

THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF MARCIO GOMES
FLAT 183 21ST FLOOR

I, **MARCIO GOMES**, of [REDACTED], **WILL SAY** as follows:-

INTRODUCTION

1. I am a core participant in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, and a survivor of the fire.
2. I lived for 10 years at Grenfell Tower, up and until the tragic and disastrous events that took place in the early hours of Wednesday, 14 June 2017. I lived in flat number 183 on the 21st floor with my wife, Andreia Perestrelo, and my two young daughters, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. We also had a pet dog, Lili. This statement is mainly about our experiences on 14 June 2017 and deals with what the Inquiry has called 'Phase 1' matters, setting out what happened to us when the fire broke out and consumed Grenfell Tower, which was my family's home. I will provide greater detail of 'Phase 2' matters as the Inquiry progresses.
3. I was 38 years-old when the fire happened, my wife was 37 years-old and my daughter, [REDACTED] was 10 years-old and [REDACTED] was 12 years-old. At the time of the fire my wife was 7 months pregnant. My date of birth is [REDACTED], Andreia's is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] is [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] is [REDACTED].
4. The day of the fire, 14 June 2017, is a day that I and my family will never forget. We lost everything that we owned in the flat. We were burnt out of our house and home. Each of our lives was under the most serious threat and danger. We thought we were all going to die. More heartbreakingly, we lost our unborn son, L[ogan], who died in Andreia's womb

as a result of smoke and cyanide inhalation when she tried to escape from the hellhole created by the fire. He was delivered by caesarean section at Kings College Hospital on 14 June 2017, stillborn. Andreia was in a coma and I was there for the stillbirth of our son. Andreia had carried L[ogan] happily and without any complications for 7 months. The depth and pain of the loss of our unborn son cannot be conveyed by mere words. We were devastated by the events of 14 June 2017. This is our story, in my words.

Personal Details

5. My full name is Marcio Paulo Da Silva Gomes. I was formerly a resident of Grenfell Tower and now I have been permanently re-housed close to where I was living in Grenfell Tower. I was born in [REDACTED] and I came to the United Kingdom in approximately 1984 or 1985.
6. I describe my ethnicity as [REDACTED]. I describe my sex as Male. I do not have any disabilities. My wife was 7 months pregnant at the time of the fire and she is asthmatic. I have two children, with my wife Andreia Perestrelo, who is also a Core Participant in the Grenfell Inquiry as are our daughters [REDACTED] Gomes and [REDACTED] Gomes. [REDACTED] is also asthmatic.
7. I am currently employed as a testing and deployment manager in IT, working with Ofsted.
8. I went to St Mary's Roman Catholic Infant and Junior school in North Kensington and went on to the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School which is very close to Grenfell Tower. I achieved GCSEs whilst at school, although that is now many years ago. I have lived all my life in the UK in the North Kensington area and was very much part of not only Grenfell Tower but also of the community in the Tower and the community of North Kensington. I have attained various IT related qualifications.
9. I do not have any communications needs.

Exhibits and 999 calls

10. There is now shown to me exhibit to this witness statement, marked "MG 1", a true digital copy of a video I took on my mobile telephone, from inside my flat, on the night of the fire. The video shows the ingress of smoke into our flat through the front door leading

on to the landing on the 21st floor and it shows the pitch black smoke on the landing when I opened the front door of my flat at 2:32 am on the 14 June 2017. There is also shown to me exhibit to this witness statement, marked “MG 2”, a series of photographs that were shared with me by various other residents during the refurbishment works at Grenfell Tower.

11. I have listened to audio recordings of four 999 emergency calls I made to the emergency services whilst my family and I were trapped in the building. I have read the transcripts of the calls. The words of the 999 calls transcribed on to paper, of course, help to explain what happened to me and my family as we were trapped in our flat and when we struggled to make our escape from the Tower, but the real time audio recordings to the London Fire Brigade on the night are the best evidence of what we were going through. It is extremely difficult on paper to convey the complete range of emotions and the desperation I felt as I tried to get my family out of the burning Tower. The playing of and listening to the audio recordings of the 999 calls I made to the fire service and in particular the last emergency telephone call, which lasted 33 minutes, will help the Inquiry to fully understand, appreciate and understand what we went through in the early hours of 14 June 2017. I have no objection to the four 999 calls being played in public at the Inquiry and I would like the audio to be played so that what happened can be properly and fully understood and so that it what it was like to evacuate my children and pregnant wife from our burning flat in the early hours of the morning is fully conveyed to the Inquiry.

Family life

12. My family life before the fire was very happy. I lived in our flat at Grenfell Tower with my wife, Andreia Perestrelo, along with our two young daughters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. We also had a family dog, Lili, who was killed in the fire and was found to have gone back to our flat after she had been taken part way down the stairwell on the night of the fire by one of my daughters. Our dog died on the landing outside our flat door on the 21st floor.
13. At the time of the fire, Andreia was 7 months pregnant with our unborn son, Logan. He was due to be born on 21 August 2017. All of our family and friends were so pleased that Andreia was pregnant and we were all looking forward to Logan being born. We had prepared the nursery room for him in our home in anticipation of his birth. It was with the deepest sadness and indescribable pain that I was told by the staff at Kings College

Hospital that our unborn son had died as a result of the effects of the smoke and toxic fumes from the fire. Logan was stillborn in Kings College Hospital whilst Andreia was still in an induced coma after the fire. He was delivered by caesarean section. I was there to witness his stillbirth. I held him in my arms. I cannot even start to describe how crushingly sad I felt at the loss of our baby boy. When Andreia awoke from her coma the first thing she asked me was "How is the baby?" It was devastating to have to tell her that he was gone. She had never got to hold him in her arms. It was a terrible time.

Pre-fire life

14. I lived with my family in Flat 183 Grenfell Tower. We were on the 21st Floor. There were only two floors of flats above us. We were renting the property and paid our rent to The Kensington and Chelsea Tenants Management Organisation ('the TMO'). We had the flat valued on two separate occasions as we were considering buying the flat. It was last valued at £330,000 in early 2017.
15. The flat was not in a habitable state when we got the keys and it needed a lot of work. I could not see any structural problems with the flat but I am not an engineer.
16. The water pressure was terrible.
17. The windows opened all the way out. We had asked for a safety feature to be installed to prevent the windows from opening fully as our daughters were very young when we moved into the Tower. We did a lot of cosmetic work to make the flat our home.
18. We were happy and enjoyed living in the Tower. I would describe it as living in our own little bubble.
19. I had lived at Grenfell Tower for 10 years without any problems, save for problems that arose during the refurbishment works which took place approximately between 2012 and 2016.
20. There was a great communal atmosphere at Grenfell Tower. Everyone was friendly and we all knew one another, especially the neighbours on our own floor. We were a close community and supported one another.

21. Over the years, we had made a lot of friends in the Tower and it felt like we had our own little micro community. Both Andreia and I felt it was a very safe space in which to bring up our young children.
22. It was a family orientated Tower which was great for us as we are a young family with young children. Our girls would often play with the other children in the Tower on our floor and on the other floors.
23. It was secure and we felt safe. We did not live in fear of anyone breaking-in as everyone looked out for each other. We had no particular security concerns.
24. I also enjoyed living in the Tower because of the fantastic views we had from our flat over London. It was a penthouse view and you could see the whole of London laid out in front of you. I would describe it as a lovely place to live.
25. [REDACTED] was in Year 7 at [REDACTED] and was due to sit her end of year examinations in the weeks following the fire. She was unable to sit several of her examinations as she was still in hospital but she did manage to sit a few after she was discharged from hospital. Andreia and I spoke with [REDACTED] school after the fire and they were very understanding and told us that they would take [REDACTED] overall performance over the year into consideration when assessing her final grade for the year. [REDACTED] started Year 8 at [REDACTED] in September 2017 and was offered a scholarship at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] shortly after, she moved schools in October 2017.
26. [REDACTED] was in Year 5 at [REDACTED] and is now in Year 6 and preparing for her SAT exams. Andreia had a meeting with [REDACTED] Head of Year recently who informed her that she had noticed a change in [REDACTED], and that [REDACTED] was not the same girl she was before the fire.
27. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were both involved in a lot of activities before the fire. These activities included boxing, swimming lessons, Rugby Portobello Trust activities such as trampolining, basketball, football, singing etc. All of this stopped after the fire although they are now slowly getting back into these.
28. Before going on to what happened on 14 June last year I want to make some very brief comments about safety issues and the refurbishment that took place at Grenfell Tower.

These comments are not exhaustive by any means and as a core participant I am fully aware that the mass of documents which will deal with 'Phase 2' issues have not yet been disclosed by the Inquiry to my legal representatives and to me as a core participant. I will be making a further statement or statements to the Inquiry when the 'why did it happen' issues are dealt with after the conclusion of Phase 1.

Concerns about fire safety

29. Although we enjoyed living within the Grenfell Tower, I had several concerns about fire safety both before and after the refurbishment works that took place at the Tower between 2012 and 2016. I will set out each of my concerns in turn.
30. Before the refurbishment works, our flat was on the 18th floor of the Tower and after the refurbishment works our floor was re-numbered to become the 21st floor. However, the TMO and/or those carrying out the works failed to change the numbering on the stairwell and the numbering on my stairwell after the refurbishment works were complete remained as the 18th floor. This issue had been raised with the TMO by myself and other residents but they had failed to take any action to rectify this.

Windows

31. As a result of the refurbishment, the windows in our flat had been moved out from the original frame so that they were flush and in line with the new cladding that had been put on the outside of the Tower.
32. The windows were smaller than the original windows and our natural light was reduced as a result.
33. The fact that the new window frames were smaller than the previous window frames resulted in substantial gaps being left around the edges of the window and underneath the window ledge. These gaps were filled with mastic and some sort of a foam-type substance. The workmen were cutting the foam to try and fit it into the gaps around the windows so as to fill them. The foam seemed to have a fire proof coating which they were cutting through, to shape the foam to fit gaps. I was worried that this was reducing any anti-fire resistance and that the foam was damaged as a result of the cutting.

