

News release

20 October 2009

Children's Centres' Inspirational Scheme Launched

Six Sunderland community groups have become the first to benefit from up to £750 of extra funding to help improve the lives of young children, as Sunderland launched its unique Inspiration Fund.

Sunderland Children's Centres' Inspiration Fund, a first for the region, saw the initial six groups who applied for the much-needed financial support presented with their cheques during a special launch ceremony held at Southwick Primary School.

Councillor Pat Smith, Portfolio Holder for Children and Learning City within Sunderland City Council presented Rainbow Rascals – out of school provision, Chance Community Centre, Lambton Community Association, Bethel Toddler Group, Health Scented – alternative and complementary therapists, and the Bridge Project – a women's training organisation – with their funding, while urging other community and voluntary groups to get involved with the scheme.

The Sunderland Children's Centre Inspiration Fund supports groups across the city, which work to improve the social, emotional and physical well-being of children aged from birth to five years. All voluntary and community groups are invited to apply for the funding, which could see each group awarded up to £750 of additional funding to allow them to offer extra services for families with young children.

Councillor Pat Smith, Portfolio Holder for Children and Learning City within Sunderland City Council, said: "The launch of the Inspiration Fund is an excellent opportunity for many of the city's voluntary and community organisations to offer additional services and new activities for families to benefit from. We have already had an overwhelming response to the application process but following the official launch of the scheme we want every group from across the city to know about the Fund and to complete their applications."

The Inspiration Fund, which is run by Sunderland Children's Centres as part of the City Council, will help to strengthen links between the centres and community organisations. By

working in partnership and supporting Children's Centres, the Inspiration Fund will develop existing services to further support children and their families.

Katherine Bone, Team Leader of the Bridge Project's Bridging Out scheme, said: "The Bridge Project's Bridging Out programme has worked with a large number of young mothers in its 10 year history, over half of which have been spent working in partnership with Sunderland's Children's Centres. Through the project many young women have progressed onto employment, training and higher educational opportunities.

"We are absolutely delighted to have received the grant from the Inspiration Fund which will enable us to hold a 10th anniversary celebration, to be held on 28th October at Bridge Columbia Washington. We'll be inviting all past learners and their children to share their experiences, achievements and successes."

The Inspiration Fund's launch also provided community organisations and local dignitaries with the chance to learn more about the initiative, while applicants were able to post their completed forms on the day in special Inspiration Fund post-boxes which have been created by the Salvation Army.

Any groups interested in applying for the Sunderland Children's Centre Inspiration Fund should contact Susan Ord on 0191 219 3995 or email susan.ord@sunderland.gov.uk.