

ANNEX A

The exemptions applied in this instance are:

Some information has been withheld as an exemption under section 29(1)(d) of FOISA (Ministerial private office) applies to some of the information requested because it relates to the operation of any Ministerial private office.

This exemption is subject to the 'public interest test'. Therefore, taking account of all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemption. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exemption. We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosing information as part of open, transparent, and accountable government. However, there is a greater public interest in preserving the efficient and effective operation of a Ministerial Private Office.

In addition, this is a formal notice that an exemption under Section 38(1)(b) (personal information) of FOISA applies to some of the information you have requested, this is because it is personal data of a third party and disclosing it would contravene the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the General Data Protection Regulation and in section 34(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018. This exemption is not subject to the 'public interest test', so we are not required to consider if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemption.

FOI 202300386996

MINISTERIAL PREFERENCES

FIRST MINISTER

Humza Yousaf MSP is the First Minister of Scotland and head of the Scottish Government. You can find his biography and responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

The First Minister's private office (FMPO) handles a high volume of information, receiving over 500 emails per day. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

All submissions, invitations, and general queries relevant to the First Minister should be sent in the first instance to FMPO to ensure all requests are dealt with.

Box times

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

First Minister - speeches

The First Minister's Speechwriter is [Redacted – section 38 – personal information]. [Redacted – section 38 – personal information] should be contacted at the earliest opportunity in preparation for any events where the First Minister is expected to give a speech, opening remarks or to record a video address.

If the First Minister is required to speak at an event you are responsible for, contact [Redacted – section 38 – personal information] as soon as possible to discuss the audience, format, and formality of the event. You should be prepared to share any draft briefing material with [Redacted – section 38 – personal information] or other speechwriters, as speeches are prepared in tandem with briefings.

Preparation for every speech is different, but for keynotes you can plan for two meetings with speechwriters and to provide input to three drafts. The commitment

may be less or more, depending on whether a speech is impacted by an unfolding situation.

First Minister - engagement briefing

When preparing an engagement or meeting briefing for the First Minister, make sure you use the First Minister's preferred briefing template (document will download).

Once Mr Yousaf agrees to a meeting or external visit, the relevant private secretary will contact officials to commission a briefing. The diary secretary will schedule the event, inviting external stakeholders if required.

The First Minister's visits and events team (V and E) will assist in all logistical aspects of external visits and contribute to briefing packs. The V and E team are also responsible for providing the First Minister with an operations note ahead of the event.

For external engagements, you should consult and copy in communications colleagues, into any relevant email trails. Your briefing should include the background to this.

It is common practice for an official to support Mr Yousaf at both internal and external engagements, unless otherwise agreed with private office. You should discuss and agree official support with the relevant private secretary in advance and the name and mobile number of the official should be included in the briefing. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Keep briefing short, relevant and avoid duplication. Briefing should tell the First Minister what he needs to know – it should not repeat information he is already aware of. All briefing should be cleared at deputy director level.

Speaking notes are drafted by the First Minister's speechwriting team. Officials should help the team by way of discussion and if necessary early sight of the briefing.

External meetings and visits briefings should:

- be as succinct as possible
- include a cover sheet which clearly outlines the purpose of the meeting and who the key people the First Minister is meeting are
- detail the First Minister's role in the agenda or running order where he is attending an event
- briefly outline the meeting objective(s) and what outcome(s) are desired
- clearly outline any sensitives the First Minister should be aware of
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- include information on any previous meetings and a note of progress since
- include bios on attendees Mr Yousaf has not met before

First Minister – correspondence

If you need to draft a letter on behalf of the First Minister, you should speak to the relevant portfolio private secretary first. They will be able to offer a steer on what key points should be added to the letter.

All letters should be proofread in advance and all spelling and grammar checked before you send them.

Title

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

If you're in any doubt on whether the First Minister should be copied into an email, contact First Minister's private office to discuss further.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER AND CABINET SECRETARY FOR FINANCE

Shona Robison MSP is the Deputy First Minister (DFM) of Scotland. She is also the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, which includes responsibility for the Scottish Budget.

You can view her biography and responsibilities as Deputy First Minister and as Cabinet Secretary for Finance on gov.scot.

Please consult the following top tips and guidance for best practice before providing support to the DFM. Any queries should be directed to private office in the first instance.

Top tips

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

The Deputy First Minister (DFM) will always require a briefing for meetings, engagements, committees, debates or statements. You should prepare briefings using the preferred template.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Ms Robison's portfolio is wide-ranging, and it's easy for briefings to become too long as they try to cover everything. Please keep briefings as short as possible, keeping in mind that ministers generally will not have a lot of time to review the briefing ahead of the event.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to ask experienced colleagues for advice. You can also contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected. Further advice is in the writing a speech guidance.

Key points to be aware of are:

- the Deputy First Minister (DFM) speaks at approximately 160 words per minute
- you should generally send draft speeches for significant events to private office a week in advance to allow time for Ms Robison to consider and provide feedback
- private office may also arrange a discussion between officials and the DFM to go over the content of a speech
- you should include a word count at the end
- speeches should be in Arial 16 with 1.5 spacing
- speeches should always be sent as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack, and pages should always be numbered
- speeches can be sent in bullet point format for closing debates and Scottish Cabinet Analysis of News and Current Events (SCANCE) notes
- page breaks should occur only at the end of a full sentence, with no split paragraph between pages (therefore providing a natural pause between changing pages)
- avoid using acronyms, jargon or tables - remember this is being read aloud

Where Ms Robison is giving multiple speeches on the same topic over a short period of time, keep in mind this means there's likely to be some crossover between the audiences. You should therefore avoid duplication between the speeches.

If a speech is for an online event or is pre-recorded, it should be no longer than 10 minutes in total to keep the audience engaged.

The public engagement unit (PEU) manages correspondence sent to ministers using the MiCase system. Replies are drafted on their behalf for issue within 20 working days. The guidance here applies to ministerial replies from the Deputy First Minister (DFM), with some additional tips.

Correspondence from MSPs and MPs

Many MSP/MP offices will include a reference number, so ensure this is copied in the response under 'Your Ref'. When a MSP/MP writes on behalf of their constituent, refer to the constituent by name and state their address if given.

The DFM responds to all correspondence from MSPs/MPs. When these responses issue from Ms Robison, please address the Member by their first name. Where the correspondence has been sent by a Member's constituency staff, address the letter to the Member directly.

Official replies

You should include 'I have been asked by the Deputy First Minister to thank you for your letter of [day/month] and to reply on her behalf', or similar.

Diary invitations

Replies to diary cases are typically sent from the private secretary (PS). You should ensure the PS minute includes all specific policy details, key points and the views of the communications team. The more information given, the more likely the DFM will make a firm decision.

Flag up any diary cases that are going to be sent up late, especially if it's an event happening in the near future. This allows us to let the organisation know well before the event takes place. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Contacting private office

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

If you think you're going to need longer than the MiCase deadline and an interim response will need to be issued, contact PO at the earliest opportunity. Ideally, an interim response is issued prior to the deadline rather than sending when the case is late.

Reallocation

Ministerial replies can be reallocated so that Ms Robison is answering on behalf of another cabinet secretary/minister who received the original letter. You should thank the correspondent for their letter to the original cabinet secretary or minister and add: 'I am replying as I have portfolio responsibility for the issues you raise'.

Delays

If the response is sent more than four weeks after the original letter was written, include an apology for the delay when replying. If the MiCase is not sent up to the DFM by the private office deadline, you should include a short note explaining the delay.

Some top tips for drafting correspondence are:

- the main text of the letter should always be Arial, font size 12
- include the full title of the correspondent, such as Director/Chairman/Convener
- if you're responding to a Councillor, address him/her as such, and if they have another title such as Convener/Chairperson, include that as well
- please spell it 'Convener' rather than 'Convenor'
- don't use Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms etc. unless the correspondent does
- don't use Esquire after a name
- refer to the date of the original letter in the response
- consider who will be reading the response, for example children or young people
- make sure the reply is clear, concise and can be easily understood - read how to write well for more information on this
- don't use unnecessary phrases at the beginning of sentences, for example 'I am writing to...'; 'First of all,...'; 'I have to advise you that...'; 'Perhaps it would be helpful if I were to set out some general background about...'

- keep sentences short and avoid jargon
- don't use the phrase 'I am afraid' - an alternative is 'Unfortunately'
- don't use the phrase, 'Scottish Ministers have no locus to intervene' - alternative wording is 'it is not appropriate for Scottish Ministers to intervene'
- where appropriate add 'I hope this is helpful' at the end of a response
- try to fit the reply on one page, but do not make the font smaller to do so
- don't alter the default page set-up - If drafting a letter outwith MiCase, use the ministerial template found in the Scottish Ministers folder in Word
- don't use paragraph numbering
- ensure the DFM's name at the bottom of the letter is in bold and capitals in the centre of the letter - 'SHONA ROBISON'
- the private secretary's signature should also be in the centre of the page
- use single spacing between sentences
- open the letter with some background, for example 'Thank you for your letter about...'
- make sure the response answers the points raised by the correspondent
- avoid 'general interest' details, which do not answer the question asked
- if cutting and pasting from previous correspondence, ensure the response is tailored to the current correspondent and all facts and figures are up to date
- use spell check and proofread the response to ensure the grammar and spelling is accurate before sending to private office

Officials must draft a short briefing for the interview, using the preferred template. You must provide the briefing in good time, so Ms Robison can digest it before the interview begins.

CABINET SECRETARY FOR THE CONSTITUTION, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS & CULTURE

Angus Robertson MSP is the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture. You can find his biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website. Please contact private office for further advice and help.

Briefing is always commissioned for a week in advance of any event, but we are always happy to discuss deadlines to accommodate officials. If it's a big set piece event, such as a parliamentary debate or speech, it should be sent a week in advance for the Minister's consideration.

Officials should copy in special advisers, communications colleagues and Mr Robertson into all correspondence or briefings. They should also confirm with private office as soon as possible who will be leading on the engagement and, where necessary, complete a minute for the corporate record.

Mr Robertson always:

- needs to know who is in the audience
- needs to see any agenda in advance
- needs the facts, and then views
- prefers speeches to be simple
- likes to see speeches one week in advance of the event to check and allow time to commission more information, check facts or briefing
- likes headings for each section of the speech
- dislikes long complex sentences full of abstract nouns
- likes helpful factual material and any detail for relevant facts

When drafting a speech please remember:

- it should be in Arial, size 20 and with 1.5 spacing
- Mr Robertson speaks about 140 words per minute

- to have paragraphs no longer than two or three lines
- to put page breaks at the end of a sentence - paragraphs should not run over pages
- pages must be numbered (bottom right)
- to use headings to signpost sections of the speech and changes of topic
- to include examples of relevant events Mr Robertson has undertaken in their ministerial capacity
- to involve communications and special advisers in drafting
- to always check the speech for accuracy – facts and figures should be checked and double checked
- speeches should always be sent up as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack
- to avoid using acronyms and jargon - where acronyms are necessary, these should be read out fully on first use
- if there is a quote included in a speech – the quote, and the paragraph related to it, should be on a separate page
- Mr Robertson likes to speak at a lectern - please request this where possible

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice and contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected.

Read the guidance on writing ministerial speeches.

Please consider these points when writing a speech:

- make the speech relevant to the event
- who is the audience and what do they want to listen to
- the speech should use positive language
- don't recycle or copy and paste previous speeches on the same subject
- avoid getting bogged down in policy unless necessary
- include the big picture context - start and end with the big picture

- include some relevant context, especially in the introduction
- include any constitutional points that are appropriate
- cover hot issues and topical subjects
- potential announcements should be discussed with communications colleagues
- add some colour to the speech to personalise it and feel free to include testimonials, startling facts and quotes
- it's important to read the speech aloud to identify any potential challenges or problems in delivering it
- allow time for the Cabinet Secretary to take interventions, or make personal additions when delivering speeches
- Mr Roberston speaks German fluently - for German speaking audiences, he likes to be given the option of delivering speeches in German and may request a translation

engagement briefing

Make sure you use the preferred briefing template for visits and meetings. Tailor the information boxes as appropriate and only complete sections that are needed.

Keep the briefing as short as possible, ensuring it's relevant whilst avoiding duplication. It should contain only the key facts and background information, plus anything new that Mr Robertson is not already aware of. You should always submit speaking notes as separate documents and include page numbers in briefings.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

If amendments need to be made after briefing/speech has been submitted, please contact us as soon as possible to ensure the Cabinet Secretary has the most up to date briefing pack or speech.

You should also make sure:

- communication colleagues and special advisers are aware of engagements where necessary, and appropriate handling arrangements are detailed in the briefing pack - please keep them copied in to correspondence
- to provide a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names, parking allocations (if any) and contact phone numbers
- you differentiate your briefing to ensure it's sufficient for the needs of the event or meeting
- to contact private office for further advice about specific requirements for engagements

Correspondence

For correspondence on the MiCase system:

- all ministerial responses should reflect Mr Robertson's personality
- they should be person-centred and considerate of the correspondent - if you put yourself in the correspondent's position, what response would you expect?
- ensure the response answers all the points raised, or explains why we can't - try to be as helpful as possible
- don't pad your response with unnecessary Scottish Government policy lines – Mr Robertson finds this unhelpful
- provide an email address, as well as a postal address in the letter
- contact private office to check diary availability ahead of drafting responses
- avoid using jargon or abbreviations
- contact private office if you would like further advice on handling correspondence
- private office will always send you the final copy, which was issued, with the minister's signature added
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

For correspondence dealt with outside MiCase:

- responses to letters from devolved administrations or other MPs should be drafted and sent to private office for clearance within seven working days
- always provide an email address for the correspondent, as well as a postal address
- private office will always send you the final copy, which was issued, with the minister's signature
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Mr Robertson also uses a preferred letter template and diary letter template which should be used for correspondence with stakeholders.

CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Jenny Gilruth - top tips

Jenny Gilruth MSP is the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. You can find her biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

Box

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

When an event is confirmed in the diary, private office will issue a meeting request to the lead official requesting briefing.

Official support

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Jenny Gilruth - speeches and events

Speaking engagements (including conferences, meetings and receptions)

Pre-meetings will be arranged in advance (where time allows) to discuss Ms Gilruth's requirements.

Ms Gilruth in general prefers full speeches, although she appreciates this may vary depending on the audience. You should try to submit it at least a week in advance.

If Ms Gilruth is chairing a meeting, you should make this clear in the briefing, which should also include a chair's brief and accompanying speaking points. This briefing can take the form of an annotated agenda.

Debates or committee

Full speaking notes are required for debate opening speeches. However, debate closing speeches should be made up of a written start to the speech and a written conclusion. The main body of the speech will be formed during the debate as Ms Gilruth responds to the points made. To assist with this, include a series of one

paggers on the most likely issues to arise, with lines to take on each, for Ms Gilruth to use as required.

Committee speaking notes should always be written out in full.

Some tips to be aware of when writing speeches are:

- it is helpful to have first drafts of speeches as early as possible and private office will usually set a deadline and arrange pre-meetings - please ask if this hasn't been done
- ensure it is tailored to the engagement and not copied and pasted from previous speeches
- consider the audience and tailor accordingly (for example, less “policy speak” would be more appropriate when speaking to young people)
- avoid jargon and acronyms
- read speaking notes aloud to check fluency
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]
- reference any recent related engagements or visits

Speeches should be formatted with:

- Arial font 18pt
- 1.5 line spacing
- page breaks at the end of a paragraph - do not split a paragraph over two pages
- pages numbered at the bottom right
- a word count and estimated timescale for delivery

Speaking rate

Ms Gilruth speaks at around 160 words per minute.

Ensure the speech box details from the briefing template are completed and include as page one of your briefing.

You should include the following:

- clear message for the speech
- layout of room – for example round table, theatre style
- lectern or sitting as part of a panel
- make-up of the audience
- how many are attending
- what do they want to hear
- any media interest
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice on the type of speech and structure expected. You can find further advice in the writing a speech guidance.

You should consider the event being attended and ensure the level of briefing is appropriate. Short visits do not require a lengthy briefing pack.

Make sure you download the templates for engagements and meetings.

Some tips when providing briefing for meetings or engagements are:

- consider the engagement and the level of briefing required

- provide a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names and numbers
- ensure mobile numbers for supporting officials are included
- include speaking notes as separate documents
- if amendments are required after the briefing is submitted, track changes or make it clear in the covering email what has changed
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]
- if a previous meeting has happened, include a note of progress since
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]

Jenny Gilruth - correspondence

Ms Gilruth is keen to be as helpful as she can when replying. You should ensure any points made in the letter are addressed and questions answered where possible. If necessary, you can provide a PS minute detailing additional information or advice not for inclusion in the reply.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]

Correspondence	
information to include	Further details and instructions
Address	<p>Use the reply address provided on the letter. Some correspondence specifies an address they would like a response to. If the letter has a reference, please include this under 'Your Ref'.</p> <p>When an MSP/MP writes on behalf of their constituent, refer to the constituent by name and state their address if</p>

	<p>given. You should do this in the subject line of the reply. For example:</p> <p>Dear XXX,</p> <p>RE: Jenny Gilruth, 1 Holyrood Place, Scottish Parliament, EH99 1SP</p> <p>I write regarding the above named constituent and your recent correspondence with my office.</p> <p>You should also personalise the response to the elected member. For example:</p> <p>‘Dear Mairi’ as opposed to ‘Dear Mairi Gougeon MSP’.</p>
<p>Contact details</p>	<p>When offering contact details for Ms Gilruth, please only use the email address Cabsecfores@gov.scot</p> <p>[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]</p>
<p>Content</p>	<p>Consider who will be reading the response and tailor the language as necessary. For example, a softer, less “policy speak” tone will be more appropriate when corresponding with young people or children.</p> <p>Ensure the reply is clear and concise and avoid using unnecessary jargon.</p> <p>If Ms Gilruth is responding to a letter sent to another minister, explain that and why. For example - 'Thank you for your letter of DATE to OTHER MINISTER, I am replying as I have portfolio responsibility for SUBJECT'.</p>

Date	<p>Refer to the date of the original letter in the response.</p> <p>If you send the response at either the end or the beginning of a month, check the letter is dated appropriately. If in doubt, it is often best to date a response with the new month as, depending on ministerial availability, it may take a couple of days before Ms Gilruth sees it.</p>
Font	<p>The main text of the letter should always be Arial, font size 12.</p>
Diary invitations	<p>Always draft two separate letters - one accepting and one declining the invitation. Alternatively, a separate letter for any other possible answers, such as another minister will undertake the event can be drafted where appropriate.</p> <p>Always include a PS minute, detailing any background detail and policy advice</p> <p>Responses should be in the private secretary's name, unless the correspondent is a member of parliament, other government minister or a constituent.</p> <p><i>Example diary case replies</i></p> <p>Accept</p> <p>Thank you for your email dated XXXX inviting Jenny Gilruth MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to attend / meet / visit XXXX.</p> <p>Ms Gilruth would be delighted to accept your invitation. I would be grateful if you would contact her Assistant</p>

	<p>Private Secretary at Cabsecfores@gov.scot to make the necessary arrangements.</p> <p>Decline</p> <p>Thank you for your email dated XXXX inviting Jenny Gilruth MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to attend / meet / visit XXXX.</p> <p>Ms Gilruth will unfortunately be unable to accept your invitation. Please accept her apologies and best wishes for a successful event / conference / XXXX.</p>
Layout	<p>If drafting a letter outwith MiCase, use Ms Gilruth's letter template. Make sure you add page breaks at the end of a paragraph.</p>
Ministerial replies	<p>All letters to members of parliament, other government ministers and constituents should be drafted in Ms Gilruth's name.</p>
Official replies	<p>Include 'I have been asked by Ms Gilruth to thank you for your letter of [DATE] and to reply on her behalf, or a similar form of words.</p>
Photo	<p>You can find Ms Gilruth's official photo on the Scottish Government Flickr page.</p>
Signature	<p>Ministerial reply –</p> <p>JENNY GILRUTH</p> <p>PS reply –</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information].</p>

	Private Secretary
Spelling	Always check spelling and proofread the response before forwarding to private office.
Salutations and pronouns	Ensure you use the appropriate titles and pronouns of those being responded to. Use the terms they use to refer to themselves.
Late correspondence	<p>It is always helpful if cases can reach Ms Gilruth as soon as possible to allow her more time to consider it amongst many other papers. If submitting a case to private office after the deadline, include an explanation for Ms Gilruth's information and offer an apology in the correspondence if appropriate.</p> <p>If a case is significantly late, consider whether it is still appropriate for the Cabinet Secretary to issue the response.</p>

CABINET SECRETARY FOR WELLBEING ECONOMY, FAIR WORK AND ENERGY

top tips

Neil Gray MSP is the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy. You can find his biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

Briefing is always commissioned a week in advance of any event. We're happy to discuss deadlines. If it's a big set piece event, such as a parliamentary debate or speech, we require briefing a minimum of a week in advance for the Minister's consideration. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Contact private office to make them aware of any urgent issues before sending and please ensure it is marked urgent in the subject. Private office provide further advice and help where they can. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

speeches and events

Speeches should:

- be in arial, size 18 and with 1.5 spacing
- have numbered pages (bottom right)
- be written as speaking notes rather bullet points
- be short, clear and concise - paragraphs should be no longer than two or three lines and should not run over pages
- avoid using acronyms and jargon - this is being spoken
- be relevant to the event and acknowledge who is in the audience
- cover hot issues and topical subjects
- have headings for each section of the speech

- include factual material and detail of relevant facts
- not use parts of previous speeches on the same subject
- include the big picture context - start and end with the big picture
- include any constitutional points that are appropriate
- be discussed with communications colleagues if they are to include potential announcements
- be colourful and personalised - feel free to include testimonials, startling facts and quotes

Points to remember:

- it's important to read the speech aloud to identify any potential challenges or problems in delivering it
- Mr Gray speaks about 160 words per minute
- facts and figures in the speech should be checked and double checked
- speeches should always be sent up as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack
- Mr Gray likes to speak at a lectern - please request this where possible

If you're new to writing speeches, read the guidance on writing ministerial speeches.

engagement briefing

Please contact private office for further advice or to talk through specific requirements for engagements.

