

Balloughry Integrated



28 November 2007

Caitriona Ruane MLA
Minister for Education
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
Bangor
BT19 7PR

Dear Minister

Following the launch of the Executive's Draft Programme for Government and Draft Budget for 2008-11 and as a member of **Early Years - the organisation** for young children, Balloughry Integrated Community Playgroup is asking for your **support** for the introduction of a Transformation Fund here, similar to the one already operating in England and Wales.

Staff in the childcare sector are **keen** to update **their** qualifications to ensure their knowledge and practice is up-to-date, reflecting current research on what is best for young children. This will guarantee that all children in Northern Ireland get the **best possible** start in life. Recent research has reinforced the importance of the education of early **childhood educators** as the study found that children fare significantly **better** in language **skills** development with **teachers who** have achieved a higher level of education.

However currently staff **working in community** or voluntary pre-schools and day care **services** here **who want** to further their careers are having to pay for their own training and professional development, at the cost of several thousand pounds per year, **and** also face a significant disparity in levels of pay with **the statutory sector**. In **England and Wales** £200 million has been **allocated** for this **type** of training.

We **know** that **you** supported the motion for a Transformation Fund in the **debate** that **took place** on the 26th June, 2007 and we now **urge** you to **work** with **your colleagues** in other departments to allocate the necessary resources for a Transformation Fund.

I look forward to hearing your response to this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Mary O'Connell'.

Balloughry Integrated Community Playgroup