parenting and mental health. Barbara referred Ceri for a holiday to provide the family with some quality time together.

*“Ceri didn't have the care of her two girls for a while. [I thought] it'd be quite nice just for them to get together and have some quality time away from all those pressures that she's got at home... just to improve her mental health as well as the girls.”*

Barbara has observed some positive benefits for the family in terms of relationship building.

*“She could just make her daughter her main focus and the relationship between her and her daughter was vastly improved. And I can see that when I went to visit them...the little one was so positive, she was buzzing, and it was lovely to see her have some happy memories.”*

Barbara noted that Ceri seemed to have more confidence and was doing more with the children.

*“They do a bit more cooking at home. I think they have tried swimming, but before she'd lost her confidence about going swimming. But at the caravan, she took the wee one swimming every day... and she has taken her a few times since they have come back home.”*

Barbara commented that life had been difficult since the family returned but the improvement in relationships did seem to be sustained.

*“I don't think I'd have seen such an improvement in Ceri's relationship with her daughter...I think [the holiday] sort of enhanced it and bound it together more.”*

## Case Study 4: Fiona

### Family Perspective

Fiona is a lone parent with four children of her own and she is also a kinship carer. The family had never been away together before.

Fiona and the children were very excited when the holiday was confirmed.

*"The kids were just [asking] constantly, Mum how many weeks away is the holiday, when are we going?"*

Fiona had some anxieties around travel, having never travelled beyond her hometown, and as such, the family opted to stay on site for the duration of the holiday. However, the holiday did provide the family with opportunities for new experiences, specifically swimming and golf.

*"We went to the park, they did swimming and golf, we went to the pool party. We went to the restaurants they played outside and met friends at the caravan and they would all play together."*

The safe environment of the holiday park also meant that the children could have more freedom than at home. Fiona explained that although the stresses and strains of daily life have resumed, she did experience a positive impact on her wellbeing.

*"I'm obviously back to my daily life now. But I'm also so happy that I got that time away. And so I'm feeling a lot more relaxed and stuff."*

Since returning from holiday, Fiona has arranged for the children to have swimming lessons so that they can continue to take part in this activity at home.

### Referrer Perspective

Lorna is a social worker and has been supporting Fiona with her kinship care arrangements. Lorna explained that Fiona and been having a stressful time in relation to the legal guardianship process and she felt that the family would benefit from a holiday.

Lorna felt that the holiday met the families needs very well by providing a safe environment for them to relax and take part in different activities. Lorna has observed an improvement in family relationships since they returned.

*"I think it's [the holiday] brought them all together... it was just nice for them all to be in the house together just somewhere completely different... it was really good for them all to just really bond together."*

Lorna noted other positive changes for the family, including the children starting swimming lessons and the fact that Fiona was planning to save for another holiday next year.

*“If they do feel a bit rubbish and a bit down, they can bring the photos out and just remember the holidays. they don't really have a lot of these memories of them all together... it's just made them think again, enough for Mum now to start saving up for a holiday for next year.”*

Lorna felt that being able to offer the family a holiday had helped in her work with the family.

*“And I think as well, getting a holiday through social work, makes them realise, oh she is there to support us for the good things as well... because really, you don't want to be in their lives all the time, and being able to offer a holiday - that's a huge thing.”*

## Case Study 5: Rosie

### Family Perspective

Rosie lives with her husband Dan and two daughters aged 8 and 6 in Clackmannanshire. Both children have medical needs and are under paediatricians, the 8 year old (Daisy) is autistic and has ADHD and it's taken a number of years to receive a diagnosis which has been challenging for the family. Rosie has not worked for a number of years and has essentially been a full-time carer for her children and has been home schooling Daisy due to issues at school.

*"I struggle to get her into school quite a lot of the time"*

Dan works six days a week so as a family they only have Sundays together. Rosie described the family situation:

*"we get by as families do. This is normal to us, this is the way our family functions. It's all we've ever known. So when people say how do you cope? It's a very hard question to answer because it's your normal. However, we do know that we've not had an easy ride ourselves. It's we're in that grey zone where dad's wages, you know, just in that grey zone that you're not quite entitled to anything, but you don't make enough to keep a family of four plus home schooling extra food all that. It's, you just get by?"*

The family enjoy free outdoor pursuits. They have a loch within a manageable drive and enjoy outdoor swimming during the summer months. These kind of activities suit the family, the children love water and Daisy in particular finds crowded places difficult.

*"We usually do a bit of paddleboarding and wild swimming and bug hunting to my delight. You know, it's just, every weekend we're outdoors somewhere in the woods or at the water".*

Rosie used to enjoy annual holidays until she had children. The family have never been able to afford to go on holiday together and an additional consideration for the family when contemplating a break, even if they could afford it, is whether the benefits of the break will outweigh the challenges in managing change for Daisy. Thus finding an appropriate, quiet location for the holiday was key when this holiday was approved.

*"I would imagine if we went somewhere, like I used to, you know, a hotel in Spain, full of families, if we went somewhere like that. I would need to go for at least 10 days because of the few days change and Daisy. Like she's not bad. I mean, the caravan was a tester, but I think I picked one of the most, like rural sites there is in Scotland, and it was pretty much a home from home for her it was really good".*

Although Rosie was still somewhat apprehensive how Daisy would manage a break away from home anxiety was eased after finding a suitable location and knowing the family would be enjoying some of the same outdoor activities they often do anyway on a weekend.

