

Witness Statement of: Nina Masroh
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Exhibits:
Date of statement: 28/02/20

GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

2nd WITNESS STATEMENT OF NINA MASROH

I, NINA MASROH, will say as follows:

1. This statement is an account of my experience of fire safety in the walkways and of dealing with the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation ('TMO') and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council ('the Council').
2. This statement will also provide a brief factual account of my experience in the aftermath of the fire at Grenfell Tower ('the fire') on 14 June 2017.
3. I provided a Witness Statement to the Inquiry dated 5 June 2018 (Unique ID: IWS00000792) for the purpose of Phase 1.

Background to tenancy

4. I am a Core Participant to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. My date of birth is [REDACTED]
5. I had lived in Testerton Walk on Lancaster West Estate ('the estate') since 1992 until the night of the fire on 14 June 2017. I lived in a different property initially and moved into a two bedroom maisonette 336 Testerton Walk in July 1996. I lived there with my four children; my daughter, who was 25 years old at the time of the fire, and my three sons, who were aged 15, 13 and 6 at the time of the fire.

Fire Safety

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Systems

6. I am aware of several fires having occurred at Grenfell Tower since I moved in to Testerton Walk. As far as I was aware, these fires had always been contained to one flat and if there was any damage caused to other flats, it was no more than smoke damage.
7. The main door to my flat did not have a self-closing mechanism. It could be left open. There were no smoke seals or strips around the door. Around 15 years ago, the TMO changed many of the front doors around the estate. Some people were given multi-lock doors. I was not one of the tenants that received a multi-lock door but I was told by the TMO that my new front door was fire proof. I think the TMO were carrying out a general upgrade of front doors on the estate. As far as I am aware, it was not carried out specifically to improve fire safety. The front door was changed again in 2019. I was told that the new door would be fire proof and that the previous door had not been fire proof. I was confused as for 15 years, I had thought my front door was fire proof when that was not the case.
8. The new doors have been poorly fitted. There are gaps around the door. It is supposed to have a self-closing mechanism but it doesn't work properly. You have to use a lot of force to close the door properly. After it was originally fitted, they had to get a second company to come and look at the doors. I think the first company had a lot of doors to do around the estate so they were haphazard, trying to fit as many doors as quickly as possible. I spoke to someone from the Council at the Baseline building (who have now replaced the TMO) and I was told that there was an issue with the way the door was fitted. From speaking to neighbours, I know they were told the same thing. I think I remember seeing something in writing as well about the front door not being fireproof. Although it is obvious anyway from just looking at the doors that they aren't fire proof. It dawned on me recently that I never heard anything further from the Council so the front door is still fitted incorrectly.
9. I am not sure but I think the communal doors around the estate were fire proof. They looked fire proof. They were very heavy doors with glass panels. These doors did have a self-closing mechanism. However the doors would sometimes be vandalised or people would put something in the way to keep them propped open. I think it was partly the fault of the TMO and their attitude to residents that led to people propping the doors open.

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10. My property was in the 300s block (i.e. flats with door numbers in the 300s) and the main entrance to my block was on the station side by Grenfell Tower. However it was often easier to access my property via the 400s block because it was a flat surface with a ramp and involved much less walking. Similarly, it was easier to access my walkway directly from my garage. Otherwise I had to take a route that involved a lot of stairs to get to my property. That was difficult to navigate with young children, a buggy and bags of shopping. However to access my walkway via my garage, I needed my fob to be programmed to allow access via particular doors. The TMO refused to do that for 'security reasons'. They denied this access to other people as well which resulted in the situation where people were keeping these doors propped open, creating a much worse security issue and a fire safety issue. It took me years of asking the TMO before my fob was updated to allow me this access.
11. I don't think there was any emergency lighting in Testerton Walk. I think this because sometimes the lighting would fail in the communal areas and we would be left in darkness.
12. There was no fire safety signage anywhere in Testerton Walk. The only sign I can remember seeing in Testerton Walk or any of the other walkways was a sign saying that children were not allowed to play there.
13. The only thing in the communal area of Testerton Walk that I knew was related to fire safety was the dry riser that was located by the rubbish chute. I can only recall that one dry riser.
14. There were no smoke detectors or fire alarms in our property when I first moved in. I put up three smoke detectors myself; one in the hallway downstairs, one outside the kitchen and one inside the kitchen. Around 4 or 5 years ago, the Council fitted another smoke detector in our property. I am not sure what the full reasoning was but I think there was some sort of regulation that smoke detectors needed to be connected to the mains in case of battery failure. There were no smoke detectors or fire alarms in the communal areas.

