

**GRENFELL TOWER
PUBLIC INQUIRY**

**Witness Statement of
NICKOLAS LAYTON
(Local Authority Liaison Officer for RBKC)**

I, NICKOLAS LAYTON, WILL SAY:

1. I make this Witness Statement further to receipt of the Rule 9 letter from the Public Inquiry dated 12 July 2018 and to provide assistance to the Public Inquiry.
2. The matters contained in this statement are either known to me or are ones which I believe (in which case I have specifically said so) or are derived from records including computer records maintained by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea ('the Borough' or 'RBKC'), and to which I have access and with which I am familiar and which I believe to be accurate.
3. I would firstly like to offer my condolences to the bereaved, survivors and families of residents of Grenfell Tower. I also express thanks to the emergency services personnel who dealt with the fire that night. I appreciate how exhausting it must have been and how the impact continues to be felt by so many.
4. I served in the British Army for 22 years before joining the Borough in October 1995. I was initially employed on a part-time basis, but became full time by December 1995.
 - 4.1 I was initially employed as a Hall Keeper. In this role I was responsible for managing health and safety for events within RBKC halls lettings. In June 1996 I became Building Officer, responsible for the day to day running of the Town Hall building and some contracts such as cleaning and security. I held that post until June 2011 when I became Customer Services Officer/Security Officer. This

involved me working within the customer service centre at Kensington Town Hall, and I could be assigned to other buildings if required.

- 4.2 In 2013, Amey plc took over the Facilities Contract within the Borough and consequently I am now employed full time by Amey plc and to whom I now report. My current role is as a Security Officer. Since I started in this role I have had responsibility for security within RBKC Town Hall. I deal with any incidents within the Customer Service Centre, and also within the Town Hall itself if needed ie anywhere within the building. I also deal with the security side of things such as CCTV access control systems, customer service and often dealing with the more difficult customers.

5. In addition to my employment with Amey, I also work directly for the Borough as an On-Call Borough Duty Officer ('Duty Officer').

- 5.1 This Duty Officer position is an on-call position in which I work one week in four. During the week I am working in this position I am on call 24 hours a day. I have held this position for the past 15 years.

- 5.2 As a Duty Officer, I deal with incidents which come up out of hours and in which the Borough is required to attend. For example: Road Traffic Accidents, fly tipping, potholes and incidents involving the emergency services. If we get a report of an incident, we are required to go and investigate and see if we can offer any assistance or resolve the issue.

6. In the case of an incident, I attend and deal with the incident as a Local Authority Liaison Officer ('LALO').

- 6.1 A LALO is there at an incident to liaise, on behalf of the Borough, with the Emergency Response Services and provide as much support as possible from the Borough. As LALO, I would be required to attend any incident whereby assistance is required from the Council to assist / support residents, for example, where rest centres need to be opened if there has been an evacuation.

- 6.2 It is the Emergency Services which must specifically request a LALO from the Local Authority, such as the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Once the LALO gets the request to attend, the LALO then attends the scene and liaises with the Command Centre.

- 6.3 When I act as a LALO, I am not under the command of the Emergency Services. Either the Police or the Fire Brigade would take command. My role is to provide assistance to the Emergency Services and to report back to the Local Authority.
- 6.4 I have received training from the Borough and which includes specific emergency scenarios. The training included reacting to different emergency scenarios.
- 6.5 RBKC has a Contingency Management Plan (CMP), which as a Duty Officer I am aware of. This sets out the Boroughs plan for dealing with major incidents. I also have a Duty Officer Manual, a copy of which I attach at **Exhibit NL2**. This manual identifies the role of a Duty Officer and sets out what a Duty Officer should do in each different scenario, as well as containing key contacts. I am familiar with this manual and I take it with me to every incident so that I have this information to hand. The CMP is also contained in my folder.
- 6.6 I have dealt with quite a few major incidents through the years. For example, I was a LALO at a large gas leak, a shooting, as well as at the Trellick Towers Fire. The role of LALO includes assessing whether rest centres are needed if there has to be an evacuation. If rest centres are needed, in my role as LALO I would report that to the Contingency Planning Manager/Emergency Manager at the Borough, so that the rest centres can then be arranged as quickly as possible.
7. I was the On-Call Borough Duty Officer on the night of the Grenfell Tower fire. The Emergency Services made a specific request for a LALO from the Borough. I then received a call and attended the site of the Grenfell Tower fire as a LALO. My notes from the night of 14 June 2017, my LALO log, are attached at **Exhibit NK1**.
8. On the night of the Grenfell Tower fire, I was contacted just after 2am, by GDIT, the out of hours call answering service for the Borough. I was informed that there had been a fire reported at Grenfell Tower and that there was possibly 3 or 4 fatalities. GDIT told me that the Emergency Services were on site and I recall being told there were 15 pumps in attendance. I knew from this information that this was a serious incident and would require a major response.

