

News release

23 January 2009

Extended Openings for Sunderland's Children's Centres

In order to meet a rise in public demand and to help benefit more Sunderland families the City Council has chosen to extend the opening times of its Children's Centres.

The extended opening hours, which were introduced earlier this month, are allowing many more working parents and pregnant women to benefit from the wide range of services offered by the city's 17 Children's Centres.

Previously the centres were only open 8am-6pm Monday to Friday, however the decision to improve access will broaden these times to include one late evening and one Saturday opening per locality area, per week.



Sunderland Children's Centres are open to all families with children aged from birth to five years old, including the antenatal period and offer a city wide network of services to help support families. The centres bring together early learning, childcare, parenting advice, health services and help for parents to find work or training – helping to provide every child with the best possible start in life.

There are also a number of activities for both children and parents to enjoy together, including baby days, dad and kids clubs, soft play, health sessions, family nurturing and young parents groups.

To help encourage further attendance during the new opening hours a range of support services will be introduced, including help with transport, crèche facilities and incentives including football tickets, pamper sessions, event and show tickets as well as leisure vouchers.

Barbara Phillips, a local parent, grandparent and foster carer, commented: "The later opening times are great news for me and my family as I work full-time. The new opening hours now

means that I have more opportunities to spend quality time with my children in the company of other parents and children of all ages who are in similar situations to me.”

Councillor Pat Smith, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services within Sunderland City Council, added: “The decision to extend the opening hours of the city’s Children’s Centres follows a public consultation which highlighted longer openings as a need, underlining just how much of an affect the services that the centres offer are having on their communities.

“By closing later and opening on weekends it is allowing the Children’s Centres to help even more families with young children and does not exclude working parents,” Cllr Smith continued.

To find out specific opening times contact your local Sunderland Children’s Centre or contact the Families Information Service on 0191 520 5505.