

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5b

Statement of: FOSTER, KEELEY

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation: DAC, LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

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This statement (consisting of 13 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: K FOSTER

Date: 25/04/2018

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (supply witness details on rear)

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I have been in the London Fire Service for nearly 16 years. I started as a firefighter at Millwall, which was a fairly quiet station on the Isle of Dogs. During this time, I became an instructor for the Local Intervention Fire Education (LiFE), a Community Safety programme, in three Boroughs and trained in Outreach to try and encourage more women into the organisation. From there I went to Edmonton and gained specialist skills on the Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) which attends incidents such as road traffic collisions and I also trained in water, line and urban search and rescue (USAR). I then progressed into management. I was promoted to Crew Manager and then Watch Manager and joined the Brigade Fast Track scheme where I became a Station Manager based at LFB HQ in Union Street. Whilst at Union Street I have been based in a number of different departments, the first being Special Operations Group which provides specialist response to incidents and runs the National Interagency Liaison Officer (NILO) cadre. I then moved to the Central Operations Team which is responsible for service delivery pan London and became a NILO.

In December 2014, in the rank of Group Manager I was offered the role of Staff Officer to Ron DOBSON, the then Commissioner. I remained in the role of staff officer for two years, retaining the role when Ron DOBSON retired to provide continuity for the incumbent Commissioner Dany COTTON.

During that time, I was promoted to Deputy Assistant Commission (DAC) but remained as Staff Officer to the Commissioner until the 1 November 2017 I when I took the role of DAC in Development and

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Training. All roles below DAC are placed on development initially and have to complete a personal development record, acquiring evidence to set units and elements aligned to the role and completing formal assessments to demonstrate competence. You usually have 18 months to complete your development. At DAC level you are placed on performance related pay.

As a result of my experience to date I feel that I have a good understanding of most areas of the service, the only thing I don't really know about is the fire engineering, which is a whole science in itself but other than that I would say I have a good working knowledge of specialist skills and as a Staff Officer, the strategic issues we face.

I have been asked what is the norm in terms of ongoing training for firefighters. There are core risk critical skills which must be maintained.. There is centrally programmed training such as breathing apparatus (BA), Station based training and planned exercises, covering a number of scenarios from basement fires to high rise. Localised training at fire stations can be both practical and classroom based. Any training undertaken should be logged in the System for Training, Evaluation and Performance (STEP) and linked to the ITR (Individual Training Record) section of the Staff Attendance Register (STAR).

We have a station based training programme called the Development and Maintenance of Operational Professionalism (DAMOP), which is to equip firefighters with the best knowledge, skills and understanding. This covers areas such as core risk critical skills, procedural knowledge and physical training and is completed on rotation to a minimum of six hours per tour.

DAMOP is currently under review. The programme has been running for a number of years and as equipment and procedures change, we have to ensure that the training is fit for purpose. So alongside the training the firefighters conduct, we too review it to ensure it is current and they are training to the required standard.

As part of their station working routine crews are expected to complete outside duties, including inspections and familiarisation of high rise blocks in their area. This is to give the local fire fighters the best knowledge of a building when they attend a fire - it provides them with an overview, to prepare and

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implement a tactical plan for that particular block; where the hydrants are, which lift goes to which floor and so on. The visits also enable them to obtain the details of the responsible person for the building and serves as reassurance to the residents.

At Group Manager (GM) level we don't do the same BA training as we are not required to wear it at an Incident. However, on a regular basis we receive Incident Command training and are assessed by the Operational Review Team. We have two training centres run by our training provider Babcock - one at Beckton and one at Harrow. They run command exercises on a mock-up of a Command Unit there. It replicates what you would expect on an incident. We are also expected to keep up to date with Policies and Procedures.

The promotion process itself is quite rigorous and having gone through it recently myself (March 2017) you are tested to a high standard. It tests procedural knowledge, your command, leadership, skills, risk management and behavioural aspects such as remaining calm under pressure. For example, the scenario I was tested on was a fire in the RAF Club which is a building over multiple floors and the fire occurred in the middle of the night. The hotel was full to capacity and residents were all asleep. There were two seats of fire, one of which was in the basement, the other higher up the building. The scenario is run using computer generated images on a large screen. You then have to demonstrate your thought processes and run the incident utilising the LFB decision making model. They also test you by throwing in issues such as life risk, proximity to surrounding risks such as train tracks and dealing with the media. You have support from other officers to whom you delegate roles and verbalise your thought process and decisions.

