

Witness Statement: Wintom TEMESGEN
No.: 2 [Statement Number 1 [IWS00000382_0000]

Exhibits: 0
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THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF WINTOM TEMESGEN
FLAT 26, 5th FLOOR

I, **Wintom TEMESGEN**, formerly of Flat 26 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 21 May 2018 and this is recorded as document IWS00000382.
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.
4. I would refer to my previous witness statement where I set out my circumstances as:

“3. I moved into Grenfell Tower around 2011 and joined my partner, Hiwot Dagnachew, and our two children, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who had been living in the Tower since 2004. We lived in Flat 26, on the 5th floor of the Tower. Our flat was directly above Flat 16 on the 4th floor, which I understand to have been the source of the fire in the early hours of 14 June 2017.

4. I met Hiwot when I was 21 years old and we have had our two wonderful children together. Our family life before the fire was normal; we were a happy family and we were happy in our home.

5. At the time of the fire I was 44 years old, Hiwot was 41 years old and our children were 13 and 11 respectively. Hiwot's date of birth is [REDACTED] 76], [REDACTED] s is [REDACTED] 04] and [REDACTED] s is [REDACTED] 05 .

6. I was born in 1973]. I do not have any disabilities.” IWS00000382_0001 & 0002

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)

Fire Safety Systems

5. 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;

Usually one of the lifts would break down about once a week. Even though one lift might be working it would be so busy with people from the higher floors calling a lift that you would not be able to use it. Therefore, we would simply walk down. On occasions both lifts were not working. I am not sure how often this occurred but enough for us to notice.

I did not report that the lifts were not working as I assumed that there were so many people in the tower, that someone would report it. From experience someone always had reported it. When the concierge desk was in the tower, I sometimes would mention it to him, and he would tell me it had already been reported.

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

In addition to the further points I make I would refer to my previous witness statement where I said:

“21. As part of the refurbishment works, our front door had been replaced and I remember an incident during which Hiwot was trapped in our flat as the front door would not open. Hiwot had to call the TMO who arranged for a locksmith to come to the flat to let her out.” IWS00000382_0004

I would add that the self-closing mechanism didn't work properly. The doors would part close but not fit securely closed. I do not remember any drafts coming through the doors. The letter box worked and closed on its own fully.

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

With regard to the doors on the stairways, I would refer to my previous witness statement where I mentioned about the lack of smoke on the stairs that may be as a result of the doors on the stairs being closed but I do not know.

"I also could not see any signs of a fire or smoke on the landings or on the stairwell as we descended." IWS00000382_0006

I would add that the self-closing doors were always closed on the stairs. However, they would move sometimes slightly. There would be a kind of wind circulation (not necessarily relating to the weather outside) which would blow through the stairways and push the doors open and closed a bit but not all the way.

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

Firstly, I would refer to my previous witness statement where I said in relation to windows:

"18. I also had concerns about the replacement windows which the contractors installed, as they were smaller than the original windows and left gaps around all of the edges of the window frame and the wall. Both Hiwot and I were home when the windows were being replaced and we could see the gaps around the edges when the new windows were installed. The contractors filled the gaps around the edges with a foam material covered in foil. They then covered the foam with a plastic frame. The problem this caused us was that a draught was now coming into the flat through the gaps underneath the window ledges in the kitchen, living room and both bedrooms."

For example, we could feel the draught whilst we were sat on our sofa in the living room, the draught was strong enough to noticeably move the net curtains inside our flat. The gaps underneath the window ledges in the kitchen, living room and both bedrooms were large enough for me to fit my fingers through.

19. Hiwot reported the issues with the windows to a lady called 'Linda', who was employed by Rydon to work as the resident liaison officer between Rydon, the TMO and the residents. Hiwot also reported the window issues to Claire Williams at the TMO. After Hiwot reported the problems, Rydon employees came to our flat on four occasions to try and fill the gaps with sealant. I cannot remember the dates of the visits but I think they were all within a space of a few months. They used something to fill the gaps but I cannot remember what this was and they then covered this with a sealant. We would speak generally with the workers and we were able to communicate with them just fine but we did not discuss our concerns with the worker. Each time they came, they filled the gaps with sealant but this was not effective as the draught was still coming through, and this is why they had to keep coming back. This issue was finally resolved after the 4th visit." IWS00000382_0003 & 0004

With regard to the extractor fan in the kitchen (the only one we had) this you could hear a rattling noise especially on a windy day.

