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Basic Income for Greater Manchester: Plans for a feasible, affordable and popular pilot

February 2025



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Author Group

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Executive summary

- Basic Income is more feasible and popular than alternatives, such as Minimum Income Guarantee and increases in Universal Credit
- A targeted Greater Manchester Basic Income Pilot is affordable, socially feasible and popular
- It can produce valuable evidence to support development of pioneering preventive policies
- It has the support of comparable communities and builds on the experience of similar interventions, such as the Welsh Government Basic Income Pilot for Care Leavers
- There are clear pathways to funding an intervention of sufficient size without requiring revisions to tax codes
- This is an opportunity for progressive politicians to be brave and to demonstrate that big thinking can solve crises of insecurity



"A Basic Income doesn't solve every problem, but it makes every problem easier to solve"

~ Sandhya Anantharaman

Contents

Authors	1
Executive summary	2
Contents	3
Introduction	4
What is a Basic Income?	5
Why Basic Income is better than alternatives for recipients and politicians	6
Why Basic Income is more popular than alternatives	10
Social feasibility	13
Political importance and impact of a Basic Income Pilot	12
A pilot with some features of a trial	13
A Housing First Cohort	14
Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathfinder	15
The broader financial context of pilots	16
Cost	17
Routes to funding	18
Evaluation	19
Project team	21
Research team	22
Conclusion	23
Notes	24

Introduction

Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, has prioritised addressing homelessness within Greater Manchester Combined Authority policy. This pioneering work has mitigated a devastating growth in homelessness since 2010. He has also expressed the potential of Basic Income to significantly reduce homelessness and poverty.

As numerous authorities now recognise, prevention is better than cure in all the key outcomes that matter within Britain: homelessness, mental and physical ill-health, educational under attainment, economic inactivity and crime. There is considerable evidence that the most impactful approaches are those that address social determinants, most importantly poverty, inequality and insecurity.

Basic Income has been presented as a key intervention that addresses those determinants in ways that are feasible, affordable and politically popular. In Greater Manchester, we have begun to connect the potential of a Universal Basic Income with the region's values and Greater Manchester Combined Authority's vision for a fairer and more just Greater Manchester. Mark Donovan, founder of the Denver Basic Income Project¹¹ has visited Manchester to speak at an event about tackling homelessness, to explain how a UBI alongside the innovative Housing First scheme will not only reduce homelessness remarkably, but make a fairer and more just Greater Manchester. The will is there, but we need to make one more big push to make a pilot happen. Greater Manchester has the chance to be the first region in England to test the social feasibility of Basic Income. The region can continue to lead the way on 'doing things differently'. Mayor Andy Burnham has shown his support in his 2024 mayoral manifesto:



The evidence from our Housing First pilot is that, if you set people up to succeed, the vast majority will and, in turn, that saves money on crisis provision in other public services. For this reason, we believe the logical next step, after the success of our Housing First pilot, is to bring forward a Basic Income pilot, as suggested by Compass. This would fit well with our new Live Well concept and would test whether a different, more preventative way of supporting people would lead to better use of public funds.¹²

As mentioned in his manifesto, the mayor sees UBI as being an important next step in 'setting up people to succeed' and explains how it fits in with the Greater Manchester story and vision for a fairer future.

There have been few interventions that provide the evidence for a broader roll-out in the UK. In that absence, some have suggested that other interventions that constitute an expansion of Universal Credit may be preferable. We will first explain what a Basic Income is and why it is better than those suggested interventions.

In this report, we set out the evidence base for Greater Manchester to commit to a Basic Income pilot for the most vulnerable of its citizens: people from deeply disadvantaged backgrounds who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. This pilot will be connected to Housing First and/or the Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathfinder. These are suggestions made by Mayor Andy Burnham and those on Housing First at GMCA. We argue that such a Basic Income scheme will offer immediate and practicable evidence by which to pioneer the development of ambitious policies that enable progressive policymakers to demonstrate their capacity to fix social problems.

What is a Basic Income?

A Basic Income would guarantee financial security for all. It has five core characteristics:

1. **Cash:** it's money you can spend on whatever you want
2. **Regular:** so you know the next payment is coming
3. **Individual:** each person gets their own Basic Income, paid to the individual not the household
4. **Unconditional:** you don't have to work or make any promises to get your Basic Income, there are no strings attached
5. **Universal:** everyone gets it

Everything else remains to be decided. Including how much people receive and how it's funded. Many affordable Basic Income programmes have been proposed¹³ and, as we explain in this report, the impacts are overwhelmingly positive.¹⁴

Why Basic Income is better than alternatives for recipients and politicians?

Basic income is more feasible, more affordable and more popular than the alternatives such as a Minimum Income Guarantee¹⁵ and National Living Income.¹⁶ This may seem counter-intuitive, as these alternatives are less radical and represent an extension of Universal Credit or Working Tax Credits. However, there is an extensive literature that shows that Basic Income achieves the impacts policymakers and the public need because it represents a unique combination of adequacy, security and predictability of income. It is particularly popular across society because it removes the fairness deficit for workers who are currently exposed to gross insecurity and removes the perverse incentives for inactivity that exist within the current system.



