A BIG LOCAL BASIC INCOME:
PROPOSAL FOR
A LOCALLY-LED BASIC INCOME PILOT

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Acknowledgements:

The Local Task Forces in each area led the community consultations and drove this project forward.

Jarrow Local Task Force: Hannah Burman, Rosalind Taylor, Anne Corrigan, Angie Angus, Rebecca Maw, Chris Pickering, Cllr Paul Milburn

Grange Local Task Force: Mike Segal, Julia Hines, James Masters, Daniel Mermelstein, Sandy Barker, Mariella Hill, Sachin Patel and Ismail Abdi

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Autonomy is an independent research organisation which creates data-driven tools and research for sustainable economic planning.

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FOREWORD
The Basic Income Conversation was launched at the end of 2019, and since then we have talked to thousands of people about basic income. Through the pandemic, political turbulence and with the backdrop of the climate crisis people have talked to us about how a basic income would reduce stress, increase their choices about how they could spend their time and allow them to do the work that was most valuable.

During these conversations people always tell us the reasons their hometown or city is the perfect place to try a basic income. Places across the UK offer unique circumstances that would tell us more about how a basic income would function in different communities if tested there. The people familiar with these communities have an intuitive sense of the benefits the policy would have there. When asked what they want to happen next, they often want to see basic income tested, proven and used to make the case for a national policy.

National conversations about basic income tend to quickly turn to pilots. A basic income is a transformative policy, and it’s understandable that policymakers want to gather evidence to make sure it is an effective choice - even if, in a broader context, this is an unusual approach. Universal Credit, for example, was not piloted anywhere near as extensively as basic income already has been.

Pilots that give everyone in a geographic area a basic income and test the community-level effects offer the best approach. This type of pilot was proposed by the Scottish basic income pilot feasibility study in 2020. But those projects were blocked by a lack of Westminster support. The more recent Welsh pilot has learnt from the work in Scotland, and was launched for care leavers in 2022.
Our proposal outlined in this report differs from government-led pilots. These pilots would be community-led. They come from interest in basic income in Jarrow and Grange, East Finchley. Nearly 100 years ago, 200 men marched from Jarrow to London to protest the unemployment and poverty they suffered at home - problems that are still not solved. The Grange area of London lays bare the level of inequality in the UK, with some of the richest neighbourhoods situated minutes from some of the poorest. This pilot proposal is about taking action now to get closer to a basic income for all in these communities and across the UK.

This proposal is about making a political point. Asking people in positions of power, funders and politicians, to put their money where their mouth is to get the pilot off the ground. To provide people with unconditional cash and pay attention to what happens, the benefits that we’ve already seen in dozens upon dozens of pilots globally. Over 100 basic income pilots with a similar purpose have been launched in the USA, many privately funded and community led. We hope that we will be able to secure backing to get these proposals underway as soon as possible.

We hope that these pilots will lead to more awareness and a better understanding of basic income. We hope that the public support for the policy will be taken more seriously by politicians and policy makers. Leading to more comprehensive pilots, a less conditional, more generous welfare system in the short term and ultimately a basic income for all.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Grange Big Local in East Finchley and Big Local Central Jarrow have led two years of community consultation to design a basic income pilot in their areas.

Community consultation, supported by Basic Income Conversation and Northumbria University, found substantial support for basic income pilots. A combination of door-knocking, workshops, roundtables and surveys found that the majority of respondents felt both that it was a good idea in principle and that it would be good to run pilots in their local areas.

The pilot model:

15 people in Jarrow and 15 people in Grange, East Finchley receive a basic income of £1,600 a month for two years.

Researchers will work with the people getting these payments to understand the difference they make to their lives.

This research and these people’s stories are used to make the case for a national basic income and more comprehensive trials to fully understand the potential of a basic income in the UK. This pilot would ensure evaluation materials work and produce valuable primary data that can be used for further research in the short term.
The pilot would also recruit a control group. This group would not receive basic income payments but would do questionnaires, focus groups and interviews as part of the pilot evaluation to understand the difference in experience between people receiving a basic income and people not. The people in this group would be paid for their time.

Validated evaluation measures for the pilot would be drawn from the Northumbria University team’s existing protocol resource. This process would involve co-production with communities. We therefore do not propose a specific research protocol for evaluation of impacts of the basic income pilots at this stage, but the existing protocol resource provides clear indications of robust methods. A mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods that have been validated and received ethical approval at universities is recommended.

All outputs should be produced in consultation with community members, with reports designed to be as accessible as possible. It may be advisable to include design costs for easy-read versions of reports. Co-authorship should be offered to community members providing substantive input. All formal community involvement should be remunerated at Northumbria University research assistance rates (currently £17.19 per hour though in equivalent vouchers where appropriate for DWP purposes) or on the basis of in-kind support.
We outline an approximate pilot budget of £1.642 - 1.662 million. This would include:

- Basic income payments: £1.152 million
- Evaluation activities with control group: £20,000 - £40,000
- Research team: £290,000
- Administrative team: £60,000
- Community support team: £120,000

The key concerns that came out of the community consultation were the risk to participants, including how payments would interact with taxes and existing benefits, potential for tensions within the community, and how participants could transition into and out of the pilot. These need to be carefully managed, in collaboration with the community, throughout the pilot.

Finally, communication of findings must be agreed with the communities to ensure that perspectives are not misreported or misinterpreted and that communities are able to ‘tell their own story’.
INTRODUCTION
This report outlines a proposal for a basic income micro-pilot. This proposal is the result of two years of community consultation in Central Jarrow and the Grange area of East Finchley.

**INTRODUCTION**

**WHAT IS A BASIC INCOME?**

A basic income is defined by the following five characteristics:

- **Periodic:** It is paid at regular intervals (for example every month), not as a one-off grant.

- **Cash payment:** It is paid in an appropriate medium of exchange, allowing those who receive it to decide what they spend it on. It is not, therefore, paid either in kind (such as food or services) or in vouchers dedicated to a specific use.

- **Individual:** It is paid on an individual basis and not, for instance, to households.

- **Universal:** It is paid to all, without means test.

- **Unconditional:** It is paid without a requirement to work or to demonstrate willingness-to-work.
Basic income is often discussed as a policy response when considering:

- Reducing poverty and inequality
- Promoting rights, efficiency, growth and flexibility in the economy and labour market
- Supporting education and currently unpaid labour like volunteering and caring
- Benefitting public health
- How to maximise the social benefits of automating labour
- Guaranteeing all citizens a level of income that meets their basic needs

A basic income pilot is a small-scale scheme designed to test the real world impacts of payments that meets the five criteria above. One of the best options is to give everyone in a geographic community a basic income. Others, like the one proposed in this report, produce useful stories or qualitative data that can be used to inform further research, to test evaluation materials for larger pilots and to generate political interest in the policy.

A national basic income policy depends on big changes to tax and social security systems, the economy and labour market. Pilots have often been run by governments responding to popular support for basic income, to test the potential benefits of a national policy.