I will now move on to events on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017. I will refer to notes I prepared subsequent to the incident which incorporate information collated from emails, text messages, phone records and my notebook from the evening.

I exhibits these reference documents as follows:

KGF/1 Record of Actions of Operational Personnel

KGF/2 Log of phone calls from 12:54:13 to 09:45:15 on the 14.06.17

KGF/3 Rough contemporaneous notes

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KGF/4 Photocopy of pages of note book with contemporaneous notes made during incident

KGF/5 Map with locations marked up during course of statement

KGF/6 Example of grid system for FSG calls

KGF/7 email chain with five (5) photographs sent from Andrew ROE 01:56 hrs 14/06/17

At the time I was still in my role as Group Manager and Staff Officer to the Commissioner. Due to the Commissioner travelling on business on the 14<sup>th</sup> it was agreed that the Duty Brigade Manager (BM) would be Assistant Commissioner (AC) Dan DALY covering the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> June and into the 14<sup>th</sup>.

I was on call as duty staff officer for the 24-hour period from 0800 on the 13 June 2017 to 0800 on the 14 June 2017. I was responsible for monitoring operational and significant incidents/occurrences and informing the BM accordingly should any incidents develop, mobilising them as monitoring officer in accordance with policy to any incidents of 15 pumps or more.

The Monitoring Officer (MO) is the rank above the person in charge of an incident, if an incident then escalates they would then take over command or if they felt they needed to they could take over at any point they felt the incident was escalating beyond the experience or ability of the incident commander, this then provides consistency for the incident and support for the Incident Commander. You monitor to the point of an incident 'stop' message is sent and resources are decreased. There are two ways of monitoring, either remotely or direct, dependant on the incident size.

I was at home asleep when I was notified by pager of an 8 pump fire with fire survival guidance calls (FSG's) at Grenfell Tower, Lancaster Gate. It was approximately 01:30 hrs. An FSG is where a control operator remains on the line providing advice to the caller who feels either in danger/trapped by fire and cannot leave their property. Control remains on the line until they are rescued or the line is cleared.

At that point, with that number of appliances, it was an information only message which means I would be paged and sent an email from Logistics giving me details of the incident. At 15 pumps or more I would automatically attend and the Commissioner would adopt the role of monitoring officer, but at 8 pumps it is "information only". We form no part of the command structure at this point and I would remotely monitor the incident for information only on behalf of the Commissioner. Normally, as per the Resource Management Logistics (RML) matrix, staff officers are notified and sent an email with all the incident

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details. It depends how busy they are in Control at the time as to how much information is in that email as the calls and mobilisations take precedence. We have a notification template for incidents and that is an A4 sheet that will inform you of the following: time of call, address, incident type (AI being fire), last message, who's in charge, who the monitoring officer is and who the Operations Review Team (ORT) are, plus the first two appliance attendance times - what time they were notified, what time they mobilised and what time they got on scene and (if applicable) what time they returned. That would be the gold standard. If that email comes through I don't need to phone control, as we don't want to tie them up with loads of questions. My point of contact from then on would be the ORT as they would have the full picture of the incident, they are the contact on scene.

So, at the point of receiving an "informative" message, my usual procedure is to gather information and obtain good background knowledge so that I am able to fully brief the Commissioner should the need arise. I waited about five minutes but no email came through so I telephoned the London Operations Centre (Control), Officer of the Watch (OOW) to gather more information about the incident but was unable to get through.

I tried a number of times and could not get through. I decided to also have a look on Twitter and news channels as in this day and age there is often information available on Social Media almost straight away if anything major is going on. I don't remember seeing anything at that particular time. I also logged onto BOSS which would give me access to the control logs regarding the incident. I also turned on my airwaves radio to monitor the radio traffic related to the incident and I put in a phone call to the Staff Officer for the Director of Operations - Rob DAVIES. There was not much information coming through on the system, there was no message which was unusual but I could see there were a large number of FSG's and I knew they would be busy on scene.

