

Witness Statement of: **Jenny Quang**  
No. of statement: **2**  
Exhibits: **1**  
Date of statement: **25.02.20**

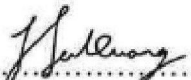
## **GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY**

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### **WITNESS STATEMENT OF JENNY FEI QUANG**

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This statement is a factual statement prepared for the Grenfell Tower Inquiry dealing with Modules 3 and 4 in Phase 2 only. It does not, and is not intended to set out my experiences on the night of the fire, or the impact that these events and the aftermath have had on me (and my family).

Signed .....  .....

**I, JENNY FEI QUANG, will say as follows:**

1. I was a resident of Grenfell Tower. My mother Hoang Quang and my father Van Ho are survivors of the fire, which started on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017. I am making this statement for the purposes of Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry.
2. I made a statement in Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry (reference IWS00000766), dated 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018. I also gave a statement to the Metropolitan Police Service, dated 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017. I wish for my Phase 1 Statement and Phase 2 Statement to form my evidence to the Inquiry.
3. This statement addresses the issues within module 3 (fire safety within the Tower and communication with residents) and module 4 (aftermath) from the Inquiry's stated Phase 2 schedule. I deal with issues relating to module 3 in paragraphs 4-58, and module 4 in paragraphs 59-89.

### Module 3

#### Living in Grenfell Tower

4. I was born in 1995 and lived in Flat 76, Grenfell Tower until the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017. I lived with my mother Hoang Quang, my father, Van Ho and my older sister, Lucy Ho. My parents were tenants of the council (RBKC). I know the TMO looked after the building in terms of maintenance, repairs and cleaning. My mum's first language is Cantonese and she speaks limited English. They had moved into Grenfell Tower in 1990, before I was born. The tenancy was in both my parents' names. My father moved out of Grenfell Tower in 2001, but he would stay at our flat occasionally. We told RBKC that my dad had moved out, but I am not sure if the tenancy was ever updated.
5. Flat 76 was on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of Grenfell Tower. It was in the Northeast corner of the Tower. Flat 76 was a two bedroom flat. When I was younger before the refurbishment, the kitchen windows would overlook the football pitches. The Kensington Aldridge Academy (KAA) and the leisure centre were built where the pitches were. From the kitchen windows on the east, we could see round to Barandon Walk. We could also see the KAA and the leisure centre from the bedroom windows. If you looked out far from the bedroom windows on the north, you could see the play park and the main road. The view from the 10<sup>th</sup> floor was amazing – we could see the London Fireworks, and could see the BT Tower. The view was one of my favourite things about living in Grenfell Tower.
6. Grenfell Tower was always my home. I went to the nursery, which was inside the Tower. I then attended [REDACTED] Primary School, which is close to the Tower and close to where other children in the community went to school. For secondary school, I went to [REDACTED] School in Hammersmith. I took a gap year to work as a rowing coach at my school before going to university in September 2014. I am studying [REDACTED] I completed a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] after the fire from 2017 to 2018. I am due to complete my [REDACTED] in the summer of 2020. During term times, I lived in Manchester but always came home for Christmas and summer breaks. I would often come back to visit my family and friends. I would come back to

London every six weeks or so. Even though I lived term times in Manchester, I still considered Grenfell Tower and London my home.

7. I liked growing up in Grenfell Tower. The view from our flat was amazing, and the park area next to the Tower was nice. It was a nice place to spend time with my family. We also have two dogs called [REDACTED], so the green spaces was great for them. We had a cat who sadly died in the fire. I remember people from the Tower just by growing up there, including the people I went to school with, as well as my sister's friends. Our neighbours were always so considerate – they kept the communal area clean and we had no issues with them

#### Relationship with RBKC and the TMO

8. My mum was a RBKC tenant. Most communication from RBKC and the TMO came in the form of letters and leaflets, but these seemed to be generic updates. I don't recall the family ever being visited from someone from RBKC or the TMO. I do not remember RBKC or the TMO providing us with any kind of tenant handbook or information about who to call if there was a problem.
9. As social housing tenants, it felt like you could not change too much in the flats because we did not own it. If RBKC or the TMO wanted to change something in the flat then we would just have to accept what they wanted to do because we didn't feel like we could refuse as they owned the building. I felt as if you could not object to certain things, like the works done during the refurbishment. We tried to superficially upgrade the living room floors, bought living room furniture, changed the bathroom walls and painted the living room walls and ceiling. We would not have been able to do more than this because we were tenants.

