

# **#SP2021 – Independent candidate for Lothian Ashley Graczyk**

**Ashley Graczyk is an Independent Candidate for Lothian in the Scottish Parliament Election on 6 May 2021.**

We asked her to provide the answers to some questions we have asked several of the candidates standing in Edinburgh and Lothian.



Ashley Graczyk

Here is what she replied:

“I was first elected to elected office in 2017 as a Conservative Party Councillor for Sighthill/Gorgie. I was genuinely shocked to see the impact of a number of UK Government policies on disabled and vulnerable people first-hand through case work in my constituency.

“This experience as well as a growing recognition of the importance of self-governance for Scotland led me to resign from the Conservative Party in July 2018. I am pro-independence and pro-European and proudly serve the community as an independent.”

**What kind of issues are you going to concentrate your efforts on?**

“Social housing is a matter close to my heart because I

personally have experienced homelessness at one time in my life due to personal circumstances beyond my control, I also could not afford private rent, never mind a mortgage.

“I know what it is like to have housing insecurity and to genuinely struggle to make ends meet during an immensely challenging time. Yet, I cannot imagine what it must be like to go through this during a public health emergency.

“People are in desperate need of being represented by politicians motivated by public service, as so many people do not have the luxury to wait years for MSPs (who are not priced out of mortgages or high rent) to accelerate the building of more public and social housing, introduce planning policies to disincentivise private PBSA development, reform short-term lets and review rent control; which should have been addressed and implemented by now.

“Also, much more needs to be done in policy to encourage developers to put forward planning proposals that will prioritise the needs of local people and communities rather than maximising profits at the expense of other people’s misery in struggling to make ends meet to afford their own homes.”

**What is there in your past career that you can use to your advantage if you are elected as an MSP?**

“I’m currently an Independent councillor for the Sighthill/Gorgie ward and the first profoundly deaf Councillor elected to the City of Edinburgh Council. I’m hoping to set the record of becoming the first deaf MSP.

“I think my advantage is my track record for campaigning on various local issues, especially on housing and greenspace issues. I’m the founder of [Housing And Greenspace Activism](#) (HAGSA) which includes initiatives, such as Housing Activism, that campaigns against purpose built student accommodation proposals – many targeting Gorgie Dalry area and for housing

policies that will promote more equality and fairness in housing.

“Then there is Saughton House (for Saughton Mains and Stenhouse area) and SightPark House (for Sighthill, Broomhouse and Parkhead area) which aims to re-introduce the benefits of regular access to our local greenspace and the outdoors as we believe this can bring communities together, improve an individual’s physical and mental well-being and reconnect them with nature; as well as providing places for recreation to enjoy.

“Our projects include organising events and volunteering activities, such as litter picks, forestry projects, community gardens, and a fairy garden for the kids; through to fundraising for improvements and responding to planning applications.

“I lead a Keep Gorgie Clean campaign, which is to increase more sanitation resources in Gorgie Dalry area so we can improve the local environmental standards to help keep our area clean. We encourage everyone to use the appropriate services for waste collection and to manage their rubbish responsibly so the Council can improve their waste service, including reporting on Twitter. There are also two sister campaigns, Keep SBP Clean (Sighthill, Broomhouse and Parkhead), and Keep SMS Clean (Saughton Mains and Stenhouse).

“I have also campaigned to highlight the flooding issue at our well-loved Redhall Park after months of no action, which then got immediately addressed after media attention. Along with some fabulous members of the community, we have founded the new Friends of Redhall Park and Friends of Sighthill Park dedicated to improving the park for people to use and enjoy.

“I believe in social, economic and civic inclusion for all, and I’m committed to creating communities that work for everyone.”

## **What do we not know about you?**

“I’m a qualified Hair Stylist and Makeup Artist with an immense love for vintage fashion – especially 1940/50s, and I am a huge fan of Eastern Asian fantasy drama – lots of excellent historical and political storylines, martial arts and great costumes!

You can read the full list of all candidates in Edinburgh and Lothian at this year’s election [in our previous article here](#).