

Is Basic Income Essential to the Good Life?

Sheffield University | Centre for Wellbeing in Public Policy

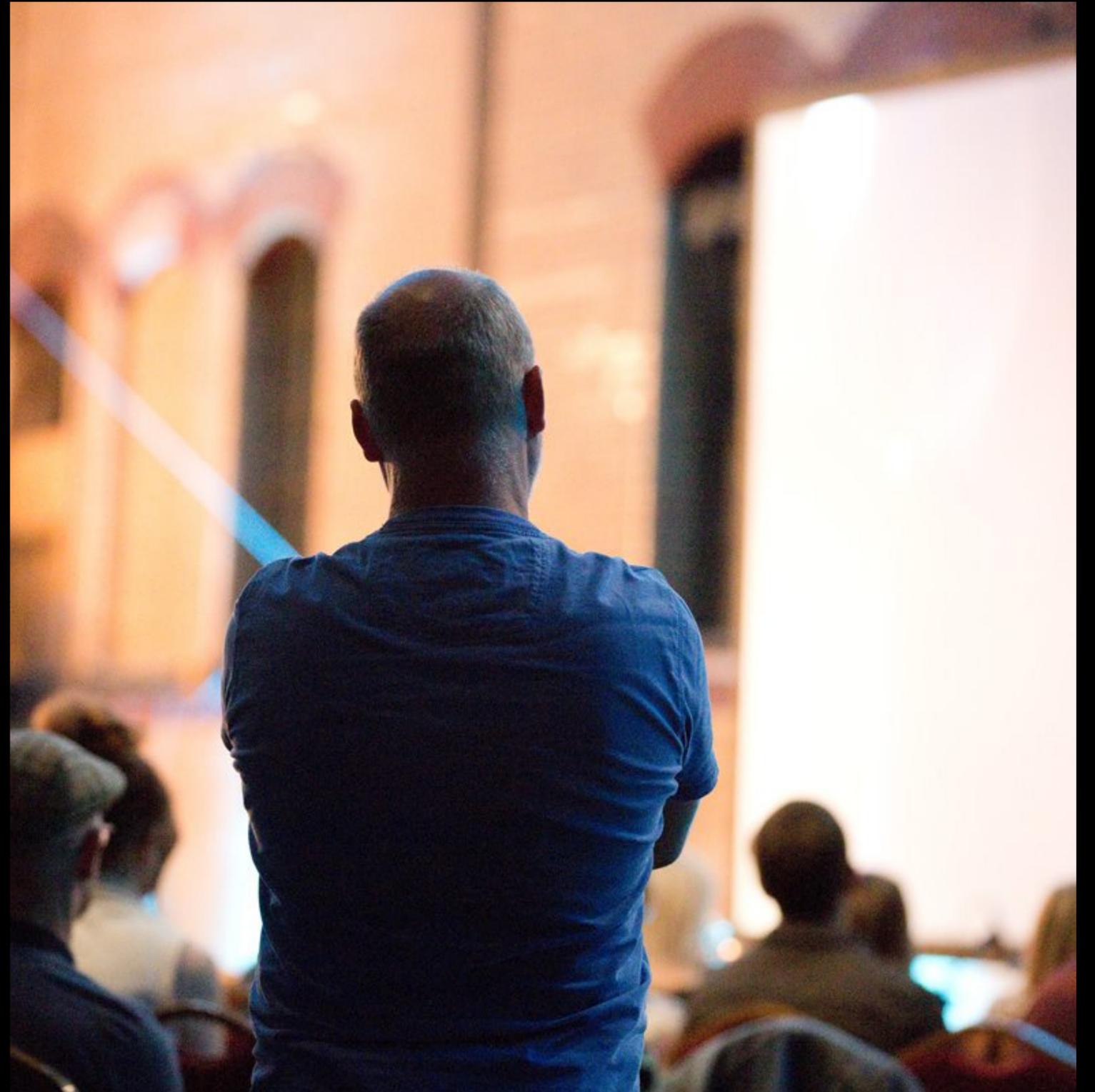
Sponsored by the Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board

**festival
of debate**

Simon Duffy

Who am I?