34. There were a lot of gaps. As they were using hard foam, it was impossible to mould it perfectly into the gaps which had been created by the fitting of the new windows. The gaps under the window ledges were huge but this was when the new windows were first put in. The foam attempted to fill the gaps. The workmen then placed the plastic/pvc edging around the window ledge to cover the foam, which concealed the gaps which the foam had not completely filled. I was working from home at regular times and I was therefore able to see the gaps which had been left particularly beneath the window ledges before they were covered up with PVC. After they covered the window ledge with PVC, there were no visible gaps, only small cracks which were letting through draughts of air from outside the building
35. Once the contractors had finished working on the windows, we could certainly feel a draught in the flat. It was not immediately noticeable as it was summer when the fitting of the new windows was completed, but as it got colder we started to feel the breeze in the flat. It felt as if one of the windows in the flat was open.
36. I spoke to Linda Prentice, who was appointed by Rydon to act as the liaison officer between the residents, the TMO and Rydon, about the draught coming through the windows and she arranged for a Rydon employee, whose name was Sunday, to come up to the flat to try and resolve the problem. Sunday filled the gaps and cracks around the edges of the windows with mastic filler and it was much better after this.
37. I recall asking a lot of questions about the window frames as we were going to lose some of our natural daylight. I was informed that we would get more window ledge as a result of the windows being pushed back but at what cost is the reality. All of our concerns were met with the same responses from the TMO, ie that the refurbishment works were better for us and that we had no reason to worry.

Gas Pipes

38. I also had concerns regarding the installation of gas pipes in and around the landing on our floor and on other floors and on the stairwell. I refer the Inquiry to the various photographs I have exhibited at **MG2**.
39. I thought it was very odd to have gas pipes in the stairwell as this was the single and only emergency exit out of the Tower in the case of an emergency when the lifts would be out

of bounds and/or disabled. Some of the pipes in the stairwell had been left exposed and not enclosed in boxing which worried me as anyone coming up the stairs could accidentally knock into them or deliberately tamper with them. I was concerned that a naked light from a discarded cigarette could cause a fire if any of the pipes became damaged, and that such a fire would block the sole escape route outside of the lift system.

40. The gas pipes came out of the stairwell and on to each landing. They were running over some of our neighbours' front door frames as the ceiling in the landing was very low. Again, I felt this was dangerous as the pipes were running over the only entrance and exit into the individual flats. I complained to the contractors whilst they were working on my landing and I understand that an official complaint had been made by one of the residents, Mr Shah. Mr Shah had lived in the tower for over twenty years and he informed me that he had already put in a written complaint to the TMO by email regarding the gas pipes posing a fire hazard as they had been left bare.
41. The contractors wanted to drill holes in my flat so that they could run the gas pipes into my flat. They managed to run the gas pipe over my front door and had marked an 'x' on the wall where they intended to drill the pipes into my flat. I spoke with the contractors at the time they were doing the work and told them that I would not authorise them to run gas pipes into my flat as we did not have any gas appliances.
42. It just did not feel safe. I was aware there had been explosions in high rise buildings previously involving gas and my worry was that if the pipes ran over our front door, which was the only way in and out of our flat, that we would be exposed to danger. The old gas pipes in the Tower were built into the structure and were not exposed pipes.
43. I also had concerns in relation to the new pipes (non-gas pipes) which had been installed inside my flat. They had lowered the ceilings both on the landing and inside our flat to conceal pipes which had been fitted. The pipes came in through the entrance and were connected to the bathroom, toilet and finally the kitchen. As far as I am aware the pipes were hot water pipes. The pipes running along the bottom of the flat had been left bare and were visible. For example, the pipes for the radiators had been left bare, which I felt was dangerous as I have young children and I was worried that they would burn themselves. Both my wife and I had raised our concerns regarding the pipes with the TMO and their response was that we should not worry because at best the pipes would

only be warm to touch, however in fact they were very much hotter than simply warm to touch.

44. Furthermore, I had heard during the refurbishment works that the contractor, Rydon, had damaged one of the gas pipes and that they had patched the damage but over time this did not hold and people started smelling leaking gas within the building. I believe this is when British Gas got involved, as there was a hole or holes somewhere in the gas piping.

Boiler

45. The TMO and the contractors dealing with the oversight of the refurbishment, Rydon, had intended to install a new boiler in our hallway just by our front door, above the main electrical box. I had concerns regarding this for obvious reasons. I did not think that it was sensible or safe to have a boiler that could leak water positioned above an electrical board. I was worried that water would get into the electric connections and cause a short and possibly start a fire. I in fact was threatened by a Rydon employee that I would be taken to court if I did not agree to have the boiler in the hallway. I do not take easily to threats and was not intimidated. I told Rydon that I would like to see them try taking me to court.
46. I raised this concern with the TMO. I along with a number of the other residents felt that our individual voices were not being heard by the TMO and we therefore set up a group with some of the other residents called the Grenfell Compact Group. The group included me and 7 or 8 other residents of the Tower. The Chairman of the group was David Collins who lived in Flat 185, on the same floor as me. The Vice Chairman was Ed Daffarn and he lived on the 13th floor. The other members of the group were William Thompson (3rd floor), Turufat (7th floor) and Mauna (I do not remember the floor she lived on). We would meet on a regular basis to discuss the concerns which the residents of the Tower had with the TMO and Rydon concerning the refurbishment and relay those concerns back to the TMO and Rydon. We had to set up a group as the TMO did not respond to our concerns as individuals and we therefore felt more united raising our concerns collectively. We put letters through our neighbours' letter boxes to find out what their concerns were and we acted collectively on behalf of all of the residents who raised their concerns with us. The issues which we raised with the TMO were mainly in relation to fire safety. The emails were sent to the TMO either by David Collins or Ed Daffarn.

47. The Grenfell Compact Group had to put up a fight to challenge the decision to install the boilers in our hallways. We told the TMO that we did not feel safe with the boiler in the hallway/corridor. We pointed out, for example, that if we had to exit the flat in an emergency it would be an obstruction and fire hazard. I was also worried that my daughters would injure themselves whilst playing in the hallway as they could run into the metal casing of the boiler.
48. The battle with the TMO and Rydon concerning boilers went on for up to a year with emails back and forth, and meetings etc. The TMO eventually conceded and agreed to position the new boilers in the kitchen areas (as had been the previous position of the old boilers), although they told us that the refurbishment would take longer if we insisted on having the boilers in our kitchens. Safety did not seem to be uppermost in their minds as they just seemed to want to do the job as quickly as possible and get out. They also told us that we would go without water for at least two weeks if we wanted the new boilers back in the kitchen area. We told them that we did not mind as long as the boilers were fitted in our kitchens.
49. The TMO were handing out bottles of water whilst the boilers were being fitted as there was no running water in our flats. The TMO made arrangements with the local sports centre so that residents could go in to the centre to use the showers. We took the girls to my parents' house for showers etc as my parents only live a mile away from Grenfell.

Electrical Problems

50. We were constantly experiencing power surges during the refurbishment works which went on for a considerable period of time. There was one particular month during which the power surge had short circuited either our kettle or toaster and we only realised this when we tried to use it. Around that time, we also started to notice the lights, television and fridge were switching on and off and several of the electrical appliances in our flat were damaged beyond repair as a result of the power surges in that month. I am unable to recall all of the items which were damaged but some of the damaged items included my X-box, my daughters' Nintendo Wii, plugs, chargers, microwave, bed side radio and Ipod dock. The TMO's initial response to my complaint regarding the damaged items was 'change the fuse'. I had changed the fuse and told them that this did not resolve the issue. They eventually sent an electrician to check the appliances. The electrician confirmed that the appliances were in fact damaged.

51. The TMO offered £200 to cover the cost of the damaged appliances. I did not accept the TMO's offer as their offer felt like a slap in the face as I had sent them an email detailing all of the damaged items which was in excess of a £1,000.
52. The £200 offer was a blanket offer made to all of the residents who had suffered from the same issue. I replaced the faulty units myself at my own expense.
53. The TMO arranged for repairs to be carried out within a month after this particular incident which helped but I did continue to notice that the lights on my surge protector were constantly flickering. This was a clear indication that the electricity was not 100% or the adapter had been damaged during the surges whilst the works were going on.
54. There were a couple of times where the TV surround sound would just switch on and off of its own accord and I presume this too was linked to the power surges as the lights on my surge protector were flickering at the same time.
55. The lights on our landing would also be out on a number of occasions. This was at least every six months. When the lights on our landing were out, it was complete darkness.

Concerns about modifications to the Tower

56. My wife and I and a number of residents in the tower had several concerns regarding the modifications to the Tower from the outset. I had raised my concerns verbally with Linda Prentice. I felt that the majority of my concerns were either disregarded or trivialised and I was told that I had nothing to worry about. I was constantly told that the refurbishment works which were being carried out were for both my benefit and the residents' benefit.
57. As soon as the cladding went up on the Tower, our mobile phone signal/coverage was reduced significantly. The signal in the flat was very poor. We could receive calls but it was hard to understand the caller and vice versa. We therefore had to take calls near the kitchen window and that had become the area in which we would all go to talk on the phone as we were unable to get a decent reception anywhere else in the flat.

Doors and automatic closers

58. When the TMO informed us that they would be replacing the front doors to the flats in the Tower, they told us that the new doors were fire resistant, were of better quality, were stronger and would last longer. We thought this was great and we were happy with the proposed replacement door to our flat. We were told this on numerous occasions during meetings with the TMO at the bottom of the Tower in the community rooms and we were also sent a few letters which set out options of four doors which were available to us with different styles of glass panels and colours. It has of course now transpired that the safety of the doors in terms of fire resistance is an issue.
59. I was not happy with the automatic closing mechanism on the front door as the door would slam shut. I was worried about the safety of my daughters as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were only 5 and 6 at the time the door was fitted. Our concerns were that our daughters might have their hands by the door frame and the door would chop off their fingers when slamming shut automatically.
60. I reported my concerns regarding the new front door to the TMO and asked them to remove the automatic closing mechanism. The TMO refused to remove the mechanism. I therefore spoke to a member of staff from the company who fitted the doors as they came to our flat a few weeks after the doors had been installed to inspect them and asked us if we were happy with the new door. I informed the gentleman that I was not happy with the door due to the force of the automatic closing mechanism. I asked him if he could take it out and he said no, he told me that I should wait for the final inspection following which if I wanted, I could remove the closing mechanism myself. I told him that I was aware that I could do it myself and I asked them if there was a way to make the door less springy. He informed me that the door could not be modified and I therefore had no option but to remove the automatic closing mechanism myself. I had not told the TMO that I had removed the automatic closing mechanism but the TMO had been to my flat after the chain was removed and would have noticed that the door did not slam shut and never raised this with me.
61. I would like to make it clear that removing the spring/automatic closing mechanism did not stop the front door from closing shut, the door still closed shut automatically, but it was more natural and not at speed. I and my family, obviously, always kept our front door

shut when we were in our home or when we were away. On the night of the fire, the front door was completely shut.

