

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: REES, JOSH

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

Occupation: POLICE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 9 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.

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Date: 17/06/2017

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

This statement refers to an incident that I have been the first responder to at the MAJOR INCIDENT at GRENFELL TOWER which CAD 428/14 JUNE 17 refers which has involved LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE (LAS) LONDON FIRE BRIGADE (LFB) and the METROPOLITAN POLICE. I have briefly viewed my body worn video footage prior to writing this statement.

I am Joshua REES a Police officer from KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA Response team A. I have been a police officer for (2) years and myself and Kieran SANGHA 119BS have been the first police units to attend the GRENFELL TOWER fire W11.

There has been a period of around 72 hours which has lapsed to making my notes as I have been on rest days as this incident has happened just prior to rest days, so notes have been commenced on returning to duty. I have started this Statement on the 17th June 2017 and have finished this statement on the 18th of June 2017.

On WEDNESDAY the 14th of JUNE 2017 I have been on duty in full uniform on mobile patrol in a marked police vehicle, call sign BS21N with PC SANGHA 119BS. At 0118 hours I have accepted CAD428/14JUNE17 in relation to a 6 pump fire at GRENFELL TOWER. We have made our way to the location and at the time of going there is very limited information and no real update about this fire. We

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have arrived at BOMORE ROAD at 0122 hours whoever I do not remember the specifics of the route that we have taken to get to that point, but I do remember the arrival at scene. I have immediately noticed a large blaze above the tree line on the NORTH EAST side of the tower which the fire had engulfed the two (2) windows of flat.

We have vacated the vehicle and 119BS has gone to access the scene as I have headed towards the base of the tower the entry/exit point in order to liaise with the fire commander or whomever at that point was the scene manager for the LONDON FIRE BRIGADE (LFB). At this point I can recall one (1) fire engine at the entrance of the tower block and one (1) further back which was arriving on scene about the same time as myself.

As I have seen the LFB commander he has stated that there will be more fire units attending this scene due to the size of this fire. I have seen firefighters on the NORTH EAST side of the tower attempting to put out the blaze. At the point I have come to the scene I have been unable to distinguish where this fire has started and how quickly it has spread. I can parts of cladding from the NORTHEAST side falling of the building at this early stage near to where some firefighters are attempting to put out the blaze. My immediate concern was getting residents who were exiting the building out of imminent threat and to where 119BS had started a cordon on CLAERDON ROAD. I am instructing residents to move back and assisting them from leaving the tower block. I am having individuals very upset and screaming at myself in relation to relatives still in the tower block and various others concerns they had. I have attempted to move back this crowd to allow LFB to be able to work uninterrupted. As I am liaising with LFB I can see the stairwell of the tower block and seeing people struggling to move down the door way. I could start to see smoke in the hallway, people were also standing in the vicinity of the entrance which I believed would hinder the LFB and put these residents in immediate danger.

I have headed into the tower block to move away individuals and usher them out of the way. I risk assessed this and I believed that the for at that moment I was safe for myself to enter to help preserve life as best as I could and to make sure that LFB are able to enter this premises and there are no additional risk to them or the public attempting to leave the building and people waiting to get family or attempting to re-enter the building. I have spent a period of time helping individuals in the stairwell of the building attempting to exit this building. I could see the smoke in the stairwell and the smell at that point indicated

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to myself that this was a very serious situation and much worse than I initially thought. I had grave concerns about members of public exiting this building and when I could see that the stairwell was clear at that point I have gone outside of the entrance of the tower block and I recall around 10-15 people there who extremely distressed and not moving to safety. I have had to move these people back and ensure that they did not return. Seeing the fire beginning to engulf the NORTHEAST side I became increasingly concerned and worried for the safety of the fire brigade. As people were attempting to get back into the building I have at times had to physically stop people attempting to re-enter and change my tone to a more autoreactive tone stating that "they will not be going back into the building, and they are hindering the fire brigade by not vacating the area." I remember one (1) male who was becoming aggressive and stating he would not move and I would have to arrest him." He has been filming the fire and always going towards the fire engine, I have had to physically move this male towards my colleague 119BS SANGHA. I am unsure at which point but I have spoken to METCC in relation to getting LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE (LAS) running to the location as I feared that there would be multiple casualties. I had looked at where the fire had initially been when I arrived on scene and the fire now appeared to have risen vertically to the flats above the treeline and seemed to be engulfing flats several floors above, however I am unable to state which specific floors that was. After speaking to LFB commander he has stated that more fire units would be arriving on scene and space would need to be made for the fire brigade to be able to accommodate this. When speaking to LFB command I could identify the seriousness of the situation when they have stated that a lot more fire units would be attending this scene and this incident had now escalated from a normal fire to a very serious and major fire unlike anything that I have ever experienced before. At this point have checked the WEST SIDE of the tower where residents have been congregating as people were star bursting upon exiting the building. At this point I could see there some people at this muster point and I have stated to them to move to a safe location as they were not safe to stay there. Due to the fact it was only myself on scene at this time I was unable to physically move them due to my prioritise of getting people out of the tower and facilitating getting these residents away from immediate danger. I am unable to recall if I have done this before or after entering GRENFELL tower to assist people out of the building as this happened in a very short time frame. Assistance has arrived as I have seen A/PS Logue and A/INSP THATCHER who have come to my location and have assisted in moving individuals back from the scene and a cordon was being introduced on BOMORE ROAD and this appeared to be happening gradually from what I could see. I have spoken to A/INSP THATCHER who when I have spoken to has asked if I could go to the SOUTH SIDE of the tower Along BRAMLEY

