Proposal for SHA on UBI

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**Introduction**

Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a long-standing proposal to create a radical change in the economic system of society to increase social justice and improve health and well being. Many are calling UBI “This Generation’s NHS”[[1]](#footnote-2)

*At its simplest UBI means that every individual, without exception, will receive an income, sufficient to live with dignity and that additional earnings are subject to progressive taxation.*

As with any such radical proposal, there are a whole series of important questions, caveats and options which are worthy of discussion and there is already a lively community of basic income activists, which includes many members of SHA. In fact, the SHA has been an advocate of UBI in the past (see work of Dr Steve Watkins). However, over the past few decades the idea of basic income was no longer being actively considered by mainstream politicians.

**This is changing:**

Today UBI is backed by growing numbers of Labour MPs, members and CLPs.

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The consensus behind the implementation of Universal Credit is breaking down as politicians start to understand its damaging consequences of its design - targeting the poorest and disabled people for sanctions, stigma and extreme means-testing. It also costs a fortune to administer, much of which goes to private companies.

There already exists a considerable research literature, based on pilots, models and other empirical work which shows the significant health and well-being benefits of basic income.

There is a growing social movement, involving many in the current SHA movement, that is successfully increasing public awareness of the case for UBI.[[2]](#footnote-3)

COVID-19 has further underlined the case for addressing the deep systemic failings of the whole economic system. Over the long run we have seen very modest economic growth paid for by increased poverty, inequality and insecurity. In order to improve health, mental health and protect the natural world we need a different approach to economics and social priorities.

**SHA next steps:**

The SHA could pull together a working group to develop a policy proposal for consideration by the Central Council, which would include deeper study into the wider economic conditions and policies that would best support the change.

The group would be initially drawn from the attendees at our two symposia, supplemented by relevant experts in the field. They do not need to be members of the SHA.

The group would examine existing evidence for and against UBI, as well as aspects of practical implementation if UBI were considered as a positive development. Historical aspects, such as the Guild Socialists’ work on Social Credit, would be explored in outline.

In addition, the group would explore alternative approaches, such as full employment, again with options for implementation if that were considered a positive development.

UBI will not be considered in isolation. We would require analysis of how UBI would fit into a wider economic analysis of Modern Monetary Theory.

The impact of these radical ideas on health would remain a central theme thoughout. This would not be only about the economics, but also about the economic determinants of health.

**Central Council is asked to approve this scoping paper to enable the policy development to begin.**

3 Lansley, S. Reed, H. (2019) *Basic Income for All: From Desirability* *to Feasibility*, London:Compass

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/aug/10/our-generations-nhs-support-grows-for-universal-basic-income> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. 2 <https://www.ubilabnetwork.org/ubi-labs> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)