Lobby area

62. Originally there was a security guard in the Tower. As tenants we were given the opportunity to vote on whether or not we wanted to keep the security guard as we had to pay for this as part of our rent. The majority of residents voted no and the security guard was removed.
63. During the refurbishment a new double door entrance system was installed whereas previously residents only needed a fob for the front door and you could then just push the second door open. With the changes, we had roughly a ten second period of time to open the second door after opening the front door. If a resident did not have a fob or if a visitor came to the Tower, we could buzz guests or residents in without a fob through the front door of the Tower, but there were occasions when the second door would not open.
64. At times I had been trapped in between these two doors when I had left my fob at home. I had to call Andreia whenever this happened to send one of the girls down to let me in or I had to wait for someone to leave or enter the building to let me through the second door.
65. Often this would be around the time Andreia would be cooking and more often than not I would just wait for someone to either enter or leave the Tower. There was one occasion where I had to wait 20 minutes to get through the door.
66. This also happened quite frequently when we had guests visiting. We were able to buzz-in guests through the front door and they should have been able to walk through the second door without any problems when the doors were working. However, on the occasions when they were not working, someone would have to go down to let them through the second door as they would be trapped. I reported this to the TMO by phone and I also spoke to Linda about this and I was told by both the TMO and Linda that they would look into it but it was never resolved.
67. I considered the work to be shoddy as the old door system worked perfectly well.

Smoke ventilation system

68. Another concern I had was in relation to the smoke ventilation system which was installed as part of the refurbishment. As I understood it they, by that I mean the contractors carrying out the refurbishment works, had fitted the smoke ventilation system on the hallway/landing of every floor so if there was a fire the ventilation would absorb all of the smoke and extract it to the outside of the building. The vents were in two places on opposite walls in the hallway/landing. When the ventilation system went off (by that I mean when the vents sounded like they were working) it was like a loud Hoover sound, a high pitch sound. It sounded like there was wind going around the hallway. The noise could keep a light sleeper awake at night if the ventilation system was going off ie working. However, when it was needed on the night of the fire I believe the smoke ventilation system failed to work on my floor. The hallway/landing was full of thick black smoke and the stairwell was also full of smoke yet I could not hear the ventilation system working when I opened the door of my flat onto the landing and just after 2 am and when I later left the flat with my family at around 3.25 am.
69. I think the ventilation system never really worked properly as almost every week after it was installed we could hear the suction sound from inside our flat, by this I mean, it was going off when it did not need to as there was no smoke in the hallway/landing to activate it. The sound from the ventilation system was extremely loud. As I have said, I would describe it like the sound of a Hoover but loud enough to be heard inside our flat. There was obviously something wrong with the ventilation system and personally, I think, although it is only my personal assumption, that the TMO and/or their contractor switched it off because of the number of complaints they had received from the residents. I do not remember hearing the noise from the system in the weeks leading up to the fire although I cannot be precise as to the number of weeks I did not hear it making its noise in the time leading up to the fire. I cannot be sure when or if it was switched off but I had not heard it for several weeks leading up to the fire.
70. I had reported the noise to the TMO via their complaints number. I cannot remember when I made this call but the TMO should have a record of my complaint although I cannot be sure as records were only made when, for example, it was a first complaint by a resident in the building. I say this because if I complained about something which had already been reported to them by another resident, for example, the general response from the TMO was that they were already aware of the issue. They did tell me that they were

aware of problems with the ventilation system as the person I spoke to in order to make my complaint about the ventilation system told me that complaints about the system had already been made.

71. When the ventilation system was running, the noise was loud enough to wake us when it switched on, although it mainly woke my wife as I am a heavy sleeper.
72. I am as sure as I can be that the ventilation system was not working on the night of the fire as I could not hear it. I say this because first, the noise from the ventilation system was extremely loud and could be heard from inside my flat when it worked, and I did not hear it on the night of the fire. Secondly, there was smoke everywhere which confirmed to me that it was not working ie the smoke had not been extracted from the hallway and released outside the building. Thirdly, my video recording taken from inside my flat at 2:32 am confirms that it was not working as there is no noise from the ventilation system to be heard on the video and this would have been clearly heard from my flat and when I opened the door – as I have said, it was a loud system when it worked
73. The general response of the TMO to all of the concerns that either I raised as an individual or collectively on behalf of the residents as The Grenfell Compact Group was that:
 - a. we were being ‘paranoid’;
 - b. there were ‘no problems’; and
 - c. the refurbishment works were for our ‘benefit’.
74. I expected the TMO and Rydon to know what they were doing. I am not an architect, a fire engineer or a building expert. I obviously had concerns regarding fire safety and the Grenfell Compact Group raised those concerns with the TMO. The details of those concerns will be expanded upon when we get to Phase 2 of the Inquiry. We had never thought, however, that a fire like the Grenfell Tower disaster would ever happen.

The evening of 13 June 2017

75. During the evening of Tuesday 13 June 2017, I returned home to flat 183 with my wife and our two daughters after having been out for the evening with friends for dinner. We had returned home at approximately 10:30 p.m. we put the girls to bed and I played a game on my Xbox and finished just after midnight and went to bed.

The early hours of 14 June 2017

76. At approximately 1:30 a.m. on Wednesday 14 June 2017 both Andreia and I were awoken by a banging on our front door and the noise of commotion outside of the Tower, it was not very clear what it was all about as we lived on the 21st floor and were high above the ground level from where the noise seemed to be coming. It was a mix of shouting and sirens. There was more loud banging on the front door of our flat. Our daughters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were still sleeping at the time. Andreia went to answer the door and I got dressed and followed shortly after her. Our neighbour, Helen Gebremeskel, who lived at flat 186 on the same floor as us (21st Floor), was at our front door with her daughter, [REDACTED] and their dog, Simba. Helen was clearly very upset, she was breathing heavily, talking quickly and looked very worried. She told us that there was a fire in one of the flats in the Tower.
77. Whilst we were at the front door speaking with Helen, I could hear my next door neighbour, Abdulla from flat 182, talking with people who then went into his flat. Helen had told me that she had been speaking on the landing with the people from the lower floors who had come up to our floor before she knocked on our door and that they had gone into our neighbours' flat. Helen informed us that she and [REDACTED] had tried to go downstairs and were sent back up by a fire fighter. My understanding from Helen was that all of the people on the stairs were sent back up by the fire fighters. This was the only reason she knocked on our door. Helen had been with another group of people, with whom she had tried to go into flat 182, however, Abdulla and Helen did not get on and he told Helen to come into our flat. This is when she knocked on our door.
78. I immediately remembered at this point that there was a 'stay put' policy in place in Grenfell Tower in the case of a fire. I had been told about the stay put policy by both the TMO and the London Fire Brigade (LFB). I had also discussed the matter in passing and through the Compact Group of residents, although that was not in great detail.
79. My recollections on the issue of 'stay put' are as follows:
- (a) When I went to sign the Tenancy Agreement for our flat on or about 7 April (it was certainly in April) 2007 I met with Janice Jones, who was the housing officer for the TMO. We went to see her in the TMO administrative office on the ground floor. When

my wife and I arrived we spoke to the receptionist and she directed me to a waiting area. We waited for Janice to arrive and when she came in we all went into a private room and she took us through the tenancy contract. The meeting lasted between 30 – 60 minutes. I then signed the tenancy agreement as did Andreia, my wife, and Janice signed for and on behalf of the TMO. After signing, Janice then told us about health and safety in Grenfell Tower as part of what she described as the handover to us. She explained that in the case of a fire in the Tower there is a 'stay put policy' in place. She said this meant that, 'If there is a fire in the Tower you should stay in your flat unless the fire is in your flat or on your floor or unless advised by the Fire Brigade to leave.' She said 'You can't use the lifts if there is a fire, so you will have to use the stairwell.' She explained that, 'If the fire is in your flat you should leave and raise the alarm.' I can not recall if she said to close the door behind us. I cannot recall if she mentioned breaking the alarm glass outside the flat on the landing when leaving to raise the alarm. I remember that we then joked about it and I said, 'If there is a fire, I'm getting out! I'd prefer being outside the building than being inside the building if there is a fire.' Janice replied, 'I would do the same.' She was smiling at the time, she had a broad smile, when she said she would do the same. She then went on to tell us how the door fob worked, how the reception area worked, and how the security guard operated. She said, 'You'll like your floor; as it's a family floor with other kids.'

(b) The next occasion when 'stay put' was discussed with me was when about 3 fire officers in fire officer uniform came to my flat to check the smoke alarms in my flat to make sure they were working. This took place before the refurbishment works had started and even before I was aware that there was to be a refurbishment of the Tower. We had a smoke alarm in the corridor and one in the kitchen. They tested them and both went off. The alarm in the kitchen used to go off periodically when Andreia was cooking, especially when she opened the oven and the cooking fumes went into the air. I used to have to stand on a chair and fan the smoke away from the smoke alarm to make it stop. I do not recall the fire officers signing any paper or doing any tick box checklist when they were in my flat. I do not recall that they left any paperwork with me. Whilst two of the fire officers were testing the alarms the third fire officer, who seemed to be the senior officer, spoke with me in the corridor in between my bedroom and the girls' bedroom. He asked me, 'Do you know what the procedure is in the case of a fire?' I replied, 'I am aware there is a stay put policy and that means you stay in your flat if the fire is elsewhere in the building unless it is in my flat and then I would get out.' I do not recall saying anything to him about leaving if the fire was on my floor, for example in another flat on my floor, nor

do I recall saying I should leave if advised by the Fire Brigade (as in fact Janice had said years previously). I also added, 'We don't use the lift if there's a fire but use the stairwell to get out.' He replied 'That's correct.' I do not recall anything being mentioned by the fire officers about leaving if told to do so by the Fire Brigade, but it is common sense that one should leave a building if instructed to do so by the Fire Brigade. The officers were in my flat for between 5 to 10 minutes. They were all wearing blue t-shirts with 'LFB' and the senior officer had a heavy jacket. It was not an in depth conversation. He did say, 'The flats are designed to keep a fire contained.' Nothing was said to me, as far as I recall, about leaving if smoke came into my flat. I only recall the fire officer speaking about fire. Only one of the officers, the apparent senior officer, spoke to me save that the other two simply said, 'Hello' before carrying out the alarm testing.