#### Complaints and Communication to RBKC and the TMO

10. Over the years I lived in Grenfell Tower, and during the refurbishment, we as a family made several complaints to RBKC and the TMO. We made complaints about our bathroom, gas pipes and our ceiling. My mum's first language is Cantonese so most communication went through either Lucy or myself, when I was home. Either one of



us would contact RBKC or the TMO depending who was there and who was available. I would try various methods of communication to report repairs issues to RBKC and the TMO. When I was younger, I would be less inclined to try to phone people so I would initially try online methods of contacting them both. I knew there was an online maintenance form for repairs that I used. I would expect a copy of these complaints to be on the housing file. I am not sure where this form would go in RBKC or who would receive it. I would have expected a response within a week. Often I would not receive a response, or I would receive a response after about 3 weeks.

11. I would also try emailing RBKC and the TMO. Now, I cannot recall which email address I contacted. Emails also never seemed to progress the issue and I rarely received a response. I would also call up. I do not remember the names of who I spoke to but I would try phoning the contact details from the letter or their websites. Often, nobody picked up or I would have to call a number of times before someone would come and solve the problem. I was not aware that there was an official complaints procedure from the TMO.
12. RBKC and the TMO should have had both mine and Lucy's phone number and they should have been aware that we were the main points of contact for the flat. We have explained the language barrier my mum had multiple times to them. Lucy and I would sometimes contact both RBKC and TMO if something went wrong or we had a complaint. More often than not, I would not receive a response from either of them. It was often not clear who to problems needed to be reported to – if it was RBKC or the TMO.
13. It would take the TMO a long time to come and solve any issues. Eventually repairs and maintenance issues were sorted, but after a lot of chasing from us. For example, our broken bathtub and leaking sinks were unresolved for two years. The time it took to fix a problem would vary a lot depending on what the problem was. For example, we had issues with asbestos that took a long while to fix, however this was dealt with much quicker than leaking sinks. They would never turn up on the same day and would take between one to three weeks on average.



14. We had issues with leaks and our hot water. The taps in the bathroom sink and in the kitchen would leak. I do not know specific time or dates now. We reported the tap problem on multiple occasions to various people at both TMO and BRKC. They did not fix it quickly at all. It took around two years to get fixed. It got to the point when they were planning to change the bathroom anyway, so I think they were just trying to put it off until this point. Eventually, they did end up fixing the taps and changing them. It got fixed after I spoke to Lynda Prentice at Rydon about it. Then, they changed the whole bathroom so they changed the taps again.
15. The hot water would stop working – it was an intermittent problem. We still do not know what the problem was or what caused it. I do not know if it was linked to the refurbishment, or if this happened before or after the refurbishment. It happened quite a lot, maybe a few times a year. Sometimes we would get a warning that the hot water would go off through letters/leaflets through the door. We just got used to it and kind of dealt with it. It would not go off for long so we did not make complaints about this.
16. The electricity would also stop working. Like with the hot water, it would just go off often – probably a few times a year on average for about half a decade. The lights and electricity in the flat would just stop working. I think it was sometimes caused by a power surge but I am not certain. I do not recall things being broken because of the power surges. The electricity would go off for a few hours at a time and then just came back on within a couple of hours. Usually we just gave it a bit of time to resolve itself.

#### Health Before the fire

17. Before the fire, I had no health problems. [REDACTED] My mum sometimes struggled walking. She would have problems after walking a lot and would complain about leg pain.
18. There were often problems with the lifts in Grenfell Tower. I explained this briefly in paragraph 19 of my Phase 1 statement. The lifts were unreliable and broke down often. Sometimes both lifts were out of service and which meant that people had to use the stairwell. There was only one stairwell in Grenfell Tower. I was able to use the stairs to get to the flat.

19. My mum would use the stairs if the lifts were out of order, but it was difficult for her to use the stairs. This meant she would not be able to come and go from the flat as often as she normally would. It would take her a long time to use the stairs, so she would plan her day to minimise journeys up and down.
20. I never complained about the lifts – mainly because I was never the first person to notice the problem. There would sometimes be a sign there notifying it was out of order, so I assumed someone else had reported it. We never received any texts or other communication from RBKC or the TMO to let us know that the lifts were broken. Prior to the Refurbishment, there was a concierge area by the entrance door on the ground floor of the Tower. He used to be positioned between the two doors where you had to use your fob to get through. The concierge would know about the lifts being broken. I do not know what the concierge would do about the lifts.
21. The TMO would not come fix the lifts quickly though, and they would usually take about a week to be fixed. They seemed to break down once every few months.
22. I do not remember every filling in a questionnaire about any specific needs my family had. If we did and it was in English, my mum would have needed someone to translate it. It's likely either Lucy or I would have completed the questionnaire if we received one, but I don't remember either of us doing this. We would have been better off on a lower floor due to my mum's difficulty walking and being reliant on the lifts. However, we were never asked about this and I don't recall the TMO or RBKC ever considering our needs and suitability being on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor.

