

*Witness Statement: Salma SAID*  
*Statement No.: 2 [Statement Number 1 [IWS00000919]*

*Exhibits: 0*

*Date: 28 February 2020*

**THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF SALMA SAID**

**FLAT 54, 8TH FLOOR**

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I, Salma SAID, formerly of Flat 54 Grenfell Tower **WILL SAY** as follows:

**INTRODUCTION**

1. I am a Core Participant in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, and a survivor of the fire on 14 June 2017.
2. I have already submitted a Witness Statement(s) dated 14.06.18 and this is recorded as document [IWS00000919].
3. I have made a statement to the Metropolitan Police and I confirm that I consent to any police statement I have made being disclosed to the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry.

### Module 3

#### (Active and passive fire safety measures internal to building, management of building, compliance RRO 2005, fire risk assessment, including complaints and communication with residents)

I would refer to my previous witness statement where I dealt with my general concerns following the refurbishments:

*"28. Following the refurbishments in 2013 my concerns about fire safety at Grenfell increased. This was a very large-scale refurbishment. They took out some communal areas of the building and added extra floors and extra flats.*

*29. As part of this refurbishment, new pipe works was installed into my flat and all other flats and exterior cladding was fitted to the outside of the building.*

*30. I was very concerned about the changes that were proposed to my flat. There were a lot of pipes that were fitted as part of the refurbishment which ran both along the floor in my flat, up the sides of the walls and along the ceiling. None of these pipes were covered up, which I did not like at all. I also knew that part of the proposal was to replace my old boiler with a new boiler and the idea was that the new boiler would be placed in my entrance hallway to the side of the hall.*

*This meant that the entrance hallway would be restricted within my flat. This also concerned me as if the boiler blew up it would block the only escape route. They contacted me by letter giving me seven days to grant entry into the flat in order to install the boiler by the front door. However, I continued to refuse to let them in and they eventually gave in.*

*31. I refused to allow entry to the council's contractors, who were called Rydons, because I did not want the boiler to be relocated to this new position in my hallway. It was only when they reluctantly agreed to put the new boiler in the position the old one had been in that I allowed access and allowed the work to continue. This was in a cupboard in the living room which is where it was finally placed.*

*32. They also agreed to cover up some of the pipes running along the ceiling, although the pipe work running along the floor of the flat and up the sides of the*

walls was never covered, it was always exposed. I do not know if the piping carried water or gas. I never touched them so do not know if they carried hot water. I was always worried if there was an electrical or gas fire caused by one of these pipes rupturing, then if it was on the stairway, our escape route as residents would have been blocked.

33. At the same time, they also fitted the cladding and new windows for the flat. The cladding made the walls thicker and the window sills became much wider and were made of a plastic.

34. I heard rumours that the cladding had not been installed properly. This is not something I have any direct knowledge of, it is just something I had heard and there was general gossip around at the time of the refurbishment. Other residents were saying that the cladding was not safe because it was flammable. There was not a particular person saying this but a general conversation amongst residents.

35. I did not myself make any complaints about the refurbishment, other than refusing access to the Rydons workers until they had agreed to my request regarding the pipes work in my flat and the location of the boiler.

36. Nobody ever came either from the council or from Rydons or TMO after the works were completed to check if it was all ok." [IWS00000919\_0005 & 006]

"41. I would note that at the time of the refurbishments the council asked leaseholders such as myself to contribute £6,000 towards the refurbishments but we refused to do so and eventually they council did not pursue the matter any further. I believe they sent one letter, but I am no longer in possession of the letter."  
[IWS00000919\_0008]

### Fire Safety Systems

4. Please address any issues that you were aware of in relation to the following topics at Grenfell Tower. When you do so, please include whether you reported the issue, the person or organization you reported the issue to and what happened as a result of your



*report as far as you are aware. Please set out the date of approximate timing of any of the above actions as far as you can recall.*

**(a) Lifts;**

The main problem in relation to the lifts was that following the refurbishments, there would often be problems with the lifts. There were two lifts and one was not working approximately twice a month. About once a month both lifts would not be working. What made the fact that the lifts were not working was that nobody let you know what was happening with them. You would simply see that they were not working. There would be no indication that anyone had been notified, that they were fixing them or any time scale as to when they would be working. It was as if it was not important to let us know and that it did not matter if we were left in the dark.

The lift would normally be fixed on the same day but sometimes it could take longer, especially over the weekend.

