



Scottish Council of
Jewish Communities



Empowering Scotland's Ethnic and
Cultural Minority Communities

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MEMO+^{PLUS}

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Minority Ethnic Matters Overview

*MEMO+ is an occasional series of briefing papers on topics of interest to minority ethnic communities in Scotland. It is produced by the **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities** in partnership with **BEMIS – empowering Scotland's ethnic and cultural minority communities**, and is supported by the **Scottish Government**.*

The Scottish Parliament and Government

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1. The Scottish Parliament

Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs)

The Scottish Parliament has 129 members. 73 of these are elected to represent local constituencies, and there are also 56 regional MSPs who are elected in a separate ballot in 8 regions each of which is made up of a number of constituencies. This system is intended to make the overall distribution of seats correspond more closely to the proportion of votes cast for each party, and enables independent candidates and small parties that receive a significant proportion of the vote to gain seats even if they do not receive enough votes to win a constituency seat by 'first past the post'.

As a result, each person in Scotland is represented in the Scottish Parliament by one constituency MSP and seven regional MSPs who may be from several different parties.

[Click here](#) for information about how to contact your local constituency and regional MSPs

The last elections to the Scottish Parliament in May 2016 left no party with an overall majority. Although the SNP won more seats than any other party, they only have 63 of the 129 seats in the Parliament – fewer than half. Since they decided not to enter a formal coalition to share government with any other party, they have formed a minority administration, and so will only be able to implement any policy if it is supported by at least one other party.

The State of the Parties

The Conservatives are the second largest party in the Parliament with 31 MSPs (up from 16 in the last Parliament), and are therefore the official opposition. Labour, which lost one third of their seats in the last election, are the third largest party with 23 MSPs, the Green Party is fourth largest with 6 MSPs (4 more than in the last Parliament). Although the Liberal Democrats still have 5 MSPs, the same number as in the last Parliament, they are now the smallest party. There are currently no Independent MSPs in the Parliament.

Number of MSPs elected in each political party

	Constituency MSPs	Regional MSPs	Total
SNP	59	4	63
Conservative	7	24	31
Labour	3	20*	23*
Liberal Democrat	4	1	5
Green	0	6	6

These figures exclude the Presiding Officer, who gives up party allegiance on election. The current Presiding Officer, Ken Macintosh, was elected as a Labour MSP for the West of Scotland Region.

How does the Parliament work?

The Presiding Officer: **Ken Macintosh**

The Presiding Officer, who is elected by the MSPs from among their own number, chairs proceedings in the Chamber of the Scottish Parliament, and is also Convener of the [Parliamentary Bureau](#) and the [Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body](#). (The Parliamentary Bureau is responsible for timetabling parliamentary business and establishing parliamentary committees, and the Corporate Body manages the administration of the Parliament.)

The Presiding Officer sets aside any party political allegiance and remains politically impartial, taking the interests of all Members equally into account and acting on their behalf, so, although Ken Macintosh was elected as a Labour MSP he will play no further role in party politics either within or outwith the Parliament.



***Ken Macintosh** was elected as a Labour MSP for the West of Scotland Region, but, since his election as Presiding Officer, does not have any party political affiliation.*

He was born in Inverness in 1962, and attended schools in Skye, Oban, and Edinburgh, before studying History at Edinburgh University. After working for the BBC, he was elected as MSP for the Eastwood constituency in the 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011 Scottish elections, and served as Shadow Education Secretary in the last Parliament. He lost that seat in the 2016 election, but was returned as a regional member. He is married and has six children.

MSPs also elected two **Deputy Presiding Officers**. They only set aside their party allegiance whilst they are actually deputising for the Presiding Officer, and are able to speak and act in accordance with their party political views at all other times.

Deputy Presiding Officer: [Linda Fabiani](#)



Linda Fabiani represents East Kilbride as an SNP constituency MSP.

Born in Glasgow in 1956, she is of Italian origin and is a Knight of the Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity. She was elected as a regional MSP for Central Scotland in the 1999 election, and again in 2003 and 2007, and served as Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture in the SNP administration of 2007.

Deputy Presiding Officer: [Christine Grahame](#)



Christine Grahame represents Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale as an SNP constituency MSP.

She was born in Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire in 1944, and brought up in Edinburgh, where she qualified as a teacher, and later as a solicitor. She has been a regional MSP since 1999, and was Shadow Minister for Social Justice from 2004 to 2007.

