



**mothers  
at home  
matter.**

Spring 2022

# **MOTHERHOOD** – AN ACT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

**Our annual conference was once again held online this past November enabling many extra people to participate in the sessions. There are very few MPs prepared to acknowledge the importance of mothers having the choice to being available to be the main caretaker of their children, and even fewer who will say so publicly. Miriam Cates is one such person and we were privileged to have her as our keynote speaker at the conference.**

We were so encouraged by Miriam's heartening words about the importance of motherhood. She paused her career as a teacher to raise her young children before she stood for Parliament so she knows first-hand the challenges of being a mother at home.

'Motherhood is not babysitting. It is not a passive role, it is an active role... It is not a leisure activity, it's an act of huge public service,' she said. 'Let's give all women freedom and real choice over both their work and their family life.' She added that, for most adults, 'the biggest contribution you can make to society is being a good parent.'

There was much in the news recently about the Duchess of Cambridge's visit to Denmark to learn about their childcare system and how the UK can benefit from similar styles of care. We have covered the long hours of childcare in the Nordic countries in previous MAHM newsletters (Spring and Autumn 2018) and it is fair to say that there is even more pressure to leave children in the care of professionals than in the UK!

Anne Fennell and some of our Nordic counterparts wrote a polite letter to Her Royal Highness drawing attention to the challenges faced by Danish children and parents. It is included on our website's new Campaign Resources page.



**'Motherhood is an act  
of huge public service!'**

Our committee has so many hard-working volunteers; long-standing member, Lynne Burnham, stepped down in the autumn after serving MAHM in many roles over the past years. As Secretary and, more recently, Vice Chair, Lynne represented the mother at home with enthusiasm and clarity on radio, TV and with policymakers. We are grateful that she will share her knowledge and experience by continuing to help us as media consultant.



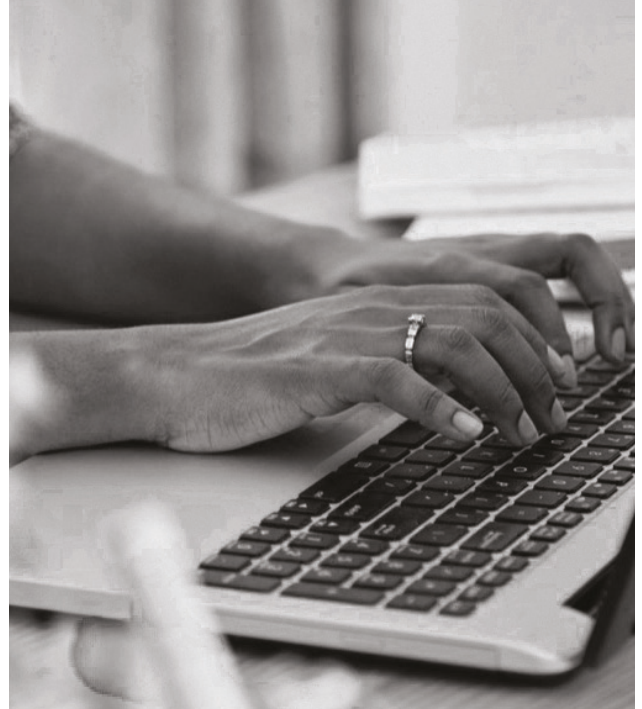
One of the struggles when choosing to take an employment break to be based at home is a perceived difficulty at being able to return to the workplace. I and others here would argue that the process of motherhood necessarily equips us with wide-ranging skills which can be of incredible use to employers and organisations. For paid or voluntary work, the skills gained through motherhood are invaluable and should be recognised more often. In this redesigned issue of the newsletter, Cathy Mee recounts her recent experience of returning part-time to paid work while Roisin Harkin expresses her frustrations at mothers being so undervalued in today's society.

### **'The skills gained through motherhood are invaluable and should be recognised more often.'**

There was general agreement at our conference with Miriam's sentiment expressing that feminism 'may have done much for women but has driven a coach and horses through children's rights because mothers seem only to be valued when working outside the home'. If we're truly honest with ourselves, the majority of women — particularly those in the care sector — don't have careers, they have jobs. Food for thought indeed!