(c) I had also read the notice plaques beside the lifts which advised residents to stay in their flats in the event of a fire in the building as this was safer. The notice I recall reading was only in English and it clearly stated that if there was a fire in the building then you should stay put unless the fire was in your flat or on your floor, then you should get out.

(d) I had a folder of newsletters from the TMO and Rydon that were given to us during the refurbishment. I have seen the 'Grenfell Tower Regeneration Newsletter' of July 2014 which contains the following advice under a heading 'Emergency fire arrangement': 'Our longstanding 'stay put' policy stays in force until you are told otherwise. This means that (unless there is a fire in your flat or in the hallway outside your flat) you should stay inside your flat. This is because Grenfell was designed according to rigorous fire safety standards, Also, the new front doors for each flat can withstand a fire for up to 30 minutes, which gives plenty of time for the fire brigade to arrive'. That newsletter would have been in my folder of newsletters.

80. After Helen had entered our flat, Andreia seemed to be in a daze and Helen was panicking. I reminded them of the protocol in place for a fire which required us to stay in the flat. The Tower was designed to contain fires in the individual flat in which it broke out. If the cladding had not been on the Tower, I believe that the fire would have been contained within the flat where it had started.
81. I had also been informed by some of my neighbours, that the LFB had visited the Tower on the weekend before the fire to speak to residents and reiterate to them that there was a stay put policy in place, which was consistent with what I had been told by the fire officer

about previously when the alarm testing took place in my flat. My family and I were not at home that weekend so I only learned of the LFB visit from speaking my neighbours.

82. When Helen, [REDACTED] and Simba came into our flat through our front door, I could see smoke on our landing. It was black smoke and it was quite close to the ceiling at that point you could see through it. This was around about 1:25/1:30 am. Some of the smoke from the landing came into our flat whilst our front door was open to allow Helen and [REDACTED] into the flat. [REDACTED] was crying and I asked her to go into my daughters' bedroom. [REDACTED] and my daughters used to have sleepovers at each others flats and [REDACTED] therefore knew where to go. Andreia and Helen went into the kitchen.
83. I followed Andreia and Helen into the kitchen to speak with Helen a bit more to find out what was going on. I tried to reassure them that everything would be ok. I even went to the extent of saying that there had been fires in the building previously and everything had been fine.
84. I then went into my girls' bedroom as they had been woken up by [REDACTED] by that time. I told them to get dressed and put their trainers on. I didn't tell the girls that there was a fire, I just told them that something was happening and they needed to get ready but [REDACTED] may have told them already that there was a fire in the Tower.
85. I then started to look out of the window to see what was going on and I could see a couple of fire engines, fire fighters and lots of people looking up at the Tower. As we were on the 21st floor, it was hard to see the precise detail of what was going on at ground level. I did not see any hoses at that point. I could see fire fighters running in the direction of the building but I do not know if they came in or not, they were running around at ground level.
86. At this point my instincts just kicked in. I knew there was a real problem and I started to fill the bathtub up with water and I put the big towels, bed sheets and tea towels into the bath to soak up the water. I could see the commotion outside of the Tower and that smoke was coming into the flat through the front door jambs and under the front door. I did not know what the problem was but my instincts were to wet the towels and cover the edges of the doors with towels. This is something which I had learnt at school.

87. There was smoke coming in through the front door and I put wet towels at the bottom of the door and along the sides from top to bottom to cover the edges as the smoke was coming in through all of the edges. I used the hooks on the door to hang the towels and sheets. It was not an air tight door and the smoke was seeping in. The smoke smelled toxic. Anytime I breathed it in, it made me gag.
88. I also ran the shower as the air in the flat was quite dry due to the smoke. I was trying to get some wet particles into the air to make it easier to breathe. However, shortly after, the water to our flat was cut off, there were a few drips but nothing more coming out of the taps. Luckily we had already filled the bath with water. We would later have to use the soaked towels as face masks to try to help us as much as possible from inhaling smoke when we had to exit through the stairwell of the Tower.
89. I could see the Fire Brigade outside of the Tower but could not hear anything happening on our floor. I did not see many more fire engines at ground level but my view was restricted to the view of Latimer Road station and I could not see left or right past the pillars of the Tower. The pillars restricted my view of the flats either side of me, so, if there was a fire in the flats either side of me, I would not have been able to see it.
90. I had opened my front door a few times after Helen and [REDACTED] came into our flat to check the state of the smoke in the hallway. Each time I opened the front door, I could see the smoke was getting thicker and thicker until it was eventually pitch black outside. I do not remember the timings but I may have opened the door 7 or 8 times in total and each time I opened the door, more smoke was coming in so I tried to keep smoke ingress to a minimum by not opening the door too much. The smell of the smoke was toxic. I can only describe it as what I imagined smelt like chemicals. It was something I had never smelt before in my life. There were no alarms going off either in my flat or on the landing. It was deadly silent on the landing.
91. At 2:32 a.m. I opened the door onto the landing hallway and took a video on my mobile telephone of what I encountered. I saw and videoed a wall of dense, pitch black smoke. It surged into the flat through the open door when I opened the door to inspect the state of the landing. There were no fire alarms going off on the landing and no vents sounding. I could not hear anyone coming up from lower in the building. There was no shouting.

Video footage at 2:32 am

92. I took the video as I was approaching the front door of my flat from inside my flat to have a record to show people what it was like inside the Tower. To be brutally honest, it was because I wanted my loved ones to see what the situation in the Tower was like if I did not make it out. I took the video at 2:32 am, just before we had made our first attempt to leave the flat. The footage lasts for 30 seconds. It shows clearly that smoke was seeping into the flat through the door frame. In the first few seconds you can hear my wife and Helen saying in the background, 'Keep the windows open'. You can hear coughing. The children were crying and you can hear Helen saying to her daughter, [REDACTED] 'Why are you crying, why are you crying? You are crying.' We were all under a lot of stress and fear at that time. I understand now that the fire had been burning for over an hour and a half at that point in time.
93. At the time of the video being taken all we knew was that no one had come to rescue us. You can also hear in the background the sound of water running in the shower at this time ie at 2:32 am.
94. The video is exhibited to this witness statement and marked 'MG1'.
95. I had tried to open the door at that time to go to my neighbour's flat but the smoke was just too thick. It was pitch black in the landing. The smoke smelt and tasted chemically infused. I could not see a thing through the smoke. The smoke also triggered the internal smoke alarms in our flat when I opened the door on this occasion. My neighbour at Flat 181, Lugaya was elderly, she is in her early 80s and lived on her own. I wanted to check on her but I could not get to her. I also wanted to check on my direct neighbours, at Flat 182, Faeza, Abdulla, Nahouda, Merdi and Yassin to ensure that they were all fine. I was shocked and frightened by what I saw but I knew that I had to stay calm and collected for the survival of my family and of Helen and [REDACTED]. There was thick black smoke everywhere and from this I knew that things were not getting better and there was only one other way it could go.

First 999 call

96. I called 999 and spoke to the Fire Brigade for the first time at 2:21:04 am from my mobile phone. I ask that the audio of the call be played at the Inquiry hearing.

97. I reported the fire and told the operator that I was in flat 183 on the 21st floor with my 7 months pregnant wife, another adult and three children and that we could not get out. The operator told me that the Fire Brigade were already at the Tower and were dealing with the fire. I emphasised that we could not get out of the flat.
98. The operator told me that 'it's all right, because what we're doing is we're telling our command units that are on the scene and they're going round the flats'.
99. When I again told the operator that my wife was seven months pregnant she said 'Okay, I'm going to tell them that and they'll come and take you out'. After discussing placing towels around the door to stop smoke coming in she said to me 'as soon as I put the phone down to you I'm going to go and tell our command unit that's on the scene and they're going round people at the moment, okay'.
100. I felt relieved that someone was coming for us, as I believed the operator was giving me accurate information. I had no reason to disbelieve what I was being told, and therefore I positioned myself to stand in the hallway of our flat so that I could hear the fire fighters knock on the door. I told my wife and Helen and the girls that fire fighters were coming to rescue us. We were all ready and waiting for them to come in and rescue us.

Calls from outside the building

101. I received several phone calls from other residents, namely, Miguel Alves and Ivan Costa Suarez who both lived on the 13th floor of the Tower. They had managed to get out of the Tower earlier. They called me at various intervals and kept telling me to get out of the Tower. They did not tell me much more than that and I presume this is because they did not want to panic me and my family. I told them I could not leave as the smoke was too thick. I told them that I was waiting for the fire fighters to come up with oxygen masks.
102. They both phoned me a few times and kept asking me the same thing ie had I managed to get out, I told them that we were still inside our flat waiting for fire fighters to come and help us get out. During one of the phone calls from Miguel, he spoke with someone from the emergency services and told them we were still inside the Tower. I could hear the advice he was given by a member of staff from the emergency services, which was to 'hang tight' and that someone will come up for us. Miguel then found a fire fighter or

policeman at the bottom of the Tower and informed him that we were still inside. I could hear their conversation, whilst I remained on the telephone. Miguel told them the floor I was on, my flat number and that my wife was pregnant. The advice from the person responding was that they were still sending people up and we should wait.

103. The person who was having the conversation with Miguel told him that we have to 'expect casualties', or something along those lines. I do not know if the person knew that we were on the other end of the telephone line when he was speaking to Miguel.
104. My wife, Andreia also received telephone calls from worried family members during this time. I do not know who called Andreia or what they told her.

