

# Basic Income Plus: Is UBI consistent with the goals of the Independent Living Movement?

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*The relationship between Universal Basic Income (UBI) and disability needs more discussion. Although basic income will bring some benefits for disabled people, the UBI that everyone is entitled to may not meet the extra costs that disabled people face in order to live an independent life in the community. This means that we must define an additional concept of Basic Income Plus (UBI+). The 'plus' is the amount that will meet the extra costs faced by disabled people<sup>1</sup> in exercising their citizenship. There is also important resistance to the idea of UBI by some within the disabled people's Independent Living Movement. Understanding and overcoming this resistance may prove important to the long-term success of UBI. In particular, it is argued here that the UBI community would benefit from attending to the core purpose of the Independent Living Movement, and to identifying the empowerment of potential as the ultimate goal of UBI.*

## Defining UBI+

Most advocates of Universal Basic Income (UBI) understand UBI as a transformative and liberating reform of income security. Many potential benefits have been identified: increased exercise of citizenship rights and responsibilities, personal liberation, the fulfilment of moral and ethical ideals, and many others (Duffy 2016a: 39; Raventós 2007; Torry 2015, 2016). So it may seem surprising that relatively little attention has been paid to the potential benefits (or risks) that UBI creates for disabled people. Here we will argue that this is a twofold error and that not only has UBI much to offer disabled people, but also that the movement for Independent Living, led by disabled people, has much to teach the UBI movement.

There is a tendency in discussions of UBI to treat the needs of disabled people, and any necessary reforms of disability benefits in the light of UBI, as a matter of additional complexity, to which attention must be paid at some future date (Torry 2013: 266). Of course, no advocate of UBI excludes disabled people from receiving UBI, but by treating the reform of disability benefits as a secondary problem it may appear that the needs of disabled people are not addressed by UBI or that they are somehow less important. It is our contention that the needs of disabled people should be central to discussions of UBI, and the question of how to adapt UBI for disabled people should be addressed as a matter of urgency (Elder-Woodward and Duffy 2018). We have adopted the term Basic Income Plus (UBI+) to describe

a model of UBI that includes additional payments to address people's additional needs.

As shown in Figure 1 below, UBI+ builds on the universal component of a UBI for all but then provides additional resources for three logically distinct, but compatible reasons:

1. To the extent that disabled people face disadvantage in finding paid work it would be possible to create an income supplement to reduce the level of relative poverty experienced by disabled people.
2. To the extent that disabled people face extra costs and barriers in their ability to function as equal citizens then it would be possible to create an income supplement to meet those extra costs.
3. To the extent that disabled people have need for extra assistance, then any necessary budget for that assistance could be transferred into the direct control of disabled people.