Devolved governments have been at the forefront of the work on basic income in the UK. Four local authorities in Scotland, Glasgow, Edinburgh, North Ayrshire and Fife, led a Scottish Government-funded project to produce the design of pilots in Scotland.¹ This multi-year, £250,000 project concluded that pilots were feasible and desirable – but would require widespread political support as well as primary legislation from the UK government. As a result, the project progressed no further.

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In 2022, the Welsh basic income pilot launched, seeing 500 18-year-olds leaving the care system receive a monthly payment of £1,600 for 24 months.² This pilot represents the biggest progress made on basic income in the UK’s history.

Proceeding with the support of a national government and a design that allowed the pilot to go ahead without collaboration from the UK government, the pilot will benefit from extensive evaluation and research activities.

**MICRO-PILOTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS**

A micro-pilot is a small-scale basic income pilot. Some government-led pilots may operate on this small scale but micro-pilot projects tend to be privately funded and community led. The Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration, a mayor-led programme in California, is an example of this kind of project. In February 2019 the project commenced, 125 residents were paid a guaranteed income of $500/month for 24 months – funded through private donations.³

Sometimes micro-pilots, like the one in Stockton, are termed ‘demonstrations’. Demonstrations include the political objective of making a statement about the potential positive impacts of a basic income, in addition to ‘testing’ its effects.

This is done through supporting participants to tell their stories alongside communicating the data collected during the pilot. This brings the impact of the basic income payments to life and leads to more political and public awareness of the policy.

Big solutions are needed for big problems, like poverty and financial insecurity. Basic income is a big solution. But long-term thinking and the implementation of big solutions can require a big leap of faith. These projects help to demonstrate what a world with a basic income would look like in order to influence policy-making in the short term and build toward a universal basic income for all.

Since the demonstration in Stockton over 100 basic income pilots across 30 states have been launched. These will benefit more than 38,000 people navigating harsh economic conditions directly. This work is also influencing state and federal policy-making seeing the introduction of unconditional cash transfers like Stimulus Checks and Child Tax Credit.

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³ Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (2021), ‘About SEED’. Accessible at: https://www.stocktondemonstration.org/about-seed
WHY A UK MICRO-PILOT?

The purpose of this micro-pilot project would be both to collect new data on basic income in the UK context and to make a political statement about the idea of a basic income through demonstrating its impact.

Pilots indicate how a basic income would affect people, what communities would do differently with a basic income, and what support they might need alongside a basic income. Given recent large devolution deals, including in the North East, there is an opportunity to engage with policymakers and to provide them with a model for transformative, flagship social policy.

The scale of the pilot we are proposing in this report is small. This is to make sure it is possible to secure the investment needed to make it happen. This pilot would produce important qualitative data for further research on basic income, including modelling its potential effects.

It will help make the case for more unconditional and universal benefits policies in the short term. Research has shown just how badly sanctions affect people’s mental health. The introduction of Universal Credit, for instance, led to increased psychological distress but not to an increase in employment. A more unconditional and universal approach to income support could prove better for people’s health and mental health. These pilots will help demonstrate that better policies are effective, popular and possible.

The Welsh basic income pilot shows what can be done in the short term, even without collaboration from the UK government. The Scottish work outlined what a gold standard basic income pilot would look like: an entire community would be paid a basic income so we could better understand what a real, universal basic income that goes to everyone would do. The pilots we are proposing will help push governments in the UK towards delivering the most comprehensive universal basic income pilots possible or a basic income policy, rather than simply more pilots. The work in the USA has shown how effective the community-led pilot approach is.

It should not be underestimated that these proposals came from community action. The people in Grange and Jarrow, and many other places around the UK, believe that basic income would benefit their communities and they want to see this tested. These pilots would show people around the UK that a basic income is within reach and send a powerful message to decision makers that serious consideration of long term solutions like basic income is an essential part of the UK’s future.

# THE PILOT

## BASIC INCOME MICRO-PILOT PROPOSAL

| WHY? |  
|------|---|
| • Test the impact of a basic income in England for the first time.  
• Make the political case for basic income through demonstrating its benefits.  
• Act on support for the policy in these communities.  
• Produce a 'proof of concept' for local basic income schemes.  
• Ensure evaluation materials work and are appropriate for the audience. |  

| WHERE? | Jarrow, South Tyneside and Grange, East Finchley |

| WHO? |  
|------|---|
| Active group: 30 individuals, aged 18+  
Control group: 30+ individuals, aged 18+  
Quotas in each group to ensure diversity reflects local demographics. 20% places reserved for people with disabilities. |  

| HOW LONG? | 2 years |

| HOW MUCH? | Active group: £1,600 a month  
Control group: Remunerated at Northumbria University research assistance rates (currently £17.19 per hour though in equivalent vouchers) for participation in evaluation activities. |

| COSTS |  
|------|---|
| Basic income payments: £1.152 million  
Evaluation activities with control group: £20,000 - £40,000  
Research team: £290,000  
Administrative team: £60,000  
Community support team: £120,000  
**Total:** £1.642 - 1.662 million |
VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The principles that underpinned the work that led to the pilot proposal and the pilots themselves are:

» **Community driven** - The community will lead the decision making at every stage of this project.

» **Respect** - We will respect each other’s roles and perspectives.

» **Support** - We will support people throughout the project and after it ends.

» **Fairness** - Participation is open to all residents, without discrimination or judgement.

» **Transparency** - We will be clear on the aims, processes and obligations involved in the project.

» **Confidentiality** - We will keep information confidential unless agreed otherwise. All data will be securely stored.

» **Risk of harm** - Involvement in the pilot will not bring harm to participants or the community.

» **Learning** - We will prioritise learning by collecting useful data.

» **Trust** - We will work to build trust in the project by being trustworthy ourselves. We will trust the community throughout.

» **Accessible** - We will involve as many people as possible in the project. We will explain all relevant information in accessible language.

» **Informed consent** - The community will have access to the information they need to make informed decisions about the project.

» **Universal** - People will be able to apply to take part in the project regardless of their income or situation.
THE PROPOSAL

Across the two areas, the Local Task Forces in Jarrow and East Finchley collected input from residents at hosted events, in focus groups, through door-knocking and other community consultation exercises. This proposal has translated those conversations with local people into a practical, actionable plan for a basic income pilot.

This proposal will be used to facilitate discussions with funders and policymakers with the intention of securing the partnerships and investment required to deliver the pilot. In line with the values and principles that underpin this project, we expect the pilot and its evaluation to evolve with further input from the community and based on the investment secured.

THE TEAM

The team that led this project worked across three groups:

- **Local Task Forces** - Residents from the area and representatives from Big Local Central Jarrow and Grange Big Local formed Local Task Forces that led the community consultations. They reviewed decisions made about the pilot proposal to ensure these align with what is being heard at the local level.

- **National Steering Group** - The Basic Income Conversation team, representatives from the Local Trust and members of the Local Task Forces formed the National Steering Group. This group managed the project, the direction of the community consultations and recruited the research partners. They were also closely involved with producing the pilot proposal.