To understand the contrast between Basic Income and alternatives, we must understand that only Basic Income guarantees us the support that we need, when we need it. It is the parachute that is always attached to us for when we fall off the cliff edge of financial insecurity. The alternatives all require us to make demands of the state after we have fallen, always taking time to be introduced, always inducing different degrees of hunger, stress and desperation and always requiring considerable state resource to administer.

It is essential to understand that Basic Income is fundamentally a targeted social security scheme - and a much more effective targeted scheme than those that explicitly emphasise targeting via conditionality. Basic Income is a redistributive measure targeting those who experience poverty, particularly among those in work. It is much more effective at supplementing incomes than negative income tax schemes, such as Living Income or Minimum Income Guarantee, because the income is provided first then taxed, rather than the other way round. It is targeted at those who are financially insecure through progressive taxation, providing secure, predictable income for those, particularly in work as self-employed or as casual or precarious employees, whose incomes are not predictable.

It is the constant in people's lives that allows them to take greater risks and secure additional income beyond what they already have. No other scheme is targeted on those on low and insecure incomes as effectively as Basic Income.¹⁷ It is present-by-default like the NHS, not absent-by-default, and this is the key feature that enables Basic Income to 'change everything' for the better.¹⁸

Moreover, Basic Income imposes no perverse incentive for inactivity – we keep the money we make from work, with progressive taxation, particularly on wealth, funding payments from those who can genuinely afford to pay. In this way, Basic Income is definitively targeted – it protects those who are exposed to financial insecurity and does not increase the income of those at the top end of the distribution, because the payments are returned in taxation. It is much easier to target through taxes than through the welfare system. However, it is always there for those better paid workers who experience catastrophic loss of earnings – an increasing element of precarious work.¹⁹

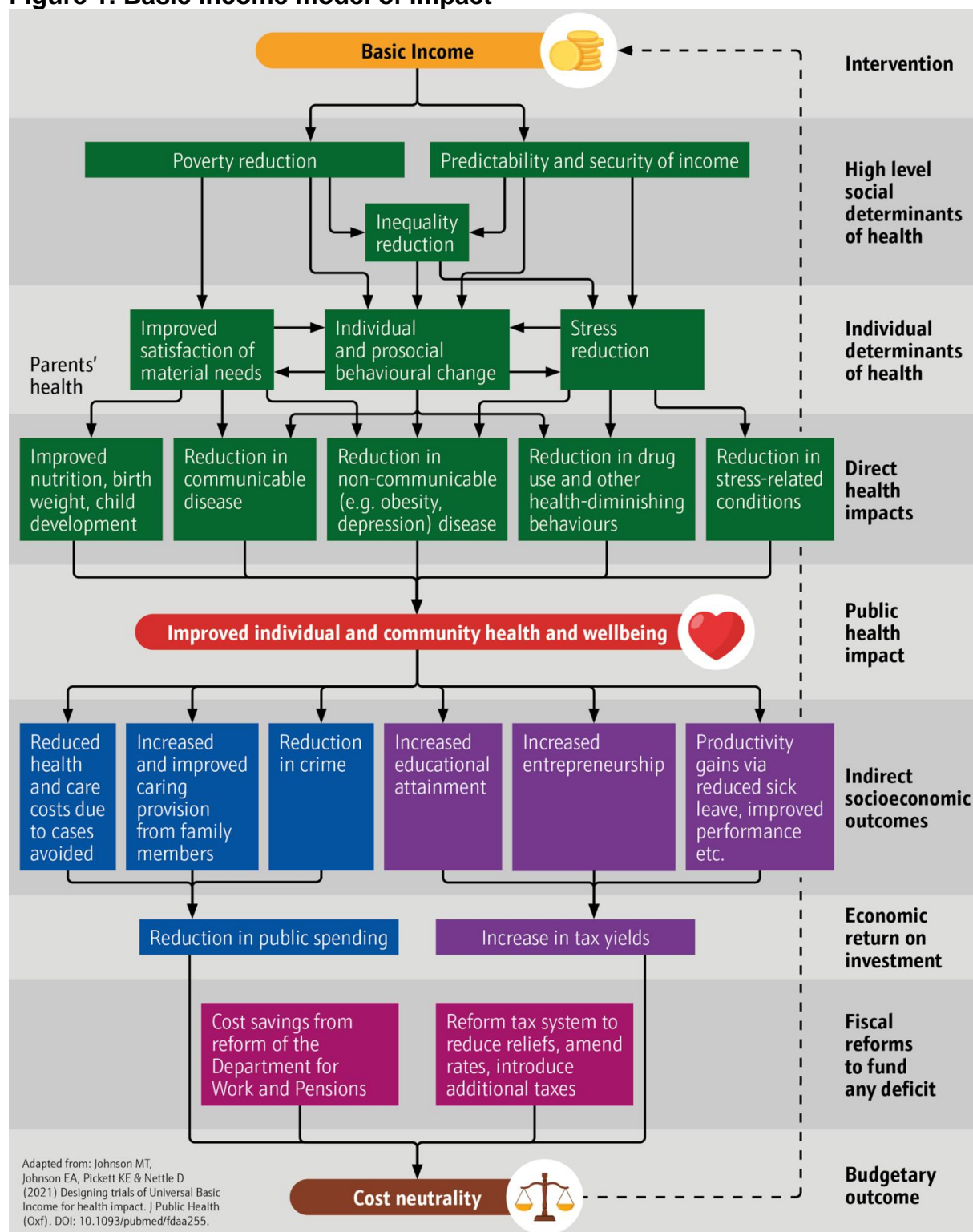
We argue that Basic Income improves everything through following the values of the Beveridge Report.²⁰ By that, we mean that the core features of adequacy, security and predictability transform the underpinning causes of Britain's decline by tackling the 'social determinants' of outcomes in housing, health, employment, education and crime. Figure 1 traces the impacts of adequate, secure and predictable income on different aspects of our lives.

