Universal basic services and sustainable consumption

Anna Coote
New Economics Foundation, London, UK

ABSTRACT
Discussions about sustainable consumption corridors tend to focus on private consumption. This Policy brief explores the contribution that public consumption may provide in maintaining lower and upper corridor boundaries. Recently developed proposals for “universal basic services” (UBS) are offered as a framework for understanding the potential of public consumption in this context. Drawing on a multi-disciplinary literature, the policy brief seeks to define and analyze the concept of universal basic services in theoretical and practical terms. It considers how far they may contribute and what their limits are, and briefly examines the extent to which this approach complements or conflicts with proposals for universal basic income (UBI).

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 26 September 2019
Accepted 26 October 2020

KEYWORDS
Universal basic services; public consumption; sustainable development; collective action; human needs; welfare state renewal

Introduction
The idea of universal basic services (UBS) has been developed initially in the UK, where it grew out of a concern with increasingly widespread endorsement of “universal basic income” (UBI) as an alleged solution to the problems of poverty and deteriorating welfare states. During the COVID-19 pandemic, support for UBI has grown more vociferous, on the ground that it would ease the process of economic recovery. UBS offers an approach that shares some of the same goals but is embedded in a different ideology and has widely different practical implications. It seeks to reclaim and develop the collective ideal that inspired the creation of welfare states in the postwar era. It represents a form of consumption that is public and shared, rather than private and individual.

In this policy brief, I explore the hypothesis that UBS – as a framework for policy and practice – can make a useful contribution to the task of establishing sustainable consumption corridors. I take “corridors” to indicate space between minimum and maximum levels of consumption, within which everyone is able to meet their needs and live a good life, not just today but for generations to come (Fuchs 2020, 296–307). The aim is to achieve security and justice for all, now and in the future; the challenge is to identify these limits and to consider how they might be realized in practice. As a vision of sustainable development, the concept of consumption corridors is closely allied to economist Kate Raworth’s “safe and just space for humanity” between a social foundation and an ecological ceiling (Raworth 2017, 51), but with a closer focus on the relationship between quality of human life and guaranteed access to life’s essentials or “protected needs” (Di Giulio and Defila 2020, 100–114).

Against this background, I consider the component parts of the concept of UBS and how – taken together – they relate to the objective of maintaining consumption within such parameters. I examine the practical implications of applying this approach generically across service areas and specifically in three areas where public services are rare or unevenly available: housing, transport, and childcare. I explore the likely impact of UBS in terms of equity, efficiency, solidarity, and sustainability. I end by drawing together and summarizing the main implications for achieving sustainable consumption corridors.

This is work in progress. The first prospectus for UBS was produced by the Institute for Global Prosperity at University College London (Portes, Reed, and Percy 2017). An indicative literature review has since been conducted (Coote, Kasliwal, and Percy 2019), and a book has been published entitled The Case for Universal Basic Services (Coote and Percy 2020). It remains to build on the research so far and submit our analysis to further scrutiny, debate, and development.

Proposals for UBS have been closely informed by the experience of public services in the UK, where
government policies since the 1970s have chipped away at the postwar consensus and at the value of benefits in kind. Changes have been driven by a vision of economic success based on personal choice, private ownership, a small state, and a free market, blaming the jobless and poor for their own troubles and urging individuals to help themselves. Many services, including care for children and disabled adults, as well as housing and transport, have been outsourced to for-profit corporations, stripped down to the bare bones, abolished altogether, or left to the vagaries of voluntarism and philanthropy. Combined with cuts to the value of social security benefits, the effects have greatly exacerbated social and economic inequalities and left more than a million living in destitution (Fitzpatrick et al. 2018). This was before the COVID-19 pandemic and the government’s response made matters a great deal worse.

The UK experience has been echoed across Europe, where many other countries have traveled a similar path. In most of them, however, there seems to have been a slower deterioration and I have noted below some of the many examples of better practice, which offer useful lessons for developing UBS.

**Component parts of the concept**

The concept of a UBS could of course be interpreted in multiple ways. As a starting point for this policy brief, I follow the definition offered by early protagonists (including the current author). Accordingly, and in reverse order, “services” are defined as collectively generated activities that serve the public interest. A service can be distinguished from a “good” as being a type of activity that is not separable from the producer and where production and consumption occur simultaneously. However, material goods and infrastructure are intrinsic to services in all areas of need, as we shall see. Services are described as “basic” to distinguish activities that are essential and sufficient to enable people to meet their needs. They are not simply the bare minimum for survival, but what is required to participate and flourish. “Universal” conveys the idea that all citizens and/or residents are entitled to services that are sufficient to meet their needs, regardless of ability to pay (Coote and Percy 2020, 4).

Defined this way, UBS includes what already exists, such as education and healthcare, in many countries. More importantly, it conveys an ambition to expand the approach in practice both by improving the quality of existing services, and by reaching into new areas such as housing, transport, and care, to enable everyone to have access to life’s essentials.

**Provenance and rationale**

The case for UBS rests on two key principles: *shared needs* and *collective responsibilities*. It recognizes that all human beings have the same set of basic needs that must be satisfied in order to survive and thrive, think for one’s self, and participate in society. Theories of capability and human need converge around this point. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2000) describes three “core” capabilities of affiliation, bodily integrity, and practical reason. Doyal and Gough (1991) identify health and critical autonomy as basic human needs that are prerequisites for social participation. The theme is echoed in more recent work on “protected needs” by Di Giulio and Defila (2020).

Several factors distinguish human needs from wants or preferences. They are universal across time and space. While the detail of how they are met will vary widely, they always require certain generic “satisfiers” that remain fairly constant, although the list may evolve over time. These have been identified by need theorists as water, nutrition, shelter, secure and non-threatening work, education, healthcare, security in childhood, significant primary relationships, physical and economic security, and a safe environment (Di Giulio and Defila 2020; Miller 2012). More recent efforts to identify “a set of universal, irreducible and essential set of material conditions for achieving basic human wellbeing” have found that access to motorized transport and to information and communications should be included (Rao and Min 2018, 138–225). There is also a case for including care, which is only implied in the list above, as a generic satisfier (The Care Collective 2020).

Needs cannot be substituted for one another (for example, a lack of water and shelter cannot be offset by more education or healthcare). They are essential parts of the same package. And – crucially for the development of sustainable consumption corridors – they are intrinsically satiable: there are limits beyond which more food, more work, or more security are no longer helpful and could even do one harm. There comes a point where sufficiency is reached in the process of meeting needs: this helps to constrain a tendency toward escalating consumption that is associated with satisfying consumer wants, threatening to breach planetary boundaries. The focus on needs and sufficiency aligns UBS with sustainable development, aiming to meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED 1987).

For the purpose of this discussion, we can divide needs into three broad, overlapping categories, generated by history and cultural expectations as well as by what is required to meet the need itself. In the
first category, there are needs that most people expect to meet for themselves either directly or through market transactions – food and clothing for example. A social protection scheme is vital to ensure that everyone has an adequate income to make such transactions. Often, as in the case of food, public policies are required to safeguard quality and availability for all (Sharpe and Barling 2019, 329–340; Benton et al. 2019).

