

Cost of Living Crisis



Sarah and Foysol recently hosted a roundtable in the Scottish Parliament on the cost of living crisis facing students across Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Both Sarah Boyack and Foysol Choudhury have been raising the cost of living crisis faced by the residents across the Lothians this winter in Parliament. Too many families are having to choose between heating and eating. Both Sarah and Foysol are calling for the action needed to support families and businesses. Last summer they welcomed the Scottish Government's u-turn on their opposition to a Rent Freeze. In addition, to the private Rent Freeze, Sarah and Foysol are calling on both the UK and Scottish Governments to put the

- following in place:
- End the premium paid by residents who have a prepaid meter.
 - Provide a £100 water rebate from Scottish Water's reserves for every household.
 - Freeze rail fares.
 - Pay carers £15 an hour.
 - Increased debt support.
 - Keep bus fares affordable.

Sarah Boyack MSP said, "Too many families across the Lothians are having to choose between heating and eating as they grapple with the cost of living crisis. Energy bills, the cost of the weekly shop and household finance is higher than ever before. "Unfortunately, there is no end in sight for struggling families and businesses. We need urgent action from both the UK and Scottish Governments to help people now but also to ensure future winter pressures are not as harsh as the last one. That means getting serious on insulation to help families heat their homes for less and make

sure that public sector workers in schools, hospitals, care and other essential services get a fair pay deal so they are not the victims of high inflation." Foysol Choudhury MSP said, "While I welcome the Scottish Government's U-turn on implementing a rent freeze and the private sector rent cap until September this year, this can only be the beginning. I am consistently contacted by constituents who need urgent help with their family finances and housing.

"An increasing problem is poor housing quality which made up one in four of the cases I helped resolve last year. Damp homes are becoming an increasing problem which has long term health and wellbeing impacts.

I support the measures being put in place by local authorities across the Lothians such as creating Warm Hubs which provide free activities and allow people to keep warm and encourage local authorities to continue their work with local charities to provide vital help and support to families over the coming months.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Sarah Boyack MSP

Foysol Choudhury MSP

**Members of the Scottish Parliament for
Lothian Region**

Parliamentary Report 2022/23



**BOTH SARAH AND FOYSOL
ARE SUPPORTING
WORKERS AND TRADE
UNIONS ACROSS THE
LOTHIANS TAKING ACTION
FOR A FAIR PAY RISE.**



The costs of this publication have been met from parliamentary resources. The SPCB is not responsible for the content of external websites.

Advice Surgeries

Sarah and Foysol hold advice surgeries for constituents to raise any issue. You can find details of upcoming surgeries below. To book an appointment with Sarah call 0131 348 6994, to book an appointment with Foysol call 0131 348 6761.

Sarah's Upcoming Surgeries

- Friday 24th March 10am**
SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE, 117 Nicolson st, EH8 9ER
Held jointly with Cllr Tim Pogson
- Friday 24th March 12noon**
COFFEE SAINTS, 2a Little King St, EH1 3AR
Held jointly with Cllr Margaret Graham
- Friday 21st April 6pm**
THE BRUNTON HALL, Ladywell Way, Musselburgh, EH21 6AA
Held jointly with Cllr Ruaridh Bennett
- Wednesday 31st May 7pm**
PORTOBELLO LIBRARY, 14 Rosefield Avenue, EH15 1AU
Held jointly with Cllr Jane Meagher
- Tuesday 6th June 6:15pm**
DANDERHALL COMMUNITY HUB, 59 Edmonstane Road
Held jointly with Cllr Stephen Curran
- Friday 30th June 12noon**
THE RIPPLE, 198 Restalrig Rd South, EH7 6DZ
Held jointly with Cllr Joan Griffiths

Foysol's Upcoming Surgeries

- First Friday of the Month 4pm**
DRYLAW NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE, Groathill Road North, EH4 2SA
- Second Friday of the Month 6:30pm**
QUEENSFERRY COMMUNITY HUB, 30 Ashburnham Road, EH30 9JN
- First Wednesday of the Month 1pm**
ROYSTON/WARDIEBURN COMMUNITY CENTRE, EH5 1NF
Held jointly with Cllr Cammy Day
- Third Wednesday of the Month 6pm**
MCDONALD ROAD LIBRARY, 2 McDonald Road EH7 4L
Held jointly with Cllr James Dalglish
- First Monday of the Month 5:30pm**
LEITH LIBRARY, 29-30 Ferry Road, EH6 4AE
Held Jointly with Cllr Katrina Faccenda
- Third Friday of the Month 4pm**
ONLINE, for West Lothian Constituents
Contact for appointment



Contact Sarah

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Contact Foysol

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Sarah Boyack MSP and Foysol Choudhury MSP
Members of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region (Scottish Labour)

STANDING UP FOR PATIENTS AT THE RIVERSIDE



reasonably possible. Constituents continue to contact me on long waits and difficulties in getting through to book appointments. I will continue to raise these issues directly with the practice, NHS Lothian and the Scottish Government until patients are able to receive the care and treatment they deserve.” Sarah Boyack is concerned that the experience of patients in Musselburgh is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to health services across the Lothians. She added, “Constituents right across the Lothians continue to contact me on a daily basis to raise issues from long waiting times to a lack of resources to meet their needs. Our healthcare workforce go above and beyond but are being failed by mistake after mistake, leaving our NHS on life support. I will continue to push the Scottish Government to deliver for patients. I will continue to fight for the funding and resources NHS Lothian needs to ensure patients receive the care and treatment they deserve.”

