



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Our Words

## First Minister's Questions

by Portree High School and Magic Torch Comics

First Minister's Questions (FMQs) happens on a Thursday and lasts 45 minutes.



FMQs provides a form of scrutiny on the Government. It gives MSPs a chance to ask questions regarding issues brought up in their constituencies and to get responses on record.



It takes place in the Debating Chamber. All 129 MSPs usually attend, including the First Minister and government, and the Presiding Officer. There are also journalists, official reporters, special guests invited by the Presiding officer and members of the public who all sit in the gallery.



The Presiding Officer sits directly opposite the First Minister supported by clerks. Their role during FMQs is to pick relevant questions, while remaining impartial. The Presiding Officer also has the role of peacekeeping during FMQs.





To represent their community effectively and prepare for asking a question at FMQs, MSPs must listen to their constituents as much as possible.



There are many different ways that people can contact their MSP.



Emails are one effective way.



Or people can meet their MSPs at surgeries held in their communities.



MSPs are always ready to listen to questions or concerns.



All of these different priorities and opinions will be considered by an MSP when deciding what question to submit.

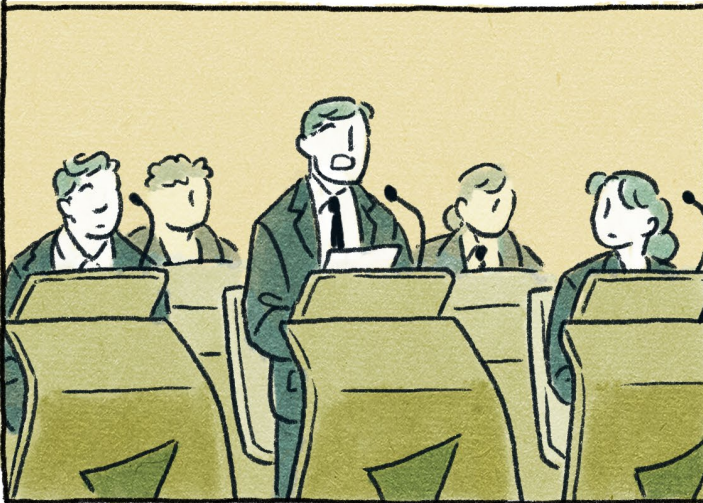




The Presiding Officer selects around six questions to be asked by the backbench MSPs. MSPs must submit those questions on the Monday before FMQs. It is usually the most topical questions that are selected and the First Minister has time to prepare responses to those questions.



The Party Leaders also get to ask questions the First Minister is not expecting.



Difficult questions can sometimes be designed to catch the FM out, but they also have an important role to play in helping scrutinise Government.



Throughout FMQs the Presiding Officer decides who speaks and keeps order in the chamber. The PO must be unbiased and give everyone a fair chance.



Can I ask the First Minister to commit to increasing mental health services for young people?





Well obviously we are all extremely concerned about the challenges now facing our young people and that is why...



The question and the response become a matter of record, and of course can ultimately start to influence policy and investment.



It also helps people see that they are part of the process and that Governments are accountable to them.



This process of questioning and accountability all starts with listening.



Can I ask the First Minister...



And it does not stop.

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