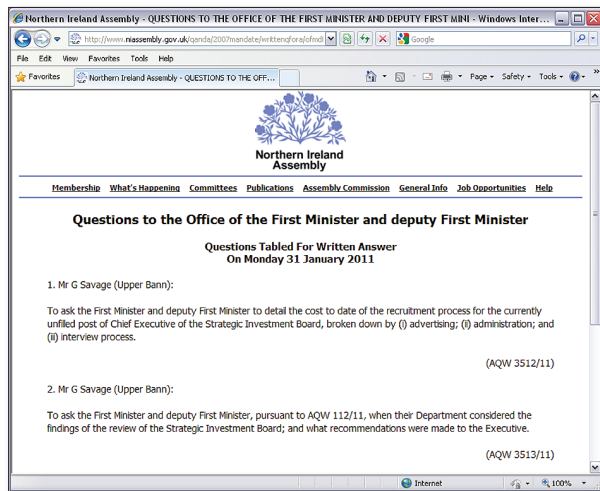


may rise in their places to indicate that they wish to ask a supplementary question and the Speaker normally calls a further two Members to do so. This process continues until the 30-minute period is finished.



Where can I see these Questions?

- All sittings of the Assembly, including Question Time, are open to the public. Access to the following publications can also be obtained through the Assembly website (www.niassembly.gov.uk/questions.htm):
- Questions for Oral Answer: The questions notice is published on the website each Friday morning for the Question Time on the next-but-one Monday or Tuesday;
- Answers to Oral Questions: If a listed question is reached during Question Time, both the question and the answer (and any supplementaries) are recorded

Assembly Information

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Belfast, BT4 3XX

NIA General Enquiries
Tel: +44 (0)28 9052 1333
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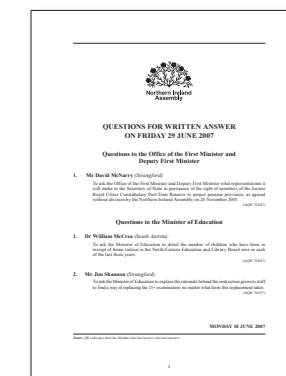
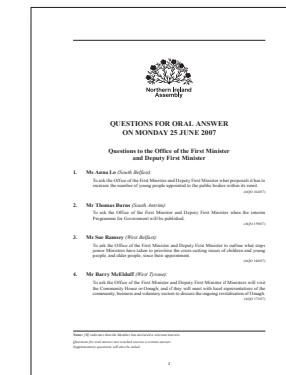
Assembly Questions

in the Official Report for that day's sitting. This is also the case for Urgent Oral Questions. If a question is not reached, a written answer will be provided and will be published in the 'Weekly Answer Booklet' (see 'Answers to Written Questions' below);

- Questions for Written Answer: Details are published on the website on the day after tabling;
- Answers to Written Questions: A 'Weekly Answer Booklet', detailing all written answers received during the previous week, is available on the website each Monday; and
- Questions not yet answered are collated in the 'Consolidated List of Questions' which is also published on the website each Monday.

Further information

You may wish to consult the current Assembly Standing Orders 19, 20, 20A and 20B.



Why?

A Member of the Assembly can ask questions of a Minister, or of the Assembly Commission, which is the corporate body of the Assembly. Questions provide an opportunity for Members to hold Ministers to account and to enquire into matters relating to the work of each Department and the Assembly Commission.

What?

There are four categories of questions:

Questions for Oral Answer

Tabled by a Member seeking an answer during a plenary session of the Assembly.

Questions for Urgent Oral Answer

Allowed only if the Speaker judges that the subject is urgent and of public importance. If allowed they are taken in plenary session, normally after Question Time..

Questions for Written Answer

Not taken in plenary session, but the tabling Member receives an answer in writing from the Minister. These allow for detailed information to be provided.

Questions for Priority Written Answer

Not taken in plenary session, but the tabling Member receives an answer in writing from the Minister. Such questions should not request large amounts of historical or statistical information.

How are Questions Processed?

The questions system is administered by the Business Office, under the authority of the Speaker. Questions are

checked to ensure that they comply with the rules on admissibility (set out in Standing Order 19).

- Members who wish to table questions for oral answer during Question Time must submit their names in advance to the Business Office. Members' names are then put into a random ballot and 15 Members are selected to ask questions of each Minister. The 15 successful Members have until Thursday at 1pm to submit their questions. These are then put into a random shuffle to determine the order in which they will be taken during Question Time;
- A maximum of five written questions per day may be tabled by each Member, one of which may be for priority answer;
- Notice of a proposed Urgent Oral Question should be given by 10.30 am on a sitting day.

On average, in any year, there are about 8,500 questions tabled for written answer and 1,550 questions tabled for oral answer.

When?

Questions for oral answer are normally taken at Question Time between 2.30 pm and 3.30 pm on Mondays and between 2.00 pm and 3.00 pm on Tuesdays. A rota is agreed by the Business Committee to allow each

Minister and the Assembly Commission to be questioned on the following basis:

- Office of the First and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) – every 2 weeks;
- Other Ministers – every 3 to 4 weeks; and
- Assembly Commission – every 12 weeks.

Urgent Oral Questions are normally taken immediately after Question Time.

Questions for written answer are normally replied to by the relevant Minister within ten working days after the question is published. A Member may, however, ask for a question to be treated as a priority, and an answer will normally be provided within 2-5 working days after publication.

What happens at Question Time?

A period of thirty minutes is available for each Minister or Members representing the Assembly Commission to answer questions. A maximum of 15 questions is listed for each slot.

Each question on the list is called, in turn, by the tabling Member, and the Minister gives a prepared answer. The Member is also allowed one supplementary question to seek further clarification on the issue. Other Members