9. I immediately called David Kerry to let him know. David Kerry is a Contingency Planning Manager; also known as Emergency Planning Manager, employed by the Borough. In my role as On Call Borough Duty Officer, David Kerry was my manager on the night of the fire. My role thereafter as LALO, was not to contact everyone in the Council, but to liaise directly with David Kerry and to make sure he was kept up to date with information from at the scene of the fire, where I was located. During my initial telephone call to David I relayed to him the scale of the emergency. The minute I was aware that there were fatalities, I contacted David Kerry. After I had spoken to David I left home and headed straight to the scene of the fire.
10. In his role as Contingency Planning Manager, David would then escalate the matter and notify all other necessary people. He would also set up the Borough's BECC: Borough Emergency Control Centre –this is where the Borough would manage the incident and its response. People on the ground such as myself as LALO, pass information to BECC and BECC coordinate and manage everything going on. For example, once BECC were informed by a LALO that rest centres were needed, BECC would locate and arrange for the setting up and staffing of rest centres. The LALO is the "eyes and ears for the BECC".
11. I arrived at the scene of the fire shortly after 02:30am.
12. As I approached I could see that the fire had taken complete hold of the top the Tower. It appeared that there were a number of floors engulfed in flames and there were flames from the bottom going to the top. I was completely transfixed. I had no idea of the enormity of what I was witnessing. I had never seen anything like this even in my 22 years in the army and 22 years working for as a LALO.
13. I walked towards the Tower until I got to a police cordon and asked them where the Command Station was and showed them my ID. They directed me in the direction of the Command Centre, which was a fire truck at the base of the Tower situated on Bomore Road, near Kensington Leisure Centre. While I was making my way to the Command Centre I could see debris falling from the Tower and people being escorted out of the tower by the Police. The scene was overwhelming. As far as I could see at the time, these people could walk and I could not see physical injuries, but I could see the trauma in their eyes. There was a lot of shouting and screaming around, but not from the people

coming out of the Tower, but people standing at the side of the Tower talking on their mobile phones to persons still in the Tower waiting for instructions. These people were shouting at the Emergency Services, or anyone that would listen, and trying to tell them where their friends or family members were in the Tower. I recall hearing the Police calling over their radio for shields so that they were able to escort people out of the building without debris falling on either of them.

14. Upon my arrival at the Command Centre, the first thing I was told by the Incident Controller was that they required a mortuary to be set up into which to move the deceased as there was already bodies lying around which needed to be moved. The Emergency Services asked if they could set up the mortuary in the adjacent Sports Centre. Whilst I did not have any keys to access the Sports Centre I immediately gave permission for them to force entry to allow it to be used. However, a decision was then made that this was not required as the Police decided to erect a tent and use that as a temporary mortuary. As more bodies were recovered, they were placed in the temporary mortuary.
15. Within 5 to 10 minutes of my arrival at the Command Centre, the Police informed me that the Belushi's Hotel in Shepherds Bush had offered itself as a rest centre and had capacity of 10 beds. The Police stated that they would provide mini buses to take people to the Hotel, which was about 1½ miles away.
 - 15.1 I contacted David Kerry to inform him about this and I then informed the Police that RBKC would take them up on this offer of the Belushi's Hotel as a rest centre
 - 15.2 It was RBKC's responsibility to manage the rest centre premises and there is an agreement in place with the Red Cross that they will provide immediate assistance in the event of such a major incident. The Red Cross would ordinarily arrive at rest centres relatively quickly, i.e. within approximately one to 1½ hours. I believe that David Kerry contacted the Red Cross and requested them to go to the Belushi's Hotel straight away to await people arriving and to set up with such things as refreshments and blankets.

