



GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY RT

Day 267

April 25, 2022

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1 Monday, 25 April 2022
2 (10.00 am)
3 (Proceedings delayed)
4 (10.10 am)
5 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to
6 today's hearing. Today we're going to continue hearing
7 evidence from some of those who were directly involved
8 in the fire and the events which occurred immediately
9 after it.
10 Yes, Mr Millett.
11 MR MILLETT: Yes, good morning, Mr Chairman. Good morning,
12 members of the panel.
13 I now call Mr Nabil Choucair, please.
14 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you.
15 MR NABIL CHOUCAIR (sworn)
16 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you very much. Would you like
17 to sit down and make yourself comfortable, please.
18 THE WITNESS: Thank you.
19 (Pause)
20 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes, Mr Millett, when you're ready.
21 MR MILLETT: Thank you, Mr Chairman.
22 Questions from COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY
23 MR MILLETT: Mr Choucair, good morning.
24 May I start by thanking you very much for coming
25 here to the Inquiry and assisting us with our

1

1 investigations. We are extremely grateful to you.
2 By way of introduction, can I ask you, please, to
3 keep your voice up so that the person who sits to your
4 right and is typing can get down on the transcript your
5 evidence clearly. Please also don't shake your head or
6 nod your head; you have to say "yes" or "no" as the case
7 may be.
8 A. Sure, no problem.
9 Q. Okay.
10 Now, if any of my questions are unclear or you would
11 like me to repeat them or put them in a different way,
12 I can do that.
13 A. Okay.
14 Q. As you probably know, we will take a break halfway
15 through the morning, just so that everybody can get
16 a break, but if you need a break at any other time, we
17 can do that too.
18 Now, you have made two statements to the Inquiry.
19 The first is at {IWS00001069}. Can we please have that
20 up on the screen. That's dated 11 September 2018.
21 Is that the first page of your first statement
22 there?
23 A. It is, yes.
24 Q. Thank you.
25 Can we please turn to page 8. There's a signature

2

1 there under the statement of truth. Is that your
2 signature?
3 A. It is, yes.
4 Q. Thank you.
5 Can we please turn to your second statement. That's
6 at {IWS00002365}.
7 Is that the first page of your second statement
8 there?
9 A. It is, yes.
10 Q. Thank you.
11 Can we please turn to page 8 in that statement. You
12 will see there's a statement of truth in the middle of
13 the screen with a signature underneath it, above the
14 date, 28 February 2019. Is that your signature?
15 A. It is, but I just want to say I think the date of the
16 year should be 2020 rather than 2019.
17 Q. Yes, thank you. I was going to ask you that. So that
18 should be 2020.
19 Have you had the opportunity to read both of these
20 statements that I've just shown you recently?
21 A. I have, yes.
22 Q. Can you confirm that the contents of each of these
23 statements are true?
24 A. Yes.
25 Q. Thank you.

3

1 Now, I just want to ask you one or two questions
2 first, if I may, Mr Choucair, about your connection with
3 Grenfell Tower.
4 You had a strong connection with the building,
5 didn't you, because a number of your family members
6 lived there; is that right?
7 A. That's correct.
8 Q. Just to identify them, am I right that it was your
9 sister, Nadia, and her husband, Bassem, who lived at
10 flat 193; yes?
11 A. That's correct.
12 Q. And they had three children.
13 A. Yes, that's correct.
14 Q. Your nieces, Mierna, Fatima and Zainab; yes?
15 A. That's correct.
16 Q. Yes, your mother, Sirria —
17 A. Yes.
18 Q. — lived at 191 with your other sister, Sawsan.
19 A. That's correct.
20 Q. Yes.
21 Now, you gave a commemoration to the Inquiry on
22 22 May 2018 for your family, and you explained to us at
23 that stage and to everybody listening the experience
24 that you endured, and are still enduring, as a result of
25 what's happened to your family. I want to make sure