### The Refurbishment

23. Within paragraph 20 of my phase 1 witness statement, I stated that most of the Refurbishment happened when I was away at university. I went to university in 2014, so during a large part of the work, I was in Manchester. I was back in London during the summer months and over Christmas breaks. I received general updates from my family about what was happening with the refurbishment when I was at university.

24. When I initially became aware of the Refurbishment, I knew the TMO were going to be doing work on the windows (including double-glazing), heating, improving the insulation and upgrading the boiler. I don't remember any other changes being proposed. My understanding was that all of the flat were getting the same upgrade and overall, the refurbishment would make the Tower a better place to live in. I assumed it was happening because the Tower had not been invested in for many years and I thought it was about time the Tower was upgraded for the residents. I wanted the flats to be improved because we had problems, such as leaking sinks and a broken bathtub, and had never seen things being updated in the flat before. I thought that the bathroom and toilet needed upgrading particularly, mostly because things were breaking. My thoughts at the time was that any changes or upgrades would be beneficial to us and that works would be done right. I never questioned the proposed refurbishment at the time, although I did not feel at the time like we had a say and I don't recall us as a family ever having a say in what should be changed. If we had, we would have said that the internal flats needed upgrading and made more modern.
25. I saw some letters and leaflets about this relatively early on in the refurbishment process. I was more aware of what was happening once the work started. I did not initially know that cladding was going to be put on the outside of the building, but when I did, I assumed it was to better insulate the Tower and to match the buildings in the surrounding area, like the new school.
26. I do not remember being made aware of any consultations or meetings that took place for residents to be part of at the start of the refurbishment. I believe that if my mum had been aware of the meetings, she would not have attended on her own due to the language and so would have asked Lucy or me to go with her (if I was around). I don't recall ever receiving a questionnaire about our views on the refurbishment. I definitely do not remember being asked our views on the external cladding. I first remember the cladding when I came back from university in the summer of 2015 and saw it. I felt indifferent to the cladding since it was superficial. I did not know how dangerous it was then, I feel very differently about the cladding now.



27. Once the works progressed and we saw how unprofessional the work was as it did not look right or safe. I then started to question what work was being done. For example, when I saw the pipe work that was done in the flat, I thought it looked unsafe, although I do not know enough about fire safety to comment further on this.
28. It was not until one of our neighbours, Antonio, started putting notices on his door that he did not want the work to be carried out, did I realise that this was even an option to question the works. I thought that if we objected to the works, it would have made life more difficult for us living there. For example, I thought that perhaps other changes my mother needed would not have been made. I never really thought you could say no to a landlord.
29. Prior to the Refurbishment, there was a concierge area by the entrance door on the ground floor of the Tower. He used to be positioned between the two doors where you had to use your fob to get through. I did not use the concierge often but knew he was there if we had a problem. There was a woman named Victoria who also worked on the concierge desk. I do not remember much about her other than my mum used to talk to her about whether rent payments went through. Mum also got new fobs from the concierge desk and tried to report repairs problems in the flat to Victoria. There was also a room on the ground floor of the Tower, but we never really used this room. I thought it was a staff room.
30. After the Refurbishment, the concierge was removed. I do not remember being asked if we wanted him to be retained. I recall that the front entrance to the tower was one of the last things to be done during the Refurbishment. For a while, we had to enter the tower using the walkway, which connected Grenfell Tower to Grenfell Walk. When we were able to use the main entrance on the ground floor again, the concierge was gone. I did not see the concierge staff since they put in a temporary main door to the building on Grenfell Walk. I remember there being a security man who used to be there at night before the refurbishment. I thought this was good and felt safer at night with him there.
31. When I was home from university, I would help my mum by dealing with contractors, arranging appointments and letting them in the house. It was difficult to deal with the workers coming into the property. These workers were from Rydon. Having workers

in our flat and in the area felt intrusive. The noise from the works was loud and disruptive if I was studying. There would also be people in a workers' lift outside the building who could see into our windows. This felt like such an invasion of privacy.

32. It was difficult to make appointments with Rydon for this work to happen. When workers would have to come into Flat 76 to do work either Lucy, my mum or I would have to be there. My mum would never leave a worker in the house without someone else there. We made appointments for a Wednesday as this was mum's day-off from work, but they often did not turn up. It felt like we were housebound on days when we were expecting them to turn up. We were just stuck there. Other times, it felt like people would turn up and we were just supposed to let them in. I thought if we had to rearrange for the workers to come back another time that would be inconvenient for everyone and cause delay. It felt like we were constantly guarding the flat in case someone turned up.