16. The Manager of Harrow Rugby Club came to see me at the Incident Centre (Command Centre) and said he had the facility close by which could be used as a rest centre. I called David Kerry and informed him. At that time we were looking for around 300 people to be accommodated into rest centres and the Harrow Rugby Club could take 250 people.
17. We made the decision to open both Harrow Rugby Club and Belushi's Hotel initially. The Harrow Rugby Club was very close: about 300 to 400 yards away and it was felt that people could walk there. The Police were informing people of these rest centres and encouraging them to make their way there straight away. David Kerry also asked the Red Cross to attend the Harrow Rugby Club rest centre and set it up.
18. Shortly after 05:30am David Kerry informed me that nobody had attended at the rest centre at Hotel Belushi's. I presumed that this was due to the difficulties in getting people there, - as although the Police had said they would provide transport, I overheard the Police on their radios asking for assistance, as people were trying to get back into the Tower and Police resources were being stretched in dealing to the limit. Consequently, I believe that a decision was made that this rest centre would be closed.
19. I found out later (I cannot recall precisely when) that other ('unofficial') rest centres were opening but without our knowledge at the time. These rest centres were being opened by the Local Community and they were dealing with their centres themselves. They were not dealing with these through David Kerry and we only found out about them later. I later understood that the local community rest centres started to experience problems as they were smaller rest centres and required assistance with the number of people arriving there. I therefore asked Robert Black to assist and arrange for his staff to help at the rest centres as quickly as possible. I believe the BECC were also investigating the opening of another rest centre close to the site.
20. We needed to find out the identity of the people who were in these Local Community rest centres. David Kerry started liaising with these rest centres as the Red Cross was not at the rest centres as yet.

21. I was the first to arrive at the Command Control centre as LALO from RBKC. Mike Rumble arrived as support LALO at approx. 03:20 hours. Mike had brought satellite phones to assist in maintaining Communications, but the normal mobile phones were actually working fine. I was mainly situated with the silver fire command on base level - which was a fire truck placed within the grounds of Grenfell Tower. My duty that night was to report on what was happening with the survivors and to organise rest centres for them. David Kerry was requesting the Red Cross to attend at each of the rest centres.
22. At approximately 03:30am/03:45am Robert Black, Chief Executive Officer of Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation ('the TMO') arrived with two colleagues from the TMO. I spoke directly with Robert and the first instruction I gave to him was for him to arrange for his staff to get to the rest centres and staff them as quickly as possible. Robert confirmed that he would arrange for this to happen.
23. The London Ambulance Services ('LAS') had their 'Control' near to the Fire Brigade's Control vehicle. I liaised with LAS during the morning and we discussed resources and in particular, I asked whether the LAS could arrange for paramedics to be placed in each of the rest centres to check on people's welfare upon their arrival. LAS did not have sufficient resource to do this and it was agreed that the rest centres would call 999 if LAS were required.
24. Hourly 'Silver' meetings took place to keep all key personnel up to date with the incident and its management. The meetings included representatives from the Fire Brigade, Police, London Ambulance Service, RBKC LALO's, and any other agencies/organisations involved. The first Silver Meeting took place at 03:15am. The Fire Brigade's Incident Control Commander chaired these meetings and they were minuted by the LFB. Each representative updated on what service they were providing, what resources they had and how they were doing. I provided an update on the rest centres.
25. At 04:15am the Fire Brigade asked me to arrange for a Dangerous Structures Officer to attend the site as there were concerns regarding the stability of the Tower. I was informed that if a 'blue light' escort was required to get the Officer here urgently, it could be provided. The Fire Brigade would ordinarily make such a request directly with the

Council via the out of hours call centre and I don't know whether they had already made such a request before approaching me. I called David Kerry and he arranged for the Borough's Dangerous Structures Officer to attend and within a fairly short time, I was aware that he was on route.