- Philosopher and activist
- Founded Inclusion Glasgow, In Control and developed concepts like personal budgets and self-directed support
- Founded the Centre for Welfare Reform in 2009 and Citizen Network in 2016.
- Active campaigner against Austerity and current concept of 'welfare reform'
- Co-founder of UBI Lab Sheffield



Is Basic Income Essential to the Good Life?

My hypothesis

Establishing a system of basic income is an important step in helping us become a community that cares for our common welfare - and in particular - it will help us find the true meaning of work and its place within the good life.

“Why is everyone so negative about welfare in the UK - in Finnish the word just translates as wellbeing.”

Katja Valkama | Finnish academic and Fellow of the Centre for Welfare Reform

Welfare	Wellbeing
Stigmatised	Sexy
Associated with poverty	Associated with health
Othering	Aspirational
Defined negatively by need	Defined positively as improving
Means wellbeing	Means welfare

Universal Basic Income (UBI)

A simplified definition

1. Regular cash payment - ie. no food banks
2. Enough to live on with dignity - ie. a decent minimum income
3. Universal - ie. no means-testing = the poor don't pay higher marginal taxes
4. Individualised - ie. no bread winner
5. Unconditional - ie. no sanctions = no punishments

The focus of my talk

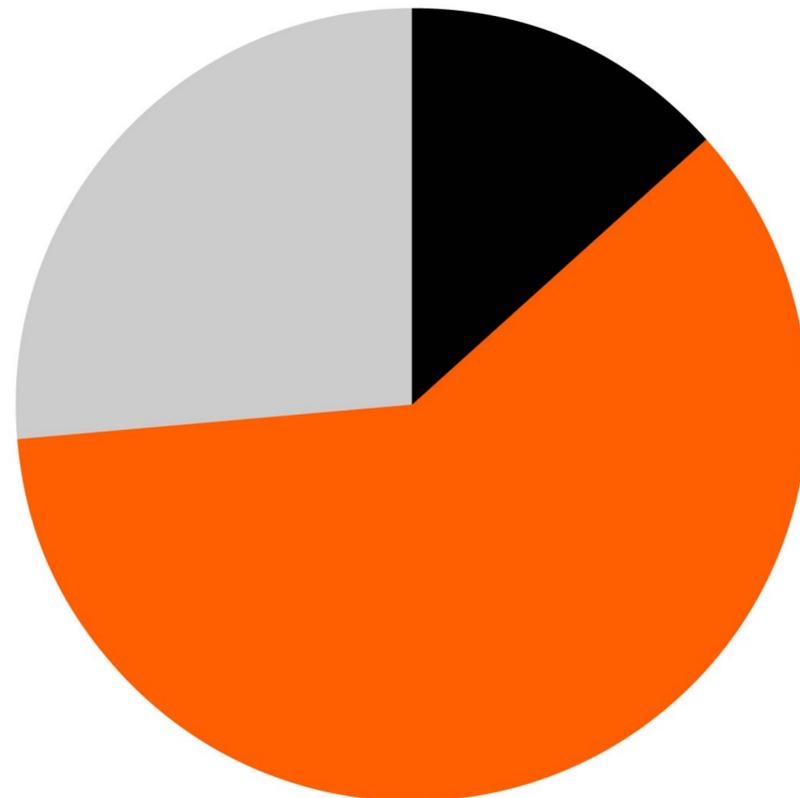
Should the government check that people are looking for work?

-  No - people have a right to benefits and should be free to make their own decisions
-  Not sure - maybe some people need to be controlled for their own good
-  Yes - people who get benefits need to be managed and sanctioned if they break the rules

