

Is it Time for a Basic Income in Sheffield?

JOIN THE DEBATE

Universal Basic Income (or UBI) is a proposal to radically reform the tax and benefit system. The current system is unfair, too complex and damaging. Society gets richer, but poverty and inequality get worse. More of us end up relying on a tax-benefit system that is stigmatising and dehumanising.

UBI offers a simple alternative:

Everyone gets a regular payment to ensure they can live with dignity

This is a simple and radical idea which is gaining growing levels of support. There are many arguments for **basic income**, but the main ones are:

1. **Fair** - it ensures everyone has enough and has a stake in the system
2. **Efficient** - it lets people contribute in the best way for them
3. **Democratic** - it helps everyone participate in the life of the community
4. **Necessary** - it reverses the insecurities of globalisation and automation

We're coming together to explore the possibility of **basic income** for Sheffield as part of Sheffield's annual Festival of Debate:



7-9 pm
Thursday 1st June
Quaker Meeting House
10 St James Street
Sheffield S1 2EW

This event is supported by *Sheffield Equality Group*, the *Centre for Welfare Reform* and *Basic Income UK*.

What kind of basic income?

The simplicity of UBI is part of its attraction. But there are important questions that need to be answered in order to create a realistic systems. The system may need to be more complex in order to be fair and we may not all agree about what is fair.

Here are **10 questions** that will need to be discussed in order to agree a **basic income** system for Sheffield:

1. **How much money?** - If it's too low and a basic income won't be worth having, too generous and it may be unaffordable.
2. **Who gets it?** - Basic Income is for everyone - but does this include visitors, refugees, asylum seekers or migrant workers?
3. **Does it change with age?** - Do younger people need more or less? Should the current pension system be converted into a form of basic income?
4. **Does it have to be individualised?** - We tend to live in families and many benefits are determined by household characteristics, but should people get more or less depending on their family circumstances?
5. **What about housing?** - Housing costs are very high in the UK but they vary massively for homeowners and renters. Can we build housing into the basic income or does it need to be a different system?
6. **What about disability and caring?** - There are good reasons to think that people with disabilities and carers need extra money to cover their higher costs. But how would this be done?
7. **How would you fund it?** - The obvious funding is through income tax, but others see basic income as a form of democratic money creation. Other alternatives include using a land value tax, capital shares, negative interest rates or a wealth taxes.
8. **What about duties?** - Should people have to contribute in some way to society in order to get their payments or would that undermine the whole concept?
9. **How often should payments be made?** - Weekly, monthly or something else?
10. **How should it be administered?** - Could we close down the DWP and do all of this through one integrated tax and benefit system?

What do you think?

Piloting basic income

If we like the idea of basic income could we pilot it in Sheffield?

Basic income has been piloted in other places in the world and both Birmingham and Glasgow have proposed piloting it in their cities. Pilot schemes aim to explore what the impact of a full **basic income** scheme would be, but can also aim to help groups of people in the short term.

Maybe it wouldn't be possible to pilot **basic income** for a whole city, but we could have a partial pilot:

- **Focus on a group:** e.g. a Finnish pilot focuses on people who are homeless, others focus on people who are unemployed, we could focus on people with disabilities
- **Focus on an area:** e.g. one of the Mosborough townships
- **Do a virtual pilot:** e.g. explore with people how their behaviour would change if receiving a Basic Income

We need to ask ourselves what would success look like and what questions other pilots have not answered. We might want to explore whether **basic income:**

- Improves people's health?
- Reduces malnutrition and the use of food banks?
- Reduces stress and improve mental health?
- Increases people's level of contribution to community life?
- Helps people find more meaningful work or pursue their life goals?
- Alleviate pressures on public services?

Are these the right questions? What questions would you like included in any pilot?

Getting involved

One of the arguments for **basic income** is that it is a universal system - like the NHS. It is something we all contribute to and all benefit from.

If we introduced **basic income** then income security would stop being an issue which only concerns a minority. Instead it would become something that mattered to everyone.

But this means:

- We must discuss, debate and agree it
- We must get organised to make it happen
- We must be able to define, change and amend it over time

Basic income is a political idea and it needs to be backed by people:

- Do you want to get involved in thinking about basic income?
- Do you want to help encourage others to debate basic income?
- Do you want to try and make basic income real in Sheffield?
- Can we get funding to run a pilot now in Sheffield?

Join us in the debate

For more **information** about basic income go to: www.citizensincome.org

To join the national **campaign** for basic income go to: www.basicincome.org.uk

For a **critical view** you can read the findings of the Work & Pensions Select Committee who recently rejected calls for basic income: <https://t.co/MRQnBXjhDi>

Sheffield Equality Group



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