- **Research Partners** - Elliott Johnson, Senior Research Fellow in International Relations and Politics at Northumbria University, who was lead author of this proposal. Prof Matthew Johnson, Professor of Politics at Northumbria University, provided oversight and input into the design of this proposal.
THE LOCATIONS
THE LOCATIONS

This project grew out of interest in basic income in Jarrow and Grange. The first step was a series of conversations with 86 residents, spread across eight Big Locals. These conversations took place in Autumn 2020, as residents were learning to live under the social conditions of the Covid pandemic.

These conversations inspired a desire to do further work on basic income and, with the support of the Basic Income Conversation team, this was explored with several of the Big Locals. It led to the concept of this project: producing a proposal for a local basic income pilot with input from the community.

Initially, 6 Big Locals engaged residents to see if there was an appetite to form a team that could push the project forward. This succeeded in Jarrow and Grange and they formed the Local Task Forces that led the work in these areas.
THE BIG LOCAL PROGRAMME

Big Local areas were selected by the National Lottery Community Fund from 2010 to 2012, in collaboration with local authorities and local civil society organisations. Many of the 150 places selected as Big Local areas suffered from low levels of civic activity—they were chosen because they had not received what was perceived to be their fair share of lottery funding, typically because of a lack of community organisation, organised activity, or advocacy to bring funding into the area.

The £217m originally provided by The National Lottery Community Fund to support this programme is the largest single-purpose Lottery-funded endowment ever made, and the biggest ever investment by a non-state funder in place-based, resident-led change.

Big Local is radically different from other funding programmes due to a set of core principles that include being long term (funded over 10-15 years), resident-led, non-prescriptive (enabling residents to spend the funding on their own terms), patient and non-judgemental (giving communities the time and opportunity to learn, make mistakes, overcome challenges) and accompanied by flexible and responsive support provided by Local Trust.

The outcomes set for Big Local were deliberately broad to provide maximum scope for communities to set their own priorities. At the heart of Big Local is a vision of empowered, resilient, dynamic, asset-rich communities making their own decisions on what is best for their area.

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5 Local Trust (2023) ‘About Big Local’. Accessible at: https://localtrust.org.uk/big-local/about-big-local/
BIG LOCAL CENTRAL JARROW

Jarrow is a town in the north-east of England, located on the south bank of the River Tyne. It has a rich cultural and industrial heritage. From the middle of the 19th century until 1935, Jarrow was a centre for shipbuilding, and was the starting point of the Jarrow March against unemployment in 1936. The people of Jarrow are proud of its cultural and industrial heritage and there is a strong sense of community throughout all the areas of Jarrow.

Today, Jarrow is an area of deprivation with its industries closed and the majority of homes being social housing. Indeed, 85.3% of people live in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation. The remainder live in an area that is in the most deprived 30%. The Upper Tier Local Authority in which Jarrow is located, South Tyneside, was the 22nd most deprived in England in 2019 and is representative of the sort of community targeted by the Government for Levelling Up. The health of the population in the area is also poor, the life expectancy of residents is 10 years less than a person living in a neighbouring ward of Cleadon. Men have a life expectancy of just 70, compared with a regional average of 78 and national average of 80. Indeed, 98.3% of people live in a health deprivation ‘hotspot’. There are 4,273 people living in Central Jarrow.

- 41% of children aged 0-19 are in relative low-income families in Central Jarrow compared with 29% across the North East.
- 26% of people have a limiting long-term illness in Central Jarrow compared with 22% regionally.
- 33% of people have no qualifications in Central Jarrow compared with 26% in the North East.
- 16.4% of working-age people claim workless benefits compared with the regional average of 10.5%.
- 17.2% claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP) compared with 10.9% across the North East.

Data in this section is sourced from Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion’s (OCSI) Local Insight Profiles (latest report 8 November 2022): https://local.communityinsight.org/. This collates data from official sources at local area level.
In 2012 the Centre of Jarrow was designated as a “Big Local Area”. Local residents and partner agencies are using the funding from the Big Lottery Fund to make a massive and lasting difference to their community. They are looking to bring together all the local talent, ambitions, skills and energy from individuals, groups and organisations who want to make their area an even better place to live. As such, it provides an appropriate base to undertake research with under-represented groups of people who are likely to be disproportionately affected by the welfare system and changes to it. This ensures integration of multiple knowledge and skill sets derived from lived experience of vulnerability to welfare reform, regional inequality and inequalities in health.

The following quotations from residents of Jarrow indicate why Big Local Central Jarrow are involved with the project:

“There are people who can’t see beyond a week or month. Holidays, culture and activities are blocked off to them”.

“In areas of the North-East, we suffered through industrial changes in the 1980s. The inequalities between here and the rest of the country are huge. UBI could improve the health profile of the region”.

In one consultation event, stakeholders stated that there were many marches in the 1930s, but that people remember the Jarrow March. Given Jarrow’s history of being at the forefront of social change and leading the charge, there was a feeling that Jarrow is the place to prove whether basic income works.

Find out more about Big Local Central Jarrow [here](#).
GRANGE BIG LOCAL

Grange Big Local (GBL) is in a small pocket of East Finchley, in suburban London. Their vision is to promote a thriving and caring community.

There are 6,542 people living in Grange. While Grange scores comparatively well on a number of measures of deprivation, 55.5% of people are in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods by income compared with a London average of 20.6%. In addition, all residents live within neighbourhoods that are in the top half of areas with barriers to housing and services.

The most striking thing to note, both within the GBL area, East Finchley, and the London borough of Barnet, is the marked level of inequality. Walk 20 minutes from GBL and you will find yourself on Bishops Avenue, where the average house price is a shade under £7.5 million.

The area contains a number of social housing estates, run by Barnet Homes, Optivo and Home. A proportion of the social housing was sold under right to buy legislation. A recent fire in one of the Barnet Homes blocks revealed that approximately one third of the block were social housing tenants, one third owner occupiers, and one third of the flats were being privately let, often as houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). This means that the home was occupied by three or more people from more than one household. The area also contains some streets of private housing, some owner occupied and some privately rented.
GBL has three strands of work, community-building, sustainability and economic empowerment. GBL has supported founding of a number of projects:

- infrastructure work, like the setting up of new green spaces (Barnwood and a garden in the Archer Academy School)
- ongoing projects to improve a local pedestrian underpass and playground
- support for the local economy and skills, including training and information and advice services,
- support for food projects including Finchley Foodbank, N2 Food Project, lunch clubs teaching cooking skills with Bread and Butter CIC,
- community grants and Covid recovery grants
- provision for young people, including Summer play schemes with SOTO CIC
- detached youth work with Art Against Knives
- after school provision in martial arts, basketball, and outdoor activities and forest school
- provision for older people including Silver Birchers (a forest school for older people at Barnwood) and a shopping bus
- Community festivals, Big Lunches, and Fun Palaces

GBL want to explore the difference a basic income could make to the wellbeing of people living in their area - especially: those on low incomes, those in the gig economy on wildly changing incomes; those who are, or want to be, carers; those who want to take risks as entrepreneurs, and those who want to feel safer.