The recordings of Miriam's talk and those of the afternoon sessions are now available to watch on our website; go to [mothersathomematter.com/conference21](https://mothersathomematter.com/conference21) and use the password *yourvoice*. Enjoy and be encouraged!

*Philippa Nicholson*  
Editor



## **FAMILIES NEED SUPPORT**

**Mother of six boys and Mothers At Home Matter's Chair, Anne Fennell, has been musing on the importance of childcare and how we could change the current tax system that handicaps those who wish to provide childcare themselves.**

It is not an unreasonable desire for a mother to want to be with her baby and judging by anguished cries at nursery gates not all babies and young children are too keen with being separated either. According to the Anna Freud, National Centre for Children & Families it is a 'normal part of development' that at around six months babies will become anxious when their parent or carer leaves them. They get clingy and cry but usually grow out of this by the age of three.

*When a child starts to experience separation anxiety it's a sign that they have begun to realise how much they rely on their carer. They will also have developed more awareness about what is going on around them. All this means they feel less safe when they don't have their carer close by. They may also feel upset in new situations or with new people, even if their carer is there. For a baby, it's particularly frightening to lose sight of their caregiver.<sup>1</sup>*

The website proceeds to give advice as to how 'to cope' with this situation for parents and nursery workers and how to prepare young children and babies for separation.





But given these facts and the growing evidence of the importance of attachment in this early period for long-term emotional resilience and well-being, why are we not doing more to support parents not to just 'cope' with separation but to avoid this situation altogether and free parents to be able to do their job — to mother their infants?

When I started campaigning for MAHM over 10 years ago 'staying at home' to care for our children was described by our then Chancellor George Osborne as a 'lifestyle choice', by the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, as 'sepia-tinted' and implied



to be 'lazy and idle' by the Coalition government which saw child benefit taken away unjustly from single earner families on lower incomes whilst higher earning double income families keep it and new childcare tax allowances awarded only to those 'hardworking families' where both parents worked.

'Some parents may want, and are able to afford, to stay at home, which is their choice. But most families need two salaries to survive.'<sup>2</sup>

This attitude — typical of most MPs in Westminster — wilfully ignores the fact that, whilst some families have always needed two incomes to survive, many other families were being put into that category by their policies. Furthermore, it is not that 'some parents may' but almost all mothers of young children 'do want' to spend more time with their children.<sup>3</sup> This choice has been taken away from the vast majority. That is not, as MPs imply, a blind economic fact but a result of policy.

## 'This choice has been taken away from the vast majority.'

Care, which in our parent's generation was once done for love and supported through family tax allowances, is now only recognised and supported if it is a traded commodity and measured as growth. But policies can be reversed and as we come to understand more about the child's need for consistent care and seek to prevent declining mental health at an early stage we can look to policies that support families being able to care.

### The Taxation Trap

The UK is one of the worst countries in the world in the way it supports families. It is almost alone in taking no account of families and is plainly unjust in its treatment of one-earner families. Here a man supporting a dependent wife and two, three or more children pays the same tax as a single person with no such dependencies at the same income level. Families who can command (in a free market) incomes in the top 15% are brought into the bottom half of the income distribution owing to taxation and removal of child benefit. In effect the taxes they pay will make their households poorer than some of those their taxation contributions are supporting! Single income families on lower household income pay more tax than households on higher incomes — sometimes twice as much tax as dual income families on the same household income.

Some families caught in the Child Benefit tax charge are in the poorer 50% of the population whilst some of the richest families continue to receive it – it makes a mockery of the intent that removal of child benefit should affect those in the top 15% income distribution. Can it be that the Chancellor was ignorant about how our taxation system affects families?! Or did it just make good headlines? The result though is unjust.

There are other injustices: our tax system separates mother from child, husband from wife. Couples can be financially better off apart and those with children can increase their income by 12k by living apart. High marginal effective tax rates for those on Universal Credit (nearly half of all families) make it very difficult for many primary earners to earn more income.

**‘The mother will have to work near to capacity at a rate of reward for effort amounting to exploitation as bad as anywhere in the world and passing largely unnoticed!’**

For every extra £1 earned 76p gets taken back by the Treasury – 21p income tax, 11p national insurance and 44p reduction in tax credits. The higher earner child benefit tax charge drags many more families into this tax trap. Families have little choice but for the mother to work to plug the income gap and with rising living costs the situation is only getting worse. But the tragedy is that the mother is also caught in this trap, she loses 65p in every £1 earned and she will have to work near to capacity at a rate of reward for effort amounting to exploitation as bad as anywhere in the world and passing largely unnoticed.

