

## Written evidence from Disabled People Against Cuts [PCW0064]

Disabled People Against Cuts is a national network of grassroots disabled people and our allies. We have a formal membership of 3,800 covering England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and as well as 21,000 social media followers.

### **We welcome this opportunity to submit evidence outlining our concerns regarding proposals for the introduction of a universal basic income (UBI).**

Our concerns centre around potential impacts on disabled people and others who are reliant on the current social security system and state-funded support services in order to have their basic human needs met and be able to contribute to society.

We have major concerns about Universal Basic Income:

- There are different models of UBI and the devil is very much in the detail. Different models produce very different distributional impacts. Some supporters are in favour of a full UBI, others a partial UBI. Among our members, disabled people tend to be drawn by the idea of no longer having to go through assessments or being subject to conditionality and sanctions. The majority of basic income models for the UK recommend retaining a separate, parallel system for disability benefits which will still require an assessment process. They are therefore being drawn in under an illusion of what a UBI could deliver for them.
- The UK has in place a complex and targeted social security system. UBI trials in countries without the same levels of support infrastructure produce positive results, for example the pilots in Madhya Pradesh showed significant benefits for disabled people such as being able to afford food and medical assistance. These tell us that giving some money to people who have nothing helps them. Introducing a UBI in the UK is a completely different question. It would require major changes to the existing welfare and tax systems which will itself cost a considerable amount of money. The distribution of gains and losses would depend upon the detail of the UBI scheme.
- The cost of UBI in the UK at Guaranteed Minimum Income levels would significantly exceed current spending on cash benefits and tax-free allowances. A budget-neutral UBI would therefore require either a UBI below GMI levels, or additional tax increases.
- We are concerned that the cost and effort required to introduce a Universal Basic Income will divert funds and attention away from other already severely under-funded public services such as social care and from other issues with the current social security system that need urgently addressing, for example problems with inaccurate disability benefit assessments leading to terrible outcomes such as “benefit deaths”. Some advocates such as Professor Guy Standing actually promote UBI on the basis that it will allow savings to the social care budget. In his 2019 report *Basic Income as Common Dividends*, he raised the ‘incidental’ impacts of UBI in “reducing pressure on the

Treasury to pay for public and private carers. In considering the net cost of a basic income, this expected saving should be factored into the calculations.” At the rate paid by a modest basic income, what this would represent is an expansion of the current situation of vast over-burdening on carers without adequate recompense.

- It is our view that the majority of the public are in favour of a social security safety net that prioritises those most in need. It is unlikely that there would be broad support for a system based on universality at the expense of the most disadvantaged. Public money that is directly targeted at those most in need has far more progressive outcomes.
- The World Bank recommends a UBI in order to facilitate greater flexibilities in the labour market, reducing burdens on employers and removing the need for job security. However, research has shown that low control, low paid, insecure jobs are worse for people’s mental health than being unemployed. Disabled people are over-represented in low paid and insecure jobs and yet have the greatest needs for entitlements such as sick pay, protections from unfair

dismissal and stability. 19% of the working age population are disabled. Creating greater security and better conditions for workers will enable greater numbers of disabled people to be in paid employment. We believe that a UBI will undermine this goal.

For more information on our position regarding UBI please see: <https://dpac.uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/UBI-Solution-or-Illusion.pdf>

Instead, DPAC is in favour of a guaranteed decent income (as per recent proposals from the [Commission for Social Security](#)) that is not tied to conditionality, is means-tested while ignoring savings and is paid at the rate identified by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation as capable of providing a minimum income standard with tops ups for those who are long-term out of work and who are disabled. We support the removal of conditionality and sanctions which overwhelming evidence has now shown to be counterproductive while discriminating against disabled people and other disadvantaged groups. Bureaucracy and eligibility tests for benefits need to be made far more accessible and less onerous on claimants, however we do believe that an element of means-testing needs to be retained in order to target resources at those who are most in need.

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