

# News release

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## TV Favourite Plants Roots in Sunderland

A popular children's TV character has popped up in Sunderland to help the city's children grow a taste for healthy eating and to encourage them to eat their five a day.

Around 30 children from Wessington Children's Centre, aged from three to six, were treated to a special visit from the popular CBeebies character Mr Bloom, who is famous for his gardening talents and vegetable companions.

During his visit to the Children's Centre Mr Bloom, from Mr Bloom's Nursery, talked to the children about the vegetables from his garden, including cabbages, courgettes and potatoes and also taught them how to plant their own vegetables.

The event aimed to encourage families to regularly eat fruit and vegetables and to further promote healthy lifestyles. Mr Bloom, whose real name is Ben Faulks, said: "It's really important to me that kids can go outside and use their imaginations. In the show's allotment we let children roll up their sleeves, get their hands dirty and get hands-on with vegetables.

"I hope that it inspires them and proves that vegetables shouldn't be something alien that land on their plates."

Michelle O'Reilly, 33, from Washington, attended the event with daughter April, two-years-old. She said: "I'm very focused on encouraging April to eat well, but everyone knows how hard it can be to get children to eat their greens sometimes.

"Mr Bloom was really great at working with all the children to get them used to the vegetables and enjoy the gardening. April had a great time getting mucky and hopefully she will now be more inclined to try different vegetables."

Raj Singh, Extended Services Manager at Children's Services within Sunderland City Council, added: "Often children don't associate nature with the food they have for tea.

"Mr Bloom does a brilliant job of encouraging children to get excited about something they may traditionally turn their noses up at – vegetables – this is extremely important in encouraging healthy lifestyles. By educating children about the journey their food takes from seed to plate, they can learn to appreciate the benefits of healthy eating and connect more with nature and outdoor activities."

Sunderland Children's Centres bring together free play and learn activities, health services, early education, childcare, parenting support and help for parents looking to find work or training. The centres are continually developing new links with local organisations and community groups to help provide every child in Sunderland with the best possible start in life.

Mr Bloom's Nursery is broadcast daily at 10.05am on the CBeebies channel.