Briefings should:

- use the preferred briefing template for visits and meetings - tailor the information boxes as appropriate
- keep the briefing as short and concise as possible, ensuring it is relevant while avoiding duplication

- contain only the key facts, background information and anything new that Mr Gray is not already aware of
- include current top lines
- be separate from speaking notes
- note any previous meetings in background information
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]
- include a map which is helpful (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names, parking information and allocations (if any) and numbers
- get in touch with private office as soon as possible if amendments need to be made after submission, to ensure Mr Gray has the most up to date briefing pack or speech

correspondence

Correspondence on MiCase system

For general correspondence:

- all ministerial responses should be tailored to the correspondent
- make it person-centred and considerate of the correspondent
- ensure you answer all the questions and points raised, or explain why we can't - correspondence should always be as helpful as possible
- provide an email address, as well as a postal address in the letter
- avoid using jargon or abbreviations
- contact private office if you would like further advice on handling correspondence

Private office will always send you back the final copy, which was issued, with the ministers' signature added. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

For diary correspondence:

- contact private office to check diary availability ahead of drafting responses
- contact private office to discuss if a request is not clear
- where a specific meeting or date is not requested and officials advise that a meeting should take place, this should be with officials in the first instance unless Mr Gray requests otherwise
- please submit both an accept and decline where a meeting date has been specified

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Visit accept

Thank you for your correspondence of XX, inviting the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy to XX.

The Cabinet Secretary would be delighted to accept your invitation. I'd be grateful if you could contact his Diary Secretary, at CabSecWEFWE@gov.scot, to make the necessary further arrangements.

Visit decline

Thank you for your correspondence of XX, inviting the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy to XX.

Unfortunately, due to existing commitments, the Cabinet Secretary is unable to accept your kind invitation on this occasion. He has asked me to pass on his best wishes for a successful event.

Meeting accept

Thank you for your correspondence of XX, requesting a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary.

The Cabinet Secretary would be delighted to meet with you. I'd be grateful if you could contact his Diary Secretary, at CabSecWEFWE@gov.scot, to make the necessary further arrangements.

Meeting decline

Thank you for your correspondence of XX, requesting a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary.

Unfortunately, due to existing commitments, the Cabinet Secretary is unable to meet with you at this time. He has asked me to pass on his best wishes.

Correspondence outwith MiCase

Responses to letters from devolved administrations or other MPs should be drafted and sent to private office for clearance within seven working days. You should always provide an email address for the correspondent, as well as a postal address.

Private office will send you back the final copy, which was issued, with Mr Gray's signature added. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Use the correct letter template and not a blank Word document (these are easily accessed in Word templates).

CABINET SECRETARY FOR NHS RECOVERY, HEALTH and SOCIAL CARE

Michael Matheson - top tips

Michael Matheson MSP is the Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care. You can find his biography, portfolio responsibilities and photos on the gov.scot website. Please only use these photos for publications.

Michael Matheson - speeches

When drafting a speech for Mr Matheson you should note that Mr Matheson speaks at 120 words per minute. Keep paragraphs very short and avoid breaking sentences over the page where possible. Speeches should also be Arial, 16 point, with 1.5 spacing. You should always send speeches as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack, and pages should always be numbered. Always include a word count and note of the allocated time at the end of the speaking note.

Use section headings to break the speech up. Speeches should have a beginning, a middle and an end, and should flow rather than jumping from topic to topic. Avoid adding jokes, light-hearted tangents, or flowery language – speeches should be drafted pretty straight, and he can embellish it himself if he wants to. You should also avoid using acronyms and jargon - remember this is being spoken

Speeches shouldn't normally be more than about 10 minutes long, though you can discuss this with private office. Mr Matheson is usually happy to do a Question and Answer session after a speech. For big set-piece events including all conferences and anything in the chamber, Mr Matheson expects all speeches to be written out verbatim. For a five to ten minute informal speaking slot, bullet points are preferable.

Draft speeches for significant events should be sent to us two weeks in advance in order to allow time for Mr Matheson to consider and provide feedback. As a guide, you should provide no more than one to two pages of bullet points for a five minute speech and no more than three to four pages for a ten minute speech.

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice and contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure

expected. We can provide an example of a good speech if that would help. You can find further information in the writing a speech guidance. You should also involve communications colleagues when drafting the speech.

If providing a Question and Answer briefing, be realistic about how much you're providing – [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. Where possible, include examples of things Mr Matheson has seen or done in a ministerial capacity.

Michael Matheson - engagement briefing

When preparing briefings for Mr Matheson:

- ensure you download and use Mr Matheson's preferred template for meetings and visits
- keep briefing short, relevant and avoid duplication
- speaking notes should always be submitted as separate documents (and contain page numbers)
- official support should be assumed for all visits or meetings, unless otherwise agreed
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]
- read top tips for officials supporting the Cabinet Secretary on visits

The cover page should provide a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names and numbers. For remote locations or large sites, it would also be helpful to provide a grid reference. You can find a latitude and longitude reference on Google maps, by right clicking on a point and then selecting 'What's here?' Include details of the building (for example, court, church hall) and consider entrances/drop off points if there are multiple. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Make sure you differentiate your briefing to ensure it is sufficient for the needs of the event or meeting. For example:

Meetings with key stakeholders, ministers of other governments, major conferences and high profile events

When preparing these types of briefings include:

- maximum 20 pages unless agreed otherwise with private office
- cover sheet
- agenda
- meeting objective(s) and what outcome(s) are desired (this should be succinct)
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]
- if there was a previous meeting, a note of that and progress since
- Q and A
- bios (and pictures if possible) for meeting attendees he has not met before
- speaking note - if required

Meetings with external stakeholders, receptions or events, including dinners

Prepare these briefings similar to those for key stakeholders, but ideally include no more than 10 to 12 pages.

Routine visits/engagements or photo-ops

When preparing these briefings include:

- logistic briefing only
- why Mr Matheson is attending
- when, where, what and who, guest list, bios as above
- any key local or topical issues to be aware of

- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Parliamentary engagements

Mr Matheson takes parliamentary engagements such as debates, statements or committee appearances very seriously. Such engagements will require comprehensive, but also easily navigable and succinct briefing. This is likely to include:

- cover sheet
- key messages to get across
- summary of relevant manifesto commitments and progress in achieving them
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- speaking note
- historical context, including key facts or figures (not covered above)
- summary of any previous evidence sessions

The briefing should be signed off by a deputy director and special adviser. Private office can provide further advice on parliamentary support.

Michael Matheson - correspondence

Ministerial replies

Mr Matheson likes to respond personally to:

- his own constituents (Falkirk West Constituency)
- chief executives
- MSPs/MPs/MEPs

- elected members from other administrations
- councillors/conveners
- key stakeholders

Key points

You should:

- use the reply address provided on the letter - many MPs and MSPs request that the reply is sent to their constituency address, particularly during recess
- open the letter with some background, for example 'Thank you for your letter of x about...'
- ensure the reply answers the points raised by the correspondent
- avoid padding which doesn't answer the question asked
- always proof read draft replies very carefully - a number of letters are sent up with basic errors and correcting and reprinting these takes time

Non-MiCase correspondence

Some correspondence, such as inter-ministerial correspondence and letters from parliamentary committees, is handled outwith MiCase. Private office will send the letter directly to officials with a request for advice and draft reply.

Please include the original letter when submitting advice and reply to private office.

If you're drafting a letter outwith MiCase, please use Mr Matheson's correspondence template.

CABINET SECRETARY FOR RURAL AFFAIRS, LAND REFORM and ISLANDS

top tips

Mairi Gougeon MSP is the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands. You can find her biography and responsibilities on the gov.scot website. If you need a hi-resolution image of Ms Gougeon, please check Flickr.

speeches

Ms Gougeon always:

- needs to know who is in the audience - get this from the organiser
- needs to see any agenda. Conferences often have a theme and there may also be papers such as a brochure. It's important to get hold of these as it will help write a speech relevant to the occasion
- needs the facts, and then views. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- likes to get speeches one week before the event to check over and allow time to commission more information, check facts or briefing
- likes headings for each section of the speech
- does not like long complex sentences full of abstract nouns
- does like helpful factual material - and detail of relevant facts
- speaks at about 170 words a minute

When writing a speech please remember:

- they should be in Arial 16pt with 1.5 spacing
- have paragraphs no longer than two or three lines
- have page breaks at the end of a sentence. Paragraphs should not run over pages
- pages must be numbered (bottom right)

- to include examples of relevant events/visits Ms Gougeon has undertaken in her ministerial capacity
- to involve communications and special advisers in drafting
- to always check the speech for accuracy – facts and figures should be checked and double checked
- speeches should always be sent up as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack
- to avoid using acronyms and jargon - this is being spoken
- Ms Gougeon likes to speak at a lectern - please request this if possible

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice and contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected.

Read the guidance on writing ministerial speeches.

Please consider these points when drafting a speech:

- make the speech relevant to the event
- who are the audience and what do they want to hear about
- the speech should use positive language
- please do not recycle or copy and paste parts of previous speeches on the same subject
- try to avoid getting bogged down in policy unless necessary
- include the big picture context - start and end with the big picture
- include some relevant context, especially in the introduction
- include any constitutional points that are appropriate
- cover hot issues and topical subjects
- potential announcements should be discussed with communications colleagues

- add some colour to the speech to personalise it and feel free to include testimonials, startling facts and quotes
- it is important to read the speech aloud to identify any potential challenges or problems in delivering it

engagement briefing

Please ensure you use the correct briefing template for meetings and engagements.

- if you are providing urgent briefing which requires private office to email Ms Gougeon, bear in mind that Word formatting on her tablet can sometimes pose an issue. Please avoid the use of formatting (and in particular text boxes) and keep the text as plain and simple as possible
- provide an address and postcode (checked with the organisers) to the diary secretary as far in advance as possible. Briefing should include the postcode/map/directions venue contacts. Please check the details carefully as incomplete/confusing directions lead to delays and stress
- provide a map (where required), address and postcode, organisation name, contact names and numbers. For remote locations or large sites, it would also be helpful to provide a grid reference. You can find a latitude and longitude reference on Google maps, by right clicking on a point and then selecting 'What's here?'
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- briefings should be short, succinct and have an easy-to-follow structure. For regular meetings, they should be eight pages maximum. Briefings for larger meetings that Ms Gougeon is chairing should include a steering brief but should still be succinct
- if Ms Gougeon is being asked to do a Q and A as part of an event, separate Q and A briefing should be provided and clearly labelled as such. This can be added as an annex in the briefing pack (please ensure all new annexes are on an odd numbered page)

- Ms Gougeon prefers her briefing to be structured in a logical manner – she likes to have information about the group she is meeting and the purpose of the event before the agenda, biographies etc
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- keep briefing short, relevant and avoid duplication. If Ms Gougeon or private office think the briefing is too long, it will likely be returned for editing
- speaking notes should always be submitted as separate documents (and contain page numbers on the bottom right).
- any amendments required after the briefing has been submitted may require editing by the private office team, 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
- please think carefully about the purpose of the briefing and how much time Ms Gougeon will be engaged for. For short engagements (half an hour or less), briefing should be no more than six sides of A4 (not including a speech)

Meetings with key stakeholders, ministers of other governments, major conferences and high profile events

Your briefing for these types of event should include:

- cover sheet
- agenda
- meeting objective(s) and what outcome(s) are desired (this should be succinct)
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- if there was a previous meeting, a note of that and the progress that's been made since
- question and answer
- bios on meeting attendees

- speaking note - if required

Meetings with external stakeholders, receptions or events, including dinners

These briefings should be similar to those for key stakeholders but ideally have no more than eight pages.

Routine visits/engagements or photo-ops

These briefings should include:

- logistic briefing only - no more than six pages
- why Ms Gougeon is attending
- when, where, what and who, guest list, bios of meeting attendees
- any key local or topical issues to be aware of

Media bids/interviews

If Ms Gougeon is asked to record a short clip (either radio or TV) for the media, any briefing supplied should be no more than two sides of A4. The briefing should cover:

- the top lines (at the top of the first page, set out in bold text), plus short, relevant background paragraphs
- highlight any key events which are relevant to the topic having taken place within the last few years (for example – if recording a clip about national parks, relevant park events/reports should be mentioned)
- attach any recent news releases on the topic as Ms Gougeon will find it useful to refer to these before recording.

For longer, more in-depth interviews (for example longer segments or an interview on a specific subject with a newspaper/magazine journalist) a full briefing pack is usually required. Check with private office if unsure.

correspondence

Ministerial correspondence is subject to corporate targets and should be answered within 20 working days. Draft replies for ministerial consideration should be with private office within 10 working days.

Guidance for drafting correspondence and handling invitations is below and private office are more than happy to answer any queries you may have. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Ms Gougeon will personally respond to all letters from MPs, MSPs, MEPs, Members of the House of Lords, Councillors, Chairpersons/Chief Executives of Public Bodies and key stakeholders, friends/acquaintances, and constituents (Angus North and Mearns).

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Use plain English.

Dates should follow Scottish Government convention (for example 18 October 2016 not 18th October).

Please remove unnecessary parts of the letter template (for example unused refs or signature). Include the month and year at the top (day will be written in) and put the Ms Gougeon's name in the signature space – the letter should be ready to print and not need further editing by private office.

Leave three lines between the date and the start of the letter for the 'Dear x' to be handwritten and seven lines between the end of the letter and Ms Gougeon's name for the signature.

We check the MiCase system regularly for all draft responses for clearance so there is no need to phone/email to alert us.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Further guidance is listed here in alphabetical order:

Address	<p>MSPs - MiCase will default to the parliament address, this is fine as we tend to email the letters to the MSPs. Please also ensure that if the incoming letter has a reference, this is copied in the response under 'Your Ref'</p> <p>Constituents - when an MSP/MP writes on behalf of their constituent, please refer to the constituent by name and state their address if given</p> <p>Email - some correspondents prefer to receive their response by email, or do not give a postal address. If there is only an email address, please put this under the correspondent's name at the top of the letter. Once the letter has been signed off, it will be scanned and emailed by Private Office</p>
Contact details	<p>When drafting an acceptance to an invitation, please include a sentence asking the correspondent to contact the Cabinet Secretary's diary secretary, via email</p>

	<p>at CabSecRAI@gov.scot to make the necessary arrangements. (Find out more under diary invitations)</p>
<p>Content</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open the letter with some background, e.g. 'Thank you for your letter of x about...' • ensure the response answers the points raised by the correspondent • avoid 'general interest' details, which do not answer the question asked • if cutting and pasting from previous correspondence, please ensure that the response is tailored to the current correspondent and that all facts and figures are up to date
<p>Co-ordinated responses</p>	<p>[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].</p> <p>Please ensure that all facts and figures are consistent</p>
<p>Date</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • please refer to the date of the original letter in the response

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• if you send up the response at the end/beginning of a month, please check that the letter is dated appropriately. If in doubt it is often best to date a response with the new month as, depending on Ms Gougeon's box arrangements, it may be into the next month before the letter is signed
Delays	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• if the response is more than 4 weeks since the original letter was written, please include an apology for the delay in replying• if the MiCase is not sent up to the Minister within the private office deadline, please include a short note explaining the delay
Font	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the main text of the letter should always be Arial, font size 12• please note that the St Andrew's House address details, our ref and date are formatted. Please do not reformat

Diary invitations

- ensure a valid postal/email address is put on the final reply letters - this is important so we can make sure the letter reaches the correct recipient
- make sure the final reply letters are signed off by the Private Secretary rather than the Cabinet Secretary. Private office sends out all accept/reject letters; the Cabinet Secretary does not sign these
- please ensure that the PS Minute includes all specific policy details/key points/comms views - the more information given the more likely the Minister will make a firm decision
- flag up any diary cases that are going to be sent up **late** - especially if it is an event that is in the near future. This allows us to let the organisation know well before the event is taking place
- last but not least - please ensure that the grammar/spelling is accurate - in private office we don't have time to change all the letters individually, so this is a great help

Sample diary case responses:

Accept:

Thank you for your letter of 1 January inviting Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, to attend your annual conference.

Ms Gougeon would be delighted to accept your invitation subject to Parliamentary business, I would be grateful if you could contact the Cabinet Secretary's Diary Secretary, via email at CabSecRAI@gov.scot to arrange a mutually convenient date/make the necessary arrangements.