Whilst I had been trying to get through on the phone I missed a call from Assistant Commissioner (AC) Richard MILLS. He was AC2 that evening. As well as having a duty DAC which was my role we have two assistant commissioners on — one will be AC1 and the other AC2. AC1 is the first point of contact and then it will swap over if they are utilised. Richard MILLS was AC2 and he left me a voicemail and he told me he was going to be AC1 as Andy ROE was going to an incident.

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I managed to get hold of him and he informed me that he was taking on the role of AC1 as Andy ROE, who was designated AC1 was now Incident Commander. By this point I had received an email with about five photographs from the scene from AC ROE. From these I could see that the upper part of the block was engulfed in fire on two sides. It was about 01:56 hrs. This email was sent to AC ROE from Gareth COOK at 01:43 hrs. I believe it was also sent to DAC Andy O'LOUGLAN, AC Adrian FENTON and AC Rob DAVIES. I also forwarded it to the Commissioner.

I again called the OOW but was still unable to get through until 02:01 when I spoke with Alex NORMAN and in confirming the pager details, I was told this was now a 25 pump fire, there were multiple FSG's, no informative message from the incident had been received and Control were in planned fall back at Stratford. As we spoke she said "we've got another FSG, and another one ..... and it's now a 40 pump fire". It was apparent to me that Control were under pressure, so I said I was going to inform the Commissioner and could she show us both mobile to the incident.

Although AC DALY was shown as Brigade Manager, I felt that the Commissioner would want to be notified of an incident of this magnitude which is why I made the decision to contact her as a matter of urgency. As head of the organisation this incident would take precedence over her appointment the following day and I knew she would want to be present and in a command role. I told her everything I knew at the time along with the email I had forwarded from AC ROE.

In ordinary circumstances I would have relayed more detailed information, including a situation report from the Operational Review Team (ORT), life risk, names of the Incident Commander and Monitoring Officer and the last message from the incident ground. As it was I had minimal information available to me but I contacted her and told her to proceed directly to the incident whilst I continued to get details & aid the set-up of our Strategic Response Arrangements.

I was just getting into my car when AC ROE called and said he was mobilised. He told me what he knew which was that it was a large fire with multiple FSG's and it had been made a major incident, that was at 02:07 hrs. He asked if I had seen the photographs and I replied that I had and that I had forwarded them to the Commissioner.

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I was anxious and frustrated at this point and the severity of the situation was sinking in. At about this time I received a further text message from Rob DAVIES informing me that there were reports from people on various floors of the 20 floor block that were stuck in smoke and couldn't leave.

I mobilised to the incident under blue light conditions making and receiving calls whilst en route (via hands free). One of the calls I made was to AC DALY to explain what was happening, I also informed the Director of Safety and Assurance Steve APTER. Usually I will not make/receive calls whilst driving somewhere on a blue light but on this occasion I had to make those calls. My phone logs show several calls to Steve APTER, who operationally was the same level as the Commissioner and was required for support. I left voicemails, with a short brief of the incident. I told him Dany was going to need his support and he needed to set up the Commissioners Group and the Strategic Response Arrangements. I eventually got hold of him and asked him to proceed to HQ. Dany was going to the incident and I knew Richard MILLS was going to head in to HQ to support Steve. I was trying to get everything in place to support the Commissioner.

From memory I believe I arrived near to the Incident Ground at about 02:50 hrs. I think this is about the last time I could put a time to anything, it was just too chaotic after that. I followed an LFB Command Unit (CU), which was also heading in towards the building. It soon became apparent that due to huge crowds and vehicles blocking the route we were not going to be able to get through. I have been to large scale incidents before but have never come across crowds like it, there were people everywhere, people running, people in the road. I spoke briefly with the CU team leader and we agreed to turn around and try an adjacent road that appeared to be wider. We approached the incident via Lancaster Road and I was directed to park my vehicle on a section of hard standing outside Notting Hill Methodist Church by a Police officer. I had not been able to see the building from my approach. As I opened my car door the noise hit me. It is something that would almost haunt you. There were people screaming and shouting, some were trying to get back into the building and I could see people up at the windows. I could hear the sounds of what appeared to be civil disorder. I could also hear loud bangs. The noise sounded to me like a full scale war was going on. At that point I couldn't see the fire operations as they were hidden behind residential buildings and a grass mound and the main BA area was behind the Leisure Centre which was again out of my line of sight at that time.

