

Letter from UBI Lab Cardiff

First Minister of Wales

Welsh Government

Ty Hywel

Cardiff Bay

CF99 1NA

18 May 2020

Dear First Minister

We write to you as group of citizens in Cardiff to urge you to consider a universal basic income pilot in Cardiff. Our numbers include academics, policymakers, and professionals.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on just how precarious our economy is, and it is unsustainable for us to continue along the same path. Now is the time for bold ideas and a universal basic income must be considered as an alternative to our current settlement, particularly when we face future pandemics, rapid climate change and technological advancement.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer's intervention is a positive step – and we thank him for his efforts – but the furlough scheme only delays a rise in unemployment and it mainly serves to protect salaried workers, leaving many to either slip through the cracks or to apply for Universal Credit.

A universal basic income is the simplest and most inclusive way of ensuring there is a safety net for everyone. It would provide every adult with a fixed, regular and unconditional income to cover their basic needs.

There is now a body of evidence that illustrates the benefits of implementing a universal basic income. Those benefits include a significant reduction in poverty and homelessness, significant improvements to physical and mental well-being and an increase in citizens' trust in government. The latter of which will be incredibly important as we rebuild society.

Further, by putting money directly into people's hands, they are likely to spend a significant amount of it in their local economies, which will help those economies and communities to recover in the years following the pandemic. It will give people the confidence and the freedom to be entrepreneurial, or to take care of a loved one – both of which add value to society.

We, the undersigned, accept the current UK financial framework makes it difficult for you to implement an immediate emergency basic income for the citizens of Wales.

You will face many of the challenges the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, has spoken of when advancing the case for a universal basic income in Scotland.

However, the Scottish Government will soon publish a report on whether it is feasible for them to run a universal basic income pilot. At the very least the Welsh Government should undertake its own feasibility report to assess whether a pilot is possible.

In the past 18 months, Sheffield, Liverpool and Hull council have all passed a motion in support of piloting a universal basic income in their area. It is time to add Cardiff to that list.

A universal basic income has the potential to reshape society for the better, to make it fairer, so that no one is left behind again. It should be the founding policy for our post-Covid settlement.

It can be our generation's NHS.

Yours sincerely

UBI Lab Cardiff