26. The next Silver Meeting was at 04:30am. My briefing included informing Command that the Harrow Club rest centre was now being opened. I recall that it was also at the 04:30am meeting that I was asked by the Fire Brigade for a List of all residents at Grenfell Tower.
27. Having received this request, I was aware that this information was likely to be with the TMO, as they were the managing agents for the Tower. I therefore passed this request to Robert Black and asked him to obtain the information urgently. I recall that in my presence, Robert Black made a call to someone asking for this information.
28. The next Silver meeting was at 05:50. Before I went to the next meeting I asked Robert Black whether he had managed to get the list of the Grenfell Tower Residents. However, he did not have this information and he made another call.
29. I reported at the 05:50am Silver Meeting that the list of Grenfell Tower residents was still not available and I assured that I was pressing to get this information urgently. I recall that the Fire Brigade were unhappy that the information hadn't arrived yet and after the meeting finished and I then went back to Robert Black and relayed this to him. I asked Robert again if he had received the information. He hadn't and he made another call, but when I checked with him before I left the scene at 7am, he still hadn't received it and I passed over the matter to Mike Rumble so that he could liaise with Robert.
30. I was present when the Borough's Dangerous Structures officer arrived along with John Allen, RBKC's Building Control Manager. They came via Incident Control and they had to report to the Fire Brigade who would have then explained the issues and what was required. I do not know how or when they got to site as I did not see them arrive. From my conversation with David Kerry, I don't believe that a blue light escort was provided as they were already on route.

31. Clements Church and Latimer Christian Centre were Local Community rest centres that had opened by the 05:50am Silver meeting.
- 31.1 The two surrounding buildings near Grenfell Tower were also then evacuated, which meant more people needed to be housed.
- 31.2 I was informed that Harrow Rugby Club rest centre was not at capacity.
- 31.4 I recall that the Police were aware of some of these rest centres and were directing people to go to these.
32. Some years ago we would have had a dedicated rest centre manager and would have been able to contact these individuals directly. They were colleagues from Social Services and were trained on how to manage the rest centres. However, about 10 years ago this stopped. It was a resources issue as the Borough could no longer get volunteers. I can only comment on this about this Borough. I do not know how other Local Authorities have dealt with this.
33. However, even with dedicated rest centre managers they need and have the support of the Red Cross. Now, the Red Cross are used as a first resource and are experienced in dealing with such emergency rest centres. Regardless of who set up the rest Centre, the Red Cross are called to manage them.
34. At RBKC's Town Hall there are halls that can be used as rest centres, if required. They were not used on this occasion because of the distance from Grenfell Tower. Whilst with good intention, the Local Community rest centres were unable to provide the scope of the services the Borough were able to give. The Borough were able to staff the rest centres and obtain the names of people using the rest centre.
- 34.1 We knew approximately how many residents were unaccounted for from the 999 calls made to the fire service at various times and by how many people had been brought out during these times.
- 34.2 These are the reasons why I asked Robert Black for him to obtain a list of the residents at Grenfell Tower, and to arrange to have his staff assist in manning the rest centres, and to become involved.

35. At around 7am I handed over the role of LALO to Mike Rumble and I handed him my notes / Log so that he knew what had been happening. Although I was still Duty Officer for the rest of the week I was no longer the LALO for Grenfell Tower. At no point prior to me leaving the site had I ever been asked about the layout of Grenfell Tower or been asked to obtain any plans for the Tower.
36. Before I left the Grenfell Tower fire site at 7am, I recall seeing three Councillors in attendance at the scene which I think included Councillor Feilding-Mellen and Councillor Paget-Brown.
37. My shift at work (Town Hall) was due to start at 0730am as I am the key holder and am required to open up the premises. I arrived at Town Hall and I first went to see David Kerry in the BECC. When I reported to David Kerry I immediately broke down due to the enormity of what had happened to those in Grenfell Tower and from what I had seen. Despite having to witness a number of horrific incidents during my 22 years in the army and in my role as a LALO, nothing in my life prepared me for what I saw that night and nothing compares to what it was like. I had never experienced a disaster to the extent of the Grenfell Tower fire.
38. I then opened up RBKC Town Hall Customer Service Centre. David advised me to go home and try and get some sleep for a while as I had been awake since 2am. I went home and tried to sleep, but couldn't and so I came back to work around 10:30am / 11am. I resumed my normal duties then. I let David Kerry know I was back and offered that I would go back to the scene if needed. I was not needed and carried out the remainder of my shift at work until 3:30pm.
39. On 15 June 2017:
- 39.1 I was back at work from 07:30am on normal duties at the Customer Service centre. I became involved in helping out with donations which were coming in thick and fast, in high volumes. The Borough asked for Volunteers from its staff to help with the donations at Town Hall. A lot of people volunteered and there was a huge effort to deal with the donations. I was also aware that the Borough's staff were also assisting at the rest centres.