Meetings of the full Parliament

The Parliament meets in the Debating Chamber on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday each week to debate new legislation and issues raised by MSPs, and to question Ministers. All meetings are open to the public; contact [Scottish Parliament Visitor Services](#) to request tickets to watch proceedings from the public gallery, and to watch online see <http://www.scottishparliament.tv/>.

Parliamentary Committees

Committees are central to the work of the Parliament. They examine proposed legislation in detail, consider written and oral evidence from interested parties, conduct inquiries, and consider petitions submitted by members of the public. Their meetings, which generally take place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, are usually open to the public; to attend a meeting contact [Scottish Parliament Visitor Services](#) and to watch online – see <http://www.scottishparliament.tv/>.

Mandatory Committees have to be established at the beginning of every parliamentary session, and their remits are determined by parliamentary rules. These are:

- [Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee](#)
- [Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee](#)
- [Equalities and Human Rights Committee](#)
- [Finance and Constitution Committee](#)
- [Public Petitions Committee](#)
- [Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee](#)

The Parliament can also choose to establish **Subject Committees** to consider legislation relating to issues such as Health and Education. The current Subject Committees are:

- [Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee](#)
- [Education and Skills Committee](#)
- [Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee](#)
- [Health and Sport Committee](#)
- [Justice Committee](#)
- [Local Government and Communities Committee](#)
- [Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee](#)
- [Social Security Committee](#)

Further Committees may be formed in future to consider particular pieces of legislation, and details of these will be published on the [committee pages](#) of the Scottish Parliament website when they become available.

Getting involved with the Scottish Parliament

Public Petitions

Anyone can bring issues to the attention of MSPs by submitting a petition for consideration by the Public Petitions Committee. This can raise awareness about local issues that might not otherwise be discussed in the Parliament, and has, in a small number of cases, resulted in legislation.

Before being formally presented to the Committee, petitioners can choose to publicise their petitions on the [Scottish Parliament website](#) to attract wider support.

Consultations

Committees often consult about legislation that they are currently examining, or when they are holding an inquiry, and individual MSPs can issue consultations about Bills that they hope to bring before the Parliament. Details of these can be found on the [current consultations](#) page of the Scottish Government website, and both individuals and organisations can submit responses.

2. The Scottish Government

Since the SNP has more MSPs than any of the other parties, even though it does not have a majority, it was able to form the current Scottish Government. This consists of the First Minister, nine Cabinet Secretaries, thirteen junior Ministers, and two Law Officers, who make policy decisions and are supported by the civil service.

First Minister: Nicola Sturgeon

Head of the Scottish Government: responsible for Government policy, constitutional affairs, and for representing and promoting Scotland.



Nicola Sturgeon represents the constituency of Glasgow Govan. She was born in 1970 in Irvine, studied Law at Glasgow University, and practiced as a solicitor before becoming an MSP in 1999. She was Deputy Leader of the party and Leader of the Opposition in the Scottish Parliament from 2003 to 2007, and Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing from 2007 to 2014, then Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities until her election as First Minister.

She is married to Peter Murrell, the chief executive of the SNP.

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills:

John Swinney

Responsible for developing and delivering Government strategy, co-ordination of public sector reform, school standards, educational attainment and improvement, the teaching and social service professions, schools, qualifications, child protection, childcare, children's rights and services, Higher and Further education, student funding, and science.



John Swinney represents the constituency of Perthshire North. He was born in Edinburgh in 1964, and studied Politics at Edinburgh University. He worked in business before becoming an MP from 1997 to 2001, and an MSP in 1999. He was leader of the SNP and Leader of the Opposition in the Scottish Parliament from 2000 to 2004, and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth from 2007 to 2011. He is married with three children, and lists his hobbies as hill walking, cycling, and cooking.

Minister for Childcare and Early Years: Mark McDonald



Mark McDonald was born in Aberdeen in 1980, and is a graduate of the Universities of Dundee and Aberdeen. He worked as a personal assistant to 3 other MSPs, and was elected to the Scottish Parliament in 2011 as a regional list member for North East Scotland, and then as the constituency member for Aberdeen Donside in 2013 and 2016.

Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science:

Shirley Anne Somerville



***Shirley-Anne Somerville** was born in Kirkcaldy in 1974, and is a graduate of the Universities of Strathclyde and Stirling, and Queen Margaret University College. She has worked as a parliamentary researcher and in the voluntary sector, and was a regional list member for the Lothians from 2007 to 2011, and in 2016 as MSP for Dunfermline.*

Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Constitution: [Derek Mackay](#)

Responsible for the Scottish budget, Scottish public finances, tax and tax policy, government procurement, performance, and efficiency, public sector pay, public bodies, Registers of Scotland, digital public services, and the constitution.



