

# Managing risk through security:

Social security's contribution to tackling  
climate change and gender inequality

Feminist Green New Deal Policy Paper



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# **Managing risk through security:** **Social security's contribution to tackling climate change and gender inequality**

## **UK Feminist Green New Deal Policy Paper**

**by Marilyn Howard for the Women's Budget Group**

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## Summary and introduction

### Aims of this paper

Social security is an important part of a package of social and economic policies which could mitigate climate change. Such policies should not disadvantage people on low incomes and women, so both environmental sustainability and gender equality must be considered. This paper focuses on the UK social security system, drawing on a more detailed social security paper for forthcoming publication by the Women's Budget Group. Social security reforms have been discussed for many years, with no easy answers, but this paper identifies potential trade-offs and directions to explore.

### What is social security and what is it for?

Social security (i.e. benefits and tax credits) is important for women, who are more likely than men to rely on social security, especially due to current and past caring responsibilities.

Social security has many functions: alleviating and preventing poverty; protecting against risks; providing income security; re-distributing resources at a point in time, over the life course and towards those with additional costs; contributing to reducing inequalities and acting as a country's economic and social stabiliser. Different benefit types help to fulfil these functions; but one benefit cannot meet every social security function. The UK's working-age benefits rely heavily on means-testing, contributing to poverty alleviation but often failing to meet other social security functions.

Different approaches to social security have been proposed (sometimes as part of a package of policies to tackle climate change); three 'models' are Universal Basic Income; Minimum Income Guarantee; and Participation Income, used in this paper to explore social security's role in gender equality and climate change. However, one 'big idea' cannot fulfil the many social security functions, so a balance between different benefit types is required. Social security can form part of a wider package of policies, including public services provision. However, although some people have argued that provision of public services is more environmentally sustainable than cash transfers, not all social security functions can be replaced by public service provision.

### Climate change and social security

The risks of climate change can be direct (affecting people's living and working conditions); or indirect (arising from environmental policies which may distribute costs unequally and/or affect revenues for social security). Hence poverty and equality impacts should be considered within environmental policy. Social security can support climate policy but currently over-emphasises paid work and is too reactive (alleviating poverty after the event). Instead, functions such as income security and risk-sharing can support moving to a green caring economy, and contribute to public acceptance of climate change policies.

Proposals for 'eco-social' social security draw on models such as Universal Basic Income and Participation Income. These can involve environmental conditionality, but this leaves claimants

with less autonomy than those not receiving benefits. Some eco-social proposals also involve means-testing (in some cases, to save money); these, and proposals which position services as more environmentally sustainable than cash, tend to focus on social security's 'safety net' role, neglecting its many other functions, also ignoring alternative revenue sources (e.g. wealth). This can restrict the scope of options considered for social security within a strategy for tackling climate change.

Social security is mainly funded by taxation (which also supports the redistribution function). Some reform proposals appear to set social security and public services in competition for funding, but both need adequate funding so as to meet social, economic, and environmental goals.

### **Tackling climate change and gender equality together**

Social security is important for women, but proposed reforms rarely consider gender issues. This paper adapts Nancy Fraser's principles for gender equality (broadly defined), to consider various dimensions of gender inequality, which can highlight trade-offs involved in specific reforms.

Social security can contribute to environmental sustainability and equality alongside other policies. Reform proposals should:

- Recognise the diversity of benefit types and functions, seek a better balance between them, and between benefits and services; a 'one-size-fits-all' solution is unlikely to be able to meet all social security functions;
- Make those who are most responsible for carbon emissions pay most towards climate change policies;
- Support, not compel, people on low incomes to make environmentally sustainable choices; and
- Develop a new social contract between government and citizens to tackle climate change.

Such a social contract should involve government providing income security to enable people, especially the most disadvantaged, to mitigate environmental risks, thus instilling public confidence that they will be supported during a period of significant economic change.

# 1. What is social security, and what it is for?

This paper refers to 'social security' rather than 'welfare'.<sup>1</sup> The UK's social security system broadly consists of benefits, pensions and tax credits. Many benefits are GB-wide, though some are the responsibility of devolved governments.<sup>2</sup>

Social security is important to women, who are more likely than men to have lower incomes, especially due to unpaid caring roles, and to be working part-time, often in low-paid, precarious jobs, largely as a result of unpaid caring responsibilities.<sup>3</sup> Women tend to rely more on means-tested benefits than men - who are more likely to qualify for contributory benefits because their work histories are less likely to be interrupted by caring responsibilities. Women are also conduits of benefits for others, such as children's benefits.<sup>4</sup>

Social security should provide income security and support for all,<sup>5</sup> including treating people with dignity and respect.<sup>6</sup> Social security is internationally recognised as a human right; the United Nations recognises that women need rights because their needs are often neglected, or assumptions are made about them by policymakers; and that income security should be an individual rather than a familial right.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.1 Social security functions

Social security has the following (overlapping) functions:

|                                    |      |   |
|------------------------------------|------|---|
| <b>poverty</b>                     | i    | Alleviation of poverty  |
|                                    | ii   | Prevention of poverty   |
| <b>security &amp; risk-sharing</b> | iii  | Shared protection against risks, and pooling of risks   |
|                                    | iv   | Income security   |
| <b>redistribution</b>              | v    | Redistribution over time (individual and family life course)                                  |
|                                    | vi   | Redistribution at one point in time, towards those with fewer resources (vertical)            |
|                                    | vii  | Redistribution towards people with additional costs, e.g. children or disability (horizontal) |
| <b>social solidarity</b>           | viii | Contribute to reducing inequalities (e.g. gender)   |
|                                    | ix   | Economic and social stabiliser for society  |

1 Reflecting social security functions, avoiding the fuzziness and pejorative associations of 'welfare'; Lister, R. (2013) '[Benefit cuts: how the language of welfare poisoned our social security](#)'. *The Guardian*

2 Social security is fully devolved in Northern Ireland. The UK differs from some other countries as it does not have a federal structure (and devolution is not symmetrical across each of the UK's four nations). Further discussed in the forthcoming social security paper.

3 Bennett, F. (2018) 'Gender and Social Security' in Millar & Sainsbury (eds) *Understanding social security*. Bristol: Policy Press 99-117

4 Daly, M. and Rake, K. (2003) *Gender and the Welfare State*. Cambridge: The Polity Press

5 e.g. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)

6 Scotland's [social security charter](#); CPAG (2021) *Transforming Social Security: how do we provide secure futures for children and families?*

7 United Nations's [Social Protection, Human Rights and Gender](#)

In recent years, social security functions have been more narrowly viewed as providing a 'safety net'.<sup>8</sup> Proposals for social security reform often focus on poverty alleviation rather than (more effective<sup>9</sup>) prevention; and other functions such as redistribution and risk-sharing can also prevent and reduce poverty, as well as protecting us all against life event risks. Social security can also promote social solidarity,<sup>10</sup> help to reduce inequalities, and play a part in changing gender unequal norms.<sup>11</sup>

**For individuals**, a key role is providing security,<sup>12</sup> which means tackling economic and social *in*security through *social* or collective means.<sup>13</sup> According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) social security stabilises the incomes of individuals affected by unemployment or underemployment, helping to avoid hardship and social instability.<sup>14</sup> Currently, the UK's income security is weak because benefit levels are low and increased conditionality can be *de*-stabilising<sup>15</sup>; conversely improved security can support people during insecure times (e.g. climate change).