Before the refurbishments I would tell the concierge if there were any problems with the lift. However, after the refurbishments there was no concierge and so if the lifts broke down, I would not inform anyone. One lift would normally be working.

Sometimes over the weekend if both lifts were not working, they would not be fixed and a sign would be placed near the lift saying they would be fixed on the Monday which they normally would be or at least one of them.

**(b) Flat doors, including the self-closing devices and smoke seals/strips;**

I would refer to my previous witness statement where I stated:

*“23. Firstly, the front door was changed. This was a few years ago but I cannot remember exactly when. We used to have a wooden door which I now understand was fire resistant. I know that it was fire resistant since listening to the news in recent months about Grenfell where mention has been made about the new doors*

*compared to the old one, in that the new doors were not as safe as the old doors.*

*24. After the refurbishments the front door was changed to a door which had a plastic coating in the form of PVC on it. I do not remember who changed the door or why, but it was part of a building wide change and everyone's door was changed at the same time.*

*25. With regard to the front door of our flat, when it was first installed it would close fully automatically as it had a working hinge retractor. However, after some time this stopped working and the door would not close completely and sometimes it wouldn't even move on its own towards the closing position. You would have to pull the door closed manually. I reported the fact that the door did not close to the Tiv10 at the reception desk, but they never fixed it. I cannot remember when I reported it but it was shortly after the refurbishments. As stated above this new door was changed at the time of the refurbishments.*

*26 The letterbox on the new front door would close on its own fully.*

*27. Further the internal doors on all the rooms in the flat also did not work in that they would not fully close. Rydons stated that it was nothing to do with them when I complained. I cannot remember when I complained about these. My internal doors were wooden, but I do not know if they were fire doors.”*

*[IWS00000919\_0004 & 0005]*

*“42. I would normally leave the internal doors open (bedroom door, kitchen door, living room door, toilet door) apart from when the room was being used e.g. the bathroom.” [IWS00000919\_0008]*

*“46. I never propped the front door open and I am not aware of my neighbours propping their front doors open.” [IWS00000919\_0008]*

**(c) Communal doors throughout the building (including the stair doors), including the self-closing devices and smoke seals/strips;**

The communal door leading to the main stairs was always closed and I think it had a self-closing mechanism. I do not remember it not being closed but I would tend to use the lift so did not really use the door leading to the stairs.

**(d) Windows, including the window reveals and kitchen extractor fans;**

I would refer to the comments in my previous witness statement where I said:

*“39. Prior to the fire, but after the refurbishments, there was a big draft coming in through the kitchen and bedroom windows. I could see a gap by the side of the window, but I cannot remember exactly where it was. We reported this to Rydons shortly after the refurbishments had been completed. We made the complaint using the telephone number provided by Rydons. When I spoke to them on the phone they said that someone would come and fix it. They came but I cannot remember when as I was at work at the time. A family member let them in but even though they came in I am not sure what they actually did. When I returned home from work the draft was still there.” [IWS00000919\_0007]*

*“43. The extractor fan in our kitchen was working up to the time of the fire. Normally, I couldn't smell food cooking from the other flats, but if I could, it would be when I was between the kitchen and the living room. I could not hear any noises from the other flats.” [IWS00000919\_0008]*

*“40. With regard to the cladding itself and the outside window, I do not recall a gap between them.” [IWS00000919\_0007]*

**(e) Fire safety signage;**

I remember there was a sign next to the lift only on the Ground floor. I think it said not to use the lift in the event of a fire, but I do not remember the exact words. I am not aware of any other fire safety signs.



**(f) Escape routes;**

I would refer to the comments in my previous witness statement where I said:

*“16. The only escape routes out of the Tower were either the lifts or the stairs. I have never received any instructions in person or in writing or any other form as to what to do in the event of a fire. I have only seen one sign on the ground floor by the lift, but I cannot remember what it said. There were no signs on my floor.*

*Common sense would tell me not to get a lift in a fire.*

*17. The stairs at Grenfell Tower were very narrow. There was only sufficient room for two people to walk side by side, but even then they would be squashed up to each other. The staircase itself was in a reasonable state of repair however, they did smell of urine. The stairs themselves were also quite dirty in appearance.*

*18. The lifts were replaced about 8 years ago and the new ones seemed to work okay. The old ones had been very unreliable, but even though the new ones i.e. the two new lifts, were more reliable they would still break on occasions. Normally, at least one of the new lifts would be working even if the other one was not. However, about once a month, both lifts would be out of order for no more than a day when both would be fixed.” [IWS00000919\_0003 & 0004]*

*“37. With regard to the floor level and signs for the same, we were originally on the fifth floor but after the refurbishments we became the eighth floor. In the beginning it was a bit confusing in that when we got in the lift we would press the fifth floor rather than the eighth floor.” [IWS00000919\_0007]*

Further, I believe there should have been a procedure in place with regular practices on what to do in the event of a fire. However, there was no such procedure or practice.