(e) Fire safety signage;

The only fire safety signage I remember was the Fire Exit sign which was on our floor. I do not remember any other signs or any form of notice stating what to do in the event of a fire.

(f) Escape routes;

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

"12. I also had concerns about the stairwell as there was only one stairwell in the Tower for all of the residents. I was concerned that in the case of an emergency lots of people could be using the stairwell and if there was a problem on the stairwell there was no alternative means for getting out except for the lifts, which are obviously limited in terms of the number of people which they can carry and should not be used in any event if there is an emergency." IWS00000382_0002

"16. The Kensington and Chelsea Tenants Management Organisation ("the TMO") had informed us of their plans to install our new boiler in our hallway, by our front door. Hiwot and I were not happy about this and we told the TMO that we would not allow them to carry out these works. We refused Rydon entry into our flat. We were concerned about having the boiler by our front door as boilers can explode, and this was our only exit point from our flat.

17. Some of our neighbours had agreed to the works being carried out and had boilers installed just inside their front doors, but we were not happy for this to happen. Hiwot spoke with the TMO and Rydon and explained our concerns to them. It took between 6 to 12 months to reach an agreement about the location of the boiler but the TMO eventually agreed to install the new boiler in our kitchen. The original boiler that was being replaced had been situated in the kitchen, and it was a straightforward replacement." IWS00000382_0003

"20 I also had concerns about the new gas pipes in the stairwell. I was worried about the gas pipes because if there was an explosion or fire in the pipes then our only exit out of the Tower would be blocked. I discussed my concerns with Hiwot and she was going to raise them with the TMO and The Grenfell Compact Group." IWS00000382_0004

"31. Our daughter was just about to walk out the fire exit door at the bottom of the stairwell when Hiwot pulled her back as we could see falling debris which was on fire. It was shocking to see. We exited the Tower from the main entrance/exit in the lobby. I could see few fire fighters outside of the Tower and they were not doing anything at this point.

32. Somebody had wedged the main entrance/exit door open with a big bag. That door can only be opened with a fob and if it were closed when we came down the stairs, we would have been trapped inside the Tower." IWS00000382_0006

(g) Emergency lighting;

When we escaped from the tower it was still early, so the normal lighting was still on in the stairwell. I remember the emergency lighting lights on each level on the right-hand side as

you pass through the stairway door. At the time we left I cannot remember if the emergency lighting came on or not. It was hard to tell as the normal lighting was still on.

(h) Smoke control or ventilation system;

I was not aware of the installation of a smoke control or ventilation system. I also did not hear any noise coming from what I now know as the ventilation system at the time we escaped from the tower on the night of the fire.

(i) Smoke alarms;

I would refer to my previous witness statement where I detailed in relation to our smoke alarm:

“27. The smoke alarm which was on the ceiling of the kitchen had not gone off despite the kitchen being full of smoke. There was also a smoke alarm in the hallway and this did not go off either. I never tested the smoke alarms in our flat but Hiwot makes traditional Ethiopian coffee and when she roasted coffee beans, it would always set off the smoke alarms so we knew they worked. The smoke alarm in the kitchen was working a few days before the fire, as that is when it had gone off.” IWS00000382_0005

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

I would be at work during the day, so would not have been at home to know if they visited or not. Therefore, I am not sure. We did not have any specific problems in terms of gas leaks or other such issues.

(k) Electricity.

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

“13. We also had problems with electricity after the contractors re-wired the Tower, as part of the refurbishment works. The light bulbs in the hallway and in our bedroom were always blowing and needed replacing on a near monthly basis, I am unable to recall when this started but I was extremely worried about the risk of a

fire because of the problems we were experiencing with the electricity.”

IWS00000382_0002

“14. I am also aware from our neighbours in the Tower that some of their electrical appliances had been damaged because of power surges after the Tower had been re-wired. Concerns about modifications to the Tower.” IWS00000382_0002

Fire Safety Checks/Inspections

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

I do not remember any such checks either by the fire brigade, TMO or RBKC. However, as I would be at work during the day it would be unlikely that I would be present if they did attend to carry out such checks. I did not receive any notification of any such checks.

