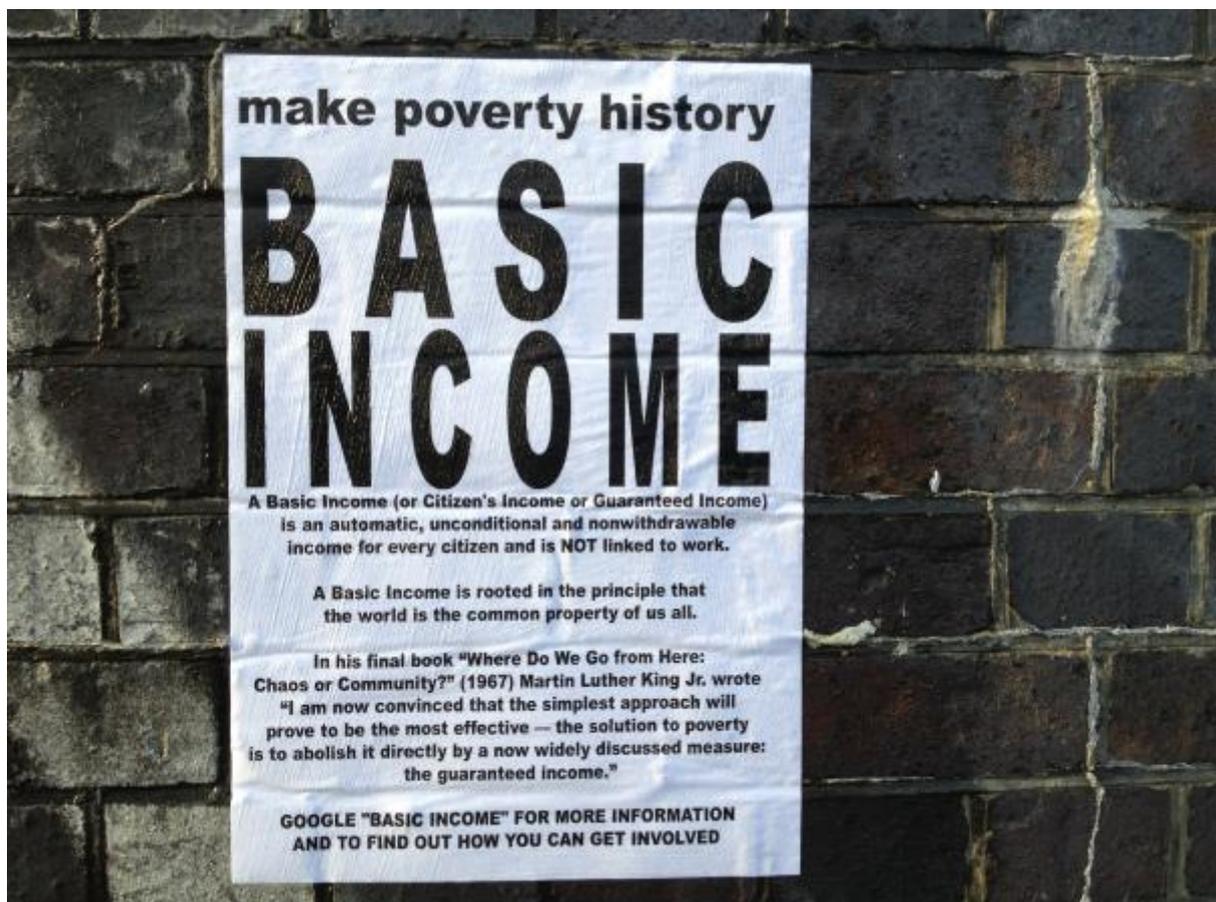




Future Generations December 2021 Newsletter



Foreword

At this time of year, much of the media is full of messages around 'how to make it the perfect Christmas', adverts abound of gifts of every kind, but for many households in many of our communities, a decent meal on Christmas day will be what they are hoping for.

Poverty is something which shouldn't exist in a world full of resources and innovation, yet its spectre and its devastating impact is very real – all year round, not just at Christmas – families struggling to buy adequate clothing, to provide healthy meals, to cover bills.

Many juggle more than one job and are still just about getting by. The impact of poverty can last for generations. Earlier this month, the Bevan Foundation released [A Snapshot of poverty in Winter 2021](#) which highlighted how nearly 4 in 10 Welsh households are struggling to make ends meet.