**(g) Emergency lighting;**

I would refer to my previous comments in my last witness statement where I stated:

*"45. The lights on the outside landing nearly always worked and if they broke they were fixed quickly. I cannot remember when this last happened."*

*[IWS00000919\_0008]*

**(h) Smoke control or ventilation system;**

I was not aware of any smoke ventilation systems or smoke control. As I was not at home on the night of the fire, I cannot comment on these in terms of their effectiveness in the event of a fire.

**(i) Smoke alarms;**

I would refer to my previous witness statement where I said:

*"19. Within the flat I can remember that we had smoke alarms fitted. I believe that TMO fitted them, but I cannot remember. There were no smoke alarms when I first moved in. Later these were installed; one in the kitchen and one in the hallway. Again, I cannot remember precisely when they were fitted or by whom.*

*20. I do not know if the smoke alarms were connected to each other, but I do not think they were as if one went off the other didn't. I also don't know if they were battery operated or linked to the mains. Nobody, including those from the council, TMO or Fire Brigade, ever came to show me how to use or test the smoke alarms. I never tested either of the smoke alarms. However, I do seem to remember the smoke alarm in the kitchen going off about once every few months as a result of my cooking in the kitchen. The smoke alarm in the hallway in my flat has never gone off as far as I remember. There was also a carbon monoxide monitor in my kitchen, but I also never tested this, and it never went off as far as I remember. I do not remember who or when this was installed*

*21. There were no sprinklers or smoke alarms on the landings outside any of the flats.*

*22. In terms of alterations to my flat while I was there, I do remember a number of*



*alterations.” [IWS00000919\_0004]*

*“47. Although, I know I had smoke alarms in my flat, I do not know if the whole building had a smoke or fire alarm system. If there was one, I do not remember it ever being tested or even seeing such an alarm system.” [IWS00000919\_0008]*

**(j) Gas works carried out by Cadent Gas/TRIO at Grenfell Tower.**

I would refer to my comments from my previous witness statement:

*“49. I do remember that we had a gas safety check within the flats about once a year. The check would normally take about twenty minutes. They would look at the gas meter as well as checking the gas appliances such as the cooker.”*  
*[IWS00000919\_0004]*

**(k) Other Issues.**

I would refer to the other issues I detailed in my previous witness statement:

*“44 With regard to other problems, we had no electricity in the whole block for about ten days about seven years ago.” [IWS00000919\_0008]*

*“48. I also remember that the flats were re-wired about seven years ago. I only witnessed the rewiring in my flat and am not sure what was done to the tower generally outside of my flat. The rewiring in my flat involved changing the plug sockets. I am not sure what else they did but it took them about two days to*

*complete. On the first day I was at home and the second day I was at work. I do remember there being electrical cables being placed into the ceiling."*

*[IWS00000919\_0008]*

### **Fire Safety Checks/Inspections**

Before dealing with the specific points below I would refer to my previous witness statement where I made the following comments:

*13. I am not aware of the fire brigade coming to do safety checks at any time. However, during the day I would not be at home as I would be at work, which meant that I would not have been aware of anyone coming to Grenfell in the daytime, unless it was at the weekend." [IWS00000919\_0002 & 0003]*

5. *Please outline your knowledge of fire safety checks/inspections that were carried out at Grenfell Tower.*

I am not aware of any such checks.