- 39.2 Dealing with donations involved unloading goods from vehicles and sorting them out as they all had to be checked before they could be distributed. I am not aware of who was dealing with the requests and organising the donations. A lot of donations were coming in, but as yet not going out and needed to be sorted and checked. Some donations were being ordered on-line and these were arriving directly to us.
- 39.3 I worked until around 10pm that night. I was covering both my role as Security Officer and assisting with donations. A lot of other staff also worked late helping out with donations. Staff were working flat out and dealing with the donations as they came in.
40. On Friday 16 June:
- 40.1 I started my normal shift at Customer Service Security at 07:30am. Again, as well as doing my general security duties, I helped with the donations – as did many other members of staff.
- 40.2 At some point that day, I was asked to assist with the delivery of cash to the rest centres over the weekend. I would be accompanied the Police to the rest centres and made sure that the cash was delivered from Town Hall, to the rest centres, securely.
- 40.5 I finished work that night around 9pm or 10pm.
41. On Sat 17 June and Sun 18 June:
- 41.1 Following the delivery to the Town Hall of the cash the previous day I assisted another member of staff to deal with this and also attended with the Police in a Police escort to the Westway Community Centre where we then issued about £75K in total over the weekend period to the Westway Community Centre. The process was that Westway would put through a request for the cash and Police would then arrive to provide an escort. I went with the Police to deliver the cash on the Saturday and Sunday. I handed that over to the rest centre managers who were then at that time, RBKC managers. The Police escorted me every time money was required to be delivered. I was not the Duty Officer that weekend but dealt with this in my own time over the weekend.

- 41.2 The Westway centre opened as a rest centre later than the others (possibly Wed or Thurs). Westway opened because of the other smaller places not having enough space, and for somewhere central for people to go to. Once this was opened the smaller places could be closed.
42. Thereafter on following days I helped with donations which lasted, I recall, 2 to 3 weeks and possibly longer.
43. Since the Grenfell Tower fire I understand that a number of procedures have been looked at by various agencies to see whether there is anything that can be done differently in the future. For my role as a LALO, I am aware of the following changes:
- 43.1 The Fire Brigade and the Borough are looking at the 'threshold' where an incident occurs as to when the Duty Officer is called. Historically, a Duty officer was only called in limited circumstances, but the threshold has been lowered and LALO's are now called out to more incidents, especially more minor incidents. The Borough and the Fire Brigade are now looking at the threshold as to when the Fire Brigade call for a Duty Officer to attend. I understand that David Kerry is working on this threshold with the Fire Brigade.
- 43.2 I attach at **Exhibit NL3**, a document called 'Major Incident Contact' which relates to a new structure in which more people are now on call should an emergency arise. The Contingency Planning Manual is being amended to now have more people involved as on-call in an emergency. There is now a weekly duty-rota for staff who are specific points of contact for different services.
- 43.3 I attach at **Exhibit NL4**, a document called 'RBKC SMG incident log book' which is a template for note taking that has been introduced since the Grenfell Tower fire. This allows for a documented record / log rather than us just keeping a manual handwritten log as I did at the Grenfell Tower fire.
44. I provided a statement to the Police in September 2017. I consent to my police statement being disclosed to the Public Inquiry for use in evidence.

Statement of Truth

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

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

Full name: Nickolas Layton

Position or office held:

Signed:

Date:

11/09 2018

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**Index to
Witness Statement of
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1. Exhibit NL1 - LALO Log - 2 sheets
2. Exhibit NL2 - Duty Officer Manual
3. Exhibit NL3 - Major Incident Contact.
4. Exhibit NL4 - RBKC SMG incident log book