Sarah Boyack has called for better services for patients at the Riverside Medical Practice in Musselburgh. After raising concerns of patients directly with NHS Lothian and the Scottish Government, Sarah Boyack was able to secure a review of the service provision at the practice. The review confirmed a number of issues that have been raised by patients over the last few years and outlined seventeen recommendations that must be implemented. Sarah Boyack said, “I welcome the recommendations from the Review and have called for them to be acted on as quickly as

ACTION NOW ON EDINBURGH HOUSING CRISIS!



pleased so see the process now being implemented. However, this can only be the start.” Sarah Boyack hopes that the licensing scheme and future planning changes will see the supply of residential housing increase but is clear further action is required. She added, “Too many people are being priced out of the Edinburgh housing market which has a devastating impact on communities and the economy. In addition to STL regulations we desperately need more social and affordable housing built for families and residents. I will continue to push the Scottish Government to provide the resources needed and the support for councils to leave no stone unturned to provide more affordable housing for all.”

Sarah Boyack has welcomed the introduction of Short Term Let (STL) licensing in Edinburgh but is clear more action is needed to fix the housing crisis. Sarah Boyack said, “In the last session of Parliament, I was Deputy Convener of the Local Government and Communities Committee which scrutinised the legislation to establish the licensing process and

SOS CALL FOR EDINBURGH'S CULTURE

The culture sector is currently facing a ‘perfect storm’ of falling incomes, increasing costs and the ongoing impact of the pandemic and cost of living crisis with the Filmhouse already lost and cultural venues facing massive pressures. The Parliament’s Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee which Sarah is a member of has considered evidence by the culture sector that they face a perfect storm and that more cherished venues and organisations are on the brink of collapse. In October last year, Sarah Boyack hosted a

culture sector roundtable in the Scottish Parliament. Sarah said, “Culture organisations used up the majority of their reserves during the pandemic and so have no room for manoeuvre. They are clear that there are solutions but that means the Scottish Government and councils providing support and working with the sector. I am committed to working with all stakeholders as any loss of our culture sector means less jobs and a long term impact on the local economy. I am also disappointed that the Scottish Government’s budget proposals will see the culture budget cut making the situation even worse.”

OPEN ARMS FOR REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

Sarah Boyack is grateful to the over a thousand people across the Lothians who have expressed an interest in hosting refugees from Ukraine in their own home and to the services that have supported refugees over the last year. She said, “Scotland opened its arms to refugees fleeing Vladimir Putin’s appalling invasion of Ukraine. I am grateful to all those who have offered their own home and to the volunteers and services who have supported refugees during their time in Edinburgh. With the war still ongoing, it is becoming clear that a number of refugees will make Scotland their home for a number of years. It is important that Scotland’s warm welcome is reflected in the experience of refugees living, working and studying here so I will continue to make the case for funding and resources needed to make this happen.”

OUT AND ABOUT ACROSS THE LOTHIAN



Taking part in the Danderhall Aberfan Memorial



Visiting Cyrenians to learn about their work to tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness



Visiting Talbot Rice as part of the Scottish Contemporary Art Network’s #ArtUnlocks campaign

MY SECOND YEAR AT THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

Since my last Annual Report I have been busy working in the Scottish Parliament, which has many responsibilities in terms of service provision and budgets. For example Health, Education, Transport, Environment, Care of the Elderly and addressing Cost of Living, Poverty. Over the past year I have pushed the Scottish Government to concentrate on the issues which matter to my constituents. I have carried out surgeries, Round Table Policy Events in the Scottish Parliament, visited community projects, asked questions and submitted motions in the Scottish Parliament, on behalf of constituents and organisations. This action has allowed me to reflect the needs and action to be taken in the coming year. The priorities for 2023 has to be the Environment, Cost of Living, Care of the Elderly, the NHS and invest in New Housing.