Advice

15. There was no fire safety advice or communications from the TMO or Council. We received an estate newsletter sporadically but I don't recall there ever being any fire

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safety information contained within it.

16. I had no awareness of where the official meeting point would be in the event of a fire. I was not aware of any fire safety procedures. I had never heard of 'stay put' advice until after the fire.

Checks and Inspections

17. I never noticed, or was ever made aware of, any fire safety inspections or checks happening in the communal areas. There was never any fire safety check or inspection carried out in my property.
18. My ex-husband was extremely conscious of security and safety issues. As a family we came up with our own fire safety plan as there was no information or guidance provided by the TMO or Council. We lived on the top floor so we had to consider what we would do if there was a fire and we were not able to leave the property via the main door. We would have to try and escape via our patio. The patio is about 60 feet above the ground. We kept a ladder on the patio in case of a fire. We had decided that we would use the ladder to reach the metal walkway that runs across the roof of Testerton Walk and try to escape that way. We also bought our own fire blanket and fire extinguisher. In passing, I sometimes mentioned this to neighbours and suggested that they needed a fire plan too.

Fire safety after 14 June 2017

19. Since the fire, the Council has improved the fire safety in the walkways. I have already mentioned that they have replaced the front doors to the flats with fire doors. They also have fire marshals doing patrols around the estate. I am not sure how long that will continue for.
20. There are now green fire exit signs above the communal doors in Testerton Walk. It is very noticeable as they were never there before. I noticed them immediately when I first returned to Testerton Walk after the fire. I remember walking in and saying 'oh wow, that's new'.
21. They have also added a feature, I think they are called fire curtains, under and above some of the windows that look in to the communal area. They are electronic and if there is a fire, apparently they will automatically cover the windows. When I saw them, I

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noticed that they were not on every flat window, which I thought was odd. There is also a new dry riser outside the main exit from the 400s. I assume there is also a new one outside the 300s main exit but I have not seen it.

22. There is a wall between the 300s and the 400s block. In the past, the blocks were designed so that you could not easily pass between the two blocks. For example if you lived in the 300s block and there was a fire and you were not able to leave via the main exit which is underneath Grenfell Tower, you could use your fob to access the area where the rubbish chute is. You could then exit to the communal green from there. However you would have to leave via 3 flights of stairs. This would obviously be difficult for anyone with mobility issues. The rubbish chute area also had a door that would allow access to and from the 400s block but you could only get through that door if your fob was programmed to allow you access. If you lived in the 300s block, you would not automatically have a fob programmed to allow you access to the 400s block and vice versa.
23. Now a communal door has been built in to the connecting wall between the 300s and 400s blocks which allows easy access between them. It is an extra wide fire door. One of my neighbours told me that they had heard that the fire brigade told the Council that the existing situation was not adequate for someone in a wheelchair. In the scenario I mentioned above, if the main exit was blocked by a fire, someone in a wheelchair from the 300s block would have to get down three flights of stairs to escape as they would not have access to the 400s block (or vice versa). I know of several people over the years who have lived in Testerton Walk and have been in a wheelchair or had mobility issues.
24. One final change that I have noticed is that the rubbish chute has changed. The opening to the chute is now much smaller. The old chute was around double the size. It was also possible to keep the chute door open. I think this was a hazard if there was ever a fire as smoke or fire could then enter via the opening. Now the chute hatch closes automatically. It has to be held open while putting rubbish in. Once you stop holding it open, it snaps shut immediately.
25. Obviously these are all helpful measures that improve fire safety in the walkways but I can't help but feel that it is too little and too late. It just highlights all the things that should have been in place before the fire at Grenfell Tower ever happened as a matter of course.