In the second category, there are needs that many, but by no means all, are able to meet through direct payment: housing and transport are examples. These tend to involve a considerable amount of material infrastructure and it is most unlikely that unregulated markets will ensure fair and adequate distribution. The higher the costs passed on to the user, the more people will find that services are beyond their reach. Public policies are crucial to making them universally affordable, accessible, and of sufficient quality.

In the third category, there are needs that few can meet on their own, where most people depend on others for meeting them. Trying to access and pay for them individually is likely to be ruinous if not fatal: examples include education and healthcare. Childhood and adult social care may belong to the second or third category and this will vary between countries and household types, depending on how far uncommodified care is available within families and on the social and financial implications for informal carers.

In all three categories, exercising a degree of collective responsibility is the only way to ensure that everyone’s basic needs are met. This is the “fundamental basis” of social life, as Durkheim observed: people “cannot live together without agreeing and consequently without making mutual sacrifices, joining themselves to one another in a strong and enduring fashion” (Durkheim 1984, 154–159). The concept of consumption corridors can only be realized through societal responsibility, both to enable universal “access to a minimum level of ecological and social resources necessary to be able to live a good life” (Fuchs 2020) and – to that end – to constrain individual excess.

UBS offers a framework for exercising collective responsibility to meet shared needs, with a focus on services rather than money and goods. It involves pooling resources, sharing risks, and investing collectively – through government institutions – in social and material infrastructure to serve the public interest. As such, this agenda relates chiefly to consumption that is public or social, rather than private: services that are used by all who need them and funded wholly or partly through taxation.

To a certain extent, public and private consumption are interrelated. The collective provision of services to meet shared needs amounts to a social income that replaces out-of-pocket expenditure. This leaves individuals and households with more disposable cash (all else being equal) that may be spent on meeting needs in the first category set out above.

Putting UBS into practice

UBS is not a new idea. It builds on the spirit of United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal and postwar welfare states. Since most rich countries have health and education systems that are free at the point of use, there is plenty to learn from past experience. For example, concentrating power in the hands of large, centrally controlled institutions has been found to diminish the autonomy of citizens and service users, contracting out services to for-profit organizations rarely serves the public interest well, and there is no one-size-fits-all model for service delivery. A key lesson is that there can be no return to the traditional top-down model of twentieth century state services. Instead, the UBS agenda seeks to transform the ways in which services are organized, delivered, and controlled.

Services differ from each other because of the specific functions they perform to meet needs. This requires a customized approach to planning and organization in each case. Yet all service areas within the UBS framework have certain features in common, because they are all engaged in enabling people to have fair and sufficient access to life’s essentials. Central to the framework is an acknowledgement of the specific characteristics and provisioning systems associated with different areas of need, combined with a generic approach shaped by shared values.

Summarized briefly, this generic approach involves – in all services areas – collective responsibility for ensuring that shared needs are met, exercised through democratically elected governments. Power is devolved to the lowest appropriate level (according to the principle of subsidiarity). Services are delivered by a range of organizations with different models of ownership and control, all sharing a clear set of enforceable public interest obligations. There is meaningful participation in planning and delivering services by residents and service users, working in close partnership with professionals and other service workers. And there are clear rules and procedures for fair and inclusive eligibility and entitlement.

People have access according to need, not ability to pay. Access is conditional on need (one of several ways in which UBS is different from UBI). Who
decides who needs what will vary from one service to another: eligibility may depend on professional judgment, locality or age, or on a claim by the individual – or a combination of these criteria. One component of conditionality, proposed by neo-Keynesian economist Tony Atkinson (2015), is eligibility based on resident participation. This involves making a social contribution and although Atkinson was considering eligibility for income support, the concept can equally apply to services – moving toward a reimagined social citizenship, based on plural identities and rights conferred on residents rather than on passport holders. It has also been proposed that decisions on the scope of UBS and who is eligible should be subject to democratic dialogue, through citizens’ assemblies and juries or similar models (Coote and Percy 2020, 111–112).

While no one is denied access because they are unable to pay, it does not follow that every service is entirely free for all users. In some cases and settings, reflecting the third category outlined above, it may be appropriate for a service to be free to all at the point of use. In others, the critical factor may be a realizable entitlement to the service, rather than free provision: here, there may be a strong element of collective funding, combined with low-cost charges for users and partial or total exemptions to ensure that they are genuinely accessible for all income groups.

UBS is intended to be realized through entitlement for all who are eligible. This follows sociologist T. H. Marshall’s view of “social citizenship,” which holds that every member of society should have positive economic and social rights as well as the more traditional “negative” rights that protect us from harm and maintain our civil liberties (Marshall 1965, 261–272). “Positive” social rights enable people to claim the means that are essential for participating fully in society, and for realizing their civil and political rights. They feature in the constitutions of some countries, including Finland, Sweden, and Belgium. While there is often quite a distance between what is written in a constitution and what happens in practice, declarations of this kind set out what is agreed to be desirable and help to create a favorable climate of opinion. As such, they can serve as a touchstone and support for progressive policy makers, local initiatives, and social movements (Coote 2017, 11).

Most declarations of social rights need further development, including legislation backed up by strong political support, to put them into practice. For social rights to be realized fully, they would ideally be codified in law and be accompanied by a robust framework of “procedural rights,” that is, systems and protocols that enable people to know and claim what they are entitled to by means that are fair, accessible, timely, and affordable (Galligan 1992, 55–68).

Once entitlements are established, they have to be upheld. This implies corresponding duties and duty-bearers who are clearly identified and suitably resourced and supported to fulfill their duties. The role of the state is crucial in this regard. In some areas of need and in some settings, it may be appropriate for the state to be a direct provider of services. However, the UBS framework involves a shift in power toward localities and people who use services. It favors diverse models of ownership and control, coupled with a changing dynamic between “bottom-up” and “top-down” politics, and a transformation of the culture and practice of public authorities. Against this background, the national state retains four essential functions. The first is to ensure entitlement to equality of access, between and within localities. The second is to set and enforce ethical and practical standards. The third is to collect and invest the necessary funds, distributing them to maximize inclusion and fairness. The fourth is to encourage diverse models of delivery and to coordinate functions across the different areas of need, in order to maximize positive impacts (Coote and Percy 2020, 24).

**Extending UBS into new areas**

As I have noted, the UBS agenda aims for radical improvements in healthcare, schooling, and other services, such as policing and social work, which are already (in theory if not always in practice) universal. It also seeks to extend the approach to areas such as housing, transport, and childcare as well as to adult social care, and to access to digital information and communications. Here, I focus on the first three issues.

**Housing**

Housing is widely acknowledged as one of life’s essentials and is central to the UBS agenda. It belongs to the second category of need, where the aim is not to give everyone free accommodation, but to ensure that everyone has access to accommodation that is secure, sufficient, and accessible, according to need rather than ability to pay.

Delivering housing as a part of a UBS programme involves a lot more than bricks and mortar. It must take account of the quality of housing, neighborhoods, and local amenities, the degree to which residents are engaged in planning and managing their homes and surroundings, the quantity of supply, and the affordability of housing, fair access,
and distribution, and sustainability. None of this can be achieved through markets alone.