**For society**, social security maintains economic and social stability, such as when economic activity is reduced; and can be part of a wider economic strategy.<sup>16</sup> Countries' responses to the pandemic to protect jobs and incomes highlighted social security's vital role as a 'social buffer and economic stabiliser'.<sup>17</sup> A decent wage also offers income security.

Fulfilling social security functions (e.g. redistribution) also depends on who pays and by how much. Currently the UK's system of tax allowances and reliefs reduce revenue available to fund social security and public services, and in practice predominantly benefit the better off, especially men.<sup>18</sup> Thus how social security and how climate emergency policies are financed in the future is an issue of equality as well as (environmental and political) sustainability (discussed in section 6 below).

8 As highlighted by Bennett, F. and Sutherland, (2011) *The importance of independent income: understanding the role of non-means-tested earnings replacement benefits*. ISER: working paper 2011-09 Essex University

9 Sinfield, A. (2020) *Prevent Poverty to Secure The Future For Children and Families*. CPAG

10 CPAG (2021) *Transforming Social Security: How do we provide secure futures for children and families?*

11 Tessier, L. et al (2013) *Social Protection Floors and gender equality: A brief overview*. ESS Working Paper 37. Geneva: ILO; ILO (2011) *World Social Security Report 2010/2011: Providing coverage in times of crisis and beyond*. Geneva: ILO; Bennett, F. and Himmelweit, S. (2020) *Taxation and Social Security*. Paper for WBG Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy. WBG

12 See CPAG (2021) *Transforming Social Security: How do we provide secure futures for children and families?*

13 Lister, R. (2019) *Social Security*: speech to Law Centre NI; Lister, R. (2019) *Seeking Security in an Increasingly Insecure World*. CPAG

14 ILO (2011) *World Social Security Report 2010/2011: providing coverage in times of crisis and beyond*. Geneva: ILO

15 Sinfield, A. (2020) *Prevent Poverty to Secure the Future For Children and Families*. CPAG

16 Brewer, M. et al (2021) *Social Insecurity: Assessing trends in social security to prepare for the decade of change ahead*. Resolution Foundation

17 ILO (2021) *World Social Protection Report 2020-2022*, Geneva: ILO; Razavi, S. et al (2020) 'Reinvigorating the social contract and strengthening social cohesion: Social protection responses to Covid-19.' *ISSA Review* 73(3) 55-80

18 Himmelweit, S. (2022) *Taxation and gender*. WBG

## 1.2 Benefit types and balance of mechanisms

'Social security' refers to benefits, tax credits and pensions.<sup>19</sup> UK benefits can be grouped into four:

**Table 1: Broad benefit types**

|   |
|---|
| <p><b>Categorical</b> benefits funded by general taxation, paid without a means test to people who fit the designated category e.g. Child Benefit<sup>20</sup>; benefits contributing to extra costs such as Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment, or Attendance Allowance for older people; and Carer's Allowance (which has an earnings rule indicating that it has an income replacement function similar to contributory benefits below).</p>  |
| <p><b>Contributory</b> ('social insurance') benefits, part funded by National Insurance Contributions from workers and employers, for the interruption or end of employment for reasons such as older age (State Pension), unemployment (now called 'New Style' Jobseeker's Allowance) and sickness or disability (now called 'New Style' Employment and Support Allowance). Bereavement benefits are based on a late partner's contributions or given in cases in which the partner died as a result of industrial accident or disease.<sup>21</sup></p>   |
| <p><b>Means-tested</b> (or social assistance) benefits, funded from general taxation and paid to those on low incomes, taking account of family and other circumstances, and/or to meet particular needs (e.g. housing costs). These include Pension Credit for people over state pension age, Universal Credit for working-age adults (replacing separate means-tested benefits like Jobseeker's Allowance, and Tax Credits for low-income households with an earner or children). Local authorities run Council Tax reduction schemes and discretionary assistance.</p>   |
| <p><b>'Employment-based' benefits and paid leave</b>, usually not means-tested or contributory, but with employment and/or earnings conditions. Some are paid by employers: Statutory Sick Pay, Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay, Statutory Paternity Pay and Statutory Shared Parental Pay; Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay can be given following the death of a child or stillbirth.<sup>22</sup> Other benefits associated with employment can be paid by the Department for Work and Pensions; e.g. Maternity Allowance can be paid to women who are not entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay who have recently been employed or self-employed (self-employed people cannot usually claim benefits like Statutory Sick Pay but may be able to claim other benefits e.g. New Style Employment and Support Allowance, Universal Credit.<sup>23</sup>)</p> |
| <p><i>There are also <b>other specific schemes</b> (not covered here) for benefits and lump sum payments.</i></p>   |

Source: adapted from Millar, J. and Sainsbury, R. (2018) 'Social security: the landscape' in Millar & Sainsbury (eds) *Understanding social security*. Bristol: Policy Press 1-18

19 Social security can also include private/occupational provision, but this paper focuses on state transfers

20 Though Child Benefit is subject to a [high-income tax charge](#)

21 Industrial injuries benefits are not based on national insurance contributions and are not means-tested

22 Employers can usually be reimbursed for 92% of what they have paid out on such benefits, except for Statutory Sick Pay.

23 See: Turn2Us [benefit guide](#)

Receiving one benefit may also affect entitlement to another. Benefits are complicated because they deal with a range of conditions and circumstances, and with complex lives.<sup>24</sup> One benefit or benefit type alone cannot meet all of the social security functions. Proposals for one simpler, single benefit mechanism are unlikely to fulfil such multiple functions either.

As one mechanism cannot meet all social security goals or functions, most countries have a mix of different benefit types. Currently, the UK's balance is out of kilter, especially for working-age adults, increasingly emphasising means-testing and tighter conditions for contributory benefits:<sup>25</sup>

**Table 2: Social security functions and how well current benefits meet them**

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>poverty</b>                     | Means-tested benefits alleviate household poverty but are less likely to prevent it because there are gaps in coverage (e.g. a 'no recourse to public funds' condition excludes someone from means-tested benefits and some public services such as social housing <sup>26</sup> ) and amounts may be reduced by caps, deductions, or sanctions for non-compliance with conditionality.   |
| <b>security &amp; risk sharing</b> | Often means-tested benefits do not offer income security <sup>27</sup> and are associated with complexity, social stigma, social control, and low take-up. <sup>28</sup> Contributory and categorical benefits may offer income security during contingences covered, but exclude people who do not meet the eligibility conditions.  |
| <b>redistribution</b>              | Benefits such as State Pension and Child Benefit can be seen as <i>life course</i> redistribution (making payments during life stages where needs may be greater). Disability benefits and child payments are seen as <i>horizontal</i> distribution, i.e. towards those with additional costs/needs. Means-tested benefits (with taxation) deliver <i>vertical</i> redistribution (to those on low incomes at a particular point in time). |
| <b>social solidarity</b>           | Unemployment and related benefits can stabilise the economy during a downturn, though cuts to benefits since 2010 have weakened this role. <sup>29</sup>  |

Weaknesses in the current social security system leave us unprepared for widespread social and economic change. For example the introduction of furlough during the Covid-19 pandemic was perhaps some recognition that the current social security system could not cover closure of large parts of the economy. The climate emergency is likely to generate further economic uncertainty, raising questions about how social security can play its part in policies to tackle climate change.