4

1 that we all bear that in mind when you're giving your
 2 evidence.
 3 A. That's correct.
 4 Q. But you'll recall that.
 5 A. I do, yes.
 6 Q. I want just to ask you about the night of the fire.
 7 I think it's right — and correct me if this isn't
 8 right — that you became aware of the fire first when
 9 your sister, Sawsan, telephoned you on the night of
 10 14 June.
 11 A. That's correct, yes.
 12 Q. I say on the night; in the early hours of 14 June.
 13 A. In the early hours, that's right.
 14 Q. That was, I think you tell us, between 2.30 and 2.40 am.
 15 That's what you say in your first statement at
 16 paragraph 17 {IWS00001069/5}. Is that correct?
 17 A. That's correct.
 18 Q. You also say in the next paragraph — let's have that
 19 up, actually. It's page 5 of the first statement
 20 {IWS00001069/5}, paragraph 18. You say:
 21 "I tried phoning Nadia but the phone just kept
 22 ringing and ringing."
 23 That's right, is it, you couldn't get an answer?
 24 A. That's correct, yeah.
 25 Q. Then I think you say you called your brother, Hisam, to

5

1 "tell him what had happened and to meet me at the
 2 tower".
 3 A. That's right.
 4 Q. Yes:
 5 "I told Malak to keep trying Nadia and her brother
 6 Baseem ..."
 7 You say there; should that be Bassem or Baseem?
 8 A. Bassem.
 9 Q. Bassem:
 10 "... who were inside the tower and I then left home
 11 and left Nadia with our three children at home."
 12 A. That's correct.
 13 Q. Now, you then arrived at the tower. You say:
 14 "I then rushed down to the tower. Coincidentally
 15 both my brother Hisam and I both arrived at about the
 16 same point in time and I parked under the Westway Sports
 17 Centre."
 18 Can you tell us a little bit about the scene you
 19 observed when you arrived?
 20 A. There was a cordon. The road had been cordoned off.
 21 Ambulance was going and coming, Fire Brigade was going
 22 and coming. It was like chaos. The fire — the tower
 23 was ablaze. It was just the worst nightmare you could
 24 ever, ever imagine and see.
 25 Q. Where, on the cordon, were you? Which part of the

6

1 cordon did you arrive at?
 2 A. I arrived at — it was on Bramley Road.
 3 Q. Bramley Road.
 4 A. I think it was at the junction of Stoneleigh(?) Road or
 5 something.
 6 Q. Right. And you could see the tower clearly from there,
 7 could you?
 8 A. I could see the tower, yeah.
 9 Q. Did you see anyone when you arrived from RBKC or the
 10 TMO?
 11 A. No, I did not.
 12 Q. What was going through your mind when you arrived at the
 13 cordon and could see the building and were trying to
 14 find your family?
 15 A. I was hoping that my family and everybody had made it
 16 out, and nobody was in the tower.
 17 Q. Now, can we go to your second statement, please. I just
 18 want to ask you about your search in the early hours of
 19 that morning.
 20 If we go to page 4 of your second statement
 21 {IWS00002365/4}, please, paragraph 20, you have a little
 22 heading which says "Rest centres", and then you say:
 23 "My brother [Hisam] and I learned that some of the
 24 local halls were being opened up for displaced
 25 residents. This was around the early hours of the

7

1 morning — roughly 5:00—6:00am of the 14th. My brother
 2 and I separated to search these centres. We kept
 3 hearing from people on the streets (others looking for
 4 their loved ones) that these centres were opening up for
 5 the residents that had been evacuated from the Tower."
 6 So is this right: that between you and your brother
 7 and sister, Hisam and Sawsan, you in all, I think,
 8 searched some six rest centres, looking for your family?
 9 A. That's correct.
 10 Q. Right.
 11 Is it right that you were hearing about those rest
 12 centres from other people in the street?
 13 A. From around, yes, that's correct, yeah.
 14 Q. So do I take it from that that you weren't getting any
 15 information about which these rest centres were or where
 16 they were from any official source?
 17 A. No, just from people looking for their loved ones and
 18 missing people, you know.
 19 Q. Right.
 20 At that time, did you understand that those rest
 21 centres were official rest centres or community-led?
 22 A. We didn't know whether they were community-led or they
 23 were official, we just knew that they were being opened
 24 up for people to be taken there.
 25 Q. How easy was it to identify and access these rest

8

1 centres?