[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]

PRIVATE SECRETARY

Decline:

	<p>Thank you for your letter of 1 January inviting Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, to attend your annual conference.</p> <p>Unfortunately, due to prior commitments/ due to engagements we're unable to rearrange, Ms Gougeon is unable to accept your kind invitation on this occasion. Please accept her apologies and best wishes for a successful event.</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]</p> <p>PRIVATE SECRETARY</p>
<p>Language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• consider who will be reading the response for example children/young people• ensure that the reply is clear, concise, and written in a language that is easily understood. Read our writing guide for reference• do not use unnecessary phrases at the beginning of sentences for example: 'I am writing to...'; 'First of all,...'; 'I have to advise you that...'; 'Perhaps it

	<p>would be helpful if I were to set out some general background about...'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• keep sentences short and avoid jargon• if a case is reallocated to Mairi Gougeon for answer the phrase 'I am replying as I have portfolio responsibility for the issues you raise' should be used• please do not use the phrase 'I am afraid'. An alternative is 'Unfortunately'• please do not use the phrase, 'Scottish Ministers have no locus to intervene'. An alternative wording is 'it is not appropriate for Scottish Ministers to intervene'.• where appropriate add, 'I hope this is helpful' at the end of a response
Layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• try to fit the reply on one page, but do not make the font smaller to do so

- **do not alter the default page set-up. If drafting a letter out with MiCase, please use the ministerial template found in the Scottish Ministers folder in Word**
- leave four lines free at the top between the date and the start of the letter and six lines at bottom of the text of the response to allow Ms Gougeon to add her signature
- if, due to the above formatting, the Cabinet Secretary's name is the only thing on the second page, insert an appropriate page break to ensure that either two full sentences or the last paragraph is moved onto the second page
- please do not use **subject titles** at the beginning of a letter, instead incorporate in opening sentence 'Thank you for your letter of 1 January about...'
- please do not use paragraph numbering

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that unused text boxes are removed as these will appear in the final draft for example << text>> , Your ref, signature • please ensure that the Cabinet Secretary's name is at the bottom left of the letter and in bold and capitals MAIRI GOUGEON • the private secretary's signature should also be at the left hand side of the page as detailed below • text should be justified
Official replies	Please include 'I have been asked by Ms Gougeon to thank you for your letter of day/month and to reply on her behalf' or a similar form of words
Reallocation	Ministerial replies can be reallocated so that Ms Gougeon is answering on behalf of another Cabinet Secretary/Minister who received the original letter. Please thank the correspondent for their letter to the original

	Cabinet Secretary/Minister and add, 'I am replying as I have portfolio responsibility for the issues you raise'.
Signature	Letters for the Cabinet Secretary's signature (bottom left of the page) MAIRI GOUGEON
	Letters for PS (bottom left of the page) [Redacted – section 38 – personal information] PRIVATE SECRETARY
Spelling	Please use spell checker and proof read the response before issuing it
Timing	It is always helpful if cases can reach the Cabinet Secretary as soon as possible as this allows extra time for discussion, if necessary
Titles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include the full title of the correspondent for example director/chairman/convener

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• if responding to a councillor, please address him/her as such. If they have another title such as convenor/chairperson, this should also be included.• do not use Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms unless the correspondent does• do not use Esq after a name
--	---

CABINET SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

top tips

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP is the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice. You can find her biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

speeches

Read general guidance on writing speeches.

Speech requirements vary based on the engagement. If you're drafting a significant speech (for example a parliamentary statement or making a key announcement), Ms Somerville prefers to receive a speech outline before any major work is done.

Type of engagement	Speech requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">debates or statementscommittee appearancesopening of debateconference keynotes	Verbatim speech (without bullet points)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">small or less formal eventsclosing of debate	Bullet points with key points which Ms Somerville will use to ad-lib

When drafting, consider the format of the event, including whether Ms Somerville will be speaking from a lectern or a sitting position. For the latter, a bullet style speech is usually better than a full verbatim speech.

Where Ms Somerville is speaking at a conference, she will always prefer to follow her speech with a Q and A. For a 30-minute slot Ms Somerville's preference would be a 10-minute speech, followed by 20 minutes of questions. Ms Somerville speaks

at around 160 words per minute. Allow time for her own additions and anecdotes and never submit a speech over the required time.

You should also think carefully about the audience. For example, if the audience will principally be young people, don't make it too heavy on policy. Many of the events Ms Somerville speaks at attract similar audiences. You should avoid simply cutting and pasting from previous speeches or pasting together separate contributions.

You should also make sure:

- speeches have a clear structure, flow and are free from jargon and clichés
- you're clear on what the speech is trying to achieve
- to avoid lengthy phrases and sentences
- to always read the speech out loud to pick up on repetitiveness or a lack of natural breathing space

When formatting and finalising:

- don't split sentences/paragraphs between two pages (use the 'keep lines together' checkbox in Word, by going to 'Paragraph' and selecting the tab 'Line and Page Breaks')
- text should be Arial, size 16 with 1.5 paragraph spacing
- insert page numbers as a footer (in centre)
- speeches should be sent as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack

Briefing

Use the correct briefing template and send this as a Word document, not an eRDM link. The templates include guidance and you should ensure you follow the steps. Deadlines for submitting briefings will be detailed in the diary entry private office sends you.

Speeches should be submitted as separate documents and have page numbers as a footer (in the centre).

If your briefing requires amendments after it's submitted, check with private office before re-submitting. An amended section or additional annex is often better than resubmitting the whole briefing, particularly for parliamentary debates. We can advise what is best in each instance.

Committee or debate briefing

Category	Type of event	Template
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> parliamentary debates committee appearances 	Debate/committee appearance template
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ministerial working groups meetings with other ministers, stakeholders or organisations 	Meetings template
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> receptions and events including dinners external visits, engagements or events including dinners 	Engagements template

correspondence

Read the guidance on handling ministerial correspondence. The MiCase system is the primary correspondence tool for ministers.

On MiCase:

Wherever possible, a reply will be sent out electronically. Please include an email address directly under the final line of the address. Where a letter will be sent electronically, Ms Somerville still wishes for the full postal address to be entered. On MiCase you need to add these additional fields.

When replying to MSPs, ensure you use their preferred reply address – some MSPs ask a particular address to be used.

You should begin by thanking the sender for their letter and refer to the date it was sent. If our response is late, provide a short apology for the delay in replying.

If the original correspondence was sent to another minister but Ms Somerville is replying, acknowledge this and explain why she is responding

For all diary acceptance replies include the following text in your draft: 'Please note that all engagements accepted by the Cabinet Secretary are subject to parliamentary business and can change at short notice. Please contact me at CabSecSJ@gov.scot to finalise your arrangements.'

Left justify the signature which should be laid out:

SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE for ministerial replies, or

[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]

Private Secretary for diary replies

CABINET SECRETARY FOR JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Angela Constance - top tips

Angela Constance MSP is the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs. You can find her biography and responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

The following is intended as guidance only and does not cover every scenario. If you are unsure of anything, contact private office.

Briefing

Find the correct briefing template from the table on this page and send as a Word document. Make sure you follow the guidance for completing the templates included in them.

Briefing will normally be commissioned via the diary invitation. You should ensure the times within the invite match what you have agreed with stakeholders. Deadlines for submitting briefings are generally a week before the event.

You should always submit speeches as separate documents and include page numbers within the footer.

If briefing requires amending after it is submitted, check with private office before re-submitting. An amended section or additional annex is often better than an entire new pack, particularly for parliamentary debates – we can advise what is best in each instance.

Committee or debate briefing

You should refer to the briefing templates in the table, using the right one depending on what type of engagement. This is particularly important for briefing for any kind of parliamentary engagement.

You should think about the type of parliamentary engagement you are preparing briefing for and how the minister is likely to use the briefing pack.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Type of event	Template
<ul style="list-style-type: none">parliamentary debates, statement or committee appearances	Debate or committee appearance template (document will download)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">ministerial committeesmeetings with other UK ministersstakeholders or organisations	Meetings template (document will download)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">receptions and events (including dinners)external visits/engagements/events including dinners	Engagements template (document will download)

Angela Constance - speeches

You should read general guidance on writing speeches before you start preparing a speech.

Speech requirements for Ms Constance vary based on the engagement. You should use verbatim speech (without bullet points) for:

- parliamentary debates or statements
- committee appearances
- conference keynotes

You should write bullet points which Ms Constance can improvise with for:

- smaller or less formal events

- where the minister is sitting at a table

Ms Constance likes a front page which provides a summary of the speaking engagement – format, audience, whether there's a lectern etc.

When drafting, you should:

- consider the format of the event, including whether Ms Constance will be speaking from a lectern or a sitting position (for the latter, a bullet style speech is usually better than a full verbatim speech)
- think carefully about the audience (for example, if the audience will principally be young people, don't make it too heavy on policy)
- avoid simply cutting and pasting from previous speeches, as many of the events the minister speaks at attract similar audiences
- ensure the speech has a clear structure, flow, and is free of jargon and clichés
- consider using quotes as well as facts and figures to emphasise a point and give the speech more colour
- be clear on what the speech is trying to achieve
- avoid lengthy phrases and sentences
- allow time for the minister's own additions and anecdotes in the speech – Ms Constance speaks at around 140 words per minute, so don't submit a speech over the required time
- always read the speech back to yourself out loud to pick up repetitiveness or lack of natural breathing space

When formatting and finalising:

- do not split sentences or paragraphs between two pages - use the 'keep lines together' checkbox under 'Paragraph' then select 'Line and Page Breaks' in Word
- use Arial font, size 16 with 1.5 paragraph spacing
- keep paragraphs short which makes it easier to read
- insert page numbers as a footer (in centre)
- always send speeches as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack

Angela Constance - correspondence

You should familiarise yourself with the guidance on handling ministerial correspondence before drafting replies for Ms Constance.

When replying on MiCase you should:

- include an email address directly under the final line of the address
- ensure you use the preferred reply address when corresponding with MSPs (some MSPs ask for a particular address to be used)
- begin by thanking the sender for their letter and refer to the date it was sent
- provide a short apology for the delay in replying if the response is late
- in cases where the original correspondence was sent to another minister, but Ms Constance is replying, acknowledge this and explain why she is responding instead

For all diary acceptance replies include the following text in your draft:

Please note that all engagements accepted by the Cabinet Secretary are subject to Parliamentary business and can change at short notice. Please contact our office at CabSecJHA@gov.scot to finalise arrangements.

For ministerial replies, Ms Constance's signature should be centred at the bottom of the letter as:

ANGELA CONSTANCE

And for diary replies the deputy private secretary's name should be used:

[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]

Deputy Private Secretary

For letters outwith the MiCase system use the preferred template (document will download).

CABINET SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, NET ZERO AND JUST TRANSITION

Mairi McAllan - top tips

Mairi McAllan MSP is the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition. You can find her biography and responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

Mairi McAllan - speeches

Key points

The Cabinet Secretary needs to know who her audience will be. It's helpful if this information can be included in briefings in the form of biographies for keynote speakers and attendees.

You should always include an agenda in the briefing for any speaking event. It's also important to highlight a designated speaking slot, which allows private office to manage the Cabinet Secretary's time.

The Cabinet Secretary requires a fully prepared speech, written in plain English. Do not include long, complex sentences, make sure paragraphs are no longer than two or three lines and do not run over pages. You should send speeches to private office one week in advance of any event. This will allow the Cabinet Secretary sufficient time to read through and request more information, briefing or to check facts.

Speeches should not be longer than eight minutes, unless private office have agreed otherwise in advance.

Speeches should:

- be in arial, size 16 and with 1.5 spacing
- have numbered pages (bottom right)
- be written as speaking notes rather than bullet points
- avoid using acronyms and jargon - this is being spoken

- be relevant to the event, acknowledging who is in the audience
- cover hot and topical issues, including factual material and detail of relevant facts
- have headings for each section of the speech
- not use parts of previous speeches on the same subject
- include the big picture for context - start and end with the big picture
- include any constitutional points that are appropriate
- be discussed with communications colleagues if they are to include any potential announcements
- be colourful and personalised - feel free to include testimonials, startling facts and quotes

Mairi McAllan - engagement briefing

You can contact private office for further advice or to talk through specific requirements for engagements.

Briefings should:

- use the preferred engagement briefing template (document will download) for all visits and external engagements, tailoring the information boxes as appropriate
- use the preferred meeting template (document will download) for all internal and external meetings being held via MS Teams or in person, tailoring the information boxes as appropriate
- be short, concise, relevant and avoid duplication
- contain only key facts, background information and anything new that Ms McAllan is not already aware of
- include current top lines
- be separate from speaking notes
- note any previous meetings in background information

- for shorter engagements (half an hour or less) be no more than five sides of A4 (not including a speaking note)

Official support for all visits or meetings, unless agreed otherwise with private office is assumed. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Include a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names, parking information and allocations (if any) and phone numbers. Please also copy your briefing to the Government Car Service.

Ensure there is a clear and concise annex covering page – the briefing should be page numbered and match with the annexes listed.

Briefings should have a clear annotated agenda with speaking points under each item. Think carefully about the contents of the briefing, ensuring it is appropriate for the event or meeting. You should also factor in how much time the Cabinet Secretary has set aside for each meeting – timings should be agreed with private office in advance.

If amendments are required to a larger briefing pack (such as committees or debates), track change these or make them very clear in the covering email. Doing this means we can easily substitute pages as appropriate within the Cabinet Secretary's pack.

You should get in touch with private office as soon as possible if amendments need to be made after submission, to ensure Ms McAllan has the most up to date briefing pack or speech.

For meetings with key stakeholders, ministerial colleagues from other Governments, major conferences and high profile events you should include:

- a cover sheet (use the correct briefing template and include who/why/when)

- an agenda
- a succinct detailed list of meeting objectives and what outcomes are desired
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- whether there has been prior engagement with the individual or company, and a brief outline of the previous meeting alongside the progress that's been made since
- biographies of attendees
- a speaking note if required or suggested speaking points if necessary – these should be with private office one week in advance
- use the correct template for ministerial meetings

Media bids and interviews

If Ms McAllan has been asked to record a short clip (either radio or TV) for the media, any briefing supplied should be no more than two sides of A4.

The briefing should cover:

- top lines alongside short and relevant background notes [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- any key events which are relevant to the topic within the last year, including any recent lines or news releases released on the topic

For longer, more in-depth interviews (for example, longer segments or an interview on a specific subject with a newspaper or magazine journalist), a full briefing pack is usually required. You should discuss briefing expectations with private office.

Parliamentary engagements

Parliamentary engagements such as debates, statements or committee appearances are often complex and wide ranging. Such engagements will require clear, comprehensive, but also easily navigable and succinct briefing. The briefing

should include:

- a cover sheet, including a clear annex list alongside page numbers
- key messages the Cabinet Secretary will wish to focus on
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- speaking note - read the guidance on writing speeches for advice on what to include
- historical context, including key facts or figures
- summary of any previous evidence sessions

Briefings should be signed off by a deputy director and SPADs before sending to private office.

If amendments to larger briefing packs (such as committees or debates) are required, track change these or make them very clear in the covering email. We can then easily substitute pages as appropriate within the Cabinet Secretary's pack.

Mairi McAllan - correspondence

Ministerial correspondence is subject to corporate targets and should be answered within 20 working days.

Draft replies for ministerial consideration should be with private office within 10 working days.

You can find guidance for drafting correspondence and handling invitations on this page and private office are more than happy to answer any queries you may have. Ms McAllan attaches great importance to correspondence and would like all policy

colleagues to draft quick and sympathetic responses to all letters from members of the public.

Ms McAllan will personally respond to all letters from:

- MPs, MSPs, MEPs
- members of the House of Lords
- councillors
- chairpersons/Chief Executives of public bodies and key stakeholders
- friends and acquaintances
- constituents (Clydesdale)

In each case there is a 'main' point the correspondent makes. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

You should also:

- use plain English
- make sure dates follow Scottish Government convention (for example, 18 October 2023 not 18th October)
- include the month and year at the top (exact date will be inserted by private office when cleared by the Cabinet Secretary)
- leave three lines between the date and the start of the letter for the 'Dear xxx' and seven lines between the end of the letter and Ms McAllan's name for the signature
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Further guidance is listed in the table in alphabetical order:

Correspondence information to include		Further details and instructions
Address	<p>MSPs - MiCase will default to the Parliament address, which is fine as we tend to email the letters to the MSPs. Please also ensure that if the incoming letter has a reference, this is copied in the response under 'Your Ref'.</p> <p>Constituents - when an MSP or MP writes on behalf of their constituent, refer to the constituent by name and state their address if given.</p> <p>Email - most correspondents now prefer to receive their response by email. Place the email address under the correspondent's name at the top of the letter. Once the letter has been signed off, it will be electronically issued via the MiCase system.</p>	
Content	<p>You should open the letter with some background, for example 'Thank you for your letter of x about...'</p> <p>Ensure the response answers the points raised by the correspondent and avoid 'general interest' details, which do not answer the question asked.</p> <p>If cutting and pasting from previous correspondence, make sure the response is tailored to the current correspondent and that all facts and figures are up to date.</p>	
Date	<p>Refer to the date of the original letter in the response. If you send up the response at the end or beginning of a month, check the letter is dated appropriately.</p>	

Delays	<p>If the response is more than four weeks since the original letter was written, include an apology for the delay in responding. If the MiCase is not sent up to Ms McAllan by the private office deadline, include a short note explaining the delay to allow us to manage expectations.</p>
Diary invitations	<p>Ensure a valid postal or email address is put on the final reply letters - this is important so we can make sure the letter reaches the correct recipient.</p> <p>Check the final reply letters are signed off by the Private Secretary rather than Ms McAllan. Private office sends out all accept/reject letters. Ms McAllan approves these, but private office sign.</p> <p>Ensure that PS Minutes include all specific policy details/key points/communications colleagues' views. Ms McAllan will be able to make a more informed decision based on how much information she has to consider.</p> <p>Flag up any diary cases that are going to be sent up late, especially for events in the near future or coming week. This allows us to let the organisation know well before the event is taking place.</p> <p>Please ensure grammar and spelling is accurate – private office do not have capacity to change all letters individually, so this is a great help.</p> <p><i>Sample diary case responses</i></p> <p>Accept:</p>

	<p>Thank you for your letter of 1 January inviting Mairi McAllan MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition, to attend your annual conference. Ms McAllan would be delighted to accept your invitation subject to parliamentary business. I would be grateful if you could contact Ms McAllan’s Diary Secretary via email at</p> <p>CabSecTNZJT@gov.scot to arrange a mutually convenient date/make the necessary arrangements.</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]</p> <p>PRIVATE SECRETARY</p> <p>Decline:</p> <p>Thank you for your letter of 1 January inviting Mairi McAllan MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition, to attend your annual conference.</p> <p>Unfortunately, due to prior commitments/due to engagements we're unable to rearrange, Ms McAllan is unable to accept your kind invitation on this occasion. Please accept her apologies and best wishes for a successful event.</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]</p> <p>PRIVATE SECRETARY</p>
Font	<p>The main text of the letter should always be Arial, font size 12. The St Andrew's House address details, our ref and date are formatted. Please do not reformat them.</p>

<p>Language</p>	<p>Always consider who will be reading the response, for example, children or young people.</p> <p>Ensure the reply is clear, concise and written in a language that is easily understood. Read our writing guide for reference.</p> <p>Please do not use unnecessary phrases at the beginning of sentences, such as: 'I am writing to...'; 'First of all,...'; 'I have to advise you that...'; 'Perhaps it would be helpful if I were to set out some general background about...'. You should instead keep sentences short and avoid jargon. You should never use the phrase 'I am afraid' - a good alternative is 'Unfortunately'. The same also applies to the phrase, 'Scottish Ministers have no locus to intervene'. An alternative wording is 'it is not appropriate for Scottish Ministers to intervene'.</p> <p>Where appropriate, add 'I hope this is helpful' at the end of a response.</p>
<p>Layout</p>	<p>Where possible, try to fit the reply on one page, but do not make the font smaller to do so and do not alter the default page set-up. If drafting a letter outwith MiCase, use the ministerial template (this will download) found in the Scottish Ministers folder in Word.</p> <p>If due to the formatting Ms McAllan's name is the only thing on the second page, insert an appropriate page break to ensure that either two full sentences or the last paragraph is moved onto the second page.</p> <p>Do not use subject titles at the beginning of a letter. Instead you should incorporate the subject in the opening</p>

	<p>sentence, for instance 'Thank you for your letter of 1 January about...'</p> <p>Do not use paragraph numbering and ensure that unused text boxes are removed, as these will appear in the final draft (for example << text>>, Your ref, signature).</p> <p>Make sure Ms McAllan's name is at the bottom left of the letter and in bold and capitals: MAIRI MCALLAN. The private secretary's signature should also be at the left hand side of the page and the text should be justified.</p>
Official replies	<p>You should include this text: 'Thank you for your letter of day/month. I am responding on behalf of the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Energy'.</p>
Reallocation	<p>Ministerial replies can be reallocated so that Ms McAllan is answering on behalf of another Cabinet Secretary or Minister who received the original letter. Thank the correspondent for their letter to the original Cabinet Secretary or Minister and add, 'I am replying as I have portfolio responsibility for the issues you raise'.</p>
Signature	<p>Letters for the Cabinet Secretary's signature (bottom left of the page) should read as follows:</p> <p>Mairi McAllan</p> <p>Letters for the Private Secretary's signature (bottom left of the page) should read as follows:</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information] PRIVATE SECRETARY</p>

Timing	It is always helpful if cases can reach Ms McAllan as soon as possible as this allows extra time for discussion, if necessary.
Titles	<p>Include the full title of the correspondent (for example director/chairman/convener).</p> <p>If responding to a councillor, please address them as such. If they have another title, such as convenor/chairperson, this should also be included.</p> <p>Avoid using Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms unless the correspondent does and avoid using Esq after a name.</p>

MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT

Fiona Hyslop - top tips

Fiona Hyslop MSP is the Minister for Transport. You can find her biography and responsibilities on the gov.scot website. The following pages contain advice, useful information, and tips collated from previous ministers and private offices, and which take into account Ms Hyslop's preferences.

