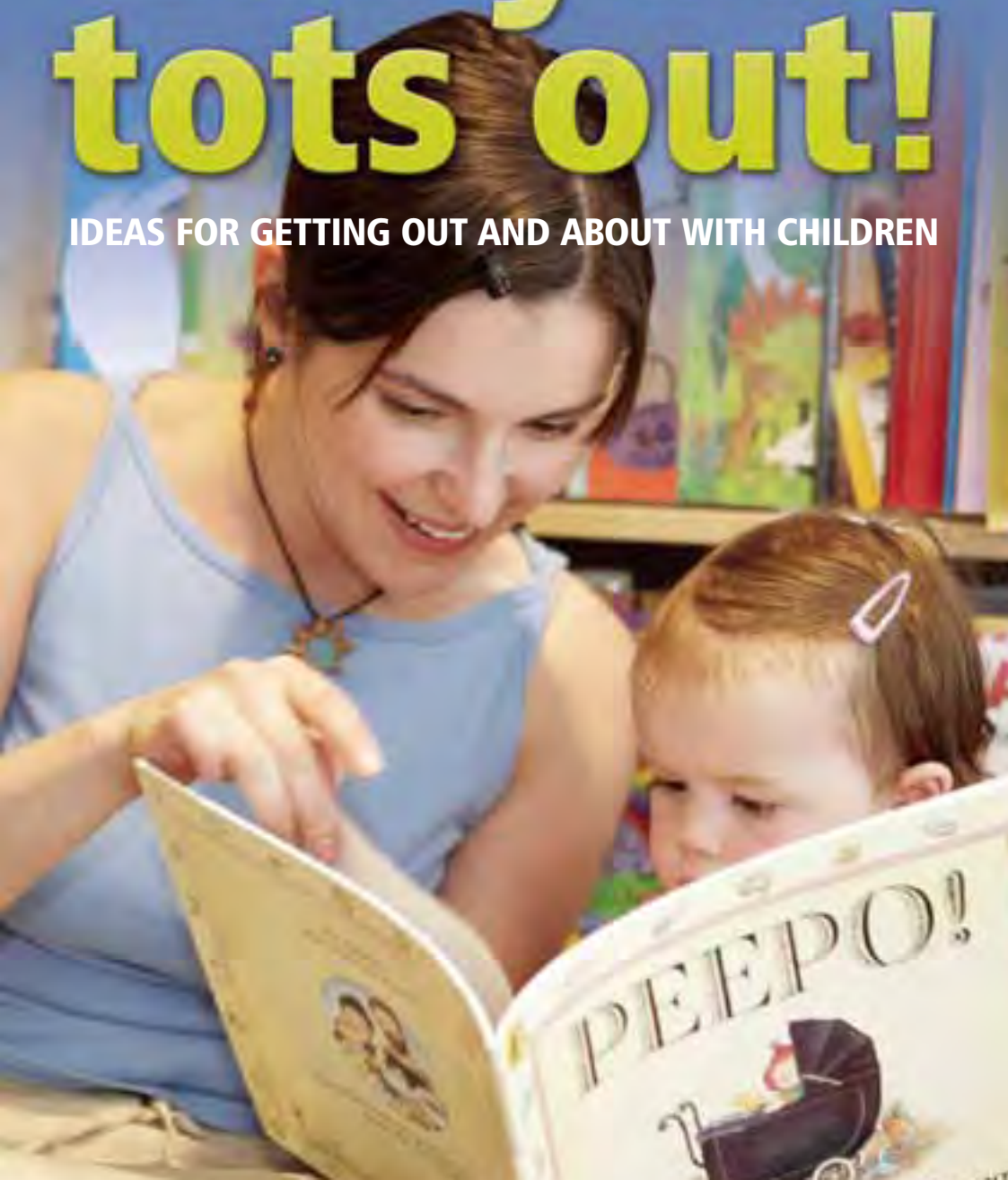


Get your tots out!

IDEAS FOR GETTING OUT AND ABOUT WITH CHILDREN



Introduction

Congratulations on your new arrival!

Newcastle is a great place to be a parent. There's a lot going on for the under 5s. But unless you know lots of other parents, it's not always easy to find groups or activities which appeal to you and your baby.

There are days when being with the kids is about cuddles and giggles and having fun. There are also days when it is about counting the hours and minutes until the end of the day ('Only 12 hours and 52 minutes until bedtime!').

Whichever sort of day it is, and whether you have one, two, three or more children to play with, this booklet is for you.

This booklet aims to be your first reference point whether you're looking to make new friends, try something new with your child or just fill in time on a rainy afternoon.

It's been written by two local mums, Nikki Wilkinson and Louise Wilson. Between us we have a couple of six-year-olds, a four-year-old, a two-year-old and a new baby.

Thanks to the funding from Newcastle City Council's Children's Centres, there's no advertising or sponsorship so we're free to give you our honest opinions of the activities on offer. And we must stress that these are just our opinions. If you disagree, you know about an activity we haven't included or just want to get in touch, please make contact – we'd love to hear from you.

Nikki and Louise

From birth to sitting up

Make the most of it!



From Birth to Sitting Up

Meeting other parents

It's much more fun being a mum/dad if you have friends who are going through the same thing. And even if you're shy, it's easy to start a conversation with another parent – just ask how they're sleeping!

Midwives and health visitors

Ask your midwife and health visitor if they run any sessions where you can meet other mums. Some run regular coffee mornings – a great place to meet other new parents who live close to you. Others run advice sessions on feeding, sleeping, first aid and so on. Obviously this is all useful information – but you'll find they make it easy for you to get to know other mums too. You may feel shy, but GO! It really helps to have friends with kids the same age as yours!

There are also social sessions on offer at the RVI. See page 7 for details.

Parent and toddler groups

Don't be put off by the name. Most toddler groups welcome babies and have toys and equipment which will be suitable for your child. There are hundreds of parent and toddler groups in Newcastle, mostly meeting in church halls, schools or community centres. These groups are usually managed and funded by the people who attend, so each one is slightly different. Try a few and you'll find one to suit you and your child.

Your young baby will certainly enjoy watching other children and babies, experiencing different toys and perhaps 'listening' to story time or songs. As they get bigger, you can let them experiment with paint or play dough without destroying your own home! The groups will also give you a chance to have a coffee and talk to other parents, grandparents and carers.

Newcastle Action for Parent and Toddler Groups Initiative (NAPI) has an up-to-date list of all the groups in your area. They're really friendly and will also be able to tell you about any local sessions specifically for new babies. Give them a ring on 0191 265 6158 or email napi@heaton-trewhittroad.fsnet.co.uk.

The National Childbirth Trust run regular coffee mornings – phone 0845 1201 498 or email Newcastle@national-childbirth-trust.co.uk for your local one. The NCT is a well-established network for families, and runs really good nearly new sales too!

Baby massage

There are loads of baby massage classes around the area, run by health visitors, Sure Start and private practitioners. The sessions will teach you some basic massage techniques which help your baby as he learns about his hands, feet, fingers and toes. It's really relaxing for you and baby, and we've read that it's good for bonding. It can soothe colic too. Our baby massage class was run by a local health visitor who also made sure we swapped telephone numbers with other mums in the group and after five weeks of your bare babies pooing everywhere, you definitely make friends with people! Ask your health visitor for details of a group near you.

Children and Young People's Information Service

Newcastle Children and Young People's Information Service is a free and impartial service which provides up-to-date and accurate information, advice and assistance. Please see pages 46–47 for more information.