### **Fire Safety Advice**

6. *Please outline your knowledge of the "stay put" strategy at Grenfell Tower including whether you were made aware of such a strategy before 14 June 2017 and how you were made aware of such a strategy.*

I would refer to my comments in my previous witness statement where I said:

*"14. I previously lived in a hostel before moving to Grenfell. Whilst living in the*

*hostel, I do remember being advised that if there was a fire, you should leave the building immediately and just get out and stay out. I believe that as a result of this previous advice, if I had been in the Tower on the night of the fire, I would have got out as soon as I realised there was a fire. I would have ignored any other advice. I believe I would have done the same thing i.e. got out as soon as possible, even if I heard about a fire in another part of the Tower. Therefore, the only reason I would have tried to leave straight away would have been due to the advice from the hostel. I certainly do not remember anyone telling me specifically what you should do about a fire situation in Grenfell Tower.*

*15. If there was a fire in my flat I would automatically leave the building and call the fire brigade and I would do the same if there was a fire in any part of the tower. The reason I would do this is because of the advice I received when I was in the hostel before Grenfell, and as it is common sense.” [IWS00000919\_0003]*

I was never told by anyone that I should stay put in the event of a fire and I cannot remember any signage or leaflets telling me to stay put in the event of a fire.

7. *Please outline your knowledge of fire safety advice or communications you received other than the “stay put” strategy, prior to 14 June 2017 and how you were made aware of such advice or communication.*

I would refer to my previous witness statement where I said:

*“11. When I first moved into the flat, I do not remember being given any advice or information at all about fire safety. I do not recall being given any information about what to do if I discovered a fire in my flat or elsewhere in the building and I do not remember receiving any advice about what to do if a fire broke out in another part of the building.*

*12. I received no fire safety advice at any time that I was living in Grenfell or before I moved in. I do not remember at any time there being a fire drill practice. I do remember a fire sign by the lift, but it was in small writing and I didn't know it was important to read and nobody ever drew my attention to it. I just remember*



*seeing the words which I think included 'do not use the lift in the event of a fire and to stay put if there was a fire', but I cannot remember the exact details or wording." [IWS00000919\_0003]*

8. *Please outline any issues or difficulties you experienced with the communication of this fire safety advice (please refer to the two questions above) and whether you were aware of any provisions for such advice to be made available to those with language or other special needs.*

I did not receive any such advice.

9. *If you are willing to do so, please detail any special needs or vulnerabilities you or members of your family living in Grenfell Tower had which was relevant to fire safety and whether RBKC and/or the TMO was ware of them. Where relevant, please explain how this information was communicated to RBKC and/or the TMO.*

None of my family or I had any special needs or vulnerabilities before the fire.

### **Fire Safety Complaints**

10. *Please outline any complaints you made to TMO, RBKC or Rydon about fire safety. Please detail how and to whom such complaints were expressed and whether anything was done in relation to those complaints. Please detail your view of the adequacy of the response to those complaints.*

I did not make any such complaints.

11. *Please outline your knowledge of any provisions that enabled those with language or other special needs to send and receive communications to the TMO, RBKC and Rydon about fire safety and safety more generally.*

I did not receive any such advice so the issue of communication of such advice is not applicable.

12. *I was concerned about fire safety at Grenfell Tower and in or around [insert date] I raised my concerns to RBKC/the TMO/Rydon. These can be seen at [exhibit number]. [Ask what gave rise to the concerns and what it was in particular that they were concerned about]*

Following the school being built and the parking area next to the Tower being replaced with the school I had concerns how the fire brigade would be able to access the tower in the event of an emergency. I did not specifically raise this but did attend a demonstration of residents and signed a petition created by the residents. This was before the refurbishments, but I cannot remember the exact date.

13. *I made a complaint in writing/orally and I was informed by RBKC/the TMO/Rydon that...*

I never made any such complaint.

14. *I did/did not feel that my complaints were effectively dealt with.*

I never made any such complaint.

15. *I do / do not know of any steps taken by the TMO/RBKC and Rydon to have measures in place, which allowed those with language or other special needs to send/convey any concerns or complaints to do with fire safety and safety in general. [Set out the adequacy of any steps taken by RBK, TMO or Rydon]*

This would not have been relevant to me and as such I am not aware of any such steps.

### **Complaints of Disrepair**

*16. Set out (briefly) a list of any complaints of disrepair made to RBKC/TMO [e.g. leaking, damp/mould, pest infestation]. Refer to any exhibits if contained in housing file. Comment on whether information withheld in housing file.*

I became the leaseholder of my flat about two years before the fire. Therefore, I was responsible for lots of the internal issues to be fixed and so would not report them to RBKC.

*17. Set out approximate dates as to when these difficulties were experienced*

There were no such difficulties that I remember and any I did have I would simply fix myself as set out above.

*18. What was the impact of the difficulties and for what period of time did these difficulties persist.*

I would refer to my comments above.

