

Witness Statement of: Glenn Young
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Exhibits: 1
Date of statement: 8th February 2020

GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

PHASE 2 WITNESS STATEMENT OF GLENN YOUNG

I, Glenn Young, of [REDACTED] will say as follows:-

1. This is my first witness statement and relates to Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. I did not make a statement during Phase 1 as I did not become a core participant until after the deadline for witness evidence had passed. This statement will focus on Phase 2 issues, but to ensure that my other evidence can be understood in context, I will also briefly outline my experience on the night of the fire.

Background

2. I lived in [REDACTED] Hurstway Walk until September 2018, when my wife and I left London as a direct consequence of the Grenfell Tower Fire.
3. I originally moved to Hurstway Walk in Summer 1985 to live with my first wife, Josephine. Josephine was already a tenant of the flat, where she lived with her son Jeremy. When Josephine passed away in 2005, the tenancy transferred into my name. I remember being provided with a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) handbook with the tenancy agreement. The version of the TMO handbook I was given, was an updated version of the one Josephine had previously been provided. I would refer to this when I needed to contact someone from the TMO, for example Deon Wilks or Sam Fawehinmi, who were both Estate Officers. Several years later, I met my current wife, Julie Young, and she moved in to live with me.
4. My flat was on the first floor of Hurstway Walk. It is closest to the middle of Hurstway Walk, next to the main entrance that comes out onto Bramley Road. Grenfell Tower was close to our flat and you could see it from our balcony that looked out onto

Latimer Road tube station. I exhibit a photograph of Grenfell Tower in exhibit GY/1 from my balcony taken on 15 June 2017, which shows the proximity of the tower to my flat.

5. I remember my first impressions of the property being positive, when I moved in all those years ago. I really liked the flat. I had lived in London for only a short while up to that point. I was originally from Hartlepool. I had a cousin who lived in West London and I came down to work for him.
6. When I first came to live in Hurstway Walk, it included three separate sections according to flat numbers. They were 300, 400 and 500s, and each section was open above. In 1989, Hurstway Walk was refurbished and sections were combined together. Partition walls were added with a roof and the inside was partially tiled, covering the original bricks. I remember thinking it looked like a prison, which I think a lot of people feel. The tiles meant that the communal area would echo and it became noisier than before. The council changed the door numbering system when the refurbishment was completed. My original door number was [REDACTED] and post refurbishment it changed to [REDACTED]
7. Whilst I lived at Flat [REDACTED] Hurstway Walk, I was not part of the Lancaster West Estate Management Board (EMB), the TMO or any of the resident associations. I remember being provided with a form to join the TMO and completing this, but I did not receive anything back to confirm my membership.
8. When I moved to Hurstway Walk, I registered with RBKC social services as disabled. RBKC social services assisted me in getting my Disabled Persons Freedom Pass. I was born with a bilateral conductive deafness. I wear a specialised hearing aid during the day and take it off before I go to sleep.

Flat [REDACTED] Hurstway Walk

9. I liked the flat but it was outdated and the kitchen, radiators, bathroom and windows needed replacing. Over the years, I made numerous complaints to the TMO that I will set out below. I was a bit disappointed with the TMO and their service. They were not helpful at times and I would have to wait for a long time for works to be done. I knew

that my friend and neighbour, Christine, was always trying to fight the TMO for a better service from them. She was involved in the EMB before and after the TMO took over.

10. In August 2011, I remember when many of the front doors in the block were replaced. I did not want my original door replacing as it had a stained glass panel in it made by my late wife. I found that after an amount of time the bottom of the door appeared to be rotting away which resulted in me agreeing to have a new door fitted. The new door did not have a self-closing device on it but it was heavier and so did close automatically. I was not happy with this new door and I remember completing a feedback form from the TMO that was posted through our letterbox. I gave it back with zeros and the TMO contacted me to ask if I wanted them to review the work done.
11. One of the recurring problems we had, was leaking from the roof onto our balcony and into our flat. When it rained, water would accumulate and leak into our bedroom, damaging our bedroom ceiling. On 20 September 2012, I contacted the TMO out of hours repair line, to report this leak. It took a long time for them to come and fix it. When they did, they did not repair the leak properly. They came and put asphalt on the roof and then put the new tiles on but the tiles were all wonky. I was originally a plasterer and decorator and could have fixed this better myself. The contractors left a mess when they were bringing materials through my flat onto the balcony. A previous leak a few years earlier had been fixed but had left damage to a bedroom carpet and damage to an area of the ceiling. The TMO sent a decorator to make good the ceiling damage before that leak was fixed.
12. In 2015, a surveyor visited our flat and confirmed that they would carry out works to replace our kitchen. I think this may have been part of the Decent Homes Standard. Once RBKC confirmed the works to be carried out, a second surveyor came to visit our flat to check for asbestos presence before they started the work.
13. A surveyor came to inspect the flat shortly after the Grenfell fire, he was rude and disrespectful. He looked around the flat as though it was a communal area; opening cupboards without our permission. I asked that he request permission before opening cupboards and walking into rooms. After this, his tone changed and he informed us