First escape attempt

105. I could see that the smoke was getting worse which made me realise that the situation was not under control and this was not a simple fire as if it was, the smoke would have become lighter. The smoke was getting thicker and thicker and that coupled with the calls that we were all receiving from our family and friends made us realise that this was a serious fire. Helen was speaking with someone outside the Tower and with our neighbour, Nadia who lived directly above us in the Tower in flat 193 on the 22nd floor. I think she was also made aware that the situation was getting worse.
106. I discussed the situation with Andreia and Helen and we all agreed that we needed to try and leave. It felt like we had been waiting for the Fire Brigade for as long as 15 to 20 minutes after the first 999 call and we all felt we had to try and get out. The situation was not easy, the smoke was getting thicker and it was getting more and more difficult to breathe. We decided that we had to leave and I briefed everyone through the process of leaving the Tower. I appointed Helen to lead the group out as there were only three adults in our group, and Andreia was pregnant. I said that Helen was to be followed by [REDACTED], Andreia, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I was to be at the end of the chain so that I could push everyone down the stairs. Everyone had a wet tea towel to cover their mouth and nose and wet bed sheets over their heads covering their bodies. The idea was to try and keep everyone together and push everyone out of the Tower as quickly as possible, using the stairs in the stairwell as the means of escape.

107. We had already discussed instructions but I went through it again with Helen as it was pitch black outside the flat. I confirmed with Helen that she knew where the emergency exit was, and instructed her that she needed to walk out of the flat in a diagonal direction and then push open the door to the stairwell. I instructed her that she needed to walk through the door and grab hold of the handrail. My instructions were 'not to stop and just keep going'. We did not want others in our group to be slowed down by stopping on the stairwell.
108. The first time we tried to leave the flat, Helen opened the front door and smoke immediately started to enter the flat. Helen was completely shocked, and she panicked and closed the door. We could not leave as the smoke was just too thick, it was pitch black and we could not see through it. It was toxic.
109. I took some of the sheets and tea towels back and put them back into the bathtub which was still full of water, so that they would remain wet and would be ready for us when we tried to leave again. There were extra sheets and towels in the bathtub as I had thrown in everything I could find.
110. The first attempt to escape would have taken place at around 2:35 to 2:40 am

Second Escape attempt

111. After approximately 10 minutes, we tried to leave the flat again for a second time. I told everyone that we needed to give it a go. They were all very aggrieved, particularly the children. I lined everyone up in the order as we had agreed earlier and made sure that they all had a wet face cloth over their mouths and a wet bed sheet over their heads.
112. Helen opened the door and we started walking out on to the landing. However, this time Andreia panicked before she even reached the stairwell so we all had to turn around and come back inside our flat. Andreia and the girls were crying desperately.
113. I think Andreia knew that it was not going to be easy and she kept saying 'I can't, I can't'.
114. The second attempt to escape would have been around 2:45 to 2:50 am

Second 999 Call

115. I phoned 999 again and spoke to the Fire Brigade at 2:55:38 am.
116. I told the operator that I was calling from flat 183 and that we could not get out.
117. The operator asked if we had tried to put wet towels over our heads to try and get out. I explained that we had tried that but that we could not get out and that we could not leave our flat at that moment.
118. The operator then asked whether we could block the smoke from coming in. I told her 'I've tried with towels but it's still coming in and the fire is right next door'. I believed that the fire was next door because I could see a bright light.
119. The operator suggested we go to the side of the flat where there is fresh air and open the window. I told her that was where we were and that was what we had done. She asked me again what flat I was in. I told her 183.
120. The operator then said 'Okay, I'll let the firemen know, okay, to come up to you'. I told her there were three kids and three adults and that my wife was heavily pregnant. The operator said 'Okay, I'll let them know. All right. Thank you. Bye'.
121. We had tried to leave the flat twice by this time. I kept going to the windows in the living room and I could see people down on the ground shouting. I could hear a few words here and there, but it wasn't clear because of the distance. I heard people shouting 'Fire', 'Stay where you are', 'Stay put' but you could not hear clearly as there were sirens in the background and you could not tell to whom they were shouting.
122. We could not really see what was going on. The fire was not visible when I looked up and down the outside cladding. All I could see were my neighbours in flat 193, the Chouair family in the flat directly above us hanging fairy lights out of the window to attract attention.
123. If I had been able to see left or right, past the thick outside wall, I believe I would have seen the fire and we would have all left sooner. I could not see what the others outside the Tower could see.

124. We had also been told that help was coming.
125. The fire notices by the lift had informed us that there was a stay put policy in place. I followed the advice and information given to me. I believed that what I was doing was the best way of protecting my family. In my mind I did not expect to see fire in the stairwell as it was made out of concrete. I was therefore not afraid of being trapped by fire on the stairwell going down. However, the smoke was toxic and made it impossible to breathe. All I wanted and was waiting for was the oxygen masks from the fire fighters for my wife and [REDACTED] who are both asthmatic.

Third 999 call

126. I called 999 again at 3:09:52 am.
127. I told the operator we were on floor 21. The operators asked were we still in the flat. I confirmed that we were and that we could not get out.
128. I told her that smoke was now inside the flat and I told her the fire was next door.
129. She then said 'Okay. Well, listen, the advice we're giving now, you need to leave. Make your way down the stairwell.'
130. I told the operator that we could not leave as there was too much smoke. She said we needed to cover ourselves in wet sheets. I said, 'We've done that. We can't, as soon as we open the door the smoke just comes in. It's overpowering.'
131. The operator said, 'I can let the crews know that you're not leaving the flat, but our advice is to try and leave and make your way down the stairs.' I explained that we had tried and that as soon as we got in the smoke we could not breathe. I explained, 'I've got three kids, three adults and one heavily pregnant wife.'
132. The operator said, 'The situation at the moment is there's going to be some time before they get to you and the best advice we can give you is to make another attempt to leave if you can and get into the stairwell and down.'

133. I ask the Inquiry to play the audio of this call, in full. The operator said, 'I'm going to tell the crews that you're still there in the flat and we'll make it a priority to get to you but if you can, if you can just give it one more try to get out, that is the best advice we're giving at the moment, okay.'
134. I wish that the operators had been honest and more knowledgeable about the situation from the first phone call as, had I known that no help was coming, I would have handled the situation differently. I believe that there was a miscommunication between the call centre and the command centre on the ground and this is why we were still being told that help was coming. I appreciate that the operators started to change their advice on my third 999 call but the operator still said she would let the crews know and would make us a priority. At no point did she say, no help was coming and we had no choice but to try and get out ourselves. If I knew that no help was coming, I would not have stayed in the burning Tower with my family a minute longer.
135. If I was in the Tower as a single person, I would have dealt with the situation differently but I was not on my own. I was with my pregnant wife, my two children, plus Helen and [REDACTED]. To add to this, Andreia and [REDACTED] are both asthmatic. I was therefore waiting for fire fighters to come up to us with extra breathing apparatus. The information given to me by the 999 operator, by those on the ground, was misleading. I believed that help was coming right to the very point the fire entered my flat, as I had no reason to believe that the information from the emergency services would ever be misleading or inaccurate.
136. All of the windows in the flat were open at this point and I could now see that the fire was getting closer. I could see a red and yellow colour appearing by my bedroom window, so I decided to go into the bedroom to close the window. I then came back to the hallway and stood in the same spot by the door waiting for the fire fighter rescuers to arrive.
137. I then looked over to my right, towards the living room/kitchen, the girls and Andreia and Helen, to make sure that they were all ready to leave as I believed that the fire fighters would be here any minute.
138. I also told Andreia that when we left the flat this time, we just needed to go. We could not keep coming back into the flat as each time we opened the door, smoke was coming into the flat to the point where the ceiling was now dark and full of smoke. The girls were

sitting on the floor of the living room to breathe as the smoke had not yet reached the ground.

Fourth 999 call

139. I phoned the Fire Brigade again at 3:25:45 am.
140. It had been over 15 minutes since my last call to the Fire Brigade, and even though we were now a 'priority' I had not heard or seen any signs of fire fighters getting to our flat to rescue the six of us and my unborn son.
141. I ask the Inquiry to play the entirety of the audio of the fourth call in public. It is the only way that the Inquiry and the public will truly understand the enormous difficulties and life threatening challenges faced by people who made it on to the stairwell at Grenfell Tower late into the fire as they attempted to get out. There is no way in which I can convey in words in a statement the abject fear and torment faced by those who got on to the stairwell at around 3:30 am. This is contemporaneous audio evidence, but it should be played with a clear warning. I strongly wish that it is played so that everyone can hear and understand our struggle for life on that stairwell.
142. As I first talked to the lady operator from the Fire Brigade, everyone else was in the living room/ kitchen area and ready to leave. I was stood in the hallway on the phone waiting to hear a knock on the door from the fire fighters. I again explained where we were and how many of us were in the flat and that my wife was pregnant. I said we had tried to get out but we could not get out because of the smoke.
143. The operator recognised us as previous callers and said, 'I know you've phoned a few times, I think I've spoken to you before. Our command unit is down there and we're going to put us – try and get you as a priority, okay, because you've tried to get out three times.' In fact we had made two attempts to get out.
144. At this point, I turned back to look inside my bedroom, whilst I continued to speak to the Fire Brigade operator. I saw that the window frame of the bedroom was on fire as were the curtains and the Moses basket which we had prepared in readiness for the birth of our son. I looked at the flames closely and I could see that the window was still closed and that the glass had not cracked. The fire had come in from outside, into our flat. The fire

had come through the window frame on the left-hand side of the window. It quickly spread across the wall and on to the ceiling.

145. I had my suit hanging on the front of my bedroom door. I grabbed my suit and threw it onto the bedroom floor. I did this because I needed to close the door to stop the fire from spreading. As I closed the door, I could see that the fire had spread from the wall to the ceiling, on the window side of the bedroom. It was crawling across the ceiling, and it was very quick. I would say that it was already half way across the ceiling when I closed the door. It was a surreal moment, like something you see in films. The flames were bright, yellow and red. It was already very hot in the flat and I do not remember the temperature changing when the fire broke into our flat.
146. My bedroom is located directly opposite the door to the entrance of the flat. I was lucky enough to be standing by the bedroom door as I was waiting in the hallway so that I could hear the fire fighters when they came to the door.
147. In total shock I shouted, 'Oh shit, the fire's here, the fire's here, the fire is here in the house.'
148. The Fire Brigade operator said, 'Right, so if the fire is in the house you need to get out of the house, don't stay in the house.'

Third escape attempt

149. As soon as I pulled my bedroom door shut, I turned to my right and shouted to Andreia, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Helen and [REDACTED] that the fire was now in the flat and that we needed to go. In my mind it was now or never. Everyone already had the tea towels ready, but I told them to put them over their faces and to hold hands. I put the extra sheets over them. We all lined up in the same order we had on the previous attempts. I told them all we had to go. I said to them all, 'All hold hands girls. Hold hands girls. Everybody hold hands.'
150. Helen opened the door. I said to them 'Right, let's go girls. We have to go. Go! Go! Go! Go! Hold hands, go straight. Hold hands! Go straight to the stairs. Get to the stairs now! Go!'