33. I remember there being a problem with asbestos that was identified during the Refurbishment around 2015. I knew that it was an important issue. It was really worrying as I knew asbestos can cause cancer. I recall that a worker came and it looked as if he was just hoovering up the vents. I believe the asbestos was in the ceiling in the bathroom that was flaking. Workers essentially ripped out the ceiling to get rid of the asbestos and then just left the bathroom in a state. I am not sure where these workers were from. They did not replace the ceiling. We weren't given any guidance about not using the room during the works or afterwards.

34. I filled in an online form on behalf of my mum on the TMO website in August 2015. In this web form, I explained that the bathroom ceiling had recently (i.e. in the last few months) been removed to clear asbestos and requested it to be repaired. I also stated that the bath taps were leaking and the bath and shower were disintegrating. I exhibit a copy of this form at **JQ/1**. They just told me that this was cosmetic damage and we needed to sort this out ourselves.

35. As part of the Refurbishment, work was done to the boiler. This affected our rent. Prior to the work on our boiler, the cost of hot water was included in our rent. Afterwards it was not and we had to pay for this separately. Before the work was done, our boiler

was by the kitchen. When they replaced it was moved the hallway. I remember it being a massive box by the front door on the left hand side. I do not recall getting a choice where the boiler went. It seemed like an inconvenient place to put a boiler, and these sort of things made me question if the refurbishment was well thought out.

36. There was also work done to the windows. I thought at the time that this would be a good thing. I thought the works included making the windows double-glazed and make the flat more insulated. Work was carried out in the summer of 2015 – the windows were fitted and the new ones had a plastic frame. I remember being there when the work was done to the windows. One of the builders who did the work taught me how to use the key that accompanied the window. I do not recall being told anything else, like how to clean the windows and we were not left a manual about the windows. I cannot remember there being gaps in the windows and do not remember a draught coming through.
37. Lynda Prentice from Rydon came round to the Flat after the windows were installed. She had a checklist for the work the workers did and what they were meant to do. She visited at least two to three times and I spoke to her. She checked the works and it seemed like she thought the work was done correctly. She seemed like she was in charge. She was the only accountable face I knew and would answer my questions about organising appointment for Rydon workers during the Refurbishment.
38. There were works done to the extractor fan in the kitchen window a short while after the windows being installed. I do not remember there being any real issues with this extractor fan and I do not think mum or Lucy complained about this.
39. I remember coming home for one summer and pipes were put into the communal area. This was either the summer of 2015 or 2016 but I cannot remember. I think I knew at the time that these were gas pipes, but I cannot remember how I was told this. The pipes were installed in our flat on the walls, they went both along the top and bottom of the walls and into the hallway of the flat. They led back into the communal area. I did not even know what these pipes were for. I know they did not look safe and they were big and bulky. They looked like they were covered in metal/foil rather than insulated. It worried me that if something went wrong with them or if they caught fire, it would



spread quickly. It seemed like they were placed inconveniently and in the way. That made me question how well planned the refurbishments were, and then, in turn, made me question how safe it was. Mum complained about the pipes to one of the Rydon managers because she wanted the gas pipes covered. It took a lot of time for something to happen about the pipes. Some were covered but others were not. They seemed to only box in the pipes they could reach easily. Just like the bathroom ceiling, it seemed to be an unfinished job. This was another example of how it felt like we did not have control over what was happening and we just had to accept the changes that were being made. It was made to seem like we could not refuse as changes were happening to the whole tower. It did not seem as if we could ever say, "no we do not want this". It was as if we would be an inconvenience if we did.

#### Fire Safety in Grenfell Tower

40. I do not know who was responsible for fire safety in Grenfell Tower. I knew we were responsible for checking the fire alarms in our flat and I assumed we would have to tell the TMO if something was wrong with them, or there was a problem with safety in the Tower. We would have just contacted the general office number for the TMO. I did not raise any concerns about fire safety in Grenfell.
41. I have never seen anyone from the RBKC or TMO carrying out fire safety checks at Grenfell Tower. I never saw someone checking the front doors, fire alarms or fire exits. As far as I am aware, no one checked our front door.
42. There were caretakers on site who cleaned up. I do not remember how often they came but they were there.
43. I don't remember ever having been given fire safety advice by the TMO or RBKC. I didn't know that there was a stay put policy in place at Grenfell Tower. Before the fire, the phrase 'Stay Put' meant nothing to me. It was not a known policy to me. I don't recall ever seeing information about fire safety advice contained in a letter, leaflet or newsletter. Even if we were sent a leaflet or information about what to do in the event of a fire, my mum would not have been able to read it. We never received any communications in Cantonese. The TMO and RBKC were aware that mum could not

speak English and spoke Cantonese. Lucy and I told people at TMO and RBKC on multiple occasions.