The family travelled four hours to Grannies' Heilan' Hame. The family spent a lot of time on the beach and benefitted from good weather. The children's Auntie also visited the children from Orkney. The family also visited a nature reserve and enjoyed seeing seals and dolphins during their breaks.

*"We went out to there's like a nature reserve just say a ten mile drive up from the caravan park where the seals all bask you know, so the girls had a ball there was a lot of more, you know, scavenging, the girls love we go treasure hunting, as they call it. So they were having a ball just been able to run free on a beach. There was a really big park on site. We used to go to that first thing in the morning whilst everyone else was still sleeping because it would get quite busy in the afternoon"*

The holiday was quite short notice and they didn't have time to save any money ahead of the trip. This wasn't an issue for the family given the fuel and food vouchers and also that they were never planning to incur additional spend in arcades and during entertainment as this wouldn't be something Daisy in particular would want to do whilst away. The vouchers the family received helped them to venture further afield whilst away than may otherwise have been the case.

The best thing about the holiday for Rosie was seeing Daisy enjoy herself without the anxieties and worries she often has at home. The holiday provided a temporary reprieve from these.

*"seeing the children being able to run free and especially Daisy watching her anxieties float away kind of thing? She had no worries for a few days. Whereas we've come home, school is a huge trigger for Daisy. So since she's been home, we're back to bed wetting she's barely slept. And she's waking up every day crying and worrying about going to school. We're still a week and a half away. So it's, it was really nice to let her get that break from reality"*

Rosie also feels the holiday has had a positive impact on the wellbeing of the wider family, by enabling them to spend family time together that they rarely manage at home.

*"we never ever usually get you know, consecutive days together because Dad only ever has off Sunday in reality and Dad usually never usually gets much more than a couple of days off because we have so many hospital appointments and things Dad's four weeks usually get eaten up by that"*

Rosie also felt the holiday has had a positive impact on confidence within the various family members, particularly confidence that they can manage a break away from home.

*"I'd say an all rounder it's gave me confidence to let us see that we can go places as long as we research them and make sure [they're] more suited, I mean, the likes of I don't know, Butlins, I can just imagine that would not be our place. But yeah, not definitely. For us confidence and for the children. Again, it's a confidence thing they've gained a bit more, we don't exactly live on a beach so they've got more confidence and education about you know, the wildlife on the beaches and the dangers of the ocean".*

Other positives include the siblings bonding whilst away, playing board games (something they've been doing since returning) and providing the family with positive memories they can reflect on and discuss when times are challenging.

*"It's got the long lasting impact that we've got memories that we can relate back to, that good times can be there and hopefully we can have the same to look forward to next year. Set goals and you know, do our charts"*

The family would like to have a holiday again and would be keen to go back to the same location although the holiday has stirred interest in wanting to see more of rural Scotland. Rosie feels it would benefit Daisy to visit the same place, to become more familiar and potentially more engaged with the different activities available at the setting.

*"It would be nice yeah. Now that we know it's manageable, and I would definitely say we would go back to the same place because Daisy's one of these kids that up until even the third time seeing a person the third time going anywhere, you don't see the real her [ ]. We can't make promises but hope for it it's all we can do."*

*"it's just opened a can of worms that we want to see so much more of the rural Scotland. The places that you drive past going up there and stopped off on the way down. It was really nice".*

One change the family have agreed to take forward following their break is regular swimming during the colder months.

*"The swimming aspect was agreed no matter what we will keep it going into the winter obviously in the summer we just we go cold water swimming we're tough cookies, but come the winter it's not as fun for the children doing that so we've agreed that it's one thing we will continue as a family. Hopefully, every other Sunday, we will do go into the swimming pool"*

### **Referrer Perspective**

Gayle works for Home Start and has been supporting the family for two years following a referral from CAMHS. The family were experiencing a range of challenges relating to the behavioural and medical needs of their children and at



the point of referral the couple were separated so Rosie was facing these challenges predominantly as a single parent including home schooling her eldest daughter who she had withdrawn from school.

*“we went in and did a piece of work with her around managing behaviour. She had gone through Sleep Scotland, we got a referral to that. And I think even although she was on medication for that, it wasn't working. There's lots of medical issues for both children, they're both under paediatricians lots of medical appointments, you know, mum just was never getting a minute to herself”.*

Gayle outlined her reasons for applying for a holiday for this family:

*“it came to light that she's, they've never had a family holiday. They've never been away as a family. She at that point, her and her ex partner had got back together again. So there was lots of issues and that was kind of why I thought the holiday association would be nice because on the surface they look as if they are well off but they're not and you know that they're struggling really struggling financially. So they couldn't afford to take the girls away. So this was the idea was to get them away just for a break as a family and it really benefited them all”.*

Gayle felt the holiday benefitted the entire family in a number of ways (including family bonding and memory making) and the holiday came at a good time not long after the parents had reconciled and married.

*“it gelled them as a family it brought them close, I mean, they are a close family but the fact that they were suddenly thrown back as a couple you know, and the children really benefited from it, they used the Grannies Heilan' Home so they used that as a way of taking them other places that they had gone to as children that had never been able to they wouldn't have been able to afford the break and the petrol to take them all the other places that they took the girls because they did lots of outdoor things while they were there. They just had a fantastic time. You know, it was really improved the relationship as a family, the dynamics have shifted. Mum's a lot more chilled”*

Gayle also feels the holiday has had a positive impact on the mental health of Rosie and had also observed that she is being more pro-active in her life than previously, perhaps due to increased confidence. As an example Rosie had already made contact with the school about some worries she had rather than sitting on the worry which had helped relax her ahead of the new school year. This was a positive observation given that Gayle feels historically Gayle and her daughter would often feed off each others anxiety making the situation worse.

