Our NHS

As part of the UK our NHS in Scotland gets the best of both worlds. We make decisions here in Scotland about our NHS, and we benefit from sharing the burden of paying for this across the shoulders of taxpayers in the whole of the UK, not just Scotland. The strength, stability and security of the UK economy safeguards our NHS for generations to come.

The NHS is our most cherished public institution. There is no greater achievement than providing universal health coverage for all. However as medicine becomes more expensive and our population becomes older, our NHS faces challenges in the future. Only as part of a strong and secure UK can we ensure our NHS goes from strength to strength in the future.

The impartial experts at the Institute for Fiscal Studies have shown that a separate Scotland would face between £3 billion and £10 billion of cuts or tax increases. The NHS could not escape the inevitable cuts that would come with such pressure on our public finances if we vote to leave the UK.

In contrast, as part of the UK, Scotland’s yearly health spending is around £200 per person higher than the UK average. Scotland gets a great deal out of being a part of a strong UK where health spending is spread on the basis of need, not nationality.

If Scotland was to separate from the UK then current cross-border health arrangements would be cast into doubt. Some treatments are too specialised to be cost effective in a country of 5 million. However, as part of the UK, Scots have access to dozens of treatments that are unavailable in Scotland with no hassle and no charge.

The 5 things you need to know

- **OUR NHS IS SAFER IN THE UK** – Scotland receives around £200 a year more in health spending than the rest of the UK. With severe cuts or tax rises necessary if we were to separate, our hospitals, nurses and doctors would be placed under significant pressure. The nationalists have no answers to how this funding gap would be filled.

- **MAKING OUR OWN HEALTH DECISIONS** – Health has been under the control of the Scottish Parliament since its establishment. In the past 15 years we have brought forward remarkable advances in our healthcare and the ban on smoking in public places as well as huge improvements in our life expectancy and mortality rates. As part of the UK our control over health will continue to be backed up by the strength of the UK economy.

- **SPECIALIST CARE** – One of the great things about the UK is that if you or your family need specialist treatment you can get it anywhere in the UK, free of charge. From heart and lung transplants in Newcastle to specialist cancer care in London and Manchester, these lifesaving facilities are available to all Scots, no questions asked.
Better Together Factsheet

- **MEDICAL RESEARCH** – Scotland has a long and proud history of intellectual excellence and success in research, with particular strengths in world leading medical research. We receive around £143 million of UK charitable funding, that’s 13% of the UK total compared to our 8% of the population. Our medical research thrives as a part of this integrated UK system and would be put at risk if Scotland was to separate in September.

- **ACCESS FOR BORDERS PATIENTS** – In the last ten years, patients from the Borders have been given 21,899 outpatient appointments and 3,391 inpatient appointments in England. Over 22,000 cross-border ambulance journeys have been made by the Scottish ambulance service in the last 8 years. That’s around 7 or 8 journeys every day. If we were to break away, patients in the Borders may be forced to use hospitals that are further away from them purely because their closest facility is now in a foreign country.

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Life-saving treatments available to Scots as part of the UK

- **Heart and Lung Transplants** – Scottish patients have this vital procedure available to them at Freeman Hospital in Newcastle.

- **Cutting-edge cancer care** – Proton Therapy is one of the latest developments in the fight against cancer. A specialist centre already exists in the Wirral with another two due to open in London and Manchester.

- **Imported Pathogens Lab** – The UK’s lab that protects us from the world’s most deadly diseases is based in Porton Down, Salisbury. If Scotland were to break away we would be left without this facility that is vital for our national security and wellbeing.

- **Children’s Liver Transplants** – Scottish children needing a liver transplant need to go to one of three specialised centres in Leeds, Birmingham or London.

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What the experts say

**Medical Research**

- **Joint letter from fourteen senior scientists:** “Growing out of our profound commitment to Scotland are grave concerns that the country does not sleepwalk into a situation that jeopardises its present success in the highly competitive arena of biomedical research... Scotland’s research interests will be much better served by remaining within the common research area called the United Kingdom.”
Better Together Factsheet

- **The Wellcome Trust:** “Our future commitment, and the eligibility of Scottish institutions for trust support, would need to be reviewed. There is no guarantee that our funding would be maintained at current levels. The majority of the trust’s awards are provided by researchers to UK institutions; the funding that we provide overseas is largely focused at low and middle-income countries.”

- **Sharmila Nebhrajani,** the Chief Executive of the Association of Medical Research Charities, which represents more than 120 charities: “Scotland punches above its weight in life sciences and as a recipient of medical-research funding. My worry is the uncertainty and the risk to funding in that interim period, which could last some time. It may be that going forward, people would then think twice about setting up an institute in what became an independent country. It may mitigate towards grant funding.”

- **British Medical Association:** “Funding for research in universities is currently determined on a UK-wide basis including the allocation of research grants from the seven research councils. Each year the research councils invest around £3 billion in research, with awards made on the basis of quality rather than by country of origin. Scotland is currently successful beyond its population share.”

- **Sir Paul Nurse,** Nobel Prize Winner in Physiology and Medicine: “Scotland, with wonderfully innovative biomedical teams engaged in path-breaking research, relies on money that comes from UK organisations such as the Medical Research Council, the Wellcome Trust and Cancer Research UK. My fear is that it will be difficult to justify using their money for research in an independence Scotland. This will be a major problem for Scotland and with progress in biomedical research, including the treatment of diseases such as cancer.”

**Cross-Border Care**

- **Chairwomen of the Scotland Patients Association, Margaret Watt:** “There is already pressure on patients when it comes to travelling for medical treatment and the system for treatment south of the Border is complicated enough. We wouldn’t want to see patients placed with any additional burdens.”