44. There were no signs that I can remember in the communal areas informing us of what to do in the event of a fire. If they were there, they were not prominent enough for me to realise they were there. Again, if they were in English, my mum would not have been able to read them.
45. I knew what I would do as an individual in the event of a fire. This was something I would have been told at school. I would close all the windows and doors to prevent fire spread and stay low on the ground. I would then leave the building by the stairs. At school, I was always taught to leave the building and to not use the lift.
46. If I were to have experienced a fire in Grenfell Tower, I would have tried to see how bad the fire was before making a decision about whether to stay or leave, but that is based on me knowing there was a fire in the Tower and the extent of the fire.
47. I was aware of what my exit route would be if we did need to evacuate. I would have gone down the stairs and not use the lifts. I know I could get down quickly, but other people would have struggled if they were higher up the tower, had poor health or were older. I was never told about a fire meeting point. Based on what I was taught at school, I would have just gone to a large, open and safe space down stairs. We never had fire drills at Grenfell Tower. My mum may have struggled to evacuate depending on what the conditions in the stairs were like. I do not think my mum would have been able to cope on the stairs if they were smoky or there were obstructions in the way.
48. There was a fire once in Flat 66, directly below us. I think this was in 2013 – I mentioned this in paragraph 14 of my Phase 1 witness statement. My mum and I were in the flat and we saw the smoke outside our window. I don't remember alarms in our flat or the communal area going off. We could only see a bit of smoke, there were no flames and no screaming or commotion. I think mum walked out of the flat to go and see what was happening. The fire brigade turned up and came into the building. Mum came back to the flat and said to me that everything was ok. I think Lucy also talked to a member of the fire brigade because she was downstairs and outside the tower, who

told her that everything was fine. This fire did not really progress anywhere. We did not think we needed to leave as the fire was quickly brought under control. We were never told to stay in the flat by the fire brigade and did not know 'stay put' was the policy.

49. As mentioned in Paragraph 11 of my Phase 1 statement, there were two smoke alarms in Flat 76. One was located in the hallway and one was in the kitchen. I think RBKC put these in in 2013 and replaced the old fire alarms. I do not think this was something we requested. I cannot remember who fitted them. I do not think they explained to us how the fire alarm works and did not tell us about replacing batteries. Fortunately, we already knew this information from just general knowledge.

50. I do not think there were fire alarms in the communal area of Grenfell Tower.

#### Fire Safety Features

51. Other than the fire alarms in our flat, we did not have any other fire safety features. There was not a fire blanket or fire extinguisher.

52. You would be able to call our flat from the intercom downstairs and we could let someone into the Tower from the flat. There was no way of contacting all flats at one time. If I wanted every flat to be aware of something, I would have probably told the concierge before he was removed. After he was removed, I would have to call RBKC or go and knock on doors myself if there was something everyone in Grenfell should know.

53. The 10<sup>th</sup> floor communal area was generally well kept, clean and tidy. I remember it being well lit. Mum would clean outside of our door area, and our neighbours were always considerate. They would not really leave rubbish in the communal area.

54. In paragraph 17 of my phase 1 witness statement, I stated I was not aware of any fire safety measures throughout the Tower. I cannot remember there being any fire extinguishers or sprinklers on our floor. I do not remember there being a dry riser on my floor although I have been told since the fire there was one. I cannot recall there



being signs about what to do in the event of a fire or there being an emergency exit signage.

55. The fire door from the 10<sup>th</sup> floor to the stairwell was a blue door. It was pretty heavy. This door closed automatically. I do not remember issues with this fire door.

56. I knew there was a smoke control and ventilation system in the tower. You could see the vents on the wall. I did not know any specifics about it, so I would not know if it was working or not. It was noisy at times, but not something that we had a problem with.

#### Front doors

57. I provided information about our front door to Flat 76 in paragraph 12 of my Phase 1 Statement. We had our front door replaced when we lived at Grenfell Tower, in around 2013. I do not remember being asked about whether we wanted a new front door. I do remember having options to choose the colour and we chose it together as a family.

58. The new front door was red and did not have any windows. There was a letterbox in the middle and I think it shut close fully. I do not remember any issues with gaps in the door. I have lived in student accommodation, and compared to the doors in student accommodation, our door did not seem very good at all. I remember it being thin, thinner than the previous door. It did not shut automatically and could be left wide open.