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Relationship with the TMO

26. I moved in to Testerton Walk in August 1992 when my eldest child was 8 months old. It was a one bedroom property. Four years later, I moved to another property in Testerton Walk. This was a two bedroom property. I lived in that property until the fire in June 2017. I had issues with the property and with the TMO and Council since the very beginning of my tenancy.
27. One regular issue was with the heating and hot water system on the estate. I experienced problems with this on a monthly basis from the very start of my tenancy to the very end. There were constant issues with a lack of heating or with a lack of hot water. Sometimes we would be left without heating in the middle of winter. Sometimes it took 2 to 3 days for these issues to be resolved.
28. I had to teach my children to have a bucket bath when there was no hot water. I showed them how to boil the kettle and then top it up with cold water so that they could wash in the morning. As this happened so regularly, I eventually bought a large pot to boil water in. Not having hot water in the morning made getting the kids ready for school in the morning so much more stressful and time consuming.
29. The TMO was extremely flippant when you called them to report these issues. They would always say that it was because the system was old and there was nothing that they could do about it. They made you feel like you were bothering them by reporting the issue to them. They always told you that there was an engineer on site dealing with it. There was never any suggestion that they'd do anything more such as upgrading the system so these issues weren't constantly happening. They never did anything substantial to fix the underlying issues. They just constantly patched over the problems and claimed that it was impossible to do more.
30. I got in to the habit of speaking to my neighbours to check if they had reported the issues with the heating and hot water yet. This was because sometimes when you rang the TMO and told them of the issue, they would claim that no one else had reported the problem. If I had already spoken to my neighbours, I was then able to respond and say that I had spoken to X, Y or Z and they were having the same issues and they had also called the TMO to report it. I know I reported these issues 90% of the time that they occurred and

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that many of my neighbours regularly reported them too. I don't know if my calls were always properly recorded. I would often call in the morning to be told it was being sorted out and then when I called in the afternoon or evening, I was told that they didn't have a record of my earlier call. These issues affected everyone in the walkways and were so regular to the point that some of my neighbours would not even bother to report it to the TMO as they knew that lots of other residents would do it and because they hated dealing with the TMO.

31. I didn't realise until after the fire that the main boiler for the heating and hot water system was under Grenfell Tower. Once the refurbishment was done to the Tower, I did not notice any improvement to the heating and hot water system and the problems carried on as they always did. It is hard to remember if the problems were worse while the Tower was being refurbished, as the refurbishment caused so much disruption to everyone on the estate, it was just one thing amongst everything else. I remember lots of the access routes across the estate were closed off. You could add an extra mile to your journey by having to go around the estate instead of through it. The Council always took the attitude that they were going to do what they were going to do and they didn't care whether we approved or not.
32. The issues with the hot water and heating wasn't just about the fact we were sometimes left without it. It was an old system in general and this caused issues. Sometimes the cold water taps didn't work. Sometimes I would turn on the cold water tap and hot water would come out instead. There were also frequent issues with the radiators. Sometimes they didn't come on or if they did, they would only be lukewarm. Sometimes the radiators leaked. The radiator in my kitchen never worked. I initially did report this and asked for it to be removed but nothing ever happened. The kitchen was warm enough without the kitchen radiator so I didn't follow up on the initial report. I always reported the other issues with the radiators.
33. About 15 years ago we had the water tank in our property replaced but we continued to have issues with it. The plumber who replaced it was amazed by how old the pipes were. They looked awful; old rusted pipes with lots of wadding around them. The pipes had just been patched up over and over again.
34. The TMO took the decision each year to switch off heating between May and October.