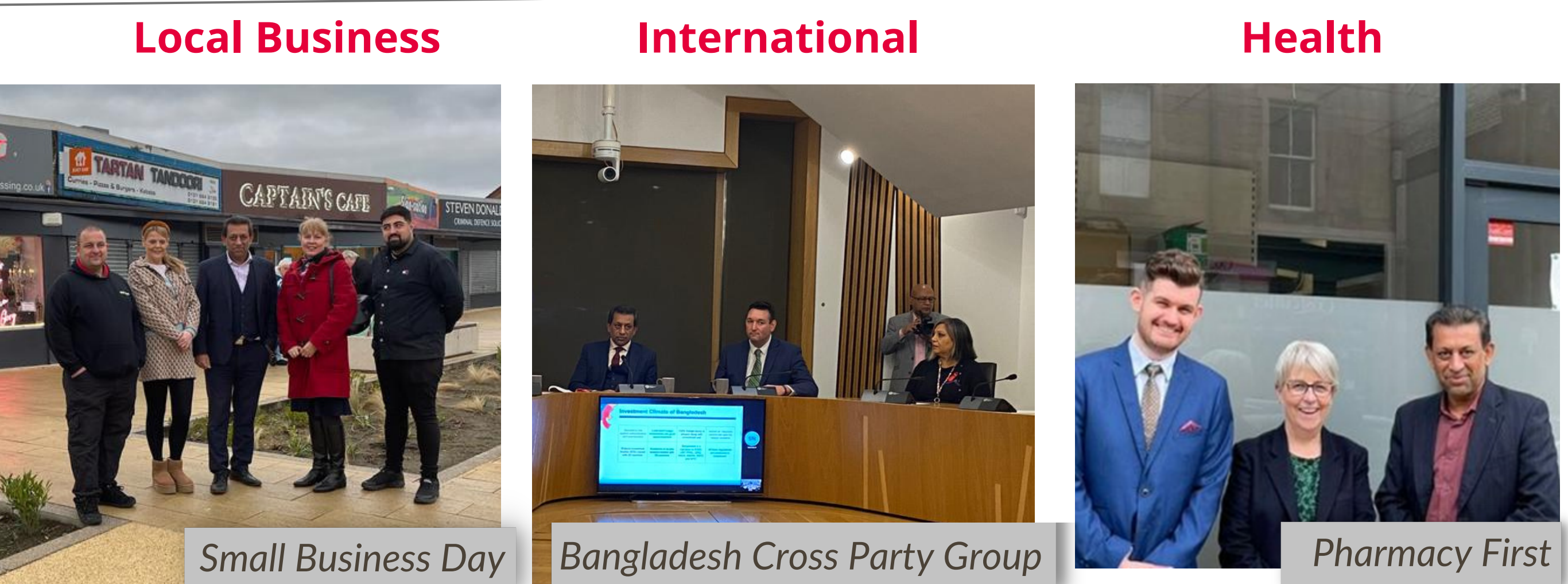


PARLIAMENT

I’ve raised parliamentary questions on various topics, such as climate justice, Scottish education, racism, refugee crisis, and many more topics that can be checked on my social media or on the Scottish Parliament website. I recently held the second CPG meeting on Bangladesh and we discussed relations between Scotland and Bangladesh on matters such as tourism, development and climate change. In Parliament, including at First Minister’s Questions I raised the issue of healthcare and the NHS crisis, from waiting lists to a lack of equipment. I wrote an opinion piece in the Scotsman, imploring the Scottish Government to fix the crisis that our overburdened, under-staffed, under-resourced and the creeping privatising of the NHS. I’ve been exploring the colonial legacy of museums and how we can make Scotland’s cultural landscape more representative. I visited the Respect! Caribbean life in Edinburgh exhibition. I’ve been working to ensure that our important cultural institutions don’t become victim to the cost-of-living crisis.

CASEWORK

Over the past year, housing issues have made up a significant amount of my casework (25%). Most housing issues relate to the lack of suitable council accommodation, with many having to live in temporary accommodation. Recently, a coroner reported that the tragic death of two-year-old, Awaab Ishak, was a direct result of the black mould in the flat he lived in, and constituents have, understandably, been concerned about black mould in their properties. Because of funding for local authorities, set by the Scottish government, imposed cuts on Lothian’s Councils, has left local services under threat. This has resulted in high percentage of casework being Council services. NHS waiting times, health issues (including delayed discharge), continue to be a major problem in Lothian, with approximately 11% of casework being related to these issues. In Scotland, the length of time that people are having to wait for hospital procedures, outpatient appointments and diagnostic tests has shot up to 776,341, equivalent to 1 in 7 Scots. At the end of September 2022, 2,114 people referred for an outpatient appointment and 7,612 patients waiting for a day case, or inpatient procedure had already been waiting for over two years. These shocking figures have been reflected by the high number of constituents who have contacted me about the length of time they are having to wait for appointments, hospital procedures, or the length of time they have had to wait in A&E.



VISITS/MEETINGS/CAMPAIGNS
Following COVID-19, the challenges facing my constituents and community groups all over Lothians, is the Cost of Living, rise in energy costs and cuts in their budgets. I have met many groups including volunteering, third sector, co-ops, charities, national organisations, further education, campaigning groups, Trade Unions over the past year. I have taken up many issues, following my visits and meetings, in order to take action and make a lasting difference.