They would like the people in their area to be part of imagining, and testing, a different way of doing things. Being part of the basic income conversation could be part of Grange Big Local’s legacy.

Find out more about Grange Big Local [here](#).
THE STORY
THE STORY

The intention of this project is to bridge the gap between where we are now and a national, universal basic income policy. Broadly speaking, basic income pilots have three goals to help us get there:

» Give unconditional cash to people
» Inform policy long-term
» Build support for basic income

Different pilots focus on different aspects of those three goals.

Currently, millions are suffering the sharp end of destitution because of our economic system. Basic income pilots, even if temporarily, offer reprieve from that suffering for some. While we are building the movement for basic income nationally, these local pilots give unconditional cash that has immediate impact. This is undeniably one of the goals of this pilot proposal, especially given the Covid pandemic and subsequent economic crises.

Informing policy in the long run requires data evidencing the positive impact of a basic income for all different kinds of people and communities. Pilots, as identified earlier in the proposal, are also a method of testing and modelling a roll out of this policy to understand what support and infrastructure is necessary alongside a basic income to consistently achieve positive impacts. This is part of this pilot proposal, but given the sample size of the pilots we’re proposing, the data is likely limited in its general applicability.

The legacy of these pilots would lie in the successful storytelling and winning widespread support for the project, and the wider policy. Pilots like this, where everyday people are platformed to talk about their economic reality have the potential to fuel the narrative of the need for change in the UK. Pernicious existing beliefs around deservedness, meritocracy, and the social safety net are all challenged by basic income. Poverty is all too often understood as an individual, moral failure and not a societal, systemic one. These pilots are a unique opportunity for people to share their experiences with our current benefits and our current economic system and share the impact of unconditional cash has on their lives.
With help from the Basic Income Conversation team’s experience of organising a national platform for narratives about basic income, the depth of community outreach and consultation that is built into this project has laid the groundwork in training the taskforces and in how to safely, and ethically, do this.

This approach was validated by the consultation. It was clear from engagement with project members that it is essential to tell the story of the project throughout development and in engagement with stakeholders.

People in both Grange and Jarrow understood that showing the project had incredible potential to show the real impacts financial insecurity has on people and make it clear that something needs to change, both within communities and to policymakers. By centering participants’ stories in the media and national portrayal of the pilot, the project also ensures the people involved are listened to on subjects that have a real bearing on their lives.

Our goal with these stories is to ‘position cash as a tool to recognize everyone’s inherent dignity and deservedness, particularly after the devastation of the pandemic’ and basic income as ‘provid[ing] agency and increased opportunity’.

In concrete practical terms, this means facilitating media pieces and engagement with politicians and local civil society where the participants are interviewed, speak, or write about the pilot.

There are a whole host of resources and partners running pilots globally that have informed our principles and priorities in the storytelling aspect of these pilots. The principles that underpin the way we communicate the work we do together to the public are:

- **FOCUS ON STORIES** - In external output, we will prioritise the stories and experiences from Big Local area communities and task force members.

- **ACCESSIBILITY AND SUPPORT** - Any opportunities to be involved or share stories will involve as many people as possible from the project. We will explain all relevant information in accessible language and do our best to remove barriers to sharing stories.

- **RESPECT** - We will respect participants’ roles and perspectives. The community will have access to the information they need to make informed decisions about sharing their stories.

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TRANSPARENCY - We will be clear on who we are sharing stories with, and how those involved in the project can get involved.

CONFIDENTIALITY - We will not share information about people unless explicitly agreed otherwise. Your stories are yours to decide to tell.

Some best practices to protect the welfare and agency of recipients involved are for example:

- Providing childcare, transport costs, and addressing other general accessibility concerns to take part in interviews.
- Not releasing second names of participants publicly to avoid being found on social media.
THE LOCAL RESPONSE
THE LOCAL RESPONSE

Both Big Local Central Jarrow and Grange Big Local undertook a range of consultation activities, ranging from roundtables, 1:1 conversations, stalls, door-knocking and on-location community consultations. More formal focus groups were hosted in Jarrow.

AWARENESS

Awareness of basic income was still relatively low when measured through the consultation activities. In Grange Big Local’s door-knocking campaign, around one in five (21%) of the 112 respondents were aware of basic income.

In the subsequent micro-pilot meeting in Grange, 19 of the 28 attendees had heard of universal basic income (UBI) before door-knocking and leafleting activities. This suggests, perhaps unsurprisingly, that people with prior knowledge were more likely to engage with more detailed activities relating to the concept. This should be noted when interpreting these findings and in relation to potential engagement and take-up in the pilots.

SUPPORT

Despite this relatively low prior awareness, responses even at the door-knocking stage were overwhelmingly positive. For example, of 101 respondents, 76 thought that basic income is a good idea and that Grange should run a pilot. This reflects previous surveys, which found average support for basic income of 70-76/100 in ‘red wall’ constituencies in Wales and the North and Midlands of England, and widespread support nationally.8

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Table 1: Grange Big Local door-knocking responses matrix on whether basic income is a good idea and whether Grange should undertake a trial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BASIC INCOME IS A GOOD IDEA</th>
<th>BASIC INCOME IS NOT A GOOD IDEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GBL SHOULD BE PART OF A TRIAL</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBL SHOULD HAVE OTHER PRIORITIES THAN A TRIAL</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

In relation to the micro-pilot public meeting in Grange, participants highlighted a number of potential benefits, which reflect the kinds of arguments for basic income that have been seen in previous studies. For example, the (note-form) quotations below demonstrate a belief that basic income would promote autonomy, security and health as well as reduce crime:

“[Basic income would] convert people into self-sufficiency and would save by promoting mental and physical health and therefore would save on services in the future”

“[Basic income] gives the ability to do something different, for example travel, different jobs, support for artists”

“People have to rely on their children earning in order to make ends meet. It can increase crime, or mean people turn a blind eye to where the money is coming from, because they can’t afford to otherwise”
Participants also expressed other potential benefits. For example, one resident was keen to start their own business while also caring for young children. She recognised that basic income would not penalise her husband and the family’s resources while setting this up. Others saw the benefit for people receiving individual payments which would enable them to leave abusive domestic situations.

The unconditional nature of basic income was also highlighted:

> “[Basic income] helps give people dignity. If disabled [you would] not have to jump through hoops. The dignity aspect is really bad at the moment’

> ‘The unfairness of the present system [is an issue] because it encourages destitution, and [only then says] ‘we will help you!’ This disincentives saving’

The UK’s current welfare system was described as “bureaucratic”, “judgemental” and aggravating literacy problems. People were “too scared to apply for anything in case money is taken away” and were confused by benefits and their different names. Many highlighted the cost-of-living crisis, rising rents, and how basic income might influence employers as significant to the discussion.

Not only residents responded positively to the idea of basic income and a pilot. The Big Local Central Jarrow roundtable included local councillors, Big Local employees and volunteers, and discussions highlighted potential economic benefits if incorporated into the UK Government’s Levelling Up agenda. There was a sense that Jarrow, with its distinctive history of progressive protest, would be a particularly appropriate place for a pilot. Likewise, there was a belief a pilot could test the impact on people’s diet, health, wellbeing, activity, hopes, aspirations, enterprise, reskilling, pride, freedom and community flourishing across all ages.