#### Module 4

##### 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017

59. On the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017, I was in Manchester at university. My mum and dad were both in our flat when the fire started. I became aware of the fire as Lucy messaged me. I explained this in more detail in my Phase 1 statement, paragraphs 22 to 35 (Reference - IWS00000766). Initially I just felt helpless and I felt the panic from Lucy telling me what she had experienced. It's difficult to describe the shock I felt that night of finding out what happened. I couldn't believe it. That night we lost our flat and all our possessions. Friends and neighbours lost their lives.

Week following the fire

60. Within paragraphs 36 to 41 of my Phase 1 statement, I provided some details about the immediate aftermath of the fire. I wish to provide more details below.
61. I returned to London on the 15<sup>th</sup> June at around 5pm. I had an important university presentation I needed to do that morning. I would not have been able to complete the year without doing this presentation. I did the presentation and then left straight afterwards to make my way to London. By the time I got back to London, my mum had already been placed at the Premier Inn Hotel in Earls Court. I knew that she had gone to the Westway Centre with her friend and this is how she was placed in accommodation. I don't think Mum had a choice in which hotel she went to. I remember telling my mum on the phone to stay in the hotel accommodation rather than stay at her friend's house because I was worried if she did that she would slip between the cracks and that RBKC would not know that she was alive and needed help.
62. I stayed with my mum for a few days in the hotel to support her and be with her. I knew she needed help and I was not convinced she was going to be looked after by the council. I helped with things like getting new passports, helping her get new glasses, bank accounts, cancel the TV license and energy bills. I wrote a list of all the things I thought we needed to do. We then went out and got this done. Lucy and I did all this. We were not given information from RBKC about how to get help or where to go. I had some stuff in Manchester so I did not need clothes, although I lost all my valuables in our Grenfell flat. Lucy went shopping on the 14<sup>th</sup> June to get clothes for herself and mum.
63. On the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June, my mum and I went back to the Grenfell area. Largely help was being provided by members of the public and hubs of volunteers. I went to the Rugby Portobello Club and the Westway Centre on the 16<sup>th</sup> and back to the Westway Centre on the 17<sup>th</sup> to get essential items. I explain further about the relief centres below.
64. On the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2017, I had to go back to Manchester to start a four-week work placement, which was part of my degree. I was determined to finish the year. When I

went back in Manchester, I was in constant communication with my family. I received updates from WhatsApp groups as well. I would be contacted by Gareth, the key worker who was allocated to our family, or my family about any communications from RBKC but otherwise I did not receive any information from RBKC. This was sometime after the fire, and not within the first seven days. This is surprising given that the TMO would have had my contact details because Lucy and I were the ones to speak to them when we lived in Grenfell Tower. I didn't receive any contact from them to check I had been accounted for, as they wouldn't have known I was at University that night.

65. I moved back to London after these four weeks in July 2017. I stayed living with my mum in the one hotel room until September 2017. I then moved back to Manchester to start my master's degree. I then returned to the hotel over the Christmas break from university.

#### Emergency Accommodation

66. The room in the Premier Inn Hotel was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. We were allocated one room to share between me, my mum and Lucy. There was a double bed and a single bed. The room was small and we were only offered the one room. Lucy stayed with us and with her partner Paul, who was placed in another hotel as he had been evacuated from the Walkways where he lived. Lucy would go between the two hotels. At times, mum, Lucy and I would all be staying in one room.
67. There were little things wrong at the hotel. For example, our names were wrong on the hotel booking from the start. It was just something that we should not have had to deal with. I just kept questioning how there was so much confusion about everything and so little information being given to us. When we first got there, there was no one from RBKC or the TMO to help us or give us information, even basic information such as how long we could stay at the hotel..
68. Mum was always worried and always anxious about being kicked out of the hotel. She felt unsettled by not knowing how long we could stay there. There was no clarity about how long we would be allowed to stay there. I knew they wouldn't just throw my mum out of the hotel, especially not so quickly after the fire. Every month we would get a



confirmation of staying for another month. This happened every month until we left. It was a very uncertain and unsettling time. We also did not know how the hotel was being funded. I assumed it was through RBKC but we were never specifically told that or given any reassurance that we would not have to pay for the hotel room.