It also revealed that living standards are being squeezed with thousands of households having to cut back and ration their use of the essentials we all need to live with dignity.

Low-income households, renters, disabled people, lone parents and adults aged between 25 and 64 more likely to have had to cut back on everyday essentials than other groups.

I believe everything should be done to lift people out of a life of crushing poverty – a life which limits their opportunities and their chance to thrive, and it is for this reason [I support a Universal Basic Income \(UBI\)](#).

It is not about being beholden to the state, it is about the state using common sense, long term thinking and ensuring all citizens have a decent quality of life so that a great many of the detrimental effects of poverty are alleviated.

Indeed, [a major study I commissioned](#) has shown that poverty in Wales would be halved if Welsh Government commits to a progressive UBI.

The feasibility study by leading think tank Autonomy, finds a UBI would decrease overall poverty rates in Wales by 50% and child poverty would decrease by 64%, bringing it to a rate of under 10% in Wales. It is currently at 28% - the worst in the UK.

What is a Universal Basic Income?



A universal basic income (UBI) is where a government pays every individual a set salary on a regular basis, regardless of their means or employment status.

It is a basic, minimum payment, designed to meet basic needs, paid to everyone individually, without condition.



Described as 'this generation's NHS' a UBI in Wales would

- Decrease poverty rates by 50%
- Decrease child poverty rates by 64%
- Address income security
- Take pressure off the health service
- Improve long-term health



We're calling on Welsh Government to trial a geographically-based UBI scheme that includes children, the employed, the unemployed and pensioners, as well as care leavers.

It also found that almost three quarters of people in Wales, 69%, support piloting a UBI - which has been described as 'this generation's NHS'.

Universal Basic Income is a government programme where every citizen receives a set amount of money on a regular basis, regardless of their employment status. It is a basic, minimum payment, designed to meet basic needs, paid to everyone individually, without condition.

This is an important issue to me as Future Generations Commissioner for Wales because, according to the World Health Organisation, poverty is the single largest determinant of health, and ill health is an obstacle to social and economic development. This means poorer people live shorter lives and have poorer health than affluent people.

Earlier this year, Welsh Government announced its ambition to pilot a UBI pilot in Wales.

What's possible with a UBI for Wales?

A universal basic income could...



Improve economic security, provide a cushion for those impacted by COVID and/or automation and help mitigate against the increasingly precarious nature of work.



Provide support to older people and people shouldering caring responsibilities.



Provide opportunities for creative development e.g through volunteering or creative placements.



Give more people the resources to undertake education.

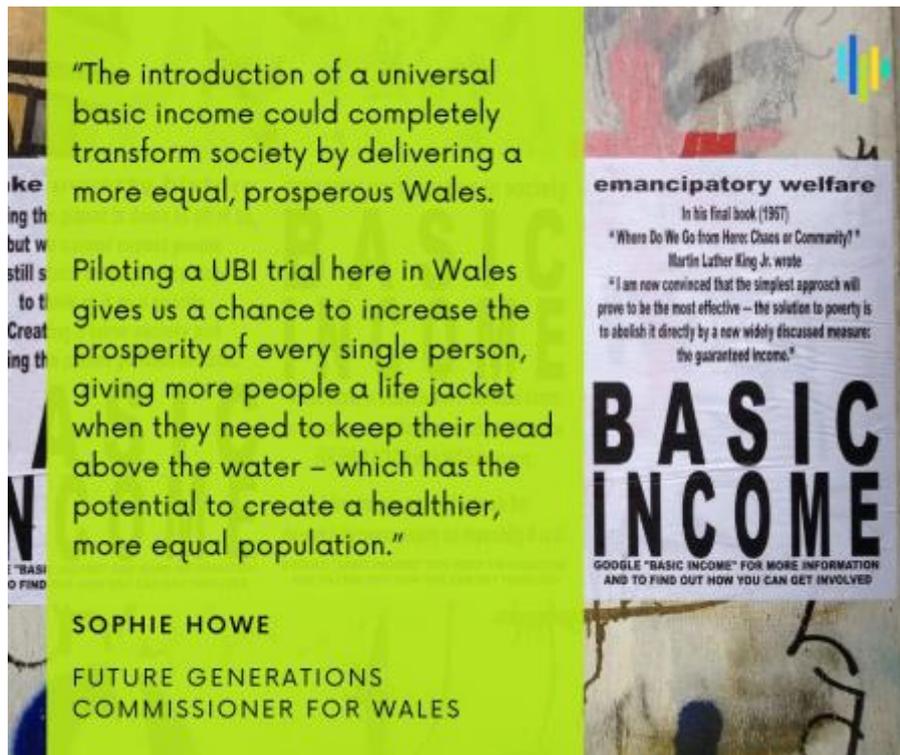


Remove the stigma surrounding benefits as everyone receives payment regardless of economic status.

