

Scotland's Future

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On 18 September this year the people of Scotland face a choice between two futures for Scotland. It is a choice between sticking with an increasingly unequal Westminster system or putting Scotland's future in Scotland's hands and moving forward to an Independent Scotland. As more and more people across the country hear the case for 'Yes' they are realising that Scotland can, should and must be independent.



Scotland **can** be a successful Independent country and the experience of the Scottish Parliament's stewardship of our health service clearly demonstrates that. Since 1999 the Scottish Parliament has had full responsibility for the health service and becoming independent will not affect the day-to-day running of NHS Scotland. Indeed, Jackson Carlaw MSP - the Conservative's Health Spokesperson - has recently said that *"...if Scotland did vote for Independence, Scotland's health service would continue, people would continue to be treated and I believe it would prosper¹"*. It is estimated that an Independent Scotland would be the 14th richest country in the OECD – with independence we can better support the health service with access to all of our nation's resources.

We are very fortunate that the running of the NHS in Scotland is already effectively Independent from Westminster because it has allowed it to follow a very different path to the health service in England. Independence is about just that, ensuring decisions are taken here in Scotland, not at Westminster by governments we do not vote for. With powers over health the Scottish Parliament has chosen to scrap prescription charges for all – saving those with long-

¹ BBC Radio Scotland: 12.02.14

term conditions £104 every year² compared with England. Prior to the abolition of prescription charges, two-thirds of all paid-for prescriptions related to long-term conditions and around 600,000 adults in families with an income of less than £16,000 could have been liable for charges³. There is also a stark contrast between the Scottish Government's approach to the health service, as a publicly owned and operated service, and that of the Westminster Government whose privatisation agenda in England is growing ever more pronounced and damaging. Since 2007 the SNP government has protected the NHS budget: the health resource budget will be a record £11.8 billion in 2015-16⁴ – a 22% increase under the SNP. In protecting Scotland's NHS and working to improve the health of our nation successive Scottish Governments have demonstrated what can be achieved when Scotland's Parliament has the appropriate powers.

Scotland **should** take on the full powers of an Independent country because this record, of protecting public services and the incomes of the most vulnerable, shows decision making in Scotland works. With a 'Yes' we will take responsibility for the economy, taxation, and welfare, we can access our own resources so we can make Scotland's wealth work better and more fairly for all the people of Scotland. While the Scottish Parliament has the power to protect universal rights to healthcare, the Westminster Government plans to cut Scottish welfare spending by around £6 billion by 2015-15⁵. The Child Poverty Action Group has estimated that child poverty in Scotland will increase by 100,000 by 2020⁶ as a result of these cuts. For the NHS this increase in poverty will mean greater ill health and widening health inequalities. With Independence, we will have the full powers required to safeguard the welfare state, protect the incomes of the poorest and tackle the root causes of health inequalities.

² British Heart Foundation (2014). 'Prescription Charges'. [British Heart Foundation](http://www.bhf.org.uk).

Available From: [<http://www.bhf.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/prescription-charges.aspx>]. Last Accessed: 20.04.14.

³ Scottish National Party (2013). 'Labour to Target Free Prescriptions'. [Scottish National Party](http://www.snp.org).

Available From: [<http://www.snp.org/media-centre/news/2013/oct/labour-target-free-prescriptions>]. Last Accessed: 23.04.14.

⁴ British Medical Association (2014). 'Draft Budget Scrutiny 2014-2015'. [British Medical Association Scotland](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk), P. 2.

Available From:

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_HealthandSportCommittee/General%20Documents/Draft_Budget_Scrutiny_2014-2015_-_Submission_from_British_Medical_Association_%28Scotland%29.pdf]. Last Accessed: 22.04.14.

⁵ Scottish Government (2014). '£6 Billion Cut from Welfare Budget'. [Scottish Government](http://news.scotland.gov.uk).

Available From: [<http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/-6-billion-cut-from-welfare-budget-b3e.aspx>]. Last Accessed: 24.04.14.

⁶ Child Poverty Action Group (2014). 'Briefings & Consultation Responses – Scotland'. [Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland](http://www.cpag.org.uk).

Available From: [<http://www.cpag.org.uk/scotland-briefings-responses>]. Last Accessed: 24.04.14.

Scotland **must** become Independent to protect the welfare state from Westminster's continued austerity agenda. The Coalition government's "privatisation agenda" could lead to the end of the free, universal health care in the rest of the UK. If Scotland's finances remain tied to these Westminster decisions then every cut made to services through privatisation in England has a direct impact on the budget available to the Scottish Government. Furthermore, a number of Westminster politicians have already called for the Barnett formula, which allocates spending across the UK, to be abolished. This would mean a cut to Scotland's budget to the tune of £4 billion. It is now clear that the only way we can continue to protect Scotland's NHS in the future is to put Scotland's resources in Scotland's hands, and only a 'Yes' vote in September will deliver that.