

The Impact of Independence on the Health Service

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Introduction

I strongly believe that our National Health Service is the best example of the positive case for remaining within the UK. As a Liberal Democrat, I believe our NHS is the finest example for continuing our home rule journey, building a stronger Scotland within the UK partnership of nations. As students and as healthcare professionals you have a unique practical insight into how devolution works in practice.



We know that Scotland benefits from devolution: we control our domestic agenda on issues like health and education whilst working together across the UK to share resources and have a stronger voice in the world.

An Historic Overview

It was a Scottish Liberal who set the blueprint for the universal National Health Service created by Aneurin Bevan in 1948. Three decades prior, Liberal Prime Minister David Lloyd George tasked Inverness-shire MP Sir John Dewar with investigating inadequate healthcare provision in the highlands. The report led to the creation of the Highlands and Islands Medical Service, paid for by a central government grant, guaranteeing doctors a minimum salary and travel expenses in return for treating all those in need of help. It was a radical step which contributed towards the creation of the universal health system we know today.

Whilst the National Health Service Act of 1946 created the NHS for England and Wales, it was a separate piece of legislation from the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1947, which created Scotland's NHS. Scotland controlled the domestic agenda on health from the inception

of the NHS, and worked with the UK on the regulation of the medical profession, pensions and the funding of excellent medical research in Scotland's Universities and NHS. This was devolution at its earliest days and at its finest form.

Universities & Research

The BMA recognises that despite having 0.1% of the world's population, Scottish research contributes 1.8% of the world's citations and is ranked first in the world in terms of research impact per GDP¹. In 2010-11, Scottish Universities were awarded 15% of the UK's research council funding for 9% of the population². In 2012, the UK-wide Medical Research Council established seven large-scale research investments across Scotland. This is a success story of devolution; our students at the forefront of some of the finest medical learning institutions in the world; Scotland's reputation boosted in the world with the strength that comes with working as part of the UK partnership of nations.

Better Together

I think it is telling that, for whatever reason, we have not seen much divergence from the rest of the UK when it comes to medical education and training. Neither have we seen much divergence when it comes to the structure of the healthcare workforce, or the ways in which we determine pay and contracts. It demonstrates the existence and efficacy of the UK single market. We recognise working together makes sense and we recognise the economies of scale that come with being part of the wider UK partnership of nations.

We take decisions on the domestic agenda whilst working together to pool resources and share best practice. As healthcare students and junior clinicians, you have just begun your career in a public service which continues to inspire millions across the world. Continuing our home rule

¹ British Medical Association (2011). 'Building a Smarter Future: Towards a Sustainable Scottish Solution for the Future of Higher Education'. BMA Scotland, P. 8.

Available From: [<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/345511/0115002.pdf>]. Last Accessed: 22.04.14.

² Scottish Government (2013). 'Scotland Analysis: Science & Research'. Scottish Government, P. 17.

Available From: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/255788/bis-13-1115-scotland-analysis-science-and-research.pdf]. Last Accessed: 21.04.14.

journey in the UK will give us a hand up in the world, using the strength and security of the UK to achieve more - and achieve more together.