69. Food was provided by the hotel. The hotel food was good but it wasn't particularly healthy. The longer we lived in the hotel, the less we wanted to eat their food. There was one time we went down to eat dinner and we gave them our room number; we were told that someone had already taken our number. The hotel staff handled this well, as they already knew us and allowed us to eat anyway. This was just another aspect of unnecessary problems. At one point, we stopped being given meals at the hotel and were given money to buy food. I cannot remember when this was.
70. Even when we were given money to buy food, we could not cook proper meals in the hotel. Mum was given a rice cooker, a mini microwave and a mini fridge by volunteer. It was really tough not being able to properly cook and eat what we want. It was especially tough for my mum. Mum had never really eaten out and never had a takeaway before living in the hotel. She was not eating food she was familiar with because it was Western food. Everything was more expensive without a kitchen. The costs of takeaways and buying food that does not need to be prepared added up quickly.
71. To me, it felt like RBKC did not really consider the fact that I would need accommodation. My mum wrote my name down as part of the family when signing up for a hotel room in the Westway Centre, and I think a member of RBKC crossed my name off the list as I was in Manchester at the time. They did not seem to factor in that I would also need a place to stay when I was home. Grenfell was my home too.
72. Over the Christmas period, it was a struggle only having one room. I was supposed to be working on my degree, and I found it difficult to cope with sleeping, living and studying in one small space. We had to request a second room in December 2017. Our key worker, Gareth, really helped with securing this. He really had to state our case and push this forward. By this point, I thought we might have been in a new house, so still being a hotel for months was a struggle.

73. Overall, staff at the hotel were nice. I was always conscious about people knowing I was from Grenfell because how they would treat us.

#### Relief Centres

74. During the time I was in London, we went to the Westway Centre and the Rugby Portobello club. It just seemed that everything was based there, back in the Grenfell area. I went in the week following the fire on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June, as well in the summer when I was back. We would have to regularly go to the rest centres for every day things such as collecting our post.

75. All information about how to get our lives back together was from these relief centres but also finding information about missing people. It was not easy to find out information about those who were missing. It seemed like no one really had an idea who was where, and who was safe. There were posters of peoples loved ones who were missing. It was really a case of asking around if anyone had seen a person.

76. I found out about the relief centres by looking up information on the internet. I think I saw a page that said where we could go. This page was directed at volunteers to tell them where they could go and help. I had to seek out this information. I know that the churches in the Grenfell area, mosques and the Harrow centre opened up as relief centres. I was aware of them from looking online, through other people and just generally walking down the street in the area. I popped in to see what they were offering when we were in the area after the fire. However, I did not really use them.

77. The Rugby Portobello Club was the main relief centre we used. I went on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June. It was just a good place where everyone went. We went there probably three or four times. It was better organised than the other relief centres I had been to and I felt protected there. The organisers only let people in who needed to be there and needed help. We had to prove we were from the Tower to get in. The volunteers who worked there would help us get what we needed like clothes, food and toiletries. They helped us with things like having our post redirected. The volunteers were all amazing. I saw the Rugby Portobello as a trusted source of information and support. I think the people there were volunteers from the community.

78. I think I went to the Westway Centre once or twice on the 17<sup>th</sup> June and once again after that, when I was back for longer in the summer. To me it seemed to be more open to people coming in (i.e. not just survivors of the fire). I was always wary of the journalists and press around at the Westway centre; I did not want to speak to them.. I felt uncomfortable when the press were around. It felt like things were not private when they should have been.

79. I cannot remember seeing or speaking to anyone from RBKC or the TMO in the Grenfell area or the Westway centre in the first seven days of the fire, or even after that. If they were there in the relief centres, they did not make themselves known to me. I did not see any signs, stalls or staff indicating that they were from RBKC or the TMO. During the first seven days after the fire, RBKC and the TMO did not get in contact with me and I didn't feel I was helped by them. All the help my family and I received was from the community.

#### Financial Assistance

80. I did not feel that there was clarity about what financial support there was available to survivors of the fire and where money was coming from. We were also uncertain about for how long we would be housed in the hotel. For these reasons, I tried to avoid spending any money as best I could. To save money I would walk to Latimer Road from Earls Court instead of taking the bus. I was cautious about buying replacement clothes. I was also scared to buy things in case I lost everything again.

81. We did receive a financial payment from the Westway Centre in the first seven days of the fire. We received financial support from RBKC later on in the summer of 2017, though I can't remember when exactly. We used this money to buy essential things like food and replace some of the things we had lost in the fire as we had nothing. I felt though that RBKC were not trying to contact me directly about the financial support and assistance I needed, even though I had lost my home and everything in it. I feel as though I was overlooked and my needs were discounted.

#### Support and Information from RBKC



82. We were allocated a key worker called Gareth within seven days of the fire. Gareth was from Ealing Council and had previously worked in mental health. He made contact a couple of days after the fire; I cannot remember the specific day. Gareth was great at helping us with practical things. I spoke to him quite a lot. He was aware that I was a medical student, so spent some time helping with aspects of university. He would suggest things that were helpful for my family, such as help with finances. We did not see him that often but knew he was there when we needed him. Gareth was replaced with a woman named Sharon Davies. I think this was around Christmas time 2017. I think Gareth went back to Ealing Council. Sharon left in the next December – I barely knew or spoke to her. To me it seemed like she was ready to close our case and told us we could reach her if we needed. I did not really feel like she was really there for us. Since then, we have not had a key worker. We now have a case manager who I am happy to speak to.

