



Media Briefing – August 2006

KEY POINTS

- 2006 marks the sixtieth anniversary of universal benefits for children.
- On 6 August 2006 – sixty years since the first family allowance payments were made – the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) is launching the *Make Child Benefit Count* campaign.
- The campaign is calling on the Government to increase child benefit and ensure that younger children get the same rate as the oldest child. This would also help to support larger families, which is vital if child poverty is to be ended once and for all. It would be a fitting decision for the Government to make in the sixtieth anniversary year of universal benefits for children.
- In addition to CPAG, *Make Child Benefit Count* is being supported by a growing coalition of organisations including the End Child Poverty Campaign, the TUC, Save the Children, Citizens Advice, One Parent Families, Barnardo's, Family Welfare Association and Daycare Trust.
- The campaign is being launched by one of the first mothers to receive the first family allowances payments in 1946, 86 year old Edith Wyper from Edinburgh, together with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. (Photographs of the Wyper family launching the campaign are available from the CPAG Press Office or Newsflash Scotland).

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

On 6 August 2006, we will be launching:

- *Child Benefit: fit for the future*, a report by Fran Bennett marking the 60th anniversary and making the case for further investment in child benefit.
- A postcard campaign calling on the Chancellor to increase child benefit and ensure that younger children get the same rate as the oldest child.
- A campaign website www.makechildbenefitcount.org where people will be able to sign the postcard online and find out more.

For further information please contact Alex Belardinelli at the Child Poverty Action Group on 020 7812 5216 or abelardinelli@cpag.org.uk

FOUR GENERATIONS LAUNCHING THE CAMPAIGN

Our campaign is being launched by four generations of the Wyper family from Balerno, Edinburgh.

86 year old Edith Wyper was one of the first mothers to receive family allowances when they were first paid in August 1946. She is joined by her son Raymond, her granddaughter Valerie and great grandson Lewis.

Edith Wyper, who also worked as a sub-postmistress and so paid out many of the family allowances, says:

“Family allowances were useful as an addition to your income and they helped poorer families where even a shilling was quite a sum. I saved it, maybe for 6, 7 or 8 weeks, until I had a lump and then I’d spend that on clothes and shoes and things that my children needed.

“Extra cash is always welcome. I think it was a good idea to help people in that way. After all, children are the future and they’ve got to be looked after.”

Hi-resolution colour photographs are available from the CPAG Press Office on 020 7812 5216 or direct from Newsflash Scotland.



Launching the Make Child Benefit Count campaign are (from left to right): Edith Wyper (86), Valerie Patience (32), Lewis Patience (4) and Raymond Wyper (61).



UNIVERSAL BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN – THEN AND NOW

	1946	2006
What was it called?	Family allowances	Child benefit
Who got it?	Paid for second and subsequent children only	Available for almost all children, but at different amounts
How much was it worth?	5 shillings for second and subsequent children	£17.45pw for the first child, £11.70pw for second and subsequent children
How many families got it?	4.6 million children in 2.9 million families (GB)	12.9 million children in 7.3 million families (UK)

THE CASE FOR CHILD BENEFIT:

(An executive summary of *Child benefit: fit for the future*, published by CPAG)

- August 2006 marks the sixtieth anniversary of universal benefits for children in the UK – first family allowances, then child benefit.
- Support for all children redistributes resources to those with additional costs, to the time in the lifecycle when extra is needed, and to the next generation. And it shows the value society places on children, not just as an investment but also in their own right.
- Universal benefits also help prevent poverty. Countries with generous non-means-tested support for children tend to have low rates of child poverty.
- Child benefit is multi-purpose. It is simple to claim and is claimed by virtually all those entitled. Despite the ‘light touch’ means test, and the high take-up, child tax credit still does not match child benefit on these criteria.
- Child benefit provides essential help for many of those on low incomes. Payment to the mother, and clear labelling of child benefit as being meant for children, helps to ensure it is spent on the things that children need.
- These are also features of child tax credit. But child benefit also provides stability when incomes fluctuate, and ‘follows the child’ through changes in partnership status – so it plays an essential protective role.
- The history of child benefit shows its resilience, despite many challenges. But recent policy has placed increasing emphasis on means-tested help for children, with child tax credit overtaking child benefit as the major form of support.
- There is a growing consensus that it is time to rebalance support for children towards child benefit. Child benefit is no longer deducted from the extra help given to children in low-income families. So increases benefit them in full.
- There is also support for rebalancing the structure of child benefit towards larger families. The current structure of support for children in the UK which gives proportionately more to smaller families is unique internationally.
- Children in larger families run a higher risk of poverty. Tackling this is important to achieve the goal of halving child poverty by 2010. Policy options to help do this, while also putting more emphasis on child benefit, include a higher rate for second and subsequent children, or more help for families with three or more children. The first of these options produces a more sensible structure from where we are now.
- Such an increase would not only help tackle poverty in larger families, but also help encourage ‘second earners’ in couples with children into employment. And it would be a fitting decision for the Government to make in the sixtieth anniversary year of universal benefits for children.