***Derek Mackay** has been the Member of the Scottish Parliament for Renfrewshire North & West since 2011, and was previously Minister for Transport and Islands and Minister for Local Government and Planning. He is also currently the SNP Business Convener, responsible for the management and administration of the party. He was previously Leader of Renfrewshire Council and a non-executive director of Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board.*

Minister for Minister for Parliamentary Business: [Joe FitzPatrick](#)



***Joe FitzPatrick** was born in 1967 in Dundee, studied forestry at Inverness College, and graduated in science from Abertay University. He worked for the Forestry Commission and as assistant to the local MP and MSP before being elected as MSP for Dundee City West in 2007 and 2011. He was re-elected in 2011 and has been Minister for Parliamentary Business since 2012.*

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work: [Keith Brown](#)

Responsible for the Scottish economy, infrastructure, trade, and investment, business and industry, Scottish Enterprise, employment policy and the labour market, fair work and the living wage, productivity, internationalisation, consumer advice, trades unions, cities and regional economy, innovation and life sciences, financial services, and energy.



***Keith Brown** represents the constituency of Clackmannanshire and Dunblane. He was born in 1961 in Edinburgh, studied Politics at Dundee University, and worked in local government, as a Local Councillor, and served as a Marine before becoming an MSP in 2007. He was Minister for Skills and Lifelong Learning from 2009 to 2010, and Minister for Transport and Infrastructure from 2010 to 2011. He has three children.*

Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy: [Paul Wheelhouse](#)



Paul Wheelhouse was born in Belfast in 1970, was raised in Edinburgh, and is a graduate of the Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh.

He is a professional economist specialising in higher and further education, policy evaluation and appraisal, and impact assessment. He is a regional list MSP for South Scotland, and was previously Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

Minister for Employability and Training: [Jamie Hepburn](#)



Jamie Hepburn was born in Glasgow in 1979 and is a graduate of the University of Glasgow. After serving as Convener of the SNP's student and youth wings, he became a regional list MSP for Central Scotland in 2007 and 2011 and has represented Cumbernauld & Kilsyth since 2011.

He was Minister for Sport, Health Improvement & Mental Health in the previous administration.

Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity: [Fergus Ewing](#)

Responsible for Rural Scotland, Highlands and Islands, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, food and drink, crofting, transport, and connectivity including ensuring that everyone throughout Scotland has access to a broadband connection.



Fergus Ewing represents the constituency of Inverness and Nairn.

He was born in Glasgow in 1957, and is the son of Winnie Ewing, the former SNP President, MP, MEP, and MSP. He studied at Glasgow University and practiced as a solicitor before becoming an MSP in 1999. He was Minister for Community Safety from 2007 to 2011.

He is married with one daughter, and is a former member of the Lomond Mountain Rescue Team.

Minister for Transport and the Islands: [Humza Yousaf](#)



Humza Yousaf was born in Glasgow in 1985, and is a graduate of Glasgow University and of the US State Department's International Visitor Learning Programme.

He was an aide to the late Bashir Ahmad MSP and was elected an MSP for the Glasgow Region in 2011. He was Minister for External Affairs and International Development in the previous Scottish Government.

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport: **Shona Robison**

Responsible for the NHS, including patient services, primary care, acute services, mental health, drugs and alcohol, child and maternal health, patient safety, carers, health improvement, planning and performance, national clinical strategy, public health, sporting events and legacy, and sport.



Shona Robison represents the constituency of Dundee East. She was born in 1966 in Redcar, studied Social Sciences at Glasgow University, and worked in Glasgow City Council Social Work Department before becoming an MSP in 1999. She held the posts of Minister for Public Health and later Minister for Public Health and Sport from 2007 to 2011. She has one daughter.

Minister for Public Health and Sport: **Aileen Campbell**



Aileen Campbell represents the Clydesdale constituency. She was born in 1980 in Perth, studied Politics with Economic and Social History at Glasgow University, and worked in publishing, and as a parliamentary assistant before becoming an MSP in 2007. She is married, and lists her hobbies as going to the cinema and gigs, and watching St Johnstone football team.