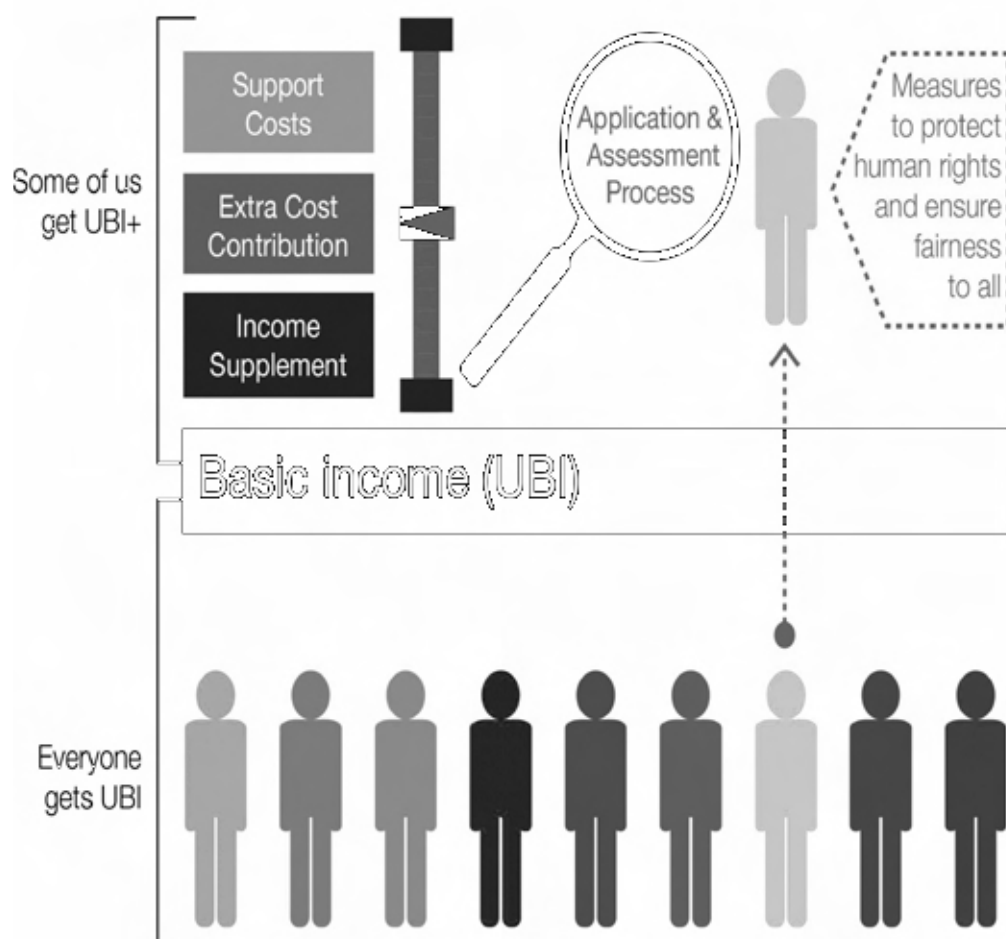


Figure 1: Universal Basic Income.

This model raises a number of further questions that would also need to be explored; but for the purposes of this article we are going to assume:

- A. The extra income supplements would be introduced in accordance with the spirit of UBI, that is it '... unconditionally has three aspects. First there would be no income conditions, that is no means testing ... Second there would be no spending conditions ... Third there would be no behavioural conditions, requiring people to behave in certain ways and not others ...' (Standing 2017: 6).
- B. There would still need to be some kind of assessment or claim process for the additional elements. This process should be designed with disabled people to be empowering and respectful. Obviously, this would be radically different from the medical and professionalised models of assessment currently being used.

However, within the limits of this article, we want to focus on three questions:

1. What are the potential benefits of UBI+ to disabled people?
2. Why do some disability leaders reject the idea of UBI?
3. What strategy, if any, could reconcile these different movements for social justice?

### The Benefits of UBI+

The most obvious benefit of UBI for disabled people is that it reduces poverty and is also associated with a wide range of wider benefits including: better mental and physical health, reduced domestic violence, increased IQ and better educational outcomes (Standing 2017; Torry 2015). All disabled people would benefit from these changes, but given that they are more likely to be in poverty than other groups, then they would tend to benefit more than most from these improvements (Elwan 1999).

The second benefit of UBI for disabled people is that it would eliminate a chronic insecurity built into most welfare systems. For instance, many systems of income security, like the Employment Support Allowance (ESA) in the UK, are organised so that the whole of your income

is dependent on proving the negative impact of your impairment on your ability to work. This assessment process is inherently negative and stressful (Saffer et al. 2018). But this stress is made even worse by the fact that if you feel you have been wrongly assessed and you try to challenge their assessment then you will not be put onto a lower benefit. Instead you will be treated as if you are entitled to nothing until your challenge reaches the tribunal. There is also an in-built delay, often of several months, while the benefit agency 'reconsiders' your claim before a case can go to tribunal. To receive any income you must borrow from friends and relatives during the wait, or beg for food from the growing number of charitable 'foodbanks' (Garthwaite 2016).