Housing delivered according to the UBS framework would involve a combination of private and public consumption. The public element involves collective action, through public authorities, to invest, to regulate, and to distribute. These public measures can help to keep people above the lower boundary of the consumption corridor by enabling everyone to have housing that is secure, sufficient, and affordable. They can help to maintain the upper boundary by ensuring that housing is constructed (or retrofitted), equipped, and managed in ways that are ecologically sustainable.

The politics and capacity of bodies exercising collective responsibility, and the extent of residents’ control over their homes and neighborhoods, are intertwined to create conditions for security and sufficiency in housing. How far a dwelling is sufficient is partly a matter of objective measures such as floor space per capita, fittings, outdoor space, and amenities; it is also determined by subjective judgments shaped by history and culture. For example, home ownership is highly desirable in the UK, but in Vienna, 80% of the population rent their homes and more than half pay social rents. Residents’ views about sufficiency will be influenced by the quality of their surroundings, relationships with neighbors, and how easily they can find their way to transport, jobs, schools, public services, shops, leisure facilities, and open spaces. All these things can spell the difference between a living environment that enables people to meet their needs, and one that is experienced as inadequate or debilitating, making life a struggle.

Ghettos of deprivation are common in the UK, but elsewhere, some municipal authorities have set out to integrate residents from different backgrounds. Vienna has its Wohnsfond Wien policy that ensures mixed tenure of housing blocks, with the explicit aim of maintaining a social balance across the city. In the new town of Ørestad, near Copenhagen, social and private housing have been developed side by side, sharing enviable transport links, shops, and amenities. Neighborhoods where people from different backgrounds live in proximity are more likely to generate mutual understanding and respect, and a sense of shared responsibility for the community as a whole.

Where residents have some control over their daily living conditions, they tend to be healthier and happier: this stems not only from being able to influence what happens to their homes and surroundings, but also from the very experience of control (Marmot et al. 2018, 98). Indeed, “political voice” is recognized as integral to the social foundation that underpins the “safe and just space for humanity” in Raworth’s “doughnut” (Raworth 2017, 44) and having “a say in shaping society” is included in Di Giulio and Defila’s list of “protected needs” (Di Giulio and Defila 2020, 108). Residents can exercise control by being engaged in decision making and this can range from being consulted as part of a residents’ association, co-producing decisions with landlords to joining co-operative structures for owning and managing local housing. Housing co-ops flourish in many countries, including Austria, Denmark, Germany, Spain, and Switzerland, where they run a considerable chunk of the housing stock. In parts of Copenhagen, up to 40% of housing units are owned and managed as cooperatives (Falk and Rudlin 2018, 9). Where co-ops are at their best, there is firm and enduring political and practical support from government.

In a universal service, no one is excluded for want of money. Scarcity drives up prices, so increasing supply is an early goal wherever there are housing shortages – a common experience in cities across the world. Supply can be increased by building more dwellings, but it may be equally important to refurbish and redistribute existing stock, using regulation, taxation, or compulsory purchase to discourage or eliminate empty dwellings and multiple home ownership (Dorling 2014, 114). Markets are unlikely to produce sufficient and affordable housing unless they are shaped and managed by local and national government, using regulation, public investment, and partnerships between commercial, state, and other nonprofit bodies. Public asset corporations in Copenhagen and Hamburg, and Montpellier’s special purpose vehicles for pooling and developing land, are examples. The cost of supplying more homes can be kept in check by investing public funds in infrastructure, land acquisition, building, and retrofitting, by legislating to prevent speculation on land and property values, and by limiting profits extracted by private developers. Public funds can be raised by issuing government bonds, by taxing land and property as well as income, by generating revenue from local shops and amenities, and by reinvesting revenues from rent and sales. There is also a case for taking land into collective ownership through municipal authorities or civil society vehicles such as community-land trusts, so that it becomes a shared asset managed in the public interest rather than a barrier to affordable housing.

The UK’s Institute for Global Prosperity has proposed issuing 30-year government bonds to finance building 1.5 million new units to double the size of the social housing stock (Portes, Reed, and Percy 2017) at an annual cost of 0.7% of gross domestic
product (GDP). In Vienna, the city government has kept housing affordable by owning most of the land, using municipal developments and supply-side subsidies to keep costs down. Denmark levies a tax on land, based on one-thousandth of the market value of the parcel, reviewed every two years, which is collected nationally and distributed to local government for reinvestment in housing and infrastructure. In England and Wales, a growing network of community-land trusts, set up by local people, develop and manage affordable housing and other local assets. There are countless initiatives in cities across Europe that aim in these and other ways to boost the supply of affordable housing (Falk and Rudlin 2018).

Affordability is of course a relative notion and even the least expensive homes are beyond the means of some people. Poorer households generally pay a much larger slice of their income in rents or mortgages (OECD 2019). So further measures are needed if housing is to be genuinely affordable for all. These strategies may take the form of demand-side benefits, such as housing benefit in the UK (widely considered a way of enriching landlords as the payment is entirely to them, or subsidizing employers who pay poverty wages) or supply-side measures, whereby prices, including rents and purchase deposits, are capped or subsidized, as is common in parts of Austria, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands.

As noted, sustainability is a key component of the UBS framework. Housing is especially relevant in this regard because it accounts for a substantial share of greenhouse-gas emissions (GHG) emissions and resource use, and has considerable potential to maintain or breach the upper limits of sustainable consumption. This is reflected in recent policy proposals on both sides of the Atlantic.

The European Union’s “Green Deal” calls for doubling the rate of renovating private and public buildings to improve energy efficiency, climate proofing, and compatibility with the circular economy. It stipulates that particular attention should be paid “to the renovation of social housing, to help households who struggle to pay their energy bills” (European Commission 2019). The UK’s Green New Deal Group has proposed large-scale investment in energy-efficient and affordable homes (Green New Deal Group 2013). The “Green New Deal” proposed by some members of the United States Congress in 2019 called for all new and upgraded buildings in the country “to achieve maximum energy efficiency, water efficiency, safety, affordability, comfort, and durability, including through electrification” (United States House of Representatives 2019). Notably, this proposal was as much about social justice and democracy as the biophysical environment: sustainable housing is taken to mean not only designing and building zero-carbon homes using renewable resources, but also developing neighborhoods where everyone is encouraged to think and act sustainably.

The town of Freiburg in southwest Germany is claimed to be the “solar capital of Europe,” but that involves “far more than simple technological conversion.” The Freiburg model reportedly promotes “urban eco-living, facilitated by a strong long-term vision, national policy frameworks and a focused commitment to change and community engagement” (Falk and Rudlin 2018, 13). There are many other developments across the world — although still far too few — that adopt similar approaches to sustainable housing.