2 A. You could access them, but, you know, getting

3 information was — you know, it was ask and wait kind of

4 thing. But, you know, it was all panic, all over, and

5 there was a lot of uncertainty.

6 Q. Right. When you say uncertainty, was that because you

7 weren't sure whether to trust what people in the street

8 were telling you?

9 A. We didn't know where and what time the places were open

10 or whether the fact — or the families would be in there

11 or not.

12 Q. Right.

13 If we go to page 5 of your second statement

14 {IWS00002365/5}, the next page, paragraph 27, you say

15 this, under the heading "Response from the authorities"

16 at the foot of the screen there, you say:

17 "Rest centres: The response was a mess even within

18 the rest centres, one minute someone was there, the next

19 minute everyone was gone. As explained above there was

20 a lack of coordination and the rest centres were often

21 unmanned. I do not recall whether there were any

22 officials from RBKC or central government; we were just

23 looking for our loved one. There was so much confusion

24 and no arrangements or control of anything. Nobody knew

25 who was where."

9

1 Is that right, you can confirm that here?

2 A. Yes, that's correct.

3 Q. Were you aware of something called a friends and family

4 assistance centre having been set up?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Or some kind of centre to provide information for people

7 like you, looking for their loved ones? No?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Were members of the community — is this how it

10 worked — essentially pulling together in these rest

11 centres, trying to offer support?

12 (Pause)

13 A. It was just chaos. It was just a lot of chaos, as far

14 as I remember.

15 Q. When you got to these rest centres, did you find them

16 helpful in providing information about where your loved

17 ones might be or giving you support in any way?

18 A. There wasn't very much help. I mean, it was a lot of

19 confusion, and, you know, it was — there was a lot of

20 chaos going on on the day. The morning, should I say.

21 Q. If we go back a page in your second statement to

22 paragraph 23 on page 4 {IWS00002365/4}, you say there,

23 and I think we pick it up at the beginning of

24 paragraph 23 at the foot of page 4:

25 "The search for our loved ones: After checking the

10

1 centres and registering the names at the centre on the

2 morning of the 14th June, I decided we should go to

3 check the hospitals in case my family had been taken

4 there."

5 Then you go on to describe you and Hisam's journey

6 through London, checking each of these hospitals.

7 Why did you feel at the time that you had to search

8 for your family from hospital to hospital?

9 A. I believed — I thought just in case they had been —

10 they had made it out or they had been rescued, maybe we

11 might be able to find them in a hospital or so. So

12 there was a chance. Since we wasn't — we had searched

13 everywhere else and there was no luck anywhere else, we

14 thought, you know, maybe that's the next step, we might

15 be lucky to find or hope to find.

16 Q. Right.

17 Did you observe anybody at the rest centres getting

18 any help about the way to go about finding their loved

19 ones who weren't there?

20 (Pause)

21 A. Well, we noticed people were — it was chaos. I mean,

22 you know, they could only help with what they had or

23 they knew who was there, you know, if it was helpful to

24 them. But it was just, as I say, a lot of chaos, and it

25 was a lot of panic, it was a lot of — nobody knew what

11

1 was going on or what was happening, and confusion and

2 everything else.

3 Q. Now, you say in paragraphs 16 and 17 of this

4 statement — and if we go back a page we can see them on

5 the screen {IWS00002365/3} — that whilst searching

6 hospitals, you called an emergency helpline during the

7 course of the morning of 14 June. Is that correct?

8 A. That's correct, yes.

9 Q. And you say that you learnt about that number between

10 7 am and 8 am and you tried it, and I think eventually

11 got through at about 8.30; is that right?

12 A. That's correct, yes.

13 Q. Can you just tell us what happened when you got through?

14 A. That we had to give — they asked for the members'

15 names, who they were, and, you know, what they were

16 related to, you know, who they were related to, their

17 ages, the date of birth, et cetera.

18 Q. Right. Did they tell you what they were going to do

19 with that information?

20 A. They did not tell us what they was going to do, no. No.

21 I was on — I was assuming that they would tell us —

22 once we gave that information to them, they would come

23 back or they would tell us that, "Yeah, we do have your

24 loved ones", or, "We don't have them", or, "We haven't

25 come across them yet", or so.