It is not clear yet how people who have failed disability tests will be treated under the UK's new system of Universal Credit (UC), but the situation looks likely to be even worse, since you might also lose the housing element of UC during a dispute. Even if you are successful under the UC, you may need to wait six weeks or more to get your first payment. So UBI+ would radically increase income security because the core UBI element of a cash grant would be received automatically, whatever the result of your disability assessment.

This is not just a technical change, for the intrinsic purpose of UBI is to overturn the strangely illiberal assumptions of neoliberalism: that people lack social rights and that it is the job of the state to direct and control citizens for the sake of an economic system which benefits the better-off. In the UK these illiberal assumptions have led to a welfare reform agenda which has deployed a dubious 'biopsychosocial' assessment of disability developed by medical practitioners (Waddell and Aylward 2005). Their theories on and practices of assessment led to the UK Government's Work Capability Assessment (WCA) and a harmful Work Programme (Hale 2014; Shakespeare et al. 2017; Stewart 2018). The WCA has also led to increased levels of suicide and mental illness (Barr et al. 2015). Instead of all this, UBI+ starts from a foundation of human rights and a commitment to support the freedom and security of everyone, whatever their impairment.

The third benefit of UBI+ is that it radically removes the poverty-traps caused by means-testing and conditionality, and enables people to do paid work on terms that make sense to the individual. Many disabled people can and want to carry out paid work; but they cannot necessarily work in exactly the same way as other people. For example, people with chronic illness may go through prolonged periods of incapacity; yet may also be able to do periods of paid work when they have adequate energy levels (Hale 2018: 11). Of course, opportunities for paid work also will depend on employers or customers; but UBI increases the ability to negotiate reasonable accommodations,

while maintaining reasonable incentives. You will never be made worse off by taking paid work and you will be taxed on your new earnings at the same rate as other citizens; no longer will you have to pay an effective tax rate close to or, sometimes even exceeding 100% (Duffy and Dalrymple 2014).

Fourthly, UBI+ helps achieve a long-standing objective of the Disabled People's Independent Living movement (hereafter referred to as the Movement), by establishing a universal system for funding care or support – what is sometimes called individualised funding or personal budgets. There has been important progress in disability rights in shifting control over service funding into the hands of disabled people (Duffy 2018a). However, these systems are often complex and unreliable, often applying multiple criteria for eligibility as well as means-testing.

The recent development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in Australia follows an international trend towards shifting power and control towards disabled people, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the demands of disabled people and families (Duffy 2013). However, this trend often faces resistance from the bureaucracies and other interests that it threatens. Often, funding remains controlled or constrained and people are unable to use it as they see fit (Duffy 2012). In some countries (like the UK and the USA), funding for disability support is also severely means-tested (Coalition on Charging 2008). But, by including personal budgets within the UBI+ model, it becomes easier to both increase personal control over support and to end the application of means-testing to disability support services.

The fifth benefit of UBI+ is political. Disabled people would share a common cause with all other citizens in ensuring that the base UBI level was set at the highest feasible level. Advocates of UBI, those fighting poverty and inequality, would have an important ally in the Movement if these causes were clearly linked by a common framework. Currently this is not the case, for disability-related benefits are disconnected from unemployment benefits and there is no advantage to disabled people from increases in unemployment benefit, and no advantage to unemployed people from increases in disability benefit. Worse, not only are the economic interests of these two groups disconnected, both are also subject to separate prejudice and scapegoating while this can also further undermine the alliances necessary to advance social justice.