Secure, sufficient, and sustainable housing is a route to meeting basic needs for health, autonomy, and social participation across individual lifetimes and generations. Conversely, homelessness or inadequate housing will act as a barrier and trigger demand for costly interventions in areas such as healthcare, income support, and criminal justice. Where housing is designed and managed to maximize ecological sustainability, it will help to safeguard natural resources and the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Transport**

Motorized transport is said to belong to “a set of universal, irreducible and essential material conditions for achieving basic human wellbeing” (Rao and Min 2018, 138–225). As such, it fits within the UBS framework, in which services are available to all according to need, not ability to pay. Like housing, it occupies the second category of need outlined above, where universal access may be achieved through a range of measures including free services.

The ultimate goal of transport as a UBS is a well regulated, interconnected, frequent, reliable, and adequately funded scheme that also discourages car use and encourages safe walking and cycling alongside public transport. Free bus travel has been proposed as one way to start (Coote and Percy 2020, 88).

A universal transport service could help to maintain both lower and upper boundaries of the sustainable consumption corridor. No one would be denied access to essential travel because of inability to pay. According to a 2016 evaluation of free bus travel for older and disabled people in England, pass holders found it easier than others to access services such as healthcare, had more opportunities for social interaction, and were left with more
disposable income; all this disproportionately benefited those on lower incomes (Department for Transport 2016). Other studies have found that free bus travel leads to better health as a result of more physical activity (because bus travelers walk longer distances than people traveling by car), easier access to jobs, increased independence, reduced isolation, greater sense of belonging to one’s local area, and enhanced opportunity to contribute to society (Massey 2014).

At the same time, free bus travel could help to maintain the upper boundary by discouraging car use and reducing air pollution and GHG emissions. A UK study found that GHG emissions from use of cars and taxis were more than seven times higher than from use of buses (Department for Transport 2017, 6). Accessible, coordinated public transport across a large conurbation, even without free fares, has been estimated to reduce car traffic by 9%, resulting in better air quality and lower carbon emissions (Sloman and Hopkinson 2019, 6). Free bus fares could reasonably be expected to accentuate that effect.

For their full potential to be realized, research suggests that free buses would need to be coupled with strong disincentives for private vehicles, such as a road-user charge (Storchmann 2003, 89–105). No less important, they would need to be genuinely useful to as many people as possible, so that they are widely adopted as a preferred form of travel.

There are free local transport schemes (mainly buses) in more than 100 towns and cities worldwide, including more than thirty in the United States and twenty in France, as well as in Poland, Sweden, Italy, Slovenia, Estonia, Australia and elsewhere. More have been added in response to the pandemic. Some are restricted to certain social groups and times of day. Frequency and connectivity vary between countries. In the UK, for example, adults over 65 and disabled people are entitled to free bus travel. Since 1985, most local buses have been deregulated (though not in London). Four large corporations now dominate the market, producing a patchwork of poorly connected and/or infrequent services with no shared system of ticketing; prices have risen as government subsidies have diminished (Bayliss and Mattioli 2018, 13–14). As the UK Local Government Association has observed, there is no point having a free bus pass if you cannot get on a bus to take you where you want to go (Massey 2014).

Most other European countries have regulated bus services with better coordinated routes and timetables, as well as better links between town and country, and higher levels of public subsidy. Compared with the UK, they are found to be more affordable and their users more satisfied (Bayliss and Mattioli 2018).

Costs of developing transport as a UBS will vary between countries, and will depend on what is already available, how far services are entirely free, and the extent of public investment required to ensure that they are genuinely affordable for all. A huge variety of taxes are levied by local authorities around the world to pay for their public transport systems, ranging from local income and property taxes to sales and tourism taxes, corporation tax, and road-user charges (Taylor and Sloman 2016, 115–116). In France, for example, public transport is funded through a payroll levy called Versement Transport (VT): more than 80% of France’s urban transport authorities apply the levy which pays for more than half of their infrastructure investment and subsidies to operators. For the UK, analysis by the Institute for Global Prosperity found that extending free bus passes to the whole population would cost around £5.2 billion a year (0.26% of GDP), and the cost of extending London’s level of public transport service, which includes underground and local rail travel, across the UK, would be £12.3 billion (US$6.7 billion) (0.63% of GDP) (Portes, Reed, and Percy 2017, 35–36).

Free buses may be seen as one step in the direction of providing a more comprehensive public transport service, which could eventually include trains, trams, and underground railways (as well as safe cycling and pedestrian routes) and make them as widely accessible and affordable as possible. Indeed, frequent, well-connected, and affordable train services (along with long-distance buses) offer an important opportunity to reduce short-haul flights – which otherwise threaten to breach upper limits of sustainable consumption. Public investment in the necessary material infrastructure such as vehicle fleets, stations, routing systems, railways, and tramlines would be a crucial prerequisite. Collective control of investment and the capacity of public authorities to impose public interest obligations on suppliers could help to ensure that all aspects of the transport system were ecologically sustainable.

**Childcare**

Education, security in childhood, and access to paid work are recognized as generic “satisfiers” of basic human needs and childcare is a means of meeting those needs – by providing early education and care for preschool age children and enabling parents to go out to work. It can only be made available and affordable for all by exercising collective responsibility. Poor children and families have more to gain
from it – and are more disadvantaged without it – than those who are better off (Lloyd and Potter 2014, 78). Childcare is therefore an obvious candidate for inclusion in the UBS agenda. (“Childcare” is the term used throughout this section to denote early childhood education and care for preschool-aged children. The period of childhood it covers varies between countries, but it often spans the years between the end of statutory parental leave and the start of compulsory schooling.)

Many countries have well-developed childcare systems. The challenge almost everywhere is to ensure that a sufficient quality of childcare is universally accessible. Factors that contribute to quality in childcare include training and qualifications of staff, ratios of children to staff (lower is generally better), good mix between children with different social and ethnic backgrounds, suitably warm and consistent relationships between children and staff, parental involvement in managing childcare centers, and opening times to suit parents’ working lives.

Norway, which sets an enviable example, has well-qualified staff, relatively low child-staff ratios, a consistent form of childcare setting (the kindergarten), and continuity of care from age one to six as the norm. It combines “a legal guarantee to a place for all children with fees that are both low overall and income-related” (Ellingsæter 2014, 53–76).

In most countries childcare is provided by a mix of for-profit, public, and voluntary organizations. The role of for-profit providers has a bearing on both cost and quality, where resources are “siphoned off for shareholders rather than invested in staff wages and other quality inputs” (Stewart et al. 2014, 209–226; Penn 2012, 19–42). Where for-profit provision is combined with a demand-led, fee-paying system, the observed effects are “a rise in the fees charged by providers, a drop in standards in poorer areas, and an increase in inequalities of access” (Penn 2014, 453). But Norway has reportedly managed to expand provision, open it up to private businesses, and still maintain quality. This is attributed to the fact that government covers 85% of childcare costs, caps fees, imposes tight regulations on staff qualifications, limits profit to what is “reasonable,” and ensures that parents sit on kindergarten boards. To make sure children from disadvantaged backgrounds participate, research suggests that “the most effective strategy is universal access plus outreach to vulnerable groups, not one or the other” (Stewart et al. 2014, 223).

