

27 March 2017

Dear Ms Johnson

I am writing to you to ask you to intervene in the very unsatisfactory position that the Dainton family find themselves in as a result of the recent works at Grenfell Tower by National Grid. They have been unable to return home for the last four weeks as a result of asbestos having been disturbed at their flat during those works.

When the asbestos was discovered, National Grid arranged for the affected area (a cupboard in the hallway) to be cleaned, sealed up and air tests to be carried out. There was some clothing and a laundry basket in the cupboard which they removed and disposed of due the asbestos.

Zoe Dainton was alone in the flat at the time and nothing was really explained to her until she called the supervisor at National Grid. She also attempted to contact her housing officer at the TMO Latimer Office, but could not reach her so called the TMO repairs line to inform them and ask for someone from Environmental Health to attend.

National Grid returned to the flat again on the 28 February and advised that the air test results were all "normal". However, the flat was not cleaned until 11 days after the asbestos was discovered, so that gave the air time to settle. National Grid were unable to advise whether other clothing that had been in the cupboard should be destroyed, nor how this should be done. Following a telephone call on 28 February, the housing officer advised the family that they should not remain in the flat until the situation was clarified. They made their own arrangements for temporary accommodation.

The family asked for a copy of National Grid's air test but were told it could not be shared with them due to data protection. On 10 March they asked for it again. They also asked whether it was safe to return to the flat and for confirmation that everything else in the flat - the rooms and their contents - were unaffected by the asbestos.

An Environmental Health officer contracted by TMO came to the flat on 10 March to remove the panel containing asbestos and carry out more air testing. On 13 March the housing officer said that the family could receive a copy of the National Grid report, but did not respond to any of the other queries. She also said that National Grid would contact them to arrange to complete the work.

The report from Martin Loveday, project manager at National Grid was received around 16 March. The family believed that it was not accurate and asked him to amend it, which has not been done. The family reverted to their housing officer on 17 March for a response to their earlier enquiries and was told that they would be

"passed on". There is an e-mail trail that sets out most of these conversations.

The family were then invited to a meeting with their housing officer, [REDACTED] and wished to sort things out so that she did not come back to the same problems. This was almost two weeks after it was known that asbestos had been disturbed. The meeting was set for 22 March. However, on 21 March the family were told that senior management at the TMO had instructed the housing officer also to involve representatives from National Grid at the meeting. In the event, the meeting did not take place and the TMO told the family that it was National Grid's responsibility to respond to the family's requests since they had carried out the works.

Mr Loveday then e-mailed the family stating that the property was safe and that the items in the cupboard had been disposed of. There was no confirmation that the rest of the flat and its contents are safe, nor has an amended report been sent. The family as a consequence are far from reassured that it is safe for them to return and they have sought advice from solicitors and contacted the Health and Safety Executive for advice.

This sorry state of affairs raises a number of questions.

The TMO advise that they told National Grid where the asbestos was situated in Grenfell Tower. So either (a) the TMO did not know of the presence of asbestos in that particular cupboard; or (b) that National Grid was negligent in drilling into and exposing the asbestos.

This not the moment to identify culpability or accountability. The main issue is that this family has not been able to live in their home for four weeks; they remain very concerned that they have had only an inaccurate report on air testing; that it took 11 days before the air tests were carried out; that the TMO and the National Grid are passing responsibility for resolving the matter between them and the family are left in the middle without proper support or information.

They have made their own arrangements to find alternative housing in the interim so are not costing the TMO any money. I suspect that if the TMO were paying for alternative accommodation, then the matter might have been addressed more swiftly. However, as the manager of Grenfell Tower on behalf of the Council, the TMO should have taken full responsibility for addressing this very serious issue as quickly as possible. It is absurd to expect tenants to deal with major utility companies unaided.

Since the TMO and National grid appear to be in conflict about accountability, I believe that it is therefore up to the Council as the freeholder of the property to ensure that someone deals with this swiftly - albeit belatedly - and ensure that all

issues are resolved to the satisfaction of everyone so that the family may return to their home. To have left things hanging for such a long time is frankly shocking. We look to the Council to ensure that everyone is resolved as quickly as possible and without any further prevarication.

Once the family are safely back in the home, there remains the matter of compensation, which I understand is the responsibility of the Council's insurers, so I hope that this will then also be addressed as quickly as possible.

I look forward to hearing from you and/or the TMO, Environmental Health and (not instead of) National Grid with an appropriate plan of action.

Cllr Judith Blakeman