In the top half of the diagram, we see how the effects of Basic Income filter through to individual brains, hearts, backs and abdomens to produce better individual health states. We have known for a long time now that although health states play out within the body, they are strongly affected by influences coming from society. We are likely to end up in worse health states when we suffer severe material want, when we lack autonomy and control, and when our livelihoods are volatile and unpredictable. In a nutshell, when policymakers intervene at the macro-scale on the rate of poverty, the inequality of the distribution of resources, and the degree of certainty and predictability in subsistence, they necessarily have a downstream effect on individuals' material want, insecurity, and capacity to exert control.²¹ These individual states, in turn, have effects on our brains and bodies that are as real as those of drugs or poisons.

The bottom half of the diagram shows how this better distribution of health states flows through to the 'health' of society and the public finances.²² Healthcare costs, as well as the costs of supporting people on sick leave, go down. Care of families and children gets better on average. The crime rate goes down. People are more productive and undertake new economic ventures. People are in situations that allow them to be better citizens. These outcomes are just as much dependent on eliminating the cliff edge of uncertainty and unpredictability as it is about wage levels.

If we make people's lives safer and more secure through Basic Income, a whole suite of behavioural changes will follow. These changes will have further beneficial consequences for population health and for the wellbeing of society. This is the double dividend of safety²³ and it can only fully be achieved in our times with a Basic Income for everyone.

Figure 1. Basic income model of impact



A Living Income would deliver a new minimum income guarantee benchmarked to need, including a new standard payment set at 50% of the JRF Minimum Income Standard²⁴ (MIS) after housing and childcare costs (AHCC). There would be additional support through payments of up to 100% of the MIS (AHCC) for children, those with a disability, or those unable to look for work; and the abolition of caps, limits, and sanctions. A Basic Income would likely provide extra support for these people through its 'plus' element. This compares to a minimum of just 35% of the MIS (AHCC) for a single person over 25 on UC.

However, as a consequence of payments being removed as soon as income rises beyond 50% of the Minimum Income Guarantee,²⁵ many will face a cliff-edge. This makes getting a job a source of insecurity, rather than security. Because no tax is paid up to the £28,000 Minimum Income Guarantee level, it is likely that much more significant tax changes are required and no specific suggestions on which taxes will rise have been presented.

Table 1. Comparison of different welfare schemes

Feature	Universal Credit	Minimum Income Guarantee or National Living Income	Basic Income (plus)
Cash	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.
Regular	No, income and sanction dependent.	No, income dependent. Most will not receive a payment when income increases beyond 50% of the Minimum Income standard for NLI (including other benefits).	Yes.
Individual	No, it is household-based	No, it is household-based.	Yes.
Unconditional	No. All sorts of hoops to jump through.	No, though everyone is automatically enrolled.	All citizens are entitled, but entitlement can be revoked following convictions for crime.
Universal	No.	It proposes that everyone is opted automatically into the Universal Credit system (used to implement NLI), even if they never receive an NLI payment.	All citizens.
When is it paid?	After you fall into poverty/get in trouble.	After you fall into poverty/get in trouble.	Before you fall into poverty/get in trouble. A parachute already deployed to stop you hitting the floor.
Any more help available?	Yes, the disability allowance etc, the whole panoply of means-tested benefits currently available.	Yes, it says at least that those with more needs should get to the Minimum Income Standard quicker. Does not say anything about removing other benefits.	Yes, Basic Income+ retains support for additional needs: disability, caring responsibilities or living alone.
Poverty reducing	No, income falls far below basic needs levels.	Yes, but it is limited as payments are not regular and would depend on government implementation.	Yes, even according to less generous schemes. ²⁶
How do you pay for it?	Out of general taxation as it stands now.	Out of general taxation. Some changes to taxes are proposed to raise the additional money.	Through progressive taxation on those who can afford it, including by addressing inequality of rates of tax on work and wealth. ²⁷

The comparisons between Basic Income, Universal Credit and a Minimum Income Guarantee or a National Living income are significant. In effect, a Living Income is a more generous version of Universal Credit and would have all the UC structural deficits built in. Far from being cheaper, it would be extremely expensive to administer like UC and creates perverse incentives not to work by withdrawing payments as people earn.