Few governments have been willing to provide entirely free universal childcare for all preschool children, in spite of strong evidence about the benefits it can bring. In Denmark, which is typical of more generous state funders, local authorities are expected to cover no less than 75% of costs, while parents pay no more than 25%. For a single parent in the United States, childcare costs can be over half of net income and in Ireland that figure is 42%. Couples in the UK and New Zealand spend around a third of their income on childcare (OECD 2016). This highlights the value of social income delivered through the UBS framework.

Total public spending on childcare (including care, preschool education, and related in-kind benefits) as a percentage of GDP ranges from 1.7% in France, 1.5% in Norway, and 1.4% in the Netherlands to 1.1% in the UK, 0.8% in Germany, and 0.7% in Australia, leaving the United States at the lower end with spending equal to 0.6% of GDP (Stewart 2013; OECD 2016).

Spending and quality are inevitably intertwined. In the UK campaigners have argued that in order to achieve high quality care, childcare workers should have training and salaries comparable to primary school staff. They have calculated, accordingly, that free universal provision for children aged six months to the start of compulsory schooling, would cost 3% of GDP. They also estimate that nine-tenths of the costs would be recouped through employment gains, increased tax revenues, and reduced income-support payments (De Henau 2017; Himmelweit, Coote, and Hough 2014).

Childcare can play a substantial role in enabling people with children to stay above the lower level of the consumption corridor. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has identified a range of social benefits that can be derived from “high quality early childhood education and care,” including better health, reduced likelihood of individuals engaging in risky behavior, and stronger “civic and social engagement,” with positive “spill-over effects” for society as a whole (OECD 2011, 4).

In terms of the upper limit of the corridor, the potential impact of childcare is less obvious than that of transport or housing. There are nevertheless three ways in which it can contribute. While these are not readily quantifiable, they help to illustrate the potential contribution of a range of public services (such as education, healthcare, and adult social care), which could have a significant combined effect. First, childcare can help to constrain public consumption by preventing various kinds of harm that would otherwise impair people’s wellbeing and require costly interventions by a range of public agencies. Second, a well-regulated and securely funded system can be brought within a shared set of protocols for sustainable consumption, covering for example the way childcare centers are constructed, equipped, and maintained, the volume of energy
and nonrenewable resources they use, and the modes that children use to travel to and from home. Finally, they can encourage children from a very young age to value, enjoy, and safeguard the natural environment. In commercial settings, where childcare is a commodity supplied by competing and profit-seeking providers it will be very difficult or impossible to achieve such results.

**Some possible effects of UBS**

Protagonists for UBS claim that it can bring substantial benefits in terms of equality, efficiency, solidarity, and sustainability. These claims are not definitive because the framework is new and untested, and there has so far been little opportunity for scrutiny and debate. There is nevertheless some evidence, drawn from studies of existing public services that support them. In this section, I look at each area of benefit in turn.

**Equality**

Public services are known to reduce income inequalities by providing a virtual income, made up of in-kind benefits, which is worth much more to people in low-income groups. A study of OECD countries suggests that poor people would have to spend three quarters of their income on essential services. Table 1 shows in-kind benefits – education, health-care, social housing, early childhood education and care (ECEC), and elderly care – as a share of disposable income per quintile.

The 75.8% share for the lowest income quintile compares with a 13.7% income share for the highest quintile. Indeed, the study shows that inequality in OECD countries is reduced by one fifth when the measure is extended from money incomes to a combination of money and social income. Without in-kind benefits, many individuals and families would be unable to meet their needs and flourish. These are important for all families, and especially for those on lower incomes, not only directly through the services they offer (education, care, housing), but also indirectly through their preventative effects. Those who can rely on getting an education, a decent home, and care when they need it are better protected over time against accumulating risks and vulnerabilities.

**Efficiency**

Measures of efficiency in the public sector are usually complex and contested. Public services have been accused of inefficiencies, to justify introducing market rules. But privatization, competition between multiple providers, and customer choice for service users have largely failed to improve outputs let alone outcomes. These failings have been greatly exacerbated by public spending cuts.

Nonprofit, collective forms of provision avoid inefficiencies that routinely arise from market processes: inflexible contracts, higher transaction costs, and moral hazards that are encountered when profit incentives combine with unequal knowledge in markets. A nonprofit system does not need to extract funds to pay dividends to shareholders.

A 2016 study compared spending on healthcare and average life expectancy in OECD countries. It found that the United States, which is a mainly market-based system, outspent the UK in 2014 by the equivalent of £6,311 (US$8,162) per person, compared with £2,777 (US$3,592) yet had an average life expectancy at birth of 78.8 years, compared with 81.4 in the UK (Office of National Statistics 2016).

Calculations of efficiency must take account of the multiple dimensions of value, the many ways in which value is experienced and how it accrues. This calls for social value analysis to take account of long-term, indirect effects across social and environmental dimensions. As I have noted, expenditure on UBS can be seen as an investment in social infrastructure, which can be expected to yield significant returns over time.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is one approach that has been adopted by the UK government, which formally requires public authorities to consider whether their procurement practices “improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area, and how, in conducting the process of procurement, it might act with a view to securing that improvement” (Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 2014, 2). Michel Bauwens and Vasilis Niaros have called for a major “Value Shift” whereby instead of rewarding “extractive” practices “that enrich some at the expense of the others,” we should reward “generative” practices that enrich the social and environmental resources to which they are applied (Bauwens and Niaros 2017, 3). Building support for UBS will partly depend on redefining efficiency

---

**Table 1. In-kind benefits as a share of disposable income by quintile, average over 27 OECD countries, late 2000s.**

|                        | Q1   | Q2   | Q3   | Q4   | Q5   | Total |
|------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Education              | 30.6 | 18.5 | 14.2 | 10.4 | 5.6  | 11.8  |
| Health care            | 34.9 | 22.2 | 15.8 | 11.8 | 7.2  | 13.9  |
| Social housing         | 1.8  | 0.7  | 0.4  | 0.2  | 0.1  | 0.4   |
| ECEC                   | 4.5  | 3.0  | 2.4  | 1.5  | 0.8  | 1.8   |
| Elderly care           | 4.0  | 1.9  | 0.7  | 0.4  | 0.2  | 0.9   |
| Total                  | 75.8 | 46.4 | 33.5 | 24.3 | 13.7 | 28.8  |

Source: Verbist, Förster, and Vaalavuo (2012).
along these lines, by asking how far such services lead to outcomes that renew local assets, safeguard planetary boundaries, and nurture human flourishing.

**Solidarity**

The concepts of shared needs and collective responsibilities embody the idea of solidarity, and the practice of UBS, as defined here, has potential to develop and strengthen solidarity. Solidarity is taken to mean feelings of sympathy and responsibility between people that promote mutual support. It is an inclusive process, not just within well-acquainted groups but also, crucially, between people and groups who are “strangers” to each other. It involves collective action toward shared objectives (Wilde 2013, 1).

Pursuing the UBS agenda not only requires solidarity but may also contribute to it – in three main ways. First, it can develop experience of shared needs and collective responsibility, which builds understanding of how people depend on each other and a commitment to retaining those interconnections. Second, where services bring people together from different social groups, they can provide opportunities for developing mutual sympathy and responsibility (Coote and Angel 2014). Finally, the combined effects of more and better services, as I have noted, bring benefits to society as a whole and have a redistributive effect, reducing inequalities that otherwise create barriers to solidarity.