24 See e.g. Spicker, P. (2017) *What's wrong with Social Security Benefits?* Bristol: Policy Press

25 Lister, R. (2019) *Paths to universality*. Fabian Society

26 Migrant women may depend on a partner for their right to stay in the UK: Reis, S. (2020) *Migrant women and the economy*. WBG

27 E.g. Millar, J. and Bennett, F. (2017) 'Universal Credit: Assumptions, Contradictions and Virtual Reality' *Social Policy & Society* 16(2) 169–182; CPAG (2021) *The Problem with Universal Credit's Assessment Periods And How To Fix It*

28 Garnham, A. (2019) *The Problem with means testing*. CPAG; Hick, R. (2020) *COVID-19 and the bypassing of contributory social security benefits*. Bath University IPR blog 22.5.20

29 Gardiner, L. (2019) *The shifting shape of social security: Charting the changing size and shape of the British welfare system*. Resolution Foundation



## 2. Climate change risks and social security

The climate emergency could lead to massive social and economic upheavals until the climate can stabilise, or for longer if action is not taken quickly enough or if climate policies<sup>30</sup> are unsuccessful. Climate change risks are affected by a combination of personal, social and environmental factors and – importantly – policy and practice.<sup>31</sup> Hence there is a role for policy (including social security) in mitigating climate risks.

### 2.1 Climate risks and potential impacts on social security

Climate change risks can be **direct** (affecting living and working conditions); or **indirect** (arising from climate policies which may have uneven impacts).<sup>32</sup>

Without climate policies in place, such **direct** risks include the potential for:

- **Increasing labour market volatility**, similar to 1980s de-industrialisation, if businesses close because they cannot transition to net zero, with differing impacts by sector and locality.
- **Disruption to global supply chains** (already evident as a consequence of Brexit and the pandemic), highlighting reliance on 'just in time' rather than 'just-in-case' supply chains. Shortages resulting from such disruption could increase the price of essentials, which could worsen poverty, and make women's role in managing low-income family budgets much harder.
- **Increasing poor health** arising from climate change.<sup>33</sup>
- **Increasing 'forced migration'** from areas that are no longer habitable.<sup>34</sup>
- Increasing likelihood of **climate emergencies** such as floods, wildfires and landslips, potentially affecting coastal and low-lying areas, creating immediate risk to individuals, communities, homes and business premises, disruption to the supply of utilities, transport and the internet.

There are also **indirect** risks arising from climate change policy. Discussions about poverty and the environment have raised concerns that climate policies do not always take sufficient account of their potential impacts on poverty, or how such policies could be designed to alleviate it.<sup>35</sup> Climate change policies which fail to recognise poverty and gender could compound inequalities and place additional costs on those who have fewest resources and least responsibility for emissions. Hence the fair distribution of the costs and benefits of climate policy, when advantages may occur, and avoiding creating new inequalities within climate policy, should be considered.<sup>36</sup>

30 In the UK, some environment policies are devolved; note importance of the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act*

31 Preston, I. et al (2014) *Climate Change and Social Justice: an Evidence Review*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation

32 Gugushvilli, D. and Otto, A. (2021) 'Determinants of Public Support for Eco-Social Policies: A Comparative Theoretical Framework'. *Social Policy & Society* 1-15

33 Rocque R.J. et al (2021) 'Health effects of climate change: an overview of systematic reviews'. *BMJ Open* 2021

34 See Pierson, C. (2021) *The Next Welfare State? UK welfare after Covid-19*. Bristol: Policy Press; Preston, I. et al (2014) *Climate Change and Social Justice: an Evidence Review*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Taylor, D. (2022) 'Prepare for mass migration to cities in climate crisis, UK mayors warn'. *The Guardian*, 16.2.2022

35 Murphy, L. and Emden, J. (2021) *Delivering an equitable net zero transition: Workshop series summary*. IPPR, JRF and ZCC

36 IPPR Environmental Justice Commission (2021) *Fairness and Opportunity: A People-Powered Plan for The Green Transition*. IPPR

## 2.2 Social security functions and climate risks

Social security can support policies which aim to mitigate climate change. However the current UK system is not well placed to deal with future challenges.<sup>37</sup> For working-age adults, the link between **entitlement and paid work** (e.g. financial incentives, conditionality and sanctions) neglects the environmental impacts of some paid work.<sup>38</sup> Social security is also increasingly **reactive** (such as through means-testing households once poverty has occurred) and less proactive and preventative.

Instead, the climate emergency means that any social security response, as part of a wider package, needs to deploy **all** of its functions, not simply rely on alleviating poverty after it has occurred. If particular sectors of the economy need to contract in order to support the transition to a net-zero economy, social security functions such as **income security, risk-sharing and social and economic stability** must play a more prominent role. If people feel insecure they may resist taking actions needed to bring about a transition to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, or demands to reduce their consumption; so emphasising these social security functions and talking about 'security' is one way in which to gain public support for climate change policy.<sup>39</sup> Public attitudes to social security also highlight that when people feel that they have a stake in the social system, they are more likely to support it.<sup>40</sup>

As well as climate change, we must ensure that a transition to net zero does not simply replicate current inequalities.<sup>41</sup> As noted above, social security is particularly important for women, often due to the impact of unpaid caring responsibilities on women's incomes from the labour market. Hence proposals to reform social security as part of a strategy to tackle the climate emergency must also be accompanied by measures to tackle gender inequality.

## 3. Gender inequality

Given the importance of social security for women, how its functions are deployed can affect gender equality. For example, one of the social security functions discussed earlier specifically refers to contributing to reducing inequalities. Whilst social security arrangements alone cannot solve gender inequality, it has a significant role to play. As a starting point, this paper proposes adopting gender equality principles to guide social security reforms.

### 3.1 Gender equality principles for social security

The work of US academic Nancy Fraser highlights principles for gender equality (broadly defined)<sup>42</sup> (table 3), which can be used to assess the impacts and trade-offs of particular policy ideas.