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Considering British weather, it is not possible to guarantee that you're not going to need heating during that period. The impact on residents wasn't consistent anyway. In some flats, the radiators would be completely shut off and not work and then in other flats all of the radiators continued to work. It was frustrating because we had such a lack of control over our own home environment.

35. I had a few minor issues with leaks in my property. I was very lucky though as I know some of my neighbours experienced major leaks.
36. On 11 April 2017, I got a call from one of my neighbours who asked me if I knew that there was scaffolding outside my patio. I hadn't been given any warning from the TMO or Council that they were putting up scaffolding outside my property. The scaffolding was from the communal green between Testerton Walk and Barandon Walk up to my patio. I was concerned because it was a security issue. I wasn't told what this scaffolding was for and I didn't hear anything from the Council for 2 weeks. On 26 April I was getting missed calls from the TMO. I was left a voicemail telling me it was urgent. I kept calling them back but couldn't get through. I ended up visiting the TMO's office to find out what the issue was. I was told that they thought there was a leak coming from the patio of my property to the property of my next door neighbour who was a leaseholder. I explained that the patio had been done up in 2009. The builders had put down a waterproof lining and then I put decking on top. The builders had said the waterproofing would last for 20 years. The TMO asked for photos of the patio.
37. On 28 April 2017, which was a Friday, I sent photos of the patio to the TMO. They said that the decking had to come up. They suggested that I should do it myself as contractors would damage the decking. They wanted me to do it straight away so that they could access the property on Monday. I said that this wasn't reasonable notice. I had four kids and I wasn't going to be able to take the decking up by myself over the weekend. It wasn't clear where I was supposed to store all of my patio furniture. I also didn't know what work they intended to do on my patio or how long it would take. I put all my concerns to the TMO in an email.
38. This situation was very stressful. I was also clear that all communication should be by email as I wanted everything in writing. However despite me telling them this several times and always sending them emails, they completely disregarded my requests and

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continued to contact me by telephone instead. In the end, I had to email the Chief Executive of the TMO, to ask that he deal with it. In the end the TMO agreed that they would get a contractor to remove the decking and once they had completed the work, they would pay for the decking to be replaced. They agreed to store my patio furniture in one of the estate garages. I found out after the fire that this furniture had been lost. It was so difficult to get them to agree and I think things would have been different if I was someone who was intimidated by them or if English was my second language. In the end they dug up the patio and they didn't find the leak anyway.

39. The water tank in our property was located inside an airing cupboard. It was old and poorly fitted. I had problems with leaks from the tank and connecting pipes. At one point, I took a plastic box I had been using to store my kids toys and I put it inside the cupboard to catch the rusty brown water that used to leak from the tank. I used to store towels and things in the cupboard and they would become stained when the water leaked.
40. Since the fire, I have been contacted 3 times by the Council because there has been a major leak and they think it is coming from my property. I don't live there anymore and I have relinquished my tenancy but they still contact me about leaks. I am not sure how good they are at keeping their records updated. I have another friend who no longer lives on the estate and she is still being contacted about works to her old flat. I don't mind being contacted about the leaks as I still have furniture stored in my old flat and I am often in the local area. I have attended the property each time the Council have contacted me and they have not been able to locate the source of the leak. During the last visit, the plumber was so frustrated he just shut off the whole water system in the flat.
41. One of my neighbours had a massive leak to her property. Her ceiling looked like it was about to cave in. The Council are refurbishing properties but they only seem to be focusing on aesthetics. It's pointless if they don't deal with the underlying issues such as the old pipes and electrics on the estate.
42. Pests were an issue across the estate. I know some of my neighbours had issues with mice and cockroaches but luckily I never did. I did sometimes have infestations of pharaoh ants and silverfish. The pharaoh ants would turn up anywhere but I remember most frequently having issues in the living room and a cupboard in the kitchen that I used as a larder. I had issues with pests in my property around twice a year. I was told that this was

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due to the heating system on the estate. When the heating was working, it would get very hot. There were heating pipes under the flooring so the floors would often be very warm. The Council had an in-house pest control team that would come around the estate regularly knocking on doors to check if you needed assistance. If you weren't in, they'd leave a letter for you with a contact number to call if you had any issues.