Pro UBI = 60%

Anti UBI = 13%

Neither = 26%



n = 1082

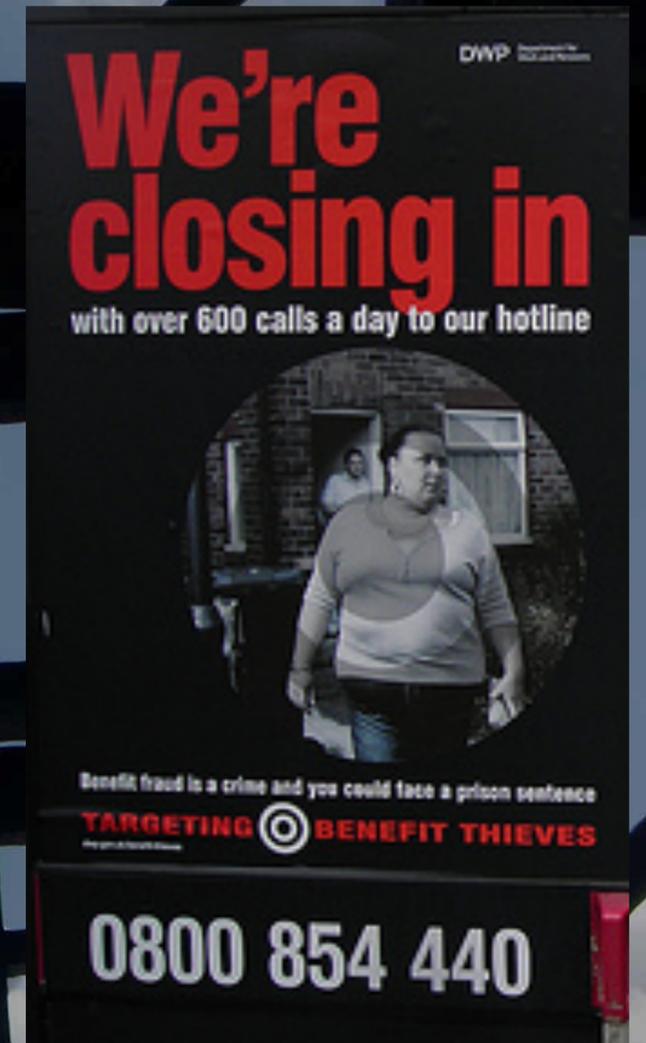


Being in paid work is the central virtue of the modern era.

It is how we are to evaluate our own worth.

It is a central goal of those who rule us.

cui bono?