On the other hand, participants also felt that a pilot would provide a valuable opportunity to explore how bad poverty is for individuals, families and wider society. One participant felt people may be more likely to engage in lower paid socially beneficial work like social care. Finally, others noted that basic income could provide an opportunity to change attitudes and improve self-worth.
CONCERNS

Where concerns and opposition were presented in the activities, they focused on a small number of issues common to existing debates around basic income. However, it is important to note that there were very few signs of hostility to the idea of basic income or a pilot in the consultation activities undertaken so far. Some respondents, for instance, felt that efforts and money would be better directed elsewhere – such as interventions aimed at particular age groups or people in the greatest financial need. Some also felt that investment in public services ought to assume a bigger priority.

Other concerns, including from those who supported the idea on the whole, tended to focus more on the practical, detailed design of the pilot along with concerns relating to community cohesion and fairness. This reflects a trend of concerns seeming to relate not to ‘if’ but ‘how’ we reform the welfare system, which a pilot could help to answer. For example, the roundtable in Jarrow resulted in the formulation of some ‘big questions to answer’ before a rollout.

'Big questions to answer'

» How will we fund the pilot and its evaluation?
» How will basic income payments interact with tax, benefits and pensions during the pilot?
» What support will pilot participants need during the pilot and after it ends?
» What does a “fair” pilot look like?
  » What level of payment?
  » How many participants?
  » How are participants chosen?
  » How long is the pilot?
  » How is the control group formed?
  » How is the rest of the community invited to contribute?
» How do we make sure the pilot benefits the entire community?
In addition to these questions, people at the Grange pilot meeting wanted to know the following about basic income as a general policy:

- What the impact on inflation would be.
- Whether there would be a London weighting.
- What would happen to funding for basic services, like NHS, schools, childcare, with particular concern about intersection with Free School Meals.

Some of these questions are answered within this proposal. Others will need to be answered as the project progresses, for example how the project and evaluation will be funded will depend on the fundraising efforts.

Throughout there will be a feedback loop with the community about the pilot design to make sure residents are satisfied with the decisions made. However, the remainder from the Jarrow roundtable fed through to the detailed focus groups.

**FAIRNESS**

The issues of community cohesion and making it ‘fair’ for those who do not take part was also highlighted. There was discussion about ensuring that the plan is communicated as widely as possible so that everyone has the opportunity to take part, that participants are diverse and include people who are most in need and that the whole community are given the opportunity to feed into the project. There was also a broad feeling that it would not be possible to please everyone and that the current system is already a ‘lottery’. It was stressed that disappointment should be managed, confidentiality assured and that there should be ways of involving others in the research in another way if possible.

In addition to those highlighted previously, the Grange pilot meeting identified some further concerns and considerations. This included:

- ensuring that evaluation of the pilot is robust and validated
- ensuring that it would be clearly and accessibly explained
- whether participants could be obligated to take part in the research and if there would be disqualifications for those leaving the area or being jailed.
- support for including peer researchers to improve skills and
because “people might prefer peer researchers than a man in a suit asking them questions”

possibly including financial education to widen benefit to the whole community

In addition to the positive perspectives on basic income in the Jarrow roundtable, participants also expressed that changing mindsets about unemployed people and poverty as well as stigma around benefits should be an important feature. There was a specific focus on influencing long-term change and providing additional support and advice. This was in addition to creating local economic benefit including through a more circular economy, more engagement with lower-paid socially beneficial work and care, and increased entrepreneurship, reflecting the remits of participants. There was concern about discouraging low-paid work, but that this may be addressed through improvements in security and conditions.

A range of opinions were presented by residents during the focus groups when they were asked directly to propose an amount for the basic income payments. Suggestions ranged from £700-£1,500 per month depending on the arrangement with benefits. For instance, £1,500 on top of current income received comments like “I would be well off on that amount”, with £700-£1,000 felt to be enough to be a transformative amount.

This led to conversations about the likelihood that the basic income payments would be classed as income, and therefore be taxed, making people ineligible for certain benefits. There was an understanding that a higher level of payment may reduce the risk for people participating.

Importantly, concerns raised throughout the activities were not necessarily incompatible with a belief that a pilot could be useful. In the Grange door-knocking, some respondents liked the concept of basic income and a pilot but did not feel that they personally should take part. This reflects existing focus on conditionality in welfare policy and there may be room for further discussions about how tax changes would likely balance out the income for wealthier people. Indeed, some participants in the pilot meeting highlighted that “It would give more of a community feel if everyone had it [a basic income]”, and that “People would contribute more, be more generous”.
THE RECEPIENTS
THE RECIPIENTS

These design decisions were made based on the above consultation activities, alongside previous work on the design and evaluation of basic income pilots. Choices may be revised based on local needs and available funding.

Basic income group

» **Number of participants:** 30 individuals aged 18+ (15 in Jarrow and 15 in Grange)

» **Payment:** £1,600 per month (pre-tax) to each participant for two years

Control group

» **Number of participants:** 30+ individuals aged 18+. These should be recruited from the group of individuals who submitted their interest in participating in the pilot but were not selected to receive the basic income payment.

» **Payment:** Remunerated at Northumbria University research assistance rates (currently £17.19 per hour though in equivalent vouchers where appropriate for DWP purposes) to take part in evaluation activities. This would include questionnaires, focus groups and interviews.
With regard to how participants should be chosen, a broad range of options were discussed. From whole geographic areas, targeting specific groups (such as those below the poverty line), covering a cross-section of the population in areas or recruiting on a random basis. There were also discussions about whether basic income should cover individuals or households.

While there were a range of opinions on the positives and negatives of the various ways of choosing participants, key themes consistently emerged during the discussions:

» Universality is a core component of basic income and a local pilot that allows anyone to participate is the most similar to a true basic income.

» Participant safety and ability to accept the money are key and depend on people’s ability to stay anonymous during the pilot should they so wish.

» Transitioning in and out of the pilot needs to be well handled to avoid risk to participant’s income.

This led to the decision to take a random sampling or lottery approach so anyone can put themselves forward as a participant and also remain anonymous. Handling the transition in and out of the pilot is discussed in the next section of this report.
RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

We propose that individuals nominate themselves following advertising of the project in the two local areas. Demographic guidelines (below) should be used during random assignment of places following checks to ensure that multiple payments are not going to the same household. Efforts should be made to advertise to specific groups if the initial self-nomination does not recruit enough potential participants in each.

Advertising should make clear that those who are not selected to receive the basic income may be offered a place in the control group and would therefore receive remuneration (likely in vouchers) to take part in evaluation activities.

A dedicated contact number and email address should be provided to participants to obtain support should there be any issues during the project. This should be in addition to a full information sheet that will include local support organisations as well as an FAQ to cover more common issues.

Before participants commit to their involvement in the pilot they would be offered one to one support including a “better off” calculation so they would have a clear idea of how the basic income payments would impact their total income.