Fire Safety Advice

7. 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.

My understanding as to what you should do in the event of a fire in a building comes from procedures in place at my workplace, where I am a manager. We were trained that if there was a fire you should leave immediately. I do not recall any advice in relation to Grenfell from RBKC, TMO, the LFB or any other such organisation. I also am not aware of any signs in the tower providing advice as to the stay put policy. Therefore, my reaction on the night of the fire was to get out as soon as possible hence I left essentials such as my keys.

8. 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:

“I was not provided with any information about fire safety when I moved into the Tower or at anytime thereafter.” IWS00000382_0002

9. 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.

10. 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.

There were no such issues.

Fire Safety Complaints

11. 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.

12. 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.

None of our family members fall within any of these categories.

Complaints of Disrepair

13. 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 did not make any complaints as my wife would deal with such issues.

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

This is not applicable to me.

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

This is not applicable to me.

16. 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.]

This is not applicable to me.

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

This is not applicable to me.

18. 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.

This is not applicable to me.

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

None of our family are disabled or fall within any of these headings. However, I would expect the council to still have an effective evacuation plan in place for a tower block and also to have a plan as to what to do in the event that the compartmentalization failed.

Additional Questions

19. Did you complain about the building.

I did not complain about the building.

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

I only remember our flat being very hot in the summer but I am not sure about the winter time. I never mentioned this to RBKC or any other body.

21. Did you have any knowledge of the Urban Initiatives Reports.

I had no knowledge of the Urban Initiatives Reports and nobody ever told me about them.

22. Do you know who the members of the resident's groups were within the Tower and what views those groups have about the building and what complaints or issues did they put forward.

My wife was on the resident's group. We could not both be part of it as we have children. I was aware of the issues that the group were raising usually through my wife. We would discuss these. I knew the main people on the committee. I had a good understanding of the issues which included the issue of the installation of the boiler, the piping and other issues, especially during the refurbishments.

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

I do not remember anyone specifically mentioning about cladding. Further, I was never informed or made aware of the problem's due to the cladding. At the time of the refurbishment works nobody in the tower or even in the public generally was aware of the issues caused by such cladding. Therefore, if the word cladding had been in any conversations, I am not sure if I would have remembered it. However, I am certain that nobody specially singled out the cladding as an issue. I seem to remember the refurbishments being mentioned in the local council free newspaper, which I think had a photo of what the Tower would look like. There were no details about the cladding as far as I remember.

24. What information were you given about the cladding.

I cannot remember any such information.

(Aftermath) (Module 4)

Emergency Shelter and Accommodation.

Before dealing with the specific points below, I would refer to my previous witness statement where I said that at the time of signing the statement (21 May 2018):

“65. In the days that followed the fire, we were staying at the Premier Inn hotel on Cromwell Road.” IWS00000382_0010

“68. We were in the hotel for approximately two and half months following which we were moved to our temporary accommodation..” IWS00000382_0010

“Since the fire we are still living in temporary accommodation as The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (‘RBKC’) have not yet allocated us a permanent home. This has caused us a lot of stress.” IWS00000382_0002

“77. That same weekend, we completed our housing assessment forms, following which we were told by the RBKC that they had they lost our file and that we had to complete the assessment again. I was really upset with this incompetence. Naomi told me that we should just sit down and complete the assessment again. There was just no understanding or compassion from the RBKC. I refused to complete the assessment again as I had sat down for several hours to do this once already and could not go through several more hours doing the same thing again because the council had lost our file. Thankfully, a few days later the original file was found.” IWS00000382_0012

25. 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:

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

"53. We did not see any of our friends at the Club. Genet had managed to make it out of the Tower with her partner and one her sons, [REDACTED] but she had lost her other son, I[sac], whilst getting out of the Tower. Sadly, I[sac] who was five years old did not make it out. He died inside the Tower.

54. We were given blankets and water by volunteers at the Club, and the volunteers were people who lived in the local area who also offered us their living room floors to sleep on. It was just a horrible experience and words cannot describe the pain, fear and loss we were all feeling. It was extremely difficult to get information about other people in the Tower, which was unbearable." IWS00000382_0009

I would note that the club referred to at Paragraph 53 (set out above) of my previous witness statement was the Rugby Portobello.

