

MSPs call for action over dangerous damp housing in Edinburgh

Foysof Choudhury MSP secured a business debate on damp housing in Scotland in parliament last week.

Speaking afterwards he said: "The tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak, who died after exposure to extensive mould in his home in England, was a stark warning of the dangers that mould can cause when not dealt with properly.

"That's why it was so important for me to bring this Members' Business Debate to the Scottish Parliament, to highlight that we must act now to stop preventable deaths like Awaab's from occurring in Scotland.

"Unfortunately, too many Scottish residents today live in dangerous housing.

"The Scottish Government's recent House Condition Survey supposedly found that 40,000 homes in our nation fall below tolerable standards, with a third of these being due to rising or penetrating damp.

"Given there are on average two people per household, that's 80,000 Scottish residents living in homes that their own Government considers to be intolerable, with 27,000 of these due to damp.

"One of my constituents lives with their partner and four children in a council house in Edinburgh.

“Two of the children have asthma, which has gotten worse, and another has developed a constant hacking cough as a result of damp and mould.

“My constituent has told me they fear for their children because of their prolonged exposure to mould and has even had to call an ambulance at one point due to their child having severe chest pains.

“The ambulance report actually cited mould as an environmental factor at their property.

“Another of my constituents has been living in a mould infested house for 16 months with their 21-month-old son, leading to a disastrous effect on their mental health.

“Many constituents are left feeling helpless and like nothing is being done to ensure they have permanent, safe accommodation.

“Negligent behaviour of private landlords must be tackled, especially as almost half of private-sector-rented homes in Scotland supposedly failed the Scottish Housing Quality Standards.

“The experience of my constituents, who have had to move out of their privately rented accommodation because of fears the effects of damp and mould would have on their very young child, speaks for itself.

“Letting agents and private landlords must ensure tenants are aware of the ways in which mould and damp occurs and how to prevent it.

“In addition, landlords should not be renting out houses or flats that need structural repairs to avoid mould forming.

“Ultimately, housing providers should be held responsible for ensuring that the accommodation they provide is clean and safe for every resident or tenant that moves in there.

“The Scottish Government need to do more to help them and hold them accountable when crucial repair work is not being done properly.

“How many trips to the hospital, long-term illnesses, or deaths caused by damp housing is it going to take for The Scottish Government to take this seriously?

“I am asking for the Scottish Government to consider setting up a grant scheme to tackle dampness problems in council, housing association and private sector properties. We need to address both the long and short-term problems with damp housing and consider extra investment for a whole house retrofitting programme, across Scotland.

“Too many of our citizens are living in dangerous accommodation and landlords are getting away with doing nothing about it.

“We, as the Scottish Parliament, have to do more.”

Conservative MSP for Lothian, Miles Briggs has agreed that the level of damp and mould in Edinburgh social rented homes is unacceptable.

The Scottish Conservatives made a Freedom of Information request which found that the number of reports of damp and mould in Edinburgh have increased from 122 in 2019 up to 1,215 in 2022.

Mr Briggs highlighted during the debate the negative impact on health – both mental and physical – can have. He said: “The extent of damp and mould in Edinburgh socially rented homes is unacceptable with the number of houses reporting damp and mould increasing ten fold in ten years.

“I have received regular case work about issues with damp and mould in their properties and the impact this has on their health.

“We urgently need to see improvements in the quality of socially rented homes and with proper repairs being made when mould is reported.

“The number of homes with damp and mould has been on the rise under the SNP despite repeated warnings.

“SNP and Green Ministers must find an Edinburgh specific solution, which I have been calling on them to do for the last seven years.”



Foyso! Choudhury, MBE, MSP