Briefing

Striking the right balance between providing too much briefing for ministerial engagements and not covering the key issues is crucial.

Giving accurate logistical information in your briefing is important. It's often the small things that cause the biggest problems and sometimes determines ministers' views of a particular event. Please take the time to check our tips in these pages for preparing briefings.

Fiona Hyslop - speeches

Speeches should have a clear structure and flowing style. Before drafting, you should think carefully about the audience the speech is intended for.

Make sure you know what the format of the event will be as well. Will the audience be standing or sitting? Will the Minister deliver the speech from a lectern (the preference for large events), sitting at a table, or standing in the centre of a room without a lectern?

Writing the speech

Use full speaking notes (with page numbers top and bottom right flush). Ms Hyslop speaks at around 150 words per minute. Always include a word count and approximate time at the end of a speech.

Think about what the speech is trying to achieve. Summarise this at the start, work through the body of the speech with it clearly in mind, then conclude by summarising the key message(s) again.

Ensure speeches have an introduction and conclusion, flow naturally and any subject changes are linked appropriately. Always check facts and figures, do a spell check and read the speech aloud. This is the best way to notice things such as repetition or failing to allow for a natural breathing space.

If the time or word count is a concern (for example, for a debate), consider highlighting paragraphs in bold which Ms Hyslop could drop without affecting the flow of the speech or omitting key information.

Timescales for submitting the speech

You should send speeches to private office at least one week before the event or meeting. Speeches should always be quality checked and approved by special advisers.

The sooner speeches are shared with private office, the better. You can do this before sending the full briefing pack.

Format of the speech

Speeches should always be sent as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack in Arial font, size 16, 1.5 spacing.

Paragraphs should be left flush, with no bullet points or numbered paragraphs. Ensure paragraphs don't run over the page, are kept short using plain English and start on a new page when starting a new subject heading.

Further help and advice

Drafting a speech can be challenging and you may find it helpful to ask experienced colleagues for advice. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Fiona Hyslop - engagement briefing

When preparing briefing, make sure you download and use Ms Hyslop's engagement briefing template.

Briefing is normally commissioned when private office sends out the diary scheduler to supporting official(s). [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

The Minister likes to consider briefings or speeches in advance and identify anything else she thinks should be included. All briefings must be sent to private office at least one week in advance of the engagement. If there's a good reason you're unable to meet the deadline, you must contact private office to agree a revised date.

Private office can advise on the drafting of engagement briefings and Ms Hyslop's preferences. Where something is unclear, early engagement with private office prevents briefings being sent back for redrafting on receipt.

How to use the template

Briefings should ideally be no longer than 10 pages. If briefings are too long, they will be returned for editing. Speaking notes should always be submitted as separate documents (and contain page numbers, top and bottom right flush).

Don't delete cells from the first page of the briefing template. It should ideally fit on one side of A4 to allow for review of the details at a glance and follow the format and order.

The summary page for external events should capture the key issues that can be referred to quickly. Additional background briefing should be provided in as logical and succinct a way as possible.

Avoid unnecessary repetition between the summary page and the background briefing. In particular, avoid phrasing the same point differently in the two, as this can cause confusion.

Formatting tips:

- bullet points should not be used where possible
- avoid the use of italics
- always include page numbers
- use a consistent font type and size throughout the briefing
- use subheadings (bold and/or underlined) to assist with quickly locating relevant sections
- be clear about what are lines for the Minister to take, and what is background briefing not to be shared more widely

What to include in the briefing

All engagement briefings must include:

- clear purpose and objective to the engagement as a whole and, where appropriate, for individual elements such as key agenda items. Ms Hyslop needs to understand what the engagement is seeking to achieve and what outcomes are anticipated
- attendee list (including details of previous engagements and brief biographies at the end for key participants the Minister has not met before)

- numbered agenda with timings where appropriate. Where Ms Hyslop is chairing larger meetings a separate steering brief should be included
- annexes should then include briefing, lines to take, and expected questions, against each agenda item, with further background briefing included thereafter

For any engagement which involve speaking to the media, Ms Hyslop requires specific media lines so that she knows what lines and messaging to communicate. It is policy officials responsibility to prepare this briefing and advice can be sought from communications colleagues. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

You should also include an up to date and accurate address checked with organisers if necessary. Provide a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names and numbers. For remote locations or large sites, it would also be helpful to provide a grid reference. You can find a latitude and longitude reference on Google Maps.

Multi-engagement briefings

Where the Minister is undertaking a multi-engagement visit across one or more days, a coordinated briefing pack should be provided.

This should include an overall steering brief with annotated itinerary and core briefing on key issues across the engagements. Separate packs should then be provided for each day (or grouping of engagements) with individual engagement briefings, using the above guidance, as annexes.

Please discuss and clear the briefing with private office before sending for the Minister's consideration.

Fiona Hyslop - correspondence

Correspondence should be drafted by downloading and using the correct letter template.

Ministers attach great importance to all correspondence. The information on this page provides guidance on how responses should be drafted.

Make sure you quality check and proof read all correspondence before sending it to private office.

Letters

You should ensure that if the incoming letter has a reference, this is copied in the response under 'Your Ref' and delete 'Your Ref' and 'Our Ref' if not required. The Minister's name should always be in bold underneath the signature – **FIONA HYSLOP**

Diary invitations

Responses to all invitations addressed to Ms Hyslop should be drafted as from her private secretary.

All diary acceptance letters should be 'subject to parliamentary business' unless the event is outwith the parliamentary session, during recess.

Sound advice should be asked for from both policy and communications and included in the PS minute to allow the Minister to arrive at the correct decision. You should also consider whether officials could agree to fulfil the commitment.

Language

Consider who will be reading the response, for example young people. Ensure the reply is clear, concise and written in language easily understood - it should answer the question and show empathy. (You should also bear this in mind when drafting official replies.) Keep sentences short and avoid technical jargon. Always spell check and proofread responses.

'Scottish Government' should be used explicitly where appropriate - do not shorten to 'Government'. Where the reference is to the 'UK Government', say so.

If a case is reallocated to Ms Hyslop, you should use the phrase 'I am replying as I have portfolio responsibility for xxx issue'.

Layout (including MiCase)

Use Ms Hyslop's letterhead template if outwith MiCase. Do not alter the default page set up of the letter template. Try to fit the reply on one page but do not decrease the font size to do so. Include references, the date, subject and name at the bottom.

If Ms Hyslop's name is the only text on the second page, insert an appropriate page break to ensure at least two sentences are on the second page.

MiCase correspondence

Populate the salutation – if the response is to an MP or MSP, use their first name. If the correspondent is known to the Minister, first names are also fine – otherwise the salutation should be Dear Mr/Ms/Mrs/Cllr and so on.

Ensure the draft response is quality checked and any spelling errors, superfluous spaces and so on are rectified. The formatting of the final version of the letter must also be checked. Always tick the box when your draft is complete to insert Ms Hyslop's electronic signature before sending to private office for processing.

If you are unable to meet the deadline for MiCase correspondence, flag this to private office.

Keep track of your MiCases after they are sent to private office. You should undertake routine audits to ensure they are completed and signed off on the system.

MINISTER FOR VICTIMS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

Siobhian Brown - top tips

Siobhian Brown MSP is the Minister for Victims and Community Safety. You can find her biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

The following is intended as guidance only and does not cover every scenario. If you're unsure of anything, contact private office.

Briefing

Find the correct briefing template from the table on this page and send as a Word document. Make sure you follow the guidance for completing the templates included in them.

Briefing will normally be commissioned via the diary invitation. You should ensure the times within the invite match what you have agreed with stakeholders. Deadlines for submitting briefings are generally a week before the event.

You should always submit speeches as separate documents and include page numbers within the footer.

If briefing requires amending after it's submitted, check with private office before re-submitting. An amended section or additional annex is often better than an entire new pack, particularly for parliamentary debates – we can advise what is best in each instance.

Committee and debate briefing

You should refer to the briefing templates in the table, using the right one depending on what type of engagement. This is particularly important for briefing for any kind of parliamentary engagement.

You should think about the type of parliamentary engagement you are preparing briefing for and how the minister is likely to use the briefing pack.

Also bear in mind for statements and committee appearances Ms Brown will be asked questions directly and will need to answer immediately. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Type of event	Template
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> parliamentary debates, statement or committee appearances 	Debate/committee appearance template
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ministerial committees meetings with other UK ministers stakeholders or organisations 	Meetings template
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> receptions and events (including dinners) external visits/engagements/events including dinners 	Engagements template

Siobhian Brown - speeches

You should read general guidance on writing speeches before you start preparing a speech.

Speech requirements for Ms Brown vary based on the engagement. You should use verbatim speech (without bullet points) for:

- debates or statements
- committee appearances
- conference keynotes

You should write bullet points which Ms Brown can improvise with for:

- smaller or less formal events
- where the minister is sitting at a table

When drafting, you should:

- consider the format of the event, including whether Ms Brown will be speaking from a lectern or a sitting position (for the latter, a bullet style speech is usually better than a full verbatim speech)
- think carefully about the audience ([Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]).
- avoid simply cutting and pasting from previous speeches, as many of the events the minister speaks at attract similar audiences
- ensure the speech has a clear structure, flow, and is free of jargon and clichés
- be clear on what the speech is trying to achieve
- avoid lengthy phrases and sentences
- allow time for the minister's own additions and anecdotes in the speech – Ms Brown speaks at around 150 words per minute, so don't submit a speech over the required time
- always read the speech out loud to pick up repetitiveness or lack of natural breathing space

When formatting and finalising:

- do not split sentences or paragraphs between two pages - use the 'keep lines together' checkbox by going to 'Paragraph' then 'Line and Page Breaks' in Word
- text should be Arial, size 18 with 1.5 paragraph spacing
- insert page numbers as a footer (in centre)

- you should always send speeches as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack

Siobhian Brown - correspondence

You should familiarise yourself with the guidance on handling ministerial correspondence before drafting replies for Ms Brown.

When replying on MiCase you should:

- include an email address directly under the final line of the address
- ensure you use the preferred reply address when corresponding with MSPs (some MSPs ask for a particular address to be used)
- begin by thanking the sender for their letter and refer to the date it was sent.
- provide a short apology for the delay in replying if your response is late
- in cases where the original correspondence was sent to another minister, but Ms Brown is replying, acknowledge this and explain why she is responding instead

For all diary acceptance replies include the following text in your draft:

‘Please note that all engagements accepted by the Minister are subject to Parliamentary business and can change at short notice. Please contact our office at MinisterVCS@gov.scot to finalise arrangements.’

For ministerial replies, Ms Brown’s signature should be centred at the bottom of the letter as:

SIOBHIAN BROWN

And for diary replies the private secretary’s name should be used:

[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]

Private Secretary

For letters outwith the MiCase system use the minister's letter template.

MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Gillian Martin - top tips

Gillian Martin MSP is the Minister for Energy. You can find her biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

We're happy to discuss briefing deadline dates, but any extensions should be approved by my private office. If it's a big set piece event, such as a parliamentary debate or speech, we require briefing a minimum of a week in advance for Ms Martin's consideration. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Gillian Martin - speeches and events

Speeches for Ms Martin should:

- be in arial, size 16 and with 1.5 spacing
- have 130 words per minute
- always be at least two to three minutes shorter than the time slot, as this will allow the Minister to personalise it
- have numbered pages (bottom right)
- be written as speaking notes rather than bullet points
- be short, clear and concise - paragraphs should be no longer than two or three lines and should not run over pages
- always be sent up as a Word document separate from the briefing pack
- avoid using acronyms and jargon - this is being spoken
- be relevant to the event and acknowledge who is in the audience
- cover hot issues and topical subjects
- have headings for each section of the speech

- include factual material and detail of relevant facts
- not use parts of previous speeches on the same subject
- include the big picture context - start and end with the big picture
- include any constitutional points that are appropriate
- be discussed with communications colleagues if they are to include announcements
- be colourful and personalised - feel free to include testimonials, startling facts and quotes

Points to remember are:

- it's important to read the speech aloud to identify any potential challenges or problems in delivering it
- facts and figures in the speech should be checked and double checked

Gillian Martin - engagement briefing

When writing an engagement briefing for Ms Martin:

- use the preferred briefing template for visits and meetings - tailor the information boxes as appropriate
- keep the briefing as short and concise as possible, ensuring it is relevant while avoiding duplication
- keep it to eight pages maximum
- make sure it contains only the key facts, background information and anything new that Ms Martin is not already aware of
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- include current top lines
- make it separate from speaking notes
- note any previous meetings in background information

- assume official support for all visits or meetings, unless agreed otherwise with private office (you must ensure that mobile numbers of supporting officials are included)
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- include a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names, parking information and allocations (if any) and phone numbers
- get in touch with private office as soon as possible if amendments need to be made after submission, to ensure Ms Martin has the most up to date briefing pack or speech

Gillian Martin - correspondence

For general correspondence:

- use the letter template
- all ministerial responses should be tailored to the correspondent
- make it person-centred and considerate of the correspondent
- ensure you answer all the questions and points raised, or explain why we can't - correspondence should always be as helpful as possible
- provide an email address, as well as a postal address in the letter
- avoid jargon and abbreviations
- contact private office if you would like further advice on handling correspondence

For diary correspondence:

- contact private office to check diary availability ahead of drafting responses
- contact private office to discuss if a request is not clear

- where a specific meeting or date is not requested and officials advise that a meeting should take place, this should be with officials in the first instance unless Ms Martin requests otherwise
- submit both an accept and decline response where a meeting date is specified

MiCase correspondence

Keep MiCase correspondence on the system. This ensures letters are not delayed or misplaced.

Correspondence outwith MiCase

Responses to letters from devolved administrations or other MPs should be drafted and sent to private office for clearance within seven working days. You should always provide an email address for the correspondent, as well as a postal address.

Private office will send you back the final copy that was issued, with Ms Martin's signature added. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

MINISTER FOR EQUALITIES, MIGRATION AND REFUGEES

Emma Roddick - top tips

Emma Roddick MSP is the minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees. You can find her biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website. She supports the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice.

Briefing is always commissioned a week in advance of any event. We're happy to discuss deadlines. If it's a big set piece event, such as a parliamentary debate or speech, we require briefing a minimum of a week in advance for the Ms Roddick's consideration. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Emma Roddick - speeches and events

Speaking notes vary based on the engagement. You should proactively engage with stakeholders about the minister's role at an engagement. For example you must find out whether she will be asked to speak in a formal capacity (as part of the agenda or delivering a speech). If it's an informal gathering, Ms Roddick doesn't require a speaking note.

For all in person speeches (unless discussed with private office for parliamentary statements or legislative debates), Ms Roddick prefers to be given a speaking note rather than a verbatim speech. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. You should avoid breaking a verbatim speech down into bullet point format and remember this should be a document to inform the minister's remarks.

You can read this example to help you draft the speaking note.

For pre-records the preference is that a verbatim speech be provided.

Any remarks or speeches you provide should:

- be in Arial, size 18 and with 1.5 spacing (if a formal verbatim speech)
- have numbered pages (bottom right)
- avoid using acronyms and jargon - this is being spoken
- be relevant to the event and the audience
- cover hot issues and topical subjects
- include any constitutional points that are appropriate
- be discussed with communications colleagues if they are to include potential announcements

Points to remember:

- Ms Roddick speaks about 170 words per minute
- facts and figures in the speech should be checked and double checked
- speeches should always be sent up as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack
- Ms Roddick likes to speak at a lectern - please request this where possible

If you're new to writing speeches, read the guidance on writing ministerial speeches as well.

Emma Roddick - engagement briefing

Contact private office for further advice or to talk through specific requirements for engagements.

Briefings should:

- use the preferred briefing template for visits and meetings - tailor the information boxes as appropriate
- keep the briefing as short and concise as possible, ensuring it is relevant while avoiding duplication

- contain only the key facts - background information and anything new that Ms Roddick is not already aware of
- include current top lines
- be separate from speaking notes
- note any previous meetings in background information
- assume official support for all visits or meetings, unless agreed otherwise with private office (ensure mobile numbers of supporting officials are included)
- ensure communications colleagues and special advisers (SPADs) are aware of engagements where necessary
- appropriate handling arrangements are detailed in the briefing pack
- include a map which is helpful (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names, parking information and allocations (if any) and numbers

Get in touch with private office as soon as possible if amendments need to be made after submission, to ensure Ms Roddick has the most up to date briefing pack or speech.

Emma Roddick - correspondence

Correspondence on MiCase system

For general correspondence:

- all ministerial responses should be tailored to the correspondent
- make it person-centred and considerate of the correspondent
- ensure you answer all the questions and points raised, or explain why we can't - correspondence should always be as helpful as possible
- provide an email address, as well as a postal address in the letter
- avoid using jargon or abbreviations
- contact private office if you would like further advice on handling correspondence

Private office will always send you back the final copy, which was issued, with Ms Roddick's signature added. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

For diary correspondence:

- contact private office to check diary availability ahead of drafting responses
- contact private office to discuss if a request is not clear
- where a specific meeting or date is not requested and officials advise that a meeting should take place, this should be with officials in the first instance unless Ms Roddick requests otherwise
- submit both an accept and decline where a meeting date has been specified

Keep MiCase correspondence via the system, as this ensures that letters are not delayed or misplaced.