"55. On the afternoon of the fire, the RBKC asked us if we had anywhere to stay and we told them we did not. They took our details. At around 5:00 pm or 6:00 pm on the 14 June 2017, I received a telephone call from the RBKC informing me that they had managed to arrange accommodation for us at the Premier Inn on the Cromwell Road.

56. I went to Hiwot's mum's house to collect her and our children. Then we all went to the Premier Inn. On that first night, our friends came to the hotel with toiletries, undergarments and things like that, as we had lost everything but the pyjamas we were wearing. The support from our friends and the community was incredible and very moving." IWS00000382_0009

"Housing

78. I am still residing with my family in my temporary accommodation as the RBKC have not been able to arrange our permanent accommodation as at the date of this statement. The lack of a permanent home is unsettling to us and stressful for our children. We cannot move on without a permanent roof over our heads.

79. I feel as though the RBKC have put up obstacle after obstacle after the fire. It feels like we have to battle with the RBKC and every time we think something has been sorted or dealt with, we face a knock back. The council are heartless.

80. The quality of the help we received from the RBKC was very poor. I felt as though they were not considering the situation which my family and I were in. We had just lost our home and several close friends. There was no compassion from the council when we were trying to get things sorted. They were very resistant, and disorganised. Losing our file is an example and then saying they would pay for new car keys and the next day reversing that decision. When we had suffered the trauma of such a disaster, we needed support and not bureaucratic obstacles and lack of compassion from one of the richest councils in the country.

The months following the fire

81. We are still stuck and living in limbo living in our temporary accommodation, with no sign of when this will be resolved. There are no properties on the market available to us which suit our family's needs.

82. I feel as though we are unable to move forward as a family and put this tragedy behind us because we do not have a permanent roof over our heads. We are all still grieving for the friends and neighbours we have lost. It is not something which we can get over anytime soon. We have lost a whole community. The Grenfell Tower was a happy place, and we all pulled together and looked out for each other.

83. This is the main reason I have been unable to return to work full-time, as I am constantly distracted by my thoughts of the night of the fire and those who have died." IWS00000382_0013

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

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

"72. The volunteers at Rugby Portobello were very passionate in what they were doing for everybody. Everyone in the community was gathering inside to do as much as they could for us, and we were made to feel really welcome in there. It was like nothing was too much for the volunteers to do. The volunteers were great. They arranged food, tea, coffee and later the organised clothing for us. They also arranged initial provision of cash which was £100 for each household."

IWS00000382_0011

(b) The Westway centre;

I also went to the Westway Centre where the council or someone had set up help desks to deal with various problems that people issues such as passports, driving licenses, HMRC, the Red Cross, NHS and other organisations. I am not sure who set it up but each organisations provided different services. It was a very good idea to have one central hub where so many services and help could be accessed. There was also a play area for children which was good.

However, it took at least three or four days to be set up. It would be better if it had been set up straight away.

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

We were placed in a hotel on the first night as stated above. The hotel was the Premier Inn in Earls Court where we stayed until the end of August 2017. We would have been stuck there for ages if we hadn't kept pushing RBKC. The time in the hotel was terrible. We had one room for my wife and I and our two children. The children were 11 and 13 years old at the time. We were in one room with one double bed and two single beds. The only other room was a bathroom. There was no cooker. The room was designed for staying in for only short visits, not for a family to live in for such a long time.

The location of the hotel was not good as it was very away from the community and the support which was being provided by various charities. These support centres had been set up near the tower.

With regard to food, on the first night the staff in the hotel provided us with food. They offered a buffet for us and the three or four other survivor families staying in the same hotel. This was organized by the hotel not the council. Nobody from the council checked up on us until someone from Hackney Council carried out an assessment a few days after arriving.

However, as I have mentioned further in this statement, they carried out the assessment and then lost our assessment forms.

With regard to food we knew that we could have breakfast at the hotel, but we did not know if we could have dinner there after the first night. Various charities (I do not know which ones) delivered hot food to us at the hotel. We also received food from family. However, as time passed by, we had no choice but to eat out a lot. Even though it may sound nice to be eating out all the time, this was not the case after a few days especially with children. For the first few weeks we had to pay for the meals that we ate out. We were never refunded.