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I crossed the road and the building came into full view. I have marked some of the locations I have discussed on a map (exhibit KGF/5). I must only have been looking for seconds but it seemed to me like I was glued to the spot for ages. I couldn't initially comprehend what I was seeing. It upset me and I remember thinking about the people in the upper part of the building, thinking that no one could survive that. I was rooted to the spot for what was probably only seconds but seemed like for ever. I still have that vision in my head. I just thought how can it have spread so quickly, how can the whole building be engulfed like that. There is a phenomenon called the coanda effect in which fire can travel out of a window and roll up a building, as well as the effects of wind conditions on a building which can cause fire to move around it. I have never seen fire spread like this.

From about the 5<sup>th</sup> floor to the top on one face, there was flame from every single window. It looked like it was punching out of each of the windows and rolling up the building. The fire was fully developed and I started to wonder about the conditions within the building. Were all compartments alight and had the fire broken out of the compartments into the main part of the building.

A compartment is a sealed room or apartment/flat, for example an office with the door closed, so when we talk about compartmentation in fire safety terms you don't want that to be breached in any way. If fire is contained within a compartment you don't want it breaking out and going anywhere else. This is where the Stay Put advice then comes in. It is a national policy and for an incident with a compartment alight eg: a flat within a high rise block, for the rest of the residents what we say is, if safe to do so and the fire is outside of your compartment, then stay put, stay in your "compartment", unless conditions change and you are advised otherwise. This is because there are a number of factors that can affect your exit from the building. For example, they may come out of their flat into smoke, it may hamper fire fighting operations within the staircase and so on.

I got rigged in my fire kit (leggings, tunic, fire hood, fire helmet, gloves etc.), gathered up my fire ground radio and mobile phone, locked my car up and ran to the CU. As I ran I could see a mass of firefighters waiting at what was BA main control. There were vehicles parked up and three fire appliances pumping into the building. They were set into a hydrant and hoses were laid from them into the building.

I then saw the lobby to the building which was almost like a glass box. It was a mass of fire service

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personnel - firefighters with BA sets on all waiting to be briefed. My thoughts quickly shifted from concern for the residents to concern for the firefighters because the condition of the building looked so severe - heat, spalling of concrete and so on. I just thought my god we have hundreds of people going in and going up and their lives could be at risk.

Debris was raining down, huge sections of the cladding were falling off. It was almost like there were droplets of things melting, like it was raining down fire, but there were very large bangs with debris hitting the ground on fire. I recall as I moved round the incident ground later on you would come across debris that had been blown by the wind several streets away. Later in the incident the debris was about 6' high in places. Some of the bits were about 1 m sq. From looking at the building, how intense the flames were and how widespread it was over the building, it looked like much of the internal part of the building was alight as well. The fire was raging and the building appeared to be fully alight from about the 5<sup>th</sup> floor upwards.

I hadn't been able to book onto the incident via my Airwave due to the sheer volume of radio traffic so I decided to head for the Command CU (CU8) and book in and try and find the Commissioner. I was directed to CU8 which was on Bowmore Road where I handed in my nominal roll board. A Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG) meeting was ongoing so I didn't enter.

I received a call from AC1 Richard MILLS who asked me why the Commissioner hadn't taken over the incident. He also asked for an update. I said I would enquire and get back to him due to the meeting that was underway. To be honest the Commissioner would not take over the incident. The AC was running it and the Commissioner would be acting as monitoring officer. There is no-one higher it could go to.

