

# News release

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## City Children's Groups Urged to get Inspired

Sunderland's community groups are being reminded not to miss out on an inspirational opportunity to access funding for the support and development of children and communities in the city.

Non-profit organisations in Sunderland have just over two months to access funding from the 2010/11 Children's Centre Inspiration Fund, which has already donated £83,000 to groups since its launch.

The Inspiration Fund was launched in September 2009 to help community groups which support the social, emotional and physical well-being of children in the city. Groups can apply for grants worth up to £750 each financial year.

Organisers hope that the success stories of past applicants will encourage others to apply before the financial year finishes on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

Raj Singh, Extended Services Manager at Children's Services within Sunderland City Council, said: "The Inspiration Fund has already allowed so many groups across the city to give their members something really special, whether that's a day out, safer outdoor play facilities or an entirely new service.

"Small improvements like this can really make a big difference to people's lives and give them something to look forward to. There is still funding available for groups so I would urge all voluntary and community organisations working with young children to make use of this wonderful resource."

Some groups have used the extra money to provide special one-off events for their members, such as fun days, day trips and open events to invite new members.

The Family Focus parents' group from West Sunderland used the additional money to take families from the area on an educational trip to Whitehouse Farm in Morpeth.

The children were able to visit favourite farm animals such as sheep, pigs, goats and chickens, but were also introduced to more unusual animals such as meerkats, wallabies and tortoises.

The trip gave the children an enjoyable and educational experience which they otherwise may not have been able to benefit from. Other groups have chosen to reinvigorate their services by using the money to finance longer term improvements.

Shiney Row Childcare Centre received £750 from the fund to renovate the centre's outside space and play area, which is used by parents and children every week and was in need of an upgrade. The grant allowed the centre to transform the area with bedding plants and a new seating section.

In some instances, groups have added further services to their offering. The scheme has helped community groups throughout the east of the city to provide additional sessions for vulnerable children and establish new healthy eating activities.

Councillor Pat Smith, Portfolio Holder for Children and Learning City within Sunderland City Council, said: "The extra funding will help organisations to provide even better services and activities to benefit families throughout Sunderland. I hope that this scheme will continue to develop existing services to further support children and their families, whilst continuing to strengthen the already excellent links between the centres and community organisations."

Sunderland Children's Centres are designed for children aged from birth to five years, offering support to parents and preparing children on an 'early learning' journey. They bring together free play activities, health services, early education, childcare, parenting support, and help for parents looking to find work or training – helping to ensure that every child has the best start in life.