After a few weeks our Key Worker set up a meal allowance which was where money was paid direct into our bank account.

On the 5th July 2017 the meal allowances started with £1,200 for the family which was transferred into our bank account. This was to cover food and drink for the family.

Food and Drink

26. 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

I would refer to my comments above.

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

I would refer to my comments above.

Basic Provisions and Financial Assistance

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

"I asked them for help to arrange a replacement car key and, initially, they advised me to contact my insurers. I contacted my motor insurers but they informed me that this would increase my premium and they advised me to speak with the car dealership. I called the car dealership and I was advised that the cost of a replacement key was £2,000 as they had to change the whole locking system in my car.

76. Initially, the RBKC agreed to pay for the new key system but they changed their mind the following day. Hiwot complained as we were told it would be paid for the day before and they told something different the next day. We had been without a car to use as we lost the keys in the fire. After speaking to several people at the RBKC, they eventually told us that they would speak to our social worker and that she would make the payment for the replacement car keys direct to the dealer."

IWS00000382_0012

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

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

I would refer to my above answer but would add that from the time of the fire until the 5th July 2017, we did not receive any payments. I believe that once we received the payments they were adequate.

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

Initially, we received everything that we needed from family and friends who came to the hotel and gave them to us. I am not aware of RBKC taking any steps to help in relation to clothes, hygiene products or any such items.

Psychological Support

Before dealing with the specific issues below I would refer to my previous witness statement where I said:

"61. I found it extremely difficult to go back to work and did not go back until February 2018. Even now that I am back at work, I can only stay for a few hours each day.

62. I am suffering from flashbacks every couple of days.

63. I am constantly worried about my children as they are not sleeping well. They are not the same children they were before the fire. Before the fire our children were both very happy and smiley children. [REDACTED] was a very chatty person but now he has become very closed off and very quiet since the fire. He does not talk a lot or say much.

64. People always used to say that our children were very happy before the fire, they had big smiles etc. Our family and friends have also noticed that the smiles have gone and they often say to the children, that they want to see their smiley faces again. [REDACTED], was a very happy child and since the fire she cries a lot, she gets upset very quickly, she is very emotional and she finds all sorts of excuses not to go to bed." IWS00000382_0010

“85. This tragedy is affecting us all in different and in many ways.

87. Hiwot was a very sociable person but now she does not go out much. She no longer takes time to see her friends. She has also become very short tempered since the fire.

88. I just feel as though living in our temporary accommodation with no idea as to when we will find our permanent home is very stressful and we just all feel very unsettled at present. We want to get our normal lives back. We need a little bit of stability in our lives and we do not have it without a home.” IWS00000382_0014

Since my previous witness statement, I have been receiving counselling on and off. Initially, we went as a family to CAMHS in Lancaster Road for counselling. We did this up until about Christmas 2017. I first attended on my own approximately six months after the fire. Initially, I would go once a fortnight and I kept going, although, I have not been recently. However, I am going to restart again soon.

Our son had refused to go to counselling initially. However, recently he has started and has now been three times. Since the fire he has changed he has become really forgetful and is startled by the smallest noise. I believe that there are many other such problems he is or will face in the future, but we are only at the start of the journey.

28. 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 would refer to my previous witness statement before specifically dealing with this point.

“73. We were allocated a key worker. Her name was 'Naomi' and she was very good. She helped us arrange a new set of car keys, get our identification documents and she also organised a morning taxi for the school run.” IWS00000382_0011

Information and Assistance

29. 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.

We had not lost any family although we did check up about people through neighbors, but we did not stay long.

Public Communication

30. 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 use any of these and I am not aware of any.

(b) Leaflets/newsletters;

Initially we did not receive anything but later we would get a leaflet posted through our hotel door giving an update (weekly). However, as there were only three of four families in our hotel from the tower, I think we were forgotten, and we did not receive anything for some time.

(c) Telephone helplines;

I was not aware of any such help lines.

(d) Voluntary relief centres.

We did not receive any specific information regarding these.

Nearly all the information we received was from other survivor families either by word of mouth or through a resident what's app group. It would have been useful if the authorities had such a group chat to provide information instantly and directly. Also, a chat group would allow residents to ask questions and for others to see the questions and RBKC to provide an answer that may be useful to others.