At that time I thought the Commissioner was on the CU and in attendance at the TCG but she then appeared in the street and told me she had been in the building to talk to the crews. I asked her about the command structure and was informed that she was happy with AC ROE as IC allowing her to deal with higher level strategic objectives. I asked her what she required from me. Usually with all that was going on my role would be to stick with her and offer support, feeding updates through to the Greater London Authority Gold contact and so on. She replied she didn't need me as support and that I should be deployed into the incident. A priority at that time was getting an update on the attendance of a Dangerous

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Structures Engineer (DSE) from the local council. I said I would chase this via AC1 at HQ and obtain an ETA for them.

Whilst awaiting the arrival of the DSE I liaised with a WM who had arrived with the Positive Pressure Ventilation (PPV). This piece of equipment is used to force smoke out of an area and improve conditions. He had no PPE so I assisted in getting the PPV to crews at the base of the tower.

The DSE arrived and I believe his name was Amir FARDOYEE. I met him at the cordon at the end of Lancaster Road and brought him to the grassed area (BA main control). He tried to get closer to the building but he had no PPE and due to the debris it was not safe for him to do so. By some of the things he was saying I got the feeling that he was not experienced enough for the job. He seemed unsure of making decisions and said he had to phone his boss. I needed him to speak to our main safety officer - Sector Commander Safety GM Dave O'NEIL who has vast experience of USAR. Radio traffic was heavy and it took a while to get hold of him. However, I agreed a meeting point for him to liaise with GM Dave O'NEIL. I then went back to the Command Unit to update them regarding both the PPV and the DSE. I think by now it was about 04:15 hrs.

I was then briefed by the Operations Commander Andy O'LOUGHLIN to take command of the external sectors. When we have a large, complex incident, the IC may decide to sectorise the incident to make it more manageable, delegating authority of each sector to other officers. For example operational sectors are physical areas around a building. We usually sectorise buildings from the corners and they will be 1,2,3,4, Sector 1 is usually the main scene of operations and usually the entrance, you then have Sector 3 opposite on the rear and Sector 2 and Sector 4 will then be on either side. I was asked make sure there were WM in charge of each sector, safety officers in place and that they were briefed. I made my way back to the base of the building to locate Dave O'NEIL and gain information on the structure that was in currently in place. I didn't want to overlay and complicate what was already in place. I was unable to locate him and despite making attempts to designate sectors around the base of the tower I was unable to locate spare officers to take these roles.

Everyone was working flat out and it was at this time I was approached by the Incident Commander Andy ROE who asked me my role. I explained my brief and he was firm in his response stating that priorities

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had changed and he enquired where the Ops Commander was. I then made my way back to CU8 for redeployment.

I was briefed once more by the IC to support DAC Lee DRAWBRIDGE on the Command Unit in Bramley Road. I think it was CU1. We had a 40 pump fire and a huge number of support vehicles in attendance and consideration had to be given to maintaining fire cover for the rest of London. A 20 pump relief had been ordered and I had to ensure that the relief arriving was swapped out with the first crews on scene.

It was evident, however, that this was going to be quite a complex task as a number of appliances required fuel before moving as they were pumping water or involved in other operational tasks. I had the following areas to focus on:-

- 1 Get fuel to the incident ground and prioritise issue
- 2 Identify the location of all parked fire appliances and agree a holding area/egress route with the MPS

In addition, when the decision had been made to call on EDBA wearers to the incident, some crews were split with half of the EDBA wearers inside the building whilst the SDBA wearers remained outside.

I was also briefed by AC ROE that a welfare point was being set up at Paddington Fire Station and that I should brief all crews to attend there when released from the incident ground to make contemporaneous notes as this would form the first part of the investigation. In addition, Brigade counsellors would be there to speak to all crew members. DAC Sabrina COHEN-HATTON was running the debrief/welfare area at Paddington. This was a big ask as the crews were emotionally drained, upset, exhausted and all they wanted to do was go back to their home station.

I liaised with Josh REES from the Metropolitan Police to agree a plan. He gave me a route away from the incident through roads that had been closed and cordoned off for access/egress. We subsequently discussed the use of adjacent roads to move appliances to as a holding area.

At about this time I was approached by a firefighter Les TUCKER from Wembley who had burns to the back of his neck. He informed me that he had received some treatment from the LAS and had been told

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he needed to go to hospital. There were no ambulances available to transport him so I spoke to Josh REES and he agreed to assist and arrange police transport to take the firefighter to the Chelsea & Westminster Hospital. I took his details and passed these to the Brigade Coordination Centre (BCC), which had been set up for the incident, to generate a safety event and ensure all welfare provisions were in place. I then informed the IC that a firefighter had been removed to hospital.