UBI Lab Wales, myself and over 1,000 petitioners have called on the First Minister to ensure the pilot includes children, the employed, the unemployed and pensioners, as well as care leavers in a demographically representative pilot. I spoke on this topic when I was called to give evidence to the Petitions Committee at the end of November. A trial in Wales of 2,500 people, the report finds, could cost around £50m, with adults being paid from £60 per week.

A pilot in Finland found participants were happier, had greater trust in others and higher levels of confidence in the future. They also worked slightly more than those on unemployment benefits and reported better cognitive functioning.

Those who were already living in poor health, poverty or in marginalised communities have been the hardest hit by the pandemic. It has highlighted the inequalities we knew existed in our society long before the pandemic arose – and these have been further compounded as a result of both the direct and indirect harms from the pandemic.



Rising living costs, combined with the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme (furlough) in addition to cuts to welfare benefits like universal credit amount to a “perfect storm” or “tsunami”, according to respondents to a Senedd Committee inquiry into debt and the pandemic.

I believe UBI could form part of a preventative-based National Wellness System, addressing income security – one of the social determinants of health – taking pressure off the health service and removing the barriers to long-term good health.

As Katherine Adams outlines in her story, UBI would give families a sense of security, of not having to constantly worry about money and live month to month, day to day.

I believe in a just, fair and prosperous society this is something we all deserve as a basic right.

UBI Story: Katherine Adams

When Katherine Adams fell seriously ill following the birth of her only son, her young family were spun into what felt like “a desperate never-ending black hole of poverty and insecurity.”

The 38-year old from Rhyd Y Foel, Conwy, is currently a full-time student studying social policy and lives with her husband Danny and her six-year-old little boy.

She said: “We had not long moved to Wales. My husband had just started working as a gardener. What we hoped would be our first family home turned out to be damp, mouldy, impossible to heat and poorly maintained.

“When my little boy was born, I was very ill and in and out of intensive care for months – I had to have lots of operations. My husband could not go to work for most of that time because we had a new-born baby that he had to single-handedly look after, and he lost his job.



“The consequences of that have lasted for years. It gave us debts to pay off because the benefits system didn’t respond quickly enough to the situation, we suddenly found ourselves in. Something like Universal Basic Income would have prevented that kind of crisis from being so long-lasting.”

Katherine and her family thankfully find themselves in slightly better times, and she is quick to praise her current landlord who she says has been very kind and flexible during the pandemic. Despite this, they still face insecurity.

She said: “My husband’s work is insecure. We receive Universal Credit, and it feels unstable because it’s so conditional and subject to change. Sometimes you don’t find out about changes until the consequences have already hit like finding out you’ve been overpaid historically and then suddenly having to pay it back.”

Katherine believes this would change if Universal Basic income was introduced.

“What it would mean for us is a level of certainty that we haven’t had since we’ve become parents. Not even necessarily because it’s enough to live on but because it would be something that was a guarantee on which we could base long term decisions.

“My husband’s work is obviously physically hard. I don’t know how long he is going to be able to carry on at the pace that he is working at now. Also, he would like to re-train, go back to university and do a postgraduate or teaching qualification but that feels like a massive gamble. It’s a very high-anxiety existence and it would be nice to have some certainty to make decisions on.”

A Universal Basic Income would allow Katherine to plan for the future, something that at the moment is simply not possible.

“We would be able to sign my little my little boy up for swimming or gymnastics knowing that is something we could always afford rather than having to make a decision month by month and worrying about promising him things that we couldn’t deliver.

“We would do things like buy a reliable family car rather than buy a cheap run-around that is probably going to die in a year and need to be replaced.



“We would think about being able to save money so that we could afford to buy a house and not pay more than we would pay in a mortgage on rent to have no assets or capital or anything to show for it. I think we would feel less like we are being punished for things that have happened that are beyond our control.”

“The way universal credit operates is punitive and that eats away at you over time. It also makes you feel guilty and worth less than other people and like you’re not trying hard enough when I don’t think those things are true.