This is not the case in France or Germany. Here is an extract from ‘The Good Life France on how French families get taxed’:

*French families get to share their tax liabilities between them. This does not mean a stingy little contribution via the child benefit system (though French families get that too), but a wholesale division of the family’s tax liabilities between each member of the family. Thus, the more numerous the family, the smaller the bill. Whereas the super-rich in the UK are busy messing around with offshore bank accounts and dodgy investment funds, here in France, where all you have to do is go forth and multiply, tax avoidance is much more fun.*

*A third child would not only reduce our tax liability by 25% but would transform us into a card-carrying famille nombreuse. Entire websites are given over to the privileges enjoyed by such families, which include state-subsidised reductions of up to 75% in the cost of train tickets, reduced entries to museums, cinemas and 4 of 13 leisure centres, and even, in some resorts, free ski passes for the fifth family member (lest the cost of the compulsory February activity become prohibitive). In addition to virtually non-existent childcare costs and government-sponsored rehabilitation of mothers’ baby-making equipment, reproduction in France has much to recommend it.<sup>4</sup>*

Germany too seems to value marriage and family. ‘Marriage is regarded highly in Germany, so much so, the taxman offers lucrative incentives to married couples. The impressive word “Ehegattenzusammenveranlagung” encourages marriage; financially. This tongue twister means that





## 'We need a shift in our perception of children and families.'

two become one, via "couple tax".<sup>15</sup> The couple is taxed as one subject. In short, the income of both spouses is added up, then divided by two. The applicable tax rate is then used leading to a significantly lower tax amount.

This is a choice. Couples can be taxed 'singly' or independently as we do here in UK if they wish to. Families and single parents with children get universal child benefit Kindergeld €204 per month and additional tax allowances per child. Parental allowance 'Elterngeld' is a benefit provided by the German government to new parents. This allowance supports the costs of bringing up a child. It appears to encourage parents to spend time with their babies. As a rule you are able to claim 65% of your net income before giving birth roughly between €300 and €1800 a month depending on the income of parents and can be claimed up to two years after the birth of the child.

### So what can be done here in the UK?

Perhaps first we need a shift in our perception of children and families. Much of the language surrounding children and care is of the 'burden of childcare', 'obstacles to our careers' and those who care are categorised by the Treasury as 'uneconomic units'. Children are our future; it is they who will pay our pension bills and work to create wealth. Strong families are the cornerstone of strong communities. Our taxation system does not even 'recognise' the family let alone support it. The next step is to recognise the family as a unit in taxation and income tax should be based on household income not individual income which has little bearing on how well off a family is.

This would be a long-term structural change but it is essential if justice is to be done for families. In the short term child benefit must be made fair and if the intention of removing it was to affect the top 15% families then this must be made effective.







The cry inevitably will be for more affordable childcare to start from the end of maternity leave so mothers can work, but if we are to consider the needs of very young children and the cry of separation then 'affordable good quality childcare' must at the very least include a mother or father as primary caregiver at home. This needs to be included in any debate on childcare and should be supported equally.

At the end of this month Mothers At Home Matter will join Tax and the Family at an online event hosted by Miriam Cates MP and CARE on the Taxation of Families. (Please email me if you are interested in attending.) It is vital that we change some of these injustices and penalties so that once again we can support the vital work of care in the home easing the pressure on families for both parents to work long hours away from the family.

If you would like to understand the UK taxation system and how it taxes families in greater depth please look at our booklet 'Who Cares About the Family' and our submission to the Treasury 'Tax after Coronavirus'. Both these can be found on our website page: Campaign resources. Please also join our small campaign team to push for change. Contact me at [chair@mothersathomematter.com](mailto:chair@mothersathomematter.com)

Those in the bottom half of the income distribution should not have to pay the penalty charge because those who made the law did not understand their own tax system. The reintroduction of child tax allowances needs to be explored and the marriage allowance increased significantly — perhaps restricted to families with children.