I was assisted in this task by Watch Manager (WM) Sean COLTRESS and WM Peter CLARK. Some of the appliances were unable to be moved as they were deployed into key roles. Others had no crews and so it was a logistical nightmare. There is a function called Command Support System on the CU which enables you to plot where appliances are on a map, but it was not working so WM Sean COLTRESS and WM Peter CLARK had to physically run around the incident ground locating the appliances that needed fuel and get it delivered to them. Sean managed to deal with the refuel and Peter was dealing with getting the appliances away. Despite numerous channels being opened up across the incident communications were an issue and I made the decision to communicate via our mobile phones and use the WM's as runners.

I was making my back to the CU to relay our progress when I was stopped by an Asian man in the street. He begged me to find his family who he said were on the 19<sup>th</sup> floor. I was taken aback as I didn't expect to have that conversation. I was so focussed on getting from A to B and with the task in hand I was a little lost for words. It was really hard but I reassured him that we were doing everything we could to get to people in the building. I advised him to talk to the Police at a nearby cordon as they would have systems in place to help him. I would describe him as having short dark hair, possibly of Indian or Pakistani origin. I can't remember what he was wearing. He was possibly in his 30's- 40's, quite thin, @ 6'. I can't recall where we were when this conversation took place, but it was in one of the adjacent roads..

I also came across SM WAINWRIGHT who had been assisting with the PPV and was now spare. I asked for his help and briefed him to set up an area where we could collate appliances and crew information to aid the relief plan. He armed himself with a loud hailer and a clip board, set up a system and managed to gather crews back together so they could be swapped out. That in itself was quite a difficult task as he had to stop crews coming out of the building, swapping over their sets and going back in again.

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Because some of the crews appliances were engaged in tasks and unable to be moved I had a conversation with DAC Adrian FENTON, who was based at Stratford, about the options for transporting crews away from the incident. It was agreed not to allow them to take relief crews appliances, as this would have proved to be a logistical nightmare subsequently getting the right appliances back to the right stations. It was agreed that we would request Brigade people carriers to the incident to get the crews away.

This was the plan for the crew who had responded to the initial call. We managed to get them back together and Dany spoke to them before they left. She agreed they could just go back to their home station and make their notes there instead, but she asked that they stay together on station for a while as she felt it was important for their welfare. As it happened we didn't get them a minibus either, they were so close to their station they decided that rather than wait they would just walk back.

I think it took a good 3 hours to get the vehicles/crews swapped out.

SM WAINWRIGHT and I were positioned near to the BA main control. There was a small wall nearby and I was sitting here when I was approached by Group Manager (GM) Richard WELCH and GM Pat GOULBOURNE who had been relieved from the Bridgehead. I have known them both a long time, we are good friends. Both of them looked visibly shaken. They had been working on the Bridgehead right up in the building and I knew it had been really tough for them. We were all a little lost for words and I think I said something along the lines of "you okay". We all three hugged then and we sat quietly on the wall for a while and had a cup of tea. I took the opportunity to look up at the building and reflect upon what I was seeing, thinking about the fact the building could have come down etc.

We were now moving well into the morning - I am not sure what time it was. It could have been 08:00 hr or even 10:00 hrs and I was coming to the end of what I needed to do in relation to the reliefs, most of the appliances had been released from the incident and the crews briefed. I was approached by John SIMPSON from the ORT (he had taken over from one of the earlier guys, I am not sure who) and we had a conversation around Dany. He suggested I should now step back into my role of support to her as her Staff Officer. I agreed and I handed over my role to GM Steve NORMAN.

I then returned to CU8 to join the Commissioner. We took the opportunity to have a cup of tea and a

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catch up sitting on the floor round the back of the CU. The Director Steve APTER then arrived on the incident ground with GM Rob DAVIES and we had a conversation around what had gone on thus far. Both Dany and Steve APTER wanted overview of conditions within the building in order to gain a situational awareness of where we were operationally and so the decision was made to go into the building.