*“it definitely has improved her mental health. You know, I was out seeing her at the start of the week, and she [Rosie] was a lot more relaxed. I mean, by this stage, because we're getting near the times when the kids will go back to school she'd be worrying, and you know, with the wee one not sleeping very well, and she's up and back to having issues sleeping. And she was I felt she was coping a lot better. It's the most relaxed I've seen her just before the kids have gone back to school”.*

Gayle also feels Rosie is becoming more involved in her local community through a recent friendship she's formed with a like-minded parent and their children. This friendship is helping Rosie to get out more and do more with her children than she may have done previously.

*"They've gone on camping trips and things with the children, which she wouldn't have done previously, because she'd have been her anxiety would have been through the roof. Yeah. So she's definitely doing a lot more".*

Gayle is positive that the family will try to take a further holiday in the future. Rosie is hoping to secure employment once the children are hopefully settled into school which could allow them to save up for a future, similar, holiday.

## Case Study 6:

### Family Perspective

Sophie is a single parent to her ten year old daughter. Sophie lost her parents whilst she was a young teenager and has very little family support and is quite isolated. Sophie was in an abusive relationship up until two years ago. Sophie is on benefits and lives in a council house. Sophie lives with mental health issues and has been finding life quite tough recently, challenges include having to rehome the family dog who she could no longer care for.

Money is tight and is becoming more of an issue with the cost of living increasing. Sophie has been trying to find employment recently but thus far has not been successful.

Sophie had some holidays when she was younger, mostly caravan holidays, but had never been on holiday with her daughter before. Family activities would tend to include affordable activities such as going to the local park, with occasional soft play when Sophie can afford this.

Sophie welcomed the idea of a holiday given the difficult times she had been experiencing:

*"I was really happy about it I had to recently give up my dog as well back in February and then the idea of a holiday just made everything so much better after that".*

Whilst Sophie experiences bad anxiety which led to some apprehension about travelling the actual experience was a positive one for her and despite multiple changes of train to get to their destination the travel was considered "easy" on the day.

The family spent four nights at Parkdean Wemyss Bay, a three hour distance from their home. They went swimming every day (Sophie said she hadn't been swimming in years); enjoyed the play park; arcade and evening entertainment. They also enjoyed walks in the immediate area.

*"She [daughter] absolutely loved the swimming. And obviously the live shows because we stayed up pretty late every night to watch the live thing and stuff, the karaoke, the bingo. And she loved the arcades".*

Sophie felt the holiday had helped her mental health by giving her an opportunity to relax and be away from the usual routine.

*"Just that I could relax as well and not have to do like house chores and stress and stuff it was definitely a good thing for my mental health".*

When asked how things might be different had the family not been awarded the break Sophie answered:

*"I'd probably be still stuck at home depressed all the time".*

Sophie chose to split the food vouchers across different outlets which allowed them to buy groceries to take with them (Asda); buy food/drink on the journey (Costa) and treats whilst away (Greggs). The vouchers helped Sophie be able to save for extra spend on toys and memorabilia she wouldn't otherwise have afforded. This was especially valued as it was her daughter's birthday whilst on the holiday.

Sophie is keen to have another family holiday in future, she will save as and when she is able. She also feels more confident about taking holidays in the future after seeing for herself how her anxiety wasn't an issue whilst away.

*"we're now trying to put money away whatever I can for it maybe try and get another holiday at some point. It was like it was a really good release away from home and it's definitely what I was needing and I want my daughter to experience more holidays with me obviously like I used to do. It's definitely changed my mind about like doing things in life".*

### **Referrer Perspective**

Elaine has been supporting Sophie and her daughter for a number of years through her role as Family Worker for Citadel Youth Centre. The family's involvement with Citadel began when Sophie became a young parent. They have been supported in a number of ways including Elaine attending a weekly parenting group run by Elaine. Elaine feels like Sophie is a brilliant Mum to her daughter but lacks self-esteem and direction and she's supporting her with this.

As a family severely impacted by poverty, and the fact that the family had never had a break made Elaine feel this family would benefit from a holiday.

*"there's not really very much money left over you know, to do trips or anything like that. And I mean, the whole time I've known Sophie, and Faye, I know they've never been on holiday, or never been anywhere. So she was one of the people that, you know, that I kind of thought about doing this for. She was just, you know, absolutely delighted and over the moon and, you know, I probably can't tell you when and if they'll get another holiday in the future."*

Elaine feels the family benefitted from the holiday by creating special memories and giving Faye a 10<sup>th</sup> birthday she will always remember.

*"this is the first holiday I've ever known them to have. And I just think it was nice for bonding, a joyous time. change of scenery. There's six weeks and for a family like Sophie and Faye they're just at home and from what I've heard they really enjoyed it"*

Much of Elaine's work with Sophie is about empowering her for the next phase of her life and therefore she hopes Sophie's confidence will have increased as a result of the holiday. She is currently hoping to secure some voluntary work for Sophie to move her close to being 'work-ready'.

*"a lot of my work and especially Sophie and the way she is in her life is about trying to empower Sophie in the next phase in her life. You know, so, I'll be chatting to her about whether you know getting on the train and did that inspire you a little bit? I would like to think yeah"*

Elaine added that she carefully considers which families would be suitable for a holiday, adding that it's not just about poverty but also thinking about families that may be lacking the skills needed to take a break but be ready to develop these.