In the UK, as neoliberalism has advanced, there have been increasing efforts to apply judgmental concepts based on meritocratic assumptions, such as labelling the

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poor as an 'underclass' and treating them as less than human. Television coverage of the lives of people using and abusing welfare services has only led to their greater vilification by the general population (Esmark and Schoop 2017). It is not surprising that many disabled people want to distance themselves from these stigmatised groups. At the same time, the UK has also seen a rise in hate crime directed against disabled people, often on the presumption that people are faking their disability to claim extra benefits. This has been widely promoted by the right-wing media (Roulstone and Mason-Bish 2013). So, while some fear that disabled people are faking their disability to gain unjustified advantages; some disabled people fear they must prove their incapacity to work to make sure they are not mistaken for the unemployed or the poor. Mutual suspicion is a poor basis for coherent social action and resistance to injustice.

### The Fear of UBI

It is a mistake to treat disabled people as a homogeneous group. There are many different disability groups, categorised by different impairments or by different histories of resistance to injustice. There are many people who might be defined as a person with a disability by others, but who do not identify themselves in this way, or who would identify themselves by some other aspects of identity, such as their faith, politics or place.

However, there is a line of argument strongly critical of UBI which can be identified with an important strand within the Movement, and which has been clearly expressed by several of its leaders. A particularly strong and clear case, which brings together a number of key themes, has been made by the UK campaigning organisation Disabled People Against the Cuts (known as DPAC) and we will use this argument as our primary source for outlining importance resistance to UBI (DPAC 2018).

The disabled people who lead the Movement are not alone in noticing that UBI is supported by both opponents of neoliberalism and by some of its advocates. This gives rise to multiple fears, including: that the UBI level will be too low; that it will function as a subsidy to employers; that it will lead to diminished employment rights or that it will be funded by cutting other essential services. There is a particular fear that UBI will be funded by cutting disability benefits, services, provisions and the regulations that support disabled people to be equal citizens within society at large. As DPAC state '... a welcome mat for the introduction of a UBI legitimises the neoliberal agenda of undermining social provision, increasing the rate of exploitation and disregarding the needs of disabled people' (DPAC 2019: 5).

The second criticism of UBI is that it is utopian and that feasible models of UBI would not be sufficiently generous

to reduce poverty, while an appropriate/acceptable level of UBI could not be afforded without excessive tax increases. Here DPAC cites research by Martinelli and his claim: 'The unavoidable reality is that such schemes either have unacceptable distributional consequences or they simply cost too much' (Martinelli 2017: i).

There is of course an interesting tension between the first claim, that UBI is compatible with neoliberalism and the second claim, that UBI requires a higher level of progressive taxation than is politically feasible. However, it is certainly fair for DPAC to observe that some advocates of UBI trade on its compatibility with both right-wing and left-wing agendas; and it is also true that advocates of UBI are often vague about the level of UBI they think reasonable, as well as the form of taxation that would fund it.

There is here an important lesson. In the era of neoliberalism, policies that please the centre and which pander to current assumptions are unlikely to win support from those, like disabled people, who are suffering most from the injustices caused by the current constellation of regressive forces and cuts to social programs. So, in the context of these ongoing experiences of marginalisation and oppression, it is not surprising that DPAC is very concerned that the World Bank's recent advocacy of UBI is closely linked to its desire to create a different kind of workforce where employers can offer less security because social systems are designed to provide the necessary platform of income security. The World Bank states, 'Changes in the nature of work caused by technology shift the pattern of demanding workers' benefits from employers to directly demanding welfare benefits from the state. These changes raise questions about the ongoing relevance of current labour laws' (World Bank 2019: 27).

For disabled people the idea that employers should be supported to reduce employment rights is deeply problematic. Reducing the obligations on employers does not seem progressive nor helpful to the disabled people's independent living movement. As DPAC puts it:

As a reform for labour, it is not as good as the demand for a job for all who need it at a living wage; or reducing the working week while maintaining wages; or providing decent pensions; or making full reasonable adjustments for disabled workers including guaranteeing sick pay and disability leave. These are demands that we need to be putting loudly here and now alongside calling for full and unconditional support for those of us unable to work (DPAC 2019: 24).