The project would also be subject to a full ethics submission and would be revised according to requirements provided.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We propose that around 20% of places are reserved for disabled people (as defined by the social model) to match rates at the level of the national population, and because such individuals are disproportionately likely to be affected by changes in welfare policy.

A sample that reflects ethnic diversity based on local demographics, a range of socioeconomic backgrounds and an even split in terms of gender is also important. A range of ages should also be included.

The range of participants will not paint a complete picture of the ways a basic income would impact different people. But, the information collected during the pilot will provide crucial information about the impact of a basic income on people in the UK for the first time. Participants with a range of backgrounds and experiences will provide a wider range of information and imperfectly reflect the universal nature of a basic income.
THE MONEY
As with any basic income project this proposal centred around a range of decisions relating to money, including:

- The size of the payment made to participants
- What a feasible budget for this project is considering it depends on securing investment
- How to navigate the challenge of the basic income payment interactions with existing income, including benefits

**PAYMENT SIZE**

We have based our proposed payment size on four considerations:

- Consultation with residents and other stakeholders in Grange and Central Jarrow
- An understanding of the amount of basic income required to have a meaningful effect based on our model of impact (Figure 2, below)
- Seeking to ensure that participants are financial better off as a result of taking part
- Budget constraints related to the practicalities of sourcing funding

As noted in the previous section, we have proposed payments of £1,600 per month. While the use of a ‘higher’ level of basic income payment requires a relatively small sample size (to keep costs down), the use of this longer trial period is more likely to produce larger effects in individuals.
These payments are the same size as the basic income pilot for care leavers in Wales (based on being similar to the Real Living Wage), and similar (after tax) to the Minimum Income Scheme level proposed as part of recent economic modelling by the Northumbria University team.

**ANTICIPATING INTERACTIONS**

The size of the payments also helps to address an additional challenge relating to the interaction with taxes and existing benefits. It is essential that participants receive a substantial benefit from participating. It is possible that one such benefit may not necessarily be an increase in income, but the knowledge that the payment is unconditional for a two-year period. This would be the case for some people under a national basic income scheme. Under pilot conditions, this must be counterbalanced by concerns in transitioning back onto conditional benefits at the end of the pilot.

It is not possible to guarantee that every potential participant would receive a financial benefit from taking part. This reflects the complexity of the current tax-benefit system, in which taxation is based on individual income and benefits are assessed as a benefit unit, or even household unit.

As an example scenario we ran the following through Policy in Practice’s Better Off Calculator:

- Couple in Jarrow
- Both aged 30
- Receiving child benefit for their two young children
- Renting a two-bedroom home from a private landlord
- Currently not working and receiving an average Universal Credit award

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10 Reed, H., et al. (2022) ‘Universal Basic Income is affordable and feasible: evidence from UK economic microstimulation modelling’ [working paper]. Available at: https://osf.io/b65ur
12 See ‘Better Off Calculator’. Available at: https://www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk/login
This resulted in a calculated income in 2022/23 under the existing benefits system of £1,691.71 per month.

We then calculated their expected income based on one member of the couple working and receiving £1,600 per month, to reflect the proposed basic income pilot payment. The calculated income increased to £2,444.24.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is not affected by income or savings, so needs-based disability support would remain in a basic income pilot.

The experience of the Welsh pilot suggests that it is unlikely that the DWP would exempt payments from calculations for means-tested benefits. Discussions with HMRC and the DWP are important to ensure a rapid, streamlined transition back to means-tested benefits for applicable participants.

It is also necessary to ensure that participants receive individual advice before taking part. In the Welsh pilot, Citizens Advice provides a pre-pilot ‘better-off’ calculation as well as budgeting and financial crisis advice. Broader support is provided in that pilot by Voices from Care and the Money and Pensions Service around ‘money management, education, training and wellbeing’. In addition, advice, guidance and signposting is provided by Young Person’s Advisors.

Similar support to that provided for care leavers in Wales would need to be developed and implemented for the Big Local pilot - for instance, through partnering with organisations such as Citizens Advice.

This support and advice at the beginning and end of the pilot was proposed by residents and key stakeholders from local organisations with relevant expertise throughout the community consultation. The processes for this support would be designed with further input from the local communities. Local knowledge will be key to designing fit for purpose processes and partnerships to deliver this support.

The Welsh pilot also includes the ability to be taxed before payment, to receive payments every two or four weeks, and to have part of payments go to housing providers directly. It is unlikely that this kind of infrastructure could be provided by the organisations administering this pilot, but this should be explored further.

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15 See WeCare Wales, ‘Young Person’s Advisor’. Available at: https://wecare.wales/job-role/young-persons-advisor/
ADMINISTRATION

The main consideration in administering basic income funds must be that participants are guaranteed payments for the duration of the intervention. This helps to manage risks relating to, for example, increased spending in anticipation of increased income.

In US pilots and trials, disbursement partners have been used to manage such risks and ensure smooth administration of payments. It may be possible to follow the Big Local model of having locally trusted organisations hold and administer the payments.

This is likely to require an administration fee that would need to be negotiated with the organisation managing the administration of payments. Ensuring that the funding is held in a separate, secure account that cannot be accessed for any other purposes or subject to insolvency proceedings is essential.

WORKING WITH HMRC AND DWP

We now have a precedent for pilots of basic income in the UK. The pilot in Wales for care leavers, involved extended negotiation with HMRC and the DWP in order to attempt to gain exemptions for participants so that they would not lose out financially. Unfortunately, however, such exemptions were not granted and payments would interact with benefits as it would be counted as income.

To address this, the Welsh Government chose to provide payments, after tax, of £1,280 per month (£1,600 gross), significantly above other basic income schemes that have been proposed and well in excess of the 2022/23 National Minimum Wage for 18- to 20-year-olds (£6.83 per hour) on a full-time basis.

On the one hand, a pilot that is not granted an exemption may simulate a basic income scenario in which the existing conditional system and the current tax regime remain unchanged. On the other hand, pilot payments are not permanent and there is a risk of complications when participants who currently receive benefits transition to and from the basic income pilot. While exemptions are almost certain not to be granted, these issues must be discussed fully both with participants and with HMRC and the DWP ahead of the start of a project.

In terms of remuneration for ‘control group’ individuals taking part in the evaluation, the NIHR indicates that high street or gift vouchers may or may not be treated as earnings by HMRC and the DWP. It is therefore important to clear this before beginning the project.

FUNDING

Initial funding to support the production of this report was provided by the Local Trust and the Big Locals.

Funding for the micro-pilot has not yet been secured. This pilot proposal report is intended to be used to secure the funds required to run the micro-pilot and its evaluation.

Grange Big Local, Big Local Central Jarrow, the Local Trust, Basic Income Conversation and the Research Partner all have existing relationships with potential funders, and it may require approaches and applications to a number of bodies to secure the required funding.

The main categories of funders are:

» Government-funded research councils (ESRC, NIHR etc.)

» Third-sector research funders (Wellcome Trust, Nuffield Foundation) and other charities which sometimes provide funding (Joseph Rowntree Foundation etc.).

