

Government must act now to deal with the housing crisis

The Scottish Labour Party's recent business debate concentrated on the housing crisis. Mark Griffin MSP laid down a motion demanding that Parliament acts quickly on the recommendations of the Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group.

The motion also welcomed the appointment of a dedicated Minister for Housing to the government, although admits it is long overdue.

The Labour demand also asks that the government will "adequately fund the delivery of new social homes through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme to meet an interim target of delivering 38,500 social homes by 2026; considers that the Scottish Government should commit to a target of building 25,000 all-tenure new homes annually, and presses the Scottish Government to publish a review of funding of homelessness services, including any identified funding gaps and the provision of continued funding for Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans and the prevention of homelessness".

Lothian MSP, Foysof Choudhury MBE took part in the debate. He said: "Home is supposed to be a place of safety and comfort, yet for many households across Scotland their home has become a source of discomfort and illness, overridden with damp,

mould and urgent repairs.

“Many across our nation sadly don’t even have homes, stuck on seemingly endless waiting lists for both permanent and temporary accommodation.

“There is no doubt that Scotland is deep in a housing crisis and that urgent action is needed to change this sector before it’s too late.”

Mr Choudhury spoke in the Scottish Labour business debate at Holyrood recently.

He continued: “As of September 2022, 9,130 children were reported to be living in temporary accommodation, which is an 100% increase from a decade ago.

“This is unacceptable, all children deserve a safe, healthy and stable home.

“During the Scottish Labour Business Debate on Housing and Homelessness Prevention, I urged the Scottish Government to act quickly and effectively to reverse the record numbers of children trapped in temporary accommodation.

“I also noted both in my speech then, and the day before during topical questions at the Scottish Parliament, that a new NUS report shows that a fifth of international students in Scotland had experienced homelessness during their studies.

“This problem was also made evident to me in a Student Housing Roundtable I hosted earlier this year, where I heard stories of racist landlords, sofa surfing and damp infested homes.

“Clearly, these are problems which are striking constituents across many sectors of society.

“This demonstrates that there is an overbearing crisis in the housing sector, with particular weaknesses of rising homelessness, striking levels of poor conditions and a

worrying prominence of unscrupulous landlords.

“These three areas of great concern must be addressed urgently and I will continue to urge for solutions in these areas.

“I’ve already held my Member’s business debate on Damp Housing in Scotland and my motion for this noted my call for a whole house retrofitting programme and a grant scheme to tackle damp housing.

“I’ve also lodged a student housing motion at the Scottish Parliament, urging for legislation which would give equal rights to all tenants in terms of protections offered to them.

“Scottish Labour are also calling on the Scottish Government to deliver 38,000 social homes by 2026, and to build 25,000 all tenure new homes annually.

“We urgently need a two-pronged approach which both builds more social and affordable housing, in addition to also prioritising equal access to settled housing for all.

“Once we do this, we also need to ensure that legislation holds landlords accountable, prioritises rights for tenants and awards funding for retrofitting and damp management to combat the problems with much existing housing stock in order to generate safer, liveable conditions.

“Recently, we’ve had weeks of talking on all aspects of Scotland’s housing crisis.

“That’s fantastic.

“But, now it’s time to show the value of our words and start the action.”

