

Witness Statement of: Jason Miller
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GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

PHASE ONE WITNESS STATEMENT OF JASON MILLER

I, JASON MILLER, of 145 GRENFELL TOWER (17th floor) say as follows:

1. This statement is my account of events that took place on Tuesday 13th June into the early hours of Wednesday 14th June 2017 which I make for the purposes of Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry. I would wish to make a further statement to address issues falling to be dealt with by the inquiry in Phase 2.
2. I moved into Flat 145, Grenfell Tower, on the same day as my partner, Corinne Jones (21st July 2016). When my partner Corinne Jones signed the agreement, I remember receiving some resident information, for example about how the boiler works, but nothing stood out regarding emergency or evacuation procedures. I don't recall seeing any advice about emergency procedures.

Fire safety

3. I had not been in the building previously when there had been a fire. I remember at the lifts on our floor, on the walls outside of each lift door, there were instructions about what to do if there was a fire in your flat. These signs were not there when we first arrived. It said if there is a fire in the building, remain in your flat and call 999 from there. There was no mention of evacuating the building, unless the fire is in your flat. I remember looking at the sign while waiting for the lift to arrive one day. I was with my family and clearly remember saying to them that if there were to be a fire, we would leave the building and ask questions later. It was quite late into the tenancy that we actually noticed the sign. It appeared out of the blue so we noticed when it first

appeared. There was another sign on the door to the stairs but I can't remember what it said.

4. In the communal area there were vents on both walls adjacent to either side of the lift. They were at different heights, the one furthest from our flat was at floor level up to hip level, the other closest to our house was from around chest level upwards. I thought it was for building temperature control purposes, you would often hear the wind howling through these vents. You would often see the mechanisms change and hear noises from these vents.

Fire check

5. I was in the flat when it was visited by an inspector from the fire brigade, who was wearing a polo shirt with the fire brigade logo, saying he was doing a check. This was on 10th June 2017. It was nice to be reassured given the concerns Corinne expressed in relation to the fire doors and the front door closer mechanism not being installed. We had never had a fire inspection before. He checked the fire alarm to check that it worked. It was mainly Corinne talking to him but I listened to his answers. I didn't hear the conversation about the front door, because I was in the front room. Afterwards we understood that if there was a fire, the bedroom and front doors would hold for 30 minutes.
6. There was a clearance underneath all of the bedroom doors; I could slide my fingers and knuckles under it.

The night of the fire

7. Tuesday 13th June 2017 was a normal day, although I had been staying at my mother's for a few days. I had gone to work as usual in the morning but from my mother's home. I was working as a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] where I've worked for 5 years. I went for a drink after work and then went to stay at my mum's. Corinne and I had previously made arrangements for Wednesday morning, for taking the boys to school. I had already told Corinne that I would be out for drinks and would be staying at my mum's that night.

8. I got back to my mum's before midnight, before the trains stopped. When I got back to my mum's, I didn't watch television because I knew I had to be up early for the boys. My mum had left out some bed sheets so I laid them out on the sofa and went to bed. I received a WhatsApp message from Corinne at 11:54 which said:

[REDACTED]

I replied at 12:24:

[REDACTED]

9. That was the last communication I had with Corinne before she called me and woke me up.
10. The first thing that woke me up was my phone ringing. It was Corinne, she said 'The building's on fire, the whole building's on fire', she sounded breathless and her voice was shaking, she was having difficulty speaking to me. I thought perhaps it was exaggerated and it was just a small frying pan fire, and I said okay I'm on my way. The conversation ended quite quickly. I threw some clothes on and as I was getting ready I received a picture on WhatsApp from Corinne at 1:43 of the building burning. I showed my mum the picture, trying to wake her up. At this point I started to panic because I realised how big the fire was. From her picture I realised that she was safe and out of the building. My mum told me to go straight away. I left the flat and ran to the top of the road, I wasn't thinking, I just knew I wanted to get there as fast as possible.
11. I went to the top of the road, I didn't stop to get cash on the way, I looked back to see if there were any buses. I heard someone shouting at me, but I didn't have my glasses on so I couldn't see who it was. I turned around and strained my eyes to see who it was and walked back to realise it was a friend of my brother who was getting some food. I asked him if he was driving, and he said yes and I asked if he could take me to the tower. He said yes but we would have to wait for his food. We waited maybe 3 to 4 minutes. We were heading along the top of Scrubs lane from Harrow road, and as we went over the Red Iron bridge, we could see the yellow and white flames coming from Grenfell Tower. I remember saying to the driver, *'what on earth is fuelling that*

fire?!' It looked like a torch, with the bright white lights. The intensity of the fire didn't look like any fire I had ever seen before, it looked like fuel. I thought that someone may have poured petrol over the building.