Needs of Specific Groups

31. 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;

I would refer to my previous witness statement where I said in relation to our children:

"69. At the time of the fire, [REDACTED] had been in Year 8 at school and he had end of year exams a week and a half after the fire. He goes to [The Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School]. [REDACTED] was adamant that he did not want any fuss or special arrangements at school and we told him to do his best. The school was fantastic. They looked out for him in the playground, checked on him both inside and outside the classroom to see how he was. The Head Teacher kept us updated regularly. They were very supportive.

70. [REDACTED]'s] school, Saint Francis of Assisi School, was the same. They had created a room away from everything where she would go whenever it got too much for her. She would often ask her teacher for five minutes away from class to have some time out. It was really hard for [REDACTED] as she was reminded about the fire everyday as she could see the Tower from her school playground. This was really tough on her.

71. The children returned to school as quickly as we could arrange for this to happen. [REDACTED] took a week off after the fire as he did not have his uniform, as it had been burnt in the fire, and his Head Teacher wanted [REDACTED]'s] replacement uniform to be sorted before he returned to school so that he would not stand out. He

wanted [REDACTED] 's/ return to school to be as smooth as possible for our son."

IWS00000382_0011

"74. We asked the RBKC for help with transport to take the children to and from school and with obtaining replacement passports as [REDACTED] had a school trip a few weeks after the fire and we did not want him to miss out because he did not have a passport. A member of staff from the RBKC had the passport forms and told us that he would send the forms to the Passport Agency with the payment. He then called us and informed us that the RBKC were no longer dealing with the replacement passports and that we had to go to the Town Hall to collect the forms and post them ourselves.

75 When I went to the Town hall, I could not find the man who had our forms and so we had to re-complete the forms and submit them to the Passport Agency, who had set up a desk at The Westway. Our replacement passports were issued within a few days. I also asked the RBKC for mobile phones for Hiwot and the children but they gave us just one and that did not work." IWS00000382_0012

"84. My daughter, [REDACTED] does not sleep well at all. She stays up very late and does not want to stay in her room. She wants to come with us wherever we are. She does not want to be alone. [REDACTED] is not himself, he has become very quiet and withdrawn into himself. He does not talk as much as he used to."

IWS00000382_0014

It does not appear that any special consideration was given by RBKC or TMO to children. For example, families with children should have been moved out of hotels immediately. The only specific help for children seemed to come from the charities. For example, the get away to Cornwall run by Esme "Cornwall Hugs, Grenfell".

(b) Elderly people;

This group is not relevant to our family.

(c) Individuals with disabilities;

This group is not relevant to our family.

(d) Faith and ethnic groups.

This group is not relevant to our family.

Voluntary and Community Groups

32. Please outline your experiences of:

(a) The role that voluntary organizations, charities and faith centres had in the immediate aftermath (including the British Red Cross, relief centres and other organizations);

I would refer to my comments above and add that the charities took on the role that you would expect local and or national government to undertake. Not only did it result in survivors not receiving adequate help but I believe also allowed various frauds to be undertaken, due to a failure of a central checking system of people seeking help. Such systems could only be organized by government. However, the charities and communities were amazing and without them things would have been even worse.

(b) The coordination and distribution of donations and offers of assistance from the public to those in need.

I believe that the charities did the best they could. The council failed to distribute a full and up to date list of all the residents residing in the tower and which flat they were in. I understand from friends that people were claiming money from the charities by saying that

they were from flats they were not. However, without a central record system it was impossible for the charities to do anything else. The alternative would have been that they gave nobody any help.

Coordination and Leadership

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

I believe that there was no coordination as I have detailed above.

Adequacy of Response and Lessons Learned

34. If not covered above, please provide any observations, based on your experience, on the adequacy of the emergency relief provided and any lessons to be learned for the future.

I believe that there should be a much better system of communication between parties involved in any disaster including local and central government, survivors and charities amongst others. The council should keep all of their records up to date, so they know who is in the building and whether there are any specific needs of residents such as they are wheelchair bound.

Further, I believe RBKC should have been present at the tower straight away and there should have been a proper emergency plan in place.

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.....

Wintom TEMESGEN

03.03.20

Dated.....