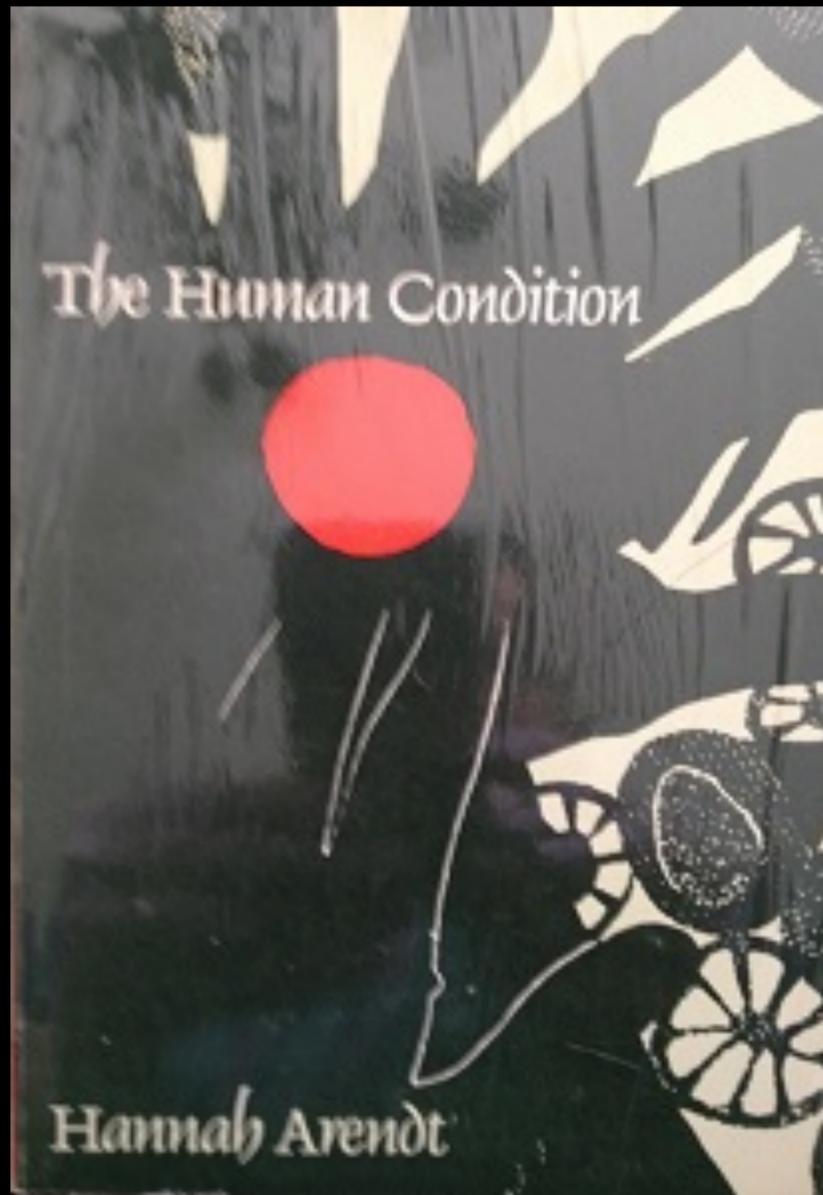


The DWP's No 1 priority (2020):
“run an effective welfare system that enables people to achieve financial independence by providing assistance and guidance into employment”

Is work good?

1. Work was not always positively valued

The current idolisation of work is historically rather peculiar



Otium - free time, leisure, ease

Negotium - absence of leisure, Hence business, occupation, employment.

Negotior - to carry on a business, especially as a banker

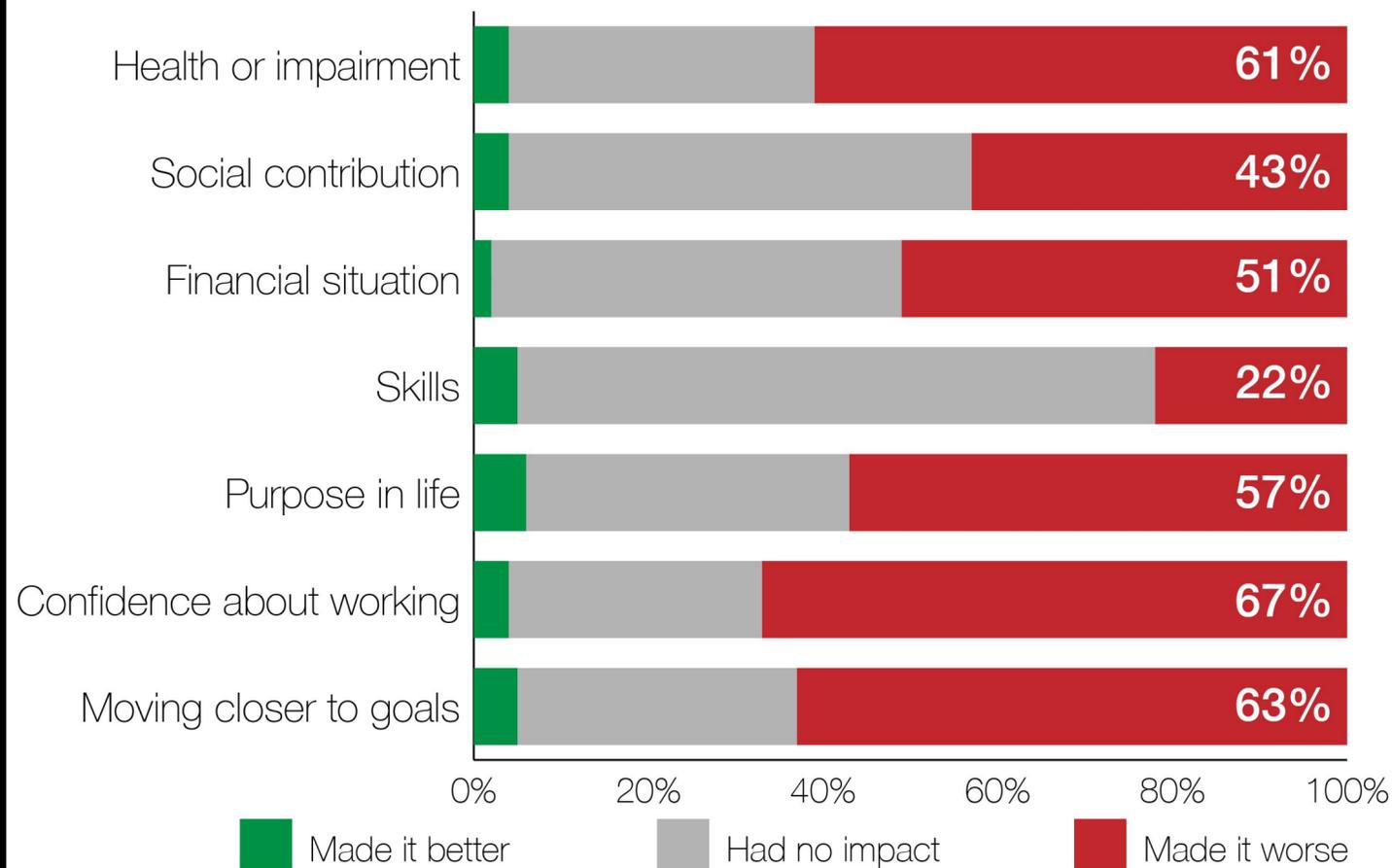
Etymology 1 [\[edit\]](#)