12

1 Q. So were you expecting them to call you back with
2 information?
3 A. I did expect them to call me and to notify me and let me
4 know, you know, if they had found our loved ones or not.
5 Q. Right. Did they say anything to you to lead you to
6 think that they would call you back with useful
7 information?
8 A. They did not say nothing, no. No. You know, it was
9 more like they were taking more information from us, but
10 not giving anything or being helpful, in the sense when
11 you really wanted to know what was going on, and, "Have
12 you heard about them, do you know about them or have
13 they turned up in your care or, you know, do you have
14 them on your list?", you know, that's what we wanted to
15 know, because there was no — even that clue, you know.
16 Q. Did they tell you what the process that they were
17 running was?
18 A. They did not mention no process, no.
19 Q. Did they tell you who was running the service, or was it
20 obvious from the helpline?
21 A. You know, at first, I assumed that it was — you know,
22 they was taking information to give us — you know, they
23 would take the information to give us the feedback,
24 you know, about our families, but then it seemed all
25 very clear at the end, you know, that they was just

13

1 taking information rather than giving information.
2 Q. Yes.
3 You say four lines down in paragraph 18 that they
4 gave you a reference number and said that they would
5 call you back. Did they tell you what the reference
6 number was for?
7 A. They said, you know, "If you need ..." It was, "It's
8 been logged that, you know, you've made the kind of log,
9 the logging kind of thing for what you've just said, and
10 we've taken it, and that's the reference number for it".
11 Q. You go on to say:
12 "I did not find the service helpful as I don't ever
13 recall anyone calling me back. In fact it was the
14 opposite, it was frustrating as I kept waiting for an
15 answer, waiting for an update and none came. I found
16 that it was a number for data collection rather than
17 them phoning back with any feedback as to where my
18 family may have been."
19 How did you discover that it was a number for data
20 collection? Did somebody tell you that or was that
21 a conclusion that you drew from the fact that nobody
22 called you back?
23 A. That was the conclusion that I drew, yes, because they
24 didn't call me back. You know, they took the
25 information and they didn't give us anything, you know.

14

1 Q. Right. Did they tell you how you could use the
2 reference number that they'd given you?
3 A. No.
4 Q. Now, in paragraph 23, if we just scroll down to the foot
5 of page 4 again {IWS00002365/4} — we've looked at this
6 a minute ago together but let's just look at it again —
7 you say — and I'm summarising, tell me if this is
8 wrong — that as you continued to search the hospitals,
9 one of the key issues and problems that you and Hisam,
10 your brother, faced was that hospitals were not
11 providing information because of what they said was
12 confidentiality concerns. Is that right?
13 A. That's correct, yes.
14 Q. Did they explain those concerns to you at all?
15 A. Well, at the time my brother was checking the hospitals,
16 so whether they explained it to him or not — but,
17 I mean, we did come across a few that were being very
18 awkward under — you know, mentioned that under the data
19 protection, they wasn't giving out — even though it was
20 an emergency and we told them, you know, we were looking
21 for our families, or he was — you know, he mentioned
22 that he was looking for his family.
23 Q. If we go to page 5 {IWS00002365/5}, still within
24 paragraph 23, you say, six lines down, can you see:
25 "We kept going around and around to the hospitals as

15

1 time progressed into the early evening. In between we
2 kept phoning them up but it was the same as before, some
3 could give us information and some were reluctant and
4 didn't."
5 That's right, is it?
6 A. That's right. Some did give us —
7 Q. Right.
8 A. Some were very helpful and some weren't, you know.
9 Q. Right. What did you make of the fact that there was
10 this difference in approach between one hospital and
11 another about their willingness to give you information
12 about your loved ones?
13 A. It's ... you know, I can understand under data
14 protection, but the fact when you have an emergency, and
15 that one is saying something and another is saying
16 another, you know, you should have one rule and one
17 policy throughout. The fact that they were being
18 different and difficult in such an emergency —
19 exceptional circumstances where, you know, this was
20 unforeseen, you know, you're looking for your loved
21 ones, you can at least be — work with it kind of thing,
22 you know, and be helpful.
23 Q. Right.
24 Do you remember whether there was any official
25 presence at any of these hospitals, such as officers