43. I lived in Testerton Walk for a long time but the Council did not update the kitchen or bathroom of my property until 2016. I really had to fight for them to replace the bath and paint and tile the bathroom. Those rooms had needed updating for a long time. Around 11 or 12 years ago, the Council had surveyed the property under the Decent Homes Programme. There was funding under that programme to refurbish properties on the estate. After the survey, I was told that they would get back in touch with me. When they contacted me again, they told me that funding was no longer available to update my kitchen or bathroom. They did rewire the property under that programme. I ended up replacing the kitchen myself which cost me around £3000.
44. Under the Decent Homes Programme, my flat was assessed twice. The second time was around 4 or 5 years after the first assessment. On both occasions I was told that funding had run out. I thought this was odd as I only knew of a few flats that had been refurbished.
45. When the Council did agree for repairs to be done, the repairs were often carried out in a haphazard way. For example, on one occasion where the Council's contractors were working in the bathroom, they poured all of the debris, such as the plaster and silicon, down the drain. This ended up hardening and causing a blockage. A plumber had to come and dig it up from the pipes. Another example was when the plaster was worn away in the corner of one of the walls in my sitting room exposing a strip of sharp metal. My son cut his hand on it. The contractors who came in did a really poor job of covering it up. When I went back to the property recently, I noticed that the metal was still exposed but higher up on the wall.
46. Like the heating and hot water systems, the electrics on the estate were old. Before my property was rewired, I often had problems with the fuse tripping or blowing when I plugged things in. I learned how to reset the fuse box and I taught my kids how to do it too.
47. There were issues with a lack of repair and upkeep in the communal areas too. The

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skylights in the walkway had a sensor. If it was a clear day, the windows were supposed to open. If it started to rain, the sensor was supposed to cause the windows to close and then reopen when the rain stopped. This never seemed to work properly. There was a long period of time when the windows stayed closed and would not open even on clear days. Then there were issues when the windows would stay open when they should have closed. In November 2014, there was a period of heavy rains but the windows remained open. This resulted in large puddles of rain water all over the walkway. The stairs were slippery due to the build-up of water. My four year old son slipped and fell while in the walkway but luckily I was able to catch him before he was injured. I reported the issue to the TMO as I was worried about my children's safety and also about the safety of my elderly neighbours. The windows were open for at least 5 days on that occasion as I have an email reporting the problem and then a response 5 days later referring to engineers looking at the skylights.

48. A number of incidents led me to believe that there was asbestos in my property and in the walkways generally. Around 15 years ago, contractors came to my property to deal with a leak in my bedroom. The contractor removed a panel to access the pipes behind it. However he put it back immediately and said that he couldn't do anything because of asbestos behind the panel. He said he wasn't specialised and he didn't want to disturb the asbestos. Another time workmen came to do work in my property and one of them mentioned that there was Artex on the kitchen ceiling which meant there was asbestos. Around 12 years ago, workmen came and removed panels in the communal areas. They left stickers which made reference to asbestos. I don't recall being notified of any official work to remove asbestos from the communal areas and individual flats. However I remember on another occasion speaking to a contractor in the walkways and being told that he was doing asbestos removal. The TMO weren't open with us about this work. Many of us on the estate were concerned about the presence of asbestos however when we asked the TMO about it, they always denied there was an issue.
49. These issues with the property and with the estate in general were made so much worse by the attitude that the TMO and Council took towards residents. This poor attitude wasn't just towards us when we were complaining about disrepair or issues on the estate, it was a general attitude.
50. Children weren't allowed to play in the walkways. I was told by one of my friends in

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Testerton Walk that her 8 year old son had been spoken to by a police officer because he had been playing. I cannot remember exactly what she said, I think either the Council had called the Police or they had asked the Police to patrol the walkways and that had resulted in her son being spoken to. That was the level of disdain towards us.