A Living Income demonstration has been proposed in Greater Manchester. But this is not going to test the National Living Income policy or the mechanisms to deliver the payments that have been proposed. Instead, it would demonstrate a Living Income at a higher level, being 60% of MIS and these payments could be standardised within the trial. The goal of the demonstration is to show the power of cash. This demonstration would be seen as a reason why a NLI should be implemented if the demonstration would be successful. This is potentially misleading, as the demonstration would likely not test the mechanisms proposed in the NLI paper. Moreover, at a time in which there is increased concern about domestic abuse, the fact that a Living Income is household dependent reduces one of the key benefits of social security – that people exposed to domination can leave secure in the knowledge that they can financially support themselves.²⁸

Why Basic Income is more popular than alternatives

In survey after survey, study after study,²⁹ Basic Income is much more popular both than the current system and proposed, conditional alternatives, including Living Income. The reasons for this are because of its design. It is there when we need it, it is easy and efficient to administer and transforms social security as a payment to undeserving out-groups to a direct benefit for workers to make workers secure at a time in which work is increasingly inadequate and unpredictable.³⁰

The TriplePC ([Public Policy Preference Calculator](#))³¹ combines complex economic microsimulation and national public opinion data to enable policymakers and the general public to explore the implications of these policies. The evidence from this suggests that it is likely that a Living Income will be even more unpopular than the current system because it is specifically an out-group policy and specifically increases payment to those who are out of work. Unlike the pandemic-era Furlough scheme, for example, workers view it as being a payment for the undeserving, taking money from those in work and giving it to those out of work.

As such, there is good pragmatic reason for Greater Manchester to commit to a cohort trial of Basic Income. The alternatives are less affordable, less efficient and less impactful. Indeed, they may elicit precisely the public opposition that facilitated the reduction in welfare support during austerity.



Social feasibility

There is now a large body of evidence to suggest both that there is support for pilots and trials of cash transfers and that concerns about their formulation and impact can be addressed successfully. Young people, in particular, believe that the current work and welfare system has a detrimental impact on their mental health, that Basic Income would have positive impacts on their mental health by virtue of reducing financial strain, that a more substantive payment of the level proposed in this report would be more impactful and preferable.³² While there have been concerns about bingeing impacts of large payments, the size of payment proposed here and its payment at regular intervals is unlikely to be large enough or irregular enough to contribute to this and there is no evidence from the Welsh Government pilot to suggest that this is significant risk.³³

Indeed, there is considerable belief that the economic stimulus provided by Basic Income will support the entrepreneurship and innovation required to support community development in those areas of the North that need it most.³⁴ Where there is opposition to welfare reform, this is specific to out of work groups being rewarded for socially destructive behaviour and this does not apply to schemes, such as Basic Income, that do not discriminate against those who are active, responsible and aspirational.³⁵ In consultation for pilots in Jarrow, South Tyneside, and East Finchley, Greater London, community members in the Northern area emphasised the potential role of Basic Income pilots in pioneering the sort of transformation comparable to that produced by the Labour Government of 1945. For those community members, only this sort of reform would be capable of addressing the large-scale inequalities that have been produced by decades of reform both within and between regions of the UK. On this basis, there is belief that there is responsibility for politicians to champion and advance community interests through such pilots.³⁶

Political importance and impact of a Basic Income Pilot

There is now a large body of evidence to indicate that progressive politicians need to demonstrate their capacity to provide practical and highly impactful responses to insecurity to survive in office. Basic income fixes many issues that other approaches simply cannot solve. Even if a Basic Income cannot solve every issue, it makes every issue easier to solve. There is great political opportunity for pioneering policymakers to adopt the approach and achieve irreversible improvements in the standard of living for communities most in need of reform.³⁷

A GM Basic Income pilot is a sensible step toward assessing the viability of Basic Income for progressive politics. A GM Basic Income pilot would continue and support the impact of the Housing First, the Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathfinders scheme and the Live Well project. Connected, these policies can diminish homelessness significantly in the UK and show how Greater Manchester leads the way in finding alternatives to current methods used by the UK government to tackle social inequalities.

By providing evidence using validated measures that enable comparison with large datasets, it can be used to warrant city-level interventions funded through a range of different national, regional and local funding sources. Indeed, it can also provide further justification for smaller, less targeted studies, such as pilots within single tower blocks or streets within multiple Mayoral Combined Authorities. Such an approach would reduce the burden on individual authorities and enable comparison among a sufficient number of participants to produce data with more statistical power.

These are pragmatic approaches to developing policy to rebuild Britain.