Families need supporting. With inflation climbing fast, rising energy prices and increases in NICs in April, families need help now. Childcare was once supported in the home through tax allowances and child benefit. Housing costs were based on one income. As more mothers went into paid work (either willingly or because policies forced them in that direction) so borrowing rose based on two incomes.

House prices and rents inflated and are now 10x or 20x in some cases what they were 30 years ago. High rents are sustained by being subsidised by taxpayers through the housing element in Universal Credit but for families with mortgages no such relief is afforded. It is no surprise that mothers cannot leave paid work to spend time with their babies.

- 1 [annafreud.org/early-years/early-years-in-mind/common-difficulties/separation-anxiety/](http://annafreud.org/early-years/early-years-in-mind/common-difficulties/separation-anxiety/)
- 2 Mr Pat McFadden MP (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab) Debate HoC, col369, on Childcare 20 Nov 2013 Hansard
- 3 Early Years Commission: Written Evidence; Appendix C. Link: [bit.ly/36mnrzs](http://bit.ly/36mnrzs)
- 4 [thegoodlifeFrance.com/how-tax-for-families-in-france-plays-a-big-part-in-life/](http://thegoodlifeFrance.com/how-tax-for-families-in-france-plays-a-big-part-in-life/)
- 5 The Red Relocators – the taxation of couples in Germany





# JUST A MOTHER

**International Women's Day is supposed to celebrate the movement for women's rights yet **Roisin Harkin**, felt somewhat flat on March 8th this year. Here she explores what being a 'stay-at-home mum' can feel like in a society in which we've been promised that we 'can have it all'.**

On International Women's Day, I found myself adrift. After getting the children ready, dropping them to school, attending my eldest son's first school Mass post-covid, then scurrying around completing a number of jobs whilst my youngest two sons were in nursery for a few hours; the post office, the dressmakers, the local shop for the bits for dinner, I felt a gnawing feeling in the pit of my stomach. Every so often I'd scan my Instagram or Facebook feeds. International Womens Day! Let's celebrate all the hard-working, successful women in our lives! Post after post of women in different states of success-play, on the corporate scene, running their own business, 'hustling', being a 'Boss b\*&%h'. Generally earning money. But there was a distinct lack of representation of one huge demographic of womanhood. Mothers, and more particularly, stay-at-home mothers.

I felt unable to contribute to the social media onslaught. Stumped for something to say, which, as those who know me will tell you, is a rare occurrence. But on International Women's Day, as a woman, as a mother, I felt translucent.

I'm 'just' a mother, you see. With each scroll I'd feel the familiar wave of guilt I'd felt since I'd made the decision three years previously to put my career on hold to dedicate my time to raising my children. With the arrival of my third child I could no longer be both the mother or career woman I wanted to be. So I chose to focus exclusively on the former. A quick realisation dawned on me before the first month's missed paycheque even registered: Modern society has instilled an inherent undervaluation of Mothers in all of us. So undervalued have we become in society that I felt unable to stand with those other women on IWD, because as I understand it, my life choice and lack of a financially-recompensed career means society views me as lesser than what a modern woman should strive to be.

**'Modern society has instilled an inherent undervaluation of Mothers in all of us.'**

I increasingly feel that women, and more specifically mothers, have been sold the lie that we 'can have it all'. That sweeping modernist statement can cop a lot of the blame for the state we find ourselves in. We strive for equality, but in an intrinsically unequal world, we are suffering by pushing square pegs in the round holes that society has carved for us. What women really want to have, if we spoke the language of truth, is choice without judgment. A right to choose whether to work, stay at home, or manage both, and for all these choices to be without stigma attached.





## 'I've been rendered voiceless upon my career abandonment.'

Just recently, while out with friends for an evening, we struck up conversation in the bar with some other women we had just met. Naturally, conversation swung around to careers. When asked what I did for a living, I responded that I was a stay-at-home mum. My friend, a successful career-woman, was quick to caveat my response with 'but she had a high-flying career before' — as if justifying my position in the world, as if to be a stay-at-home mother isn't respectable enough in its own right.

My dear friend, of course, had nothing but good intentions with her comment. But still, those comments ring in my ears. And what I could have countered with remains stuck in my throat; for a moment it's like I've been rendered voiceless upon my career abandonment.