16

1 from the Metropolitan Police or officials from RBKC,
 2 providing information to those in your position?
 3 A. You mean at the cordon?
 4 Q. At the hospitals.
 5 A. Oh, at the hospital. I didn't ask — I didn't go in to
 6 ask at the hospital, it was my brother, so I was making
 7 phone calls, trying to find out from other hospitals.
 8 Q. Yes.
 9 Now, speaking of phone calls, we have a transcript
 10 of a call that you made to the Metropolitan Police on
 11 14 June 2017, in which you're trying to find information
 12 on your missing family, and I just want to look at the
 13 transcript with you, if I may. It's a contemporaneous
 14 document, so let's see how we go with it. It's at
 15 {MET00014169}.
 16 As you can see from the top, it's call 48 with
 17 cad 9827 on 14 June 2017. I'm not sure we can time the
 18 call any better than that, but perhaps you can help us,
 19 Mr Choucair.
 20 It says:
 21 "Operator: Metropolitan Police. How can I help?
 22 Hello, Metropolitan Police.
 23 "Caller: We've got some family visiting (inaudible)
 24 earlier on today and I haven't heard from them. I've
 25 searched every hospital and I've called every centre,

17

1 and I still haven't had any feedback from anybody.
 2 Could you help me please?
 3 "Operator: Right, sorry. Who are you looking for?
 4 "Caller: My mother and her and my sister and her
 5 family. I reported it earlier on ...
 6 "Operator: Just a minute.
 7 "Caller ... right? To you guys.
 8 "Operator: And what's your name?
 9 "Caller: My name's Nabil CHOUCAIR.
 10 "Operator: Ah er okay. Erm is this regarding the
 11 potential fire at um Grenfell Tower, yeah?
 12 "Caller: Grenfell Tower that's correct, yeah.
 13 "Operator: Okay.
 14 "Caller: I've got I've got I've dialed er .. er the
 15 bureau number; I've gone to every what you call it er
 16 you know like Salvation Army, and er all these charity
 17 whatever things that they're doing, hostels and a—all
 18 that ...
 19 "Operator: Right
 20 "Caller ... and even tried every hospital. No
 21 luck."
 22 Just pausing there, do you remember roughly —
 23 I know it's difficult, just looking at what I've shown
 24 you — what time you made this call?
 25 A. I would assume, from what I've said, it's after the

18

1 bureau time of maybe 7.00 — 8.30 or so, I would assume.
 2 Q. Yes, right.
 3 A. Because I — you know, I'd made the call to the bureau,
 4 the number that was given, so it would only assume that
 5 I did it at — roughly after that time.
 6 Q. I see, thank you.
 7 Yes, and when you refer to the Salvation Army and
 8 other charities and hostels, do you mean the rest
 9 centres?
 10 A. The rest centres, I think.
 11 Q. Yes, yes, thank you.
 12 Just above halfway down the page, the operator says:
 13 "Operator: ... and er what have the Casualty Bureau
 14 said?
 15 "Caller: They say: 'Go and check hospitals.'
 16 They're not very helpful. I've checked all o—of ...
 17 I've all checked all the hospitals."
 18 Is that right, that the Casualty Bureau, when you
 19 rang them, advised you to check the hospitals yourself?
 20 A. I think it was — no, the police is the ones. The
 21 bureau was just taking information. The police were
 22 saying go and check the hospitals, you know, I believe.
 23 Q. Right. So the police at the rest centres, or — well,
 24 let me ask you this way: where were the police or who
 25 were the police advising you to check the hospitals?

19

1 A. No, this is from the phone call of the 999, they was
 2 asking, you know, to go and check the hospitals. But,
 3 you know, we had, like, checked most of them and the
 4 others that were like outside more or less London or so,
 5 we had phoned — I was phoning.
 6 Q. Yes. What I'm just trying to understand is who gave you
 7 the advice to check the hospitals?
 8 A. I would — yeah, I would say that it was the police.
 9 Q. Right.
 10 Then the operator says —
 11 A. Sorry, as in the call — yeah, the police, the caller
 12 from police.
 13 Q. Right. So the Casualty Bureau? Not the
 14 Casualty Bureau?
 15 A. No, the Met Police. This is the call with the police,
 16 not the — what do you call it? Not the Met bureau, no.
 17 Q. Right, okay.
 18 Now, looking a little further down the page, the
 19 operator says:
 20 "... you will need the Casualty Bureau ... they are
 21 the people who ... will — take your report erm
 22 o—obviously i—if you're concerned that they, they might
 23 have been involved. Er, they'll take as many ...
 24 "Caller: I've given them my report twice and they
 25 still haven't contacted me.

