

IN THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF FAHD VAQAR MALIK

I, Mr Fahd Vaqar Malik, previously of ■■■ Barandon Walk, Lancaster West Estate, London, W11 1WL will say as follows:

- (1) Except where expressly stated, the matters set out below are within my own personal knowledge. Where they are within my personal knowledge, they are true. Where they are not within my personal knowledge, they are derived from the sources stated and are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

Background

- (2) I lived at Barandon Walk from 12 December 2014 until the Grenfell Tower Fire on 14 June 2017 with my mother, Saira Malik.

Module 3

Fire safety systems

- (1) There were no fire doors as such, they were installed after the fire happened. There was no self-closing door on the flat. It just stayed open. We were concerned about it but I do not think we reported it at the time as we didn't think anything would happen.
- (2) I noticed that in one section where the walkways are split, in the wall between the different sections, there was quite a big gap in this wall. After the fire happened that's when they installed a fire door in between the 400's and 500's and the hole was filled in.
- (3) There was an emergency exit sign before the fire. There wasn't any lighting as far as I remember.

- (4) There was no smoke detector in the communal area. There were alarms in my flat but if something was happening outside you wouldn't know.

Fire safety checks/inspections

- (5) I don't remember anybody coming around, either the TMO or RBKC. They came to check if the property was in repair, but they didn't check fire safety.

Fire safety advice

- (6) Their advice was that if there is a fire you should lock your door and stay inside your flat which is contradictory as it might not be safe to stay inside. I remember being told this by Kofi who was our Housing Officer.
- (7) There weren't any leaflets given to anyone who didn't speak English.

Fire safety complaints

- (8) I don't recall making any complaints prior to the fire happening but that's only because we were reassured that nothing would happen.

Module 4

Emergency Shelter and Accommodation

- (9) We left our flat at about 0230 or 0300 after the police told us we need to evacuate our homes. They said to just grab what we could and go.
- (10) Initial relief Centre
- We went to the Clement James Church because it was the nearest place to go as it was right across the road from us.
 - They provided people with blankets and pillows so they could sleep. They provided sandwiches and water. This was all from volunteers initially but I think it was taken over later.
 - I remember calling up our Housing Officer, Kofi, he wasn't very helpful. He didn't know what we should do or where we should go he just told us that the "emergency services are handling it" and that there was nothing he could do. It sounded like he was saying to go bother someone else.

- d. As the day of the 14th June 2017 progressed more and more services popped up at the Church.
 - e. There were doctors and pharmacists at the Clement James Centre who I told I needed my daily medication. They got me that medication the same day, after waiting a few hours.
 - f. I remember a woman who I thought was from RBKC was at the Clement James Centre, told us to go to the Travel Lodge in Fulham. We stayed there for a day or two.
 - g. We went to the Westway Centre at some point while we were at the Travel Lodge. We needed to speak to someone as we couldn't stay at the Travel Lodge for very long.
 - h. I can't remember if this was at the Clement James Centre or the Westway Centre but people from RBKC were there and sorted out somewhere for us to stay. It took a bit of time and they weren't as forthcoming as you would expect because we had to keep pestering them to sort something out. It seemed like they were withholding information or maybe they weren't very well organized. It didn't seem like they were passing on information down the line quick enough.
 - i. We got clothes at the Rugby Club during this period.
 - j. RBKC arranged a place for us at the Grosvenor Hotel around the 16th or 17th of June. They arranged a taxi for us to go there in the evening.
 - k. I want to clarify that there were a lot of people who didn't get a hotel as quickly as us. It felt like you had to really pester them in order to secure somewhere for yourself.
- (11) Grosvenor Hotel
- a. I think we were at the hotel for around 3 months though I cannot remember exactly.
 - b. It was a little bit far from our area as it was in Westminster but it was ok. We had to travel from Victoria to RBKC for doctors' appointments for both me and my mum, and to get more information about what was going on.
 - c. Because of my dyspraxia I was not familiar with my surroundings. I find it difficult to navigate new places. As such there was only a small area around the

hotel which I was limited to traveling alone. I would rather have been closer to the RBKC borough as it was familiar to me.