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DPAC's perspective is rooted in the long-standing battle of disabled people to overcome prejudice and exclusion, in particular exclusion from the benefits associated with being in employment – something which brings, not just income, but also status.

As industrialisation grew, so did the exclusion of disabled people from industrial society under both capitalism and communism (Slorach 2016; Phillips 2011). In the UK this exclusion was challenged by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) who defined disability as follows:

... it is necessary to grasp the distinction between the physical impairment and the social situation, called 'disability', of people with such impairment. Thus we define impairment as lacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body; and disability as the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities. Physical disability is therefore a particular form of social oppression (UPIAS 1976: 14).

It is not impairments which bar participation in the labour market, or society at large, but the attitudinal, environmental, organisational and cultural barriers which exist within them. Against this, leading advocates of UBI, such as Guy Standing, have proposed that the case for UBI is closely linked to the way in which automation, economic change and the global economy have led to the creation of a precariat as a growing and potentially dangerous class, many of whom can be mobilised to increase social instability (Standing 2011). In other words, the economy is changing and moving to a decrease in paid labour while market conditions and technological change tend to favour organisations that reduce labour costs and minimise those with higher employment costs. However, it is perfectly consistent for disabled people to see such a precariat, not as a natural outcome of economic change, but as another group being actively excluded from equal participation within society, just as disabled people are actively excluded. DPAC is right to challenge the idea that any group of people can be made redundant and ostracised from society.

These are important criticisms which cut to one of the most important philosophical questions of our time: what is the purpose of life and is paid employment the best means to advance human development? In fact, this question probably divides both advocates of UBI and the Movement. If the creation of meaning and value is closely

aligned to 'being employed' in the paid labour force, that is being in a contractual master–servant relationship with an organisation or individual who then directs our work in return for some limited material rewards, then social justice will focus on extending the social and material benefits of employment to more people, including the disabled.

However, if we do not accept that this is how the value of one's own life should be defined then we will want to explore strategies that support people being fulfilled in alternative ways and to ensure that when engaged in paid labour we are free to negotiate the most meaningful forms of work. We are at a crossroads and we face a choice between a capitalist or a human conception of life's social value (Lyons 2019).

Interestingly, the DPAC article assumes that UBI should be seen as a subsidy to employers, who can thereby reduce the net costs of employment; whereas many advocates of UBI tend to see it as a to guarantee to the potential employee that they will now be able afford to negotiate a better contract of work which is meaningful and dignified, because it is possible to turn down bad work. This hinges on whether the level of UBI is adequate and whether it actually enables people to avoid poverty.

For disabled people there is likely to be a significant tension between two groups:

1. On the one hand there are those who know that, with suitable adaptations and strong legal protections, they and many of their demographic can flourish in paid employment, and that they will benefit from the status and resources it conveys, within the current neoliberal framework.
2. On the other hand some will see those kinds of jobs as neither attractive nor feasible; however, they know that they can make a vital contribution to community life through caring for people, or for the commons, through civic and political action or through artistic endeavour. It is this second group of disabled (and non-disabled) people who may be more attracted to the possibilities created by UBI.

Finally, another critical theme that runs through the DPAC critique is the danger that UBI does not address the urgent needs facing disabled people today. The final section of the DPAC article makes clear a hope that the UK might be on the cusp of a more radical change in direction in policy, ideology and power. They state:

Britain is currently home to the biggest socialist movement in Europe where demands for a living

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wage, for health and social care support services free at the point of need and a social security system that provides an adequate standard of living free from conditionality are all popular. These are what we need to fight for, not opening the door to policies that will be used to maintain existing power inequalities, facilitate greater job insecurity and low wages and risk further public service cuts (DPAC 2019: 26).