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ROAD in order to see if people were evacuating from there and access crowd control. Once I had assessed this and what resources would be required to liaise with A/INSP THATCHER (BS1). I have made my way Along BOMORE ROAD, onto WHITCHURCH ROAD where I have seen residents from the neighbouring flats asking what was going on and if they were safe to go into the flats, at this moment in time I had no knowledge of the extent of the fire and if LFB had not wanted any residents of neighbouring flats to go in the vicinity of these flats, so I have stated to this female if there are concerns go to the RVP on BONMORE ROAD and seek advice, there was a building fence blocking people moving from these flats to the road. I have moved this to allow easy access for people should they require this. I have made my way onto BRAMLEY ROAD and walked onto STATION WALK, this was a route SOUTH of the GRENFELL TOWER where casualties and members of the public may have mustered after leaving the tower or members of the public wanting to view the tower. At this point I was the only police officer at this location. As I arrived and walked down to the bottom of STATION WALK I could see a crowd of approximately 40-50 people at the bottom of STATION WALK by the park which was by the base, SOUTH of the tower. At this point the building was heavily ablaze and I could see the fire was spreading much quicker than I had anticipated and was a little shocked in relation to the haste of the fire. Still at this early stage of this incident there was debris already coming off the building. There was a very intense heat which you could feel. When I could see the crowd of people I felt very anxious as I was attempting to move them back to the top of STATION ROAD junction with BRAMLEY ROAD as felt initially that was an initial adequate cordon for members of public to be out of immediate danger from the fire and debris falling of the tower. When I have been asking people to move back it has been met with hostility from the crowd. I have had people refusing to move and attempting to usher people up STATION WALK has also been met with hostility and have had people shouting and screaming at me and also point blank refusing to do so. I felt at this point I would be unable to move these people due to the sheer numbers of crowd to myself. I have then noticed to my left two (2) police hi visibility jackets and have recognised PC COLLINGS 412BS moving in my direction from the base of the SOUTHSIDE of the tower. Himself with another PC and myself have been able to push back the crowd to the beginning of STATIONWALK/BRAMLEY ROAD and been able to set up some type of cordon where individuals were out of immediate danger of the fire and falling debris. PC COLLINS has headed back to the base of the SOUTHSIDE of the tower and there were still casualties and I believe that LFB required police assistance at this time. I have now been pushed up and I covering STATION WALK/BRAMLEY ROAD. There is only myself and I can see the crowd rising, there are women hysterical whom I am attempting to