Sure Start Children's Centres

The Sure Start Children's Centres in Newcastle offer lots of help, support and activities for parents and young children. Please see pages 48–49 for full details of the services on offer.

Libraries

As well as offering a great selection of baby books that you can borrow for free, libraries offer all sorts of other activities too, including storytelling and toddler sessions. Babies might enjoy watching older brothers or sisters joining in craft time or singing songs. Research has shown that babies benefit from being read to from birth, and it helps their language development as well as giving you an opportunity to do an activity which means you can sit down for a bit! Check out your library noticeboard for what is on this week. The librarians can be very helpful in suggesting books suitable for your child's age. Remember, you'll need to take along some proof of your name and address to join the library.

Swimming

Current advice suggests that there is no need to wait until your child has had all their jabs before going swimming. Lots of local swimming baths have special baby pools, and some even offer free sessions for mums and babies. These are another good way to get chatting to other mums, especially in the changing room and the coffee place afterwards. Be brave – asking “Fancy a coffee after?” usually gets a positive response from other mums, another opportunity to share those sleep horror stories! There are benefits to the child and the grown-up – the earlier you start, the less likely your child is to be frightened of water.

It’s often the peculiar and echo-y sounds that you can hear at a swimming pool that older toddlers don’t like, but getting them in the water early helps to avoid this. Learning to swim is essential for your child’s safety and a great way to stay fit!

The following swimming pools offer these free sessions for children:

Outer West Pool, West Denton. Tel: 0191 277 7980

Under 5s free any time. Adults £3.00

Elswick Park and Pool. Tel: 0191 277 3456

Under 5s free any time. Adults £3.00

Gosforth Pool, Gosforth. Tel: 0191 284 3696

Free under 5s sessions at different times each day – collect a leaflet or give them a ring. Adults £3.00. Child’s swimming lesson £3.80 (phone for times)

East End Pool, Jesmond. Tel: 0191 278 8444

Under 5s free. Adults £3.00 plus 20p locker

Swimming lessons for under 5s on Thursdays £3.60 (not school holidays)

Jesmond Pool, Jesmond. Tel: 0191 281 2482

Under 5s free any time. Adults £3.20

Lessons for 3–5 year olds (book ahead)

Aquababes for 0–3 years (adults £3.20, kids free)

We also found swimming lessons at the David Lloyd Centre in Gosforth for babies from 6 months upwards (you do need to be a member).

Cinemas

Yes, at long last, cinemas have realised that exhausted new parents would really quite like a chance to sit down for a couple of hours and watch a film!

The Odeon Cinema at Silverlink runs 'Newbies' sessions on a Tuesday morning. To make things comfortable for your baby they leave the lights up a little and turn the sound down a bit. And you can relax in the knowledge that everyone in the audience is in the same boat, so no-one's going to get annoyed about breastfeeding, burping or screaming... Call 0871 224 4007 or visit www.odeon.co.uk for details of forthcoming films.

Tyneside Cinema at Gateshead Old Town Hall also runs 'Bringing in Baby' screenings for parents and carers of babies under 1 year old. If you haven't been, this is a lovely comfortable venue for the Tyneside whilst their usual home on Pilgrim Street is being refurbished. Bringing in Baby sessions offer buggy parking, bottle warming and baby change as well as more appropriate light and sound levels for young babies. An extra incentive is the special deals on tea, coffee and scones in their lovely tea rooms. The Tyneside's choice of films might even help you to shake off that 'nappy brain' feeling. For more info call The Tyneside Cinema on 0191 232 8289.

Once your child is old enough to go to the cinema – but maybe too young to sit through the whole film, you might like to try the Kids' Club at the Odeon, Silverlink (0871 224 4007) on Saturday mornings (11am). Tickets cost £1.95 and accompanying adults are free.

Singing and music

Our babies loved music groups from a very early age and we went to one of the Piccolo sessions (see page 11). The grown-ups and the babies enjoyed the traditional and new songs, learning the actions, shaking the instruments and weeping to the lullabies. We chatted to lots of other mums at this group and at the coffee session afterwards. Piccolo costs £3.75 per session for the first child and £2.25 for next ones. Have a look at our Music and Movement chapter for other ideas.



Birthlights Baby Yoga

Church Hall, St Charles Church
Church Road, Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne

Sessions

Clare Spoons

Tel: 0191 284 2986

Mob: 07720 287341

Email: clarespoons@btinternet.com

Getting there

The church hall is on Church Road, opposite the Gosforth Memorial Health Centre.

How much is it?

£5 per session including tea and biscuits.

What's there?

Baby yoga and massage sessions (suitable from birth). Usually the sessions run for five consecutive weeks.

Prams and buggies

Access to the church hall is fine and there is a big car park.

Food and changing

There are changing facilities on site. Refreshments are provided.

We thought...

"Help! This will be full of earth mothers and their perfect babies."

But actually the class was very friendly and lots of fun. One of the most welcoming groups I've been to. Everyone was keen to chat. The baby yoga involves lots of songs to interest and relax the babies, some massage and some gentle yoga stretches. Followed by a relaxation and chatting session with biscuits and drinks for mums.

Stretches out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

Ring Clare Spoons for information about the baby yoga and 'Nurture Us' which also covers infant massage and movement/music/play.

Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI)

Royal Victoria Infirmary
Queen Victoria Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
Tel: 0191 233 6161



Sessions

Janet Turnbull
Tel: 0191 282 4555
Email: Parent.education@
nuth.northy.nhs.uk
to request a booking form

Getting there

We're guessing you probably know this one!

How much is it?

Phone for details.

What's there?

Aside from the obvious (!), the RVI runs six-week post-natal classes for babies up to 6 months old. They're for mums and babies and cover topics like baby massage and even some post-natal yoga.

Prams and buggies

Access is good but parking can be difficult.

Food and changing

Both are available in the hospital.

We thought...

We didn't go to these classes as no-one told us about them. But the lady who runs them rang especially to tell us about the classes for this book, so we think they'll be worth going along to – and a good way of meeting other mums.

Opening times

Ring in advance to check.



David Lloyd Post Natal Exercise Class

David Lloyd Centre, Castle Farm Road
Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne
Tel: 0191 284 1275

NB: You don't need to be a member

Getting there

Nearest Metro is Ilford Road. Walk down (over the bridge) to Matthew Bank. Turn left and walk round the bend. You'll have to cross to reach Castle Farm Road (and it's busy). It's a bit hairy walking up the bank, too, as it's narrow with no pavement.

By car: Castle Farm Road is just off Matthew Bank in Jesmond. Or, if you're coming from the other end, just off Freeman Road (by the Freeman Hospital).

How much is it?

£4 and £6 (you don't need to be a member)

What's there?

Low impact cardio tone specifically for post-natal mums. Your baby watches from their car seat or mat, and you can feed when required.

Prams and buggies

Fully accessible.

Food and changing

The club has a large cafe with a wide range of food on offer. It also has a baby/toddler area so your kids can wander about safely – and an outdoor area with climbing frame/slide.

Baby changing is available on site and is very clean.

We thought...

Our reviewer rated these classes as "good" and "flexible". We did the classes three years ago and found that we did very little exercise but met some lovely people and enjoyed the conversation and coffees afterwards.

Stretches out of 5 😊😊😊😊

Class times

Mondays 1.30–3.00pm (£6)

Fridays 2.30–3.30pm (£4)

Music and movement





Dancing Babies and Dizzy Kids

www.dancecity.co.uk

Dance City, Temple Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
Te: 0191 261 0505

Getting there

Dance City is just behind the Tyne Theatre in Newcastle City Centre. Nearest Metro is Central Station, or park at Time Square.