37 Brewer, M. et al (2021) *Social Insecurity: Assessing trends in social security to prepare for the decade of change ahead*. Resolution Foundation

38 E.g. Cahill, M. and Fitzpatrick, T. (2002) *Environmental Issues & Social Welfare*. Oxford: Blackwell; Wagenaar, H. and Prainsack, B. (2021) *The Pandemic Within: policymaking for a better world*. Bristol: Policy Press; Hansen, B.R. (2019) "Batshit jobs" – no-one should have to destroy the planet to make a living'. *Open Democracy*. 11.6.19

39 Along with continuity and preserving what people value: Raikes, L. and Cooper, B. (2022) *Talking Green: The UK survey. Winning the Argument for Climate Action*. Fabian Society

40 Hudson, J. (2018) 'Public attitudes to 'welfare'', in Millar & Sainsbury (eds) *Understanding social security*. Bristol: Policy Press. 179-195; Hills, J. (2015) *Good Times, Bad Times: The Welfare Myth of Them and Us*. Bristol: Policy Press; Baumberg Geiger, B. (2021) *The Elephant in the Room of Social Security Reform*. Inequalities blog, 31.5.21

41 Reis, S. and Johnston, A. (2022) 'Climate justice as a holistic issue'. *IPPR Progressive Review* 28(4). 353-357

42 In summary, debates are whether women should be treated the same as men or differences accommodated (Fraser's principles include both: Fraser, N. (1994) 'After the Family Wage: Gender Equity and the Welfare State'. *Political Theory* 22(4) 591-618)

**Table 3: Principles for gender equality**

| Broad principle   | What it means   |
|---|---|
| <b>1. anti-poverty</b>                                    | <i>Prevent, not just relieve, poverty (individual &amp; household): material conditions including equality of spending power</i>  |
| <b>2. anti-exploitation</b>                               | <i>Prevent exploitation by a partner, employer, or others: income as of right: provides economic security</i>   |
| <b>3. equality: of income, leisure time &amp; respect</b> | <i>Income within and beyond the household. Includes 'time poverty', e.g. women should not have to do a 'double shift' (paid &amp; unpaid work) for an equal income. Equal status &amp; respect means having rights &amp; being treated respectfully in practice</i> |
| <b>4. anti-marginalisation</b>                            | <i>Enable participation on a par with men: avoid women being relegated to the private sphere alone</i>  |
| <b>5. anti-androcentrism</b>                              | <i>End assumptions that male patterns are the norm: women should not have to be like men in order to have equal rights</i>  |

Source: adapted from Fraser, N. (1994) 'After the Family Wage: Gender Equity and the Welfare State'. *Political Theory* 22(4) 591-618

**Fraser's principles can relate to the social security functions described above. For example:**

| social security functions | relevant Fraser principles               |
|---------------------------|--|
| poverty                   | anti-poverty, anti-exploitation          |
| security & risk sharing   | anti-marginalisation, anti-androcentrism |
| redistribution            | equality, anti-marginalisation           |
| social solidarity         | equality, anti-marginalisation           |

Examples of considering the UK's current social security system under these principles include:

- *Anti-poverty /anti-exploitation/equality principles at risk:* Universal Credit amalgamates several means-tested benefits into one, and contains rules which can place power in one partner's hands, disadvantage women, and go against equal sharing of parenting and caring activities.<sup>43</sup>
- *Anti-poverty / equality / anti-androcentrism principles partly met:* Contributory benefits and State Pension (if over retirement age) are based on traditional male patterns of paid work (e.g. full time, long term); but some caring/parenting periods now count towards eligibility.<sup>44</sup>

With the climate emergency and gender inequality in mind, some proposals for reform are considered next.

43 Garnham, A. (2018) *Something needs saying about Universal Credit and Women – it is discrimination by design*. CPAG. Blog 17.8.2012; Howard, M. (2018) *Universal Credit and financial abuse: exploring the links*. WBG; Griffiths, R. et al (2021) *Couples Navigating Work, Care and Universal Credit*. Bath: University of Bath

44 Not just paid contributions

## 4. Three social security reform 'models'

As noted above, the current UK system is flawed and struggles to meet many of the social security functions, and Fraser's gender equality principles. Other models have been proposed as holding the potential to improve the social security anti-poverty functions, boost its other roles such as income security, or as a means of tackling gender inequality. Some of these approaches to social security have been advocated for many years; others are newer. Each 'model' considered below has been advocated as responses to the Covid-19 pandemic or within a package of policies to tackle the climate emergency.

Three different 'models' of reforms can be seen as 'ideal types', representing different directions for reform (though in practice proposals often involve several mechanisms).<sup>45</sup> The models are: Universal Basic Income (UBI), Participation Income (PI) and Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG). Both PI and MIG were developed as alternatives to UBI.<sup>46</sup> Similar language (e.g. 'guarantee') is often used but with different meanings. The three models are usually defined as:

- **UBI** – individual, non-means-tested, unconditional, regular cash payment.<sup>47</sup>
- **MIG** – household, means-tested, mainly unconditional.<sup>48</sup>
- **PI** - individual, non-means-tested, conditional on socially valued activities.<sup>49</sup>

### 4.1 How the three models might contribute to social security functions

If implemented (and depending on design features) these three models could contribute to the various social security functions discussed above, but in different ways. For example:

- UBI could *prevent poverty and reduce (income) inequality*;<sup>50</sup> regular, predictable payments could offer *income security* during periods of change and instability, acting as an *economic and social stabiliser*. Individual entitlement also means that it could enhance women's autonomy and bargaining power,<sup>51</sup> thus contributing to the *anti-exploitation* principle.
- MIG could *alleviate household poverty* (after it has occurred), contribute to *vertical redistribution*, provide some *income security*, and a floor could have an *economic stabilisation* role<sup>52</sup> but only for those below the income threshold. It performs less well on *equality* and *anti-marginalisation* principles due to its over-reliance on means-testing.
- PI could *prevent poverty* and provide some *income security* for those targeted by the PI (such as those undertaking socially useful activities).

45 e.g. Partial UBI with some existing benefits (Lansley, S. and Reed, H. [2019] *Basic Income for All: From Desirability to Feasibility*. Compass); earnings-related income replacement, disability costs and means-tested support (Abey, J. and Harrop, A. [2021] *Security For Everyone The Public Case For Non-Means-Tested Benefits*. Fabian Society); 'Living Income' with universal & means-tested elements (Pollard, T. et al [2022] *Social Security for all: Universal Credit auto-enrolment and a Weekly National Allowance*. NEF)

46 PI keeps conditionality as 'politically acceptable', avoids mass means-testing: Atkinson, A. (1996) 'The Case for a Participation Income.' *The Political Quarterly*, 67(1) 67-70; MIG targets 'need' via means-testing, favours spending on services (though 'needs' is contested: Fraser, N. (1989) *Unruly Practices: Power, discourse and gender in contemporary social theory*. Univ. Minnesota Press

47 <https://basicincome.org/about-basic-income/>

48 Most UK proposals remove work-related conditionality and sanctions, e.g. transforming UC into a MIG: Pollard, T. et al (2022) *Social Security for all: Universal Credit auto-enrolment and a Weekly National Allowance*. NEF; 'Guaranteed Decent Income' proposal: [The Commission on Social Security \(2022\) Technical Report](#)

49 Atkinson, A. (1996) 'The Case for a Participation Income.' *The Political Quarterly*, 67(1) 67-70

50 De Henau, J. et al (2021) *Modelling Universal Basic Income using UKMOD*. CeMPA Working Paper 03/21. Essex University

51 McLean, C. and McKay, A. (2015) *Beyond Care: Expanding the Feminist Debate on Universal Basic Income*. GCU/Wise WP 1

52 Statham, R. et al (2021) *Securing a living income in Scotland: Towards a minimum income guarantee*. IPPR Scotland

## 4.2 How the three models might affect gender equality

These three models can also be used to explore some important issues relating to women and social security. Drawing on the Fraser principles, one concern whether the benefit assessment unit is **individual or household** (e.g. couples). This is important because individual entitlement contributes to meeting *anti-poverty* and *anti-exploitation* principles.<sup>53</sup> The other issue is interactions between entitlement and **unpaid care**, as women spend more time undertaking caring roles than men (affecting time and income *equality*).