From Middle English *work*, *werk*, from Old English *worc*, *weorc*, *geweorc*, from Proto-Germanic **werką* (“work”), from Proto-Indo-European **wérgom*; akin to Scots *wark*, Saterland Frisian *Wierk*, West Frisian *wurk*, Dutch *werk*, German *Werk*, Danish *værk*, Swedish *verk* and *yrke*, Icelandic *verk*, Gothic 𐌴𐌹𐌶𐌰𐌿𐌿𐌴𐌿𐌴 (*gawaurki*), Ancient Greek ἔργον (*érgon*, “work”) (from *ῥέργον* (*wérgon*)), Avestan 𐬯𐬀𐬯𐬀𐬎𐬎𐬎 (*vərəz*, “to work, to perform”), Armenian գործ (*gorc*, “work”), Albanian *argëtoj* (“entertain, reward, please”). English cognates include *bulwark*, *boulevard*, *energy*, *erg*, *georgic*, *liturgy*, *metallurgy*, *organ*, *surgeon*, *wright*.

2. Making people work doesn't work well

Work punishments, sanctions and activations have a poor record

The Government's Work Programme is failing



[Source: Hale C (2014) *Fulfilling Potential?* London, Mind. n=445]

For more information go to www.mind.org.uk/chreport

Sanctions are used to punish people with disabilities or health conditions, if they do not fulfil the set activities...

...but **92%** were set activities that were **not fully accessible**

80% are anxious about being able to manage to do the activities they've been set

86% are anxious about losing their benefits if they can't manage the activities

[Source: Hale C (2014) *Fulfilling Potential?* London, Mind. n=435]

Facts about sanctions

Between October 2008 and June 2013 **76,300** disabled people on ESA have been sanctioned with their sickness benefits cut or stopped completely.

The rate of people being sanctioned is **rising rapidly**.

75% of ESA claimants are sanctioned for not participating in work-related activity, the remainder for missing or being late for an interview.

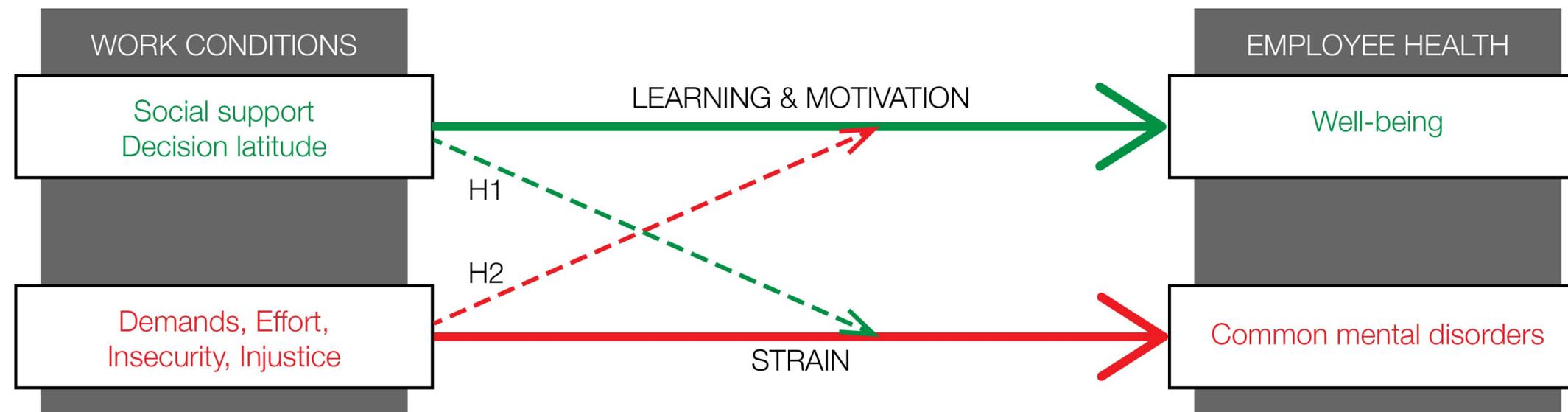
60% of ESA claimants sanctioned are vulnerable people with a **mental health condition or learning difficulty**.