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comfort whilst the crowd are a mixture of what I believe to be local residents, residents of the tower block and members of the public. There was a lot of tension and I was scared at this moment in time as I felt the crowd could turn quite easily and my concern was that numerous people would attempt to go back towards the tower block and put themselves in danger and potentially being very seriously injured or becoming a fatality. I have tried to the best of my ability to keep some sort of cordon by myself, however there is a walk way bridge which leads you from STATION WALK back to the base of GRENFELL TOWER. I was powerless to stop individuals going up there and also watching STATION WALK to stop the crowd from heading back towards the tower block. I have had to make a decision of covering STATION WALK as I felt at the time this is where most people could access the tower quickest and could and posed the biggest risk, which is why I have focused my attention on that area, whilst echoing commands to people attempting to go on the walk way bridge to "GET BACK." There have been some anti police rhetoric from the crowd ASKING WHY WERE NOT ENTERING THE BUILDING. WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING AND YOU SHOULD BE HELPING THOSE PEOPLE IN THE TOWER. I have attempted to communicate to the crowd stating what emergency services were doing and checking to see if any persons had been injured and to make themselves known to police. I have seen a white helmet firefighter who I have liaised with. I have identified him as a supervisor due to the colour of his helmet. I liaised with the firefighter in relation to what resources were required to be brought onto STATION WALK the SOUTHSIDE of the tower. He has stated that more units would be arriving imminently and we needed to make room for these units to attend and to whether they would be able to fit down STATION WALK. The crowd have been very difficult to move and I was worried due to the fact that BRAMLEY ROAD was still open and cars were still using this road and the crowd has pushed back onto the road which may have led to an accident, so was attempting to move the back to the far side of the road pavement and creating a sterile area for the LFB so they can work unhindered. The crowd were getting heated in relation to what I perceive as emergency services response and tempers did flare, in particular one incident where a member of the public has begun shouting and swearing at a fire supervisor in relation to his role in the fire and that he should be doing more. There has been a verbal altercation and it has gotten to the point of where I have had to intervene to ensure this situation did not escalate any further. I have requested on PR for more units to come to my location as I felt that I would not be able to control the crowd and there was potential for mass disorder which I felt would put myself and the other emergency service personnel in danger of attack and also a distraction from being able to assist the LFB and help casualties from the tower. I am unsure of when PS VALENTE 4BS has whoever I remember

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seeing PS VALENTE and I have given her a situation report of events on the SOUTHSIDE of the tower block. Once I have fully briefed PS VALENTE we have attempted to put in place a more structured cordon and we have attempted to clear the walkway bridge which allows people access to I believe the WESTBASE of the tower. Some point relatively soon after LFB have brought two (2) units which have been directed onto STATION WALK. I believe there were also Fire engines on BRAMLEY ROAD but I am unable to recall for when they have arrived and how many were there. PS VALENTE has cleared the WALKWAY BRIDGE leading to the top of STATION WALK which has been cleared by other officers but I do not know who these officers were. When LFB have managed to get units onto STATION WALK I have been handed cordon tape and attempted to put cordons on the far pavement of BRAMLEY ROAD to ensure safety of the crowd that was gathering because BRAMLEY ROAD has not been closed at this point due to insufficient resources. My role at this point was ensuring that STATION WALK was left as sterile as possible for the LFB to set up, unload equipment and be able to assess the scene and liaise with ourselves from what they might require from police. I was very anxious and worried as I felt that due to the mixture of feelings with the crowd and the high emotions that the public could breach the cordon and interfere with the LFB or attempt to access the tower block and put themselves in risk of serious injury/death. In and there was inadequate resources at that moment to be able to have an effective cordon. When seeing this issue I have requested more units to my location. There has been a male who was filming the crowd and police actions which has caused unrest and hostility from the crowd and I have heard someone telling the male to "FUCK OFF". I have gone in that vicinity to ensure that the situation did not escalate. This male has left the scene. There has been angry rhetoric from the crowd to emergency services. Asking why we haven't got the planes with buckets of water to put over the top of the building and we are we not going into the building amongst other profanities. I remember there was a very agitated male who was swearing at myself and LFB telling us to "FUCK OFF" and to "DO OUR FUCKING JOBS". There were many other profanities from this male which I can't remember and it seemed he wanted to fight by his body language and his aggressive nature towards emergency services. This male was with people who have calmed him and taken him back into the crowd and eased this situation. Since there were many people in that crowd who were speaking to people in the flat, on advice of the LFB I have instructed to the crowd that there has been a dedicated line set up on 999 and for anybody in the building to ring 999 and state they were in GRENFELL TOWER. I have also made enquires to for anyone in the crowd who may have exposed to smoke or have any sort of injuries to make themselves known to myself so I can get them medical treatment There has been nobody made themselves known