Correspondence outwith MiCase

Responses to letters from devolved administrations or other MPs should be drafted and sent to private office for clearance within seven working days. You should always provide an email address for the correspondent, as well as a postal address.

Private office will send you back the final copy which was issued, with Miss Roddick's signature added. Keep a record of these letters and responses in eRDM so we can make reference to them in future if needed.

Use the correct letter template and not a blank Word document (these are easily accessed in Word templates).

MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND KEEPING THE PROMISE

Natalie Don - top tips

Natalie Don MSP is the Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise.

Natalie Don – speeches

Speaking engagements (including conferences, meetings and receptions)

Speeches should never be longer than 10 minutes, unless agreed in advance with private office. If Ms Don is pre-recording a speech, it should be no longer than five minutes. Ms Don would like full speeches for all events and meetings. You should try to submit these at least a week in advance.

If Ms Don is chairing a meeting, you should make this clear in the briefing, which should also include a chair's brief and accompanying speaking points. This briefing can take the form of an annotated agenda.

Debates or committee

Full speaking notes are required for debate opening speeches. However, debate closing speeches should be made up of a written start to the speech and a written conclusion. The main body of the speech will be formed during the debate as Ms Don responds to the points made. To assist with this, include a series of one pages on the most likely issues to arise, with lines to take on each, for Ms Don to use as required.

Always write committee speaking notes out in full.

Some tips to be aware of when writing speeches are:

- it's helpful to have first drafts of speeches as early as possible - private office will usually set a deadline
- avoid jargon
- read speaking notes aloud to check fluency
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Speeches should be formatted with:

- Arial font 16pt
- 1.5 line spacing
- page breaks at the end of a paragraph
- numbered pages

Speeches should also include a word count and estimated timescale for delivery.

Speaking rate

Ms Don speaks at around 140 words per minute.

Ensure the speech box details from the briefing template (document will download) are completed and include as page one of your briefing.

The following should be included:

- a clear message for the speech
- layout of the room – for example round table, theatre style
- lectern or sitting as part of a panel
- make-up of the audience
- how many are attending
- what do they want to hear

- any media interest
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice on the type of speech and structure expected. You can find further advice in writing a speech.

Natalie Don - diary and engagement briefing

You should consider the event being attended and ensure the level of briefing is appropriate. Short visits do not require a lengthy briefing pack.

Make sure you use the templates for engagements and meetings (these documents will download).

Some tips when providing briefing for meetings or engagements are:

- provide a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names and numbers
- include mobile numbers for supporting officials
- include speaking notes as separate documents
- if amendments are required after the briefing is submitted, either track changes or make it clear in the covering email what has changed
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- if a previous meeting has happened, include a note of progress since then
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Natalie Don – correspondence

Ms Don is keen to be as helpful as she can when replying. You should ensure any points made in the letter are addressed and questions answered where possible. If necessary, you can provide a PS minute detailing additional information or advice not for inclusion in the reply.

When preparing a diary case, ensure communications colleagues are consulted so Ms Don can consider this along with policy advice and the merits of attending.

Correspondence information to include	Further details and instructions
Address	<p>Use the reply address provided on the letter. Some correspondence specifies an address they would like a response to. If the letter has a reference, include this under 'Your Ref'.</p> <p>When an MSP/MP writes on behalf of their constituent, refer to the constituent by name and state their address if given.</p>
Contact details	<p>When offering contact details for Ms Don's office, please only use the email address MinisterCYPKP@gov.scot. Personal accounts are not used.</p>
Content	<p>Consider who will be reading the response and tailor the language as necessary. For example, a softer, less 'policy speak' tone will be more appropriate when corresponding with young people or children.</p> <p>Ensure the reply is clear and concise.</p> <p>Avoid using unnecessary jargon.</p> <p>If Ms Don is responding to a letter sent to another minister, explain that and why. For example - 'Thank you for your letter of DATE to OTHER MINISTER, I am replying as I have portfolio responsibility for SUBJECT'.</p>

Coordinated responses	Many MiCases are related to PQs or press releases. Ensure all the facts and figures are consistent.
Date	<p>Refer to the date of the original letter in the response.</p> <p>If you send the response at either the end or the beginning of a month, check the letter is dated appropriately. If in doubt, it's often best to date a response with the new month as, depending on her availability, it may take a couple of days before Ms Don sees it.</p>
Font	The main text of the letter should always be Arial, font size 12.
Diary invitations	<p>Always draft two separate letters - one accepting and one declining the invitation. Alternatively, a separate letter for any other possible answers, such as another minister will undertake the event, can be drafted where appropriate.</p> <p>Always include a PS minute, detailing any background detail and policy advice.</p> <p>Responses should be in the private secretary's name, unless the correspondent is a member of parliament, other government minister or a constituent.</p> <p>Example diary case replies</p> <p>Accept</p> <p>Thank you for your email dated XXXX inviting Natalie Don MSP, Minister for Children and Young People to attend/meet/visit XXXX.</p>

	<p>Ms Don would be delighted to accept your invitation. I would be grateful if you would contact her Assistant Private Secretary at MinisterCYPKP@gov.scot to make the necessary arrangements.</p> <p>Decline</p> <p>Thank you for your email dated XXXX inviting Natalie Don MSP, Minister for Children and Young People to attend/meet/visit XXXX.</p> <p>Ms Don will unfortunately be unable to accept your invitation. Please accept her apologies and best wishes for a successful event/conference etc.</p>
Layout	If drafting a letter outwith MiCase, use the letter template (this document will download). Make sure you add page breaks at the end of a paragraph.
Ministerial replies	All letters to members of parliament, other government ministers and constituents should be drafted in Ms Don's name.
Official replies	Include 'I have been asked by Ms Don to thank you for your letter of [DATE] and to reply on her behalf', or a similar form of words.
Photo	You can find Ms Don's official photo on the Scottish Government Flickr page.
Signature	<p>Ministerial reply –</p> <p>NATALIE DON</p>

	<p>PS reply –</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]</p> <p>Private Secretary</p>
Spelling	Always check spelling and proofread the response before forwarding to private office.
Salutations and pronouns	Ensure you use the appropriate titles and pronouns of those being responded to. Use the terms they use to refer to themselves.
Timing	It's always helpful if cases can reach Ms Don as soon as possible to allow her more time to consider it amongst many other papers. Please let private office know if a case will be late.
Private office contacts	<p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]</p>

MINISTER FOR INDEPENDENCE

Jamie Hepburn MSP

top tips

Jamie Hepburn MSP is the Minister for Independence. You can find his biography and responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

Tips for speeches, briefings and submissions

Mr Hepburn speaks at 130 words per minute. He likes to add some personal touches to his speeches, so factor in time to allow him to do so. We suggest cutting by around 10% to accommodate this. Remember the little things make a big difference – taking time to focus on formatting, spelling and grammar can help you, the private office and Mr Hepburn.

Email briefing and speeches to the ministerial box five working days in advance of a meeting or event. Speeches should be attached as separate documents, not as part of an overall briefing pack.

Try to keep briefing packs as short and concise as possible.

Speeches

Mr Hepburn's key ask is that speeches follow a structure, flow well and have natural bridges between sections. For all events, Mr Hepburn expects speeches to be written out verbatim. This includes shorter speeches (five to ten minutes), but you should of course tailor content and length to the type of event. Try to ensure the speech flows so it doesn't sound like it's been stitched together from contributions from across the Scottish Government (though that may be true). Avoid using acronyms and jargon and remember it is being spoken, so have a practice reading it out yourself – if you find it awkward or jarring then Mr Hepburn is likely to as well.

You should send draft speeches for significant events to us two weeks in advance in order to allow time for Mr Hepburn to consider and provide feedback. Consider

sending an outline speech structure three weeks in advance as well. This allows early input from Mr Hepburn and could ultimately save any unnecessary work in the long run.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. Try to also make the speech engaging and interesting and think about the audience and nature of the event. An after dinner slot will need a different tone to a keynote policy speech at a conference, for example.

Formatting

Mr Hepburn speaks at 130 words per minute. Allow enough time for him to put his own personal steer on the speech. For example, when preparing a 15 minute speech, reduce it by 10%.

You should always consider Mr Hepburn's delivery style – he doesn't deliver a speech like he would read aloud a book – he likes to add natural pauses. So, consider that, alongside personal additions, to ensure Mr Hepburn doesn't overrun his slot. If there are particularly important points to make, Mr Hepburn likes to use repetition (for example – "together we must..., together we should..., together we will...")

You should also make sure:

- speeches are written in Arial 16 with 1.5 line spacing
- pages are always numbered
- paragraphs are no longer than two lines and sentences don't cross over pages
- speeches are always be sent up as a separate word document to the wider briefing pack

Structure

It's crucial you spend time thinking about what should be included and where within the speech - remember to always start with the niceties and welcome/thank key people. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

It's worth taking a few moments in the speech to outline what Mr Hepburn is going to cover – this is more appropriate for longer set-piece policy speeches. For shorter addresses, you can cover this by simply referencing what the event is about, and then getting any interesting facts in.

Content

It's vital to make the speech audience appropriate. For example, if Mr Hepburn is speaking to an audience of young people, don't provide something that is filled with detailed policy information that they might not understand or enjoy. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Where possible, link the speech to a policy announcement. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. Each policy topic should always relate back to the nature/purpose of the event.

Mr Hepburn likes positive facts and figures (including funding details), so include those – but make sure they are accurate and up to date. If facts and figures represent a need for improvement then state that clearly in the speech [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Be appropriately empathetic to demonstrate we understand the issues facing the audience and how they fit into the bigger picture and thank them for their hard work. Talk about the challenges faced more generally in the particular sector, but always draw them back and link to opportunities.

Mr Hepburn likes the use of repetition of key points/phrases/priorities. For example, if you're talking about the need for a partnership approach to take hold of opportunities (and you should try and talk about this in speeches), it's worth concluding that particular section or speech with: "together, we can..., together we should..., together we will..."

Always bring the speech to a concise conclusion that sums up the key points and reiterates the messages of thanks for the work the organisation or audience do.

There is no doubt that drafting a speech can be both challenging and fun at the same time, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice. Get in touch with private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected and pointers on flow and content. Further advice can also be found in writing a speech.

Finally, always read the speech aloud – this is when you pick up the stumbling points or identify areas that don't bridge.

engagement briefing

You should use Mr Hepburn's preferred briefing template for either engagements or meetings. Keep briefings short, relevant and avoid duplication. If Mr Hepburn or private office think the briefing is too long, it will likely be returned for editing. If we think more material is required we'll let you know. Any amendments required after the briefing has been submitted may need to be written in by private office. Please track change these or make them very clear in the covering email.

Always include a good summary page as part of the pack with top lines, key issues and anything to avoid. Think of it as being a one-pager that Mr Hepburn could use on its own to get through a meeting. Remember – this isn't verbatim lines to take - focus on key topics or issues and the Scottish Government/Minister's position.

Try to make the pack (particularly larger packs) as easy to navigate as possible. A 50 page pack with no clear contents page or page numbers will be too difficult to use, so always include a contents page and pages numbers (in the middle at the bottom of the page).

You should also:

- find out if Mr Hepburn will be expected to speak at an event and if he'll be asked to take questions after his speech (if he will, inform private office immediately)
- submit speaking notes as a separate document with page numbers - for more support, read the guidance on speeches
- differentiate your briefing to ensure it's sufficient for the needs of the event or meeting

Meetings with key stakeholders, ministers of other governments, major conferences and high profile events

Your briefing should ideally be a maximum of 20 pages. It should include:

- a cover sheet
- a summary page
- an agenda – it should provide a clear timeline for the engagement and specify Mr Hepburn's role
- a steering brief (if Mr Hepburn is chairing a meeting)
- meeting objective(s) and what outcome(s) are desired (this should be succinct)
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- if there was a previous meeting, a note of that and progress since
- Q and A – light touch and not verbatim answers
- biographies on meeting attendees (if Mr Hepburn has not previously met them)
- a speaking note, if required

Meetings with external stakeholders, receptions or events, including dinners

Briefings for these meetings should be similar to above, but ideally no more than 10 pages. You should also add table plans and guest lists, including anyone in particular Mr Hepburn should meet or talk to.

Routine visits/engagements or photo-ops

Briefings for more routine visits, engagements or photo-ops should:

- focus on the logistics – no more than six pages
- address why Mr Hepburn is attending and the objectives of the visit
- detail when, where, what and who (include a guest list with biographies)
- detail any key local or topical issues to be aware of
- have a good summary page – this is the summary of all the key topics likely to be raised
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Parliamentary engagements

Mr Hepburn takes parliamentary engagements such as debates, statements or committee appearances very seriously. Such engagements will require comprehensive, but also easily navigable and succinct briefing. This is likely to include:

- a cover sheet
- key messages to get across
- a summary of relevant manifesto commitments and progress in achieving them
- likely areas of opposition attack and rebuttals
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

- speaking note - for more information, read the guidance on speeches
- historical context, including key facts or figures
- summary of any previous evidence sessions

For committee appearances

The briefing should cover:

- whether short opening remarks are appropriate – just one or two sides
- a list of committee members
- any particular interest in relevant issues by committee members
- a list of relevant organisations the committee have recently taken evidence from, and any particular issues explored by the committee
- a summary of recent PQs, debates and statements on the issue
- keys facts and statistics
- recent media attention on the issues, and the Scottish Government response
- stakeholders' views
- financial issues
- supporting officials (please discuss in advance with private office)
- full Q and A

Documents to include in the briefing pack:

- the committee's agenda and corresponding papers
- any relevant correspondence with the committee
- copies of the Official Report for relevant committee meetings, debates, and statements

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

correspondence

Think about the correspondent when drafting the response. It sounds obvious, but a response to an opposition spokesperson on a key policy will have a different tone than a letter concerning an issue a member's constituent might have.

When drafting an acceptance letter, include the sentence asking the correspondent to 'Please contact [Redacted – section 38 – personal information], in the Minister's office at ministerforindy@gov.scot to make the necessary arrangements'.

You should send out responses to diary invitations in the name of Mr Hepburn's Private Secretary [Redacted – section 38 – personal information].

Formatting

Leave a space between the reference number(s) and the date, and tab the date in once.

Leave four lines between the date and the first line, and four lines between the final greeting and Mr Hepburn's name at the bottom. This will allow sufficient room for Mr Hepburn to add in a greeting and sign the letter.

Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy

Elena Whitham - top tips

Elena Whitham MSP is the Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy. You can find her biography and responsibilities on the gov.scot website

Diary

All briefing for events is required a week in advance of a visit using the briefing templates. This will be confirmed to you either in the diary entry or by email. Please let private office know how many officials will be attending any meeting to ensure an appropriately sized meeting room can be booked.

Official support will be required for all visits or meetings, unless agreed otherwise with private office. It should be assumed that there will be a pre-meet before any visits or meetings. Please check with private office if this is required.

Elena Whitham - engagement briefing

Make sure you use the correct meeting template or engagement briefing template.

Observe deadlines for engagement briefing – Ms Whitham likes to see briefing in advance so plan ahead to get it up in good time.

Key points

- provide a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names and numbers. For remote locations or large sites, it would also be helpful to provide a grid reference. You can find a latitude and longitude reference on Google maps, by right clicking on a point and then selecting 'What's here?'. Please also copy your briefing to Government Car Service
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- ensure mobile numbers for supporting officials are included
- speaking notes should always be included as separate documents

- if amendments are required after the briefing has been submitted, track changes or make it clear in the covering email - please do not send the full submission again, unless agreed to by private office
- keep briefing short, relevant and avoid duplication. If Ms Whitham or private office think the briefing is too long, it will likely be returned for editing
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- if a previous meeting has happened, include a note of progress since
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- official support should be assumed for all visits or meetings, unless agreed otherwise with private office
- differentiate your briefing to ensure it is sufficient for the needs of the event or meeting. For example:

Meetings with key stakeholders, ministers of other governments, major conferences and high-profile events

- cover sheet with key messages, who, when, where, officials' details, suggested social media
- agenda (item 1)
- within each agenda point, from item 2 onwards, it should contain key messages, discussion points and suggested questions, background, current media and issues to avoid
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- bios on meeting attendees (not previously met)
- if there was a previous meeting, a note of that and progress since
- speaking note - if required - find out more in speeches

Meetings with external stakeholders, receptions or events, including dinners

- similar to above but ideally no more than 10 to 12 pages

Routine visits/engagements or photo-ops

- logistic briefing only - no more than six pages
- why Ms Whitham is attending
- when, where, what and who, guest list, bios as above
- any key local or topical issues to be aware of
- discussion points and suggested questions

Parliamentary engagements

Such engagements will require comprehensive, but also easily navigable and succinct briefing. This is likely to include:

- cover sheet
- key messages to get across
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- speaking note - find out more in speeches
- historical context, including key facts or figures (not covered above)
- summary of any previous evidence sessions

Briefing should be signed off by a deputy director and special adviser.

Elena Whitham - speeches

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice and contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected. Further advice can also be found in writing a speech.

It is helpful to have first drafts of speeches – including bullets – as early as possible. Private office will usually set a deadline and pre-meetings should be arranged, but please ask if this hasn't been done. It should be assumed some amendments will be required once Ms Whitham has reviewed and has feedback to offer.

Tips

When writing a speech for Ms Whitham:

- avoid jargon and the overuse of corporate or Scottish Government buzz words where possible
- read speaking notes aloud to check fluency
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Format

When formatting a speech for Ms Whitham:

- Arial font 22pt
- 1.5 line spacing
- page breaks at the end of a paragraph
- one sided, single page (when printed)
- pages numbered
- include a word count and estimated time of delivery
- speaks 140 words per minute

Visits

Speaking notes or speeches for visits should have clear, specific messages related to that visit. Where possible, wider Scottish Government strategies, themes or work should be considered and highlighted within the speaking notes or speech where appropriate.

For visits where there is no formal speaking slot, Ms Whitham would like to have a one-page list of key/top lines.

Meetings

Ms Whitham would like key messages - no speaking notes are required. A **steering brief** would be required if the Ms Whitham is chairing the meeting.

Debates/committee

Full speaking notes are required. For both debate opening and closing, it is helpful to have first drafts of speeches – including bullets – as early as possible. It should be assumed that some amendments will be required once Ms Whitham has reviewed and has feedback to offer.

It is important to slightly run over the word count of an opening and closing speech. Ms Whitham will make some amendments, removing and/or adding lines. Ms Whitham will normally allow interventions, so it is important that there are rebuttal answers to potential questions in the same format and tone as the speech.

MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY WEALTH AND PUBLIC FINANCE

Tom Arthur MSP is the Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance. You can find his biography and responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

Top tips

Consider the type of meeting or event and tailor the briefing appropriately. Mr Arthur likes succinct briefings, with the high level, most relevant detail at the top, followed by additional details. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. Always put the most recent or the most notable issues at the top so that Mr Arthur does not have to go digging in the briefing for the most important details.

The briefing should be clear about the purpose of the meeting and what Mr Arthur needs to get out of it. Identify clearly what action you want the Minister to take and the deadline. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Consider why Mr Arthur is having the meeting, what are the aims (what does he wish to get out of it), and what might he be pressed on by stakeholders or attendees. A one-pager covering the purpose and key points is always helpful. Mr Arthur likes to know who he is meeting and their role or position. If there are a series of annexes,

put the names, biographies and roles of who Mr Arthur is meeting at the top. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. It is important that the briefing accurately reflects the name/s of the officials attending meetings and events.