*"I'm quite strict about only doing it for people that I know otherwise would not be able to do anything. So I think for people that are families that really are impacted by poverty, and otherwise would not have the skills and knowledge or the finances to book a holiday I think [it is] valuable".*

## Case Study 7: Maria

### Family Perspective

Maria lives in Edinburgh with her partner and her nine year old granddaughter S. S has lived with Maria for around nine months following the breakdown of her relationship with her mother. S's 12 year old sister (T) still lives with her mum therefore moving in with her grandmother has meant the siblings have been separated and have only seen each other on an ad hoc basis since this change, in part due to their mum's mental health challenges. When the siblings have seen each other Maria described it as being 'awkward' between the sisters with them not knowing what to say to each other.

*"It was quite difficult was quite hard. And it was quite hard not seeing the two young ones together do you know what I mean? It's quite sad. Because obviously, they were always together until then being separated was quite, quite hard watching that".*

Maria herself enjoyed regular holidays before S came to live with her. S had not had a holiday in years. Maria had thus far been unable to take a holiday with S due to the additional expense of having a further person living with them and trying to fit in a break around the school term.

Due to the kinship care arrangement the family receive support from Citadel and Maria asked their support worker whether there were any opportunities to access a break for the family. Maria explained that her goal in securing a break was not for her but to benefit her granddaughters, by giving them the opportunity to spend some solid and quality time together away from home.

*"they don't see much of each other, there's a four year gap and the older one's always galivanting with her friends and what have you, that's why I thought it'd be nice for them to be together you see"*

Maria, her partner and her two granddaughters went on holiday to a Parkdean resort in Dumfries. Maria felt the site needed improving and was too remote to be ideal. The food situation was a particular challenge for the family whilst away as one granddaughter in particular was described as a 'fussy eater' and the food at the onsite restaurant wasn't considered to be very good at all, with the on-site grocery store being very expensive. The family thus travelled 45 minutes to the closest town to eat elsewhere and access an affordable supermarket. The family did not receive food vouchers and Maria said she spent much more money on the break than she anticipated because of this situation. The fuel vouchers were important in terms of enabling them to travel outside of the resort.

*“there was nothing, there was just farm about this one site it was farming so there was nothing really apart from there was like double the price for stuff that you would get in maybe other shops that's what I would say about that place”.*

The family spent their holiday swimming, visiting Carlisle (where they would go to get food); going on bikes as part of a kids club and enjoying the children's park. They didn't really get involved in the evening entertainment.

*“They were more interested in going swimming and that, they were happy to just muck about outside the caravan at night and go to the park and that. There was a place they could get juice. They were quite happy with that”.*

Maria didn't feel the break had any impact on her own mental health and confidence, she mentioned still being a bit constantly on edge and re-iterated she didn't feel the break was about her as such. However, for her the goal of the break was achieved in that it brought the siblings closer together. Maria felt the holiday had given the siblings increased confidence about how to be with one another again.

*“I think them just being in each other's company and just doing normal things that they would do a wee bit of arguing and bickering but playing together. Do you know what I mean? That was a good thing for them? Normally when they meet up they're like they sit in silence for about 20 minutes, it's really strange. Because they haven't seen each other for so long they're awkward with each other and then, but when we were away there was nothing like that. So that was good. That helped”.*

Maria feels the holiday has and will have a lasting impact on the sibling's bond, as well as her own relationship with her eldest granddaughter. Her eldest granddaughter is now more willing to spend time with them as opposed to just her friends which is a shift in behaviour. They have also been swimming together more since the holiday.

*“We've been going a lot more swimming with them than what we did, definitely. And going up the town with them, just even up for lunch or something like that we do that much more before because R was always out all the time the older one, but now she's making time for us, do you what I mean for us a lot more. Because her life is changing, the dynamics in her life are changing because she's at high school and that, do you know what mean? But she's making more of an effort now than what she did before. Definitely”*

*“it makes me happy seeing them like that, it makes me really happy for them because that's how it should be they're sisters, there shouldn't be awkwardness”*

Maria would like to have a holiday again in future, she would ideally like to go to the Parkdean in Skegness which she has visited briefly before. This will depend on finances.

Maria concluded by detailing how valuable she feels holidays such as these are for separated families:

*“It does definitely help the kids, especially if they're in a situation, whether they're living with grandparents or like foster parents or whatever. It definitely helps them, there's no two ways about that. Definitely. Because it is quite awkward when they're separated the kids. [ ] And it shouldn't be like that. They didn't know what to say to each other because of the situation that and if you know what I mean, but if they get away like that, yeah, that's definitely totally different. And it was a holiday, it's excitement for them. It's like they've never been away from each other”*



## Case Study 8: Joe

### Family Perspective

Joe and his wife are kinship carers to their two grandchildren aged four and seven. The children's father passed away fairly recently. The children had also not seen their mum for some time and Joe felt this was likely to be playing on their minds.

The children had been away on a holiday before, but Joe and his wife had not been away for many years. The holiday had to be postponed previously because of COVID, so it was a long awaited break for the family.

The family drove to the resort and were happy with the site and the caravan, but noted that the food and shops on site were very expensive, and the amusement arcade was very tempting for the children.

*"The caravan was lovely. But when I was on site, to buy stuff. It's very, very expensive... for a loaf and two pint carton of milk that was four quid. I mean, if you're going to go the chip shop, which we didn't do, it was even more expensive."*

*"All you've got is the machines when you put money in them, its not just about spending loads and loads of money on these machines."*

Joe explained that the children went swimming on site, which they enjoyed, but apart from this, the activities for children were quite limited. Because of this, the family decided to drive to the local town for a trip out.