How much is it?

£4

What's there?

Dancing and singing for the very young, with a different theme each week. Dancing Babies is for 0–3 years. Dizzy Kids is for 3–4 years.

Prams and buggies

You can get a pram through, although there are some stairs to negotiate and a lift.

Food and changing

Baby changing is allowed at the back of the dance room. There is a good cafe on site, too.

We thought...

Our reviewer ranked these sessions as “Excellent. Very enjoyable for parents and kids.”

We like the fact that these are drop-in sessions, with no need to book. Get there early, though. They're popular!

Wiggles out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

Dancing Babies:

Wednesday 10–11am; 11am–12noon

Friday 10–11am; 11am–12noon

Saturday 10–11am; 11am–12noon

Dizzy Kids: Saturday 10–11am

Phone to confirm times.

Piccolo Music

www.piccolomusic.co.uk

Trinity Church Hall
Churchill Gardens, Jesmond
(Just at the end of Armstrong Bridge)



Contact

Anna Scantlebury 0191 252 8765
Abigail Cotton 0191 234 0596

Getting there

By car: Coming from the city centre, turn left off the Cradlewell Bypass at the lights beside a row of shops and restaurants (Rehills, Turnberry's, Santana's pizzeria). Turn immediate right, then 1st right again. Trinity Church is on the corner.

How much is it?

£3.75 per child and £2.25 for siblings over 4 months. Adults go free! Refreshments included. At their baby only sessions (11.30), the cost is £3.75 per baby from 1 week old to walking.

What's there?

A friendly group singing traditional and new songs for babies and young children. Coffee, juice and biscuits between sessions.

Prams and buggies

Access to the church hall is fine.

Food and changing

It's fairly easy to change your baby in the church hall. The ladies toilets also have baby change and potties. Biscuits and coffee are served between sessions.

We thought...

A very relaxed group and a great way to meet other parents. Babies seem to love it. They really enjoy the music and watching the other children. And for toddlers who enjoy the singing and dancing, Piccolo is definitely their top choice.

It's well worth staying for coffee afterwards, too. We made loads of friends at Piccolo.

Hums out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

Thursdays in term time:

9.45am 4 weeks to 4 years Best for older kids.

10.25am Coffee for both groups

10.45am 4 weeks – 4 years. Best for tots who've outgrown baby group.

11.30am Newborns to crawlers/early walkers.

12noon Coffee. Bring baby's lunch.



Music making at The Sage

www.musicnorth.org

The Sage Gateshead
PO Box 254, Gateshead NE8 2YR
Tel: 0191 443 4661

Getting there

Head across the Tyne Bridge, keep in left lane, follow the signs to The Sage.

How much is it?

£3 for children or adults of any age;
£1.50 for siblings.

What's there?

Music making – singing and instruments for the under 5s. You have to book in advance.

Prams and buggies

Access is very good with parking close by and lift access for pushchairs.

Food and changing

The queue for lunch at the cafe was huge, and it becomes an expensive trip if you're relying on on-site facilities for refreshments. There were plenty of high chairs and children are welcome.

We thought...

Having given up on some other music groups (my 4-year-old refuses to go – “Too noisy” or “Don't like it”), I was quite prepared to be there for two minutes. In fact, we stayed for the full time and he's keen to go again. The light and airy room was full of the usual – and some unusual – instruments and the enthusiastic session leader (a professional singer) led us with some familiar and new songs. She even took requests! The number attending is limited, so it doesn't get too crowded. There were still enough people for us, less confident, singers to join in!

Make sure you book in plenty of time, and check the guide age as different sessions run for different ages.

Also, we'd recommend sessions from 10am onwards as getting over the Tyne Bridge for 9.30am is a nightmare.

La's out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

The Sage run 14 Under 5s sessions every week. Ring to confirm times.

Tiptoes

David Lloyd Centre, Castle Farm Road
Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne
Tel: 0191 284 1275



NB: You don't need to be a member

Getting there

Nearest Metro is Ilford Road. Walk down (over the bridge) to Matthew Bank. Turn left and walk round the bend. You'll have to cross to reach Castle Farm Road (and it's busy). It's a bit hairy walking up the bank, too, as it's narrow with no pavement.

By car: Castle Farm Road is just off Matthew Bank in Jesmond. Or, if you're coming from the other end, just off Freeman Road (by the Freeman Hospital).

How much is it?

£3.50 per session.

What's there?

The classes include finger rhymes, action songs, movement games, circle dancing, and creative dance – on a different theme each term.

Prams and buggies

Access is fine. Just explain you're there for Tiptoes and ask the receptionist to open the wide barrier.

Food and changing

The club has a large cafe with a wide range of food on offer. It also has a baby/toddler area so your kids can wander about safely – and an outdoor area with climbing frame/slide.

Baby changing is available on site and is very clean.

We thought...

These were friendly classes. It's hard not to talk to other mums/carers when you're all pretending to be a train or dig a hole. My little girl was a bit disappointed that it wasn't dancing 'like Angelina ballerina', but the rest of the group (almost an equal split of boys and girls) seemed to really enjoy it. We all had coffee after the sessions and it was easy to make friends.

High kicks out of 5 😊😊😊😊

Class times

Tuesdays 2–2.30pm.

Animal Crackers



Washington Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

www.wwt.org.uk

District 15, Washington
Tyne and Wear NE38 8LE

Tel: 0191 416 5454

Email: info.washington@wwt.org.uk



Getting there

East of Washington in District 15, four miles from A1(M), one mile from A19. Signposted off A195, A19, A182 and A1231.

By bike: River Wear trail passes the centre as does the C2C cycle route. Cycle racks provided.

How much is it?

Adult £6.95

Senior Citizen £5.35

Child £3.50 (under 4s, free)

Family Ticket £18.80

What's there?

Free parking, cafe and terrace, Wetland Discovery Centre, picnic areas, gift/book shop, parent and baby room, binocular hire and children's play area.

Prams and buggies

A footpath route around the centre is ideal for prams and buggies.

Food and changing

Nice cafe, lots of high chairs and toys available. Homemade food and a varied menu – sandwiches, chips, quiche and more. Helpful staff.

The changing room was lovely – clean, smelt nice and enough room for two babies. Breastfeeding area if you want to use it.

We thought...

The entrance fees make it quite expensive unless you make a day of it – this is one for a whole day out.

We had a lovely day out and enjoyed feeding the birds – the packets of seed were cheap enough for one each.

However, if you have a child that makes a run for it, it was a bit stressful with all the open water areas.

Ducks out of 5 😊😊😊😊

Opening times

9.30am–5.30pm daily in summer.

9.30am–4.30pm in winter.



Whitehouse Farm Centre

www.whitehousefarmcentre.co.uk

North Whitehouse Farm
Northumberland NE61 6AW
Tel: 01670 789998 Email: enquiries@whitehousefarmcentre.co.uk

Getting there

Driving north, take the Morpeth turn off (A197) and turn immediately left following the signs to the Whitehouse Farm Centre.

How much is it?

Adults £6.75

Kids £5.75 (under 2s, free)

What's there?

Cows, sheep, ponies, pigs and lots of animals – big and small. There are also tractor rides, soft play, face painting, a huge toboggan slide and a chance to hold bunnies and see animals up close.

Prams and buggies

Buggy access is fine – although some bits might be a bit muddy if the weather is wet.