that there was only asbestos in the tiles in the floor and this would not be disturbed. We did not receive any other information to confirm that there was no asbestos elsewhere in the flat.

14. We were advised that the replacement kitchen would take two weeks. During this time, we would not have access or use of our kitchen. I remember being told by the foreman working with the builders that, we could not talk to the builders because they did not speak English.

15. In the end, the works took between six to eight weeks, causing a major disruption to our daily lives. The installed kitchen units were updated but poorly fitted. The kitchen sink was fitted with one clasp to the unit, rather than fourteen to fifteen clasps that should have been fitted. This caused issues with leaks later on and needed fixing. The builders also drilled a hole in the kitchen wall to fit an extractor fan. They appeared not to know what they were doing because the other side of the wall led into the interior communal hallway. After realising that they had made a mistake, they covered the hole in the kitchen with a cupboard.

16. I remember calling up to complain about the kitchen after it was installed. I got the telephone number from the TMO handbook. Following several complaints about the standard of work, someone from RBKC came to look at the work done. After this, the surveyor realised there was no fire door in the kitchen. Despite me chasing the TMO about this several times. The refurbishment tenant liaison officer was usually always hard to get hold of when we wanted to complain about various problems occurring with the ongoing works in my flat.

17. I also had problems chasing up a missing kitchen ceiling light diffuser that took several weeks before someone eventually came and installed a new one.

The Refurbishment at Grenfell Tower

18. We first became aware of the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower when we received letters from RBKC advising us there would be possible disruptions in the area. I also noticed that they started to add cladding and an external lift to the outside of the block. We were not aware of any refurbishment works inside the tower.

19. There was one occasion when I remember standing at the Latimer Road Station after the refurbishment and I vividly remember wondering to myself what would happen if it caught fire. I always wondered how people would be able to get out, given the fact that there was only one staircase. It was just a box with windows. The only time I went into the Tower was to visit the TMO offices on the ground floor.
20. I would have thought that the tower was refurbished properly and there was a plan in place for evacuation. In August 2016, I was visiting a client in a tower block in Shepherd's Bush, when a fire broke out in one of the flats. Fortunately, I was on my way out of the building at this moment, but I do remember everyone coming out of the block to go to an assembly point. I would have thought the same would have happened at Grenfell Tower.

Fire safety systems

21. The only communal door that I used was the main door that led out onto Bramley Road. I cannot recall if it automatically closed behind me or if it had smoke seals or strips on it. I remember that a lot of people would wedge this door open. I would remove the wedge when I saw this to make sure the block was secure.
22. I think there was fire safety signage but I cannot recall the details of this or where it was located.
23. I was unaware of emergency lighting in Hurstway Walk. I remember that there were lights outside the main door going into Hurstway that would be on in the evenings.
24. I was unaware of the smoke alarms in Hurstway Walk and I do not recall ever hearing any alarms.

Fire safety checks

25. Whilst living at Hurstway Walk I was not aware of any fire safety checks or inspections carried out and did not raise any fire safety complaints.

Fire safety advice

26. In my previous job, I worked as a District Nurse and was the union health and safety officer, so I had some knowledge about fire safety advice. As part of this role, I

attended regular fire safety courses and I learnt that in the event of a fire, you needed to leave to get to a place of safety. I was not aware that Hurstway Walk had a 'stay put' evacuation policy. As a disabled person, it is worrying that I was not made aware of the evacuation policy.