As women with children we fight a continuing battle to meet career goals, be devoted mothers, thoughtful partners, caring friends. We are only human and can only give so much. We can be seen as too driven for putting our careers first, or seen as unambitious for putting our children first. We are running to a standstill whatever we choose, held back by our own preconceptions of what life for a modern woman should look like. If I speak honestly, I'm much happier in my life now than I was when I was presenting quarterly updates to management teams. I wish that being a stay-at-home mother could be respected as being fulfilling for some women, and respected for where it is not.

Of course I absolutely do believe that women can have it all. But not in this society of ours. Things need to change within all of us, before that can be achievable for all of us.



# NEW COMMITTEE

Ânia Bonança, Catherine Kenny, Lauren Lewis, Maria Lyons and Tamsin Markham-David have all volunteered for roles on the committee over the past year. Here are some of their stories.



## **Catherine Kenny**, Committee Secretary

I'm a displaced southerner now living in Sheffield with a staunch Yorkshireman, a home-educated daughter and a very spoilt gerbil. After my maternity leave ended in 2017 I returned to work part-time and struggled with this juggle until I was made redundant in 2020 - the same year I discovered MAHM. I took the redundancy as an opportunity to finally dedicate the time I had craved to parenting, and I haven't looked back. Being a Mum is the most exhausting and the most energising thing I've ever done, and I love it!

I feel that MAHM's work is too often missing from conversations around motherhood, and this limits the scope of what feels achievable for many Mums, the value placed on motherhood, and the range and scale of support that's available for families. Through my small but heartfelt involvement I hope to contribute to MAHM's work to open up these important conversations, raise the profile of motherhood, and drive meaningful change in family policy so mothers after me will have more options, more respect, and more support. We can do it!



## **Lauren Lewis**, Strategy and Local Groups

I'm a mum to two daughters — 11 months and nearly 3 years old. I've been a stay-at-home mum since my first daughter was born. It feels like the role of a stay-at-home mum is very undervalued these days, so I joined the MAHM committee to help change that! I had a career in Human Resources before children and I'm using these skills now as MAHM's Strategy & People Lead. I'm also passionate about ensuring mothers have a 'village' whilst they are at home and I work alongside Becca in setting up new support groups.



## **Maria Lyons**, Policy

One of my earliest memories is someone asking me what I want to be when I grow up, and my reply was 'a mum'. I quickly dropped this notion as education and socialisation steered me toward what were considered more appropriate aspirations. I travelled, I worked, I studied, and I put off having children year after year because I thought that first I had to work out what I wanted to do with my life. But that little girl must have had a self-awareness that it took many years as an adult to rediscover. For here I am in my late thirties and when anyone asks me what I do, I say I'm a mum.

I volunteer for MAHM because I believe every mother should have a genuine choice when it comes to the provision of care for her children and because I believe the lives of children, families and whole communities would be improved and enriched by a greater political, economic and society-wide understanding of the importance of motherhood.



## **Tamsin Markham-David**, Support

I joined MAHM in 2020 when my daughter was 18 months old. Having come from a 'work hard' ethic, wanting to stay at home was not something I had in mind when starting a family. However, as soon as I had Zara, that changed and I've since become a strong advocate for the value of mothers at home.

I'm spearheading the Enhance pillar of MAHM, developing and leading activities to enhance the status and self esteem of mothers at home, and I strongly believe in cheerleading those who decide to be at home with their children!





# BACK TO PAID WORK

**Returning to paid employment can be a huge step. Cathy Mee shares her recent journey.**

On the morning of my first job interview in 10 years, I floated the idea of after-school care with my 4-year-old. He burst into tears. Even after clarifying that no, after-school care is not for children whose grown-ups have forgotten to pick them up, he was still not keen. So, I went into my interview with the image of his tear-stained face at the forefront of my mind. Perhaps that was lucky, because my interviewer and now manager also has three school-age children, and she understood my dilemma perfectly. Not only did she offer me the job, but she also agreed for me to work my 15 hours across three days, during schooltime. If I forget to pick up my children now, it won't be because I'm in the office.