You should send briefings to private office one week before the event. Where possible, this timescale should be adhered to and briefings should only be late by exception, and after discussing with private office.

We understand there are occasions where briefing or submissions may need to be changed after being sent. If this is the case, it's important to return in tracked changes or clearly mark where you have made the changes.

We would also ask, where possible, to only be copied into a final version and not be included in the email exchanges that lead to a final document. We appreciate this will be dependent on the situation, as it is sometimes useful to understand the status of submissions, briefings or responses.

If Mr Arthur has a meeting or event that covers a number of policy areas, it would be helpful if a single policy area would lead on the coordination and preparation of the full briefing pack.

Provide any parking information and a map, and include a photo from Google maps as an annex. Either update the existing box with car parking details or add an extra line and name a specific entrance for ministerial car parking arrangements.

speeches

For speeches, Mr Arthur always prefers bullet points, rather than prose. As a guide you should provide no more than one to two pages of bullet points for a five minute speech and no more than three to four pages for a 10 minute speech.

It is important that Mr Arthur sees any agenda. If it's a conference, there is usually one and a theme. There may also be papers such as a glossy brochure. You must

get hold of this and associated papers as it will help form a relevant speech for the occasion.

Mr Arthur needs to know who is in the audience, which you can find out from the organiser. The Minister also likes to refer to the audience – include examples of what the audience do or have done to make the speech relevant.

You should make sure Mr Arthur knows the format. Will the speech be followed by Q and A, is it part of a panel of speakers or is it an opening speech? There should always be a briefing on possible questions and answers if the organisers have indicated that there will be Q and A at the event. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Mr Arthur needs the facts, and then views. Bullet points are usually enough. Keep it simple. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Mr Arthur likes to get speeches one week before the event to check over and to allow time to commission more information, check facts or briefing. He does like helpful factual material - and detail of relevant facts.

Please note:

- Mr Arthur speaks at about 150 words a minute
- speeches should be in Arial 16pt with 1.5 spacing
- paragraphs should be no longer than two or three lines
- if the speech is in printed format, page breaks should be at the end of a sentence, paragraphs should not run over pages and each page must be numbered
- you should include examples of things Mr Arthur has done in his ministerial capacity
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- Mr Arthur likes to speak at a lectern, so please request this if possible

- Mr Arthur likes to see an early draft of the speech before it is finalised to give thoughts on direction and content - this does not have to be fully complete
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

You must always check the speech for accuracy – facts and figures should be checked and double checked. Speeches should also be sent up as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack - and pages should always be numbered. Avoid using acronyms and jargon. Remember this is being spoken.

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice and contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected. You can find further advice in the writing a speech guidance.

When drafting a speech, consider the following:

- the speech should be relevant to the event
- who the audience are and what do they want to hear
- the speech should use positive language
- do not recycle or copy and paste parts of previous speeches on the same subject
- avoid getting bogged down in policy unless necessary
- the big picture context - start and end with the big picture
- including some relevant context, especially in the introduction
- including any constitutional points that are appropriate
- cover hot issues and topical subjects
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- adding some colour to the speech and personalising it - feel free to include testimonials, startling facts, and quotes
- it's important to read the speech aloud to identify any potential challenges or problems in delivering it

Read examples of speeches on the gov.scot website.

engagement briefing

Make sure you use Mr Arthur's preferred briefing template for engagements or meetings. Email briefing and speeches one week before the event.

The briefing should always follow the structure laid out in the template, including the sequence of the annexes. For briefings with more than six annexes (for example A to F), please list annexes as page numbers on the contents page (for example 1 to 25) instead of using letters of the alphabet. This aids the Minister locate the information more easily in a larger briefing pack and reduces the need to tab each annex.

Provide a map and directions (where required), address with postcode, organisation name, contact names and numbers in the briefing. You should also send it to the private office assistant private secretary as far in advance as possible. Please check the details carefully as incomplete or confusing directions lead to delays [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. For remote locations or large sites, it would also be helpful to provide a grid reference. You can find a latitude and longitude reference on Google maps, by right clicking on a point and then selecting 'What's here?' Please also copy your briefing to the Government Car Service.

Official support should be assumed for all visits or meetings, unless agreed otherwise with private office. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Briefings should be short, succinct and have an easy to follow structure. For regular meetings they should be eight pages maximum. Briefings for larger meetings that the Minister is chairing should include a steering brief, but still be as succinct as possible.

You should always submit speaking notes as separate documents and add page numbers. You can also find more information on speech preferences. Any

amendments required after the briefing has been submitted may require to be written in by private office. Please use track changes or make them very clear in the covering email.

You should request a lectern at the venue and note this on the briefing. If this is not possible, advise the Minister of the layout (for instance, speaking from a table).

Please differentiate your briefing to ensure it's sufficient and proportionate for the needs of the event or meeting.

For example, meetings with key stakeholders, ministers of other governments, major conferences and high profile events should include:

- ideally a maximum of 20 pages (number pages and don't embed documents in Word documents (they can get missed in our printing))
- cover sheet or index
- agenda
- meeting objective(s) and what outcome(s) are desired (this should be succinct)
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- if there was a previous meeting, a note of that and progress since
- Q and A
- bios on meeting attendees (not previously met)
- provide a full delegate list
- speaking note - if required

Meetings with external stakeholders, receptions or events, including dinners should also be very similar but ideally no more than eight pages for the briefing.

Routine visits and engagements or photo-ops should include:

- logistic briefing only - no more than six pages

- why the Minister is attending
- when, where, what and who, guest list, bios
- any key local or topical issues to be aware of
- a line about the most recent engagement the organisation has had with the Scottish Government – either correspondence, meeting etc. and a line on who the local MSP and MP are

Parliamentary engagements

Mr Arthur takes parliamentary engagements such as debates, statements or committee appearances very seriously. Such engagements will require comprehensive, but also easily navigable and succinct briefing. This is likely to include:

- cover sheet
- key messages to get across
- summary of relevant manifesto commitments and progress in achieving them
- likely areas of opposition attack and rebuttals
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- speaking note - find more information in speech preferences
- historical context, including key facts or figures (not covered above)
- summary of any previous evidence sessions

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

correspondence

Ministerial correspondence is subject to corporate targets and should be answered within 20 working days. Draft replies for ministerial consideration should be with private office within 10 working days. Guidance for drafting correspondence and handling invitations is provided on this page. Private office are more than happy to answer any queries you may have.

Mr Arthur attaches great importance to correspondence and would like policy colleagues to draft quick and sympathetic responses to all letters from members of the public. Mr Arthur will personally respond to all letters from:

- MPs, MSPs and MEPs
- Members of the House of Lords
- councillors
- chairpersons or chief executives of public bodies and key stakeholders
- friends and acquaintances
- constituents (Renfrewshire South)

In each case there is a 'main' point the correspondent makes. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Make sure you remove unnecessary parts of the template (for example, unused refs or signature). Include the month and year at the top (the day will be written in) and put the Minister's name in the signature space. The letter should be ready to print and not need further editing by private office.

We check the MiCase system regularly for all draft responses for clearance, so there's no need to phone or email to alert us. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

You should also:

- use plain English
- check several times for any typos or grammatical errors
- make sure dates follow Scottish Government convention (for example 20 May 2021, not 20th May 2021)

Further guidance is listed in the table in alphabetical order:

Address	<p>MSPs - use the reply address provided on the letter template. Many MSPs now request that replies are sent to their constituency address or will only list their constituency as the reply address. Please also ensure that if the incoming letter has a reference, this is copied in the response under 'Your Ref'.</p> <p>Constituents - when an MSP or MP writes on behalf of their constituent, refer to the constituent by name and state their address if given.</p> <p>Email - some correspondents prefer to receive their response by email, or don't give a postal address. If there's only an email address, put this under the correspondent's name at the top of the letter. Once the letter has been signed off, it will be scanned and emailed by private office.</p>
Contact details	<p>When drafting an acceptance to an invitation, please include a sentence asking the correspondent to contact the Minister's Assistant Private Secretary, [Redacted – section 38 – personal information], via email at ministercwpf@gov.scot to make the necessary arrangements. (See also invitations).</p>
Content	<p>Open the letter with some background, for example 'Thank you for your letter of x about...'</p> <p>Please ensure the response answers the points raised by the correspondent. You should also avoid 'general interest' details, which do not answer the question asked. If you're cutting and pasting from previous correspondence, make sure the response is tailored to the current</p>

	<p>correspondent and all facts and figures are up to date.</p>
Coordinated responses	<p>Many MiCases are related to PQs, press releases etc. Please ensure that the all facts and figures are consistent.</p>
Date	<p>Refer to the date of the original letter in the response.</p> <p>If you send up the response at the end or beginning of a month, check that the letter is dated appropriately. If in doubt, it is often best to date a response with the new month as, depending on Mr Arthur's box arrangements, it may be into the next month before the letter is signed.</p>
Delays	<p>If the response is more than four weeks since the original letter was written, please include an apology for the delay in replying.</p> <p>If the MiCase is not sent up to the minister within the private office deadline, include a short note explaining the delay.</p>
Font	<p>The main text of the letter should always be Arial, font size 12.</p> <p>The St Andrew's House address details, our ref and date are formatted. Please do not reformat these.</p>
Diary invitations	<p>Ensure a valid postal or email address is put on the final reply letters - this is important so we can make sure the letter reaches the correct recipient.</p>

Make sure the final reply letters are signed off by the private secretary rather than Mr Arthur. Private office sends out all accept/reject letters; the Minister does not sign these off.

The PS minute should include all specific policy details, key points and communications views. The more information given, the more likely the Minister will make a firm decision.

Flag up any diary cases that are going to be sent up late - especially if it is an event that is in the near future. This allows us to let the organisation know well before the event is taking place.

Check the grammar and spelling is accurate - in private office we don't have time to change all the letters individually, so this is a great help.

Sample diary case responses

Accept:

Thank you for your letter of [date] inviting Tom Arthur MSP, Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance, to attend your Annual Conference.

Mr Arthur would be delighted to accept your invitation subject to parliamentary business. I would be grateful if you could contact the Minister's Assistant Private Secretary, [Redacted – section 38 – personal information] via email at ministercwpf@gov.scot to

	<p>arrange a mutually convenient date and to make the necessary arrangements.</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]</p> <p>PRIVATE SECRETARY</p> <p>Decline:</p> <p>Thank you for your letter of [date] inviting Tom Arthur MSP, Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance, to attend your Annual Conference.</p> <p>Unfortunately, due to prior commitments, Mr Arthur will be unable to accept your kind invitation. Please accept his apologies and best wishes for a successful event.</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]</p> <p>PRIVATE SECRETARY</p>
Language	<p>Consider who will be reading the response, for example children or young people. Ensure the reply is clear, concise, and written in a language that is easily understood. Keep sentences short and avoid jargon. Read how to write well for more information.</p> <p>Please do not use unnecessary phrases at the beginning of sentences for example: 'I am writing to...'; 'First of all,...'; 'I have to advise you that...'; 'Perhaps it would be helpful if I were to set out some general background about...'. Do not use the phrase 'I am afraid'. An alternative is 'Unfortunately'.</p>

	<p>If a case is reallocated to Tom Arthur for answer, the phrase 'I am replying as I have portfolio responsibility for the issues you raise' should be used.</p> <p>Please do not use the phrase, 'Scottish Ministers have no locus to intervene'. An alternative wording is 'it is not appropriate for Scottish Ministers to intervene'</p> <p>Where appropriate add, 'I hope this is helpful' at the end of a response.</p>
Layout	<p>Try to fit the reply on one page, but do not make the font smaller to do so. Leave four lines free at the top between the date and the start of the letter and six lines at bottom of the text of the response to allow the minister to add his signature.</p> <p>Do not alter the default page set-up. If drafting a letter out with MiCase, use the ministerial template found in the Scottish Ministers folder in Microsoft Word.</p> <p>If, due to the above formatting, the Minister's name is the only thing on the second page, insert an appropriate page break to ensure that either two full sentences or the last paragraph is moved onto the second page.</p> <p>Do not use SUBJECT TITLES at the beginning of letter, instead incorporate in opening sentence 'Thank you for your letter of 1 January about...'</p>

	<p>Do not use paragraph numbering and make sure text is centre justified.</p> <p>Ensure that unused text boxes are removed as these will appear in the final draft, for example << text>>, Your ref, signature. Make sure also that the Minister's name at the bottom of the letter is in bold and capitals in the centre of the letter 'TOM ARTHUR'.</p> <p>The PS's signature should also be in the centre of the page as detailed.</p>
Official replies	Please include 'I have been asked by Mr Arthur to thank you for your letter of day/month and to reply on his behalf' or a similar form of words
Reallocation	<p>Ministerial replies can be reallocated so that Mr Arthur is answering on behalf of another Cabinet Secretary/Minister who received the original letter. Please thank the correspondent for their letter to the original Cabinet Secretary/Minister and add, 'I am replying as I have portfolio responsibility for the issues you raise'.</p>
Signature	<p>Letters for Mr Arthur's signature (in the centre of the page)</p> <p>TOM ARTHUR</p>
	<p>Letters for PS/Mr Arthur's signature (in the centre of the page)</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]</p> <p>PRIVATE SECRETARY</p>

Spelling	Please use a spell checker and proofread the response before issuing it.
Timing	It's always helpful if cases can reach the Minister as soon as possible as this allows extra time for discussion, if necessary.
Titles	<p>Include the full title of the correspondent, for example Director/Chairman/Convener. If responding to a Councillor, please address him/her as such. If they have another title such as Convenor/Chairperson, this should also be included.</p> <p>Don't use Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms unless the correspondent does.</p> <p>Don't use Esquire after a name.</p>

MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPOWERMENT AND PLANNING

Joe Fitzpatrick MSP

top tips

Joe FitzPatrick MSP is the Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning. You can find his biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

Briefing deadlines

Briefing deadlines will generally be a week in advance of the event or meeting. This is to allow sufficient time for Mr FitzPatrick's consideration, and factor in a pre-meet if required. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

speeches

When writing a speech for Mr FitzPatrick they should:

- be in Arial, size 16 with 1.5 spacing
- not have paragraphs which run over pages
- be written as speaking notes, rather than bullet points
- avoid using acronyms or jargon
- cover hot issues and topical subjects
- include factual material and details of relevant facts
- be relevant to the event, and acknowledge who is in the audience
- have headings for different sections

Other points and suggestions to be aware of are:

- reading the speech aloud can identify any potential challenges or problems in delivering it
- any facts and figures should be checked and double checked for accuracy

- speeches should always be sent up as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack
- Mr FitzPatrick speaks at approximately 150 words per minute

Further guidance on writing ministerial speeches is available.

engagement briefing

Contact Mr FitzPatrick's private office directly for further advice, or to talk through specific requirements for engagements.

Briefings should:

- use the preferred briefing template for visits and meetings
- be kept as short and concise as possible, ensuring it is relevant and avoiding duplication
- include current top lines
- be separate from speaking notes
- note any previous meetings with the stakeholder in the background information section
- assume official support for all visits and meetings, unless otherwise agreed in advance with private office
- include mobile numbers for any supporting officials

Reach out to private office as soon as possible if any amendments need to be made. This is particularly important when Mr FitzPatrick is working from a printed version, and may have started making notes.

Include a map (where required) along with an accurate address, organisation name, contacts, parking information, access information and so on.

correspondence

Download Mr FitzPatrick's letter template.

General correspondence

For general correspondence, make sure:

- all ministerial responses are tailored to the correspondent
- you answer all the questions and points raised, or explain why we can't - correspondence should always be as helpful as possible
- you avoid using jargon or abbreviations
- you contact private office if you need further advice on handling

Private office will always send you back the final copy which was issued, with Mr FitzPatrick's signature added. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Diary correspondence

For diary correspondence:

- contact private office to check diary availability ahead of drafting responses
- include reasoning for the accept or decline recommendation in the private secretary (PS) minute
- submit both an accept and decline where a meeting date has been specified

MiCase correspondence

Keep MiCase correspondence via the system, as this ensures letters are not delayed or misplaced.

Correspondence outwith MiCase

Responses to letters from devolved administrations should be drafted and sent to private office for clearance within seven working days. You should always provide an email address for the correspondent.

MINISTER FOR PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS

George Adam MSP

top tips

George Adam MSP is the Minister for Parliamentary Business. You can read his biography and responsibilities on gov.scot.

High resolution images of Mr Adam are available on Flickr.

Bear in mind that no acronyms or jargon should be used in any briefing, correspondence, or speeches.

The following pages are intended as guidance only, as every scenario can't be accounted for. If you're in any doubt, contact private office for assistance and advice.

briefing and speeches

Official support should be assumed for all visits, meetings, engagements and parliamentary business, unless agreed otherwise with private office. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

If a question and answer session is to take place, you must clearly highlight this in the briefing pack, and provide appropriate supplementary briefing.

Private office will set briefing deadlines via diary entries. If you expect to miss this deadline, contact private office as soon as possible to discuss an extension.

Formatting is very important. Use page breaks in all briefing to separate out sections or annexes (don't use a series of carriage returns).

External meetings and engagements

You should prepare a briefing for meetings or external engagements in Mr Adam's standard briefing template.

An agenda or programme should be agreed in advance with other participants and clearly laid out in the first annex.

Keep the briefing as concise as possible, ensuring it's relevant and avoiding duplication. It should contain only the key facts and necessary background information.

For external engagements, provide a full postal address (checking this matches the diary entry sent to you by private office) and parking arrangements.

If a speech is required, discuss drafting requirements with private office well in advance. You should submit the speaking note as a separate document and prepare it according to the guidance in the speaking notes section on this page.

You must ensure communications colleagues are aware of external engagements, and that appropriate handling arrangements are detailed in the briefing pack. Please keep them copied into any exchanges in advance of, or following, the engagement.

Statements, debates and committee appearances

You should prepare a briefing for parliamentary statements, debates and committee appearances using Mr Adam's parliamentary briefing template.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

You should draft statements, opening debate speeches and opening remarks at committee verbatim. Closing debate speeches should be drafted more loosely, covering the key points in bullet point form. Both should be prepared and formatted according to the speaking notes section on this page, and submitted as a separate document.

Speaking notes

Mr Adam speaks at approximately 120 words per minute. You should draft according to the speaking time provided by private office, while allowing some time for Mr Adam to add his own anecdotes. If the speech is to be used for a parliamentary debate, it's also important to factor in space for interventions.

When formatting a speaking note, please use:

- arial font, size 14
- 1.5 line spacing
- the 'keep lines together' tool – open the 'Paragraph' settings from the ribbon on Microsoft Word and select the tab 'Line and Page Breaks' (this is to avoid sentences running between pages)
- page numbers at the top right-hand corner of the page

correspondence

No jargon or acronyms should be used in correspondence.

If correspondence via MiCase will not reach private office for clearance within the set deadline, you should notify private office in advance. Provide a short note explaining the delay through the system on submission. In the case of a late response, an apology should be included within the text.

If a case is returned to you for redrafting, you should make any changes urgently, and return the case to private office as quickly as possible.

Ministerial replies

When drafting a ministerial response, it should be signed off in Mr Adam's name with his digital signature attached.

Diary cases

If drafting an acceptance to an invite, the correspondent should be asked to contact private office to make logistical arrangements. Private office will then liaise to confirm a date and time, before passing the correspondent back to officials to agree an agenda or programme.