Food and changing

The cafe has a mix of homemade food, sandwiches and children's meals. Lots of high chairs and we liked the low sinks for hand-washing after the farm visit. Space for indoor and outdoor picnics too if the weather isn't too good.

The baby changing room is clean.

We thought...

We had a smashing time – the children loved holding the bunnies and feeding the goats. The sun was shining when we visited and we had a picnic as well as the visit to the cafe, enjoying the outside-ness of it all. We talked to other people with children too – a good sociable place to chat with other grown-ups as well as entertaining the little ones.

Pigs out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

10am–5pm daily

Closed Mondays in school term.

November and January: weekends only.

Pets' Corner

Jesmond Dene
Newcastle upon Tyne



Getting there

From Newcastle City Centre: Come off the Central Motorway at Jesmond and continue straight ahead to the Cradlewell Bypass. Turn left at the traffic lights just before the underpass. Follow the road round to the right, the turn right after the church – down the hill, under Armstrong Bridge and into the Dene. There are usually parking spaces available here, about two minutes' walk from Pets' Corner.

From your car walk up towards Millfield House (on your right), the entrance to Pets' Corner is on your left.

How much is it?

Free. (Although donations are welcome and animal feed is 50p per bag.)

What's there?

Goats, sheep, pot-bellied pigs, a pony, chickens, ducks, geese, peacocks, rabbits, and loads of canaries, budgies etc.

Prams and buggies

Access is fine.

Food and changing

Millfield House has a decent cafe selling cakes, sandwiches etc. It also has baby change facilities and toilets where you can wash your children's hands properly if feeding the animals. At weekends they also have a resource centre open which is worth a look.

We thought...

Pets' Corner is a great facility for the city. If you take your kids during the week – outside of school holidays – most of the animals will come and eat from their hands (at busy times they're too well fed to bother). However, heed any signs pinned up requesting not to feed the animals at certain times. It's free, it's easy to get to, and we often go for a walk in the Dene or up to Paddy Freeman's Park afterwards.

Quacks out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

Open daily in daylight hours.



Blue Reef Aquarium

www.blureefaquarium.co.uk

Grand Parade, Tynemouth

Tel: 0191 258 1031

Getting there

By Metro: Cullercoats is the nearest station. Turn right onto the sea front, and it's a good 10 minutes' walk.

By car: Take the new Coast Road and follow signs to Tynemouth and the sea front. The aquarium is on your left just before you drive into the sea... There is a large car park round the back.

How much is it?

Adults £7.50 (annual membership available)

Children £5.50 (from 3–16 years)

Under 3s free

What's there?

Fish! Sharks, ray fish, rock pools, Nemo look-alikes – and some otters.

Prams and buggies

Access is excellent. Many of the tanks have been designed so that people using wheelchairs, (or children in pushchairs), can see the fish easily. They also have little steps you can take round with you to ensure your toddler can see everything. Pick one up just before you go into the main exhibition.

Food and changing

The baby change is clean and airy. There is also a very child friendly cafe with lovely staff.

We thought...

It's amazing how much even tiny babies get from a visit here. The fish are such vivid colours that our children were mesmerised. The talks about the rock pools are great for older toddlers. Mine love stroking the starfish and holding a live crab. We could have spent all day watching the otters, too. In all, we enjoyed it so much that I became a member!

Otters out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

Open daily 10am–5pm (4pm November–February).



Getting there

The Sanctuary is located in the village of Ulgham, 3 miles north of Morpeth. It is signposted from the village and on the coastal route (A1068).

How much is it?

Adults £5.00

2 yrs+ £4.50

Under 2s free

What's there?

An animal sanctuary for all sorts of creatures – swans, foxes, badgers, tawny owls, rabbits. Also hungry goats to feed, pony rides (Fridays and Saturdays £2), toy tractor rides, arts and crafts (£1.50), a great play area, giftshop and a tearoom.

Prams and buggies

The Sanctuary is fully accessible to pushchairs.

Food and changing

We didn't actually eat during our visit, but food and drink were readily available. There's also a designated picnic area.

Baby change was also available on site.

We thought...

We found this by accident, and we were really glad we did. There's loads to do, and all the volunteers are really enthusiastic, as your entry fee helps to support the animals they care for. Once we'd fed the animals and played outside for hours, the kids really enjoyed the chance to do some painting in the craft centre.

Hoots out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

Fridays and Saturdays 11am–4pm;
11am–5pm (May–Oct).

Free Fun

A young boy with short brown hair is looking upwards with a joyful expression, his mouth open in a smile. He is wearing a red turtleneck sweater under a dark, patterned jacket. To his right is a large, vertical, cylindrical structure that appears to be a water feature or fountain. The structure is illuminated with a blue light and has a glass-like surface that reflects the boy's face. The background is a solid blue color.

Discovery Museum

www.twmuseums.org.uk/discovery

Blandford Square
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4JA
Tel: 0191 232 6789



Getting there

Nearest Metro is Central Station. Walk up past the Centre for Life and follow the signs. For bus info call the Nexus Travel line: 0870 608 2608.

By car: drive straight up past the Central Station, get in the right-hand lane and follow the signs. Parking is tricky.

How much is it?

Free

What's there?

Loads of different exhibitions, all with interactive displays. Our favourites are the water play and science maze.

Prams and buggies

Access is very good.

Food and changing

Cafe with baked potatoes, sandwiches etc.

The baby changing is very clean.

We thought...

Our favourite museum. The Play Tyne water play area is fantastic. (Take spare clothes – they'll get soaked, despite the aprons provided.)

The Science Maze is great too. Don't be put off by the name – it's always full of kids photographing their shadows, playing with mirrors and blasting balls around the room. All the staff are very child friendly, too. Every exhibition has interactive bits, from dressy ups to a see through flushing toilet. Like all museums it's easy to lose your children amongst the exhibits, so it's easier with one adult per child.

Discoveries out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

Monday–Saturday 10am–5pm;
Sunday 2–5pm.



Laing Art Gallery

New Bridge Street
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8AG
Tel: 0191 211 2104

Getting there

The nearest Metro is Monument. Walk straight down New Bridge Street, cross John Dobson Street, and the Laing is on your left.

By car: Park in Durant Road or Holiday Inn car park.

How much is it?

Free

What's there?

Newcastle's main art gallery, with a separate children's area which has art-themes activities and a great playhouse.

Prams and buggies

Good access. Lifts and ramps throughout.

Food and changing

Cafe with high chairs and a range of food at a range of prices.

Baby change is available on site.

We thought...

The children's gallery is lovely, with loads of different activities. You can make a ribbon picture, play inside a giant picture, or learn about colour mixing with a fantastic bubble tube. There's plenty of space for little ones to crawl around and generally a very friendly atmosphere.

Children are welcome in the other galleries too – so it's worth keeping an eye out for what's on.

Paintbrushes out of 5 😊😊😊😊

Opening times

Monday–Saturday 10am–5pm;
Sunday 2–5pm.

BALTIC

If your kids enjoy arty stuff, it's also worth a visit to BALTIC on the Gateshead bank of the Tyne. We don't find the galleries at all child friendly – lots of stewards constantly telling you not to touch anything. But every Saturday and Sunday they run free Busy B's sessions. Just drop in and try all sorts of different activities. Our kids always enjoy riding the lifts up to the viewing platform in BALTIC and I enjoy the cakes in their cafe!

