

Jack Horner Community Playgroup
Sheskburn Community Centre
7 Mary Street
Ballycastle
BT54 6QH

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, Jack Horner 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**.

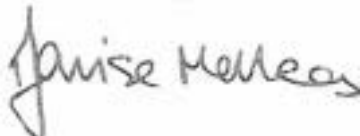
Staff in **the childcare** sector **are** keen to update their qualifications to ensure their knowledge and practice is up-to-date, reflecting **current** research on **what** is best for young children. This **will guarantee that** all children in Northern Ireland get the best possible start in life.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



Jack Horner Community Playgroup