*"The kids were on the beach. we had lunch... a bit cheaper than buying at the holiday camp... they got to do the things they wanted to do. they liked the beach and paddling in the water, there was a massive big swing park there, across from the beach, they don't have that at home."*

Joe felt that the holiday was relaxing, and the main thing they wanted from it was to be able to spend quality time with the children. The children themselves enjoyed the freedom to run around.

*"We really wanted to spend a lot more time with the kids. We got to spend more quality time with them than we normally would at home... they enjoyed it. They enjoyed staying in the caravan and things like that. The caravan was lovely. They went into the amusements, the arcades, which is what kids do."*

*"They enjoyed being out and about and they liked the swimming, we went to the swing park in the evening, they enjoyed running about and we were taking photos of them at the swing park."*

Joe and his wife are hoping to arrange some swimming lessons for the children.

Joe is keen to go away again, and to visit different resorts but this will depend on finances.

*"I would look at somewhere else, I mean, I'm always open to trying somewhere else. Obviously, things are getting harder and harder. Couldn't fault the caravan and the site. The site was kept clean. I just felt it there wasn't enough for the kids to do."*

## Case Study 9: Evie

### Family Perspective

Evie lives with her husband and nine year old daughter, Jess, who has some physical disabilities. The family were referred by an organisation that supports families with children with disabilities.

The family had been particularly isolated during lockdown and were being very careful to protect their daughter from COVID-19. Jess had been unable to attend her usual group activities during the pandemic and they had only recently resumed in full. Evie's husband works long hours and family time is limited.

*"So for the last couple of years with the pandemic, a lot of these things [activities] hadn't started back up yet for kids with additional needs. She uses a wheelchair full time, so she can't just do things like other kids where they can go and run about and do stuff like that."*

The family had been on holiday before, but a long time ago, before COVID, and they were particularly excited to go away for a break and for Jess to get out and about.

*"We were excited for the chance to go somewhere, get out of the normal routine, have a wee break, and family time together."*

The family booked the holiday with very little assistance from their referrer, and travelled by car to the resort. They were able to do lots of different things whilst they were there. The caravan was very well suited to Jess's needs.

*"We went to the beach, and there was a fairground, and our daughter could go on a couple of the rides, and there was like crazy golf, we went out for lunch... just a break from the normal. At night we would just spend time in the caravan... she loved the caravan because it was all adapted for her wheelchair, so she could get about easily...we would play board games at night and just sit and relax. It was really good."*

The family appreciated the grocery vouchers which they were able to redeem before travelling, especially as the on site shop was expensive for the basics, such as milk.

Evie explained that the break came at a really good time for them, as they were ready to start getting out and about again.

*"It was just great for our well being, and just gave us something to look forward to in the run up to it. And then we came back just really relaxed and just chilled out... we really needed it, it came at a good time."*

Jess really enjoyed the holiday and Evie noted that she was showing pictures to everyone and would really love to go back, and seemed more confident to get out of the house.

*“She seemed up for going out more, and trying to go to new places, and get out of the house.”*

Evie explained that following the holiday they were making plans to take a train trip, and get out more at the weekends.

*“We try to get out more at the weekends, next weekend we are going to go on a train journey, she's never been on the train before...[the holiday] has brought her out of her shell a wee bit again.”*

## Case Study 10: Isla

### Family Perspective

Isla is a single mum of three. One of her children, George, has complex physical disabilities. Because of his needs, Isla finds that she doesn't get to spend as much time as she would like with her other children.

*"A lot of my time is focused with George, and I don't get to spend a lot of time with the others, you do spend a lot of time with one child and sometimes the others feel left out."*

Isla had recently had to give up full time employment as she was finding the demands of caring for George as a single parent unmanageable. Organising trips out is difficult, and a lot of time is spent attending medical appointments, alongside hospital stays.

Isla described the time just before the holiday as *'really hard'*. She had been hoping to go away but having to give up work meant that this was no longer possible.

*"I was in a horrible mental place, and I think the kids could tell that as well, we didn't go out very much."*

Isla took a family friend with her for support and they all enjoyed the holiday very much.

*"We did quite a lot on site, there was a nice park, there was a pond to feed the ducks, there was a swimming pool with a hoist to get him in the pool. It was amazing. It was really well adapted. We also went up to the [local] wildlife centre, we basically had a day there."*

The holiday had a significant impact on Isla's well-being.

*"It got me out of quite a dark state. I was being quite grumpy with the kids, but on this holiday it was just nice to be relaxed and not have any worries."*

Isla appreciated the food and fuel vouchers, which helped her to budget well whilst away.

*"I came home and I think I've only spent about 60 pound. And that was a good thing because I was worried I wouldn't afford to spend the money when I was away."*

## Case Study 11: Marie

### Family Perspective

Marie is a grandmother and kinship carer to her daughter's children. She has some health problems that affect her mobility.

Marie explained that the children had settled in well with her but it was hard adjusting to looking after children again.

*"The kids have settled in really well, but the holiday was certainly a welcome break for me. It's hard to have gone back to all these years again, but I'm used to it, but I think because I'm ill as well. It's a great help financially, because holidays are so expensive. It was good that we got that and it certainly was a nice wee break for me as well as the bairns."*

Marie went on the break with one of her other daughters who is a single parent, and also really needed a break. She chose a holiday park close to home because she finds travelling difficult due to her health issues. Marie and the children took advantage of the on site facilities.