Garden Centres (honestly)!

www.peterbarratts.co.uk

Gosforth Park
Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 5EP
Tel: 0191 236 7111



Getting there

By car: Take the road into Gosforth Park from the A1. You can't miss Peter Barratt's – it's huge.

How much is it?

Free (except for all the stuff you end up buying).

What's there?

Water features, lots of colourful fish, a good cafe, a small play area and amazing Christmas lights in season.

Prams and buggies

Access is fine.

Food and changing

The cafe is very good and child friendly – plenty of high chairs and helpful staff.

The baby change is clean and airy.

We thought...

This garden centre has been a refuge on many rainy days. The children love looking at the fish and the water features – and at Christmas we could all spend weeks looking at all the decorations. They have interactive singing Santas, the lights for outside houses, fibre optic trees etc – all displayed in a darkened area for full effect. The downside is, you can end up spending a fortune on cress seeds, houseplants and squeaky singing reindeer.

Growbags out of 5 😊😊😊

Opening times

Open daily.

See also Dobbies, Heighley Gate and any other big garden centre near you.

Parks



Parks and countryside ranger events

For general information about the Ranger Service call: **0191 211 6215**



There are loads of parks, beaches, woods and open spaces around Newcastle, and you'll already have your own favourites. But it's only since having the kids that we've discovered all the events planned and run locally by the Parks and Countryside Ranger Service in Newcastle.

In the summer months (from May), they organise free activities specifically for the under 5s, including pond dips, mini beast hunts, painting, picnics and nature trails.

In addition, they put on all sorts of family days with bands, bouncy castles, magicians and community barbecues in most of the major Newcastle parks during the summer.

We've been along to quite a few, and always had really good fun. We've also discovered numerous nature reserves and parks we'd never been to before (and I've lived in Newcastle all my life).

The rangers produce information leaflets, letting you know what's coming up, and listing all their contact details. Also, look out for the free magazine *Citylife*, which is produced by the Council. It often has listings for events in the local parks and nature reserves.

Useful numbers

Benwell Nature Park

Denton Dene, Hadrian's Way, Sugley Dene, Walbottle and Throckley Dene.
Tel: **0191 273 2983**

Big Waters

Walker Riverside, Havannah Nature Reserve/ Three Hills.
Tel: **0191 281 3833**

Jesmond Dene

Iris Brickfield and Armstrong Park.
Tel: **0191 281 0973**

Tyne Riverside

Newburn Walbottle Brickworks.
Tel: **0191 264 8501**

NGP (Newcastle Great Park) Ranger.
Tel: **0191 217 0696**



Not the park again...

Ideas to keep you sane on your 4,000th visit to the local park.

- **Have a treasure hunt.** Leave a friend to push the swings while you go off and hide/bury some treasure. You can either hide clues which lead to the goodies or draw a map and let the kids decipher it. Swear blind that you had nothing to do with it, but you just saw a pirate limping out of the gates.
- **Give them a list of things to find:** a twig, a red leaf, a yellow flower etc. Take a prize for the winner.
- **Pond dipping.** Take a fishing net and have a good swish around on the bottom of the pond / river. Empty into a Tupperware tub and admire the snails and grubs you've found. You can do this any time, but it's especially fun when the tadpoles have hatched. Take a few home, feed them frozen lettuce (honestly) and watch them grow legs. From experience, remember to take them back before they start hopping around your kitchen. (Pond dipping gets you really dirty. Take some spare clothes and antibacterial gel if you can.)
- **Go on a minibeast hunt.** How many different bugs, beetles and worms can you find?
- **Make a den.** This is more fun if you sit somewhere you can see the kids then just let them get on with it. Take a blanket or plastic bags for them to sit on and some snacks to enjoy in their secret house. Again, from experience, it's best to check their chosen site for glass, needles, dog poo or angry drunk people before they start building.

- **Forage for food.** You'll need to judge whether your kids can be trusted not to munch poisonous berries and leaves – but hunting for free food can entertain them for hours. Blackberries are the easiest to spot, but you could try sucking the sugar out of clover petals and keep an eye out for mushrooms, wild strawberries, dandelion leaves etc. Don't eat anything if you're not absolutely sure it's OK. The countryside rangers sometimes run 'food for free' sessions to help you identify the edible stuff.

- **Splash in puddles.** People will look at you like you're mad – but there's nothing our kids like more than putting on their wellies and getting truly filthy jumping in puddles. Join in. It's great stress relief!

- **Make a collage.** Take a bag and collect pretty leaves, twigs, flowers etc. Then go home and make a sticky picture.

- **Find out where the fairies live.** My kids will walk for miles if we're looking for fairy houses. Clumps of toadstools are fairy villages and the fairy princesses live in trees with little 'doors' in their bark.

- **Catch a happy day.** Catching falling leaves before they hit the ground is really tricky and really good exercise. Traditionally, each leaf you catch will give you a happy day.

Jump Around



Adventurelands

Benton Road, Heaton
Newcastle upon Tyne
Tel: 0191 259 9966



Getting there

Exit the Coast Road at the Chillingham Road roundabout and turn up Benton Road. Take the third exit at the roundabout and go past Sainsbury's – the turn is just after – and parking is at the top.

How much is it?

Off-peak (weekdays):

50p babies at all times;
£2.95 1 year olds; £4.15 2–3years;
£5.25 4–12years

Peak times (weekends):

£3.95 1 year olds; £5.45 2–3 years;
£6.95 4–12years

What's there?

A big, themed soft play which is quite different to the other soft plays we know. Indoor football pitch, aquarium, 'space guns' which fire foam balls, interactive dance area, huge TV/cinema, tunnels and slides and indoor motorbikes!

Prams and buggies

Access is fine.

Food and changing

The cafe is so good that you might want to eat there even without the kids!

Baby change is available.

We thought...

Our children love Adventurelands. It's clean and chic with lots of variety and friendly staff. However, it's a bit more expensive than other soft plays we've visited and the lay out means you can't so easily keep your eye on the door if your child is a 'bolter' (the exit door is lock-controlled but out of view from the soft-play area).

Slides out of 5 😊😊😊😊
(5 if you're counting the cafe).

Opening times

Open daily (to 10pm) – phone for times.



Soft play at Concordia

Concordia
Manor Walks Shopping Centre
Cramlington
Tel: 01670 542222

Getting there

Take any route you like into Cramlington then follow signs to town centre and Manor Walks Shopping Centre. Eventually you'll find it! Park in the shopping centre car park – spaces near Concordia are hard to find.

For bus info call Travel line:
0870 608 2608

How much is it?

£1.80 for each child.

What's there?

Soft/indoor play. (Also a lovely looking swimming pool which we didn't use.)

Prams and buggies

Access is fine. The soft play is upstairs, but there is a lift.

Food and changing

There is a fairly basic cafe selling chips, crisps etc.

Baby change is clean.

We thought...

The soft play area is ideal for the under 4s – bouncy castle, lots of Fisher Price style slides, climbing frames and play houses. In the summer they use a huge area which is great for running around. Watch the door though – it's easy for kids to get out.

The rest of the year, the soft play is a smaller room – more secure but, obviously, less equipment.

Not the soft play to choose when you want to drink coffee and read the papers. There's nowhere very comfortable to sit. This is one for interacting with your children (!)

Bounces out of 5 😊😊😊

(4 in summer).

Opening times

Phone for details – varies according to season/school holiday/day of week.



Getting there

Head for Killingworth Town Centre and the “Killingworth Centre” which has a big Morrison’s and a Matalan. Park in the Morrison’s car park (it’s murder trying to get a parent & child space) and Cosmic Kids is next to the Ladbroke’s shop. (It looks tiny from the front, so it’s quite easy to miss it.)