*19. I made a complaint in writing/orally and I was informed by RBKC/ TMO that....  
[Confirm who the complaints were made to, the approximate dates of the complaints and details of any responses received. Also any action taken to resolve the complaint.]*

I would refer to my comments above.

*20. I did/did not feel that my complaints were effectively dealt with.*

I would refer to my comments above.

*21. I note that my complaints were not recorded in the copy of the Housing File which was obtained by my legal representatives despite multiple requests for the relevant information.*

I would refer to my comments above.



**Disability/Personal Emergency and Evacuation Plan (PEEP) and Other Related Information**

We did not have anyone in our family that was disabled or required a personal emergency and evacuation plan. However, an evacuation plan generally would have been useful especially in the event of a breach in the compartmentalisation.

*22. I had informed the Local Authority of my X health condition because [effect on housing] and an Occupational Therapist/Social Services assessment was requested/took place;*

This was not applicable, and I would refer to my above comments.

*23. I requested a suitability review and was [un]successful  
The Local Authority took XYZ steps;*

This was not applicable, and I would refer to my above comments.

*24. I informed RBKC of the change in my household as  
I had a child;*

*25. My [PERSON] could no longer go up and down the stairs;  
My medical condition changed;*

This was not applicable, and I would refer to my above comments.

*26. When applying for housing with [Local Authority] I informed them of [my health and family make up];*

This was not applicable, and I would refer to my above comments.

*27. I informed RBKC that my first language was X and I needed an interpreter when meeting them.*

This was not applicable, and I would refer to my above comments.

### **Additional Questions**

28. *Did you complain about the building.*

This was not applicable, and I would refer to my above comments.

29. *Did you express your concern about the poor energy efficiency of the building (hot in summer, hard to heat in the winter).*

The building was hot all the year around, but we did not raise any complaints. In the summer it was very hot, but we would open the windows, and this would cool the flat down.

30. *Do your housing files have any information about consistent complaints about the building and if so, what were they (this may be more relevant to asking them whether they ever reported their issues to the TMO and/or RBKC).*

I did not make any such complaints.

31. *Did you have any knowledge of the Urban Initiatives Reports.*

I did not have any knowledge of this.

32. *Do you know who the members of the residents groups were within the Tower and what views those groups have about the building and what complaints or issues did they put forward.*

I knew some of the members including Eddie Daffyn, Turafat Girma and Mr Shah. Mr Shah would keep all of the relevant documents. I was aware of some of the issues the residents group raised as they would tell us about before they would approach the RBKC. This included before the refurbishments.

33. *Were you ever informed that cladding would be placed on the outside of the Tower.*

I was never informed that cladding would be placed on the outside of the Tower. This was particularly concerning as I was a legal leaseholder and should have been provided with more details. RBKC simply told us that it would look beautiful rather than saying the specific alterations. Before the fire we did not know about cladding so we were not listening out for issues about the cladding. Simply that it would look nice. Further, as a legal leaseholder I was never provided details of the works.

34. *What information were you given about the cladding.*

See above



**(Aftermath) (Module 4)**

Before dealing with the specific points below I would make the following points:

On the night of the fire I was staying at my friends. Following the fire for two nights I stayed at my brother's house. On the day of the fire I went to St Clements which was where the council were taking names. I gave my details to them, but they did not do anything immediately. I continued to stay at my brother's house for two days further. I was then contacted by telephone by RBKC, who advised me that they had a hotel room in the Hilton Metropal, near Edgeware Road. I was placed there with my family and my sister's family. We were given one room for both our families with two double beds. We stayed there until October 2017

**Emergency Shelter and Accommodation.**

*35. Please provide details of any relief centres you visited including details of what emergency relief was provided to you, by who and in what time frame. Specifically, please outline your experiences of:*

The first place I visited was St Clements which was run by the church. They provided food, water, nappies, clothes, shoes, toiletries. They were run by the church and volunteers.

The next place I visited was Rugby Portobello on the 16<sup>th</sup> which was run by the charity. They provided cash to us totaling about £500 for my family.

Next on the 16<sup>th</sup> we went to the Mosque and they gave us £250 and clothes, food, water etc. They also took our names and telephone numbers and later that day they contacted us and dropped off the items to our hotel. This was after we had been placed in the hotel.

They were lots of other small charities that seemed to be helping but lots of their money was being funneled through Portobello.

We were contacted by RBKC when we were in the hotel. They provided a Key Worker for us who gave us instructions on how to access payments for food. I believe that they paid cash into our bank account. I think they paid £300 per adult per week and £150 per child per week.

