

Ballygawley Parent & **Toddler** Group
Fairfield House
Ballygawley Playing Fields
Dungannon
BT70 2HD

28 November 2007

Caitriona Ruane M.L.A.
Minister for Education
Rathgae 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, Ballygawley Parent & Toddler **Group** 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



Ballygawley Parent & Toddler Group