These issues can be summarised into three questions for any reform proposal:

- a. *Whether entitlement is based on the circumstances of an individual or household;*
- b. *If there is a test of income/savings (means-tested);*
- c. *Whether conditions of entitlement incentivise or compel paid employment and how unpaid care is treated.*

### a. Individual or household

Currently, entitlement is individual under categorical, contributory and employment-related benefits, but household-based under means-tested benefits. A key characteristic of UBI is its individual entitlement (a feature which is sometimes missed in debates about UBI's cost and coverage). UBI would be paid automatically to individual UK residents.<sup>54</sup> (However, a pilot UBI programme in Wales is focusing on a particular target group (care leavers).<sup>55</sup> PI would also be paid to individuals, but targeted at those who are 'contributing' (and paid alongside a modernised system of social insurance benefits) rather than everyone.<sup>56</sup> Most MIG proposals presume household, i.e. couple-based, assessment.<sup>57</sup> There are some reports that people claiming UC during the pandemic regarded couple assessment as unfair<sup>58</sup> and whilst some proposals invoke an individual means-test,<sup>59</sup> previous research and debates question the viability of individual assessment within a purely means-tested system.<sup>60</sup>

### b. Means-tested or not

Currently, categorical, contributory and employment-related benefits are not usually means-tested but based on eligibility conditions which aim to identify a particular group which is being targeted for support (such as those affected by sickness or who have a disability). Claimants would not have to go through a means test to receive a UBI (though a UBI could sit alongside other benefits including means-tested ones like Housing Benefit).<sup>61</sup> PI would not be means-tested as this would contradict one of its aims (to reduce the extent of means-testing).<sup>62</sup> In contrast, MIG would be means-tested (as it would top up incomes below a given threshold).<sup>63</sup>

53 Individual benefits can facilitate autonomy, independence, help prevent in-work poverty where someone in a couple loses their job, and give some income security: Bennett, F. and Sutherland, (2011) *The importance of independent income: understanding the role of non-means-tested earnings replacement benefits* ISER: working paper 2011-09 Essex University

54 Therefore excluding some, [depending on definition](#)

55 <https://gov.wales/written-statement-basic-income-pilot-care-leavers-wales>

56 Atkinson, A. (1996) 'The Case for a Participation Income.' *The Political Quarterly*, 67(1)67-70

57 As MIG implies a means-test. Some proposals also build on Universal Credit, thus retaining couple assessment; e.g. Pollard et al (2022) *Social Security for All: Universal Credit auto-enrolment and weekly national allowance*. NEF

58 House of Commons Work and Pensions (2020) *Survey of experiences of benefits during the pandemic*

59 E.g. the Commission on Social Security (2022) *Technical Report*

60 Individual means-testing was considered in the 1990s/2000s, e.g. as discussed in Millar, J. (2003) 'Squaring the circle? Means testing and individualisation in the UK and Australia', *Social Policy and Society*, 3(1) 67-74.

61 E.g. Reed, H. and Lansley, S. (2016) *Universal Basic Income: An idea whose time has come?* Compass.

62 Atkinson, A. (1996) 'The Case for a Participation Income.' *The Political Quarterly*, 67(1)67-70

63 Based on Minimum Income Standards: Padley, M. and Stone, J. (2022) *Households below a Minimum Income Standard: 2008/09–2019/20*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

### c. Conditionality and care

Currently, benefits for those not in paid work emphasise work conditions and incentives; 'full' conditionality can be modified, such as by a claimant's caring / parenting responsibilities. Carer's Allowance includes conditions on the amount of unpaid care, the disabled person's benefit entitlement and an earnings rule. UBI would be unconditional, without any paid work requirements. UBI would not be affected by providing unpaid care to a disabled person or child, so has been regarded by some as 'neutral' regarding paid /unpaid work;<sup>64</sup> though there are also concerns that it could encourage women to leave/reduce paid work, entrenching gender roles<sup>65</sup> (unless other policies are in place e.g. in the labour market: see below). PI would involve a looser form of conditionality, based on socially useful activity, such as volunteering, studying and caring (though as 'caring' would be a condition of entitlement there are questions about how this would be evidenced and policed).<sup>66</sup> PI could be a better way to encourage socially useful activities than relying on UBI recipients doing this voluntarily.<sup>67</sup> The idea of a MIG 'guarantee' indicates that it should be unconditional,<sup>68</sup> though some writers suggest that a MIG implies a work/participation condition.<sup>69</sup> In the UK, MIG proposals tend to remove paid work requirements and sanctions for non-compliance.<sup>70</sup> One proposal notes that a MIG would also provide an income for unpaid carers who are not in paid work.<sup>71</sup>

## 4.3 How the three models might affect climate change

There are debates about how the three social security models could respond (or not) to climate change and climate policy; for example does UBI's lack of conditionality mean that people use their time in more environmentally sustainable ways and consume less because there is no work condition (thus avoiding a 'work more, consume more' cycle)?<sup>72</sup> The aspiration is that reforms which break the links between paid work and benefits could lower paid work hours, in turn reducing environmental impact<sup>73</sup> (depending also on how the additional leisure time would be used).

### 'Sustainable welfare' and 'eco-social' proposals

Much has been written about climate change and also about the future of the 'welfare state', though less about the interrelationship between the two.<sup>74</sup> More recent research exploring this relationship, labelled 'sustainable welfare',<sup>75</sup> includes social security reforms.<sup>76</sup> Some

64 As highlighted in McLean, C. and McKay, A. (2015) *Beyond Care: Expanding the Feminist Debate on Universal Basic Income*. GCU/Wise Working Paper 1; [Should Feminists Support UBI? An Evening with Almaz Zelleke](#)

65 Discussed in Sharples, M. (2020) *Basic income and gender equality: Policy paper for the Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy*.

66 Zelleke, A. (2018) 'Work, Leisure and Care: A Gender Perspective on the Participation Income.' *Political Quarterly* 89(2)273-79

67 Perez-Munoz, C. (2018) 'Participation Income and the Provision of Socially Valuable Activities' *The Political Quarterly* 89(2) 268-272

68 Bryan, M. (2021) *What Is a Minimum Income Guarantee? And How Does It Relate To UBI?* UBILab blog 23.7.21

69 Howard, M. et al (2019) 'The Ecological Effects of Basic Income', in Torry (ed), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Basic Income*. Springer 111-132

70 E.g. proposal for a 'Guaranteed Decent Income': The Commission on Social Security (2022) *Technical Report*; Pollard, T. et al (2022) *Social Security for all: Universal Credit auto-enrolment and a Weekly National Allowance*. NEF

71 and Carer's Allowance would be paid on top of the MIG core provision: Statham, R. et al (2021) *Securing a living income in Scotland: Towards a minimum income guarantee*. IPPR Scotland.