How much is it?

Under 11 months: free
11 months–4 years: £3.75
4 years+: £3.95

What’s there?

A large soft play with a soft indoor football pitch, two ‘space guns’ which fire foam balls, a toddler area, the usual tunnels and slides and an area with play houses, cars and ride on fire engines.

Prams and buggies

Access is fine. The soft play area is all upstairs, but there is a lift.

Food and changing

There is a cafe selling burgers, chips etc. The coffee’s not brilliant – stick to the hot chocolate or cold drinks!

Baby change is available in the ladies or disabled toilet. It’s OK if you have a child who will stay still on one of those wall-mounted units.

We thought...

Our children like Cosmic Kids. It’s clean and airy with loads of room to run around. The staff are all very friendly, too.

Slides out of 5 😊😊😊😊

(3 if you’re counting the coffee).

Opening times

Open daily 9.30am–7pm (last entry at 5.30pm).



Getting there

Ask for directions to your venue of choice.

How much is it?

£5.25 per week (pre-booking required).

What's there?

Structured play on gym equipment with songs and action rhymes. The activities and equipment change for each age group.

Prams and buggies

Access is fine.

Food and changing

There is a room available for changing your baby's nappy.

We thought...

Dads beware – gymbabes is not quite as exciting as it sounds... Our babies used to enjoy their sessions, and the staff were all very friendly and helpful. It is quite expensive though – and we missed quite a few classes, as the timing of the sessions meant our kids often fell asleep on the way there. We found that other mums were too intent on watching their children for us to make any new friends during the sessions.

As the children progress to become Tumble Tots, we know some who have loved every minute, and some who haven't enjoyed the structure – so it's probably worth asking for a taster session before you sign up for the term.

Forward rolls out of 5 😊😊😊

Opening times

Ring to arrange a taster session and to check times.

Toddler Trampolining

Cowgate Leisure Centre, Cowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne
Tel: 0191 286 9521



Getting there

By car: Follow signs to the airport from the Central Motorway. As you come into Cowgate – heading towards Kingston Park – the leisure centre is well signposted.

How much is it?

£2.10 per 1 hour session.

You can also request a combined ticket for trampolining and soft play.

What's there?

Supervised trampolining for your under 5s. (No minimum age – but your toddler should be walking.)

A small, but fun, soft play area.

Prams and buggies

Access is fine.

Food and changing

Baby change is available in the leisure centre changing rooms. If you use the soft play there is also an area where you can eat a picnic.

We thought...

A great way to wear them out – and you, if you're brave enough to give it a go! The instructor was very friendly, as were other mums at the class. The kids loved it.

Bounces out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

Sessions run most days – ring for times.

Sessions include:

Monday 11am–12noon

Wednesday 10.30–11.30am/
1.30–2.30pm

Friday 12.30–1.30pm



Gym Tots

Cowgate Leisure Centre
Tel: 0191 286 9521
Newburn Leisure Centre
Tel: 0191 264 0014

Getting there

Cowgate Leisure Centre, Cowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne: Follow signs to the airport from the Central Motorway. As you come into Cowgate – heading towards Kingston Park – the leisure centre is well signposted.

Newburn Leisure Centre, Grange Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15: See www.newcastle.gov.uk website and follow links for directions.

How much is it?

14 weeks for £35

What's there?

Warm up with singing, dancing and floor exercises. Then have a go on a range of gym equipment, some softplay, but also the beam, the box and the parallel bars.

Prams and buggies

Access is fine.

Food and changing

Baby change is available in the leisure centre changing rooms.

We thought...

Fun with one child! Ours liked the gym but used to get impatient with the warm up and waiting for the equipment to be set up. (We often arrived a bit late on purpose.) The instructors have to be strict to ensure everyone's safe, so it can be a bit stressful if your child's not feeling well behaved! The gym equipment is great fun, though, and everyone's very friendly. I wouldn't recommend taking two kids though, unless you're super mum. It's impossible to keep them both safe, happy and under control. We thought the cost was very reasonable compared to Tumble Tots.

Star jumps out of 5 😊😊😊

Opening times

Ring to pre-book sessions and to check times.

TJ's Jungle

Bassington Industrial Estate
Cramlington
Tel: 01670 738002



Getting there

From the A1 continue onto A19.
At the roundabout take the 2nd exit
on to the A1068. At next roundabout
take 2nd exit onto the A1172.
At next roundabout take 1st exit
on to Bassington Lane and follow
the road round to TJ's Jungle.

How much is it?

9.30am-3pm term time £2.50 for
2 hours. Other times, £3.50 for 1-5
year olds. Under 1s free

What's there?

A large soft play area, toddler area
and cafe. Also Sky Sports and
newspapers for hands-off Dads
on a Sunday morning!

Prams and buggies

Access is fine, but there's not much
room for prams or pushchairs.
TJ's gets busy!

Food and changing

The food at TJ's is good, and we
reckon their coffee is the best of
any soft play we've been to!

There is a separate, clean baby
change room.

We thought...

This is our favourite soft play. The
staff are really friendly and helpful,
there's a good variety of soft play
equipment and the whole place is
fairly compact, so it's easy to see your
kids while you have a swig of coffee.

Balls out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

Open 9.30am-8pm daily.



Lil' Dragons

Heaton Road, Heaton
Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 5HE
Tel: 01670 797478

Getting there

Check with Nexus for bus times and routes. Byker Metro is a few minutes' walk away.

How much is it?

A monthly subscription of about £35 which means you can go as often as you want, up to six times a week!

What's there?

Karate-for-kids from age 4.

Prams and buggies

Some space for buggies if taking younger siblings along to watch.

Food and changing

No.

We thought...

It's great fun and has my eldest boy enthralled. This class promises to build confidence and help children achieve their potential. Mr Savage has the children totally engaged as they have a good run round, learn some new skills and practise them safely. My friend reports that her little girl has been transformed from a child who didn't much like games to a clip-winning, star-wearing enthusiast for sporty activity – can't be bad! We also like the fact that it's on six days a week so if you miss one night, you can turn up another time.

Opening times

Monday, Wednesday and Friday
at 4.30pm
Tuesday and Thursday at 4pm
Saturday at 10am.

Other Ideas





Getting there

At Byker Bridge turn right at the traffic lights then first left down Stepney Bank which leads onto Lime Street. Seven Stories is along on the left-hand side.

How much is it?

Adults £5; children £4
Under 3s free

Annual memberships are available and a very good deal.

What's there?

Seven floors of book-related activity, exhibition, events and amusement plus dressing up, story time, workshops and story-related play.

Prams and buggies

Lift access to each floor.

Food and changing

Good, clean changing rooms with lots of room.

We thought...

We love it here, and have taken out family memberships so it's a regular rainy-day home for us. We challenge you to get away without spending loads in the bookshop. The exhibitions change fairly regularly – at the moment my kids love the farting chair in the Horrid Henry exhibition! Boys and girls love the dressing up, the word play and the ever-present colouring activities. Works fine with a baby, a toddler and a pre-schooler – something for each one in the same space. The cafe is impressive too – not the cheapest – but healthy, classic combinations. The staff deserve a mention, not just for their enthusiastic story reading (daily at 11am) but for the atmosphere and positive attitude.