*"There was a pool, the bairns liked the pool and there was arcades, and [they] just [went] out to play. It was beautiful, beautiful weather."*

The family didn't go off site during their stay but had a good time nonetheless.

*"It was just good. Because I had been looking up on holidays and the prices I'm like, oh my God, how could I afford that? And I don't want them feeling they are off school and they're not going anywhere... it was a very welcomed break."*

The children enjoyed themselves and it was good for them to be able to have a distraction from their worries, and the holiday helped Marie to cope a bit better too.

*"It did help. I always feel, goodness, can I do this? You're always feeling like they are missing their mum...so it was definitely a good impact, and we felt better and when we came back we felt we had been somewhere. I definitely felt a bit better getting back into the grind. It would be good to go again."*

## 7. Social Value Assessment

Social value is the quantification of the relative importance that people place on the changes they experience in their lives.

Consideration of public value is required by public bodies under the Public Services (Social Value) Act of 2012 when awarding large contracts and local authorities now have a Best Value Duty placed on them in terms of service provision.

This evaluation has used the Social Value Engine, <https://socialvalueengine.com/> a tool accredited by Social Value UK which is based on more than 360 peer reviewed financial proxies updated annually, to produce a figure for social return on investment.

One of these financial proxies is set against each of the indicators of change set by the Family Holiday Charity and VisitScotland. A further aspect of the Social Value Engine is that it uses the UN Sustainable Development Goals to provide an overview of how activities make a place better to live in.

The post travel data collected from both families and their referrers was used to calculate the level to which targets set by the funder and the charity were met. The number of completed questionnaires received represented approximately 32% of families. It was, therefore, possible to scale up the responses to demonstrate the levels of outcomes achieved. Set against these are a number of deflators. The deflators used here were:

- deadweight (what might have been achieved without this activity?)
- attribution (what proportion of the outcome might be claimed by others?)
- drop off (the proportion of the outcome that will diminish over time)

The qualitative information collected in the interviews and case studies was analysed to develop a picture of what might have been achieved anyway, in this case, determining who might have organised a holiday anyway, and scaling up the figures in proportion to the numbers of people interviewed.

Drop off was calculated by analysing the information for those who had demonstrated that no significant change had been experienced from the holiday or for whom the effect declined very quickly. There were very few who described this, with most describing longer lasting effects. This number was again scaled up to give a percentage for the Social Value calculation.

Attribution was harder to assess as all families had support from the referring agency and all described quite intensive and high-quality support which highlights that the holiday is only one part of a whole package of support.

The final piece of information to be fed into the Engine is the inputs, in this case represented by the funding from VisitScotland. This allows the Engine to calculate the value generated to the public purse for each pound invested.

In summary, Social Value Engine calculations have identified that the social return for the project is as follows:



- **£11.18 per £1 of investment**
- **Net social return of investment: £10.18 per £1**

## Insights

- The figures and the interviews all evidence the high number of families who have not had a holiday for some years, if ever, which proves that this fund is reaching people who would not otherwise participate in tourism.
- The holiday is clearly one part of a package of support that families are receiving from a wide range of agencies and is therefore contributing to the family's wellbeing in a number of ways.
- The deflators that have been used are deadweight which refers to what might have happened anyway if the holiday had not been offered and there were some families who had organised regular holidays pre pandemic or had some of their leisure time doing outdoor activities and may have done so this year had the holiday not been offered. These were relatively small in number.
- The figure for attribution is quite high because of the level of support that most families reported receiving so the holiday needs to be seen as one part of a whole package, Drop off refers to the effect diminishing over time and is often expected to be quite considerable after a short intervention such as a holiday. The numbers reporting only a small change after the holiday were low and sometimes resulted from circumstances such as illness or bereavement. The figure for this deflator is low as most respondents reported some lasting effect, often around mental health and confidence of both parents and children.
- The indicators used related to improved wellbeing through art, culture and sport and reduced social isolation, and sport, outdoor activity and culture. Most of the activities reported were of outdoor activity and some sport with a positive impact on the confidence of family members. There was also a reporting of reduced social isolation as children took part in activities with others and a lasting impact on return home as family members developed the confidence to become more involved in local activity.

## Recommendations

- This is a short-term intervention that has the potential to have a long-term impact.
- The families involved, however, have widely differing circumstances which will have an impact on the length of time the impact will last. The interviews have been carried out quite soon after the holiday. A post hoc survey of families is recommended to discover what the longer-term impact has been.
- More details about the Social Value Engine can be found within the Appendices.



## 8. Conclusions & Considerations

The *ScotSpirit voucher scheme* has so far enabled 448 eligible families and around 1,789 individuals to take a holiday in Scotland with further families due to take their holidays in the upcoming months. The families taking the holidays have largely been facing multiple, complex and ongoing challenges in their lives.

Those taking the holidays would be unable to afford a holiday themselves, and for most families the idea of a holiday was either simply not on their radar or wasn't considered an achievable goal for them. Half of families had never had a holiday before and discussions suggested family activities were rare and limited, with many families staying quite local or at home. As such, the project has successfully reached families who would not otherwise participate in tourism.

Six in ten applications for holidays were on behalf of families experiencing mental health issues. Half of all applications for holidays were on behalf of families that were experiencing low confidence. The project has successfully helped to improve the mental health and confidence of individuals participating. Post-travel data revealed that 93% of families agreed the holiday had benefitted the mental health/wellbeing of their family. A further 86% agreed they were more confident as a result of the holiday.