12. We took a left at North Pole Road, right onto Latimer Road, followed by a left onto Oxford Gardens, then a right at Bramley Road. We ended up on the same road as the Kensington Aldridge Academy, on Lancaster Road. I did not get out of the car here. I could see that the fire was out of control. I didn't want to look at it too much, because it was horrifying to see, I was just worried about Corinne and my sons. We were up closer than before, the street was brightly lit, it felt like someone was shining an amber light onto the street, it was unusually bright. That was when I called Corinne to ask where she was, and she told me she was at her mum's. I didn't hear her say this in our previous phone call. I was overwhelmed with relief. I was still in shock, but I was so relieved to hear that Corinne and my kids were safe. I then said to the driver that we needed to go to [REDACTED] and he dropped me off there at Corinne's mum's flat.

13. When I arrived, Corinne's mum, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and Corinne were in the flat. Corinne's brother and her mum's partner were not there. I went upstairs, said hi to her mum, and gave Corinne and my sons a big hug. I asked them if they were okay, they were still washing out their noses. We were all in the front room. The TV was on when I arrived, and then it became breaking news. I remember saying that it was out of control when I arrived, and then the news came on and we could see just how badly out of control it was. It looked engulfed from every angle.

14. We were at Corinne's mum's for about an hour/ hour and a half. I was shaking, in shock, feeling angry, worrying about how this was impacting my son's health. He has had health problems and I was worried about the smoke impacting his health. We were watching the news, they hadn't mentioned any deceased or missing at this point. I then decided that we should go back to the area. My thinking behind going back was to let the council know that that we had escaped the building alive.

15. We went back and parked the car across the road from the Westway sports centre. There is a car park near the pharmacy, and then we went to Latimer Christian centre.

We asked where residents of the tower were gathering – they said they did not know. They offered me a cup of tea. I spoke to an RBKC councillor, who I now know to be councillor Matthew Taylor. He introduced himself as a councillor from RBKC, and said he got out of bed as soon as he had seen and heard the news to see what was going on. He mentioned that people would be gathering in the Leisure Centre.

16. He told me ‘I’d like to assure you that the council has contingency plans for events like this, we have measures in place for these situations’ – this did reassure me and I thought we should be in good hands. We then made our way to the leisure centre from the Latimer Christian centre, we stopped to look at the tower from the archway by Latimer road station. We tried to go around the south side of the tower but we were blocked, and we spoke to an officer at the cordoned off area – we said we were survivors; the police officers didn’t have an answer for us and wouldn’t let us through. Lancaster road was cordoned off too so we had to go all the way around. We couldn’t get to the Leisure centre because the road was blocked off. We were told that survivors were not gathering there, someone mentioned the Rugby Portobello club. We made our way towards the Rugby Portobello club, where we saw people gathering, the doors were open. We thought this is where we would have to wait to find out what’s happening next.

17. I think we returned to the scene at around 3:30am, I would say we got to Rugby Portobello at maybe 4 in the morning. I still didn’t know what was going on. After a while, I realised that this was the only help we would be getting, there were no police or anyone from the NHS. People from the community started dropping off clothes, baby food, Sainsbury’s trolleys filled with food. I remember feeling touched to see a child pushing a trolley. We saw more and more people gathering. We were waiting for the council to turn up, we wanted to find out what would happen next. That’s why we went back, we wanted to present ourselves, and to go and see the people who were responsible for our housing, to make sure that we could get emergency accommodation.

18. I thought the worst that night. From what I saw of the west side of the tower, I thought there’s no getting out of that. It was burnt to a crisp, glowing with embers. I

have always found it hard to deal with tragedy and death but it was clear to me that it was very bad. I knew lives had been lost in there, and I was thinking the worst about the people who were still in there, still sleeping. It turned out to be much worse than I thought. What I saw that night was horrific. It has had a huge impact on me, my family and the community. I would like to say more about the response to the fire and the impact it has had on us all but I understand that I will have an opportunity to provide an additional witness statement later in the inquiry proceedings.

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

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

SIGNED:  Jason Miller

DATE: 08/05/2018