**Steering Group formed to explore Universal Basic Income trials in Northern Ireland**

A groundbreaking new group has been established to explore the feasibility of Universal Basic Income (UBI) trials in Northern Ireland.

2020 was a landmark year for Universal Basic income in Northern Ireland, with 6 of its 11 local councils passing motions calling for trials of UBI in their area, and parties across the political spectrum calling for the idea to be tested.

Building on this momentum and the national conversation around the need for continued financial support in the wake of the pandemic, local authorities and other key stakeholders have now formed a new working group to deliver trials of UBI here

On 12 January 2021 the first meeting of the **Northern Ireland Universal Basic Income Trials Steering Group** was held.

Chaired by [UBI Lab Northern Ireland](https://twitter.com/ubilabni?lang=en), the Steering Group aims to connect the supporting councils with wider civil and academic society in order to bring trials to fruition.

Delegations attended from Belfast City Council and Derry City & Strabane District Council, each of which has committed to exploring the feasibility of a basic income trial in their area. Also in attendance were councillors from Causeway Coast and Glens District Council, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council and Ards & North Down Borough Council as well as representatives from Advice NI, The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and the UBI Lab Network.

The meeting included contributions from Paul Vaughan, Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods at Fife Council, who was involved in setting up a similar steering group of four local authorities in Scotland which secured government funding and produced a detailed [feasibility study](https://basicincome.scot/2020/10/06/cpw20basicincomefeasibility/) into a UBI trial there.

A presentation was also given on the UBI Lab Northern Ireland pilot proposal for a [‘](https://www.ubilabnetwork.org/resources)[Real](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a7b08c0d0e628f80b2cce36/t/5f7b2810927caa7f7aedd00b/1601906746178/A%2Bproposal%2Bfor%2BUniversal%2BBasic%2BIncome%2B-%2BUBI%2BLab%2BNorthern%2BIreland%2B-%2BOct%2B20.pdf) [Peace Dividend’](https://www.ubilabnetwork.org/resources) which was published in October 2020. The proposal outlines two fully-costed administrative models - a ‘top-up’ model of £400 (maximum) a month, and a ‘full replacement’ model of £900 (maximum) a month which would replace most benefits.

The proposal is the first of its kind to promote basic income as a means of aiding the peace process, through analysing the impact UBI may have on communities emerging from conflict.

The meeting concluded with tangible steps to explore all viable locations for a UBI trial in Northern Ireland, with agreement on both Belfast and Derry City as the most viable locations, and a commitment to explore the cost of a full feasibility study, akin to the one carried out in Scotland.

Patrick Brown, co-founder of UBI Lab Northern Ireland and a final year PhD student at Queen’s University, said:

“We are delighted that the first Steering Group meeting was a success, bringing together representatives from 5 different local authorities and a range of key stakeholders. 2020 showed us the need to explore new ideas as a way to provide people with more economic security and support in difficult times. Now we must get to work in building credible proposals to test those ideas and gather data on them, so that they can inform a nationwide roll out of UBI in the future. In particular for Northern Ireland, we have the unique opportunity to test UBI’s efficacy as a ‘Peace Dividend’ and consider in detail the impacts it could have in the context of a post-conflict society.”

[Invitation for Comments]

Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, **SDLP** Councillor Brian Tierney said:

“The concept of UBI is particularly relevant for areas such as our own that are constrained in so many ways by factors beyond our control due to the Troubles. Many of the issues we already experience as a result of poverty and under development are likely to be further compounded by the impact of Covid-19. It is timely, therefore, that we explore the feasibility of UBI as a means of offering additional economic support to assist with recovery and to build strong, independent, sustainable communities. I am pleased that our Council is lending its support to this campaign and that we have a strong voice on this steering group. I look forward to seeing the development of proposals to test the viability of UBI locally.”

Peter McReynolds, Alliance Councillor for Belfast City Council said:

“I was delighted to take part in the first UBI Steering Group as an Alliance Representative and Belfast City Councillor. There is real momentum behind Universal Basic Income and these discussions are a major step forward in achieving it. 2020 posed significant challenges but we have seen Governments respond to them creatively and in ways unimaginable beforehand. With more voices shouting louder than ever before about the benefits of a UBI, I can’t wait to see where our discussions will lead us.”

About UBI Lab Network (parent organisation to UBI Lab Northern Ireland)

The [UBI Lab Network](https://www.ubilabnetwork.org/) is a worldwide network of citizens, researchers, activists and campaigners exploring the potential of Universal Basic Income. The network is working towards piloting

basic income trials and creating a movement for change through a large network of UBI Lab groups around the world and in cities and regions across the UK including Sheffield, Newcastle, Northern Ireland, Kirklees, Leeds, Liverpool, Jakarta, Bucharest, York, Birmingham and Hull.

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