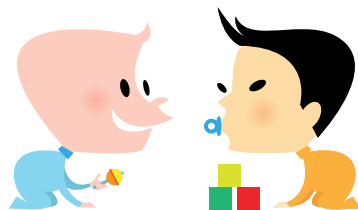




SURE START CHILDREN'S CENTRES

good for your child and good for you





There for you

Did you know that Sure Start Children's Centres are there for you, while you have a family and bring them up? From pregnancy, through pre-school years, to primary school. They'll help you give your child the best start in life.

Sure Start facts

- Sure Start Children's Centres are a 'one-stop shop' for children under five and their families.
- There's a range of support from skilled, committed and enthusiastic staff, on hand to help you.
- You can go there for:
 - childcare, play and early learning
 - expert advice, healthcare, parenting and family support
 - brushing up on your skills and learning new ones
 - taking qualifications
- links to training and job opportunities
- family fun and meeting friends
- There are already almost 3,000 Sure Start Children's Centres across the country. By 2010 there'll be 3,500 – one in every area.
- Most services are free but you will usually need to pay for childcare. If you're on a low income you may be able to get some extra help through the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit. Call the Tax Credits Helpline on 0845 300 3900 or visit www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits for more information

Thousands of parents and children across the country are already enjoying the benefits. Come and join them!

How can they help?

Sure Start Children's Centres provide a variety of services to support you, all in one place. They're somewhere your child can make friends and learn as they play. Where you can get professional advice on health and family matters. Learn about training and job opportunities. Or just drop in for a coffee and a chat.

What's on offer varies from centre to centre and is growing all the time. Some centres, for example, are providing:

Before birth

- antenatal checks with a midwife if you're a mum-to-be
- drop-in advice on housing if you're a teenage dad or mum-to-be



From birth to 5

- advice on, say, breastfeeding if you're a new mum
- immunisation for your new baby
- advice on parenting for dads and mums
- fun activities for dads, mums and kids
- childcare, nurseries and playgroups for babies and toddlers, where they learn as they play
- early education for young children, growing in confidence towards full-time school



Schools are noticing the difference that Sure Start Children's Centres make. Primary schools say that children who join them from Sure Start Children's Centres have a positive attitude, are well prepared for school and really enjoy learning.

What about families?

Families are finding that it's easy to drop in for healthcare and other services and activities.

At many centres you can:

- see your dentist, the dietician, or the physiotherapist
- visit the 'stop smoking' clinic
- get faster access to expert advice, support and short-term breaks if your child has learning difficulties or disabilities
- talk to Citizens Advice and sort out any problems
- get advice on healthy eating
- take parenting classes – and see the difference in your stress levels and your children's behaviour
- take advantage of the links with Jobcentre Plus if you're looking for training or work – and go on to get the skills you need for a job you want



- get help with family and social matters and language learning if your first language isn't English – with someone from your own culture
- improve your english or maths if they're a little rusty, or get to grips with computers

'The staff take the time to listen to you if you have any problems. You can get advice on things like benefits and housing if you need it and you're always made to feel welcome.'

Sam, dad of 12 year old,
10 year old and 4 year old

'My son's two and is special needs. As a single mum I'd have found the loneliness really tough had it not been for the children's centre. The biggest benefit for me has been the support and friendships. The Centre's had a huge effect on the community too – this area has been in a negative slump for a long time and it's really helping to boost people's opinions of themselves and the area they live in. Everyone's really friendly.'

JoJo, Mum

'I like the friendly atmosphere at the children's centre. Support and advice are always available, even if you just need a friendly ear and a cup of tea! There's access to outside agencies and services and there are varied activities for all the children, so I can bring all my children together.'

Dawn, mother of 6 year old, 4 year old and 6 week old

'People say the help they've had has turned their lives around - they feel much more confident as parents and their children settle into school more easily.'

Geoff, Rainbow Children's Centre

'I like having the centre because it gives me a home away from home. It's so friendly and I've made new friends. I can do things and achieve the goals in life that I thought were gone. Now I know that I don't just have to be a mum - and my kids get to meet new friends. Without the centre I'd just be at home with the kids. I hope the centre will be here when my kids have kids.'

Michelle, mother of 5 year old, 4 year old, 3 year old and 16 month old



Sure Start Children's Centres are already making a real difference for children and families right across the country.

Research shows that children are better prepared for school, for example, and parents are coping better with the challenges of a young family. Ofsted reported that the impact of services has been 'life-changing'. Parents say parenting sessions have 'transformed their approaches'. Fathers say children's centres are 'an important source of support in raising their children'.

Your local Sure Start Children's Centre is there when you need it. It depends on what people want locally, but many centres are open from 8 in the morning until 6 in the evening or longer – all year round. At some, you can even drop in at the weekend.

Whether you're a parent-to-be, a mum, dad, grandparent or carer – whoever you are, you'll be welcomed.

Pop into your local Sure Start Children's Centre and see what they can do for you and your children.

To find your nearest Sure Start Children's Centre, call
0800 2 346 346 or visit
www.surestart.gov.uk/surestartservices/settings/fundedsettings/



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PO Box 5050

Sherwood Park, Annesley

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Tel 0845 60 222 60

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