



**GPLA News and Views Newsletter,  
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***Mothers, grandmothers, on the 70th anniversary of Child Benefit share your memories of what this money meant to you.***

***Help remember Eleanor Rathbone - Mother of Child Benefit!***

This year (2016) the UK celebrates the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Family Allowance (now Child Benefit), and commemorates the woman who made it happen.

Independent feminist MP Eleanor Rathbone (1872-1946) campaigned for decades for greater equality of income between women and men, and a wage to be paid directly to mothers for their work of raising children and taking care of the family. She was determined to end mothers' and children's poverty. In her path-breaking book, *The Disinherited Family* (1924), she said:

*'Nothing can justify the subordination of one group of producers – the mothers – to the rest, and their deprivation of all share of their own in the wealth of a community which depends on them for its very existence.'*

She finally won the Family Allowance Act in 1945, the first measure of the Welfare State. It set a new priority for how the national income should be spent. Mothers collected their first payment from their local post office on 6 August 1946. It was paid to every mother for the second and subsequent children.

Eleanor Rathbone was one of the most famous and respected women of her time. But few today remember her. Crossroads Women, Remembering Eleanor Rathbone Group, and students at Parliament Hill School have teamed up to reverse this neglect through our Oral History Project part-funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

We will be interviewing 100 women who received Family Allowance specially in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, as well those who got Child Benefit.

We aim to reach a cross section of mothers, married, single, widowed by war, UK-born as well as immigrant and refugee. We want to find out what Family Allowance and Child Benefit meant and still means to mothers, and the impact that this money, which many women said 'is the only money I can call my own' had on their lives, relationships, and the lives of their children, families and communities.

Would you like to be interviewed? Do you know anyone ready to share their experiences of Family Allowance?

Rathbone wanted mothers to be financially independent and was disappointed that the amount was so low. But she saw it as a springboard for mothers to get more.

Women have had to repeatedly defend their entitlement to recognition of this fundamental indispensable caring work. In 1972 the Wages for Housework Campaign coordinated a successful national network to keep child benefit in women's hands –the government had wanted to transfer it to men's pay packets. Soon after it was paid from the first child as women had been demanding.

The interviews will be part of a digital oral dossier, website, exhibition and booklet, and made widely available. The findings will be launched in the House of Commons in Spring 2017, at Parliament Hill School, the Crossroads Women's Centre, local libraries, and other community and public spaces.

*Mothers, grandmothers – we would love to hear from you. Please get in touch if you would like to be interviewed to share your experience and thoughts on getting Family Allowance/Child Benefit.*

**Contact: Solveig Francis, Crossroads Women's Centre by phone 0207 482 2496, email [contact@crossroadswomen.net](mailto:contact@crossroadswomen.net), or drop in to 25 Wolsey Mews, London NW5 2DX(11am to 5pm).**