72 E.g. Fitzpatrick, T. (2011) *Understanding the Environment and Social Policy*. Bristol: Policy Press; Pinto, J. (2020) 'Green Republicanism and the Shift to Post-Productivism: A Defence of an Unconditional Basic Income'. *ResPublica* 26:257-274; Wagenaar, H. and Prainsack, B. (2021) *The Pandemic Within: policymaking for a better world*. Bristol: Policy Press; Cahill, M. and Fitzpatrick, T. (2002) *Environmental Issues & Social Welfare*. Oxford: Blackwell.

73 Onaran, O. and Calvert Jump, R. (2022) *A shorter working week as part of a green caring economy*. WBG

74 Pierson, C. (2021) *The Next Welfare State? UK welfare after Covid-19*. Bristol: Policy Press

75 See e.g. [Social Policy & Society special edition](#) : 2021

76 some proposals have a long history, others are newer, and sometimes detail is sparse, so potential impacts are often unclear

proposals build on one of the three models outlined above (although actual impacts depend on design). Sustainable welfare literature has developed 'eco-social'<sup>77</sup> proposals to introduce environmental considerations into social security – mainly for UBI and PI (to date less is written about MIG):

- **'Eco-social UBI'**: UBI could be more ecological by what individuals do after receiving it.<sup>78</sup> Eco-social proposals include paying additional amounts on top of a basic UBI, conditional on participating in environmental training / projects;<sup>79</sup> or part payment in vouchers for sustainable food/transport (though vouchers could also be targeted at those most affected by climate change or in (e.g. energy) poverty).<sup>80</sup> Each would change the nature of UBI by either making it conditional or by not paying it in cash.<sup>81</sup>

Another version of UBI is as one component of an **'Unconditional Autonomy Allowance'**, payable to all at a rate 'enough for a decent and frugal way of life', and free access to (limited) quantities of water, energy and fuel.<sup>82</sup> Here, UBI is linked to 'de-growth' principles, requiring other measures such as a maximum income and unconditional basic services.

- **'Eco-social PI'**: PI conditionality could be extended to include 'civic service programmes' (environmental protection, gardening, neighbourhood clean-ups);<sup>83</sup> 'social reproduction', to redistribute human and ecological care and other socially valued participation.<sup>84</sup>

Another proposal is **means-testing PI**, either by screening out the most affluent or individual (not household) means-testing. If the aim is alleviating poverty, this implies targeting those on the lowest incomes, whereas if aiming to promote sustainable activity, this points to more universal support but with tightly monitored behavioural conditionality.<sup>85</sup> This would change the nature of PI as non-means-tested, a central reason for proposing it in the first place.<sup>86</sup>

Eco-social proposals which focus on individual conditionality and/or means-testing tend to neglect social security functions such as risk-sharing and income security, and gender equality principles of poverty prevention, anti-exploitation, equality and anti-marginalisation. They also tend to ignore differences in men's and women's consumption,<sup>87</sup> highlighting the need to consider gender impact.

## Transition to net zero

Ensuring a fair transition is likely to entail employment policy, and a sufficient supply of decent, green jobs, but social security can also support individuals and the economy during this time. The UK's current social security system is unlikely to support transition fairly, given the gaps outlined above, especially its weak income security. Social security proposals have included:

77 Koch, M. (2021) 'Social Policy Without Growth: Moving Towards Sustainable Welfare States'. *Social Policy & Society*, 1-13

78 and how it is financed: Pinto, J. (2020) 'Green Republicanism and the Shift to Post-Productivism: A Defence of an Unconditional Basic Income' *ResPublica* 26 257-274

79 Proposals summarised in MacNeill, T. and Vibert, A. (2019) 'Universal Basic Income and the Natural Environment: Theory and Policy' *Basic Income Stud.* 14.

80 Bohnenberger, K. (2020) 'Money, vouchers, public infrastructures? A framework for sustainable welfare benefits', *Sustain* 12(2)596

81 <https://basicincome.org/about-basic-income/>

82 Liegey, V. and Nelson, A. (2020) *Exploring Degrowth: A Critical Guide*. London: Pluto Press

83 Perez-Munoz, C. (2016) 'A defence of participation income'. *Journal of Public Policy*, 36(2) 169-193; Perez-Munoz, C. (2018) 'Participation Income and the Provision of Socially Valuable Activities'. *The Political Quarterly* 89(2) 268-272

84 McGann, M. and Murphy, M. (2021) 'Income Support in an Eco-Social State: The Case for Participation Income' *Social Policy & Society* 1-15

85 Laruffa, F. et al (2021) 'Enabling Participation for an Eco-Social State' *Social Policy & Society* 1-12

86 Atkinson, A. (1996) 'The Case for a Participation Income.' *The Political Quarterly*, 67(1)67-70

87 e.g. Lister, R. (2021) *Poverty*. 2nd edn Cambridge: Polity Press; MacGregor, S. (2016) 'Go Ask 'Gladys': Why Gender Matters In Energy Consumption Research.' *Discover Society*, issue 28

- **Earnings-related payments**, either reforming contributory benefits (particularly where an employer ceases trading), or as a form of 'furlough', paid via the employer during periods of short time working (such as during the pandemic).<sup>88</sup>
- **Active Labour Market Policies** including a **Jobs Guarantee**, targeted at 'green' job creation, or when workers lose their jobs due to climate protection measures (could be together with earnings-related payments; or as an income when retraining for green skills).<sup>89</sup>

The three social security models could also support a transition, though they would do so in different ways. For example one PI proposal is for an '**Ecological Transition Income**', paid to individuals irrespective of personal circumstances or income, but conditional on activities linked to transition, and linked to support and democratic structures.<sup>90</sup> UBI could offer income security whether or not someone is in paid work; and MIG could support those on the lowest incomes.

As noted above, the social security functions of risk-sharing and income security can encourage and support individuals and society during this transition. Earnings-related schemes offer income security though as they tend to reflect labour market inequalities, they are more likely to benefit higher earners and less likely to support women.<sup>91</sup> For earnings-related proposals to meet equality principles, parallel employment policy (such as to address gender pay gaps) would also be needed.

Whilst each model discussed above has something to offer, none on its own can meet the multiple functions of social security, reinforcing that there is no 'one size fits all' social security solution. Climate change cannot be tackled holistically with just one social security mechanism (even if this is within a wider package of reforms). Furthermore, as noted earlier, social security alone cannot tackle gender inequality or climate change; there needs to be a balance between social security and services across different policy areas. Such a balance is discussed next.