**'I believe that I will be a better employee now than I was before I became a mother.'**

I stopped working eight years ago, when my oldest son was born, and stayed at home full time throughout my three children's early years. It was an obvious choice and one I have never regretted. I have a background in academia but had already chosen not to pursue an academic career, so I had no qualms about missing out. Financially, I've been in the paradoxical situation of both privilege and sacrifice. I was only able to stay at home because my husband earns enough for our family to live on (and even now, his salary enables me to work part-time), yet we are worse-off than our double-income peers and bear the brunt of an unfair taxation system.

Having chosen to work as a full-time parent, I was still shocked to find that I had no social status (no, I'm not unemployed, and no, I don't just stay at home doing nothing, do I really have to tick housewife, and why am I not eligible for a credit card?). I worried, again and again, about what I would do once the children went to school. How would I get a job? What job could I do? Would I ever save for a pension? How would I balance childcare and work? I faced applying for jobs with an eccentric CV, heavy on qualifications, light on experience and marked by so many empty years. I wrote my applications with my tongue in my cheek, citing skills earned parenting when I lacked relevant work experience. I did not expect to be taken seriously or to be given a job within one short week of beginning applications.





The situation turned out to be more hopeful than I had anticipated. I may have gone into a minimum-wage job in basic admin (not what I was expecting 13 years after receiving my doctorate), but I am working for an organisation that I admire, in a sector I had wanted to enter. I am hopeful that over the next 25 years of my working life, if it's given to me to reach my generation's retirement age of 68, I will have opportunities to grow a 'career' if I so wish. We are now expected to work for a whole half century from the end of compulsory schooling until retirement. Surely it is possible to envisage a working life that includes several years of working at home as a parent. The pandemic has been devastating for children in many ways, but it will perhaps leave a legacy that will serve families in the end, in terms of more flexible working hours, more possibilities for working remotely and from home. Employers always need good employees, who are reliable, efficient, organised, adaptable, mature: all skills to be gained through parenting. I believe that I will be a better employee now than I was before I became a mother.

Of all the jobs I have done and, I suspect, of all the jobs I will ever do, being a full-time mother has been the best and the most important, by far. I entered my new office in a daze, not expecting to return to one so swiftly, and although I appreciate having colleagues and grown-up conversations and concerns, not to mention the pay cheque, I am nostalgic for my days pottering about with one hand pushing the baby in the pram and the other holding a tiny, sticky toddler hand. Those were wonderful years, and years of wonder. I had not looked so closely at acorn cups, or admired a slick of oil on a puddle, or dissected fruit with such attention since I was small myself. The media tends to emphasise the drudgery of parenting, as though no paid job is ever tedious and every moment in the office or on site or on the production line is scintillating. On the contrary, I was surprised to find parenting so intellectually stimulating. As a linguist, it has been a gift to accompany three new people as they work their little tongues around words and acquire grammar. I knew that walking and talking would be major developmental steps, but I had never realised that grasping the concepts of time and space would be so complicated and remarkable. I was present for every milestone.

My recent experience makes me hopeful that the world of paid work may finally be waking up to the value of parenting work. If I could send a message back in time to myself, who fretted over her empty CV, I would say worry less and enjoy these years more.

# CAMPAIGN RESOURCES LAUNCHED

**Philippa Nicholson** tells us about our Campaign Resource page which was launched in March. Letters to our political representatives are important in keeping our cause in their awareness. Many thanks to Naomi Stadlen for permission to share her recent letter as inspiration to our readers.

An up-to-date Campaign Resource page has long been on the committee's 'to do' list. As you may well be aware, MAHM is run by volunteers who are mostly mothers currently in the thick of raising and caring for children; consequently time for our additional work is squeezed into limited moments — if and whenever we can find them! But I am happy to announce that the Campaign Resource page is now accessible on our webpage and ready to prompt lots of letters to your MPs and other policymakers.

Writing a letter to your MP is an excellent and easy way to draw attention to the concerns of mothers who would like the choice to be based at home for the care of their children. We know how full life can be sometimes with very little free brain space to create a letter that expresses your concerns. Hence, we have tried to make this as straightforward as possible for you by uploading a template letter which you could use either in its entirety or adapt as you see fit.

You may already know who represents you in Parliament; however, we have a helpful link, [Find Your MP](#), so that you can quickly find their contact details.