Tribunals are now upholding almost **90% of appeals** against DWP for sanctions (for JSA as well as ESA).

For more information go to www.mind.org.uk/chreport

3. Good work is good for you, so work isn't

The factors that make work good for you are independent of work



Research supports the association between various efforts and demands at work and common mental disorders, and the motivational potentials of various job resources. The hypotheses that resources are sufficient to reduce the risk of high demands on adverse health outcomes (H1) and that high demands are motivating in a context of high resources (H2) remain disputed.



UBI and Health

Health-promoting potentials of basic income:
an analysis of the psychosocial environment in work and
welfare

A DISCUSSION PAPER FROM THE CENTRE FOR WELFARE REFORM

Anna-Carin Fagerlind Ståhl

FEBRUARY 2019

4. Employment isn't work and isn't good

At the heart of employment is the master-servant relationship

servant

n. an employee of an employer, technically one who works for a master. A servant is distinguished from an "independent contractor" who operates his/her own business even though spending much time on the work of a particular person or entity. The servant has established hours or piece work, is under the direction of the employer even as to details, cannot work for competitors, and acts for the benefit of the employer rather than for himself/herself. A servant (employee) must have workmen's compensation insurance and social security coverage, pay income tax deductions, and may benefit from various Federal and state labor laws. (See: **master and servant**, **employee**, **independent contractor**)

An employee is - legally - the servant of the master - the employer.

Legally (although perhaps not materially) servants are the 21st century equivalent of what in the Classical period would have been called a slave - to be distinguished from a freeman or a citizen

5. Paid work is not the only work

Paid work is just one vital human activity amongst many

The seven day week offers us a picture of the elements that make up a balanced life and the needs of the real economy. Humans need to be able to work and rest; and work comes in many different forms, including the work of love and community.

Monday

Tuesday

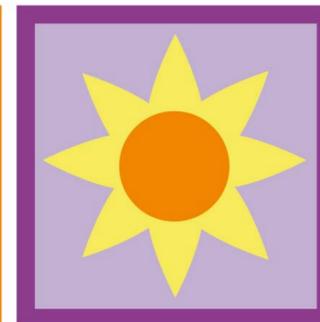
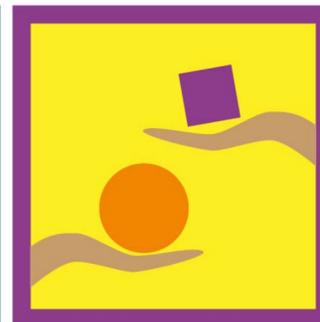
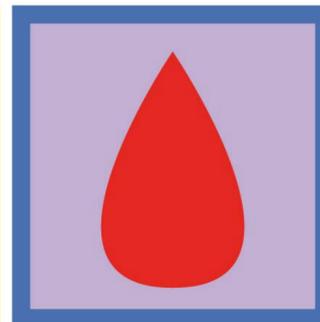
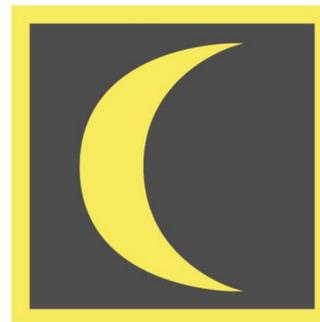
Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday



Creativity

Service

Exchange

Making

Love

Enjoyment

Rest

Moon

Mars

Mercury

Jove

Venus

Saturn

Sun

Tyr

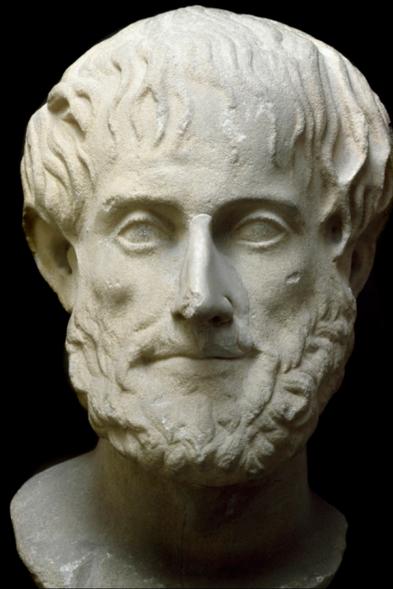
Woden

Thor

Freya

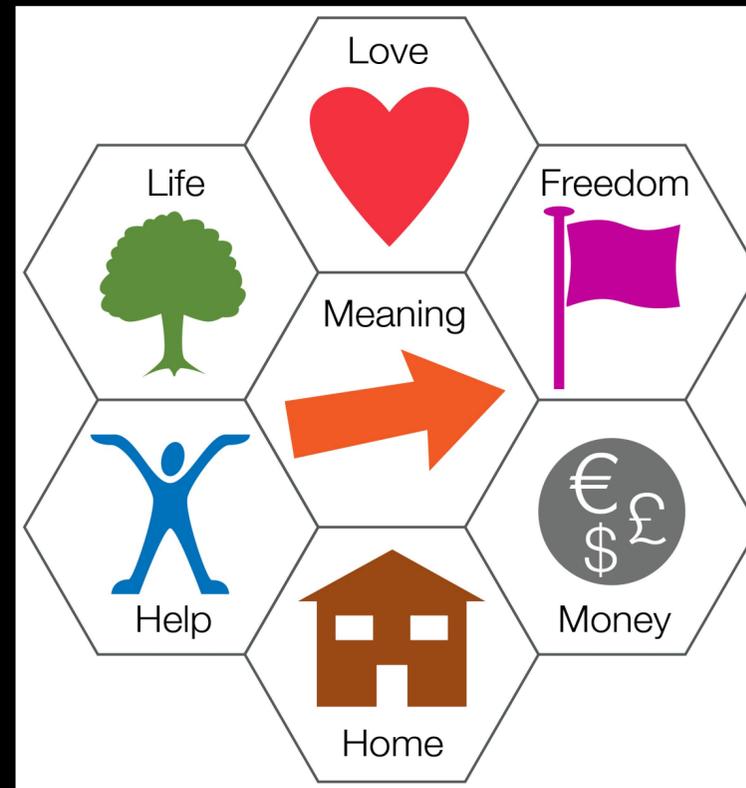
6. Work isn't the point of life

Citizenship is a better way think of the purpose of life and society



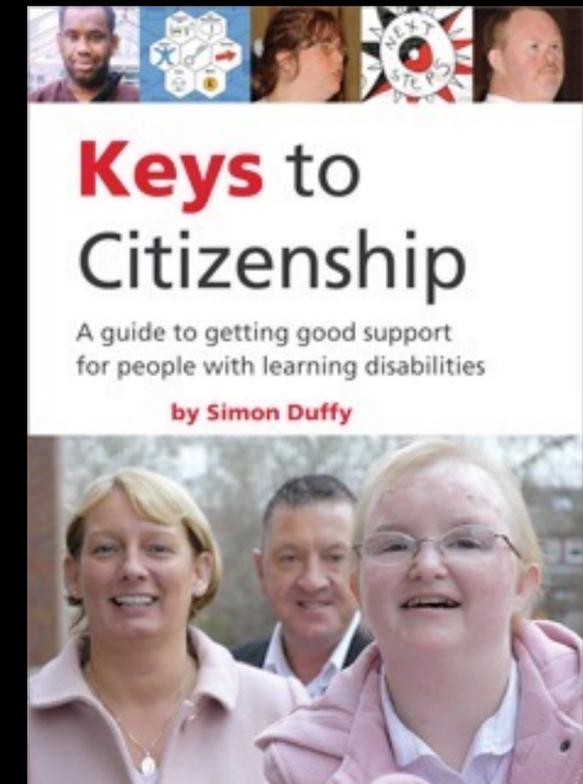
τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθὸν ψυχῆς
ἐνέργεια γίνεται κατ' ἀρετὴν

wellbeing is the full development of
our potential in harmony with virtue



OR

what we wish for those we love is
that they live full lives where they make the
best of their own unique gifts