A pilot with some features of a trial

A pilot is necessarily not universal and is a means of testing the social and research feasibility of an intervention. The data produced by a pilot are generally regarded as not providing generalisable evidence on the impact of a policy. It just tells us whether the intervention is run in a way that can be expanded to a trial. A trial involves a larger number of people with a higher degree of randomisation. In medicine, the 'gold standard' is a randomised controlled trial, which involves a group of people chosen at random receiving a treatment and another group receiving either a placebo or no treatment. This is intended to show that the treatment has a generalisable effect on human beings. Because of the expense of providing people with Basic Income, there have been no randomised controlled trials within the UK, but there have been population level trials in regions within low-middle income countries.³⁸ In the UK, there have been proposals for community-level Basic Income pilots in England designed by members of this project team.³⁹

More importantly, the Welsh Government Basic Income Pilot for Care Leavers involves a relatively large number of recipients and, although not randomised, is of sufficient size to provide evidence on the impact of generous Basic Income payments to a very specific group of vulnerable young people.

This provides a blueprint for a potential pilot in Greater Manchester, with Basic Income payments set at a level that the evidence suggests is impactful. The involvement of the authors of this report in its evaluation provides learning from which to create an evaluative framework for GMCA to assess whether to roll the policy out further.

Indeed, prior work within the team⁴⁰ indicates that an intervention with 200 participants conducted over two years is large enough to provide trial-like evidence on mental health impacts. We have recently conducted the Changing Cost of Living Study, which contained a similar number of participants in England. We recorded statistically significant effects within this sample size. 250 participants in each group will provide a minimum detectable effect of 0.25 standard deviations at 90% power. 0.25 standard deviations would be considered a small effect size, whereas we anticipate relatively large impacts, particularly on the primary outcome of mental health. This is due to the payment being in line with Minimum Income Standard and therefore meeting the theoretical threshold for significant impacts. There may not be sufficient power to provide certainty with regard to subgroups but we will assess specific moderating and mediating effects using qualitative measures. Impacts on some other quantitative outcomes may be below the level of significance over the evaluation period but will provide indicative findings for further examination. Given the substantial resource required for the intervention, we believe that this approach provides the optimal balance between funding and outputs. It will enable policymakers to evaluate population-level roll out, such as at GMCA level.

A Housing First Cohort

Given that a population-level trial requires large-scale Government funding, it is necessary to identify a pilot cohort in which a Basic Income is likely to have a significant impact beyond that produced by the current tax-benefit system. Given, also that Basic Income does have a targeted effect on citizens who have low incomes and face insecurity in satisfying their basic needs, it is possible to examine impacts on specific groups that are likely to benefit most from the policy.

Given Mayor Andy Burnham's priority of addressing and preventing homelessness and given increasing recognition of the multiple challenges faced by those who experience homelessness, Housing First is a good cohort option. The mayor has advocated for a Basic Income trial with Housing First. Housing First is an

evidence-based approach, which uses housing as a platform to enable individuals with multiple and complex needs to begin recovery and move away from homelessness. The initial pilot ran from April 2019 to March 2022 and was commissioned by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) with funding from Ministry of Homes, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The initial pilot was an incredible success and we reached the target set of 330 rehoused in the three years across all 10 Greater Manchester boroughs.⁴¹

Housing First⁴² provides people who have experienced homelessness, social care and chronic health issues with a stable home to rebuild their lives. Basic Income cannot solve homelessness on its own – a right to housing is something which can show the full potential of a Basic Income. Like Housing First, a Basic income tells individuals that they are trusted and that their dignity is respected. Housing First already provides intensive and person-centred holistic support. This is all provided without conditions. Supporting individuals to succeed, providing individual and community support without conditions shows that Housing First shares very similar values to Basic Income pilots, like the Denver Basic Income Project.

Housing First values include:

- People have a right to a home;
- Flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed;
- Housing and support are separated;
- Individuals have choice and control;
- An active engagement approach is used;
- The service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations;
- A harm reduction approach is used.

GM Housing First has supported 340 people in their own homes.⁴³ It began as a three-year project in 2019 but is being extended. The extension of Housing First and embedded support makes this a cohort that is likely to benefit considerably from Basic Income and is already in receipt of support to enable a control group to be formed. Due to its expansion, there is scope for randomisation that would enable further enhancement of evidential value from the intervention.

Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathfinder Cohort

Another potential cohort is the Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathfinder scheme. GMCA's homelessness team suggested that Pathfinders would be a good cohort for a Basic Income pilot. This cohort could be used instead of Housing First or in addition to, as an extension to this Basic Income project.

Pathfinder members are young, 18- to 25-year-old, people who are at risk of homelessness in Greater Manchester, who are necessarily likely to have lower levels of secure and adequate housing, financial stability, physical and mental health and wellbeing and access to opportunities. The scheme is a key arm of Greater Manchester's Prevention Strategy to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping and is focused on combatting the structural issues that create homelessness. Pathfinder has four elements that are complementary to a pilot:

- Improving Housing situations
- Increasing Financial stability
- Improving Physical and Mental Health
- Increasing Skills and Access to Opportunities

Each of these outcomes are associated with key outcomes of Basic Income within the project team's Basic Income logic model (figure 1). The services underpinning the programme, including coaching and financial literacy training, are also those associated with those provided to control groups within pilots or proposed pilots elsewhere.⁴⁴ As such, this is a cohort that is likely to benefit considerably from Basic Income and is already in receipt of support to enable a control group to be formed. Because 1250 young people across all boroughs have been supported to date, there is scope for randomisation that would enable further enhancement of evidential value from the intervention.



