



PRESS RELEASE  
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### **Design a single health service for children**

Scotland should consider creating a single National Health Service specifically for children according to a leading paediatric surgeon and member of the Executive's Child Health Support Group.

Professor George Youngson, a paediatric surgeon at the Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital, has expressed concern that because child health is administered and delivered by 15 different health boards in Scotland, "there are 15 opportunities for differences and inconsistency".

Writing in this month's Children in Scotland magazine, he said: "Given the competition that each paediatric sector faces with its adult counterpart and the fact that when young patients are transferred to other hospitals, finances do not follow them, it could be argued that current administrative practices are out-of-date and insensitive to the needs of children."

He argues that stronger and more sustainable health services require closer and better collaborative working between all professional carers and particularly specialists who, because of their small numbers, are vulnerable to external pressure. They would be better supported, he claims, by a single administration- a National Child Health Service.

"The gains are clear. It would create a supportive corporate identity for all workers in the service and change the emphasis away from improving the centres of excellence (which may still happen) to strengthening the weakest links and introducing consistency of care for all parts of Scotland. Standard setting, quality assurance, audit, training would all benefit from a national unified service as would the ability to move patients to the care they need irrespective of their funding authority. Indeed, could national waiting lists be developed that would allow children to be treated at the first treatment opportunity, irrespective of region?

"Advocacy would be more powerful at national level from a new centre of gravity and with that, accountability would be expected and given."

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- To request a full version of Professor George Youngson's article, email: [npay@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:npay@childreninscotland.org.uk) or phone Nicola Pay on 0131 2222419 or 0131 2288484
- Professor Youngson's article appears in the December 2004 edition of the Children in Scotland magazine, a Scottish cross-sectoral magazine for everyone working with or for children, young people and their families in Scotland.
- Also in December's magazine:

Bronwen Cohen reports on an approach to learning that is rooted in pupils' local communities and local culture.

New research reveals the childhood experiences of a group of young people whose parents had alcohol or drug problems.