Of course it might be said, particularly given the extremity of austerity in the UK and the failure to date in overturning the current neoliberal political consensus, that this is simply a different kind of utopianism. However, the matter is important and reflects an important difference between two groups. Advocates of UBI often seem to approach the issue from an academic perspective, outlining models or trying to persuade politicians and policy-makers. Street-level campaigning is growing, but it is very recent. But for disabled people issues of reduced income security, cuts in public services, and loss of employment rights are issues that demand urgent attention today, not further academic study.

### **Building a New Partnership**

If this analysis is broadly accurate then it suggests that it will take significant work and dialogue to connect these two movements. Our view is that this is worth doing for multiple reasons, but it must begin by finding every opportunity to debate these alternative perspectives and to explore whether there might not be practical policy innovations that could create common ground. As one American disabled writer argues:

People with disabilities and those who live, work with, and support them need urgently to educate ourselves about what a basic income is and what it could mean for us. We must begin to take part in the conversation now, to ensure that if a basic income does become a reality, it does so in a way that benefits people with disabilities, rather than leaving them even more vulnerable than they currently are (Harper 2017).

One very obvious area for potential collaboration is in the development of UBI pilots or policy that would enable us to test the idea of UBI+, for there is a good case that such pilots or policy changes to existing disability benefits would be both feasible and potentially liberating (UBI Lab 2019). For many, existing disability benefits could be converted into a form of UBI+ simply by:

- Ending work conditions.
- Ending income-testing and the clawing-back of earnings.

- Ending rules that limit entitlements for people in families.

This is not such an outrageous or utopian idea. For example in the UK, the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and its replacement, the Personal Independence Payment (PIP), already meet these criteria. Further, as Jennifer Mays explains, blind people in Australia have a pension which is equivalent to an approximate UBI+. This has been highly beneficial in enabling the inclusion of blind Australians in community life (Mays 2016). Reforms of this nature would turn disabled people into trailblazers for UBI and would enable empirical research on the individual and social benefits of a more empowering system.

Secondly, advocates of UBI need to recognise, and communicate clearly, that UBI is not a panacea for solving every social problem nor for meeting every vital need. Every distinct social good has its own distinct properties and logic. For example, healthcare services cannot be organised according to the same principles as UBI, as the need for healthcare varies individually. The same is true for education, housing and many other aspects of our shared community life. We need both universal income and universal public services and there should be no need to choose between them (Duffy 2018b).

Unless advocates of UBI are clear about these caveats, then they cannot expect to ease the fears of persistently disadvantaged groups such as disabled people. Basic income is not, and never can be, a suitable replacement for universal healthcare. Instead, for any meaningful alliance to be built around UBI, it will be essential that all sides are committed to the welfare state as a whole and to extending its emancipatory role. UBI must be seen to play an appropriate role within the whole welfare state, which includes measures to open up opportunities for all and to bar prejudice and discrimination.

In fact this is exactly what mainstream advocates of UBI propose, and no serious advocate of social justice is likely to believe that UBI is an alternative to universal education, healthcare or other vital services (De Wispelaere 2015: 20). Of course, in the wrong hands, any idea can be used badly. For an extreme example, Hitler exploited the idea of a national health service to advance eugenic policies (Office of United States Chief of Counsel For Prosecution of Axis Criminality 1946: 175). But this is not an argument against a national health service, instead it is an argument for ensuring that all such system are democratically accountable and run according to human-rights principles.

Advocacy for basic income needs to be built on a positive and progressive account of the purpose of the welfare state. Currently the welfare state is too often understood

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negatively, as merely a form of insurance or as a safety mechanism, to ensure basic needs are met. However, this is not the positive purpose envisioned by advocates of Independent Living nor by many advocates of UBI. In fact advocates of Independent Living have a well-established account of the purpose of the welfare state, which is rooted in the experience of disabled people and their battle for liberation from control and diminished social status.