Poems out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

10am–5pm daily
10am–6pm Thursday
11am–5pm Sunday

Shields Ferry and South Shields

Shields Ferry tel: 0191 454 8183
Nexus Travel line: 0870 608 2608



Getting there

Drive to North Shields and park on the quay. (The passenger ferry is well signposted.)

The nearest Metro Station is North Shields.

For bus info ring the travel line above.

How much is it?

Return trip on the ferry £1.95
Under 5s free

What's there?

A trip across the Tyne on the passenger ferry. (Optional extras – park with traditional swings etc, large lake with ducks and swans, mini train ride and fun fair.)

Prams and buggies

Access to the ferry is easy.

Food and changing

Not on the ferry! See below for fish and chips.

We thought...

Great fun. It can be cold outside on the ferry, but our kids loved watching the boats, birds and cranes on the river. Once in South Shields, we walked in a straight line from the ferry, through the market place and down the main shopping street. We stopped at Coleman's, a fantastic (and child friendly) fish and chip shop on Ocean Road. Continue down the road to the park. The mini train runs during the holidays and at weekends. The kids loved it. We never got to the Temple Park fun fair, but other mums told us it has a great bouncy castle and good rides for under 5s.

Seagulls out of 5 😊😊😊😊

Opening times

The ferry leaves North Shields on the hour and at 30 minutes past.



Getting there

Take the Chester-le-Street exit off the A1 and follow signs to Birtley. Beamish is well signposted from here.

How much is it?

Summer season (from 15 March):
£16 adult/£10 child and under 5s
free

Winter season: £6 each and
under 5s free

Membership scheme available
and good value.

What's there?

Ride on trams, buses, vintage car,
horse and cart, steam train. Fair
ground; old fashioned street; park
(often with brass bands); school
house; farm; mansion house;
coal mine (all from different eras).

Prams and buggies

Take a papoose or a lightweight
buggy. You'll do lots of walking
and a large pushchair is a nightmare
on the trams etc.

Food and changing

Eating areas and cafes can be very
busy – but there's loads of space
for picnics.

Baby changing is available on site
and very clean.

We thought...

It's expensive, so make a day of it.
It's worth considering membership,
especially if your first visit is with
2 or more adults – it works out
loads cheaper from your second
visit onwards. All the family enjoyed
it – from the tiny baby upwards.
The fair was a big hit, and, of
course, the trams and buses. More
surprisingly, the toddlers loved the
old style shops and schoolroom.

Time machines out of 5



Opening times

Summer season (from 15 March):
Open 10am–5pm every day.

Winter season:
Closed Monday and Friday.
Open 10am–4pm other days.

The Alnwick Garden

www.alnwickgarden.com

Denwick Road, Alnwick,
Northumberland NE66 1YU
Tel: 01665 511350



Getting there

By car: From the A1 take the Denwick turning, just north of Alnwick and follow the brown signs to the gardens.

By bus: there are regular bus services from Newcastle to Alnwick town centre.

How much is it?

Adults £8

Each adult can take up to 4 children free of charge.

A good value annual membership is also available.

What's there?

Lots of wonderful gardens to explore, fantastic water features to splash in, a poison garden, a massive tree house and aerial walk ways, a woodland walk, gorgeous cafes, mini tractors and lots of great activities.

Prams and buggies

Access is very good throughout the garden. The only problems arise when you have an older child who runs off up the steps and you need to take the long way round with your buggy. A papoose might be better if you have one.

Food and changing

The tree house cafe and pavilion both serve lovely food. Or you can picnic in the gardens.

Baby changing is clean and airy.

We thought...

This is always a fun day out. The Alnwick Garden is incredibly child friendly. Kids can splash up and down the waterways and get absolutely soaked in the fountains. Take at least 2 changes of clothes, a towel and a swimming costume if it's warm. They run all sorts of lovely events throughout the year – we think their Christmas activities and Santa are the best we've been to. It's always worth checking their website for what's on.

Blooms out of 5 😊😊😊😊😊😊

Opening times

The Garden is open every day except Christmas Day from 10am, closing at 7pm in summer and 4pm in winter.



Bowling – XS Superbowl

Unit 3, Whitley Road, Longbenton
Newcastle upon Tyne
Tel: 0191 215 0901

Getting there

From the Four Lane Ends roundabout, drive straight ahead down Whitley Road until you see the No Frills DIY store on your left. Turn left at this roundabout and the bowling alley is at the far end of the car park.

How much is it?

£3.55 per child, per game.

£2 per person, per game every Wednesday.

What's there?

A bowling alley and fast food restaurant.

Prams and buggies

Access is easy.

Food and changing

You can buy fast food or drinks if you wish.

We thought...

Bowling is great fun from about 2 years. XS Superbowl have alleys with blocked gutters and special ramps for the ball – so it's impossible to miss the pins. We found one game was enough for our kids, but they really enjoyed the atmosphere in the bowling alley.

Strikes out of 5 😊😊😊

Opening times

Open 10am–11.30pm daily.

Other bowling alleys can be found at the MetroCentre, on Westgate Road, and at Whitley Bay Ice Rink.

The Round

www.the-round.com

34 Lime Street, Ouseburn
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 2PQ
Tel: 0191 260 5605



Getting there

By car: There's a car park behind the theatre. From City Road (A186), turn left onto Cut Bank and take the second left. From Byker Bridge (A193) or Shields Road, head down Byker Bank and take the fourth right then cross the wooden bridge and head round to the left past the Cluny.

By bus: take the yellow Quaylink bus to the Ouseburn on Q2 and head down the hill from the Ouseburn Valley bus-stop, turn left onto Lime Street or from Central Station (Bewick Street), catch Bus 22: stop at the Tanner's Arms, walk down Crawhall Road, then Stepney Bank to Lime St.

By Metro: Byker Metro is a five-minute walk away, turn left out of the station and go down Raby Street to Shields Road. Turn left and walk to the bottom of the hill. Cross the car park towards KFC and cross the road next to the roundabout. Turn left down Byker Bank, then take the fourth right onto Lime St.

How much is it?

Phone for details or see the website.

What's there?

Regular shows, plays and some workshops for under 5s.

Prams and buggies

Access is good and although the theatre space is down several flights of stairs, there is a lift and very helpful staff.

Food and changing

Both are available.

We thought...

We've been to lots of things here and really enjoyed them. One only lasted 30 minutes which was just enough for a fidgety two-year-old while others have been longer, more traditional shows. Grown-ups and children were enchanted by one show we went to, where everyone sat in a circle and was able to join in. The Round seems really geared up for children which makes for a relaxed atmosphere. A really good introduction to theatre and very friendly, helpful staff.

Bravos out of 5 😊😊😊😊

Opening times

Ring in advance to check for programme and start times.



The Buddle Arts Centre

www.thebuddle.com

258B Station Road, Wallsend,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE28 8SG
Tel: 0191 200 7132

Getting there

There's a small car park behind the Buddle and Wallsend Metro is a few minutes' walk away.

How much is it?

Phone for details as prices of shows vary.

What's there?

Regular shows, plays and some workshops for the under 5s.

Prams and buggies

Access is excellent.

Food and changing

No cafe or food but toilets are available.

We thought...

We have enjoyed everything we have been to at the Buddle – with no worries about smaller children sitting for an hour because mine have always been enchanted and transfixed. Some chairs and some carpet space to sit on so you can choose whatever suits you.

Opening times

Ring in advance to check what's on and start times.