20

1 "Operator: Okay right. Okay, the probably the
2 reason, the reason for that is there isn't, there
3 wouldn't be anything to contact you back with at this
4 time, okay? What will happen, if they ... locate these,
5 the potential victims or ... the people you reported as
6 missing, they will then ... contact you back ... So what
7 I would say is hold fire for the moment ..."
8 Then the operator goes on:
9 " ... if you spoke to the Casualty Bureau they are
10 the people who are the ones to ... who are dealing with
11 all the any sort of casualties, and they're the central
12 call, the call erm, call department who are dealing with
13 casualties and um, and missing people from this
14 incident, okay?"
15 Then you give your details again.
16 Then the caller says, after they say "N—N—N— Nabil":
17 "Caller: ... (inaudible) hospitals are closing their
18 lines ... "
19 Do you remember what you meant by that? Obviously
20 you were upset at that point, but do you remember what
21 you meant when you were telling this operator that the
22 hospitals were closing their lines?
23 A. Yeah, there was some — some numbers I tried calling
24 through, and the lines wasn't ringing. It was literally
25 closed. It was a dead line, and so ...

21

1 Q. Right. So these are telephone lines?
2 A. Telephone lines for the hospitals, yes.
3 Q. Right, I see.
4 If we turn to page 2 {MET00014169/2}, halfway down
5 the page on page 2. You've given some further details
6 on the first part of that page, and then halfway down,
7 after you can see it says "Mobile, mobile", at the top
8 of your screen there, the operator says:
9 "Operator: ... so ... you've spoken to the
10 Casualty Bureau, yeah?"
11 "Caller: I have. They said: 'Try the hospitals.'"
12 So it looks as if the Casualty Bureau itself had
13 also told you to try the hospitals, at least looking at
14 this transcript. Would that be right?
15 A. If it's saying there, but I can't recall. I can't
16 recall if they said that. But if it's saying it, I'm
17 assuming, yes.
18 Q. Then the operator says:
19 "Operator: Alright so you've done that.
20 "Caller: I tried the hospitals. I—I've tried every
21 single one. Some of them are then putting me straight
22 through to Casualty Bureau. I—I've put the Ca—Casualty
23 Bureau again. I spoken to hospitals, try again and
24 again nobody, nobody. They take my name, they say
25 they'll contact me. Some take my name and er say they

22

1 contact me; some say um: 'They're not here.' You know?
2 I've been trying and trying. I've gone and visited
3 every single one.
4 "Operator: Okay.
5 "Caller: More than 12 hospitals in London.
6 "Operator: Alright. And you've ... left your
7 details with the Casualty Bureau, yeah?
8 "Caller: I have, yes."
9 So given that at this point you visited more than 12
10 hospitals, would I be right in thinking this is actually
11 some time a little bit later in the morning on the 14th?
12 A. Yes, that's correct.
13 Q. Yes.
14 Then if you go to page 3 {MET00014169/3},
15 Mr Choucair, of this transcript, about a third of the
16 way down the page, now just below halfway down your
17 screen, you say:
18 "Caller: I just wish somebody would inform us more,
19 you know, maybe they've been taken somewhere else and
20 they haven't been told. Maybe they're ... I don't know,
21 you know, they've been allocated by the council.
22 I don't know, I'm — there's so much missing, I don't
23 know what to say, you know? It's — it doesn't seem very
24 clear to me, you know.
25 "Operator: Yeah I see. Er ...