If declining an invitation, responses should state Mr Adam is unable to meet at this time. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

When drafting a response for a diary case, it should be signed off in the name of the assistant or deputy private secretary.

MINISTER FOR CULTURE, EUROPE AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Christina McKelvie MSP

top tips

Christina McKelvie MSP is the Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development. You can find her biography and responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

You may also wish to look at the ScotGov Fairer Twitter account.

engagements

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Official support is expected at all engagements. Any exceptions to this must be agreed with private office in advance. Supporting officials should play an active role, particularly around ensuring that the event runs to time, sticks to the agenda, and valuable discussion is facilitated.

Briefing

Use the correct briefing template as per the table on this page and send as a Word document – not an eRDM link. Guidance is included within the templates.

Deadlines for submitting briefings will be detailed in the diary entry sent to you by private office. These are set with the Ms McKelvie's diary, priorities and commitments in mind. Missing a deadline can have significant consequences and so if you are likely to miss a deadline, flag this to private office as early as possible.

If a briefing requires any amendments after it's been submitted, please phone private office before re-submitting. An amended section or additional annex is often better than resubmitting the whole briefing.

Type of event	Template
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parliamentary debates • committee appearances 	Debate/committee appearance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ministerial working groups • meetings with other ministers, stakeholders or organisations 	Meetings template
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • external visits and events or parliamentary receptions 	Engagements template

speeches

Speech requirements vary based on the engagement, but as default should be drafted verbatim unless agreed otherwise with private office.

When drafting:

- consider the format of the event and the audience
- set a clear structure and avoid jargon
- avoid long, wordy phrases and sentences
- keep to the required word count (speaking rate: 150 words per minute) - never draft above this
- read the speech out loud before submitting

When formatting and finalising the speech:

- do not split sentences or paragraphs between pages. Use the 'keep lines together' checkbox under 'Paragraph > Line and Page Breaks' in Microsoft Word
- set text to Arial, size 18 with 1.5 paragraph spacing

- insert page numbers in the top right corner
- submit as a separate attachment to the wider briefing pack

correspondence

Read the guidance on handling ministerial correspondence.

Replies will be sent out electronically unless no email address is available. Even when sending electronically, the full postal address should be typed in full and the email address provided directly under the final line of the address.

When drafting and submitting:

- thank the sender and refer to the original correspondence, acknowledging if it was sent to another minister
- for diary declines, reply that Ms McKelvie is unable to accept at this time - [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- for diary accepts, include: "Please note that all engagements accepted by the Minister are subject to Parliamentary business and can change at short notice. Please contact MinisterforCEID@gov.scot to finalise arrangements"
- left justify the signature and sign it CHRISTINA MCKELVIE for ministerial replies, or [Redacted – section 38 – personal information], Private Secretary for diary replies

MINISTER FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION AND VETERANS

Graeme Dey MSP

top tips

Graeme Dey MSP is Minister for Higher and Further Education and Minister for Veterans. You can find his biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

Email the Minister for Higher and Further Education and Minister for Veterans.

Engagement briefing

When preparing briefings for Mr Dey, use the preferred template for visits and meetings. Feel free to tailor the information boxes as appropriate and only fill the boxes that are needed.

Officials should use this letterhead when preparing Ministerial correspondence.

Briefings should usually be provided at least two days ahead of an event. If it's a big set piece event, such as a parliamentary debate or lecture, you should send it a week in advance.

Mr Dey should be copied into anything which is relevant to his portfolio interests.

speeches

Mr Dey speaks at approximately 150 words per minute. You should format speeches in Arial font size 20 with double spacing. Speeches should always be sent up as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack and pages must be numbered.

Mr Dey prefers speeches to be written in plain English and accessible to a broad audience – please don't use acronyms or jargon. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice and contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected. Further advice can also be found in the writing a speech guidance.

Feel free to contact private office if you're unsure of anything or require any further clarification.

MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS, INNOVATION, TOURISM AND TRADE

Richard Lochhead MSP

top tips

Richard Lochhead MSP is the Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade. You can find his biography and responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

speeches

Speaking engagements (conferences, meetings, receptions)

If Mr Lochhead is just making short introductory remarks or a more informal speech, then bullet points with key facts and statistical information are fine rather than a full speaking note.

If the Minister is speaking for more than 5 to 7 minutes, or the speech is in a formal setting for example conferences, Parliament, [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office], Mr Lochhead will want a formal and structured speech.

Debates and committee

Full speaking notes are required. Remember to leave time for interventions (when appropriate).

Tips

- it is helpful to have first drafts of speeches as early as possible. Private office will usually set a deadline
- start with the big picture - think about who the audience is and set the speech in context with scene setting facts and figures
- avoid jargon
- read the speech aloud several times before submitting to ensure it is easily readable and the sentence structure flows well (no immediate change of topic)
- send speeches as a separate Word document (not embedded within briefing paper). It makes it easier to amend – if necessary
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Format

- Arial font 16pt
- 1.5 line spacing
- think about natural pauses/breathing when delivering the speech. New line/paragraph with every pause (particularly when wanting to emphasise a line/statement)
- do not let sentences run over the next page
- underline headings
- number pages (on middle bottom of pages)
- include a word count and estimated time of delivery at end

Speaking rate

Mr Lochhead speaks at around 150 words per minute.

Please ensure the following box is completed and included as page one
(a copy is included in the briefing template)

Speech box

Clear message of speech -

Layout of room - round table, theatre style etc. -

Lectern or sitting as part of a panel?

Make-up of the audience?

How many are attending?

What do they want to hear?

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice and contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected. Further advice can also be found in writing a speech.

engagement briefing

Please consider the event being attended and ensure the level of briefing is appropriate.

Short visits do not require a lengthy briefing pack. Make sure you use the briefing template.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Key points

- provide a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names and numbers
- ensure mobile numbers for supporting officials are included
- speaking notes should always be included as separate documents
- relevant subject key headline stats and facts on one sheet of A4 at beginning of briefings
- if amendments are required after the briefing has been submitted, please track changes or make it clear in the covering email
- *[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].*
- if a previous meeting has happened, please include a note of progress since
- *[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].*
- for Q and A, preference is for headings on each subject that a question might arise under with the key facts in bullets under the heading. More detailed background and briefing can be provided in separate annexes
- *[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].*

correspondence

Key points

Mr Lochhead is keen to be as helpful as he can when replying. Try to ensure any points made in the letter are addressed and questions answered where possible. If necessary you can provide a PS minute detailing additional info/advice not for inclusion in the reply.

When preparing a diary case, please ensure communications colleagues have been consulted so that Mr Lochhead can consider this along with policy advice and thoroughly consider the merits of attending.

Use the letter template for all cases.

For all correspondence, always begin with a thank you for sending the original email or letter and refer to the date it was sent. If our response is late, please provide an explanation.

If the original correspondence was sent to another minister but Mr Lochhead is replying, please also make that clear.

Replying to MSPs – ensure you use the reply address provided.

Contact details – if replying to an invitation, ask the person to contact [Redacted – section 38 – personal information]at MinisterSBITT@gov.scot.

Font – Arial, size 12

Language – consider the recipient and tailor appropriately

Sign off – ministerial reply – **RICHARD LOCHHEAD**

PS reply – [Redacted – section 38 – personal information]
Private Secretary

MINISTER FOR GREEN SKILLS, CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND BIODIVERSITY

Lorna Slater MSP

top tips

Lorna Slater MSP is the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity. You can find her biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website. She supports both the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy and the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition

engagements briefing, speeches, meetings and events

Briefing and speeches should be emailed to private office at least one week before the event or meeting is due to take place. If this is not possible, speak to private office – we will try to be as accommodating as possible.

When drafting letters for Ms Slater's signature, she would prefer short sentences where practicable.

Always run a spelling and grammar check and proof read before submitting briefings, correspondence and so on to private office.

Lorna Slater - speeches

There are three questions to consider for preparation of speeches:

Is it online or in person?

For online speeches when reading off a screen, speaking notes can be 12 point font and single spaced and around one to two minutes long. For in person, speaking notes should be Arial 16 with 1.5 spacing.

Is the topic one Ms Slater is familiar with?

For example, is it within her portfolio area and experience? For speeches in areas outwith Ms Slater's portfolio, or unfamiliar material it will be useful to have a fully

written speech. For speeches in areas within Ms Slater's portfolio and experience please provide two to three key points (not in bullet form) – there is no need to write a full speech.

Who is the audience of the speech?

Refer to the 'know the audience' section of this guide for more information.

Key points:

- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- fully written speeches should be left flush (all text aligned at the left margin without indents, except for sub-paragraphs or bullet points following paragraphs)
- include a word count at the end of the speech
- speaking notes or fully written speeches should always be sent up as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack - pages should always be numbered
- page breaks should occur only at the end of a full sentence, with no split paragraph between pages (therefore providing a natural pause between changing pages)
- avoid using acronyms and jargon - remember this is being spoken

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice and contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected. You can find further advice in writing a speech.

Top tips on writing a speech for Ms Slater:

- Ms Slater speaks at approximately 150 words per minute

- speeches should be written in plain English
- make sure the speech has a clear structure
- speeches for pre-records should be a maximum of one to two minutes verbatim
- read your draft out loud before sending it to private office for the minister's consideration to check flow and that it is not too long

Speeches should be written considering different communication styles as outlined by the 4MAT standard. Find out more in these links:

- Microsoft Word - 4mat model and notes
- Jane Sunley - The 4mat system
- 4mat and communication
- why, what, how, what else - 4MAT communication

Know the audience

- what do they expect to hear from Ms Slater?
- how long will they expect her to speak for?
- is the speech appropriate to the audience, for example school children?
- who in the audience is worthy of a mention?
- consult widely to improve relevance
- think laterally about issues affecting the audience - get the most up-to-date position possible on these (consulting with the communications team where necessary)
- if using quotations – make sure the source of the quote will be familiar and relevant to the audience

engagement briefing

Lorna Slater - engagement briefing

You should use Ms Slater's preferred template for engagements or meetings.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

For most visits, it's helpful to have logistics, an overview and a summary of who Ms Slater will be meeting. You should note whether media will be present and, if expected, include an appropriate media briefing. Briefing overviews should describe both the event, and what will be expected of Ms Slater - for example, whether the minister is being invited to do a speech, followed by a Q and A or chairing a panel discussion.

You should facilitate where appropriate the use of public transport, walking or bicycle to attend the engagement. Advise on appropriate footwear and outerwear for engagements if walking outdoors.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. Official support should be assumed for all visits or meetings, unless agreed otherwise by private office. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

You should keep briefing short, relevant and avoid duplication. Briefing for routine meetings and visits should be no longer than two to three pages. Briefing for committee and debates should be comprehensive. Differentiate your briefing to ensure it is sufficient for the needs of the event or meeting. For routine, or regular meetings with people or groups who Ms Slater has met before, detailed background on the organisation or attendees is not required, only details for the event on the day. Speaking notes should always be submitted as separate Word documents.

Briefings for recess or summer tours, or multiple visits over a few days, should always be provided separately for each engagement/meeting as separate briefings.

They should not be provided under one briefing or Word document, and it's helpful to have an associated draft programme overview. If in doubt, speak to private office.

Briefing should include:

- cover sheet
- annex a - agenda
- annex b - summary page
- annex c - meeting attendees

Debates/ members' business debates

- use the briefing template for debates/members' business debates
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- briefing should be comprehensive and have clear question and answers in thematic heading format, rather than Q and A format
- speeches should be in Arial 16 with 1.5 spacing
- speeches should always be sent up as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack with numbered pages

closing remarks for debates should be drafted with key points (not in bullet format) and allow enough time for the minister to respond to the debate (generally around a third of the allocated closing time, so if closing is seven minutes, draft two and a half minutes of closing remarks)

Attendance at committees

- ensure you use Ms Slater's preferred template for either engagements or meetings
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

- opening remarks should be no longer than three minutes
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- be short, succinct and to the point - ideally no more than four or five lines long (two short paragraphs max). Please use 97 words or less as per parliamentary guidance
- answer the questions
- avoid complex quotes or tables
- at the top of the key messages, please include around three or four of the most likely supplementary topics/issues followed by bullet point responses so the minister can easily identify and use as appropriate in the chamber - these topics/issues should be numbered with an index, so they can be found quickly
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

correspondence

Diary invitations

You should consider the following before submitting a response:

- all invitations addressed to the minister should be replied to by her private office even if another cabinet secretary or minister is to take on the engagement on her behalf
- if another cabinet secretary or minister is going to undertake an engagement, the last paragraph should ask the correspondent to contact the relevant diary secretary
- all diary acceptance letters should be 'subject to parliamentary business' unless the event is out with parliamentary session, during recess
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

- sound advice should be received from both policy and communications and included in the private secretary minute to allow the minister to arrive at the correct decision
- consider whether officials could agree to fulfil the commitment
- diary responses can be brief

Accept

Thank you for your invitation to Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for inviting her to attend xx on xx. Ms Slater would be delighted to accept your invitation subject to parliamentary business and diary availability. I would be grateful if you would contact the Minister's Diary Secretary, xxx via email at MinisterGSCEB@gov.scot to make the necessary arrangements.

Decline

Thank you for your invitation to Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for ..., inviting her to attend xx on xx. Unfortunately Ms Slater is unable to attend but asked me to pass on her best wishes for a successful event. [Unfortunately Ms Slater is unable to attend but suggests that an official from xx attends. Please contact xxx ...

MiCase

All letters should follow the format:

- opening with courtesy, warmth and empathy
- responding to the specific question or concern
- noting any actions to be taken by either party e.g. 'You may wish to comment on the consultation here:<>', or "I will ask officials to arrange a meeting"
- closing courtesy

Do

- populate the address in full or name and if sending by email – add in 'By email: and add in email address below
- try to fit the reply on one page but do not decrease the font size to do so – if the letter runs to two pages, ensure you have more than one line of text on the second page and ensure the second page doesn't have **LORNA SLATER** without any paragraph text on the same page
- ensure enough space is left for Ms Slater's electronic signature
- ensure you answer the question, and the response is as courteous and helpful as possible
- ensure that all hyperlinks are typed out in full as letters are either sent out hard copy or electronically by PDF
- ensure letters are left aligned, including letter references and the date
- ensure Ms Slater's name is in bold left flush – **LORNA SLATER**
- spell/quality check before finalising correspondence through MiCase
- ensure there are no superfluous spaces within the letter – one space after a comma, colon, semi-colon, two spaces after a full stop

Do not

- leave in 'Your Ref' and 'Our Ref' - if there are no references delete both
- abbreviate hyperlinks – these should be typed out in full
- use commas after the address details, date or salutation

MINISTER FOR SOCIAL CARE, MENTAL WELLBEING AND SPORT

Maree Todd MSP

top tips

Maree Todd MSP is the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport. You can find her biography and responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

Official support

Official support should be assumed for all visits or meetings, unless agreed otherwise with private office.

speeches

Speaking engagements (conferences, meetings, receptions)

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. Ms Todd would be grateful for full speeches for more formal events and on any topic out with her own portfolio. Please try to submit these at least a week in advance. She prefers bullet points for smaller scale informal events.

Debates or committee

Full speaking notes are required. However, debate closing speeches should be topped and tailed and include key messages and rebuttals.

Tips:

- send in first drafts of speeches as early as possible - private office will usually set a deadline and pre-meetings should be arranged, but please ask if this hasn't been done
- avoid jargon
- read speaking notes aloud to check fluency
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Format:

- Arial font 16pt
- 1.5 line spacing
- page breaks at the end of a paragraph
- pages numbered
- include a word count and estimated time of delivery

Speaking rate

Ms Todd speaks at around 140 words per minute.

Please ensure the following box is completed and included as page one (a copy is included in the briefing template):

Speech box

Clear message of speech -

Layout of room - round table, theatre style etc. -

Lectern or sitting as part of a panel?

Make-up of the audience?

How many are attending?

What do they want to hear?

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice and contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected. Further advice can also be found in writing a speech.

engagement briefing

Please consider the event being attended and ensure the level of briefing is appropriate. Short visits do not require a lengthy briefing pack.

For visits, use Ms Todd's visit briefing template and for meetings, use Ms Todd's meeting briefing template.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Key points

You should provide a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names and numbers. For remote locations or large sites, it would also be helpful to provide a grid reference. You can find a latitude and longitude reference on

Google maps, by right clicking on a point and then selecting 'What's here?'. Please also copy your briefing to Government Car Service.

You should also:

- ensure mobile numbers for supporting officials are included
- always include speaking notes as separate documents
- if amendments are required after the briefing has been submitted, please track changes or make it clear in the covering email
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- if a previous meeting has happened, please include a note of progress since
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

correspondence

Ms Todd is keen to be as helpful as she can when replying. Try to ensure any points made in the letter have been addressed and questions answered where possible. If necessary you can provide a PS minute detailing additional information or advice not for inclusion in the reply.

When preparing a diary case, please ensure communications colleagues have been consulted so that Ms Todd can consider this along with policy advice and thoroughly consider the merits of attending.

You should also use Ms Todd's letter template for all cases.

For all correspondence, always begin with a thank you for sending the original email or letter and refer to the date it was sent. If our response is late, please provide an explanation.

If the original correspondence was sent to another minister but Ms Todd is replying, you should also make that clear.

When replying to MSPs, ensure you use the reply address provided. If replying to an invitation, please ask them to contact MinisterSCMWS@gov.scot.

Key points

- font – Arial, size 12
- language – consider the recipient and tailor appropriately
- sign off – ministerial reply – MAREE TODD MSP
- PS reply – [Redacted – section 38 – personal information]

MINISTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

Jenni Minto MSP

top tips

Jenny Minto MSP is the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health. You can find her biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

speeches

Speaking engagements (conferences, meetings, receptions)

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Ms Minto would be grateful for full speeches for more formal events and on any topic out with her own portfolio. Please try to submit these at least a week in advance.

She prefers bullet points for smaller scale informal events.

Debates or committee

Full speaking notes are required. However, debate closing speeches should be topped and tailed and include key messages and rebuttals.

Tips:

- send in first drafts of speeches as early as possible - private office will usually set a deadline [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- avoid jargon
- read speaking notes aloud to check fluency
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Format:

- Arial font 16pt

- 1.5 line spacing
- page breaks at the end of a paragraph
- pages numbered
- include a word count and estimated time of delivery

Speaking rate

Ms Minto speaks at around 140 words per minute.

Please ensure the following box is completed and included as page one (a copy is included in the briefing template):

Speech box

Clear message of speech -

Layout of room - round table, theatre style etc. -

Lectern or sitting as part of a panel?

Make-up of the audience?

How many are attending?

What do they want to hear?

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice and contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected. Further advice can also be found in writing a speech.

engagement briefing

Please consider the event being attended and ensure the level of briefing is appropriate. Short visits do not require a lengthy briefing pack. Make sure you use Ms Minto's briefing template.

Key points

You should provide a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names and numbers. For remote locations or large sites, it would also be helpful to provide a grid reference. You can find a latitude and longitude reference on Google maps, by right clicking on a point and then selecting 'What's here?'. Please also copy your briefing to Government Car Service.

You should also:

- ensure mobile numbers for supporting officials are included
- always include speaking notes as separate documents
- if amendments are required after the briefing has been submitted, please track changes or make it clear in the covering email
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- if a previous meeting has happened, please include a note of progress since
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

correspondence

Ms Minto is keen to be as helpful as she can when replying to correspondence. Try to ensure any points made in the letter have been addressed and questions answered where possible. If necessary you can provide a private secretary (PS) minute detailing additional information or advice not for inclusion in the reply. Make sure you use Ms Minto's letter template.