## 5. Balancing services and social security

With each model, and whatever the mix of benefit types, social security also interacts with other policies and service provision. Social security cannot tackle social and economic problems alone, so requires other policies such as housing, employment and childcare. Hence there are debates about the balance between benefits, services and in-kind support (e.g. items in kind, or vouchers).<sup>92</sup> Provision of a 'free' (at the point of use) service will affect what people have to pay for, and by how much, from any benefit income. For example current provision for **childcare costs** comes from a mix of means-tested benefits/tax credits and mechanisms such as the UK's 'tax exempt' scheme'. In theory, free universally available childcare could reduce

88 Abey, J. and Harrop, A. (2021) *Security For Everyone: The Public Case For Non-Means-Tested Benefits* London: Fabian Society; TUC (2021) *Beyond furlough: why the UK needs a permanent short-time work scheme* London: TUC; Resolution Foundation (2020) *Doing what it takes: Protecting firms and families from the economic impact of coronavirus* London: Resolution Foundation; Timmins, N. et al (2021) *Jobs and benefits: The Covid-19 challenge* Social Security Advisory Committee & Institute for Government

89 Bohnenberger, K. (2020) 'Money, vouchers, public infrastructures? A framework for sustainable welfare benefits' *Sustain.* 12(2)596

90 Swaton, S. (2018) 'For an ecological transition income' *Green European Journal*

91 Bennett, F. (2018) 'Gender and social security', in Millar & Sainsbury (eds.) *Understanding Social Security*, Bristol: Policy Press: 99-117; Brewer, M. et al (2021) *In need of support? Lessons from the Covid-19 crisis for our social security system.* Resolution Foundation; WBG (2021) *Gender Differences in Access to Coronavirus Government Support.*

92 Discussed more fully in the forthcoming social security paper



or eliminate the need for that component of social security. However, provision of services alone cannot substitute for the range of social security functions. Services cannot address a key gender equality issue, that of autonomy and the importance of individual incomes for women,<sup>93</sup> also highlighted within Fraser's anti-poverty and anti-exploitation principles.

Recent proposals for 'Universal Basic Services' (UBS) involve universal access to services, based on need not ability to pay, and applied to a wider range of services than schools or the NHS (such as housing and transport); and delivered by a range of organisations with different models of ownership and control.<sup>94</sup>

Proponents of UBS recognise the need for some form of cash transfer to cover functions not addressed by services, though tend to advocate a means-tested MIG, which it is argued would be less costly than UBI<sup>95</sup>, leaving more funding for services.<sup>96</sup> However, this ignores the role of revenues such as taxation in contributing towards social security functions such as redistribution, and neglects other social security functions such as income security and risk-sharing, which as we have seen above, are often less effective when delivered by a largely means-tested system. Furthermore, a MIG is not an inevitable companion to UBS; other social security models could run alongside improved, universal services, examples being UBI<sup>97</sup> and PI.<sup>98</sup>

Whilst providing more universal services could reduce the range of items currently covered by cash payments,<sup>99</sup> this requires wider consideration of factors involved in delivering a fair balance between social security and services, and the trade-offs involved.<sup>100</sup>

In the light of these debates, the next section goes on to consider how the current system, the three models and how they are funded, might be affected by or respond to the climate emergency.

## 6. Social security functions, funding and climate change

A key question for any social security reform is how we pay for it. Currently the UK's social security system is financed via general taxation (and national insurance contributions). Its funding affects the impacts of its functions (e.g. vertical redistribution). Tax design also affects the distribution of incomes and of paid / unpaid work between men and women. For example, tax allowances and reliefs reduce revenue available to fund social security, and in practice predominantly benefit the better off, especially men.<sup>101</sup> So reform of taxation is needed to make it more progressive and gender-equal, including more revenues collected from wealth.

93 See e.g. Bennett, F. and Sutherland, (2011) *The importance of independent income: understanding the role of non-means-tested earnings replacement benefits*. ISER: working paper 2011-09 Essex University

94 Button, D. and Coote, A. (2021) *A Social Guarantee: the Case for Universal Basic Services*. NEF

95 Gough, I. (2021) *Move the debate from Universal Basic Income to Universal Basic Services*. UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab

96 Gough, I. (2021) *Two scenarios for sustainable welfare: new ideas for an eco-social contract*. European Trade Union Institute; Gough, I. (2021) *Move the debate from Universal Basic Income to Universal Basic Services*. UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab

97 Buchs, M. (2021) 'Sustainable welfare: How do universal basic income and universal basic services compare?' *Ecological Economics* 189, 107152

98 McGann, M. and Murphy, M. (2021) 'Income Support in an Eco-Social State: The Case for Participation Income' *Social Policy & Society* 1-15

99 Coote, A. (2021) 'Towards a Sustainable Welfare State: The Role of Universal Basic Services' *Social Policy & Society* 1-11; Gough, I. (2019) 'Universal Basic Services: A Theoretical and Moral Framework' *Political Quarterly*, 90(3) 534-542

100 Explored in the social security paper

101 See e.g. Himmelweit, S. (2022) *Taxation and gender*. WBG

One of the main arguments against a UBI is the cost of giving a payment to everyone at a high enough level to meet their needs; therefore one key trade-off is the UBI amount versus its cost.<sup>102</sup> Different UBI options have been modelled, including by the WBG,<sup>103</sup> which suggest that if a UBI which is high enough to meet needs is unaffordable, a combination of different benefits would be required. Several proposals recommend transforming the personal tax allowance into some kind of 'universal' payment<sup>104</sup> or partial UBI,<sup>105</sup> or increase Child Benefit and UC<sup>106</sup>. In turn, such proposals also raise questions about the links between individual assessment for tax and household assessment for means-tested benefit, and the position of couples.<sup>107</sup>

As well as social security, taxation is needed to fund public services (many of which are devolved). Public services are especially important to women as service users and workers, and when providing unpaid care.<sup>108</sup> However, as noted above, services and social security should not be seen as being in competition for revenue, but rather as complementary ways achieving social, economic and environmental goals, including gender equality, and that each should be funded adequately.

With regards to climate change, there have also been debates about whether UBI or UBS would be better for the environment.<sup>109</sup> UBS advocates regard services as more environmentally sustainable than payments to individuals to purchase services on the market;<sup>110</sup> though this links cash payments with a market economy, and assumes that giving people money to buy what they need (or want) does not concern meeting shared needs.<sup>111</sup> This ignores risk-sharing and other social security functions such as income security and social / economic stability. Positioning UBS and UBI as an either/or also neglects to consider how a balance of services and different cash mechanisms could deliver social, economic and environmental goals. Rather than one or the other, a mix of social security and public services could support climate change policies through mechanisms which could reinforce each other;<sup>112</sup> for instance some writers advocate a package including affordable and sustainable housing, food security, low- or no-carbon public transport, and labour market restructuring towards green jobs and care jobs.<sup>113</sup>

A common concern regarding climate change is that funding depends on environmentally harmful economic growth.<sup>114</sup> Governments may have relied on growth to generate revenues from which to fund social security,<sup>115</sup> and environmental policies may impact upon economic

102 See e.g. Martinelli, L. (2017) *Assessing the Case for a Universal Basic Income in the UK*. IPR policy brief. Bath University; De Henau, J. et al (2021) *Modelling Universal Basic Income using UKMOD*. CeMPA Working Paper 03/21. Essex University

103 De Henau, J. et al (2021) *Modelling Universal Basic Income using UKMOD*. CeMPA Working Paper 03/21. Essex University

104 Pollard, T. et al (2022) *Social Security for all: Universal Credit auto-enrolment and a Weekly National Allowance*. London: NEF

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

106 Harrop, A. (2022) *In the Shadows: How 'shadow welfare' has overtaken social security*. Fabian Society

107 Some countries adopt the same approach for taxation and means-tested benefits, others (as the UK currently) take different routes for income tax and means-tested benefits. Any proposals for tax/benefit integration need to consider what this means for couples as well as potential gender equality impacts.