» Private philanthropists and philanthropic organisations.

» Local or Combined Authorities

In general, the first two categories are more likely to fund the evaluation of such projects than the intervention itself. This means that the support of private philanthropic sources, or local or combined authorities, is required at an early stage.
The estimated budget of the pilot is table below. The final budget will depend on the investment secured and the finalised pilot and evaluation decisions made in collaboration with the community, project team and researchers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
<th>ALLOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£1.152 million</td>
<td>Basic income payments to 30 participants (£1600 a month for 24 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£20,000 - £40,000</td>
<td>Compensation for members of the control group participating in questionnaires, focus groups and one to one interviews. The budget available for this will dictate how the evaluation activities with the control group are designed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£290,000</td>
<td>Research team:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal Investigator (10% of time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A researcher focusing on quantitative methods (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A researcher focusing on qualitative methods (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Resources for the Big Local to deliver community support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Travel and accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£60,000</td>
<td>Administrative team:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Administration fee for holding and distributing funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£120,000</td>
<td>Community support team:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Better off calculations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Point of contact for queries and feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Community engagement during recruitment of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Co-creation of materials that communicate the results of the pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>£1.642 - 1.662 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: Model of Impact

UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

Poverty reduction

Predictability and insecurity of income

Inequality reduction

Improved satisfaction of material needs

Behavioural change

Stress reduction

Improved nutrition, birth weight, child development

Reduction in communicable disease

Reduction in non-communicable (e.g. obesity, depression) disease

Reduction in drug use and other health-diminishing behaviours

Reduction in communicable disease

Reduction in stress-related conditions

Reduction in communicable disease

High level social determinants of health

Individual determinants of health

Direct health impact

Inequality reduction

Predictability and insecurity of income

Cost savings from reform of the Department for Work and Pensions

Reform tax system to reduce reliefs, amend rates, introduce additional taxes

Reduction in public spending

Increase in tax yield

Reduced health and care costs due to cases avoided

Increased and improved caring provision from family members

Reduction in crime

Increased educational attainment

Increased entrepreneurship

Productivity gains via reduced sick leave, improved performance etc.

Improved nutrition, birth weight, child development

Reduction in communicable disease

Reduction in non-communicable (e.g. obesity, depression) disease

Reduction in drug use and other health-diminishing behaviours

Reduction in stress-related conditions

Improved health and wellbeing

High level social determinants of health

Individual determinants of health

Direct health impact

Inequality reduction

Predictability and insecurity of income

Cost savings from reform of the Department for Work and Pensions

Reform tax system to reduce reliefs, amend rates, introduce additional taxes

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Reduction in crime

Increased educational attainment

Increased entrepreneurship

Productivity gains via reduced sick leave, improved performance etc.

Improved nutrition, birth weight, child development

Reduction in communicable disease

Reduction in non-communicable (e.g. obesity, depression) disease

Reduction in drug use and other health-diminishing behaviours

Reduction in stress-related conditions

Improved health and wellbeing
**IMPROVED HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

- Increased and improved caring provision from family members
- Reduced health and care costs due to cases avoided
- Reduction in crime
- Increased educational attainment
- Increased entrepreneurship
- Productivity gains via reduced sick leave, improved performance etc.
- Reduction in public spending
- Increase in tax yields
- Cost savings from reform of the Department for Work and Pensions
- Reform tax system to reduce reliefs, amend rates, introduce additional taxes

**Public health impact**

**Indirect socioeconomic outcomes**

**Economic return on investment**

**Fiscal reforms to fund any deficit**

**Direct health impact**

**Public health impact**

**Indirect socioeconomic outcomes**

**Economic return on investment**

**Fiscal reforms to fund any deficit**
Autonomy 51
A big local Basic Income

Intervention

Poverty reduction
Improved satisfaction of material needs

Cost savings from reform of the Department for Work and Pensions

Reform tax system to reduce reliefs, amend rates, introduce additional taxes

Reduction in public spending Increase in tax yield

Reduced health and care costs due to cases avoided

Increased and improved caring provision from family members

Reduction in crime
Increased educational attainment
Increased entrepreneurship

Productivity gains via reduced sick leave, improved performance etc.

Improved nutrition, birth weight, child development

Reduction in communicable disease

Reduction in non-communicable (e.g. obesity, depression) disease

Reduction in drug use and other health-diminishing behaviours

Reduction in stress-related conditions

Behavioural change Stress reduction

Inequality reduction

Predictability and insecurity of income

High level social determinants of health

Individual determinants of health

Direct health impact

Public health impact

Indirect socioeconomic outcomes

Economic return on investment

Fiscal reforms to fund any deficit

Budgetary outcome
THE DURATION
THE DURATION

In line with the model of impact in Figure 2 (above), it is essential to ensure that participants have security of income over an extended period.

Two years provides a good basis for examining the impact of guaranteed payments for a period long enough to simulate real policies.

A pilot or trial that is limited in length is unable to simulate the full effect of a basic income. However, two years would provide a degree of certainty that a shorter pilot cannot, and offers a sufficient time window for the intervention to have genuinely transformative effects on the individuals involved. This is shorter than the three years (plus a preparatory year) set out in the feasibility study for Citizens’ Basic Income Pilots in Scotland. This reflects the smaller scale of the proposed Big Local pilots, the need to be pragmatic in securing funding and the more limited aims of micro-pilots which are intended to demonstrate proof of concept and evidence for larger-scale trials.

Even if additional funds were to become available to extend the pilot period, lengthening the duration of the payment period when participants already expect it to end will not provide a sense of security but rather replicate the volatility in the current system. Equally, it is unlikely that introducing further participants later on in the project will provide the clarity in evaluation that is needed.

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THE

EVALUATION
THE EVALUATION

EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

Based on the consultation so far and our previous work on the evaluation of basic income, we believe the evaluation should be undertaken with the following principles:

- **Co-produced**: community involvement is essential to ensuring that the evaluation looks at the right areas and is trusted by participants.

- **Comprehensive**: measurement should capture wellbeing in its broadest form.

- **Validated**: where possible, measures that have been validated in previous studies should be used.

- **Accessible**: methods and measures should be described in ways that can be understood by participants and the local community. Where more complex methods are used, work should be undertaken to ensure they are communicated as clearly as possible.

- **Affordable**: costs should be kept as low as possible to provide the information required.
As part of the project, the groups involved appointed Matthew Johnson and Elliott Johnson of Northumbria University as the project research partner. The partner have been responsible for producing the initial design of the experimental and evaluation processes for the micro-pilot included in this pilot proposal report.

The research partner was identified by virtue of their ability to:

- Demonstrate significant expertise in the development of qualitative evaluation methods for interventions comparable to basic income
- Demonstrate expertise in the development of quantitative evaluation methods for interventions comparable to basic income
- Demonstrate expertise in the design of intervention assessments, including safeguarding participants and sampling and control group methodologies
- Have experience of co-production and working with communities to ensure they have ownership of research involving their local area
- Understand the principles of this project, the Big Local programme and the Local Trust’s values, ethos and approach to creating resident-led change
- Experience of seeking funding for similar projects was also desired.