By contrast, there is a rich literature on the ways in which systems based on individualism, choice, and competition weaken the values of social citizenship and undermine solidarity (Lynch and Kalaitzakte 2020, 1–20; Brodie 2007; Jayasuriya 2006, 15).

**Sustainability**

Sustainability involves, at its simplest, an inherent “capacity for continuance,” as ecological economist Paul Ekins observes: a sustainable system is one that can function in ways that continue to achieve its desired goals over time (Ekins 2014, 56). Here, I reflect briefly on the potential of UBS to affect this capacity through prevention of harm, economic stabilization, and helping to mitigate climate change and the depletion of natural resources. The urgent necessity to move away from unsustainable economic, social, and environmental practices provides a new justification and impetus for extending universal public services.

As discussed above, public services that help people to stay well and flourish are directly beneficial to individuals and society; they can also reduce demand for a range of services required to cope with problems that are otherwise likely to occur. For example, unemployment, anti-social behavior, and many forms of crime, for example, have roots in poverty and deprivation, which can be significantly reduced by a more generous “social income” (Coote 2015, 19). By helping to maintain and improve social wellbeing, UBS can not only support the capacity of society to continue to flourish; they can also prevent harm and thereby mitigate the risk of services becoming overwhelmed by rising demand, enabling them to continue to function effectively (Gough 2015, 1–21).

Where the economy is concerned, public services can help to stabilize fluctuations by generating relatively stable employment and providing security through meeting everyday needs. In these ways, they can act as a countercyclical buffer, helping to offset the effects of market downturns and recession, contributing to the economy’s “capacity for continuance.”

A move toward more and better public services is considered likely to prove more environmentally sustainable than leaving the process of meeting needs to transactions in a market-based system. There are three main reasons for this. First, the UBS framework focuses on sufficiency for all, rather than on satisfying wants and preferences, which can escalate without constraint. This helps to put a brake on excessive consumption that would otherwise threaten to breach planetary boundaries.

Second, by promoting collective action to pool resources and share risks so that everyone’s needs are met, UBS can play a part in changing the way economic success is measured – favoring a concern for human wellbeing within planetary limits rather than simply focusing on GDP growth.

Finally, provisioning systems that are democratically controlled with the purpose of serving the public interest have greater potential than market-based systems to promote sustainable consumption. Through their networks of employees, service users, and suppliers, they can coordinate sustainable practices such as active travel, resource-efficient buildings, and local food procurement, as well as avoid duplication and waste, minimize excessive demand, and implement national strategies for reducing GHG emissions. Where governments issue guidance, public sector organizations are more likely to comply because they share public interest values. Where public bodies work with non-government partners or subcontractors, they can spread sustainable practices among a wider range of institutions.

There is evidence that collectively provided services have a smaller ecological footprint than
privately funded alternatives. For example, the direct carbon footprint of the National Health Service in the UK amounts to 3% of the country’s total compared to an estimated 8–10% from the private-sector dominated healthcare system in the United States. Put another way, the per capita carbon footprint of healthcare in the United States is two and a half times greater than in the UK and three and half times greater than in several European countries (see Figure 1).

There is also some evidence that more extensive welfare states are generally better suited to adopting and implementing pro-environmental policies, especially where they embody ideas about shared needs and collective responsibilities (Gough et al. 2008, 325–344). Furthermore, public services can play a vital role in decarbonizing the economy in a just way. For example, Green New Deal programs to retrofit the vast bulk of the housing stock will require public planning, finance, and management. In order for decarbonization to be sustainable, provisioning systems are needed that will ensure a “just transition” to lower carbon living, rather than one that will load costs onto the poorest people and communities.

**Implications for sustainable consumption corridors**

The potential contributions of UBS to achieving sustainable consumption corridors are summarized briefly below.

First, UBS puts collective (or public) consumption on the agenda, alongside individual (or private) consumption, as a site of efforts to achieve a sufficient social foundation for all, to avoid breaching planetary boundaries, and to constrain excessive – and unnecessary – consumption. It involves consumption through expenditures on goods and services by a wide range of social and public institutions at national and local levels. Hospitals, schools, and prisons are obvious examples.

Second, UBS aims to support a sufficient level of consumption for all through an enhanced “social income.” It offers benefits in kind, according to need not ability to pay, that are intended to enable everyone to have secure access to life’s essentials. This is the most obvious and substantial way in which UBS can contribute to maintaining the social foundation that constitutes the lower boundary of the corridor.

Third, the concept of UBS embodies an ethos of collective responsibility and a needs-based approach to human welfare, based on sufficiency. As such, it offers a robust framework for policy and practice that is closely aligned with the goal of living well within limits. It seeks to build solidarity and mutual support among people and groups in ways that cannot be achieved by systems based on market transactions alone. By encouraging an awareness of interdependence and developing practical experience of collective responsibility, UBS can help to create favorable conditions for society to “play a pivotal role in imposing limits” on individual freedom to consume more than is required to live a good life (Fuchs 2020, 301).

Fourth, as noted above, the UBS framework can influence provisioning systems so that they remain within ecological limits. Inherent in the framework is the national allocation of resources to local and regional authorities to ensure equal access to services between different areas and population groups. This offers a vehicle for shaping the practice of organizations involved in delivering services and for influencing consumption patterns of people using services. For example, a free bus service can discourage other, more energy-intensive forms of travel; housing policies can be designed not only to create

![Figure 1. Health carbon footprints per capita, selected countries, 2014. Source: Pichler et al. (2019).](image-url)
zero-carbon homes made from renewable materials, but also to encourage residents to change patterns of consumption and tread more lightly on the planet; and childcare services can be organized and run in ways that raise awareness about sustainable consumption, and encourage and support it in practice.

Finally, the UBS framework can help to constrain excessive consumption by changing incentives and redirecting resources. If collective provisioning became an acceptable – even popular – way to secure much of what is necessary to live well within limits, norms and expectations would shift, influencing what people want to buy, how much is considered “enough” and awareness of the negative effects of accumulating too much stuff. Financing UBS requires higher taxation, unless debt rises. Even where a tax system is proportional rather than progressive, higher disposable incomes are likely to be brought below the level they would otherwise be, reducing luxury consumption (all else being equal). Comparing two countries, with high and low provision of public services but with similar total consumption, the extent and share of high-end consumption above any ceiling would be lower in the former country (Verbist, Förster, and Vaalavuo 2012).

**Conclusion: cash payments or collective services?**

To conclude, it may be useful to reflect briefly on the proposal for universal basic income (UBI), which seeks to make regular, unconditional cash payments to all individuals, and on emerging criticisms of UBS, which have come mainly from supporters of basic income (Standing 2020, 108–114; Duffy 2018). As noted, proposals for UBS were developed partly in response to UBI, offering an approach with different ideological and practical implications. Here I touch briefly on some of the critics’ main concerns about the two ideas.