“A Universal Basic Income would not be money for nothing that would be squandered. It would be a stake in a system that will allow people to make better decisions.

“Even people who don’t need that money would put that money back into the local economy and that benefits someone else. Trusting people and seeing the best in people goes a long way. Universal Basic Income is an investment in people’s potential rather than punishment for their poverty.”

Vaccine Equity

I think it is fair to say we all hoped that this Christmas and New Year would be a different one than last year in terms of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the emergence of new variant Omicron means we once again face an uncertain future where we are hoping to get our booster vaccinations as soon as possible.

While we may have to wait weeks in some cases, we can be pretty certain that all those who wish to have our third vaccination will have the opportunity to do over the next month or so.

Yet, this is not the case across the globe.

Campaigners from the [People’s Vaccine Alliance](#) – a cause I fully support - say that the refusal of pharmaceutical companies to openly share their vaccine science and technology and the lack of action from rich countries to ensure access to vaccines globally have created the perfect breeding ground for new variants.

I WANT A PEOPLE'S VACCINE, NOT A PROFIT VACCINE.

#PEOPLESVACCINE
PEOPLESVACCINE.ORG



A year since a UK grandmother became the first person in the world to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, great strides have been made to fully vaccinate over three billion people, but many poorer parts of the world have been left behind.

While countries like the UK and Canada have had enough doses to fully vaccinate their entire populations, Sub-Saharan Africa has only received enough doses to vaccinate 1 in 8 people.

The number of people in the UK who've had their third booster jab is almost the same as the total number of people fully vaccinated across all of the world's poorest countries.

The People's Vaccine Alliance, which has over 80 members including the African Alliance, Oxfam and UNAIDS, are calling for pharmaceutical firms and rich nations to change course before it is too late.

Campaigners are urging rich nations, including the UK, to insist on the open sharing of successful vaccine technology and know-how and to fund a huge expansion in vaccine production all over the world.

Members and supporters of the coalition in Wales include Oxfam Cymru, the Wales Overseas Agencies Group, Wales and Africa Health Links Network, Size of Wales, PONT, CAFOD, Christian Aid Wales and Disability in Wales and Africa.

I am also fully behind this campaign as it is clear that, a year on from the first vaccine being given, the pandemic is still far from over for the world's poorest people, millions of whom still face a lengthy wait for their first lifesaving dose.

Protecting lives – both here in Wales and around the world – should be more important than protecting the outsized profits of pharmaceutical corporations who have already made billions from this crisis.

One of the seven well-being goals that public bodies have to aspire to a Globally Responsible Wales and, as a globally responsible nation, the Welsh Government has a proud history of supporting countries in the Global South and they should continue this by speaking out loudly and calling for the UK Government to compel pharmaceutical companies to share their lifesaving vaccines and technology with the rest of the world.



Affordable Housing Crisis

A lack of affordable housing has been a contentious issue in many areas of Wales for decades.

This has recently been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic and an increase in home-working and it is an issue that I have received more and more public correspondence regarding over the past year.

Involvement work my team has carried out with organisations campaigning on this issue has highlighted the extent and urgency of the housing crisis and the fact that it is a systemic issue.

Lack of access to affordable housing impacts on and is impacted by other issues such as the climate and nature emergencies, community cohesion, health and equality, with implications across all 7 of the well-being goals.

We have met with Siarter Cartrefi (Housing Justice Charter) an umbrella organisation campaigning to tackle the crisis and representing local communities across Wales.

They highlight the experience of those directly affected by lack of affordable housing, including young people unable to stay in the communities they grew up in, families being evicted from rental accommodation because the owner is changing to short-term let, and communities whose basic services cannot be staffed because workers are unable to live locally. The crisis is affecting both rural and urban communities, exacerbating problems such as child poverty.

The Bevan Foundation also recently wrote to me, supporting my call for action, and echoing Siarter Catrefi's call for an emergency housing summit or conference to discuss the crisis and co-create solutions.

They highlighted that a summit would help ensure that underheard voices are given a platform in the discussion.

Also key to these discussions has been Aled Roberts the Welsh Language Commissioner and his team. The housing crisis is particularly affecting (but not limited to) communities in Wales where a high proportion of people speak Welsh, therefore threatening the sustainability of the language and the rights of those who speak it.



In October, I wrote to the First Minister in relation to this issue and its impact on the well-being of Future Generations, asking for further details on Welsh Government plans to tackle the growing crisis.