23

1 "Caller: Before I start thinking of the inevitable,
2 without knowing (inaudible).
3 "Operator: If, if er Nabil, if if you say you've
4 you've spoken to all the hospitals and they haven't got
5 them, then then that's gonna be your answer. They're
6 not there. Er ...
7 "Caller: Yeah but they ... they could have brought
8 someone in without they were — or with an oxygen mask
9 and not reported who he is ... Unclear,
10 unregistered ... "
11 Just looking at that, is it right to say that one of
12 the key problems for you on that morning was not just
13 the absence of any information, but the absence of any
14 information about how to get information about your
15 loved ones?
16 A. It was. Yeah, it was very, very unclear. It was
17 very — it was so unorganised. It was — you know, you
18 would think, in a situation, in an emergency, in
19 a catastrophe, there is some sort of plans, some sort of
20 organisation, but there was — it was just — everything
21 was just falling apart, and it was just so unorganised.
22 It was so unhelpful, you know, it was like we were
23 trying forever, but with no help, you know, with no
24 clear sense of help or exactly what, you know, we wanted
25 to hear or know.

24

1 Q. Yes.
 2 If we turn to page 4 in this transcript
 3 {MET00014169/4}, the operator says — and I know I'm
 4 jumping ahead a little bit here:
 5 "Operator Wh—what you've done, Nabil, you've done
 6 the right thing if you've contacted the Casualty Bureau
 7 they've taken your details; they will inform you
 8 if they find anyone at hospital or, worst case
 9 scenario, deceased at the er in the block. They will
 10 con— they will contact you erm and then they'll guide
 11 you in the process of what will happen next regarding
 12 the potential identification of whether they're at the
 13 hospital or at the scene, etc. Okay?
 14 "Caller: Right, okay. No problem. Alright, that's
 15 fine.
 16 "Operator: Okay Nabil. Obv—obviously I—I'm really
 17 sorry ...
 18 "Caller: Yeah, yeah.
 19 "Operator ... obviously that, obviously it's been
 20 a very troublesome time.
 21 "Caller (inaudible)
 22 "Operator: I I really, I can't even begin to
 23 understand how you must be going through. But ...
 24 please be assured erm that we — there are processes in
 25 place which we are trying to follow, and I do apologise

25

1 if it hasn't been explained to you properly or if er you
 2 haven't been informed properly."
 3 Then the call ends with polite exchanges.
 4 Is that right? Does that reflect your experience,
 5 that even if there were processes in place, nobody had
 6 explained them to you, properly or at all?
 7 A. Even if there was processes — it's not the fact that
 8 nobody explained them, we wasn't even getting the help
 9 or the information that we wanted, you know. It was
 10 totally ... it was the worst service ever, you know.
 11 Everything that could go wrong went wrong, and,
 12 you know, it was very unhelpful.
 13 Q. Now, looking ahead from 14 June to the few days that
 14 followed, I think it's right, isn't it, that your search
 15 for your family continued in the week after the fire;
 16 yes?
 17 (Pause)
 18 A. Yes, sorry.
 19 Q. Yes.
 20 If we go to your first statement, again, let's go to
 21 page 7 {IWS00001069/7}, paragraph 31, and you say there:
 22 "The preceding days became more and more painful as
 23 the reality began to sink in but we still did not give
 24 up hope."
 25 Did you get any further information or any help

26

1 about how to get further information during those days?
 2 A. No. No, we were left to — in the early days, we were
 3 left to ourselves to make — to help ourselves and do
 4 what we can, do whatever, whatever way possible, to try
 5 and find whatever we can about our families.
 6 Q. I just want to ask you then about FLOs, family liaison
 7 officers.
 8 Can we then go to your second statement again,
 9 please, and go to page 5 {IWS00002365/5}, paragraph 25
 10 again. You say — and this is:
 11 "Day three — 16th June 2017: We picked up posters
 12 and used them on the 16th June; I gave news interviews
 13 with my brother [Hisam] on that day and we held the
 14 posters up. I think that was the day we spoke to the
 15 police and met up with them (16th/17th June). They said
 16 that they had been trying to call us. I don't actually
 17 recall where they came to see us. They said they had
 18 tried to contact us by telephone but we weren't
 19 available so they left messages. I checked at the end
 20 of the day and noticed that the police had tried to
 21 contact me, there were so many missed calls. They
 22 explained their role and gave us a brief description of
 23 their purpose — I think it was Heather and Ashley. They
 24 said that they would tell us everything, do the work,
 25 that we would liaise with them and that they would be