51. On another occasion, there was a gap in the walkway outside my neighbour's property. It was unused redundant space. I asked my neighbour if I could store my bike and the bikes of my older two sons there. She said that was fine. She didn't use that space. The bikes could be stored there and they didn't cause any type of obstruction for anyone else using the walkways. After I had been storing the bikes there for a year, I suddenly got an email from the Council telling me that the 'estate inspector' had spotted them, they weren't allowed to be left there and if they were, they would be removed. I moved the bikes outside. Sometime later, the Council then changed their mind again and people were allowed to leave things outside their properties again. There were always unexplained and arbitrary rules and decisions being made.

52. I was aware of the TMO's complaints procedure and I used it a couple of times but not always. I felt like the TMO's complaints process was very time-consuming and I doubted its effectiveness to actually deal with issues.

Aftermath

53. I have set out the events of the 14th June 2017 in my statement for Phase 1 of the Inquiry. I now want to expand on my comments in that statement about the aftermath of the fire.

54. On the night of the fire, we were evacuated to the communal gardens and watched the fire from there. At around 3am we went to my friend Regina's house. We were very lucky that we had people we were close to living nearby. We weren't forced to go to one of the relief centres like a lot of other people.

55. We spent a couple of hours at Regina's house but we weren't able to sleep. At around 7am or 8am, we went to the Harrow Club. I wanted to find out what was going on. The Red Cross were there. I think they had just arrived when we got there as they hadn't set up an area yet. They were handing out forms for people to fill in their information. I filled one in. I don't think donations had started arriving yet. The only food and drink available at that point was what the Harrow Club already had.

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56. The Club was packed with people. It was chaos. I remember seeing Jessica Urbano's family there. They were looking for Jessica. I remember hugging her mum and dad. I spoke to another woman there who had recently lost a baby and she was still bleeding. I went around the place looking for sanitary towels. I was trying to help people the best I could but I was also in shock. When I think back to that time now, I start to feel hazy like I did at the time. I think everyone was in their own bubble of shock.
57. I then went to the Rugby Club at around 9.30am to 10am. I had been told by other residents that there were people from the Council there. When I got there it was madness. The road outside was absolutely packed with people. I don't know how we managed to get in to the building. There was a lady from the Council downstairs. She took down our details and gave us a wristband which gave us access to the Harrow Club and the Westway Centre. Donations were starting to arrive. I remember people were handing out water.
58. We were able to get back in to our property that morning to pick up a few essential items. Outside, there was still debris in the air and quite a bit of debris had landed on our patio. There were clumps of blackened debris. It looked like burnt foam. It was the burnt insulation from the Tower. I had left the patio doors and windows open before evacuating the property. Some of the debris was on the door sill and window sills. The next time I returned to the property to pick up some more things was around 4 days later. At that point, there was even more debris on the patio. Around two or 3 weeks later I returned to the property again and there was still some debris on the patio although there was less than before. I thought some of it might have been blown away as the insulation would have been light. It was at that point that I swept away the debris that was still on the patio door sill and window sills. It was around 5 or 6 weeks later when I saw all the debris had gone. I don't know if there was ever a clean-up of the debris from my property. As my patio is high up it is not very accessible. I know that some of my neighbours on lower floors did have cleaners come in to clear their patios of debris a couple of week after the fire.
59. My daughter and I stayed at Regina's house for two nights following the fire. My sons stayed with their dad. They still wanted to go to school the next day. I think that they just wanted a sense of normality. In the end they went back to school on Friday the 16th of June.