Other Theatre

There are often plays and shows at the various theatres around Newcastle, aimed specifically at the under 5s. Some (especially those at the Arena) can be very expensive, although your kids may love seeing the Tweenies or Winnie the Pooh live. We've found that some of the smaller performances at Northern Stage, Live Theatre or The Sage are better value for money and really good fun. They tend to be very relaxed, you can go in and out as often as your children need to and there's lots of audience participation. Watch out for the under 5s Christmas show especially. We've been to three in a row and they've all been excellent!

Transport

Metro

Most children love riding on the Metro – especially through the tunnels. Access for pushchairs is really good – lifts at every station where they're needed. Go to the beach, the city centre, Sunderland Winter Gardens, Central Station, the airport – or just ride around in circles until you've seen it all. It's something to do when you just want to get out of the house!

Buses

Buses are just as much fun as the Metro for the kids, (but a bit more work for you). Again, just go for a ride, anywhere you fancy – they'll love it. But make sure you choose a low loader with space for your pushchair. Collapsing your buggy and holding onto a couple of kids can be a nightmare!

Central Station

Once they hit the Thomas the Tank Engine stage, then you can easily spend a whole morning at the station – just watching the trains. You'll probably get bored before they do, but at least there's plenty of places to have coffee. We've found that most of the train drivers are lovely. They all wave to the kids as they leave, and if you look really keen, they may even invite you into their cab!

A Guide to the Children and Young People's Information Service

What we do

Newcastle Children and Young People's Information Service is a free and impartial service which provides up-to-date and accurate information, advice and assistance.

We provide information on all registered childcare including:

- childminders
- day nurseries
- nursery schools
- playgroups
- crèches
- out-of-school and holiday clubs.

We can provide information on financial support that is available to pay for childcare, including working tax credits and three- and four-year-old funding.

If you want to work in childcare, we can provide advice and information on a wide range of opportunities including:

- working or training in childcare
- becoming a registered childminder.

We can also provide information on other services and support including:

- parent and toddler groups
- toy libraries
- parenting support
- things to do
- places to go
- extended services through schools
- Sure Start Children's Centres.

Children's Centres and schools are developing more extended services. Contact us to find out how you can be involved in consultation.

How to use our service

- **Tel: 0191 277 4133**

We have an answerphone service when the service is closed. We can also use the National Interpreting Service if you are a non-English speaker.

- **Email: cis@newcastle.gov.uk**

- **Website: <http://newcastle.cyp-directory.org.uk>**

(our online Children and Young People's Directory)

to search for childcare you can also visit: **www.childcarelink.gov.uk**

- **Visit us**

Please contact us to find out where you can get face-to-face information (either in the city centre or at your local children's centre).

- **Outside normal hours**

You can make an appointment to see a member of our team outside our normal opening hours (8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday), just call us on the number above.

Sure Start Children's Centres in Newcastle

Children's centres provide good quality integrated services to children under five and their families, in order to give every child the best possible start in life, and have a broad and lasting impact on children, their parents and the wider community.

Children's centres serve children and their families from the antenatal period, through until children start in reception or Year 1 at primary school. Each centre will offer the following services to families with babies and pre-school children:

- Good quality early learning integrated with childcare, available from 8am–6pm
- Good quality teacher input to lead the development of learning within the centre
- Parental outreach
- Family support services
- A base for a childminder network
- Child and family health services, including antenatal services
- Support for children and parents with special needs
- Effective links with Jobcentre Plus, local training providers and further and higher education institutions

Sure Start Children's Centres offer services to parents and families in most areas of the city. The following are open now:

- **Sure Start East and Fossway Children's Centre**

Office address: 2nd Floor, Cragside House, Heaton Road, Byker NE6 1SE

T: 0191 275 9636 E: sure.start.east@barnardos.org.uk

www.newcastle-eastandfossway.surestart.org

- **Walkergate Early Years Centre**

Shields Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 4XW

T: 0191 263 2411 E: admin@walkergate-nur.newcastle.sch.uk

www.walkergate-nur.newcastle.sch.uk

- **Sure Start Newbiggin Hall Children's Centre**

Newbiggin Lane, Newbiggin Hall Estate, Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 1LZ

T: 0191 214 2470 E: paul.court@newcastle-pct.nhs.uk

www.newbigginhall.surestart.org

● **Sure Start North Moor Children’s Centre**

Halewood Avenue, North Kenton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 3RX

T: 0191 213 4100 E: chris.forrester@newcastle.gov.uk

www.northmoor.surestart.org

● **Sure Start Cowgate and Blakelaw Children’s Centre**

Families Matter, Lindfield Avenue, Blakelaw, Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 3PL

T: 0191 214 2460 E: nesscb@nch.org.uk

www.cowgateandblakelaw.childrencentre.org

● **Sure Start West Riverside**

(including: Westgate, Armstrong and Lemington Children’s Centres)

Office address: Rye Hill Centre, Colby Court, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6HL

T: 0191 272 7824 E: surestart@newcastle.gov.uk

www.westriversidecc.org.uk

● **Sure Start Fenham Children’s Centre**

Convent Road, Off Fenham Hall Drive, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 9XZ

T: 0191 274 8616 E: fenhamchildrenscentre@sacredhprim.newcastle.sch.uk

● **Sure Start North Fenham Children’s Centre**

Harnham Gardens, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 2RU

T: 0191 275 0951

E: northfenhamchildrenscentre@englishmartyrs.newcastle.sch.uk

By April 2008, Sure Start Children’s Centres will cover the following areas of Newcastle:

- Ouseburn
- South Heaton
- Denton
- Westerhope
- Newburn
- Northern Villages

By April 2010, Sure Start Children’s Centres will offer services to all children and families in the city.

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Before you go...

Your essential checklists (*before you get your tots out*)

Don't leave home without:

- Wipes (even if your child is potty trained)
- Nappies Nappy bags
- Change of clothes At least one plastic carrier bag
- Your child bribe of choice – we both use chocolate – you find what works!

To create illusions of control include:

- Elastoplasts Antihistamine cream – for bee and nettle stings.
- Antiseptic cream – for everything else.

Don't even think about going to the beach without adding:

- Towel Sunscreen A drink (*for washing sand out of mouth*)

Optional extras:

- Bucket and spade Ball Picnic

For country / park outings swap bucket and spade for: Welly boots

For cafes, restaurants, train journeys or anywhere they'll have to sit down and behave, choose from:

- Books Pens and paper Stickers / Magnet boards
- Play dough (*trust me*) Lego / mega blocks
- As many other toys as you can carry

For car journeys forget the play dough, books and pens. Swap for:

- Children's song tapes/CDs Talking books
- Magic doodle pad Drink
- Snack pack (*avoid anything potentially messy*)
- "I spy, with my little eye, something that is green." (*Repeat 1,000,000 times*)

Occasionally, stop to admire the muscles and incredible patience you've developed since giving birth.



Contacting us

Without other people telling us about the great places to visit and things to do that we have listed here, Rachel, James, Emma, Alistair and Fleur would have barely got beyond the front door on many days. If there is somewhere you know about which isn't listed here, please let us know for a future edition. And if you want to comment on the places we have talked about, please get in touch too!

Get Your Tots Out

PO Box 251

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE6 5YX

getyourtotsout@hotmail.com

The information in this booklet was correct and up to date at the time we went to print.

Times of activities seem to change so frequently that we would suggest you ring in advance to check that our information is still right.

The 'How to get there' section has been the most difficult to get right! In all cases, if you're travelling by bus, you can call Nexus Travel line on 0870 6082608 for advice on the best route to take.

This guide is supported by
Newcastle City Council's
Children's Centres.