The broader financial context of pilots

There is precedent for pilots of Basic Income in the UK. The Welsh Government Basic Income Pilot for Care Leavers.⁴⁵ This involves 500 18- to 20-year-old care leavers receiving £1,600 per month for two years from 2022-2024. This is a large and considerable intervention that is already demonstrating an impact on financial stability among an extremely disadvantaged cohort.⁴⁶

Experience of the pilot indicates the difficulty of securing exemptions for participants from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to avoid participants losing out financially from receipt.⁴⁷ While there is scope for direct Mayoral engagement with the UK Government to secure exemptions, it is reasonable to assume that none will be forthcoming. In order to address this, the Welsh Government chose to provide payments, after tax, of £1,280 per month (£1,600 gross),⁴⁸ significantly above other Basic Income schemes that have been proposed and well in excess of the 2022/23 National Minimum Wage for 18- to 20-year-olds (£6.83 per hour)⁴⁹ on a full-time basis. This provides a realistic framework for new interventions that meets the thresholds at which the income is likely to have a very considerable impact on outcomes that matter to Greater Manchester.

On the other hand, Mayor Andy Burnham and GMCA regard devolving some DWP functions as important to the GM project to reducing homelessness. If unconditional cash transfer pilots and demonstrations are not counted as income for Universal Credit, then they would be much cheaper to do and we would gain more effective data. This would benefit not just Basic Income pilots, but any unconditional cash transfer projects. The Learning and Work Institute has conducted research on Jobs Plus where cash transfers have not counted as income for purposes of Universal Credit. This could be a potential avenue for a Basic Income pilot to avoid participants losing their Universal Credit.



If a campaign on those grounds is unsuccessful, a pilot that is not granted an exemption may simulate a Basic Income scenario in which the existing conditional system and the current tax regime remain unchanged. On the other hand, payments are not permanent and there is a risk of complications when participants who currently receive benefits transition to and from the Basic Income pilot.

In terms of remuneration for taking part in the evaluation of a pilot, the National Institute for Health and Social Care Research (NIHR) indicates that high street or gift vouchers may or may not be treated as earnings by HMRC and the DWP.⁵⁰ It is therefore important to clear this before beginning the project.

Cost

Payments

The most significant costs associated with a Basic Income pilot are those for the payments.

A payment of £1,600 per month for 2 years would cost:

£7,680,000 for 200 recipients

£3,840,000 for 100 recipients



The larger the intervention, the more likely it is that evidence can be used to inform policy development. If we were to gain cooperation with HMRC and the DWP, this amount would be lower because participants would not lose their benefit entitlements.



Routes to funding

Funding an intervention of this size requires a collaborative and incremental funding strategy. Here listed are potential routes to funding a GM pilot:

Reallocation of existing service funding: A considerable proportion of the intervention could be funded by reallocating existing per-person service-user funding. This would ensure direct control from GMCA.

Public Funding: The intervention could be funded through public money by being included in the GMCA's spending review. As Mayor Andy Burnham's 2024 manifesto says, 'GM would be unable to bring this pilot forward on our own but will make the case for hosting one to the next Government'.

Private philanthropic support: Requests will be made to the GM Business Forum Group to solicit private investment in the pilot as a means of evaluating the impact of the intervention on economic activity. There are good reasons to believe both that Basic Income supports entrepreneurship and that the preventive effect of Basic Income is specifically beneficial to business in reducing crime and improving economic activity.

Public donation:

UBI Labs will use ongoing data from the intervention to publicise the impacts and seek regular donations from the public to support a fund to underpin any unforeseen costs and to achieve additional impact from the project. This will achieve public buy-in whilst approximately raising £20,000 to £30,000.

Research funding:

While the cost of the intervention is too great to be supported by research funding bodies, research costs will be met through a combination of external grant income and staff time.



Evaluation

We have a ready-made generic, adaptive protocol for evaluation of Basic Income interventions.⁵¹ This protocol enables comparison with validated measures of health and other key outcomes recorded within administrative data collected by the NHS and Government more broadly as well as other cohort studies (e.g. Understanding Society: The UK Household Longitudinal Study).⁵²

The size of an intervention determines the evidence that can reliably be produced to inform broader policy roll outs. While a much larger, population level randomised controlled trial produces evidence that is regarded as more valuable by policymakers, our recent Changing Cost-of-Living Study demonstrates that considerable, measurable impacts of changes in financial situation can be identified among cohorts of 200 participants.⁵³ In that study, there were immediate changes in mental health as a result of reduced financial security.

In a study such as this, we would expect to see similar ‘within-participant’ impacts within a comparable sized cohort, particularly given participants’ greater exposure to insecurity. Because of the role of security and predictability in changing behaviour, we would expect a peak health window between 9-15 months.

Because of the control group, we would expect to see some significant ‘between-participant’ impacts. While there may not be sufficient power to provide certainty with regard to subgroups (gender groups, disabled people, etc.), we can assess specific moderating and mediating effects using qualitative measures. Impacts on some other quantitative outcomes may be below the level of significance over the evaluation period but will provide indicative findings for further examination. We would seek access to NHS records to examine longer-term impacts up to year 4.