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60. On the 15th of June, I had a phone call with the Council. I cannot remember now whether I contacted the Council or if they got in touch with me. The Council told us that they could put us in a Travelodge in Battersea.
61. I went to the Travelodge with my daughter and my niece to have a look. It was a family room with four beds. There was a double bed and three single beds. There were no cooking facilities and there were no shops nearby. Breakfast was provided but it was basic. A muffin and orange juice or water. It was not a nutritious breakfast for my kids.
62. I also felt like the Travelodge was in the middle of nowhere. It was too far away from my children's schools. For them to get to school, they would have had to take the 295 bus to Ladbroke Grove which would have been around a 45 minute to 1 hour journey. It would have been another 40 minutes to get to school from Ladbroke Grove. My elder two boys were old enough to go by themselves to secondary school. I would have had to take my six year old to primary school and collect him every day. It would have been hours commuting every day for all of us. It was just not doable. My boys had to continue staying with their dad.
63. I also wanted to be closer to my community. I wanted to find out what was going on and help if I could. In Battersea, I felt as if we could have been in a different country. It was so isolating. Perhaps some people might have found that distance comforting but I think most of the residents wouldn't and I certainly didn't.
64. I called the Council and told them the hotel was too far away. They told us that they had a hotel place for us in Holland Road. I was given the address and because my daughter was at work and my boys were at school, I went to have a look at it on my own.
65. It was a tiny room. When the manager let me in to the room, it was a squeeze to enter with two adults and a suitcase. The room had one double bed and that was it. I told the manager that there were 5 of us. He seemed bemused. He kept asking me, 'are you sure this room is for you?'. There was absolutely no way that two adults, two teenagers and a child were going to be able to stay in that room. On top of that, breakfast was only offered on Sundays. I suppose my children were expected to go to school without breakfast. It was horrendous.
66. I called the Council while I was still in the room and told them that the room was not

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acceptable. It was for one adult, possibly two adults but not for the five of us. The Council kept telling me that they had booked two rooms. I was telling the Council that the hotel manager was standing right next to me and two rooms had not been booked for us. In the end, I just said that we couldn't stay in that room and that I had to leave because I needed to pick up my youngest from school.

67. After school, the five of us met up so that we could decide what we were going to do. Luckily my sister and nephew were going on holiday so we were able to stay in her two bedroom flat for the next five or so days. Whenever I called the Council, they'd say that they had the room in the B&B at Holland Park and nothing else. It was very frustrating as even if we had wanted to go back to our home in Testerton Walk, it was still cordoned off. We didn't want to go back but we didn't even have that option. I was extremely stressed and anxious during this time as I did not know what we were going to do when my sister came back from her holiday.

68. My daughter worked for a construction company at the time and she was obviously keeping them updated with what was going on. The company had two houses in Acton for its workers. The director of the company very kindly said that he would let us stay in one of the houses for a couple of weeks while the workers bunked up in the other house. While staying at my sister's flat everything had been so unsettled and I had been constantly at meetings or out trying to help and find out what was going on, that I hadn't really cooked for us all as a family. Cooking for my family has always been a really big thing for me. In the house in Acton it was the first time that I had been able to cook a proper meal for my kids since the fire. I remember being in the kitchen, cooking and crying at the same time. I knew when my kids came home from school that they would be able to smell home cooked food for the first time since the fire. I knew that would be a massive psychological boost for them after what they had experienced.

69. During this time, the Council provided us with a Key Worker. Somebody called us from the Council and told us that they still hadn't sorted out housing for us but that they could give us a Key Worker who could help with other things. For example, the Key Worker helped us with taxis for the kids to go to school. Our Key Worker also helped with recreational things for the children such as a trip for my youngest to visit Chelsea's training grounds.