I also received £5,000 from the government but cannot remember the details of this payment.

*(a) The initial relief centres (such as Rugby Portobello Club, Clement James Centre, Al Manaar Mosque, Latymer Community Church, Notting Hill Methodist Church and the Harrow Club);*

I did not attend any of these.

*(b) The Westway centre;*

I did attend the West Way center shortly after the fire, but I do not remember anything of the day.

*(c) Placements in hotels (or otherwise) including:*

- i. The time frame within which they were organized;*
- ii. Their location;*
- iii. Their suitability;*
- iv. The accessibility of basic needs at these placements including food/drink/basic provisions/emergency payments/support services.*

In relation to the hotel, its location was not suitable, as we were a long way from our community. All the services and charities being offered were near the Tower. For example, various items were being given to survivors such as pizzas, laptops, mobile phones and other essentials. We were being as we were located a long way away from these services and that we were told late at night we could not access them.

## **Food and Drink**

36. *Please outline your experiences of the provision of food and drink in the immediate aftermath. Specifically:*

*(a) The accessibility of food and drink in relief centres and emergency accommodation placements; and*

As mentioned above, we were using the money we received from the charities and later from RBKC, as we did not have access to our banks or cards due to the fire. Being in a hotel you are not able to cook your own food which we love to do. Hotel rooms have no facilities other than a sink in the bathroom and a kettle if you are lucky. It was especially hard when you have as we do, twins who were about two years old at the time.

*(b) The suitability of the food and drink provided.*

Immediately after the fire, food and drink were provided by various charities but I do not know which ones. After the immediate aftermath, we were provided with hotels. However, as I have said above you were not able to cook in the hotel rooms and it was like living in your bedroom. You had no proper dining table to all sit at but had to sit around the bed. As I have said the charities were kindly providing various items including food such as rice. However, it was impossible to cook it in a hotel room. We had to live on takeaways which we did up until October 2017, when we moved out of the hotel.

## **Basic Provisions and Financial Assistance**

37. *Please outline your experiences of the provision of financial assistance and basic provisions. Specifically:*

*(a) Access to and adequacy of the emergency financial payments;*



At the beginning most of the money was provided by the various charities apart from the money set out above. I believe that Transport for London issued a one-month travel card shortly after the fire.

*(b) Basic provisions such as clothes and hygiene essentials.*

These were provided by the charities. I do not remember the council providing any such provisions. I think the Key Worker helped us access clothes, but I am not sure where they came from.

In the hotel, even if you wanted to wash your clothes, there were no washing machines either in the room or in the hotel for our use. We had to have everything dry cleaned which was paid for by RBKC. When someone complained to the minister about this and how wasteful it was as it was cheaper to buy a new pair of socks rather than dry clean them, they introduced a voucher system for a launderette. However, the launderette where you could use the vouchers was in Ladbroke Grove. As we were so far away from Ladbroke Grove, we could not access the launderette. Later they said they would pay for taxis to take us to the launderette. This did not make sense and it would have been more sensible to simply provide cash for us to go to the local launderette.

I do not think anyone used the laundry service due to the travel distance.

The same problem applied to the nursery as the provisions related only to a nursery near the Tower so it would take too long to get there to make use of it. I believe that nobody or only a very limited number of people used the laundry service provided.

### **Psychological Support**

38. *Please outline your experiences on the provision of psychological and mental health support services. This may include access to social workers, key workers, counselors or other support services.*

I was provided with a Key Worker shortly after the fire. However, they would change on a regular basis. We would only have them for a few weeks, before they were replaced by a new Key Worker. This meant that you had no chance to get to know them and build up a relationship and trust with them. This made it very hard to really get the best out of the service. Later there seemed to be more consistency and they became more organized and better placed to help meet our needs. They also seemed to have more information for us on the issues that we needed help with such as claims, housing and other problems that we were facing. We also needed Key Workers less as time passed and we started to get our lives back together.

The Key Workers were overworked which meant that they were not always able to give the time that we needed, especially at the beginning. One of the Key Workers we dealing with us was also a social worker, so she was often in court and so couldn't answer our calls.

With regard to counselling, I started to attend in January 2018, but the children did not as we felt they were too young and were not present on the night of the fire. My counselling was organized by my key worker through NHS Direct. I am still receiving counselling and the time scales vary but are usually once a week to once a fortnight. I feel that it helps more sometimes than others depending on how I am feeling.

