

Minority Ethnic Matters Overview

MEMO+ is an occasional series of briefing papers on topics of interest to minority ethnic communities in Scotland. It is produced by the [Scottish Council of Jewish Communities](#) in partnership with [BEMIS - empowering Scotland's ethnic and cultural minority communities](#), and is supported by the [Scottish Government](#).

“Scotland’s Future” Scottish Government White Paper on Independence: Health and Wellbeing

On 18 September 2014 there will be a referendum in which voters will be asked the question, "Should Scotland be an independent country?", and the Scottish Government has produced a White Paper to explain its proposals for the way in which an independent Scotland would be governed.

A White Paper is a document produced by the Government that sets out details of their proposed future policy on a particular subject. It is not a consultation and does not set out alternatives, but only gives details of the Government’s intentions. This White Paper does not, therefore, provide an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of Scotland becoming an independent country, and it does not discuss what should happen if Scotland remains in the UK.

This MEMO+ is one of a series that summarises the main points of the White Paper. Other issues cover Scottish Government proposals for:

White Paper: General Info	Education & Employment	Immigration & Asylum
Culture & Communications	Energy & Resources	International Relations
Defence & Security	Environment & Agriculture	Justice
Economy & Finance	Equality & Human Rights	Third Sector & Civic Society

Who is currently responsible for Health and Wellbeing?

Both the NHS and delivery of Welfare services are already devolve – that is, decisions about these are made by the Scottish and not the UK Government. However, related issues, such as the regulation of the medical professions, abortion, welfare and child support benefits, and pensions, are reserved, so responsibility for these remains with the UK Government in London.

The Health Service

The Scottish Government proposes that, since it is clearly in the interest of all patients to be able to access the best available specialist treatments, in an independent Scotland, NHS Scotland would continue to pay for some patients to receive certain specialised

services from the NHS in the rest of the UK. In addition, the Scottish Government proposes that if Scotland were to become an independent country:

- medicines on prescription would continue to be free of charge;
- organ donation and transplantation would continue to be organised jointly with the rest of the UK under the auspices of NHS Blood and Transplant;
- Scotland would continue to participate in a joint research funding system for medical research with the rest of the UK.

Welfare

The Scottish Government has accepted the [Expert Group on Welfare](#) recommendation that, if Scotland were to become an independent country, there should be a transitional period during which the administration of benefit payments would be shared between Scottish and UK agencies, but believes that joint administration should not continue beyond 2018.

The White Paper proposes that:

- benefits and tax credits would be guaranteed to rise in line with inflation;
- “bedroom tax” (the current penalty on people on benefits who have more accommodation than the UK Government considers necessary), would be abolished within the first year;
- in place of the current system of single household benefit payments, individual people living in the same household would be able to claim benefits separately;
- further rollout of Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment would be stopped in Scotland.

Pensions

Under current UK Government proposals, state pension age will rise to 66 by October 2020, with a further rise to 68 between 2026 and 2028. Since life expectancy in Scotland is lower than in the rest of the UK, the Scottish Government is concerned that this would unduly penalise Scottish pensioners. It therefore proposes that, if Scotland were to become an independent country, an independent commission would be established to advise on the state pension age in Scotland.

The White Paper proposes that:

- during the first parliamentary term, pensions would be guaranteed to increase by either inflation, earnings, or 2.5%, whichever was higher;
- a new single-tier pension would be introduced in 2016. The rate would initially be £160 per week, or, would match the amount of the single-tier pension in the rest of the UK if that is higher;
- provision for people expecting to receive a state pension based on their partner’s National Insurance contributions would be maintained for 15 years after the introduction of the single-tier pension;
- the Savings Credit payment, which benefits pensioners on low incomes, would be retained;
- a Scottish Pensions Regulator would be established, and would liaise closely with the UK Pensions Regulator and UK Financial Conduct Authority.

[Click here](#) and [here](#) for more details about Scottish Government proposals about Health and Wellbeing.

Useful Links

- **White Paper: Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland**
 - Full Document <http://82.113.138.107/00439021.pdf>
 - Summary <http://82.113.138.107/00439013.pdf>
- **Scottish Government Q&A about Health, Wellbeing and Social Protection**
<http://www.scotreferendum.com/topic/health-wellbeing-and-social-protection/>
- **Expert Working Group on Welfare Report**
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0042/00424088.pdf>
- **Scottish Government referendum website**
<http://www.scotreferendum.com/>
- **UK Government Scotland Office referendum website**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/scotland>
- **Yes Scotland** (Campaign for Scottish Independence)
<http://www.yesscotland.net/>
- **Better Together** (Campaign for Scotland to remain part of the UK)
<http://www.bettertogether.net/>
- **BBC Scottish independence: Referendum library**
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-21618252>



The **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)** is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. It advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, and also works in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438) <http://www.scojec.org/>



BEMIS is the Scottish national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body, supporting, empowering, and building the capacity of minority third sector community organisations. As a strategic partner with Government, it is proactive in influencing the development of race equality policy in Scotland, and helps develop and progress multicultural Scotland, active citizenship, democracy, and Human Rights Education at the Scottish, UK, and European levels. <http://www.bemis.org.uk/index.html>



The **Scottish Government** is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland. **One Scotland** is the Scottish Government campaign designed to tackle racism. It aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlight its negative impact and recognise the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society – and make Scotland no place for racism. <http://www.scotlandagainstracism.com/>