A panel of residents, project partners and individuals with relevant technical academic experience reviewed the proposals. Following a meeting via Zoom with the Northumbria University Team and the project National Steering Group, it was decided that the proposal was successful and an agreement to appoint the research partner was made.

The partners worked with the National Steering Group to develop this proposal based on the research activity of the Big Locals in their respective areas.
WHAT WILL WE LEARN FROM THE MICRO-PILOT?

At this point, a broad hypothesis is proposed that participants receiving basic income will experience improved health and wellbeing (including social and economic benefits).

The pilot is not simply concerned with generating evidence for the effects of basic income - indeed, many such studies around the world have already been undertaken. This pilot proposal also looks to act as a demonstration - generating a wealth of practical learning and personal testimonies to help make the case for basic income nationally.

As such, the following are proposed as important areas of investigation:

- Subjective financial strain (how well people are managing financially)
- Objective income
- Economic activity and aspirations
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Physical or overall health
- Subjective stress (how stressed they feel)
- Engagement with unpaid work like caring for relatives
- Control over people's own lives
- Community trust
- Climate change (e.g. relating to consumption)
We would design the final evaluation materials in consultation with local people. This means that final measures cannot be provided here but would be primarily drawn from the Northumbria team’s existing protocol resource, as these measures have been validated, used in large studies and/or designed on the basis of existing evidence. Many of the measures have been used in studies with vulnerable communities via ActEarly and Born in Bradford. The Northumbria Team has also employed the measures in developing an evaluation process for the Welsh pilot of basic income for care leavers, which has supported identification of a range of ways in which experience of impact on financial security and behavioural change can better be captured.

Existing local public health outcomes and economic data provide useful contextual information. However, given the sample size, they will not be able to provide statistically meaningful comparison.

EVALUATION DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Due to issues with internet access, it is suggested that quantitative evaluation questionnaires should take place using paper forms with accessible alternatives. Qualitative evaluation could take the form of monthly focus groups with rolling individual interviews.

This evaluation would add to existing evidence to build the case for much larger trials. The qualitative component will be crucial given the importance of storytelling fed back by both project members and local people. Ethics should be prioritised, and it must remain optional for people to participate in the evaluation.

LIMITATIONS

A full ‘universal’ basic income cannot be simulated in such a pilot. That would require everyone in an area to receive a payment, including all adults within a household. In addition, there is likely to be a degree of self-selection bias. This could include people in higher paid work feeling that participation is not worth their time or, on the contrary, people in receipt of benefits not feeling it is worth the risk to their existing income. The size of the proposed payments provides the opportunity for participants to stop claiming existing benefits for the duration of the pilot if they prefer. If the DWP allows the payments not to be considered in the calculation of benefits, it is possible that they could be reduced in size, but the Welsh pilot has shown that this is very unlikely. Recruitment materials and a strategy that encourages people in work to take part is also crucial to obtaining a sample that reflects likely national policies. The effects on all

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socioeconomic groups are important to understand.

As mentioned above, there are potential risks to manage. These include those relating to community cohesion, ‘hedonistic’ spending of additional income on things like alcohol or cigarettes, and transitions to and from the payments. In terms of community cohesion, it is essential that positive communication campaigns are undertaken to highlight the benefits to the whole community. In relation to hedonistic spending, there is evidence that having a predictable, secure income actually promotes long-term thinking and reduces hedonism.\(^{19}\) Finally, transitions to and from the intervention requires support from project organisers and discussions with HMRC and the DWP to ensure a smooth process.

**COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNITY**

To maintain the values of this pilot throughout, a community support team will work in parallel with the evaluation. They will work to ensure there is an adequate feedback loop between residents and researchers. The methods used in the evaluation will also be selected based on their ability to work in this iterative and collaborative way.

As the main focus of the evaluation is qualitative information about people’s lives, maintaining good relationships and a positive experience of the project is crucial for engagement with evaluation activities. A team that is focused on the community’s needs will help facilitate this.

Strong relationships with the community will lead to higher awareness through the recruitment phase, troubleshooting throughout the pilot and a responsive approach to the end of the pilot.

The other key role of this team will be to work with the community to communicate the findings of the project. This will focus on making the reporting on the results of the pilot accessible to a wide audience and to ensure that researchers interpretation of the data collected resonates with the individual’s and community’s experiences.

The team has been developed over a period of four years by Matthew Johnson and has delivered work funded by Wellcome Trust and NIHR. It includes people from a broad range of disciplines. The team includes experts on basic income in general, pilots in particular, and social, economic and health outcomes of relevance to evaluation of this pilot. The following key contributors agreed to be involved in developing and eventually evaluating the pilot.

- **Matthew Johnson**, Professor of Politics, Northumbria University
- **Elliott Johnson**, Senior Research Fellow in International Relations and Politics, Northumbria University
- **Jonathan Coates**, General Practitioner, St Anthony’s Health Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne, and NIHR In-Practice Fellow, Durham University
- **Neil Howard**, Lecturer in Development, University of Bath
- **Daniel Nettle**, Professor of Behavioural Science, Newcastle University
- **Kate E. Pickett**, Professor of Epidemiology, University of York
- Cleo Goodman, Basic Income Conversation
- Local Task Force Jarrow
- Local Task Force Grange

In addition, a multidisciplinary International Advisory Group from the existing members of Prof Johnson’s broader team will be formed. This would meet quarterly, providing guidance on strategy and evaluating progress. Individual members of the committee would be contacted individually to provide guidance on issues of direct relevance to their expertise. The Citizen Engagement Group will be invited to each of the meetings to ensure community engagement with strategic development of the project and would be remunerated at research assistance rates (currently £17.19 per hour) for attendance.

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20 See Northumbria University, ‘Health Case for UBI’. Available at: https://hosting.northumbria.ac.uk/healthcaseforubi/
NEXT STEPS
NEXT STEPS

This final report is intended to be used as an outline to secure further buy-in from local and national stakeholders as well as in efforts to secure funding for the pilot. Further, it will serve as a template for other areas that might wish to undertake their own pilots. It may even be possible to include those areas in this specific project.

The Local Task Force teams will host launch events for this report in their local areas with key stakeholders and political figures. Already London Assembly member and Deputy Leader of the Green Party of England and Wales Zack Polanski has published a report on the approach taken with this project: Involving Londoners in a Basic Income Pilot.21 This was followed by an event at City Hall attended by dozens of Londoners and London Assembly members to discuss basic income, the proposed pilot in Grange and put together an ask of the Mayor of London.

The Basic Income Conversation team are attending the Basic Income Guarantee Conference in Chicago to learn more from the comparable basic income pilot across the USA.

The report must not be an end in itself but rather a means of securing both pilots of basic income and a more secure future for all communities.

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21 Basic Income Conversation (2023) ‘Involving Londoners in a basic income pilot’. Available at: https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/assembly-members/publications-zack-polanski/publication-involving-londoners-basic-income-pilot