I have not received any other support services.

### **Information and Assistance**

39. *Please outline your experiences of the assistance that was available to obtain information about missing people and the deceased. This may include assistance received via the Casualty bureau or via Family Liaison Officers.*

Thankfully, our actual family did not lose anyone in the fire although we did lose people close to us. We also did not have any missing people. When we went to Portobello Road, we had to write down our names, address and state that we had survived so that there was a record. This was the only way to check who was missing. Even though it was at the Portobello Center, this system was created by the residents of the tower. There was no other source of information from RBKC or the fire brigade.

When we were first started accessing money from various charities they were providing this to people without ID as residents did not have ID as they had been lost in the fire. One of my concerns is that people were accessing money from the charities who it was not intended for.

In terms of the distribution of the charity It was a first come basis and they gave out more money. The charities had no idea how many people were going to claim money, so the amounts they distributed varied and there appeared to be no consistency or logic. The charities also had no idea who were and were not residents. I believe the council should have linked up with residents who had already created a whats app group of survivors and used this to share the information with the charities as to who was eligible.

### **Public Communication**

40. *Please outline your experiences of how information about services and support available was communicated. Specifically, please detail whether you received any information from the following:*

*(a) Online through social media/website updates;*

We did not access any information from any such source. We were not aware of any such service.

*(b) Leaflets/newsletters;*

We did receive newsletters in the hotel. Newsletters/leaflets were gradually sent to the hotels that survivors were staying in. These were sent by RBKC who were providing information and updates regarding the community, help services, housing, how many people had been rehoused etc.

*(c) Telephone helplines;*

I never used a telephone helpline and am not aware of any such service.

*(d) Voluntary relief centers.*

From memory I believe there was the Westway and later the Curb which were run by RBKC. These provided information, and help but we did not use it.

### **Needs of Specific Groups**

41. *Please outline your experiences of whether the emergency relief response addressed the needs of specific groups. Specifically, how were the needs of specific groups assessed and supported including:*

*(a) Children and young people;*

*(b) Elderly people;*

*(c) Individuals with disabilities;*

*(d) Faith and ethnic groups.*

The main group that we fell within was children as we have our young twins as set out above. There did not appear to be any specific steps taken or consideration given for children. As I have stated above there was nursery provision, but it was so far away from the hotel we had been placed in, it was not of any use.

### **Coordination and Leadership**

42. *Please provide your experiences of the coordination role that Central Government, RBKC and the TMO had in the immediate aftermath.*



43. The coordination both of local and central government was wholly inadequate. Immediately after the fire there seemed to be a serious lack of presence by RBKC. All of the work and initial organising of help seemed to come from local people and survivors and then charities. Where RBKC did become involved it always seemed to not have been thought out and more of a reaction to each situation as it arose rather than a well thought out plan.
44. When the Prime Minister visited the site, she made a conscious decision to not meet with the survivors which is unheard of where a Prime Minister visits a disaster scene. To only speak to the rescue services was extremely insulting.

### **Housing**

45. The housing problems and issues extend beyond the immediate aftermath of the fire but I believe that it is an extremely important issue and has had a major impact on survivors lives.
46. Initially we were placed in a hotel which is designed for short stays and not as many people as were housed in each room.
47. The hotel we were placed in in the Edgware Road. We were stuck in there for four months. These hotels were not designed to be lived in but for short stays while people are on holiday.
48. Initially, we were expected to eat in the hotel but RBKC eventually realized that this was not reasonable and as such began to transfer money to our bank account to be able to eat outside of the hotel.
49. However, you are then restricted and there is a limit to how many times you can eat out. We just wanted to eat at home with home cooked food.

50. After about four months we were moved to temporary accommodation. This was better than being in the hotel. However, I was a legal title leaseholder and then had to embark along with others in the same position as me in almost a three year battle to agree to reasonable terms for the surrender of the lease. The constant arguments, meetings and general battle with RBKC was extremely stressful especially on top of everything else we had been through and living in temporary accommodation.

51. I cannot explain how difficult it has been to deal with RBKC in relation to the surrender of the lease and housing generally. You would hope that in light of everything that we have been through we would not be made to jump through hoops every step of the way to get what is fair.

#### **Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I confirm that I am willing that the statement forms part of the evidence before the Inquiry and may be published on the Inquiry's website.

Signed.....

**Salma SAID**

Dated.....