I accompanied the Commissioner and Director Steve APTER into the building with the ORT officer. I believe it was about 15:00 hrs at this point. The fire was deemed to be out in the lower half of the building but there were still fires burning on the upper floors, small pockets of fire with some hot spots remaining. The whole building was smouldering and some gas pipes ruptured and burning. As we walked round to the side of the building under a covered walkway we walked past what I would describe as lockups or garages. There were a couple of bodies covered over outside this area. Opposite the entrance to the building there was a fire appliance and a large number of firefighters all sitting outside, waiting. There was a very sombre mood. Everyone looked physically upset and shaken with blank looks on their faces as they sat waiting. There was a 135 ladder pitched up against the side of the building and firefighting equipment all over the place. Huge amounts of debris had come off the building and there were still bits raining down. The Police TSG were there, holding the riot shields and escorting people in and out of the building.

Once inside the building we passed BA crews in the lobby who were still awaiting briefs. We were initially together as a group, however I became split up from them and ascended the stairs with another officer (I can't recall who this was). As we climbed water was pouring like rain down the stairwell from above and it was becoming increasingly hotter. There was equipment and hose all over the stairs which I thought were incredibly narrow for such a large building, however this may be due to the amount of hose and other equipment present. In a standard width staircase, for example 1 to 1.5 metres we try to manage the hose, push it to one side and if able, you can sometimes take it up through the middle, but that was not possible in this case. It made me realise just how difficult the conditions must have been at the height of the fire, when you couldn't see your hand in front of your face.

The devastation was incredible. I witnessed gas pipes still alight and completely burnt out flats on one side of the building with others just smoke damaged on the other side. I witnessed remains of residents on

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some floors including a bariatric casualty that I was informed had been blocking the stairs. I understand she had subsequently been moved back into a flat to clear the way. I believe this was somewhere near the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. The difference as you went up was stark. One side of the building had thick black smoke, blackened walls, flats completely annihilated with no interior walls left, everything fused into one and the other side where the flats were smoke damaged, burned, but almost intact. I recall having a conversation with someone about how on some floors there were more than one person huddled together in a room, it was really hard to see that, and bodies fused together with contents.

There was writing on the walls in the lobby area lists, no names, flat numbers, two people, one person - I believe this was the information that was being fed through from the FSG calls.

There is a designated FSG CU, with assigned officers who will collate information regarding the FSG calls on forms and crews will use the forward Information board (FIB) within the incident to relay that information through to the Bridgehead. They will then send firefighters to the relevant floors/flats to rescue occupants.

It was apparent that the volume of calls coming through could not be accommodated on the boards which is why the walls were used. This was then relayed further up the building and once rescued, the information was fed back the other way so it can be ticked off. They draw it out like a grid. I have drawn an example using four flats on each floor (see exhibit KGF/6) partitioned out and they then note the numbers in the grid for each flat. I can't remember which specific floors I saw this on, other than the main lobby area.

I made it up to the 15<sup>th</sup> floor before the conditions were too hot and I started to notice the effects of the heat on the structure, in particular bowing floors.

There then followed a debate between the ORT and the Bridgehead officer as to what could and couldn't be done at that point, so we decided to make our way back down and out of the building so as not to hamper any progress.

A short time later the decision was made to evacuate all firefighters from the building. Keeping them in

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there and keeping them safe was a huge responsibility and at that time it was deemed an unnecessary risk.

I believe I left the inner cordon with the Commissioner at about 18:00 hrs. However by this stage neither of us could remember where we had parked our cars. I stayed with the Commissioner as there were still a large amount of crowds on the street and we walked towards Verity Close as the Commissioner believed she had parked nearby. We were stopped by a group of women who thanked us for all we had done. We eventually located the Commissioners vehicle and mine nearby and agreed a route out. I located one of the relief CU's on Ladbroke Grove and I collected our nominal roll boards and booked us away from the incident at approximately 19:00 hrs returning again the following morning at about 06:00 hrs.