As mentioned, families were often quite insular prior to the holidays, with families sometimes being overwhelmed, and understandably focussed on the challenges they were facing, taking things day by day. Many parents openly talked about being pre-occupied and not as 'available' as they could be for their children. This research suggests the holidays have had a positive impact in this area, through the holidays enabling quality relaxing time away from home, taking part in new experiences, and helping some families to re-evaluate their situations and relationships. Overall, 82% of families felt more optimistic about the future after their holidays, the same proportion felt more able to deal with challenges going forward, given that many families returned to ongoing challenges (e.g. temporary/inappropriate accommodation) this is a clear positive. Holidays have provided breathing space for families and helped facilitate resilience to keep battling through their challenges.

Positively, 94% of families also agreed they would now be more confident and comfortable taking their family on a holiday in the future. This is another clear positive, given half of the families travelling had never had a holiday before. The research found many families are keen to take future holidays although it is likely that affordability and challenges/priorities they face will continue to be a barrier. However, it is positive that aspirations have been set. Families are also largely more open to doing more generally, be this enjoying the outdoors or visiting attractions. In many cases there has almost been a realisation of what the family has been missing out on, and that similar experiences can be achieved and not always at a financial cost.

The research suggests the holidays will result in an increase in participation in sport; outdoor activities and tourism in the future, families appear to value these more as a result of the holidays. Almost seven in ten families said they were more likely to take part in the kinds of activities they enjoyed on holiday in the future.

In terms of social value, calculations and evidence suggest that the project's potential benefit to the public purse in the future is £11.18 (gross) per £1 spent on the project.

**ScotSpirit Holiday Voucher Scheme: The impact of a UK holiday on families facing tough times**

This figure is positive particularly considering the holidays are quite a brief 'intervention' for families, often coming at the tail-end of intense support from referral organisations. The holidays are one tool that is being used to support people with obviously complex needs.

The research suggests that it could be worth considering the following within future social tourism projects. These are in a suggested order of priority.

1. The research identified that many families have aspirations to take future holidays, but this won't be easy for many. To sustain momentum, could discounted holidays/subsidies be offered to families by FHC or the holiday providers? A post-travel programme of support, focussing on financial literacy, could be considered.
2. In terms of the food vouchers issued to families could there be greater flexibility in choice over where these can be spent? Whilst not necessarily increasing value, it would be more practical for some families to be able to buy items from a shop on/very near to the site, particularly for those using public transport which just over half of families were. If vouchers can be used to purchase food online families should also be made aware if they can have groceries delivered to the site directly.
3. A minority of comments suggest support/information in selecting suitable venues/accommodation for families could be improved. As an example one family had to be out of their cabin for the bulk of their holiday due to sensory issues for their child which meant they ended up spending more money than they'd hoped. Whilst it appears many referrers are involved in discussions with families, perhaps the need to discuss accommodation needs fully with families could be emphasised, something to re-check with families when bookings are being made.
4. In the main, families felt spend was manageable, therefore there doesn't appear to be a significant need to introduce further vouchers. There is however potentially some demand for supporting families that may need to purchase/loan pre-travel essentials such as suitcases.
5. It could perhaps be beneficial to ensure providers offer details on transport routes around the site to avoid families using taxis unnecessarily (or being unsure how to get about) given the substantial number of families using public transport for their holidays. Similarly, if sites are quite remote this should be clearly stated as this doesn't suit everyone's needs.
6. As there has been some stress relating to vouchers arriving on time or getting lost this process needs exploring further. Not all families received food vouchers.
7. Given more refugees and asylum seekers are taking the holidays it is worth ensuring that information is clear/in an appropriate language – e.g. almost a checklist of things to consider when selecting a location for a holiday.
8. This research has focussed on families that have had holidays within the last few months. Could it be worth capturing consent in future awards to consult with families at a later point to explore longer-term impact of holidays? This will help explore beyond more immediate impact/intentions, and explore the challenges faced by families in realising aspirations for future holidays.

9. Longer-term research could also be used to feed into the SVE going forward, to give indication of longer-term impact on the public purse. The SVE uses estimations of 'drop-off' and further research would give a more realistic picture of drop-off after the holiday 'glow' has perhaps passed.

## 9. Appendices – Social Value Engine

### 9.1 Social Value Engine – what is it?

- Social value is the quantification of the relative importance that people place on the changes they experience in their lives. Consideration of public value is required by public bodies under the Public Services (Social Value) Act of 2012 when awarding large contracts and local authorities now have a Best Value Duty placed on them in terms of service provision.
- This piece of research has used the Social Value Engine, a tool accredited by Social Value UK which is based on more than 360 peer reviewed financial proxies updated annually. One of these financial proxies is set against each of the indicators of change set by the Family Holiday Charity and VisitScotland. A further aspect of the Social Value Engine is that it uses the UN Sustainable Development Goals to provide an overview of how activities make a place better to live in.

### 9.2 What financial proxies were used and why?

Appropriate financial proxies had to be selected to measure the social value of this project. These are carefully selected to be realistic in terms of the project's aims and objectives, the length of time over which it is operating and the resources committed as well as being realistic about what can be achieved by a short term intervention. The chosen proxies were:

1. **Therapeutic effects of arts and heritage** because of the target of increasing participation in culture which uses the evidence included in the report, *Heritage and Society 2020: Heritage Counts* produced by Historic England on behalf of the Historic Environment Forum in 2020/
2. **Contribution of sport to social cohesion** because of the client's target of increasing participation in sport and outdoor activities. This is based on the Sport England report on the Social Value of Sport produced in 2017.
3. **Value of reduced social isolation** – based on the target of improving confidence and wellbeing and increased participation. This is based on the *London Sustainable Development Commission's report on the social value of helping London to build back better*.
4. **Improved emotional wellbeing** as a result of enhanced self esteem and confidence is based on your target of improving confidence and wellbeing of those taking part with an emphasis on outdoor activities which is based on evidence produced by the Wildlife Trusts in 2017 in their report *Protecting Wildlife for the Future: Social Return on Investment analysis of the health and wellbeing impacts of Wildlife Trust programmes*.
5. **Cost of inefficient collaboration** because the whole project was based on partnership working with the referring agencies and the Talk Business report produces evidence of the cost to companies of inefficient collaboration. This is a report produced by Webtorials and Opinium in 2017.