We have also included links to further information which you may find useful for adaptation of the template letter. There is a link to the MAHMifesto (a paper copy of which should be included with this newsletter) and some videos that delve into a variety of opinions about the importance of a mother's care.

It takes a little more effort but following up your letter with a phone call or appointment to meet your representative can add weight to your concerns. Obviously, the more people who raise this issue with an MP, the more they will realise it needs addressing!



We will update the Campaign Resource page with current topics, especially when we have a particular campaign to push. Watch this space!

In the meantime, let me leave you with a thoughtfully written letter sent to Miriam Cates MP by Naomi Stadlen. Along with our own template letter, I hope it will inspire you as you pick up your pen to your own MP.

Dear Miriam,

I was deeply moved to hear you endorsing the importance of motherhood at the Mothers At Home Matter conference last November, and also in a passionate speech online. I'm writing on International Women's Day because you spoke of mothering with pride, showing that it enhances us as women.

Being a mother changes us. From school years on, we learn a rhythm of life in which we alternate work and leisure. But, as mothers, we discover a different mode. There's no 'time off' in the old way. We slow down as we learn to know our child. Our work requires sensitivity: to prepare our child for the complexities of modern social life. It is surely short-sighted if new mothers are pressured, for financial reasons, to return quickly to paid work. Their work as mothers takes time but, as you pointed out, is a major and positive contribution to our society.

Are there other mothers in the House of Commons who think as you do? Would there be a way for several of you to meet to discuss the predicament of mothers today? It's probably a massive leap of aspiration to say this but I think we need a national Minister for Mothers, with a department to work out an economic system that would support mothers who want to spend longer with their children, but who say that they can't afford "the luxury of being a mother." And so many mothers say this.

With best wishes,  
Naomi Stadlen  
[www.naomistadlen.com](http://www.naomistadlen.com)





## DEAR MAHM...

*We love feedback (especially when it's positive)! Here is a selection of what you told us this year, including comments from our social media.*

*'I am so pleased I found this page!!! Thank you for existing and giving me the boost I needed right now'*

*'I am delighted to join this wonderful organisation!'*

*'I hate it when I read people going on about not being 'just a mum'. What is wrong with that?! I love being 'just' a mum (there's no 'just' about it)!'*

*'I joined MAHM in an effort to surround myself with likeminded mothers who have prioritised caring for their children because boy can it feel lonely at times!'*

*- Anna*

*'My children are now nearly grown up but still appreciate my care, I think. I work part-time from home. I remember when you were Full-Time Mothers, so you can tell I've been enjoying your company for a long time!'*

*-Sally*

# LOCAL GROUPS

**Local support groups are run by MAHM members who are happy to be contacted by other mums. Some take the form of WhatsApp groups while others regularly meet in person. **Becca Woollgar**, our Local Groups and Conference Co-ordinator, reminds you of how you can become involved with our local groups.**

We've had two new groups set up recently in North Leeds and West London. To see a current list of our support groups please visit our website here: [mothersathomematter.com/our-community](https://mothersathomematter.com/our-community)

The Sheffield group leaders, Victoria and Sarah, share how their group is going:

We managed to have our first evening meet-up without the kids this week— all four of us were all a bit giddy with excitement at escaping for the evening, and it was so lovely spending a bit of time with like-minded mums, even if I did then have to rush home to get two overtired and overexcited kids to bed!

*If you would like to find out more about our support groups and connect with mums in your local area, please get in touch with Becca and Lauren on [groups@mothersathomematter.com](mailto:groups@mothersathomematter.com).*





# TEA TALKS

You may well have spotted Tea Talks being promoted on our social media and website over the past several months. We asked **Anna King**, who stars alongside Ange Kelly, to tell us about the story behind these short chats which aim to encourage fellow mothers. You can find them on our YouTube channel: [bit.ly/3KXxyKd](https://bit.ly/3KXxyKd)

Tea Talks — chats to boost the morale of the stay-at-homers — came into being after some passionate chats about the fact that there are very few positive representations of the stay-at-home mum in the media. Where are we? Where is the lovely mirror shining back telling us that we are doing something great and wonderful? I certainly don't see it very often. We can't rely on Marge Simpson to do it all!