I mentioned Stay Put advice earlier in my statement and I have been asked about the use of that policy on the night. I believe the decision was made to change the advice as a result of enhanced situational awareness from the scene but also as a result of the contact between control and residents that the fire was so severe, that it had broken out and breached compartments and it was no longer safe for them to remain inside their flats.

I believe the decision to withdraw Stay Put would have logged and this would have been after a conversation between AC Andy ROE and Dany. I believe it may have been after the TCG meeting, when Dany had returned to the CU having been inside the building to talk to the crews early in the incident. We have never dealt with anything on this scale before and this was quite a key decision to make.

In addition to the decision to change the Stay Put advice other procedural guidance was changed that night to assist firefighting operations. As a rule, firefighters only wear EDBA once at a fire. . There are a number of factors that influence this decision the simplest of them being that ordinarily we have enough people to negate the need for this. At this incident it warranted this action and I believe the decision was logged.

Working in a fire in BA places a lot of physical strain on a body. Telemetry boards are used from the Bridgehead and they can monitor the air/time left in a firefighters' BA set. Your level of fitness, conditions and the task assigned will then dictate how long you have until your air level means you have to withdraw. Crews are taught to always stay together as a team and so your turnaround time - calculating

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how much air you have used getting there and when you need to withdraw is governed by the person with the lowest supply of air left (cylinder pressure). One withdraws, you all have to withdraw. EDBA gives crews a longer time to work under air but that also has a different physiological impact on the wearer, the cylinders are heavy and cumbersome and make it quite difficult sometimes for the wearer to move around.

Our firefighting PPE is fantastic at not letting the heat in but equally it doesn't let heat out and so effectively you can boil inside your suit. This leads to heat exhaustion and the effects of this can be irritability and anger. You are taught to look for the signs of this in your training. In addition to this the smoke has an effect on your senses and also makes it difficult to work. As fire intensifies the smoke layer starts to drop and so firefighters then have to get down low because that is where the clearest air is and on occasion you can still see. The smoke conditions within the tower were said to be so bad that firefighters were unable to see. In a lot of cases they had to drop down on their bellies and use the backs of their hands to feel the wall. Coupled with that there are also difficulties communicating as your voices are muffled and sound is distorted.

With the staircase compromised, in smoke, it would have been near impossible to bring casualties down. Basic fire safety education teaches you to get down low when exiting a building, as smoke kills. Two gulps of toxic smoke is enough, once you start to breathe it in it is all over. It did not surprise me that I heard rumours of firefighters taking off their masks to allow residents to breathe as they brought them down.

This incident was unprecedented but the crews would have had very clear briefs in terms of personal safety. Watching the crews go in again and again was the most heroic thing I have ever seen. Firefighters in BA were making their way through the building, coming out, steaming, exhausted, attending the grassed area around BA main control, testing their sets and going back in.

They probably knew their lives were at risk yet this didn't deter them. Everybody wanted to save those people and that is why we couldn't get people off the incident ground, they didn't care how tired they were they just wanted to get to them.

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Considering what we were dealing with I believe the whole London Fire Brigade came together that night. There was no-one saying "that's not my job" they just did what they could and supported each other. I can't imagine what it must have been like for the control officers, being on the phone taking FSG calls. Everyone did their utmost that night.

In terms of the building itself, I had some concerns regarding possible collapse. I expected it to have a core element where the lift shaft is and the staircase was. The concrete was obviously not combustible, but depending on the type of construction it would start to lose its strength and fail in intense heat. Thankfully this did not happen.

I had no prior knowledge of the cladding on this building, not knowing that side of London, I wasn't familiar with Grenfell Tower and I knew nothing of the history of the building. However, I noted the fire spread and how it had gone up the building and had spiralled around it.

Nothing else would have made a difference that night. We could not have physically got any more firefighters into that building to push up the stairs in that heat. We did everything we possibly could to get up those floors, the firefighters were devastated they couldn't save everybody. Modern day buildings, with engineered solutions and pressurised stairwells make a vast difference. This building was older and didn't perform how it should have, which is now under scrutiny.

From a leadership perspective Dany COTTON and Andy ROE were phenomenal. They were under an enormous amount of pressure but they led from the front and supported the crews in what was an unprecedented event for the London Fire Brigade.

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