Minister for Mental Health: **Maureen Watt**



Maureen Watt was born in Aberdeen in 1951, and studied at the Universities of Strathclyde and Birmingham. She has worked as a teacher as well as in the oil industry. She was elected in 2006 as a regional MSP for North East Scotland and was the first MSP to take the oath in Doric. She was Minister for Schools and Skills from 2007 to 2009. In 2011, she was elected MSP for the constituency of Aberdeen South & North Kincardine, and was Minister for Public Health in the previous Scottish Government.

Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform: **Roseanna Cunningham**

Responsible for climate change, land reform, the environment, flood prevention, sustainable development, biodiversity, natural heritage and national parks, and Scottish Water.



Roseanna Cunningham represents the constituency of Perthshire South & Kinross-shire. She was born in 1951 in Glasgow, studied politics at Western Australia University, and Law at Edinburgh University, and worked as a solicitor before becoming an MP from 1995 to 2001. She was Deputy Leader of the SNP from 2000 to 2004, became an MSP in 1999, and was Minister for the Environment from 2009 to 2011. She lists her hobbies as traditional music, reading, and hill walking.

Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities:

Angela Constance

Responsible for welfare policy, local government, equalities and community empowerment, religious and faith organisations, disabilities, and older people, social and human rights, the third sector, housing, poverty and homelessness, planning and building standards, and social security.



Angela Constance represents the constituency of Almond Valley. She was born in 1970 in West Lothian, studied at Glasgow University, worked as a social worker and mental health officer, and was a local councillor before becoming an MSP in 2007. She was Minister for Skills and Lifelong Learning from 2010 to 2011. She is married with one child, and lists her hobbies as jogging and running marathons.

Minister for Local Government and Housing: **Kevin Stewart**



Kevin Stewart was born in 1968 in Aberdeen, and was elected to represent the Aberdeen Central constituency in 2011.

Previously he was Depute Leader of Aberdeen City Council, and was the Convenor of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee in the last Parliament.

Minister for Social Security: **Jeane Freeman**



Jeane Freeman was born in Ayr and studied at Glasgow College of Technology. She founded Apex Scotland, a criminal justice employment charity, and was awarded an OBE for services to the rehabilitation of offenders.

As a student she was a leading member of the Communist Party, then joined the Labour Party and became a Special Advisor to former First Minister Jack McConnell. She set up Women for Independence, and was elected MSP for the Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley constituency in 2016.

Cabinet Secretary for Justice: **Michael Matheson**

Responsible for justice system, criminal and civil law and the legal system, police, fire, and rescue services, security, the legal profession, prisons and prisoners, community safety, anti-sectarianism, anti-social behaviour, violence reduction, human rights, and alcohol licensing.



Michael Matheson represents the constituency of Falkirk West.

He was born in 1970 in Glasgow, studied Occupational Therapy at Queen Margaret College and Applied Social Sciences at the Open University, and worked as an occupational therapist before becoming an MSP in 1999.

He is married with three sons, enjoys mountaineering and cycling, and is a member of the Ochils Mountain Rescue Team.

Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs: [Annabelle Ewing](#)



***Annabelle Ewing** was born in Glasgow in 1960, and is the daughter of former SNP President Winnie Ewing. She has a law degree from Glasgow University and also studied in Bologna and Amsterdam.*

She was MP for Perth from 2001 to 2005 and was elected a list MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife in 2011 and 2016. She served as Minister for Youth and Women's Employment in the previous Scottish Government.

Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs: [Fiona Hyslop](#)

Responsible for culture, broadcasting, and the arts, architecture and built heritage, major events, national records, fair trade, tourism, international development, the European Union and international relations, national identity and the Scottish diaspora.



***Fiona Hyslop** represents the constituency of Linlithgow.*

She was born in 1964 in Ayrshire, studied Economic History and Sociology at Glasgow University, and worked in the insurance industry before becoming an MSP in 1999. She was Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning from 2007 to 2009, and Minister of Culture and External Affairs from 2009 to 2011.

She is married with three children, and lists her hobbies as gardening and swimming.

Minister for International Development and Europe: [Alasdair Allan](#)



***Alasdair Allan** represents the constituency of Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Western Isles).*

He was born in 1971 in Edinburgh, studied Scots Language at Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities, and worked in media relations for the Church of Scotland, before becoming an MSP in 2007.

He is single. He was named Gaelic journalist of the year in 2006, and sings with the Back District Gaelic Choir.

Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe: [Michael Russell](#)



***Michael Russell** represents the constituency of Argyll and Bute.*

He was born in 1953 in Bromley, and studied Theology and Scottish History and Literature at Edinburgh University. He worked for the Church of Scotland and in the media, and was SNP Chief Executive from 1994 to 1999. He became an MSP in 1999, lost his seat in 2003, and was re-elected in 2007. He has previously been Minister for the Environment, Minister for Culture, External Affairs, and the Constitution, and Education Secretary.

He is married with one son, and has written seven books, including one novel.

Law Officers

The Law Officers are not members of the Cabinet, but the Lord Advocate attends when his expert legal advice is required.

Lord Advocate: James Wolffe QC

The Lord Advocate (formally referred to as Her Majesty's Advocate) is the chief legal officer of the Scottish Government, head of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, and the chief public prosecutor in Scotland. He is also responsible for the investigation of sudden deaths, complaints against the police, support for victims and witnesses of crime, international cooperation (including extradition), confiscation of proceeds of crime.



***James Wolffe QC** was brought up in Galloway and is a graduate of Edinburgh and Oxford Universities. He trained as a solicitor and was a legal assistant to Lord Hope as Lord President before becoming an advocate in 1992. He was appointed a Queen's Counsel in 2007, and was elected Dean of the Faculty of Advocates in 2014. He has experience of both government and prosecution as First Standing Junior Counsel to the Scottish Ministers from 2002 to 2007, and a Senior Advocate Depute from 2007 to 2010. He is also a member of the bar in England and Wales.*

Solicitor General: Alison Di Rollo QC

As Deputy to the Lord Advocate, the Solicitor General is responsible for legal advice to Scottish Ministers, constitutional issues, civil litigation, and appointment of Counsel.



***Alison Di Rollo QC** is a graduate of Glasgow University and joined the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service in 1985 as a Fiscal before working in the Crown Office Policy Group. She was later appointed Deputy Head of the High Court Unit, and then Head of Operational Policy. In 2008, she was appointed a trial Advocate Depute and became a Senior Advocate Depute. Since 2011 she has been deputy head and then head of the National Sexual Crimes Unit.*

Opposition Spokespeople

Lists of shadow ministers and party spokespeople for each of the political parties represented in the Scottish Parliament can be found at:

Conservative: www.scottishconservatives.com/people/msps/

Labour: www.scottishlabour.org.uk/blog/entry/kez-unveils-her-new-front-bench-team

Green: <https://greens.scot/msps>

Lib Dem: www.scotlibdems.org.uk/leadership_team

Contact details for all MSPs are on the Scottish Parliament website at
<http://www.parliament.scot/msps/current-msps.aspx>

Useful Links

- **The Scottish Parliament**
<http://www.parliament.scot/>
- **Information about individual MSPs**
www.parliament.scot/msps/current-msps.aspx
- **Parliamentary Committees**
www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/committees.aspx
Links to the webpage of each Parliamentary Committee, including membership details, current and proposed future work, and contact details.
- **Scottish Parliament Visitor Services**
www.parliament.scot/visitandlearn/visiting-the-parliament.aspx
Tickets for the public gallery of the Debating Chamber and for Committees should be booked in advance either by e-mailing visit@parliament.scot or by telephone 0131 348 5000
- **How the Scottish Parliament Works**
www.parliament.scot/visitandlearn/how-the-parliament-works.aspx
Links to information about the Scottish Parliament, MSPs, elections, and the relationship between the Scottish and UK Parliaments.
- **Holyrood TV**
www.scottishparliament.tv/
Live broadcast and archived video of proceedings in the Debating Chamber and Committees
- **The Scottish Government**
www.gov.scot/
- **MEMO+ The Scottish Government Legislative Programme 2016-17**
http://www.scojec.org/memo+/2016/16x_sg_legislative_programme_2016-17.pdf



The **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)** is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. It advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, and also works in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. SCoJeC is Scottish Incorporated Charitable Organisation, no. SC029438. <http://www.scojec.org/>



BEMIS is the Scottish national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body, supporting, empowering, and building the capacity of minority third sector community organisations. As a strategic partner with Government, it is proactive in influencing the development of race equality policy in Scotland, and helps develop and progress multicultural Scotland, active citizenship, democracy, and Human Rights Education at the Scottish, UK, and European levels. BEMIS is a Scottish Charity, no. SC027692. <http://bemis.org.uk/>



The **Scottish Government** is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland. **One Scotland** is the Scottish Government campaign designed to tackle racism. It aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlight its negative impact and recognise the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society – and make Scotland no place for racism. <http://onescotland.org/>