When preparing a diary case, ensure communications colleagues are consulted so Ms Minto can consider this along with policy advice and thoroughly consider the merits of attending.

For all correspondence, always begin with a thank you for sending the original email or letter and refer to the date it was sent. If our response is late, please provide an explanation.

If the original correspondence was sent to another minister but Ms Minto is replying, you should also make that clear.

When replying to MSPs, ensure you use the reply address provided. If replying to an invitation, please ask them to contact ministerphwh@gov.scot.

Key points:

- font – Arial, size 12
- language – consider the recipient and tailor appropriately
- sign off – ministerial reply – Jenni Minto MSP
- PS reply [Redacted – section 38 – personal information].

MINISTER FOR ZERO CARBON BUILDINGS, ACTIVE TRAVEL AND TENANTS' RIGHTS

Patrick Harvie MSP

Top tips

Patrick Harvie MSP is the Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights. You can find his biography and portfolio responsibilities on the gov.scot website.

Mr Harvie supports the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy and the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice.

Top tips

Consider the type of meeting or event and tailor the briefing appropriately. Mr Harvie likes succinct briefings, with the high level, most relevant detail at the top, followed by additional details. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. Always put the most recent or the most notable issues at the top so that Mr Harvie does not have to go digging in the briefing for the most important details. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

The briefing should be clear about the purpose of the meeting and what Mr Harvie needs to get out of it. Identify clearly what action you want the minister to take and the deadline. If you want Mr Harvie to take actions, make decisions or make an announcement at a meeting, always ensure that he has considered the issue in detail before asking in public.

Consider why Mr Harvie is having the meeting, what are the aims (what does he wish to get out of it), what might he be pressed on by stakeholders/attendees? A one-pager covering the purpose and key points is always helpful. Mr Harvie likes to know who he is meeting and their role/position. If there are a series of annexes, put the names, biographies and roles of who Mr Harvie is meeting near the beginning of the briefing. It is also useful to know when the last contact the individual had with the Scottish Government either by meeting another minister or through correspondence.

It is important that the briefing accurately reflects the name/s and contact details of the officials attending each meeting or event.

Briefings should be sent to private office one week before the event. Where possible this should be adhered to and only be late by exception, having been discussed with private office.

We understand there are occasions that briefing/submissions may need to be changed after being sent. If this is the case, it is important to return in tracked changes or clearly mark where the changes have been made, as well as providing a clean version.

We would also ask, where possible, to only be copied into a final version and not be included in the email exchanges that lead to a final document. This, we appreciate, will be dependent on the situation, as it is sometimes useful to understand the status of submissions/briefings/responses.

If Mr Harvie has a meeting/event that covers a number of policy areas, it would be helpful if a single policy area lead on the co-ordination and preparation of the full briefing pack.

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

When appropriate, please provide any parking information and a map, as well as including a photo from google maps as an annex. Either update the existing box with car or bicycle parking details or add an extra line and name a specific entrance for ministerial car or bicycle parking arrangements.

speeches

Key points when writing a speech for Mr Harvie are he always:

- prefers bullet points, rather than prose. As a guide you should provide no more than 1 to 2 pages of bullet points for a 5-minute speech and no more than 3 to 4 pages for a 10-minute speech

- needs to know who is in the audience - get this from the organiser
- needs to see any agenda. If it is a conference, there is usually one and a theme. There may also be papers such as a glossy brochure. It is very important to get hold of this and associated papers as it will help form a relevant speech to the occasion
- needs to know the format. Will the speech be followed by Q and A, is it part of a panel of speakers or is it an opening speech?
- there should always be a briefing on possible questions and answers if the organisers have indicated that there will be Q and A at the event. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- needs the facts, and then views. Bullet points are usually enough. Keep it simple. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- likes to get speeches one week before the event to check over and to allow time to commission more information, check facts or briefing
- does like helpful factual material - and detail of relevant facts
- likes to refer to the audience – include examples of what the audience do or have done to make the speech relevant
- Mr Harvie speaks at about 150 words a minute
- speeches should be in Arial 16 font with 1.5 spacing
- paragraphs should be no longer than 2 or 3 lines
- if the speech is in printed format, page breaks should be at the end of a sentence. Paragraphs should not run over pages
- ensure pages are numbered
- include examples of things Mr Harvie has done in his ministerial capacity
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- always check the speech for accuracy – facts and figures should be checked and double checked

Speeches should always be sent up as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack - and pages should always be numbered. Avoid using acronyms and jargon. Remember this is being spoken.

- Mr Harvie would like to see an early draft of the speech before it is finalised to give thoughts on direction and content. This does not have to be fully complete

Drafting a speech is challenging, so be sure to draw on experienced colleagues for advice and contact private office for direction on the type of speech and structure expected. Further advice can also be found in writing a speech.

When drafting a speech, consider the following:

- make the speech relevant to the event
- who are the audience and what do they want to hear about
- the speech should use positive language
- don't recycle or copy and paste parts of previous speeches on the same subject
- avoid highly technical content
- include the big picture context - start and end with the big picture
- include some relevant context, especially in the introduction
- include any constitutional points that are appropriate
- cover hot issues and topical subjects
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- add some colour to the speech - personalise the speech - feel free to include testimonials, startling facts, and quotes
- it is important to read the speech aloud to identify any potential challenges or problems in delivering it

Read examples of speeches on the gov.scot website.

Patrick Harvie - engagement briefing

When creating an engagement briefing for Mr Harvie:

- ensure you use Mr Harvie's preferred briefing template for engagements or meetings
- briefing should always follow the structure laid out in the template including the sequence of the annexes. For briefings with more than 6 annexes (for example A to F) please list annexes as page numbers on the contents page (for example 1 to 25) instead of using letters of the alphabet – as these aids the minister in locating the information more easily in a larger briefing pack and reduces the need of tabbing each annex
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- email briefing and speeches one week before the event
- an address and postcode (checked with the organisers) should be provided to the private office assistant private secretary as far in advance as possible. Briefing should include the postcode/map/directions/public transport options, as well as venue contacts. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- provide a map (where required), postcode, address, organisation name, contact names and numbers. For remote locations or large sites, it would also be helpful to provide a grid reference. You can find a latitude and longitude reference on Google maps, by right clicking on a point and then selecting 'What's here?'. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- briefings should be short, succinct and have an easy-to-follow structure. For regular meetings 8 pages maximum. Briefings for larger meetings Mr Harvie is chairing should include a steering brief but should still be kept as succinct as possible

- speaking notes should always be submitted as separate documents (and contain page numbers). Find out more in speech preferences
- any amendments required after the briefing has been submitted may require to be written in by private office. Please use tracked changes 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 and please ensure a mobile number is provided for the day
- please differentiate your briefing to ensure it is sufficient and proportionate for the needs of the event or meeting. For example:

Meetings with key stakeholders, ministers of other governments, major conferences and high profile events

When preparing these types of briefing include:

- ideally a maximum of 20 pages (number pages and don't embed documents in Word documents (they can get missed in our printing))
- cover sheet/index
- agenda
- meeting objective(s) and what outcome(s) are desired (this should be succinct)
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- if there was a previous meeting, a note of that and progress since
- Q and A
- bios on meeting attendees (not previously met)
- provide a full delegate list
- speaking note - if required

Meetings with external stakeholders, receptions or events, including dinners

Prepare these briefings similar to those for key stakeholders but ideally include no more than eight pages.

Routine visits, engagements or photo-ops

These should include:

- logistic briefing only - no more than six pages
- why the Minister is attending
- when, where, what and who, guest list, bios as above
- any key local or topical issues to be aware of
- Mr Harvie would like a line about most recent engagement the organisation has had with Scottish Government – for example, correspondence or meeting and a line on who the local MSP/MPs are

Parliamentary engagements

Mr Harvie takes parliamentary engagements such as debates, statements or committee appearances very seriously. Such engagements will require comprehensive, but also easily navigable and succinct briefing. This is likely to include:

- cover sheet
- key messages to get across
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].
- speaking note - find out more in speech preferences
- historical context, including key facts or figures (not covered above)

- summary of any previous evidence sessions

[Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

correspondence

Ministerial correspondence is subject to corporate targets and should be answered within 20 working days. Draft replies for ministerial consideration should be with private office within 10 working days. Guidance for drafting correspondence and handling invitations is below and private office are more than happy to answer any queries you may have.

Use Mr Harvie's letter template for all cases.

Key points

- Mr Harvie attaches great importance to correspondence and would like policy colleagues to draft quick and sympathetic responses to all letters from members of the public
- Mr Harvie will personally respond to all letters from MPs, MSPs, MEPs, Members of the House of Lords, councillors, chairpersons/chief executives of public bodies and key stakeholders, friends/acquaintances, and constituents (Glasgow)
- in each case there is a 'main' point the correspondent makes. [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office]. Then respond by setting out the facts and then our views. Candour is good. We cannot satisfy all comers, nor should we raise expectations unfairly
- use plain English
- check several times for incorrect spellings, typos or grammatical errors
- dates should follow Scottish Government convention (for example, 20 May 2022 not 20th May)
- remove unnecessary parts of the template (for example, unused refs, signature). Include the month and year at the top (day will be written in) and

put the minister's name (**PATRICK HARVIE**) in the signature space –the letter should be ready to print and not need further editing by private office

- leave 4 lines between the date and the start of the letter for the 'Dear x' to be handwritten and 6 lines between the end of the letter and the minister's name for the signature which should be in bold in the centre of the page
- we check the MiCase system regularly for all draft responses for clearance so there is no need to phone/email to alert us
- [Redacted - section 29(1)(d) – operation of any ministerial private office].

Guidance is listed in this table in alphabetical order:

<p>Address</p>	<p>MSPs - please use the reply address provided on the letter template</p> <p>Many MSPs now request that replies are sent to their constituency address or will only list their constituency as the reply address. Please also ensure that if the incoming letter has a reference, this is copied in the response under 'Your Ref'</p> <p>Constituents - when an MSP/MP writes on behalf of their constituent, please refer to the constituent by name and state their address if given</p> <p>Email - some correspondents prefer to receive their response by email, or don't give a postal address. If there is only an email address, please put this under the correspondent's name at the top of the letter. Once the letter has been signed off, it will be scanned and emailed by private office</p>
<p>Contact details</p>	<p>When drafting an acceptance to an invitation, please include a sentence asking the correspondent to contact the Minister's Assistant Private Secretary, [Redacted – section 38 – personal information], via email</p>

	at MinisterforZCBATTR@gov.scot to make the necessary arrangements. (See also Invitations)
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open the letter with some background, for example: 'Thank you for your letter of x about...' • please ensure the response answers the points raised by the correspondent • avoid 'general interest' details, which don't answer the question asked • if cutting and pasting from previous correspondence, please ensure that the response is tailored to the current correspondent and that all facts and figures are up to date
Co-ordinated responses	Many MiCases are related to PQs, press releases etc. Please ensure that all facts and figures are consistent
Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • please refer to the date of the original letter in the response • if you send up the response at the end/beginning of a month, please check that the letter is dated appropriately. If in doubt it is often best to date a response with the new month as, depending on Mr Harvie's box arrangements, it may be into the next month before the letter is signed
Delays	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the response is more than 4 weeks since the original letter was written, include an apology for the delay in replying • if the MiCase is not sent up to the minister within the private office deadline, include a short note explaining the delay
<p>Diary invitations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure a valid postal/email address is put on the final reply letters - this is important so we can make sure the letter reaches the correct recipient • make sure the final reply letters are signed off by the private secretary rather than the minister. Private office then sends out all accept/reject letters • the minister doesn't sign these off, unless they are from someone he personally responds to (see the list of contacts in key points) • please ensure that the PS minute includes all specific policy details/key points/comms views - the more information given the more likely the Minister will make a firm decision • flag up any diary cases that are going to be sent up late - especially if it is an event that is in the near future. This allows us to let the organisation know well before the event is taking place • please ensure the grammar and spelling is accurate - in private office we don't have time to change all the letters individually, so this is a great help <p>Sample diary case responses:</p>

	<p>Accept:</p> <p>Thank you for your letter of 31 August inviting Patrick Harvie MSP, Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights, to attend your Annual Conference.</p> <p>Mr Harvie would be delighted to accept your invitation subject to Parliamentary business. I would be grateful if you could contact the Minister's Assistant Private Secretary, [Redacted – section 38 – personal information], via email at MinisterforZCBATTR@gov.scot to arrange a mutually convenient date/make the necessary arrangements.</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information] PRIVATE SECRETARY</p> <p>Decline:</p> <p>Thank you for your letter of 31 August inviting Patrick Harvie MSP, Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights, to attend your Annual Conference.</p> <p>Unfortunately, due to prior commitments, Mr Harvie will be unable to accept your kind invitation. Please accept his apologies and best wishes for a successful event.</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information] PRIVATE SECRETARY</p>
<p>Font</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the main text of the letter should always be Arial, font size 12

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • please note that the St Andrew's House address details, our ref and date are formatted. Please don't reformat
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • please consider who will be reading the response for example, children/young people • ensure that the reply is clear, concise, and written in a language that is easily understood. Read how to write well for reference • please don't use unnecessary phrases at the beginning of sentences, for example: 'I am writing to...'; 'First of all,...'; 'I have to advise you that...'; 'Perhaps it would be helpful if I were to set out some general background about...' • keep sentences short and avoid jargon • if a case is reallocated to Patrick Harvie for answer the phrase 'I am replying as I have portfolio responsibility for the issues you raise' should be used • please don't use the phrase 'I am afraid'. An alternative is 'Unfortunately' • please don't use the phrase, 'Scottish Ministers have no locus to intervene'. An alternative wording is 'it is not appropriate for Scottish Ministers to intervene' • where appropriate add, 'I hope this is helpful' at the end of a response
Layout	

- try to fit the reply on one page, but don't make the font smaller to do so
- don't alter the default page set-up. If drafting a letter out with MiCase, please use the ministerial template found in the Scottish Ministers folder in Microsoft Word
- leave four lines free at the top between the date and the start of the letter and six lines at bottom of the text of the response to allow the Minister to add his signature
- if, due to the above formatting, the Minister's name is the only thing on the second page, insert an appropriate page break to ensure that either two full sentences or the last paragraph is moved onto the second page
- don't use **SUBJECT TITLES** at the beginning of letter, instead incorporate in opening sentence 'Thank you for your letter of 1 January about...'
- don't use paragraph numbering
- ensure that unused text boxes are removed as these will appear in the final draft i.e. << text>> , Your ref, signature
- ensure that the Minister's name at the bottom of the letter is in bold and capitals in the centre of the letter '**PATRICK HARVIE**'.
- the PS's signature should also be in the centre of the page as detailed below
- text should be centre justified

Official replies	Please include 'I have been asked by Mr Harvie to thank you for your letter of day/month and to reply on his behalf' or a similar form of words
Reallocation	Ministerial replies can be reallocated so that Mr Harvie is answering on behalf of another cabinet secretary or minister who received the original letter. Please thank the correspondent for their letter to the original cabinet secretary or minister and add, 'I am replying as I have portfolio responsibility for the issues you raise'.
Signature	<p>Letters for the Minister's signature (in the centre of the page)</p> <p>PATRICK HARVIE</p> <p>Letters for PS/Mr Harvie's signature (in the centre of the page)</p> <p>[Redacted – section 38 – personal information]</p> <p>PRIVATE SECRETARY</p>
Spelling	Please use a spell checker and proofread the response before issuing it
Timing	It is always helpful if cases can reach the minister as soon as possible as this allows extra time for discussion, if necessary
Titles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include the full title of the correspondent i.e. Director/Chairman/Convener • if responding to a Councillor, please address him/her as such. If they have another title such as Convener/Chairperson, this should also be included

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• don't use Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms unless the correspondent does• don't use Esquire after a name
--	---

MINISTER FOR HOUSING

Paul McLennan MSP

top tips

Mr McLennan is the Minister for Housing. You can find his biography, portfolio responsibilities and official photo on the gov.scot website.

Supporting officials

Official support is expected at all engagements. Exceptions need to be agreed with private office in advance.

Briefing

We typically ask for briefing and speeches to be emailed to private office at least one week before the event or meeting is due to take place. We will specify a deadline when we email you. Should this not be possible, speak to private office and we will try to be as accommodating as possible.

Please use the correct briefing template and send this as a Word document, not as an eRDM link. The templates include guidance and you should ensure you follow the steps.

You should submit speeches as separate documents and have page numbers. Please read Mr McLennan's speech preferences on this page.

If your briefing requires amendments after it's submitted, check with private office before re-submitting. An amended section or additional annex is often better than submitting the whole briefing again, particularly for parliamentary debates. We can advise what is best in each instance.

Committee or debate briefing

Type of event	Template
----------------------	-----------------

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parliamentary debates • committee appearances 	Committee and debate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ministerial working groups • meetings with other ministers, stakeholders or organisations 	Meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receptions and events including dinners • external visits, engagements or events (including dinners) 	Engagements

Speeches

Speech requirements vary based on the engagement. If you're drafting a significant speech (for example, a parliamentary statement or making a key announcement), Mr McLennan prefers to receive any feedback on a speech outline before any major work is done.

Whilst drafting, consider the format of the event, including whether the minister will be speaking from a lectern or a sitting position. For the latter, a bullet style speech as well as a full verbatim speech, may be required.

Mr McLennan speaks at around 160 words per minute. Always allow time (usually a couple of minutes) for the minister's own additions and anecdotes and never submit a speech over the required time.

You should also think carefully about the audience. For example, if the audience will principally be young people, don't make it too heavy on policy. You should avoid

simply cutting and pasting from previous speeches or pasting together separate contributions.

You should also make sure:

- speeches have a clear structure, flow and are free from jargon and clichés
- you're clear on what the speech is trying to achieve
- to avoid lengthy phrases and sentences
- to always read the speech out loud to pick up on repetitiveness or a lack of natural breathing space

When formatting and finalising:

- don't split sentences or paragraphs between two pages (use the 'keep lines together' checkbox in Word, by going to 'Paragraph' and selecting the tab 'Line and Page Breaks')
- text should be Arial, size 16 with 1.5 paragraph spacing
- insert page numbers
- you should send speeches as a separate Word document to the wider briefing pack

correspondence

On MiCase:

When replying to MSPs, ensure you use their preferred reply address – some MSPs ask a particular address to be used.

You should begin by thanking the sender for their letter and refer to the date it was sent. If our response is late, provide a short apology for the delay in replying.

If the original correspondence was sent to another minister but Mr McLennan is replying, acknowledge this and explain why he is responding.

Suggested diary responses

Accept

Thank you for your invitation to Paul McLennan MSP, Minister for Housing, inviting him to attend [insert occasion] on [insert date].

Mr McLennan would be delighted to accept your invitation. Please note that all engagements accepted by the Minister are subject to parliamentary business and can change at short notice.

I would be grateful if you would contact the Minister's Diary Secretary via email at MinisterHousing@gov.scot to make the necessary arrangements.

Decline

Thank you for your invitation to Paul McLennan MSP, Minister for Housing, inviting him to attend [insert occasion] on [insert date].

Unfortunately, Mr McLennan is unable to attend but asked me to pass on his best wishes for a successful event.

Or:

Unfortunately, Mr McLennan is unable to attend, but suggests that an official from [insert attendee's details] attends. Please contact [insert name and contact details].