The key to forging an alliance between the Movement and advocates of basic income may be to examine more deeply the idea of Independent Living. Independent Living is a philosophy which Jenny Morris defines using four principles:

1. All human life is of value.
2. Anyone, whatever their impairment, is capable of exerting choice
3. People who are considered disabled by society reaction to physical, intellectual and sensory impairment and to emotional distress have the right to assert control over their lives.
4. Disabled people have the right to participate fully in society; to take control; and be responsible for the outcome of our action (Morris 1993).

In our view it would benefit the UBI movement to adopt this vision and to see the fight for UBI as part of an effort to build an emancipatory welfare state. It is not enough to think in terms of meeting needs, instead we need to see the purpose of the welfare state as being to empower potential.

The possibility of connecting these different progressive quests – to achieve UBI and to ensure collective empowerment – depends on rethinking some of our assumptions about how the economy functions and what counts as a socially valuable contribution. The capitalist version of social value – use by others for financial reward – seems unlikely to be the basis for the liberation or emancipation for anyone, and particularly for many disabled people. Building a society of equals requires establishing a conception of citizenship which is inclusive and within which everyone's unique gifts can flourish, and where money and power are not used to determine human worth (Duffy 2016b: 27).

Australia is in an interesting position to work on the relationship between UBI and the rights of disabled people. The development of the *Every Australian Counts* campaign was an important national innovation where disabled people and families worked with professional

groups to define a new universalist vision for disability rights (Galbally 2016). Campaigners successfully engaged the general public by enabling them to see that disability rights were not separate rights for separate people, but instead they were part of a universal system of social security for all.

There remain enormous challenges to turn the aspirations of this campaign into meaningful reforms. There is no doubt that the progress made thus far has been significant and, most importantly, that the ongoing pressure exerted by disabled people and families has kept human rights at the forefront of public debate.

The battle for UBI (and UBI+) would benefit from similar attention to the *Every Australian Counts* campaign to developing a wider public understanding of the core ideas, the social choices ahead, and the many different groups that might benefit. But the battle for Independent Living in Australia (and elsewhere) may also benefit from converting the individualised funding that is currently being deployed by complex bureaucratic systems (like the The National Disability Insurance Agency) into a genuine entitlement and the rightful property of disabled people themselves (Duffy, 2013).

## Conclusion

UBI is a technical and political system for redistributing money directly to citizens. There are many good reasons to believe that such a system could have many positive impacts in terms of advancing human rights and reducing inequality. However, it is how it is implemented, and the beliefs and practices of those who implement it that will determine what it will actually achieve. Any system can be used well, or badly; and it is unwise to have faith in any technical and political system, purely as an end in itself.

Independent Living does not just require technological and political change, it is also a philosophy of emancipation and equality. Disabled people, based on their lived experience of resisting oppression, have developed insights into the purpose and meaning of life. They realise that every human being has value and can live a life of meaning, if they have the freedom, resources and support to make this possible.

Advocates of UBI would be wise to pay attention to the fears and hopes of disabled people, because disabled people tend to be much more aware of the importance and the perils of the welfare state. Advocates of UBI would be wise to adopt the goal of Independent Living as their own goal and to think clearly how UBI would need to function in practice so that it supports the rights and inclusion of all disabled people. If they do not, then they cannot



expect the support of disabled people in advocating for UBI. Advocates of UBI need to pay more attention to the question of how UBI is understood and implemented unless they are happy to see UBI exploited by those who do not share their commitment to social justice.

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## End Notes

1. Disabled people is the preferred political terminology in the United Kingdom for the disability social movement. For Australia, the terminology adopted is people first – that is people with disabilities. Despite differences in terminology, both the UK and Australia employ 'disability' from a critical activist standpoint to highlight the oppression, injustice and structural inequities experienced by people with disabilities throughout history and in modern times.

