

Islandbawn St. Pre-school Playgroup
35 Islandbawn Street
Belfast
BT12 7LS

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, Islandbawn St. Pre-school 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

Sr. Patricia O'Reilly OP.
Chair / Manager
Islandbawn St. **Pre-School Playgroup**