- d. It was a very nice hotel and we had a meal allowance for dinner and lunch so it wasn't too bad. The only problem was that the stuff they selected was limited. Of course, we couldn't cook as we didn't have a stove or anything. It got a bit monotonous.
- e. We had to wash our clothes by going to a launderette or from the hotel, I can't remember fully.
- f. After staying at the Grosvenor for a night we went to the Clement James Centre and someone spoke RBKC on my behalf giving my details in terms of what could or could not be done. They made an allowance of around £600-800 a month each. This was enough as I already had ESA coming in and the hotel was being paid for.

(12) Hilton

- a. We moved to the Hilton on Kensington High Street which was better for me because I am more familiar with the area. It was better than the Grosvenor because we had more choice of what we could eat on the menu.

(13) Barlby Road

- a. Nicholas Forde from RBKC contacted me, after I had been in regular contact with the Housing Team, and said temporary accommodation had become available for me on Barlby Road.
- b. We went there and met him around November 2017. We stayed there for a while. It was good there as there was private parking and security. It wasn't far from where we had previously lived so it was good for me.
- c. We felt much more settled there as we could finally cook again and had our own place. We stayed there for around a year and were offered permanent accommodation on Queensdale Crescent which we are happy with.
- d. I'm still getting calls from RBKC asking if I need accommodation, I even got one recently but told her that I'm now housed.

Psychological Support

- (14) I was already in quite vulnerable position at the time of the fire and was already in counselling but then the fire added to this. I was already going through a programme and this continued after the fire.

Public Communication

- (15) I think that at the start, before the fire happened, they didn't care very much. After the fire happened they took their time getting sorted out but did manage to start helping people. Their response time could have been quicker and more forthcoming, with things like getting housing, as you had to actively hassle them, but this improved over time following the fire.
- (16) They started sending out the newsletter from the council via post which I found helpful as it told you what services were being offered and what new services were coming up.
- (17) My Housing Officer wasn't involved following the fire. The council itself had assigned me a social worker who I got a lot of information from. We would usually speak on the phone.
- (18) I think at the time Sajid Javid was giving us updates of what the government was doing which I found quite helpful too.

Needs of Specific Groups

- (19) I think that straight after the fire the help wasn't targeted but after time it improved. They helped more with getting the community involved and helping the young people, but it just took some time.
- (20) They set up The Curve which was very busy at one point and this was really helpful as it wasn't just people from the council there.

Voluntary and Community Groups

- (21) The Rugby Centre, Churches and Mosques all helped.
- (22) There were charities helping with clothing, food, and information generally. The Al Manaar Mosque was giving people a place to stay for the night and giving people food. Westway Centre were helpful as they were giving people shelter and went on to

give the children a lot to do. The churches were also doing the same. Stalls were being put up on Latimer Road.

- (23) The problem was, at the start, not a lot of people knew about the local centres or charities. If you were going to one place, e.g. the Clement James Centre, you wouldn't know what was going on at the Rugby Club. This information flow was slow at first however they began collaborating a bit more.
- (24) The services were scattered at first, for example as RBKC had set up at the Westway Centre but it wasn't clear that they were there. We only knew this through word of mouth.

Coordination and Leadership

- (25) I think that at the start there was not much collaboration between RBKC, the TMO and Government. You could see that the services were disorganised and getting information was difficult. Afterwards they started working more collaboratively which was good.
- (26) I think the TMO itself was pretty useless. I remember going to their offices when there was leak in the flat before the fire and I reported it but it took them months to come around and sort it out. When you reported something you wouldn't hear back from them for a long time.

Adequacy of Response and Lessons Learned

- (27) The one thing I would really want to state is that the fire services couldn't access Grenfell properly. I was hoping they would use helicopters to help.
- (28) The fire services that are being provided are out of date and need to be re-examined and need to be improved. I remember a chopper roaming around thinking it was the police but it was just the press reporting. I feel like if it rained that night, or there was a way of tackling the fire externally it would have been better.

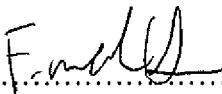
Other

- (29) I know that they started to take fire safety more seriously in the Walkways as we would sometimes go back to the flat to get our belongings and bring to the hotel. I

could see after this that they started installing things like fire doors in people's properties at this point. A lot of people we know from the Walkways have not gone back and have requested to be moved.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that the contents of this Statement to be true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I am willing for my statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's web site

Signed... 

Dated... 14/01/20

MR FAHD MALIK