The 14 June 2017 and week after the fire

27. The night of the fire was a normal evening for me and I went to bed at my usual time of about 10.30pm. I was asleep and my wife became aware of someone banging on the door and shouting "get up, there's a fire". It turned up to be my neighbour's stepson. My wife got up and looked out of the balcony window, and then woke me up. At first, I could not smell any smoke and I thought it was possible that someone had simply left a toaster on in their flat or something like that. My wife and I left the flat in the night clothes we were wearing. I thought it was part of the protocol to leave your flat. I was the fire warden at work so I knew what to do and that we needed to get out of the flat.
28. It was not obvious at first that there was a fire. When we left the flat and walked into the communal area, there were lots of people evacuating. I then realised that we needed to get out and we were in danger.
29. We left the Walkway through the normal exit and went out onto Bramley Road that leads to Latimer Road tube station. There were so many people on the street. Everyone was bewildered. It was like walking out into a war zone. There was smouldering black chunks on the ground around us. The London Fire Brigade (LFB) directed us to the further side of Bramley Road, away from the Tower. I am not sure exactly what the time was but it was between 12.45 and 1.15 am.
30. We stood there in amazement. There were lots of people leaving the block at the same time and when we got outside, we looked up at the Tower and saw a strip of flames all the way up one side. My wife said immediately "oh my god it's the cladding that's on fire". I heard screams from people in the Tower. Everything seemed to echo and you would hear people on the phone in the building and others telling them to get out. I remember hearing firefighters shouting and telling them to get out.
31. One of the first things I thought, when we saw the seriousness of the situation, was

that there was a big hole caused by ongoing gas main works that was long overdue to be finished in Bramley Road that would block the emergency services getting close to the Tower. This was because they had been doing gas works in the weeks before. I also remember looking up at one stage and seeing the silhouette of a person banging on one of the windows half way up the Tower. There was an orange glow behind her and the next time I looked at the same window, there was nobody there. I have often thought of that moment since and have wondered what happened to that person.

32. We stood outside the Buggsi supermarket on Bramley Road for around half an hour. We were worried that the Tower was going to collapse and the fire would spread to the Walkways. I remember seeing black clumps of burnt out foam smouldering at our feet. My wife and I were conscious that we were breathing in smoke. It was not direct smoke but the whole area smelt of smoke.
33. I have a friend who lives not far away, on St Lukes Road just off Portobello Road, and we decided to walk to his house after calling him and explaining what was going on. I left the site sometime after 2am and arrived at my friend's place at around 3am, and we switched on the TV. We were very worried that the Tower was going to collapse.
34. We stayed the night at my friend's house and next day at about 4pm I walked back to the area to see what was going on. By that time, the tube station had been cordoned off. I was worried about our cat, who was still in our flat, and I spoke to a policeman. He told me there is nothing I could do about it because it was still unsafe to go back into our flat. I asked if the fire was going to spread. He said they thought it had stopped but still would not let me into our flat. He told me to come back in a couple of hours and he would see what he could do. I then visited the local vets in St Helens Gardens and asked them if there was any chance they could look after my cat. The vets said they would be looking after pets for free and we could bring our cat for them to care for whilst we were not at home.
35. I went back to the area again at around 7pm on 14 June. I spoke to another police officer and explained about my cat. The police officer was reluctant at first. When he saw that other residents were visiting their flats, he agreed to escort me to mine. There was no evidence of smoke inside our flat and the cat was just lying on the bed licking

her paws. I remember seeing a fan that I had left on the night before and it had fallen over. Several of our neighbours had also made it into the block and they were collecting things from their flats. I collected some underwear for my wife, clothes for myself and some toiletries and took the cat to the vets.

36. From Thursday 15 to Saturday 17 June 2017, we stayed at my daughter's flat in Kensal Green. Fortunately, she was on holiday at the time so my wife and I had a bed to sleep in and a place to stay.
37. During the first few days, we visited the area a number of times and on the Saturday we spoke to a police officer. We were told that we could go back to the flat properly. RBKC had not contacted us at all during this time. By 17 June 2017, we were back living in Hurstway Walk.
38. In the morning on the 14 June 2017, I had contacted my manager at work to tell him about what had happened. They were very understanding about me not being able to come to work. I went into work on the Monday 19 June 2017 to see my colleagues and handover. One of my colleagues asked me why I was back at work. It was only then that things really began to affect me. I left the same day and took 2 weeks off work. I was signed off as unfit to work by my GP, who diagnosed me with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Relief centres

39. My wife and I visited the Westway a few times but all I can remember taking was drinking water. The Red Cross staff at the Westway were friendly and helpful.
40. In the first few weeks back in our flat after the fire, we had no hot water or heating. We found out that you could shower at the Westway but we did not use these facilities because it was too busy. Instead, my wife would fill up the bath with hot water from the kettle and I would have cold showers. We mainly learnt about what help or support was available through word of mouth.
41. We visited the Westway in the first few days to speak to someone from RBKC about our housing situation. At this point, we did not think we could go back to our flat at Hurstway Walk. I was adamant that I did not want to go into a hotel, despite RBKC

suggesting that it was a good thing to do. My wife would have liked to go but I could not imagine staying in one room. It would have been too restrictive. I wanted to be back at home and somewhere I could have gathered my thoughts.