151. Thankfully everyone walked out and headed straight to the exit of the stairwell towards the stairs. I had kept my mobile telephone in my hand, and I was still on the 999 call to the Fire Brigade when we evacuated the flat on floor 21 and moved to the stairwell in the Tower. The 999 call, I learned later, recorded the moment of our escape.
152. I told the girls to, 'Keep going. Keep going. Keep going down the stairs'.
153. I expected everyone to be holding hands and walking one behind the other, in a sort of chain but I do not know if they were in a chain, as I could not see a thing. I directed everyone from the back to head diagonally out of the front door so that they would hit the door to the stairwell. The door to the stairwell is a light door which swings back and forth. I had instructed them to all immediately grab hold of the hand rail and to not let go of the hand rail until they had reached the bottom of the stairs. I had given these instructions to everyone and everyone had instructions just to keep going and not to wait for anyone else.
154. In the back of my mind, I knew the fire was already in the flat but I tried to make a grab for my keys which were in a bowl in the hallway just in case we were forced to turn back again. However, I knew deep inside me that we could not go back into the flat as the flat was now on fire. However, I tried grabbing for the keys anyway and tipped the bowl slightly. I could not find my keys and continued to walk out of the flat trying not to lose the others. There was no turning back now, as I felt the door close behind me and shut.
155. I was a few seconds behind the others, as a result of grabbing for my keys. When I came out on to our landing, it was pitch black. I could not see a thing. The smoke was awful. I was struggling to breathe. I kept gagging and felt like I needed to throw up every time I tried to breathe; it was suffocating. The smell of the smoke was unnatural and toxic, it smelt of burning chemicals. It was very hot, but I had a cold wet towel over my head and wrapped around my body and a tea towel covering my mouth. The tea towel helped initially but the soot, smog and tar was getting through the tea towel making it difficult to breathe through it.
156. As I got to the stairwell door, the swing shut door was open and I walked through the door. I had presumed that the door was closed to begin with, but I did not know what the situation was as I was the last one in my group to walk through the door.

157. The stairwell was quiet, there was no noise and it was very hot. I would describe it as like the heat that comes out of an oven and blasts you in the face. It was a dry and intense heat and the hand rail was hot to the touch, but not hot enough to burn me. The smoke was thick, and I could not see where I was going or where I was stepping until I got to the 6th or 7th floor, only on these floors was I able to see again. Prior to this it was pure darkness, as the stairwell was completely filled with smoke. I recall that on the journey down from our floor that I was shouting and encouraging the girls, pushing them to keep going down. I felt that if we stopped then we would not get out alive.
158. The struggle to come down the stairs was immense. It is not easy in words to describe the physical and emotional stress and burden of trying to save your own life and the instinct to drive your children and family on so that you will all survive an inferno. To understand this, from a human and survivor perspective, as I have already said, I ask the Inquiry to play publicly the audio recording of my 999 call which graphically records the intensity of the human effort made by me and my family to escape the Grenfell Tower fire. The audio is the real time, raw evidence of what those of us who entered the smoke filled stairwell had to endure and suffer to try and survive. Tragically many did not survive and we as a family lost our unborn son as a result of what happened.
159. The written transcript of the 999 recording is of course available to the Inquiry but it does not even remotely convey to the Inquiry, and certainly not to those who are responsible for this tragedy, by mere words on paper, the stress, fear and horror which I was under in a life and death struggle to save my family.
160. The enormity of the physical barriers to escape was immediately apparent to me. I could not see a thing. I was walking down a narrow stairwell, in pitch dark, with young children and a pregnant wife. When you couple that with an inability to properly breathe, in other words to get sufficient oxygen to properly drive muscles along, whilst at the same time deeply breathing in toxins which were making me gag and choke, the feeling cannot be conveyed via the words of a witness statement. The audio recording of the 33 minute call to 999 which captured this struggle, gives a better understanding to the Inquiry and the public following it.
161. The escape was a near impossible task for an able bodied man, and it was only the thoughts of and my love for my wife and children that drove me on. I needed us all to

survive. By all, I meant my family (including my unborn child) plus Helen and her young daughter.

162. I was desperate for fresh air and tried to take air in but each time I did, it made me choke and cough, and it slowed me down. I was coughing and retching.
163. There were a number of dead bodies on the stairwell who I only realised were there as we started going down the stairs. The bodies on the stairwell started from fairly high up the Tower. I know they were bodies as I know what a body feels like when you step on it. I play football regularly and I have stepped on fallen people before. I think I started to come across bodies on the stairwell from the 20th floor. We were stepping and stumbling over the bodies as we could not see a thing. I have no idea who those people were. I could not see their faces. I could not see a thing. They were clearly my friends and my neighbours. I just do not know who they were as it was pitch black. I cannot be sure how many bodies were on the stairwell, and they may not all have been dead. I recall one collapsed person grabbed my calf, but there was nothing I could do for him or her as I had three children in front of me. It was terrible not being able to help. I knew my girls would be distraught and very frightened, so I kept on driving them to carry on.
164. As well as the physical stress and bodily exertion, the mental and emotional challenge in the stairwell was enormous. It was hard to control the fear. I did not know if we were going to make it. I totally feared that I was going to lose my whole family. All my worst nightmares were running through my mind on those stairs. I do not know if it was the lack of oxygen or the toxins, but I lost some of my senses along with all concept of time. It was as if time slowed down and at times it stood still. I kept screaming to the children, 'Come on, girls. Come on girls'. I felt that if I stopped encouraging them and pushing them to continue, then they would simply halt and that we would all die on that stairwell. By this time I had also lost the tea towel covering my face at some point on the way down, because the intense heat had caused it to dry out and it was not helping me to block out the smoke and fumes.
165. I just kept shouting encouragement at the others to keep going and not to stop. I was doing this all the way down the stairs, as I needed to encourage and convince them that it was possible to survive this hell. We were going slowly, as we could not see where we were placing our feet and we were being careful especially as we knew that there were bodies underfoot on that stairs.

166. It is impossible to know where things happened. As there was no light, and there were no signs we could see. I could not tell what floor we were on. As we were coming down the stairs I heard my daughter [REDACTED] say to me, 'Daddy I can't go on anymore, I can't.' When I heard her voice, I released that she was behind me. I could not see anything. I could only hear her. I do not know how she ended up behind me, as I had never let go of the hand rail. I shouted out to her to, 'Follow my voice.' I told them all to, 'Keep going.' I told my daughter that I was right there and I kept telling her to follow my voice. I recall saying at one point that, 'It's better down here' to try and give the girls the strength and motivation to keep moving. It was not better where I was, it was still full of thick and black smoke. However, neither [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] who was with her said anything.
167. I kept on encouraging the girls to crawl down if they had to, and to push on. I told them to follow my voice. I recall crying out loud in desperation. I was broken and crying. I thought I had lost my wife and my daughters. I was distraught and calling out for my wife and my daughters. I could not face the thought of leaving them. I called out to God saying, "Oh please, please God don't take my girls. Please, please take me. Why, why me? Why did you take them?" I was uncontrollably crying. I was waiting for a miracle. I did not know where anyone was. I was waiting for the fire fighters to find them all.
168. I knew at that point that they had both passed out. I was struggling myself to breath and I had no energy left. I knew the girls were in a life or death struggle and were losing it. I ran up one flight of stairs to try and get to them but I could not see anything as it was pitch black. I could not face the thought of leaving them behind to what would have been certain death but I could not see where the girls had fallen.
169. I think that the children had passed out unconscious, overcome by the smoke and toxins, about just after half-way down, maybe on the 8th to 10th floors, because I recall from the 8th floor down there was a bit more visibility. I kept on shouting and encouraging the girls.
170. I was calling out to them but could not hear any responses. I was totally beside myself with fear and hurt. Then I turned around and looked down the stairwell and saw a light down below, in the distance.
171. I raced down maybe two flights of stairs and saw a fire fighter. He looked exhausted. I told the fire fighter that the girls were on the stairs higher up, and we started walking back

- up the stairs to try and find them. He had a torch and I thought we could find them with the light. Then another fire fighter grabbed me from behind and pulled me back. He told me I could not go up and that I needed to go down. I complained that there were only two fire fighters, and that we needed more fire fighters to help find my family.
172. The two fire fighters went up and wonderfully located the girls. I cannot remember how long it took, but to me it seemed like it was a long time. I do not know how long that was precisely. I was panicked, but it was probably a few minutes even though it seemed like a life time. In my head I was thinking it was taking the fire fighters a long time to find them, what is the matter? I also had not seen my wife. I started to panic as I did not know if she and [REDACTED], who was with her, had collapsed on the stairs. I was desperate, confused and starved of energy and oxygen.
173. Then the fire fighters went past me carrying [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in their arms and I also made my way down. I recall telling them that there was someone else upstairs, including my pregnant wife.
174. I remember stopping at the bottom of the stairwell on the mezzanine floor as I did not know what had happened to Andreia and [REDACTED]. I thought they were still in the building. I started to think that maybe the bodies I had stepped over were Andreia and [REDACTED]. At this point, there was water gushing down the stairs from the 4th floor. I saw a fire fighter and told him that there was somebody upstairs who was alive as a person had grabbed my calf. A few minutes later the fire fighter came down with another man.
175. I was just waiting and hoping to see Andreia and [REDACTED] when a female who I thought was a fire fighter, though I cannot be sure, escorted me out. She was wearing a white shirt, so it may have been a police officer.
176. I was helped over the broken glass in the foyer towards the exit on the right, where I was met by riot police with shields who escorted me safely away from the Tower. They used their riot shields to guard me from the debris falling from Grenfell Tower.
177. I had left flat 183 on the 21st floor very shortly after starting my fourth call to the Fire Brigade at 3:25 am. I have seen a CCTV provided by the Metropolitan Police with a still image of me exiting the Tower in the lobby, which is timed on the image as at 3:55 am. If

that exit time is correct it had taken me 30 minutes to come down the stairs from the 21st floor to get out of the Tower.

