

Written evidence submitted by Dr Nathaniel Adam Tobias Coleman

To the Treasury Committee,

In response to a petition that I and 111,621 citizens signed (<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/302284>), the Chancellor replied that

“The Government does not believe a Universal Basic Income is the best method to tackle the extraordinary situation resulting from COVID-19, because it does not target help to those who need it most.”

1. Why, then, has your select committee not posed, in its call for evidence, any questions about the Universal Basic Income that was demanded in a petition that had enough signatures to trigger a debate in Parliament?
2. Given that academics and activists in long-standing groups such as the Basic Income Earth Network or BIEN (basicincome.org) have been publishing and campaigning on research that clearly demonstrates how a Universal Basic Income would (of all possible policies) guarantee “help to those who need it most”, has your select committee not insisted that the Chancellor publish the Government’s advice concluding that a Universal Basic Income would (of all possible policies) “not target help to those who need it most”?
3. Clearly, as I have shown in my question #2, above, this debate turns on the Chancellor’s use, in the Government’s reply, of the verb “target”. “Targeting”, as opposed to “guaranteeing”, only achieves the aim of “helping those who need it most”, if your action of targeting actually hits your target. Yet widespread dissatisfaction with the Government’s financial plans and indicators such as increased use of food banks, rather than increased use of home shopping, during the Lockdown, show that the Government’s financial plans are NOT actually hitting the target of “those who need help the most”. If, as BIEN and other groups argue, a Universal Basic Income would guarantee, rather than just aim an arrow at, hoping it hits the target of, “help to those who need it the most”, why is the Government, during a national crisis, when “saving lives” is its “first priority”, putting the unfulfilled hope that an arrow shot by an archer from afar hits a distant and difficult to discern bullseye over and above a LIFE-SAVING GUARANTEE?

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