I asked that communities be involved in generating solutions, in line with recommendations from my 2020 Future Generations Report that Welsh Government should “Work with organisations and communities to set a vision and long-term strategy for the future of housing in Wales.”

I also called for Welsh Government to make housing a human right in our Manifesto for the Future ahead of the Senedd elections. This call is championed by housing and homelessness charities in Wales, under the premise of the campaign.

The housing crisis is broader than bricks and mortar, and I've called on Government to ensure that the right to adequate housing is supported as a right to adequate living, and to commit to a 20-minute neighbourhood model, ensuring people can access key services closer to home; creating healthier, greener and happier communities.

In responding to my letter, and in a follow-up meeting held recently with myself and Welsh Language Commissioner Aled Roberts, Julie James MS Minister for Climate Change (under whose remit housing sits) outlined some of the proposals that Welsh Government have made to tackle the crisis, including their proposed pilot in Gwynedd.

The Minister also agreed on a follow-up meeting with Siarter Cartrefi to discuss the proposal of an emergency housing summit.

I will continue to press for urgency and a participative approach to tackling the crisis.

The Welsh Government is [currently consulting](#) on changes to planning policy on second homes and short-term holiday let – you can respond to the consultation until the 22nd of February.

Movement for Change: People's Newsroom Initiative

My team spoke to Shirish Kulkarni from The Bureau of Investigative Journalism's [People's Newsroom Initiative](#) about inclusive journalism, ensuring our diverse nation is reflected in our media and the

launch of a new Welsh network to connect people and communities historically marginalised or excluded from journalism and the media.

“As a journalist for over 25 years, I’m very clear that what journalism is, what it does, and who it’s made by has a profound effect on the society we aim to reflect and inform. Shaping a Wales of the future that’s more equal, more cohesive and has a vibrant and flourishing culture is going to need a journalism sector that’s far more inclusive than it currently is.

We are an increasingly diverse nation, but that’s not reflected in our media. The journalism industry is facing a number of existential crises, but key amongst those is the issue of 'Trust'.

If people and communities in Wales continue to be under-represented or (in some ways worse) MIS-represented, then trust will inevitably collapse even further.

If the journalism industry here isn’t reflective and representative of ALL our people and communities, then we run the risk that our conversations, culture and politics will diverge and fragment, with potentially devastating consequences for the future of Welsh society.

That’s why we’ve launched the Welsh Inclusive Journalism Network to enable all of us who’ve historically been marginalised or excluded from journalism to connect, support, organise and campaign.

Aiming to be shaped by its members, the network is open to anyone in Wales who feels they or the ir community has been systemically under-represented in the industry - black, brown, trans, disabled, working class etc. Our experiences will clearly not be the same, but alone there are too few of us, together we can express our power, support each other and build genuine change."



"This is as much for future journalists as current ones. Many of the expressions of interest and support so far have come from students, or young people who are interested in journalism. People who aspire to join the industry should know that someone has their back and will be there to support them if or when things get difficult. They should also have hope that things are changing, and that there are people working towards transformation with them.

As one person put it when asked what they wanted the network to do: 'To empower more people from under-represented communities to be able to join the industry and thrive within it and tell more (and more accurately tell) stories about their communities and the issues affecting them'.

We want to build the network collaboratively, to support current and future journalists to tell stories that build a Wales that's truly fit for the future."

Find out more about the Welsh Inclusive Journalism Network [here](#) and how to join [here](#).

Inspire! Adult Learning Awards 2022

Nominations are now open for the Inspire! Awards and this year there is a category for Wales for Future Generations.

The awards celebrate learning and skills and a call has gone out to nominate the fantastic people, projects and communities across Wales who demonstrate the transformation that lifelong learning can make.

Let's help present Inspire! Awards to those who are making a difference to their own lives and the lives of others.

Award categories include:

- Skills for Work
- Young Adult Learner
- Different Past: Shared Futures
- Essential Skills for Life
- Active Wales
- **Wales for Future Generations**

Closing date is 1 March 2022, for more information and to submit nominations please visit: www.learningandwork.wales



Nadolig Llawn!

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy, healthy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Thank you to all the incredible people and organisations we have worked with this year, I look forward to continuing our efforts in 2022.



Contact Us

Want to catch up on previous issues of the newsletter? You can find them on our website [here](#).

For more information get in contact here:

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Please note the office is currently closed and the best way to contact us is via our email address above.