178. The CCTV images I have seen of the rest of my family exiting the Tower show that my wife, Andreia, got out at 3:37 am; my daughter [REDACTED] also got out at 3:37 am; and my daughter [REDACTED] got out at 3:51 am. I was the last person from our family to exit the Tower.

Outside the Tower

179. I saw that there was melted plastic all over the floor, it looked and moved like lava. It was sticky underfoot. I was escorted towards Latimer Road station. I tried to make my way back to the Tower as I wanted to find Andreia and [REDACTED], at which point two policemen came and grabbed either side of me and I said, 'I cannot go, I am looking for my wife and daughter and my wife is pregnant.' Then one of the officers said, 'I am not promising you anything but there is a pregnant lady there.' The other officer said, 'Is your daughter called [REDACTED]?' I said yes she was, and he took me to them. I felt so relieved when I saw them.

180. Andreia and [REDACTED] were sitting on the side of the road. They were drinking water and [REDACTED] did not say a word. [REDACTED] was to the left of me with a couple of paramedics, she was unconscious and two of the paramedics were treating her. Andreia was sitting down in front of me and I was kneeling in front of her, I told her not to worry and that she was out, I told her not to look toward [REDACTED] as I did not want to distress Andreia any further. At this point I did not know where Helen or [REDACTED] were. I did not see either of them that evening.

181. When I looked up at the Tower, this was the first time that I had seen the extent of the fire and can only describe it as a towering inferno. The fire was all around the Tower and this is when I remember saying, 'How the fuck is that being contained', as I remembered being told earlier in the evening that the fire was being contained. I do not remember who told me this. It was horrible to look at and I only looked at it in that moment, I did not look at it again. I could see my flat engulfed in flames and I felt relieved and so thankful that we had managed to make it out, I was thankful but worried about [REDACTED] as she was unconscious and we were in an ambulance on route to hospital shortly after.

182. I found out after the fire that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had both been holding the dogs with one hand and the bed sheets with their other hand. They were therefore not holding the hand rail as we came down the stairs. They had simply been sliding their shoulders along the wall which is how I managed to go past them in the stairwell. The girls dropped the two dogs, Lili and Simba, when they collapsed overcome by the smoke. We discovered later that both dogs ran back up to the 21st floor as that was the location of their homes (Helen's flat and my flat). Both dogs were killed in the fire.
183. I was not outside the Tower for very long. We were all taken to the Kings College Hospital by ambulance shortly after we came out of the Tower. Whilst we were sitting down outside the Tower, the paramedics issued us all with numbers. [REDACTED] was 1, [REDACTED] and Andreia were 3. I cannot remember what number I was. I do not know what the numbers meant.
184. They wanted to separate us at that moment by putting us in different ambulances. I did not know which hospitals they would be taking us to. [REDACTED] was on a stretcher and I was going to go with [REDACTED] Andreia was with [REDACTED] and as I started to board the ambulance, they put Andreia and [REDACTED] in with us. We did not know where we were being taken and when we arrived, we realised that we were at Kings College Hospital on the other side of London.

Injuries suffered

185. I had suffered from smoke inhalation and I was in hospital for 6 days.
186. Andreia, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were all placed into induced comas due to smoke inhalation and cyanide poisoning. They were classed as in a 'critical' condition.
187. Andreia was treated for smoke inhalation. She was discharged after 15 days. At one point she had been given a 50-50 chance of survival and I was told that the next 48 hours were going to be critical. In that time, our baby son had suffered from cyanide poisoning in the womb. Doctors said that his heart had stopped beating and it was not good for my wife to keep our dead son in her womb. Whilst my wife was in the coma, she had a caesarean section and Logan, our son, was still born at 7 months into her pregnancy. I had to tell Andreia, when she woke up, that we had lost our baby due to cyanide poisoning. Logan is the youngest victim of the Grenfell Tower fire.

188. [REDACTED] also suffered from smoke inhalation and cyanide poisoning. She was discharged after approximately 10 days.
189. [REDACTED] was treated for smoke inhalation and cyanide poisoning and she was discharged after 3 ½ weeks.

Medical issues

190. I am dealing with my on-going psychological injuries, in my own way.
191. My daughters, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are case studies for Kings College Hospital due to the severity of the cyanide poisoning they suffered. They now have checkups at the hospital every 3 months and we still do not know what the long term position is for them in relation to the poisoning, as we were told that the level of poison they consumed, yet still survived, is medically unprecedented in children.
192. [REDACTED] is using her brown inhaler pump for her asthma, which has a higher dose of steroids than before. Her test results show her lung capacity is not great, hence she is using the pump more than normal. She is also a lot more wheezier than before.
193. [REDACTED] found it difficult to speak after the fire and her voice was croaky for several months due to the throat injuries. The intense heat and smoke had caused problems with her speech.
194. Both the girls and Andreia continue to suffer from nightmares.
195. Andreia is also suffering from psychological injuries and is dealing with them in her own way.
196. We both continue to suffer with sleeping problems. I in particular was only sleeping a couple of hours each night as I could not get the images of the building and our neighbours out of my head. I kept thinking of my son and how I had let down him and my family.

The fire fighters and those in authority

197. I think the fire fighters did what they could in the circumstances. They really tried to help everybody as much as they could but they did not have the right equipment, particularly they did not have sufficient extended duration breathing apparatus or any breathing apparatus for the residents, which made it difficult for the fire fighters to do their jobs and rescue people.
198. I have nothing but praise for the ordinary fire fighters of the London Fire Brigade who rushed in to that Tower and risked their lives to save people like us. Two of them saved my daughter's life and the life of Helen's daughter. Words cannot express my gratitude to them.
199. However, those in charge are a different issue for me. Someone in charge was clearly telling the Fire Brigade operators to tell us that fire fighters were coming to rescue us. Alternatively, the operators were doing this of their own volition. The fact is that no-one came or was coming to save us on floor 21. That important fact was not communicated to those taking the calls and, more importantly, it was not communicated to us when we were in our flat on our own. Why could they have not rung me back and said to me that we were on our own and no-one can get to us? We were given false information and false hope of rescue. That delayed us in leaving the Tower.
200. Had I collapsed on the stairwell and not been able to get to the fire fighters a bit below me to tell them that the girls had collapsed a few floors above, then two more children would have died in Grenfell Tower. Our escape, so far up the Tower, was probably on the limits of what a human body can take and survive. The delay in telling us to evacuate nearly killed us, and it did kill my baby son. I have no doubt of that.
201. Again, I have nothing but admiration and respect for the bravery of the fire fighters who ran into that inferno to help us. Only we, the survivors, and they, the rescuers, truly know how bad it was inside Grenfell Tower that night and how much all our lives were in the balance.

Housing

202. I was discharged from Kings College Hospital six days after the fire. The rest of my family were still in the hospital.
203. RBKC wanted to place me in a hotel which was a considerable distance from the hospital. This was at the point when my wife and daughters were all in induced comas and in a critical condition.
204. I told RBKC that this was not happening and that I wanted to be somewhere closer. RBKC failed to help me with housing. It was disgusting that they just left me and failed me at my time of need. The staff at the hospital were brilliant and on the first night after I was discharged they gave me a key for a flat inside the hospital which was on the same floor as the ward the girls were in. Kings College Hospital then connected me to the McDonald's charity which kindly arranged for me to stay in a flat near the hospital, so I could be close to my wife and children. I stayed there until [REDACTED] was discharged.
205. I told RBKC that I had made my own arrangements as they could not help accommodate me. They then told me that they would wait for all of us to be discharged to arrange our accommodation.
206. I wanted RBKC to make the arrangements beforehand so that we would all have somewhere to go when everyone was discharged but they told me that they could not do this 'due to regulations'. I did not have the will or the energy to argue. I told them to do what ever they needed to do.
207. Everyone was discharged at different times. [REDACTED] was the first to be discharged after me and I had arranged for her to stay with my mum. Andreia was discharged shortly afterwards and she stayed with me and we would take it in turns to stay the night in hospital with [REDACTED]
208. When [REDACTED] woke up from her coma, she pulled out all of the tubes feeding her medication and she started hallucinating as she had not been weaned off her drugs in the normal, medical way. The medical team made her sleep on the floor as they were worried that she would fall out of the bed.

209. She slowly got better and was moved onto another ward and was getting her senses back. She was given a discharge date for two days at this time.
210. I phoned RBKC as soon as I was aware that there was a discharge date for the last member of my family. On the date that [REDACTED] was discharged, we had a hotel booked and we took a taxi straight to the hotel which was arranged by RBKC. The hotel was on Hogarth Road, Earls Court.
211. We were all living in the hotel for six months.
212. It was quite difficult to arrange for the girls to go to school from Earls Court so we had to arrange taxis through RBKC and take the girls to school, one-by-one.
213. There were lots of things which needed to be arranged and sorted out whilst the girls were at school, so we would ask the taxi driver to drop us off with the girls. Then we would go to the "Westway" to try and sort out issues which have arisen as a result of the fire such as housing, provisions, clothing and so on.

Initial support

214. I was in hospital, as were my wife and daughters, in the days following the fire and we therefore did not need any immediate assistance from RBKC or anyone else.
215. However, RBKC only contacted me after a friend/neighbour contacted them and informed them that I and my family were in hospital.
216. My friend had initially asked me if I had received a call from RBKC and when I told him that I had not, he was upset and contacted RBKC and informed them that we were all in hospital. RBKC apologised to him and told him that they would contact me.
217. I then received a call from RBKC (who had my contact details from before the fire) and they came to the hospital and gave me £500, which I had to sign for.
218. I doubt that RBKC would have contacted me if it was not for my friend contacting them and complaining.

219. The help and assistance from RBKC was very much along the lines of us having to go to them, rather than them reaching out to us to help. They were not proactive at all.
220. There were people in hospital, including families who had loved ones and children in hospital in critical conditions, who needed RBKC to go to them at the hospital rather than be forced to go all the way to the 'Westway'. They expected all the people to go them.
221. This was not suitable for all of us, particular those with critically ill family members who were still receiving life saving medical treatment. The council had enough money to throw resources at this disaster, it was like they were too ill organised or too uncaring to put themselves in our shoes and proactively help us.
222. There were several different organisations at the Westway, including RBKC, the TMO, charities, the Royal Mail, and Home Office. There were several different desks set up by these organisations and you had to go from one desk to another.
223. It really would have been helpful if we could have just sat down with one person who took all our information and took care of all of the interaction and issues with the other organisations and government bodies. However, this was not the case.
224. We were allocated with a key worker who was really nice but the key workers kept on changing. We went through 3 key workers. We started with Phoebe who was lovely and pro-active and got things done, but she had been drafted from outside as she worked elsewhere. We were then allocated Julie, and she was really nice too but she left after about a month. The key workers changed constantly and there was no consistency. It was unsettling at such a difficult time for us.
225. The only consistency we have had is with our Family Liaison Officers ('FLO'). They have been great.
226. It was very difficult in our situation as we had to keep going over and over the same things with different people, repeating our story and repeating our problems.
227. I believe all of these things could have been managed better, and more centrally.