## Authors

Simon Duffy (Centre for Welfare Reform - [simon@centreforwelfarereform.org](mailto:simon@centreforwelfarereform.org)). Simon is a philosopher and social innovator who works to improve the welfare state. He is a regular public speaker, consultant and international government policy advisor. Simon is Director of The Centre for Welfare Reform, an independent think tank and research centre, which he founded in 2009. The Centre shares and develops social innovations to promote human rights and equal citizenship for all. He is also Secretary to the international cooperative Citizen Network which works to advance citizenship for all. In 1996 Simon founded Inclusion Glasgow to provide radically individualised support to people with complex disabilities. He went on to help create a series of new organisations in Scotland and England to promote equality and inclusion. He has led thinking on self-directed support and individual budgets and from 2003 to 2009 he was CEO of 'In Control'.



This work led to a profound shift in the organisation of social care in England. He lives in Sheffield and is co-founder of UBI Lab Sheffield that works to advance basic income. Simon has a doctorate in moral philosophy and writes on the welfare state, citizenship, social justice and inclusion. Key publications include *Unlocking the Imagination* (1996), *Keys to Citizenship* (2003) *Women at the Centre* (2011) *A Fair Income* (2011) *Peer Power* (2012) and *The Unmaking of Man* (2013). Simon is also a regular contributor to the Huffington Post. His awards include the RSA's Prince Albert Medal and the Social Policy Association Award for outstanding contribution to social policy.

James Elder-Woodward (Centre for Welfare Reform - jim.elderwoodward@gmail.com). Born with cerebral palsy, James Elder-Woodward has had life-long experience of disability, not only as a health and social service user, but also as a service provider, planner and researcher. He has worked for central government, local authorities, the health service, the voluntary sector and universities. He was one of the founders of the Glasgow Centre for Independent Living, the first centre in Scotland. He has been chair of the Scottish Independent Living Coalition, Executive Advisory Committee of the Independent Living Project, Co-Chair of the Scottish Government's Independent Living Partnership Board, Convener of the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living, Strategic Board member of the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, Board Trustee of Capability Scotland and chair of the Scottish Committee of the Campaign for a Fair Society. He is also a Fellow of the Centre for Welfare Reform. He has written a number of articles and papers on disability and independent living, including co-authoring a book for social care workers *Social Work in a Changing Scotland* (2018) For his lifelong work to promote the rights of disabled people Jim was awarded an OBE in 2012, and in 2015 he was given an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Glasgow.

### story

Thrown down & then a random  
settling to toe poke a pattern

& make some sense from this distance  
as if memory caught could now

order the photographs  
by date, place & who

your death notice  
is about as solid as it gets

RORY HARRIS,  
LARGS BAY, SA.

### A few wise men

They told him off, as he smeared  
the sky with two-and-a-half strokes  
of a cheerful rainbow.  
Curious, he looked deep into the night sky, and

wondered what lay on the other side.  
Only to be scolded, yet again.  
Speculating about the heavens, is blasphemous,  
he was reminded. Then,

before he slept that night,  
they snatched his lullaby, and handed  
him a prayer. You should know this 'God',  
'your' God, 'our' God - they instructed him sternly.

That night, though,  
someone else's 'God' turned hostile.  
The little kid, woken up by gunfire that  
wouldn't relent,  
called upon 'his' God. The night, however, belonged

to the hostile 'God' that echoed through the streets,  
silencing all prayers hurled at any 'other' Gods.  
The night orphaned him, and  
the dawn that followed, was bereft of mercy.  
He held no choice, he was told. Neither for a lullaby,  
or a prayer.

So who decides my future, he queried.  
A few wise old men, they said, as they transported  
him to a new land. You will be safe there, they  
assured him. At nightfall, as he held down the  
window blinds with his fingers, and looked out,  
the night sky was lush with stars, as always,

yet it held no allure for him. Deprived  
of a 'God' and a 'lullaby', he had been crowned a 'refugee'.  
They never addressed him as a 'kid' from that day.  
He was 'foreign policy'.

SANAM SHARMA,  
MELBOURNE, VIC.