One concern of critics of UBS is that it augments the size and power of the central state. However, this contention overlooks the fact that decentralization, local control, and citizen/user engagement are fundamental to the UBS framework, and that it includes the goal of transforming the state and its relationship with local politics and action.

A second critique is that UBS is paternalistic rather than liberating, on the ground that it involves delivering services rather than just giving everyone money to spend as they choose. Against this point, it may be argued, following T. H. Marshall, Amartya Sen, and others, that personal freedom is contingent on the social, economic, and political systems and structures that shape everyday personal lives. UBS embodies a commitment to collective action to create a sustainable social infrastructure that can enable all citizens and residents to participate and flourish. Unless resources (financial and political) are pooled to ensure that risks are shared and everyone has access to life’s essentials regardless of ability to pay, it is likely that genuine freedom will remain the privilege of a small minority. It has been proposed that UBS be combined with a generous, non-stigmatizing system of social security (Stirling and Arnold 2020), which both recognizes interdependence and supports individual autonomy.

The third critique takes issue with how UBS is costed. It has been estimated that total expenditure on extending the UBS program, if implemented all at once, would be around 4–5% of GDP in a typical OECD country (Coote and Percy 2020, 114–127). While costings are based approximately on average expenditures on similar services in a range of countries, they remain open to question, because so much depends on what services are already in place in any country, what is regarded as sufficient in terms of quality and scope, and the level of users’ contributions (if any). It is fair to say at this stage that more work is required to arrive at viable costings for UBS. However, as noted below, the costs of a sufficient UBI would outstrip the costs of UBS by a wide margin.

A detailed critique of UBI is available elsewhere (Coote and Yazici 2019). Summarizing briefly here, there are three main areas of concern. The first is about how much it can achieve in terms of meeting needs. By giving individuals some money, UBI could help people to meet those needs in the first category I set out earlier, with food and clothing as examples. It could do little to help meet needs in the second category, unless it were provided at a sufficiently high level, at least equivalent to a living wage (£10.75 (US$13.90) per hour or at least £380 (US$491) a week in 2019–2020). Even at that level, its contribution to meeting needs in the third category would be negligible.

By all accounts, UBI paid at a rate that is anywhere near sufficient to live on would leave no fiscal space for UBS in any imaginable economy. As Luke Martinelli (2017, 1) concluded after extensive modeling “an affordable UBI would be inadequate, and an adequate UBI would be unaffordable.”

Costs would reduce considerably if a basic income were guaranteed to all, rather than paid automatically to everyone, as demonstrated by the New Economics Foundation (Stirling and Arnold 2020). It is beyond the scope of this policy brief to argue the case in detail here. The key point is that there are other models of income support that could
achieve most of the goals pursued by progressive UBI advocates, while being more compatible – fiscally and ideologically – with UBS. There is no evidence that UBI would challenge existing structures of wealth and power; or that it would help to build solidarity or produce cost-efficiencies in meeting needs. It has been asserted that it would “only help people have more access to consumption without altering anything about how production is organised” (Whitfield 2018, 209).

The most important critique of UBI in the context of this policy brief is that, in essence, its single purpose is to support individual consumption. Redirecting funds through taxation may leave higher earners with less money for non-essential and luxury consumption, but UBI does nothing else to facilitate carbon reduction or more sustainable use of resources. By contrast, UBS offers multiple opportunities for maintaining expenditure on goods and services within the upper and lower boundaries of consumption corridors.

I want to end by making it clear that UBS is not a single policy lever but a framework that offers a route for policy making across a range of different areas. That route is shaped by distinctive values, favoring collective action to meet shared needs now and in years to come. How far these proposals are able to fulfill their promise depends on how services are devised, organized, and funded, a well as where power lies, models of ownership, how people participate, conditions of eligibility, and how entitlements are realized. The UBS agenda can be introduced incrementally, but its ambitions go far beyond piecemeal reform. It is essentially about changing whole systems to achieve a sustainable future.

Acknowledgements

This policy brief draws on two longer documents. Universal Basic Services: Theory and Practice by Anna Coote, Pritika Kasliwal, and Andrew Percy is based on a literature review published by the Institute for Global Prosperity in 2019. The Case for Universal Basic Services by Anna Coote and Andrew Percy was published by Polity Books in 2020.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

Atkinson, A. 2015. Inequality: What Can Be Done? Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Bauwens, M., and V. Niaros. 2017. Value in the Commons Economy: Developments in Open and Contributory