70. My daughter's employer said that we could stay in the house for four weeks. I started getting very anxious after we had been staying there for around three weeks. We still didn't know what was going to happen when that time was up. I am usually quite stoic but this situation was really taking its toll. I was visiting the Westway Centre a lot during this time and there were always different workers drafted in from different local councils. I talked to lots of people who kept taking down my details but there was not a lot of follow up.
71. I eventually went to the Clement James Centre where there were lawyers giving advice. I spoke to one lawyer and completely broke down when explaining my situation. He took down my details and told me not to worry and that he was going to send an email on my behalf to sort out the housing situation. I wasn't copied in to any email that followed but within two to three days the Council contacted me to say that they had a serviced apartment for us in Edgware Road.
72. I went with my Key Worker to view the property. It was a three bedroom property and it was very nice. It was usually used for short term lets. The five of us moved in at the end of July 2017. While we stayed there, I never had any issues with the property. We never needed any maintenance or repair of the property. I had a slight concern about the location of the property. It was in a row of five very nice houses but the area was slightly unsavoury which I was a bit worried about as a mother of young kids. Plus it still felt removed from the area we had been in before.
73. We stayed in that property for around five to six months. We got caught up in the push from the Council to get people out of hotels and other temporary properties into permanent, and other suitable, properties by Christmas 2017. I received a call in early December about viewing another property in Earl's Court.
74. In the first week of December, I went to view the property with my daughter. It was a very nice four bedroom flat situated within a house. Initially I wasn't going to take the property as I was still concerned about being so far out of our old area. I wasn't sleeping or eating properly at the time and I think that meant I wasn't myself and I wasn't thinking clearly. Thinking about it now I don't know why I didn't accept immediately. It was the person from the Council who did the viewing with us that changed my mind. He was a black man and he said to me, 'You're raising three black boys in Central London, you

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need to get them away from the Lancaster West Estate. This is a nice property in a quiet area'. He was right and it shook me back to reality. I accepted the property and we moved in on Christmas Eve.

75. People who were staying in hotels had been given a food allowance. My Key Worker was insistent that I should have been given this too. I had said to my Key Worker that I didn't need it as I had always provided for my kids myself. The Council didn't want to give it to me at first because they said that being in a serviced apartment was not the same as being in a hotel. In the end they changed their mind and I was given the food allowance as a backdated lump sum. I was able to put this money towards the expense of moving our furniture and belongings from Testerton Walk in to the new property.
76. I was able to get the Council to consider that we were two households as my daughter is an adult. She has now moved out to her own one bedroom property.
77. Obviously I want to have a permanent home for myself and my children but I am not looking forward to the process of sorting it out. It was extremely stressful getting a property for my daughter and the process of relinquishing my tenancy in Testerton Walk was a nightmare. I relinquished my tenancy in Testerton Walk in June 2019. I was chasing the Council for some time about confirmation about what was going to happen to my belongings that were still in Testerton Walk. I had already signed the relinquishment of the tenancy form but I had not been given any details about what would happen to our things. After signing the form, I had four weeks to change my mind. I was worried about our belongings so I emailed them to withdraw the relinquishment form. In response, the Council told my daughter that as I had gone back on relinquishing the Testerton Walk tenancy, she could not view any properties or access her account and bid on properties. It felt like they were blackmailing me. I didn't see how the two different things were related. Eventually, after obtaining advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau, I had a meeting with the Council and the issues were resolved. They agreed that the two things weren't related, they unsuspended my daughter's account and provided a letter to me with the information about the storage of our belongings. This took several months to resolve.
78. Another issue was that the tenancy on the Earl's Court property was due to end in July 2019. I was obviously concerned about relinquishing my property in Testerton Walk

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when I had received no information about what would happen to us after July 2019. The Council did extend our tenancy to July 2020. Nobody from the Council informed me of this. I found out when the estate agents sent me a copy of the new tenancy.

79. I am still living in the property in Earl's Court with my three boys and I do not yet know when we will be moving in to a permanent home. My eldest son has commented on the fact that we have moved more times now than some people do in their entire lifetime. We know that we still have at least one more move which I am anxious to do as I am struggling with affording the heating bills in the current property.
80. Our home in Testerton Walk was overcrowded. There were only two bedrooms for the five of us. My daughter used to sleep on a sofa bed in the living room. Although we were in overcrowded accommodation, which was very difficult, at least we lived in a close knit community. My sons had lots of friends nearby. They could easily go and knock on someone's door and go out and play. The kids knew all of our neighbours. Moving so much has been a massive upheaval for all of us but especially for my children.


Statement of truth

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

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

Signed:

Dated:


28/02/2020

Nina Masroh