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from the crowd. I had kept an eye on the fire brigade however there now appeared to be more fireman and I believe that they were going into the building and started to bring casualties to the top section of STATION WALK where the cordon has been placed. Initially there are very few casualties. I have noticed as time has gone on there were more casualties being brought from the firemen to that location. LFB were treating these casualties for smoke inhalation and given them oxygen. Around this point in time I have had members of the public speaking to me saying that they have family or friends in the building, I have spoken to a female who has passed me a phone from an individual who was in the tower. I can't remember what room the individual was in as I had numerous different people throughout the night given me different apartment numbers of friends and family who were in GRENfell TOWER. After I had been handed the phone I spoke to a female who was in the tower and the advice I gave to this female was the advice which I was given from LFB, to put a damp towel under doors and to remain low. I have relayed this and then passed the phone back to the member of the public. I cannot remember how many people I have spoken to over the phone, However this is the advice that I have been given from LFB to relay to anyone in the building. Whilst speaking to these people I have felt completely redundant and unable to help these people who were trapped in the building which is what I wanted to be able to do. Seeing the size of the fire at this moment in time now engulfing the building and seeing the crowd where you could see family and friends in a state of panic and over loved ones in the building I felt guilt that I was not able to help these people. I have taken a moment and I could LFB beginning to bring more casualties up from the SOUTHSIDE base of the tower, in particular a young girl I believe around 6-7 years old. I have run down to the fireman who has explained that this girl has lost her family. I have taken the girl and have attempted to see if this girl's parent was in the crowd. Eventually a mother and father have come forward and the child has been reunited with her parents. As the casualties have started to amass we have required LAS to come to the scene. At this point The people have been walking wounded but the more time passing it seemed that the severity of the casualties were getting more serious. There was a family brought to the top of the cordon (1) male (1) female and (1) child who were in need of medical assistance, believed to be smoke inhalation. At this point there was no LAS on scene with this so I believe that fireman have given the three of them oxygen and water for a period of time myself and PS VALENTE have helped deal with the walking wounded. There are other instances where I have helped casualties with various different level of injuries however I am unable to remember the individuals as at this point there was more and more casualties. I also recall that I brought another child casualty to myself or PS VALENTE but unable to remember the specifics in relation to this. I remember a Serial which I believe

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was a BS CT serial and I remember seeing PS Simon BLONDELL and PC Jack MONTIGUE arriving and given assistance to myself and PS VALENTE on the cordon. When we have felt that there were sufficient amount of police officers on the cordons, myself and PS VALENTE have gone to assist LFB at the base of the SOUTHSIDE of the tower with casualties coming out of GRENFELL TOWER or whichever way the LFB wished to utilize us. I was joined at this point by A/PS HANDLEY, PC LEADER 284BS, PC STOCKFORD 337BS, PC ELLIOTT 459BS along with PS VALENTE have awaited instruction of LFB. When we have got to near the base of the building I have seen the entire top half of the south side on flames. You could feel the heat from where I was standing and looking at the ferocity of the fire I was shocked that the building was still intact, I felt a sense of fear at that point thinking that the building may collapse and was shocked at how quickly the fire was spreading, the intensity of the fire and how anybody in the building could survive that fire. I was also honestly shocked that the building had not falling at this point. You could see large pieces of cladding falling of the SOUTHSIDE as LFB are attempting to enter the building from that side. I have seen injured LFB leaving the side and I have helped these firefighters as best as I could and we have assisting them when they have sought medical attention. I and the other officers in the location have assisted numerous casualties being brought out of the tower block. I can remember being given a boy around the age of about (10) ten and carrying him to a paramedic for treatment. Other officers have taken the casualties of LFB as they are exiting the building and taking them to be paramedics were, who now were on scene. Due to the fact I had moved down the base of the tower with the officers I have mentioned so I am unsure when other emergency services have arrived. I do remember seeing numerous LAS units with equipment at the base of SOUTHSIDE of the tower and at the top of STATION WALK. I am unable to account for every casualty which was coming out of the building as at this point I was exhausted. I had been constantly moving about and dealing with the situation and an LFB supervisor was concerned about myself so he has told me to sit done for 5 minutes and have water. I have taken a few minutes and rehydrated. As I sat and seen the fire spreading across the SOUTHSIDE of the tower I felt sick as I began to think about the amount of people who were still in the tower and the sheer size of the tower that LFB would have to cover. I have resumed assisting casualties and have seen the condition of the fire and the amount of debris increase which I began seeing the difficulty LFB were having merely attempting to get into the tower. We have been joined by some BTP officers and TERRITORAL SUPPORT GROUP (TSG) who I believe they were kitted in fire retardant coveralls and with helmets and shields. When they were fully kitted I remember them using shields to protect firefighters going into the building and helping protect