Value Accounting. Berlin: Heinrich Boll Foundation and P2P Foundation.
Bayliss, K., and G. Mattioli. 2018. Privatisation, Inequality and Poverty in the UK: Briefing Prepared for UN Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. Leeds: University of Leeds, Sustainability Research Institute.
Benton, T., A. Frogatt, R. King, G. Wright, and C. Thompson. 2019. Food Politics and Policies in Post-Brexit Britain. London: Chatham House.
Brodie, J. 2007. “Reforming Social Justice in Neoliberal Times.” Studies in Social Justice 1 (2): 93–107. doi:10.26522/ssj.v1i2.972.
Coote, A. 2015. People, Planet, Power: Towards a New Social Settlement. London: New Economics Foundation.
Coote, A. 2017. Building a New Social Commons. London: New Economics Foundation.
Coote, A., and A. Percy. 2020. The Case for Universal Basic Services. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Coote, A., and E. Yazici. 2019. Universal Basic Income: A Union Perspective. Ferney-Voltaire: Public Services International.
Coote, A., and J. Angel. 2014. Solidarity: Why it Matters for a New Social Settlement. London: New Economics Foundation.
Coote, A., P. Kasliwal, and A. Percy. 2019. Universal Basic Services: Theory and Practice. London: University College London, Institute for Global Prosperity.
De Henau, J. 2017. Costing and Funding Free Universal Childcare of High Quality. London: Women’s Budget Group Childcare Briefing.
Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. 2014. The Public Services (Social Value Act) 2014, Introductory Guide. London: UK Government.
Department for Transport. 2016. Evaluation of Concessionary Bus Travel: The Impacts of the Free Bus Pass. London: Department for Transport.
Department for Transport. 2017. Transport Statistics Great Britain 2017: Energy and Environment. London: Department for Transport.
Di Giulio, A., and R. Defila. 2020. “The ‘Good Life’ and Protected Needs.” In The Routledge Handbook of Global Sustainability Governance, edited by A. Kalfagianni, D. Fuchs, and A. Hayden, 100–114. London: Routledge.
Dorling, D. 2014. All that is Solid: How the Great Housing Disaster Defines Our Times and What We Can Do about It. London: Allen Lane.
Doyal, L., and I. Gough. 1991. A Theory of Human Need. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Duffy, S. 2018. Basic Income or Basic Services. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Department for Transport. 2016. Evaluation of Concessionary Bus Travel: The Impacts of the Free Bus Pass. London: Department for Transport.
Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. 2014. The Public Services (Social Value Act) 2014, Introductory Guide. London: UK Government.
Department for Transport. 2017. Transport Statistics Great Britain 2017: Energy and Environment. London: Department for Transport.
Di Giulio, A., and R. Defila. 2020. “The ‘Good Life’ and Protected Needs.” In The Routledge Handbook of Global Sustainability Governance, edited by A. Kalfagianni, D. Fuchs, and A. Hayden, 100–114. London: Routledge.
Dorling, D. 2014. All that is Solid: How the Great Housing Disaster Defines Our Times and What We Can Do about It. London: Allen Lane.
Doyal, L., and I. Gough. 1991. A Theory of Human Need. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Duffy, S. 2018. Basic Income or Basic Services. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Department for Transport. 2016. Evaluation of Concessionary Bus Travel: The Impacts of the Free Bus Pass. London: Department for Transport.
Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. 2014. The Public Services (Social Value Act) 2014, Introductory Guide. London: UK Government.
Department for Transport. 2017. Transport Statistics Great Britain 2017: Energy and Environment. London: Department for Transport.
Di Giulio, A., and R. Defila. 2020. “The ‘Good Life’ and Protected Needs.” In The Routledge Handbook of Global Sustainability Governance, edited by A. Kalfagianni, D. Fuchs, and A. Hayden, 100–114. London: Routledge.
Ekins, P. 2014. “Strong Sustainability and Critical Natural Capital.” In Handbook of Sustainable Development, edited by G. Atkinison, S. Dietz, E. Neumayer, and M. Agarwala, 55–71. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
Ellingsæter, A. 2014. “Towards Universal Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: The Norwegian Model.” In An Equal Start! Providing Quality Early Education and Care for Disadvantaged Children, edited by L. Gambero, K. Stewart, and J. Waldfoelg, 53–76. Bristol: Policy Press.
European Commission. 2019. A European Green Deal. Brussels: European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en.
Falk, N., and J. Rudlin. 2018. Learning from International Examples of Affordable Housing. London: Shelter.
Fitzpatrick, S., G. Bramley, F. Sosenko, J. Blenkinsopp, J. Wood, S. Johnsen, M. Littlewood, and B. Watts. 2018. Destitution in the UK 2018. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2018.
Fuchs, D. 2020. “Living Well within Limits: The Vision of Consumption Corridors.” In The Routledge Handbook of Global Sustainability Governance, edited by A. Kalfagianni, D. Fuchs, and A. Hayden, 296–307. London: Routledge.
Galligan, D. 1992. “Procedural Rights in Social Welfare.” In The Welfare of Citizens: Developing New Social Rights, edited by A. Coote, 55–68. London: IPPR/Rivers Oram Press.
Gough, I. 2015. "The Political Economy of Prevention." British Journal of Political Science 45 (2): 307–327. doi: 10.1017/S0007123413000434.
Himmelweit, J., A. Coote, and J. Hough. 2014. “Children in the Social Security Pocketbook.” Transport and Wellbeing: A Qualitative Study of Young People and Older Citizens in London, UK.” Social Science and Medicine 91: 202–209. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2012.11.040.
KPMG. 2017. The “True Value” of Local Bus Services: A Report to Greener Journeys. London: Greener Journeys.
Lynch, K., and M. Kalaitzaki. 2020. “Affective and Calculative Solidarity: The Impact of Individualism and Neoliberal Capitalism.” European Journal of Social Theory 23 (2): 238–257. doi: 10.1177/1368431018786379.
Mackett, R. 2015. “Improving Accessibility for Older People – Investing in a Valuable Asset.” Journal of Transport and Health 2 (1): 5–13. doi: 10.1016/j.jth.2014.10.004.
Marriott, M., J. Allen, P. Goldblatt, T. Boyce, D. McNeish, M. Grady, and I. Geddes. 2018. Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England Post-2010. London: Institute of Health Equity.
Marshall, T. 1965. “The Right to Welfare.” The Sociological Review 13 (3): 261–272. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-954x.1965.tb01140.x.
Martinelli, L. 2017. Assessing the Case for Universal Basic Income in the UK. Bath: University of Bath.
Miller, S. 2012. The Ethics of Need: Agency, Dignity and Obligation. New York: Routledge.
Nussbaum, M. 2000. Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Office of National Statistics. 2016. How Does UK Healthcare Spending Compare Internationally? London: Office of National Statistics. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthcaresystems/articles/howdoesukhealthcarespendingcompareinternationally/2016-11-01.
Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2011. Investing in High-Quality Childhood Education and Care. Paris: OECD.
Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2016. Society at a Glance 2016: OECD Social Indicators 2016. Paris: OECD.
Penn, H. 2012. “Childcare Markets: Do They Work?” In Childcare Markets: Can They Deliver an Equitable Service, edited by E. Lloyd and H. Penn, 19–42. Bristol: Policy Press.
Penn, H. 2014. “The Business of Childcare in Europe.” European Early Childhood Education Research Journal 22 (4): 432–456. doi:10.1080/1350293X.2013.783300.
Portes, J., H. Reed, and A. Percy. 2017. Social Prosperity for the Future: A Proposal for Universal Basic Services. London: University College London, Institute for Global Prosperity.
Rao, N., and J. Min. 2018. “Decent Living Standards: Material Prerequisites for Human Wellbeing.” Social Indicators Research 138 (1): 225–244. doi:10.1007/s11205-017-1650-0.
Raworth, K. 2017. Doughnut Economics: 7 Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist. London: Random House.
Stirling, A., and S. Arnold. 2020. A Minimum Income Guarantee for the UK. London: New Economics Foundation.
Storchmann, K. 2003. “Externalities by Automobiles and Cost-Saving Externalities by Automobiles.” Agricultural and Human Values 20 (1): 329–340. doi:10.1007/s10460-019-09924-3.
Stoll, L., and L. Hopkinson. 2019. Transforming Public Transport: Regulation, Spending and Free Buses for the under 30s. London: Friends of the Earth.
Standing, G. 2020. Battling Eight Giants. London: I. B. Taurus.
Stewart, K. 2013. Labour’s Record on the Under 5s: Policy Spending and Outcomes 1997–2010. London: School of Economics, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion.
Stewart, K., L. Gambero, J. Waldofgel, and J. Rutter. 2014. “Common Challenges, Lessons for Policy.” In An Equal Start? Providing Quality Early Education and Care for Disadvantaged Children, edited by L. Gambero, K. Stewart, and J. Waldofgel, 219–244. Bristol: Policy Press.
Stirling, A., and S. Arnold. 2020. A Minimum Income Guarantee for the UK. London: New Economics Foundation.

Taylor, I., and L. Sloman. 2016. *Building a World Class Bus Service for Britain*. London: Transport for Quality of Life.

The Care Collective. 2020. *The Care Manifesto*. London: Verso.

United States House of Representatives. 2019. *Recognizing the Duty of the Federal Government to Create a Green New Deal*, H. Res. 109, 116th Congress, 1st Session. Washington, DC: United States House of Representatives.

Verbist, G., M. Förster, and M. Vaalavuo. 2012. *The Impact of Publicly Provided Services on the Distribution of Resources: Review of New Results and Methods*. Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Whitfield, E. 2018. “Why Basic Income is Not Good Enough.” In *It’s Basic Income: The Global Debate*, edited by A. Downes and S. Lansley, 109–112. Bristol: Policy Press.

Wilde, L. 2013. *Global Solidarity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). 1987. *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.