'Stop moaning and do something,' my friend Lisa said to me one day. So during a Zoom meeting with MAHM chair Anne Fennell and a bagful of other very nice people, Anne asked if Ange and I would record some chats for MAHM's social media platforms. Neither Ange nor I are great fans of social media but we felt that action was required. So, fast forward quite a few months (looking after small people tends to curtail conventional productivity) and, with the help of Anne (chair) and Cat (social media guru) Tea Talks was launched. It is pretty DIY but our aim has never been to be flash. We hope we talk about things that matter to parents at home.

**'We felt that action was required.'**

Ange and I are mothers to young children and we live in the trousers of the Pennines, in an old mill town, which is a warm place with a fantastic community. We met at the local library whilst wrestling our small children. These very normal places, where we have over the years wheeled our children to and from, are where the important stuff of life happens. Friends made, loneliness soothed and laughs had. It looks fancy all this achieving and striving but what about the normal stuff? That's hopefully where Tea Talks comes in. I firmly believe that change can happen and that it comes best from the roots (that's me and you). Be proud of what you do and others will feel it too and maybe it will unearth something in those around us that has been buried. A natural desire to care for our own children.



# HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

**Have you ever thought about helping behind the scenes here at MAHM? We are all volunteers and mothers in different stages of life with many things to juggle so are always happy to have as much help as you feel able to offer. This could be the perfect time to step forward! Current roles that really need filling include:**

## **Help with November's Conference**

Our Conference Co-ordinator, Becca Woollgar, is due to have a baby in May and is looking for someone to help her organise the conference both before the event and on the day. If you feel you can help, please contact Becca at: [conference@mothersathomematter.com](mailto:conference@mothersathomematter.com)

## **Newsletter Editor**

Our current newsletter editor, Philippa Nicholson, is preparing to pass on this volunteer role so that she can make more time available for home-educating her secondary school-aged children. The newsletter, as you likely know, is produced twice a year. Please email Philippa at [newsletter@mothersathomematter.com](mailto:newsletter@mothersathomematter.com) if you are interested in this role.

## **Campaign Team**

Anne Fennell, our Chair, is looking for more mothers to join the Campaign Team. You don't have to be a committee member for this role, simply have a desire to help MAHM shape policy that truly benefits mothers and their children.

## **MAHM Representative/s at meetings**

We like to have representatives at conferences and meetings that overlap or could be influenced by our aims and objectives. It reminds policymakers and others that we exist while raising the profile of the mothers who want the choice to care full-time for their children. You don't have to be a member of the committee for this role — just have some time to show up and maybe ask a question on behalf of MAHM. We cover expenses and, with the majority of meetings now being online, this role has never been easier.

**Other ways you can help include: retweeting or sharing our posts on social media; mentioning us in conversations with other mothers and encouraging them to join as members; mothers willing to talk to camera about what they feel is needed for change so that we can use your voice on media channels; and, of course, writing to your MP — see our Campaign Resource page.**

Please contact Anne, or any other committee member, if you feel able to volunteer with us. We look forward to hearing from you!

# DO YOU HAVE A COTTAGE BUSINESS?

**Do you have a part-time business that you fit around your children? We'd love to help you by advertising your business to other like-minded mothers. It's a small way that we can support you and will create a little extra revenue for MAHM that we can, in turn, use to spread the word about the importance of mothers like you!**

**If you are interested, please contact Anne on [chair@mothersathomematter.com](mailto:chair@mothersathomematter.com)**



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### Honorary President

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### Honorary Vice President

Marie Peacock

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*Further information about our volunteers and friends:  
[mothersathomematter.com/aboutus](https://mothersathomematter.com/aboutus)*

## SUBS RENEWAL

If you've already organised payment of this year's membership subscription, or have joined in the last six months, please ignore the request for membership renewal. However, if you're a long-standing member, please don't forget to increase your Standing Order at your bank to £12.50 for single members or £15 for couple membership.

If you have changed your address or email, please let us know. If you would like to set up a Standing Order, or need any additional information about membership payment, please contact **[pj.dudley@btinternet.com](mailto:pj.dudley@btinternet.com)**

**Our PO Box is no longer used.**

Alternatively, you can pay online using Paypal.

**Newsletter designed by Anna Robson and proofread by Fiona Cole.**

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