83. In the week following the fire, I do not remember having any communication with someone from RBKC about what services they were providing and where to go for help. I received no text messages, calls or emails from RBKC. They and the TMO should have had my contact details from our records. In the aftermath of the fire, I would regularly check RBKC's website to see if they had uploaded any news or information but I didn't see that they were using this to communicate with survivors and residents. Their website wasn't helpful to me. I remember getting in contact with RBKC by phone but the person I spoke to re-directed me to go to the Curve in the Grenfell area, so that questions I had could be answered. I did go to the Curve but I didn't like it because they required residents of the Tower to wear wristbands and this made me feel uncomfortable.

84. After the first week and in the longer term, I felt that RBKC still do not do a lot for us. We received emails and letters from them, but they seemed to me to be so generic and did not have much substance. Old information was repeated in the letters and most of the information we knew already. I think RBKC and the TMO should have been a central hub of information, support and services after the fire. I think they should have been in contact with those they knew had lived in Grenfell. They should have given us information and told us 'this is what you need to do.' Everything was so confused in

the days following the fire. Things were chaotic with lots of different centres doing similar things. There was no organisation from RBKC.

85. Grenfell United became a good source of information for residents of the Tower and the bereaved. They set up a WhatsApp group chat which the bereaved, survivors and residents could use to share information, and this became a trusted way to receive news.

#### Medical Assistance/Mental Health Support

86. Although, I was not in the Tower on the night of the fire, I have still suffered psychologically as a result of what happened to my mum on the night of the fire, the trauma of losing our home and belongings, the loss of friends and neighbours, and the trauma of what happened in the aftermath of the fire. I do not want to go into detail about this in this statement.

87. The provision of mental health services for those who do not live in London but were affected by the fire, is, in my experience, non-existent.

#### Longer-term housing

88. We did not move into our new home until January 2018. I now live with my mum. Lucy did not move into her new house until the March 2018 and lives in the same building as us. We really wanted to be in a new property before Christmas 2017, but this did not happen.

89. Mum and Lucy were shown many properties that were not suitable. It felt like they were shown properties before RBKC had considered what the residents really needed. It felt like we were being shown whatever house was available. It was also important for the family to be close together – we are each other's support system. When looking at properties, there was very much a feeling of 'this is the best we are going to get' rather than finding a property that suited us. It felt like a search for a property that was an ok standard, rather than a search for a property to call home for the rest of my mum's life.

90. We were unsure of what was going on with the legalities of getting a new property. In October 2017, Lucy was in communications with the housing allocations officer. She was told that she could only have a property in one of two blocks, but not a certain flat because another Grenfell Resident was viewing it. Even when this resident decided she did not want this flat, Lucy wasn't offered it until she contacted Kim Taylor Smith. It seemed to me Lucy was being treated unfairly. I wanted to be named on the new tenancy for mine and mums flat but was told this was not possible. RBKC allowed me to have succession rights. This was difficult. It felt like if it were not for my parents, I would not have somewhere to go. It did not feel like I had a secure home. I did not want to be offered my own property, as I did not feel that was needed or appropriate. I just did not want to be in a position later down the line when I could potentially lose all my connection with London, on top of losing everything else due to the fire.

#### Impact

91. I don't want to go into a lot of detail about the impact this fire has had on me and my family as it is a public statement. I want to say though that the Grenfell Tower Fire has had a huge impact on me and my family (and on other residents in the community). It has put an immense strain on our personal and working lives, as well as on our physical and mental health. At times, this has been copiously overwhelming and I sincerely hope that we will all recover from this and it won't hurt us for the rest of our lives.
92. Although it is easier to believe that this may have brought some families and the community closer together; it has actually torn some apart. I feel that the trauma experienced by those affected is often under-appreciated and forgotten in the system; and it hurts to think that children around the area may always hang onto this suffering.
93. Grenfell is not just about losing a home. It's not just about people losing their lives and loved ones. As horrible as that already is, it's bigger than just the fire. It's a stark reminder that some people aren't treated right in this country, as though some are deemed to not be worth basic human rights. This should have been addressed properly sooner in a much broader sense - not just by the council, but by the government. We would welcome and demand real change to social housing, fire safety and the building industry, as it feels wrong that it has already been nearly three years without substantial



improvements. Until this is achieved, and answers adequately, truthfully and responsibly given by the corporations involved, there will be an unpalatable taste remaining and sense of justice lacking.

**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: 25/02/2020**