228. It seems as though some of the residents of the Tower are in better positions than others, because of the people they have sought help from. There is no equality in the way in which the residents have been helped or supported after the fire.
229. For example, they gave £5000 to families. I raised the question how this was fair on everyone, as I was a family of four but a family of one would also be given the same amount of £5000 for just themselves? They would obviously be able to make that money go a lot further, than I would for my family of four.
230. I questioned RBKC and how they had calculated the allocation of resources to families, and their response was it was just a figure they had come up with. Clearly no-one had thought it through.
231. It seems as though the necessary thinking, planning and co-ordination was just not there. I understand that this may have been an unprecedented incident, but disasters are predictable and should be planned for. I hope it never happens again. But I do feel things could have been handled far better by RBKC, and the government must learn lessons for disaster relief organisation. The victims and survivors do not need to be worrying about these things when they have survived the trauma of a disaster, dealing with loved ones critically ill in hospital and mourning the deaths of children, relatives or friends.
232. For example, I was initially told by RBKC that they would reimburse us for the taxi receipts, for example, to and from the hospital and hotel to the Westway etc, which I sent to them in September or October 2017. I am yet to receive my refund.
233. As soon as my insurance provided me with a courtesy car, I stopped taking taxis to save RBKC money.
234. My daughters were understandably not happy living in a hotel. Andreia and I thought that we were making it work as best as we could but the girls did not want to spend Christmas or New Year in a hotel. They had suffered too much trauma, and not having stability in a home and roof over their heads was affecting them. We had seen our new, permanent home in November 2017 and thought that moving to [REDACTED] would be a relatively straight forward process, but it was not.

235. RBKC kept pushing us to move into temporary accommodation but what we did not want was to keep moving from one temporary accommodation to another. The girls needed stability, as their lives had been turned upside down in a single night. It was difficult to settle but we agreed to move into another temporary accommodation from December 2017 to March 2018, on the basis that RBKC would make arrangements for us to move into our permanent accommodation by early February 2018.
236. The temporary accommodation was only meant to be for three months. When we agreed to move out of the hotel into temporary accommodation, RBKC informed us that there were no temporary properties available. I am therefore still unsure why they told us that we needed to leave the hotel, when there was nowhere else for us to go.
237. It was Andreia who found our temporary accommodation. I was worried leaving this with RBKC and wanted the girls to be out of the hotel before Christmas. I asked Andreia to go to estate agents in Ladbrooke Grove and she managed to arrange a viewing first thing in the morning for a furnished property available on a short term let.
238. She sent me pictures after the viewing and we both agreed it was suitable. We obtained a price from the agent and sent the details to RBKC and told them to make the necessary arrangements.
239. It then took RBKC nearly a week to sort this out as they could not find the right people to sign the papers, and process the paperwork and deposit payment to the landlord.
240. This occurred at the time of the opening of the Inquiry. I was at the hearing and I spoke to my wife on the phone and told her to tell RBKC that we wanted the keys by 4:00 pm. They managed to make this work but only because we had given them a deadline to work towards. We had to push and push them all the time.
241. We moved out of the hotel on 11 December 2017 and went into our temporary accommodation at [REDACTED] W10 [REDACTED]. We did not go back to the hotel after this date, except to collect our belongings.
242. Our car was broken into on two occasions whilst parked on [REDACTED] and the girls' Christmas presents from their grandfather were stolen, along with [REDACTED] mobile phone. It was all that we needed at this time.

243. Our move in date for our permanent home went from the beginning of February 2018 to the end of February 2018. Then it was then pushed back to the beginning of March 2018. Our temporary accommodation tenancy term was due to end at the end of February 2018. RBKC had to renew the temporary accommodation for another month to the end of March 2018 in order to overlap with our permanent accommodation becoming available.
244. Our move to [REDACTED] was again pushed back and the council had to again renew our temporary accommodation to the end of April 2018.
245. We were not happy with the delays in getting the keys for [REDACTED] as it was causing us a lot of stress. The girls were distressed and kept asking why we had not moved in yet. We really did not have answers.
246. We had emails going back and forth between us and RBKC. Andreia was extremely upset. She is presently pregnant, again, so this was the last thing that she needs to be worrying about. It just felt as though RBKC did not understand our situation. It was always excuse after excuse. It caused us a lot of stress anxiety and caused my wife to have a breakdown. I was left to pick up the pieces and ensure that she was okay. Our housing Officer (Amy) was very worried and also tried to console my wife.
247. They did not listen to us with regards to certain things we wanted them to deal with. We just felt like we were not being listened to which was not very nice and was pretty much how RBKC and the TMO had treated us before the fire had started.

The months following the fire

248. It has been really difficult to manage everything after the fire.
249. As parents we have to move forward and naturally we worry about our children. After losing L[ogan], as difficult as this was for us, we have had to be strong for [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
250. It was difficult for them both, not having a permanent home. They had no stability in their lives, and when we told them things were moving forward and that a stable home was coming we kept getting knocked back by RBKC letting us down.

251. Just being here in our permanent home has made a difference as we can now start making it our home.
252. The girls can call it their home and they have somewhere where they can start making new, positive and happy memories. A new baby is on the way, and that will bring back some joy into our lives.
253. It has not been made easy by RBKC, though, as there is far too much red tape and too many hoops and hurdles which we have had to go through to get anything done. Also, as I said previously, the results also vary depending on who you go through.
254. There is no uniform policy which is surprising for a council.
255. For example, our replacement passports cost £200. We gave the costs to RBKC and they told us that this will need to go through our insurance, whereas other residents had their replacement passports paid for by RBKC immediately. There is no consistency. I raised this with my key worker and the issue has now been resolved, the RBKC eventually reimbursed us but it was not easy.
256. It just seems as though everyone is getting different responses and there just does not seem to be any equality or fairness in the process.
257. We have had to approach RBKC for information and guidance on what they can and can not do for us, rather than them informing all residents what they are and are not entitled to. It is a bit of guess work. Most of the information comes from what other residents say they have received by way of help.
258. RBKC never really communicated to us the extent of the help which was available to us, particularly at the outset, and a lot of the stuff which we came to know was from other residents in the Tower. That should not be the way to communicate with victims of a disaster.
259. There was no real co-ordination within the council.

260. The FLO's have been great and I have nothing negative to say about them. They probably provided us with the most information but they are from the police, so their help is limited to what they can tell us.
261. Our housing officer is great, and I have no complaints to make there.
262. Essentially, it is not the people on the ground that are the problem, it is the managers and the decision makers that are causing the problems, making obstacles and who just do not see our predicament. There is a lack of heart, and it is like they do not care.
263. It appeared that there was a lot of red tape which delayed a lot of things and prevented us from putting things behind us and moving forward with our lives.
264. It is a full time job trying to arrange everything and I am lucky that my employers have been very, very accommodating. If it was not for my employers being as supportive as they have been I would not have been able to cope at all and our family would have been lost at sea with the enormous task of trying to rebuild our home and our lives.

Conclusion

265. I would like the Inquiry to deliver justice for the residents of Grenfell Tower and the families of those who, like me, lost their love ones.
266. It is not a case of blaming somebody or some organisation; it is a case of finding out what happened and why it was allowed to happen. If that means a person or organisation is blamed, so be it, but what is critical is that things must change and we must do everything, no matter what the cost, to ensure this cannot happen again. On that stairwell, that night, money and cost were not relevant. Families and, in particular, children's lives were being lost. I hope the Inquiry forces the government to put human life at the top of the list, as the long term costs of multiple injuries and death is beyond calculation.
267. In particular, I want the Inquiry to investigate how RBKC and the TMO failed all of the residents both prior to the fire and after the fire. Their responses and treatment of us were inadequate and contemptuous. I understand that this may not be done as part of this Inquiry but I think it is still just as important that those in power look at how they treat people living in social housing and, in particular, in large tower blocks.

268. The fire has had a huge impact on my family and on me. None of us are ever going to be the same again. Our lives changed in the early hours of the morning of 14 June 2017. We are trying our best to get back to normal but we know we will never get back to our normal lives, as the fire has now defined our lives since 14 June 2017. My children suffered an event of such magnitude and disaster, that its impact on them will probably scar them for the rest of their lives. I fear, deeply, for the long term damage to their health and of all of us who inhaled the smoke in that Tower, that morning.
269. This event has had a huge impact on my relationship with Andreia, but thankfully we have been able to get over the bad months. It has also affected our social life, as Andreia is now afraid of heights and we are unable to visit close friends who live in other tower blocks or high rise buildings. We used to enjoy going to nice restaurants in the City, such as the Sky Garden which is a roof top restaurant but these things are no longer an option for us. I have found that we are all checking the fire exits, things like that, when going into new buildings or a new place. Andreia gets very claustrophobic and needs to know how to get out of a place.
270. The psychological affects are on-going, as my daughters remember tripping over dead and unconscious people as they were coming down the stairs. Thankfully, because it was so dark, they could not see who they were tripping over but they do still remember this. I think this is something that will not leave them for some time. We do try and speak to each other about the disaster, as a family. We do not try and hide anything.
271. We lost our son, Logan, who died in hospital. We had to bury him shortly after. We had been preparing for a birth, not for a funeral. Visiting our precious, baby boy at a cemetery is a continuous reminder of what has happened to our family and this will be the lasting reminder for the rest of our lives.
272. As a family we have constant ups and downs. There are good days and there are bad days. Luckily, we have been there for each other and supporting one another through those bad days.
273. This Inquiry is part of the process of us trying to make sense of the tragedy that has been inflicted on our lives. It is really important to us.

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, save for redactions indicated in the text, and those applied by the Inquiry.

Signed:  _____

Marcio Gomes

Dated: 12.9.18