### 9.3 What other data feeds into the Social Value Engine?

- The post travel data collected from both families and their referrers was used to calculate the level to which targets set by the funder and the charity were met.
- The number of completed questionnaires received represented approximately 26% of families receiving a holiday. It was, therefore, possible to scale up the responses by this figure to demonstrate the levels to which outcomes were achieved.
- Set against these are a number of deflators. The deflators used here were:
  - deadweight (what might have been achieved without this activity?),
  - attribution (what proportion of the outcome might be claimed by others?)
  - and drop off (the proportion of the outcome that will diminish over time).
- The qualitative information collected in the interviews and case studies was analysed to develop a picture of what might have been achieved anyway, in this case, determining might have organised a holiday anyway or taken part in outdoor activities, and scaling up the figures in proportion to the numbers of people interviewed.
- ‘Drop off’ was calculated by analysing the information for those who had demonstrated that no significant change had been experienced from the holiday or for whom the effect declined very quickly. There were very few who described this with most describing longer lasting effects. However, it is important to bear in mind how soon after the holiday interviews were carried out and that some of the interviewees thought they were possibly being interviewed by staff from the charity. This number was again scaled up to give a percentage for the Social Value calculation.
- ‘Attribution’ was harder to assess as all families had support from the referring agency and all described quite intensive and high quality support which highlights that the holiday is only one part of a whole package of support.
- The final piece of information to be fed into the Engine is the inputs, in this case represented by the funding from VisitScotland. This allows the Engine to calculate the value generated to the public purse for each pound invested.

### 9.4 Value Generated by the ScotSpirit Voucher Scheme

In terms of social value, calculations and evidence suggest that the project’s potential benefit to the public purse in the future is:

- **£11.18** per £1 spent (gross)
- **£10.18** per £1 spent (net)

## 9.5 Social Value Engine Report

Output title	Outcome	Proxy	Quantity	Stakeholder	Years	Unit	Value	Leakage %	Attribution %	Deadweight%	Displacement %	Drop-off %	Impact	Yr 1	Source	During Activity Value
Improved participation through recreation	Improved wellbeing through arts, culture and sport	Therapeutic effect of art and heritage	2048	Education services	1	per person	3,549.99	0	40	21	0	36	3,446,159.89	3,446,159.89	1	3,446,159.89
Improved wellbeing through art and sport	Improved wellbeing through arts, culture and sport	Contribution of sport to social cohesion	2048	Education services	1	return per £ of public investment	8.73	0	40	21	0	36	8,474.66	8,474.66	2	8,474.66
Reduced social isolation	Reduced social isolation for community members	Value of reduced social isolation	2196	Education services	0	per person	4,668.89	0	30	21	0	36	5,669,843.99	0.00	4	5,669,843.99
Improved confidence of the children and adults taking part	Improved mental health	Improved emotional wellbeing as a result of self-esteem and confidence	1949	Education services	0	per person	1,552.21	0	30	21	0	36	1,672,967.28	0.00	5	1,672,967.28
Partnership working	Working collaboratively and through partnerships	Cost of inefficient collaboration	609	Education Services	1	per organisation per year	9,180	0	75	21	0	36	1,104,147.35	0.00	3	1,104,147.45
	<b>Total present value</b>													4,404,620.29		
	<b>Net present value</b>													4,010,486.29		

ScotSpirit Holiday Voucher Scheme: The impact of a UK holiday on families facing tough times

## Source

1. <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2020/heritage-and-society-2020>
2. <http://social-value-engine.co.uk/calculator/Social%20value%20of%20sport%20%20Sport%20England.pdf>
3. <https://www.talk-business.co.uk/2017/06/20/inefficient-communications-and-collaboration-costs-uk-companies-8000-per-employee-per-year/>
4. [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/social\\_value\\_insights\\_paper\\_0.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/social_value_insights_paper_0.pdf)
5. <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2019-%0909/SROI%20Report%20FINAL%20-%20DIGITAL.pdf>

<b>IMPACT AREA</b>	
17. Partnerships for the Goals	£1,104,147.45
3. Good Health and Well-Being	£10,797,445.82
<b>INPUTS</b>	
<b>Money</b>	<b>£394,134.00</b>
Total Present Value	£4,404,620.29
Net Present Value	£4,010,486.29
Social Return on Investment	11.18
Net Social Return on Investment	10.18

### Notes on Figures:

- The figure of £1,104,147.45 is the total of impact of the activity.
- The figure of £4,404,620.29 is the present value, i.e the social value still being created after a year. The nature of social value is that it has a habit of decreasing over time.
- The figure of £11.18 is the total present value divided by the total inputs (i.e. the funding) while the figure of £10.18 is the net present value divided by the inputs.
- The net present value is the total present value adjusted by the three deflators. These prevent the inflation of the social value figure beyond what can reasonably be expected.
- The net social return is the net present value divided by the total inputs.