Given the substantial resource required for the intervention, we believe that this approach provides the optimal balance between funding and outputs. It will enable policymakers to evaluate population-level roll out, such as at city-level.

The evaluation would follow the logic model above in measuring, first, social determinants of outcomes:

1. objective income,
2. subjective measures of financial security (Managing Financially; Perceived Risk of Destitution)

We would then measure individual determinants:

3. Housing
4. Food
5. Stress

Next, we would measure

6. Weight
7. Blood pressure
8. Mental health (anxiety [GAD-7] and depression [PHQ-8] separately and overall SF-12 Mental Component Summary)
9. Physical health (SF-12 Physical Component Summary)

Finally, we would measure community-level outcomes

10. Service use (Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALYs) (via SF-6D); healthcare utilisation (primary and secondary care visits) and costs)
11. Economic activity
12. Engagement with unpaid work like caring for relatives
13. Control over lives
14. Community trust

These measures have been developed in response to experience within the Welsh Government Basic Income Pilot, ActEarly, Born in Bradford and the proposals for pilots in England.⁵⁴ The final measures will be developed in consultation with participants as in previous iterations of evaluation development.⁵⁵

Due to issues with internet access, while phone completion of surveys is preferable, paper copies will be available as a back-up. Qualitative evaluation could take the form of monthly focus groups with rolling individual interviews. The qualitative component will be crucial given the importance of storytelling fed back by both project members and local people. Ethics should be prioritised, and it must remain optional for people to participate in the evaluation.

Experience with the Welsh Government Pilot for Care Leavers indicates the importance of a designated group of researchers conducting the research directly with a community partner. This is to ensure that ethical standards are met and that the measures used can support broader policymaker need.



Team

Project team

Alison Hawdale is Co-Chair of [UBI Lab Manchester](#) and a Lead Organiser in the [UBI Lab Network](#). Alison has worked in biological sciences, science and technology policy, patient representation in the NHS and emotional development. She believes passionately that, given the multiplicity of crises the world is facing, we should try Basic Income for the sake of people and planet. On the basis of ‘if not me, then who?’, she has become immersed in the Basic Income movement and is now part of the team running the Manchester Lab. At present, in addition to promoting this work, she is also a maths teacher.

Louis Strappazzon is Co-Chair of [UBI Lab Manchester](#), a Lead Organiser in the [UBI Lab Network](#) and Secretary of the Basic Income Movement in the UK. He has a degree in History & Politics, and a MA in Political Economy from the University of Manchester. He has strong personal reasons for becoming involved in Basic Income, linked to the failure of the system to support his parents’ family business. Louis is involved in coordinating efforts to engage with MPs and unions on Basic Income. He is also a director of [Equal Right](#).

Jonny Douglas is a co-founder of the [UBI Lab Network](#), working on key projects hosted by OPUS Independents that seek to demonstrate alternative ways of living in the face of emerging crises. Jonny is responsible for the facilitation of the Network and is the Technology Lead for the [River Dôn Project](#). Jonny has a broad range of design, creative, strategic and curational skills and experience, and has spent his career working as a change-maker and educator. He imagines a world where everyone has the means and opportunity to find and fulfil their true potential and believes a Basic Income is a fundamental foundational layer to make that a reality.

Research team

Professor Matthew Johnson (FAcSS) has led the core Basic Income health team through Wellcome Trust and NIHR funded stages over the past five years. In that time, the team has published 25 articles, with a further five under review, a monograph (in press) seven reports for organisations, four Evidence Submissions for Parliamentary Committees, a UKDS case study and numerous contributions to the written press. He will ensure completion of the objectives and achievement of impact through engagement with policymakers. He is a member of the Welsh Basic Income Pilot for Care Leavers Evaluation Team.

Professor Kate Pickett (FAcSS) is a world-leading epidemiologist who has contributed ground-breaking discovery research on the relationship between inequality, health and public policy. She is a long-term member of the research team and is ideally placed to ensure effective, reliable and socially feasible design, implementation and evaluation of the trial. She is a member of the Welsh Basic Income Pilot for Care Leavers Evaluation Team.