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firefighters and casualties as they were leaving the tower. The longer this continued the severity of the casualties became worse. I remember seeing people being carried out by LFB and paramedics have begun working on these what I perceived to be initially the critical casualties at the start of STATION WALK. I am unsure of the time but this is where I have seen a male brought out of the building and by LAS and they have conducted CPR on this male, but a short time later has been declared deceased. This is when it has hit home to me that there was going to be mass fatalities and I was prepared to assist to facilitate this when LFB began bringing out fatalities. After assisting casualties to what I believe was now the triage centre at the top of STATION WALK I remember seeing LAS doing CPR on a teenager and other emergency services holding up tar poling. We continued to assist moving casualties to this triage point from the base of the SOUTHSIDE of the tower. This consisted of people severely injured being put on make shift stretches and TSG, BTP and ourselves assist with the movement of the casualties. A male was brought out of the building with a towel over his head inconsolable crying and screaming that his pregnant wife and daughter had been separated from him in a tower and wanted to go back in and find them. I and 337BS have helped take the male who was limp and sobbing uncontrollably. The male is describing his daughter as [REDACTED] years old. My colleague has remembered helping a female out of the building early who was [REDACTED] years old and the male has also stated his wife was 7 months pregnant. My colleague has remembered helping both of these individuals very recently. As we have been assisting this male 337BS has stated that he has remembered a girl called Megan which the male has confirmed is the name of his daughter. As we have got to the triage point the male has seen his daughter and have been able to reunite this male with his wife and daughter. Which with everyone that I have been dealing with has given me a huge sense of pride to be able to assist with reuniting this family. I have gone to wait back at the base of STATION WALK to continue assist with casualties. I have noticed that there were more and more fireman who were waiting near my location. The fireman looked exhausted but were awaiting to go back into the tower. However they did not seem to be going back into the tower. This is when a sense of dread hit onto me as there we no more casualties being brought to the location which made me think that there we still numerous people in the tower however LFB were no longer going into the location. This is where I thought that it must be too dangerous for the fire fighters to go into the tower. I have later heard on the PR that people in the tower were to "self-evacuate." This is the point where I felt physically sick as from my view point I could see people in the windows of the tower trying to get the attention of emergency services, with lights opening the window and all I have been able to do is watch as the fire has moved towards them. And I felt complete helpless not being able to do anything and seeing

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the reaction of my colleagues and firefighters with paramedics will always stay with myself as the look on everyone's face of helplessness. I felt so angry that there was nothing I was able to physically do. There was a lull where I was just watching what was happening, however there were occasionally casualties brought out of the tower. I remember helping one (1) sister to the triage point. I could see another female fighting police. However it transpires that they were both sisters and the (1) one female fighting police was devastated she had lost her sister. However we were able to communicate that they were both safe. I believe these sisters were on the 20-24th floor from what I remember them saying. After a period of times when there is no longer casualties coming out of the building myself and other officers have wanted to help, so we have been tasked to get a sterile area on BRAMLEY ROAD where multiple ambulances were and assist them being able to move from the location with the large crowds and to reassure the public. I have received a phone call from PC NEAVE 620BS who has informed me that fire brigade command require a Police liaison officer (PLO) to assist with their operation. Their command post was on BRAMLEY ROAD. I have attended where I have been liaising with FIRE COMMANDER Lee DRAWBRIDGE. My role has been to work in unison with LFB to be able to facilitate what LFB require and myself to liaise with GT in order to be able to accommodate LFB. While I have been working in this role with COMMANDER DRAWBRIDGE there have been numerous tasks which LFB have been asked to assist the LFB with, such as moving the fire units on scene with fresh fire units on LADBROKE GROVE, set up RVP for press and journalists and other tasks which I cannot specifically remember. Also I have passed on police a CAD to them in relation to member of the public seeing what they believe to be a person in the building and have given that to the LFB COMMAND structure. I also facilitated the transport of an injured firefighter sustaining burns to hospital as I believed there were no units from LFB or LAS free and able to assist at that point. I have utilised a BS response team unit call sign BS85N PC Alex DIXON 425BS and PC Victoria STENNING 471 BS to ferry this firefighter to CHELSEA AND WEST hospital. I have utilised this BS asset to assist with any injured emergency services personnel for as long as I could use that unit. There no further casualties from LFB or LAS that required transport at the time that I have conducted the role as PLO. I believe that BS85N were relieved as the vehicle was required. I have had assistance with the PLO role with PS BLONDELL. I have been relieved from my post at I believe around approx. 1030 hours possibly later. I have then gone to the RVP at BOMORE ROAD where we have met with all officers from ERPT A and have been taken back to KENSINGTON POLICE STATION. We have had a de brief in relation this incident at KENSINGTON.

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