

News release

24 September 2009

Sunderland's Children's Centres are the Strongest Link

Hundreds of youngsters from across Sunderland have pitched in to prove that the city's Children's Centres are the strongest link.

To celebrate National Sure Start Children's Centre Week which ran between the 14th and 19th of September, Sunderland's Children's Centres invited families from around the city to add their own link to a paper chain.

The result was a giant paper chain that stretches a total length of 105m – the same length as the pitch at the Stadium of Light.

A wide variety of events took place at each centre, from Baby Massage and Soft Play, to Dads and Kids and Parents to Be groups. In celebration of these services, families were invited to design an individual paper link to highlight their favourite aspect of their Children's Centre.

At the end of the week, the lengths of chain from all 17 Children's Centres in Sunderland were added together to make one long chain. Every link represents a family who benefits from the services now available across the city.

Councillor Pat Smith, Portfolio Holder for Children and Learning City within Sunderland City Council, said: "The response to this campaign has been fantastic and shows just how important the services provided by the Children's Centres are to families in Sunderland. We hope this highlights the vital role Centres play in the lives of children and parents and that it encourages others to come and make use of the excellent facilities and services on offer."

Pauline Emmerson and daughter Anya joined their link to the chain when they attended the Baby Days session at Dubmire Children's Centre.

Pauline said: "Anya very much enjoys Baby Days at Dubmire, she loves interacting with other children as well as playing with the wide variety of toys. Anya also enjoys Messy Play – there

are so many fun and creative things to do as well as plenty of toys and games. The staff are all very friendly and helpful, making you feel welcome.”

Specialist Health Visitor, Diane Watson added: “It’s great to see Baby Days in full action and to know that it is inclusive and accessible to all, regardless of background or disability. I am always impressed by the motivation and drive of the teams in every cluster in supporting early support for children with disabilities and additional needs. My job would be impossible without Children’s Centres’ hard work and support.”

Designed for children aged from birth to five years and their families, Sunderland Children’s Centres bring together early education, childcare, health services and parenting support to help every child in Sunderland reach their full potential.

Through working in partnership with other local organisations the city’s Children’s Centres are able to offer a comprehensive network of services which are tailored to meet the needs of young children and their families.