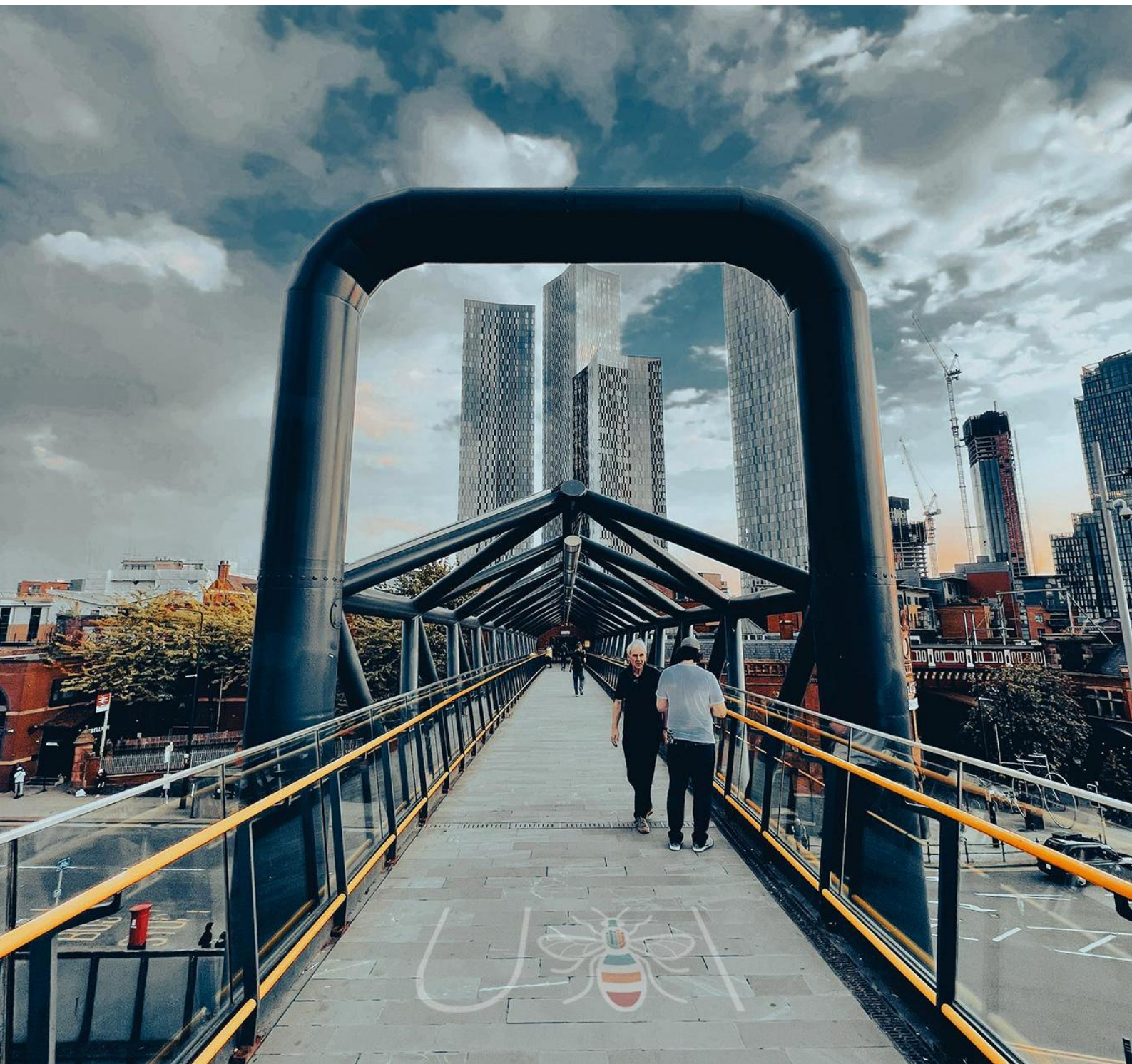
Professor Daniel Nettle (FAcSS) is a world-leading Behavioural Scientist who has contributed ground-breaking discovery research on the relationship between income, health and public policy. He will ensure effective and appropriate use of measures, as well as causal inference during the analytical phase.

Dr Howard Reed is a former IFS and IPPR Chief Economist and leading international expert in tax-benefit microsimulation modelling. He has conducted microsimulation on all prior Basic Income project modelling and will lead on economic analysis and microsimulation. He will ensure equalisation of economic measures and provide analysis of underpinning health and health economic phenomena.

Dr Elliott Johnson is Vice Chancellor's Fellow specialising in the health effects of work and welfare, particularly Basic Income and especially in relation to disabled people. He is a former Head of Research at Activity Alliance with extensive experience of delivering accessible research to non-academic audiences. He has also led the Wales Centre for Public Policy's (WCPP) work with the International Public Policy Observatory (IPPO). He will be responsible for leading writing up of the overarching publications and ensuring accessibility.

Conclusion

This report sets out a practical pathway to funding a politically valuable and socially necessary intervention to evaluate Basic Income in Greater Manchester. This is a unique opportunity for Greater Manchester to pioneer in preventing crises of homelessness, mental and physical ill-health, crime and inactivity. Dealing with these issues downstream costs the country a fortune. Basic Income will complement GMCA's values and current strategy to reduce homelessness. There are very good reasons to believe that such a pilot is socially feasible and that alternatives, such as an expansion of Universal Credit into a Living Income, would, in fact, be less popular and potentially more costly without addressing the fundamental causes of the crises we need to tackle.



Notes

Page 1

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Page 4

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The UBI Lab Network is a collaboration between citizens, researchers, social justice organisations and campaigners encouraging debate and creating a movement for change

The Common Sense Policy Group presents feasible, affordable and popular evidence-based policies that can form the programme for progressive government

Basic Income Research Group is the oldest basic income organisation in the world - leading research on basic income in the UK and part of the global movement

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