108 Land, H. (2019) *Public services in a gender-equal economy*. Briefing for the Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy. WBG

109 Bohnenberger, K. (2020) 'Money, vouchers, public infrastructures? A framework for sustainable welfare benefits', *Sustain.* 12(2)596

110 Coote, A. and Percy, A (2020) *The Case for Universal Basic Services*. Cambridge: Polity; Gough, I. (2019) 'Universal Basic Services: A Theoretical and Moral Framework' *The Political Quarterly*, 90(3) 534-542

111 Gaffney, D. (2020) 'Universal basic services or universal basic income?' Book review: *The Political Quarterly* 91(4) 856-859

112 Koch, M. (2021) 'Social Policy Without Growth: Moving Towards Sustainable Welfare States'. *Social Policy & Society*, 1-13

113 Mulvale, J. (2019) 'Social-Ecological Transformation and the Necessity of Universal Basic Income' *Social Alternatives* 38(2) 39-46

114 Haberl, H. et al (2020) 'A systematic review of the evidence on decoupling of GDP, resource use and GHG emissions, part II: synthesizing the insights', *Environmental Research Letters*, 15(6) 65003; Mulvale, J. (2019) 'Social-Ecological Transformation and the Necessity of Universal Basic Income' *Social Alternatives* 38(2)39-46

115 Pierson, C. (2021) *The Next Welfare State? UK welfare after Covid-19*. Bristol: Policy Press

growth, potentially affecting revenue for other spending.<sup>116</sup> This can then set up tensions between reducing consumption and raising revenue; and between reducing emissions and fair redistribution (the fear that having more income might raise emissions).<sup>117</sup> Whilst social security funding requires revenue, this does not inevitably mean year-on-year growth (i.e. growth reliance is a political choice). Alternative sources of revenue have been suggested, including: a maximum income (to increase economic equality and reduce the average carbon footprint);<sup>118</sup> a high tax rate on profits;<sup>119</sup> stronger redistribution policies;<sup>120</sup> wealth taxation;<sup>121</sup> a 'citizens' wealth fund' (often suggested as a way of funding UBI);<sup>122</sup> and a carbon tax/carbon cap (either as a 'carbon dividend' to support a UBI or to compensate workers displaced due to the transition).<sup>123</sup>

The risk is that, as with the UK's austerity policies from 2010, social security is seen as low priority compared with other spending priorities such as health, education or climate policies. This would be a mistake as social security has a role alongside other policies in mitigating climate change.

## 7. Conclusion: tackling gender equality and climate change together

Social security has multiple purposes, and different benefit types in combination can contribute towards meeting these. The breadth of social security functions should not be forgotten in debates about responses to climate change, as there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution which can fulfil these multiple functions, and so a combination of different mechanisms is required. As social security is important to women, including individual autonomy and an independent income, gender equality should also be considered as an essential goal alongside tackling the climate emergency.

Social security can play a role in both supporting gender equal norms and mitigating climate change. Its functions of risk-sharing and income security, and how these are funded, can contribute to environmental sustainability and complement other policies such as employment and provision of services such as childcare. Given the direct and indirect risks of climate change, social security and climate policy should be designed to work together to tackle existing inequalities and to avoid creating new ones.

116 Gugushvilli, D. and Otto, A. (2021) 'Determinants of Public Support for Eco-Social Policies: A Comparative Theoretical Framework'. *Social Policy & Society* 1-15

117 Howard, M. et al (2019) 'The Ecological Effects of Basic Income', in Torry (ed), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Basic Income*. Springer 111-132; Gough, I. (2017) 'Recomposing consumption: defining necessities for sustainable and equitable well-being' *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. A* 375: 20160379.

118 Koch, M. (2013) 'Welfare after Growth: Theoretical Discussion and Policy Implications'. *International Journal of Social Quality*, 3(1) 4-20

119 Howard, M. et al (2019) 'The Ecological Effects of Basic Income', in Torry (ed), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Basic Income* Springer. 111-132

120 Pinto, J. (2020) 'Green Republicanism and the Shift to Post-Productivism: A Defence of an Unconditional Basic Income'. *Res Publica* 26:257-274

121 <https://www.taxjustice.uk/taxing-wealth.html>

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

123 See debates in Howard, M. et al (2019) 'The Ecological Effects of Basic Income', in Torry (ed), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Basic Income* Springer. 111-132

Some directions for reform are highlighted below:

- **The diversity of social security functions and benefit types should be recognised, with the aim being for a better balance between them, and between social security and services**, as a 'one-size-fits-all' solution is unlikely to be able to meet all social security functions.
- **Those who are most responsible for carbon emissions should pay most towards policies which mitigate climate change.** It is unfair to expect people on low incomes (often women) to bear additional costs or to change their behaviour when those more responsible for environmental damage do not. Instead, those with the most responsibility for environmental damage should pay more to mitigate it.
- **People on low incomes should be supported to make environmentally sustainable choices.** It is unfair to expect claimants to be compelled (e.g. through 'eco-conditionality') or penalised for doing the 'wrong' thing environmentally when low income and inequality are barriers to doing the 'right' thing. People could be enabled to make choices with dignity and respect; e.g. well-advertised and affordable low-carbon alternatives<sup>124</sup> (which could also contribute to Fraser's equality principle.)
- **A new 'social contract' could set out what government support is available in return for taking action to mitigate climate change.** Mechanisms delivering social security functions like risk-sharing and income security could enable people to undertake activities which mitigate climate change, and the existence of such measures could help to gain public support for climate policies. This requires a new 'social contract' between government and citizens, detailing reciprocal action and support that we can expect in our efforts to tackle climate change. Such a new social contract should be based on human rights<sup>125</sup> and aim to tackle gender inequality and sustainability together.<sup>126</sup>

In conclusion, proposals for benefits and services should be assessed for both their gender equality impact and their scope for environmental sustainability. As with social security policy, Fraser's principles could be used to explore the impacts and trade-offs involved in specific climate change policies, including how they are funded. A new social contract is needed to offer the social and economic security which will be necessary to manage environmental risks. Such a social contract should be based on protecting and promoting human rights.<sup>127</sup>

124 Murphy, L. and Emden, J. (2021) *Delivering an equitable net zero transition: Workshop series summary*. IPPR, JRF and ZCC

125 OECD (2020) *Together to achieve Universal Social Protection*

126 Fraser, N. (2021) 'Climates of Capital: For a Trans-Environmental Eco-Socialism'. *New Left Review* 127, 94-127; Verbist, G. et al (2020) *Reconciling environmental and social goals in the transition towards a low-carbon society*. Belgian Science Policy Office

127 Center for Economic and Social Rights (2021) *Human Rights and Economic Recovery from Covid*. New York: CESR

The Feminist Green New Deal is bringing a gendered and intersectional approach/ perspective to the Green economy/Green Recovery - ensuring that the voices of women, people of colour and other marginalised groups are heard during environmental and political debates.

Through a programme of nationwide grassroots workshops and policy roundtables a Feminist Green New Deal Manifesto will be created and launched in 2022.

This Project is a collaboration between Wen (Women's Environmental Network) and the Women's Budget Group (WBG).

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