

Public uncertain of implications for charities if Scotland votes 'Yes'

Contributed by nfpSynergy
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The two largest political parties in Scotland are split over the impact independence will have on charities, new research suggests. "Walking the Tightrope- five recommendations for charities to engage with Scotland's changing future", a new report published by research consultancy nfpSynergy, shows that while Labour and Scottish National Party MSPs disagree on the repercussions of independence, a third of the public are uncertain about what it would mean for charities.

The report, based on surveys of 50 MSPs and 1000 adults in Scotland, reveals 19 out of 20 SNP MSPs believe independence would be positive for the third sector, with many anticipating stronger, wealthier charities with a better focus on Scottish people and their circumstances.

However, it also shows that half (seven out of 15) of Labour MSPs and four out of six Conservative MSPs worry that independence would have negative consequences, including diverting resources from charities in Scotland at a time when greater demand is placed on their services.

The results also reveal some concern about the effect of independence among the Scottish public. 23% felt that there would be fewer government resources available for charities, while only 14% thought there would be more governmental support. A third (30%) said they didn't know what impact independence would have. More positively, 23% of respondents agreed that "charities would be better placed to meet the needs of the Scottish public" in the event of independence.

The paper, free to download from nfpSynergy's website, goes on to make key recommendations for how charities can engage with the independence debate without antagonising MSPs or the public. Using feedback from MSPs as evidence, the report makes 5 recommendations:

1. Ask the tough questions of politicians: question MSPs from all parties about how charities will be affected by Scottish independence and other post-referendum scenarios.
2. Stay impartial: do not take a party stance. Engage in the debate, but remain party-neutral.
3. Work together: speak to other charities or stakeholders and discuss possible implications for them and the sector as a whole.
4. Prepare a contingency plan for independence and greater devolution.
5. Make policy recommendations. Suggest how areas of concern could be addressed.