

Exploring Universal Basic Income in London

Key information

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Investigation aims and objectives (Terms of Reference)

- Understand the benefits and drawbacks associated with a Universal Basic Income (UBI) in London
- Evaluate in how far a UBI would be effective in addressing some of the most acute problems faced by Londoners, particularly with regard to health and economic security
- Understand which groups of people are most likely to benefit from a UBI in London
- Exploring the political and economic feasibility of a future UBI
- Determine whether trialling a UBI in London would be beneficial and realistic and if so, what actions the Mayor, central and local government could take to support a UBI

Key issues

- A universal basic income (UBI) is a periodic and unconditional cash payment to all citizens within a community. No country currently has a country wide UBI, but there have been trials across regions/cities.
- Trials have been small-scale, involving typically a few hundred participants. A 2022 review concluded there was a lack of statistically significant effects in large part due to the small sample sizes.
- A national YouGov poll from 2022 found that 48 per cent of adults would support the introduction of a UBI. A 2023 YouGov poll of Londoners found that half are supportive, with 22 per cent opposed.
- Proponents argue the key benefits of such a system are improved mental health, reductions in poverty and bureaucracy, enhanced bargaining power for employees, and an enhanced sense of autonomy, enabling recipients to change careers, work less, prioritise care work or focus on education.
- Commonly cited estimates for a full UBI in the UK range from to £67 billion to £427 billion per year. A common criticism is that there is a three-way trade off in any UBI proposal: a UBI that effectively

reduces poverty is not affordable, whilst a UBI that is affordable would not effectively reduce poverty. Combining a UBI with conditional transfer payments may be affordable and effective but it would increase administrative overhead.

- A 2021 inquiry by the Parliament's Work and Pensions Committee concluded that a UBI is "extremely expensive and would not target support at people who need it most"
- There currently is only one trial in the UK: the Welsh Government commissioned a 3-year trial running from July 2022, involving 500 care leavers receiving a monthly payment of £1,600. The evaluation is due to end in 2027. There is also a proposal to trial a UBI in East Finchley, Barnet, which would involve 30 people, 15 of which would receive an unconditional £1,600 monthly for two years. However, as per an e-mail by the organisers, Grange Big Local, funding for this has not been secured.

Key questions

- What are the benefits and drawbacks associated with a UBI in London?
- To what extent would a UBI address the most acute problems faced by Londoners, particularly with regard to health and economic security?
- Who is most likely to benefit from a UBI?
- Is a future UBI politically and economically feasible?
- Is trialling a UBI in London beneficial? If so, what actions can the Mayor, central and local government could take to support a UBI?

YouGov survey responses

YouGov carried out a survey for the GLA between 18 to 25 July 2025 for views on a UBI trial in London, with 1,026 responses from London residents aged 18+. You can view the results here:

[UBI polling responses](#)

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