

Nicola Sturgeon - First Minister

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First Minister - tips

Nicola Sturgeon is the First Minister of Scotland. She is head of the Scottish Government and our first female First Minister (FM). You can find her [biography and responsibilities](#) on the gov.scot website.

Box times

The First Minister's box closes Monday to Friday at 4pm.

First Minister's private office (FMPO)

The First Minister's office handles a high volume of information and this volume is increasing. The First Minister receives around 500 emails each day, plus those received in the private secretaries' personal inboxes.

Dealing with such volumes of information means that we greatly appreciate all efforts to cut down on the amount of material the First Minister is expected to look at. Please only send or copy emails to the First Minister's mailbox if they genuinely require the attention of the First Minister or her private office team.

If you are in any doubt, phone private office and discuss with the relevant private secretary, or send the email or submission to the relevant cabinet secretary. They, or their office, can make a judgement on whether it should be forwarded to the First Minister, including whether she needs to be involved in any decision sought.

We also appreciate all efforts to keep advice succinct and timely. Specific guidance on different types of briefing is given in following pages. However, there are some common principles:

- **stick to facts:** the First Minister prefers to receive key facts and attributable verbatim quotes. She does not find lines to take or Q and A useful except as supplementary material
- **keep material short:** often one page of bullet points is the most helpful type of background brief
- **ensure material is representative of the whole government:** getting separate advice from different areas of the organisation on a subject means that it is difficult for us to provide the First Minister with a coherent picture

Title

For formal occasions, the First Minister should be referred to as the Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP, First Minister of Scotland.

If you are in any doubt on whether the First Minister should be copied into an email we would always encourage you to give us a phone to discuss further.

First Minister - speeches

The First Minister's speechwriters are [REDACTED]. They should be contacted in the first instance for any events where the First Minister is expected to give a speech.

If the First Minister is required to speak at an event you are responsible for, please contact [REDACTED] as soon as possible to discuss the details of the event, timing of speech and so on. [REDACTED] usually prefers to receive relevant factual information, rather than a draft speech or bullets arranged as a draft speaking note.

If [REDACTED] are unavailable, please contact the First Minister's private office to discuss further.

First Minister - engagement briefing

Key points

- please ensure that you use the First Minister's preferred briefing template for either engagements or meetings
- the First Minister's visits and events team will assist in all logistical aspects of external visits. We do not need extensive directions or maps. Visits and events will contact you if they need your help with logistics
- for external engagements, especially those with a public interest, communication colleagues should be consulted as to what news line, if any, there will be. Briefing should include the background to this
- any official attending an event with the First Minister should note their mobile number in the briefing, and have this phone switched on. This means that we can contact you if we require any last minute information
- keep briefing short, relevant and avoid duplication. Briefing should tell the First Minister what she needs to know – it should not repeat information that she is already aware of
- speaking notes will be drafted by the First Minister's speechwriting team. Officials should offer assistance to the team by way of discussion and if necessary early sight of briefing
- any amendments required after the briefing has been submitted may require to be written in by the private office, so please track change these or make them very clear in the covering email
- official support should be assumed for all visits or meetings, unless agreed otherwise with private office
- all briefing should be quality assured at deputy director level

External meetings and visits

- maximum of 15 pages unless discussed with First Minister's private office
- cover sheet which clearly outlines the purpose of the meeting and who the key people she is meeting are. If the First Minister is attending an event, her role should also be detailed
- agenda/running order
- meeting objective(s) and what outcome(s) are desired (this should be succinct)
- background on key issues to be discussed (use FMQ format)
- if there was a previous meeting, a note of that and progress since
- the First Minister does not want Q and A. Please provide any necessary statistics or facts in bullet format which is clear and easy to understand. Information should always be provided in context
- bios on meeting attendees (not previously met)
- speaking note - to be discussed with speechwriters – see speech preferences

Parliamentary engagements

The First Minister, on occasion, will participate by opening or closing debates, or providing a statement to parliament. First Minister's private office and special advisers will contact the relevant policy area to discuss requirements as appropriate. The First Minister's speechwriting team will work with special advisers on any parliamentary statements or speeches. Policy will be required to provide briefing on the subject matter in line with the requirements above.

First Minister - submissions

Key points

- all submissions should have a clear **purpose, conclusion** and **timescale** for response. The First Minister should be able to quickly identify what she is required to consider
- use the standard template as a helpful guide. If sending in an email format, please include headings on purpose, timing and recommendation
- it helps private office if the covering email clearly states whether this is for information, or requires a decision from the First Minister
- keep submissions as short as possible (one or two pages). Do not include background detail the First Minister will already be aware of
- do not embed attachments in your submission document or send as Objective links
- ensure each page is numbered
- remove all template comments and any tracked changes
- use the correct priority timing:
 - Routine** (over three days)
 - Urgent** (within three days but more than 24 hours)
 - Immediate** (within 24 hours)Include the priority in the subject box of the accompanying email and if immediate, call private office to alert us and also check that the First Minister is available to clear it. Consideration should also be given to recess, holidays and weekends
- use the current security markings, such as Official Sensitive, not Restricted or Confidential. Please also be clear what is in the public domain and what is not
- proof read all material to correct grammar and spelling
- submissions that require the cabinet secretary and the lead minister, or the cabinet secretary and First Minister to make a decision, should be submitted on a 1:2 basis
- ensure that all relevant ministers, DGs, comms officers and special advisers are copied in. Ideally comms and special advisers should be consulted in advance

Further information can be found in submissions to ministers.

First Minister - correspondence

Letters

If you are required to draft a letter on behalf of the First Minister, we would advise that you speak to the relevant portfolio private secretary, who will be able to offer a steer on what key points should be added to the letter.

We would ask that letters are proof read in advance and all spelling and grammar is checked before being sent.

Emails

When sending an email to the inbox, it is helpful to the team to indicate whether this is for the First Minister's information or whether a decision is to be made. The team is more than happy to discuss any submission with you and we would encourage you to discuss with us by phone or face to face in advance.

First Minister - contacts

Private office

Principle Private Secretary	John Somers	[REDACTED]
PS/PPS	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Assistant Private Secretary	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Private Secretary	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Operations Manager/Private Secretary	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Deputy Private Secretary	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Deputy Private Secretary	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Deputy Private Secretary	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
FM Correspondence Team	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
FM Correspondence Team	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
FM Diary Team Manager	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
FM Diary Team	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
FM Diary Team	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
FM Diary Team	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
FM Diary Team	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Portfolios

Communities Social Security and Equalities

- Local Government and Housing [REDACTED]
- Social Security [REDACTED]

Culture Tourism and External Affairs

- Europe and International Development [REDACTED]
- Culture [REDACTED]

Economy, Jobs and Fair Work

- Business Innovation and Energy [REDACTED]
- Employability and Training [REDACTED]
- Oil and Gas; Renewables [REDACTED]

Education and Skills

- Childcare and Early Years [REDACTED]
- Further Education, Higher Education and Science [REDACTED]
- Employability and Training [REDACTED]

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform

[REDACTED]

Finance and Constitution

- Minister for Parliamentary Business [REDACTED]
- Constitution [REDACTED]

Health and Sport

- Public Health and Sport
- Mental Health




Justice

- Community Safety and Legal Affairs



Rural Economy and Connectivity

- Transport and Islands 



UK Negotiations and Scotland's Place in Europe
First Minister Logistics/Briefing/Forward Planning

