

Ballykinlar Cross-Community Pre-School
The Plying Fields
Marion Park
Ballykinlar
Downpatrick
BT30 8DJ

28 November 2007

Caitriona Ruane **MLA**
Minister for Education
Rathgael House
Bailoo Road
Bangor
BT197PR

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, Ballykinlar Cross-Community Pre-School is asking **for your support** for the introduction of a Transformation Fund here, similar to the one already operating in England and Wales.

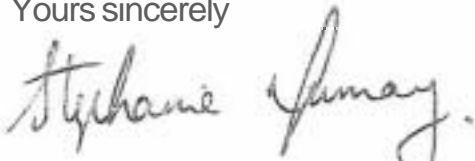
Staff in the **childcare** sector are keen to update their qualifications to ensure their knowledge and practice is **up-to-date**, reflecting current research on what is best for young children. This will guarantee that all children in Northern Ireland get the best possible start in life. Recent research 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 E200 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



Ballykinlar Cross-Community Pre-School