42. I remember going to the RBKC housing desk at the Westway. No one seemed to know what was going on and we were told to come back later. I do not know who I spoke to on this day. We then moved back to our flat on Saturday 17 June 2017.

Basic Provisions and Financial assistance

43. Immediately after the fire there was a lot of confusion about what was the right and wrong thing to do and how we could get help. At first, people told my wife and I that we should go to a hotel to get support, but I really did not want to go to a hotel. Later, the Citizens Advice Bureau gave us £100, and sometime after that, we received a £5,000 from RBKC that they transferred directly into my bank account.
44. In the first two days following the fire, my wife and I went out to the shops to buy clothes and toiletries that I had not managed to pick up. During this time, we did not know whether we would be able to go back to our flat in Hurstway. We had not been given any information from RBKC for, if and when we could go back. In these first few days, I also did not know that the relief centres were providing toiletries and clothes that was available to us, as Walkway residents. I presumed that this aid was for those in the Tower, who had lost everything in the fire.
45. I remember for weeks after the fire, there were tables on the street that people had set up with different necessities, including toothbrushes. The community came together to support one another. It was a very emotional time.
46. I went to the Curve quite frequently to speak to housing officers in the months after. My attitude was that if I was going to move I would only do it once and that it would be to Longridge. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Support and Information from Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

47. We did not hear from RBKC following the night of the fire and we were not allocated a key worker. Although we had heard of others who had key workers, we were not assigned one and did not get any information about key workers. It was as if we had been missed out. We were not given information directly by RBKC by post, email, text message or phone call.
48. We went to a lot of the meetings. I wanted to go to find out what was happening, but everyone was upset and shouting. There was no central government presence at these meetings and representatives from RBKC stopped turning up.
49. We saw no leadership from central government, RBKC or the TMO in the immediate aftermath of the fire. We had heard that Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn had visited the area but nothing more than that.

Information and Assistance

50. Before the fire, I would occasionally see Dennis Murphy at the Pig & Whistle, and I would see Steven Power and Raymond Bernard or 'Moses', as he was known, around the area. I knew of these people, we were not close friends. I only found out that they had died through missing poster signs that were put up outside the Latimer Christian Centre.
51. I had lived in the area for 30 years and I remember seeing other familiar faces on missing poster signs in the area. When I saw these posters, I knew that they had died in the fire. It was very sad.
52. We initially thought hundreds had died. In the weeks following the fire, RBKC and central government provided little, if any information on who and how many had actually died.

Public communication

53. Initially, we found things out through meetings and posters that had been stuck up

around the area. A few weeks after the fire, the Curve advertised available support in newsletters that we received through the post every week or two weeks.

54. After the fire, I joined a Grenfell group on social media which I still receive updates from.

55. My neighbour, Christine, also provided me with updates and information.

Temporary accommodation

56. After we moved back to our flat at Hurstway Walk, we did not feel safe. We wanted proper assurance that the Tower was not going to collapse onto our home.

57. On moving back to our flat, there was a large amount of debris on our balcony. The windows were also dusty on the outside and there was some dust on the inside where the bedroom window had been open. The debris looked like black, burnt out cladding. My wife decided to clean this up in the first few days of us returning to the flat. Following this, we received a leaflet from RBKC advising us that they would be sending people round to clean and clear the balcony of debris. They also offered to clean curtains in flats. However, we had blinds and we had cleaned these ourselves. A few months on, a man knocked on our door asking if he could clear the balcony. My wife answered and explained to him that she had already swept up. He did not inspect the flat or balcony to confirm that the area was safe, he just moved onto the next flat.

58. Following the fire, I saw people cleaning the windows and the roof of the communal area of Hurstway Walk. This was the first time I had seen anyone clean the roof of the communal area, it had been filthy for years. The dirt from the roof was coming into our flat and I came out to speak to the young man cleaning. I told him they should be telling residents about this, given it was affecting our flats. I told him he should have a mask on with all the dust that he was cleaning up. He shrugged it off.