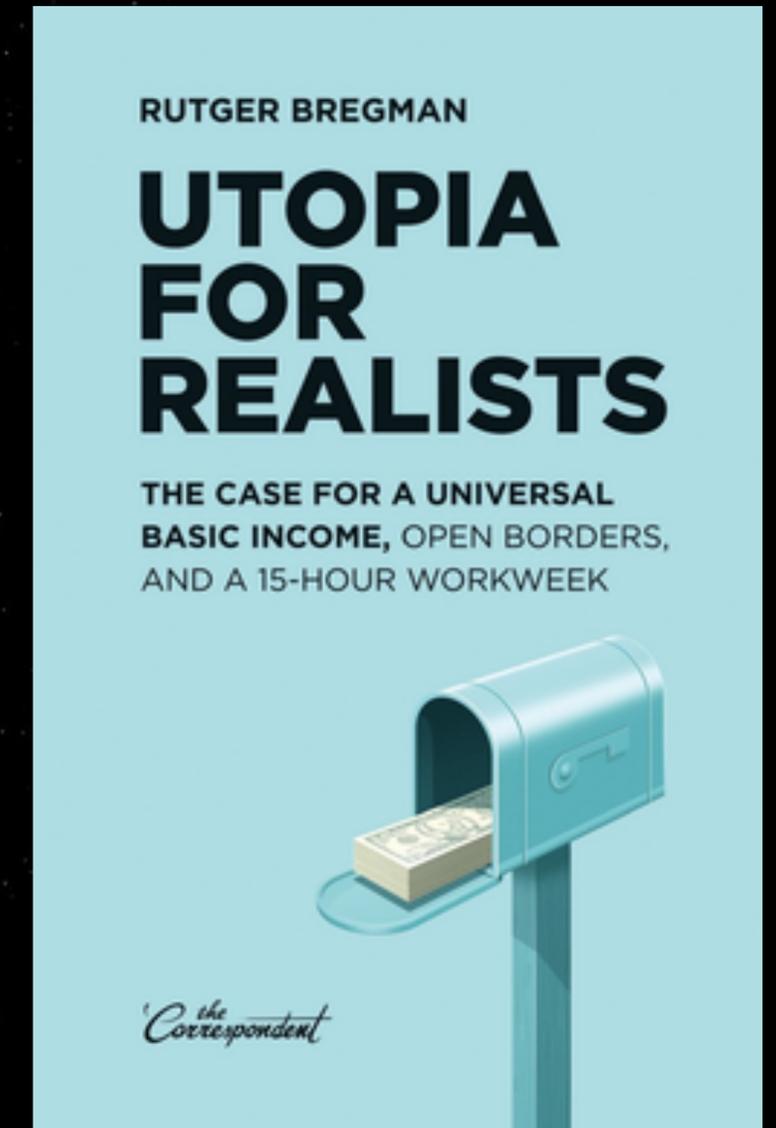


7. Working is killing us and the planet

The current work-based economic system is unsustainable



Bring back the Middle Ages -
around 1300 France had
6 months of holidays in a year



Basic Income gives us

1. Opportunity to develop better social values
2. Protection from harmful punishments and paternalism
3. More paid work that is good for us and the ability to avoid bad work
4. Freedom to work independently and cooperatively
5. Respect for all the vital forms of work and non-work needed for a good life
6. Good lives focused on making the best of our talents and gifts
7. Sustainable wellbeing in harmony with the planet and human nature

come and join us



UBILAB
Network

START YOUR OWN
UBI LAB →

JOIN UBI LAB
NEWSLETTER →

Made in Sheffield