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The political feasibility of a Citizen's Income in the UK

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CITIZEN'S
INCOME
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Terminology

‘guarantee’

‘basic’

‘Citizen’s Income’ is preferable

Feasibilities

Jürgen De Wispelaere and José Antonio Noguera, typology of political feasibility

	<i>Prospective constraints ('achievability')</i>	<i>Retrospective constraints ('viability')</i>
Discrete agency	A. Strategic feasibility	B. Institutional feasibility
Diffuse agency	C. Psychological feasibility	D. Behavioral feasibility

Strategic feasibility

Political ideologies in the UK can generate, and have generated, arguments both for and against a Citizen's Income.

Arguments for a Citizen's Income cohere with the major preoccupations of the ideology, whereas arguments against are more generic and relate to anxieties not intimately related to the ideologies.

Successful legislative attempts did not reduce the number of civil servants, whereas those which failed would have done so.

Routes to a Citizen's Income

Two routes to a Citizen's Income might be strategically feasible:

1. One demographic group at a time
2. A very small Citizen's Income for every citizen, which would then grow.

Psychological feasibility

The process envisaged by De Wispelaere's and Noguera's categorization works like this:

Psychological feasibility → Strategic feasibility
→ Political feasibility

There is another possibility:

Strategic feasibility → Psychological feasibility
→ Political feasibility

e.g. equalities legislation in the UK

This would alter De Wispelaere's and Noguera's categorization:

	<i>Prospective constraints ('achievability')</i>	<i>Retrospective constraints ('viability')</i>
Discrete agency	A. Strategic feasibility	B. Institutional feasibility
Diffuse agency		C. Psychological feasibility
		D. Behavioral feasibility

Institutional feasibility

Child Benefit is a Citizen's Income for children.

A single tier state pension might become a
Citizen's Pension

So in the UK any problems related to
institutional feasibility would not be insuperable.

Behavioural feasibility

Behavioural outcomes are the result of a variety of factors

Expected behavioural outcomes will be diverse.

Lower marginal deduction rates, the individual claimant unit, and simpler administration *will* offer more choices to individuals and to households, enabling citizens to determine their own behavioural feasibilities and then to ask whether their expectations have been met.

Conclusion

In the UK, achieving a Citizen's Income will depend almost entirely on its strategic feasibility.

Continuing acceptability will then depend on the extent to which it can prove institutional, psychological and behavioural feasibility.

A very small Citizen's Income might fail to achieve these sufficiently to enable it to grow.

The way forwards for the UK must therefore be to implement a Citizen's Income one demographic group at a time.