59. Approximately six months later, I was moving our plant pots around on our balcony and I came across a large chunk of burnt out cladding.

60. When we moved back to Hurstway Walk, we were both constantly worried about the Tower collapsing onto our home. At one point, we heard an alarm go off in the tower

and we went out on our balcony to see what was happening. We were frightened it was going to come down. It was not until we relocated to Longridge that we were able to stop worrying.

61. By the time of the Grenfell Tower Fire, I had lived in Hurstway Walk for over 30 years. I knew the area and my neighbours well and I enjoyed living there. [REDACTED]

62. My wife's symptoms were exacerbated by the worry and stress of living next to the Tower. We were both felt as though our lives had been completely disrupted. We had to see the Tower every day and we could not move on from what had happened. The Police would park outside our flat, on Bramley Road, in the weeks and months following the fire. At one point, I had to get up in the middle of the night to tell them to turn the engine off, because we could smell the diesel fumes coming up through our window. It was very stressful. I was very concerned for my wife and worried about her health worsening. I did not want to move away but the impact of the fire had been so great, on my wife particularly, that we felt that we simply had to move.

63. In June 2018, we began considering the move. We have relatives in Preston on my wife's side and when we approached RBKC, they encouraged us and offered us a relocation package. We went to the Curve to discuss moving, and we were told we needed to go RBKC's office at the town hall to speak to someone about housing. I thought at the time that they were doing us a great favour but I have found out since that they would do this relocation package anyway for anybody looking to move out of London. Then I realised that we were giving them a property back that they could use to rehouse someone who had lost their home.

64. RBKC told us we were not going to get a council swap because there were too few council properties in Preston. We were advised to look at other properties. We found a suitable property in Longridge and went for it. RBKC provided us with a £1,000 grant and they paid for the deposit on the rented property we live in. They also paid for the first month's rent, and removal costs. We had to move in earlier than we would have liked to secure the property in Longridge. We left Hurstway Walk for good on 23 September 2018 and I have not been back since.

65. The move has been successful in the sense that my wife and I like where we now live. [REDACTED] we are closer to her family, but this has come at a real cost. I miss living in West London and the local community. In London, I worked as a district nurse in a well-paid job. I now work as a support worker in a medium secure mental health hospital and I had to take a pay cut. In the Walkways, I had a secure tenancy. We now rent privately and have much less security. Fortunately, we have a good relationship with our new landlord, but we are on a monthly rolling contract and there is no guarantee that we will be able to stay where we are.
66. [REDACTED] When we moved to Longridge, she started to feel better and she began working again in early 2019 but has only managed to go back part time. Before the fire, I always said that I never wanted to leave the flat and the walks but that I would consider doing so when I reached 60.

Psychological Support

67. Following the 14 June 2017, I had to take time off work. I was referred to occupational health for counselling. It was difficult when I knew the counsellor who was a psychologist through committee meetings at work.
68. My GP referred me to the 'Take time to talk' service, organised with Grenfell Health and Wellbeing. I was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and continue to find it difficult to think about the events of the night and those following it. I completed the course of counselling sessions, although I did not find them particularly helpful.

Ongoing impact of the fire on you

69. The events on the 14 June 2017 have had a continuing impact on my wife and myself. When we moved back to Hurstway, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I started to forget simple things and names. I still forget things now.
70. As a result of the fire and the impact on our lives, we felt forced to relocate to the North of England, moving from a secure tenancy in West London to a private rental in Preston. We were unable to remain in Hurstway Walk given the psychological

impact on my wife and myself. I do not want to go back to London any time soon, and when I do, I know I will find it difficult and emotional.

71. I also have had to take a pay cut when we relocated and am now working on a salary band and grade lower than what I used to work in London. This has affected my financial situation and emotional health and wellbeing. I do not wish to provide further detail on how I have been impacted in a public forum.

Adequacy of response & lessons learned

72. The central and local government response was ill timed and ill judged. I have no respect for RBKC or the TMO. There was a lack of representation and lack of empathy. They could not see the bigger picture. The only help that we saw was from the Red Cross, other charities and the community.
73. The LFB needs to introduce new training for emergencies like those at Grenfell to make sure that this does not happen again. Central government should learn the lessons from this fire and they should arrange for the removal of the cladding on other buildings in the UK.

Statement of truth

I believe that the facts stated in this statement are true.

I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's website.

Signed: 

Date: 

Glenn Young