27

1 there for any help, to update us and to keep informed.
 2 We were always phoning them for updates and asking for
 3 any news. They said they would be our FLOs and they
 4 would keep us informed. They did keep in contact but
 5 only disclosed what they were told to. It seemed the
 6 police knew a lot more than what we would be told.
 7 I have expanded on this in paragraph 30 below."
 8 Now, your brother, in his second witness statement,
 9 paragraph 147 {IWS00001851/28} — I don't need to show
 10 it to you — says that he doesn't remember the FLOs
 11 coming to your house in that first week, or the police
 12 making contact with him or the family during the first
 13 few days after the fire. That's his recollection.
 14 Is that the same as your recollection or do you have
 15 a different recollection?
 16 A. I have a different recollection because I was told they
 17 came to visit me at my address, but obviously I think we
 18 was doing interviews on the day with news and everything
 19 when they had done it.
 20 Q. So are you reasonably confident, looking back on it,
 21 that the FLOs did contact you in the first week after
 22 the fire?
 23 A. Within that week, yes. They said they'd tried and they
 24 did leave messages, yes.
 25 Q. Yes. Did you find the FLOs helpful and responsive to

28

1 your needs when you did speak to them?
 2 A. Yes and no. I can elaborate. Do you want me to
 3 elaborate on that?
 4 Q. Yes, please.
 5 A. In my statement — they would inform us when they had
 6 something, but they wouldn't inform us exactly what.
 7 For example, they would tell us, "We've come across
 8 remains". Now, "remains", we did not know what
 9 "remains" was. Was it one body part? Was it many body
 10 parts? We tried to understand, what is "remains"?
 11 You know, and as I've mentioned in my statement,
 12 you know, they came across — they mentioned six
 13 remains, and we did not know what "remains" was. Was it
 14 six body parts or six family members or six what,
 15 you know? And we tried to find out from them and they
 16 didn't know themselves, and it was a bit of unclarity.
 17 There was confusion, there was — you know, it wasn't
 18 very helpful.
 19 Q. Did that process, the discussion about remains, begin
 20 with the FLOs during the week after the fire or was it
 21 at a later stage?
 22 A. I think it was in a later stage. It was a later stage,
 23 I believe. As far as I remember, I think it was a later
 24 stage.
 25 Q. During the first week after the fire, do you remember

29

1 whether you had any contact at all with or from RBKC?
 2 A. After the first week, did you say?
 3 Q. Within the first week.
 4 A. I don't think so.
 5 Q. What about the TMO, any contact with them?
 6 A. Don't think so, as far as I ... no, it was I think more
 7 to do with FLOs rather than anything else.
 8 Q. What about central government?
 9 A. Not that I remember, no.
 10 Q. No.
 11 Now, you tell us, if we go on, please, to page 7 of
 12 this statement {IWS00002365/7}, at paragraph 32, that
 13 you have received bereavement counselling and health and
 14 wellbeing therapy.
 15 Were you aware of that type of support being
 16 available to you during the first week after the fire?
 17 A. I was not aware, because we were still looking for our
 18 loved ones. That's what we was really concentrating and
 19 that's what we was focused — that was the most and only
 20 important thing, you know, that came and was important
 21 to us.
 22 Q. Were you aware whether any support like that —
 23 psychosocial support, counselling, health and wellbeing
 24 therapy — was available generally during that period,
 25 the week after the fire?

30

1 A. Not that I recall, no, I wasn't aware, because, as
 2 I say, the most important was finding our family.
 3 Q. Do you have any general comments that you would like to
 4 tell the panel about, about the emergency relief
 5 response on the part of central government or RBKC or
 6 the TMO perhaps, in that first week?
 7 A. It's just how unorganised they was at — especially on
 8 the day of the fire, you know, that when I was trying to
 9 find my family and asking about them and I was pushing
 10 to try and get in to rescue them, I was threatened with
 11 like, "If you do that again, you'll be arrested". And
 12 I found that at the time so hard and so hurtful and,
 13 you know, here I am, here we are, trying to get to our
 14 family and rescue them, and we're being threatened with
 15 arrest, or there was no help with the fact of, you know,
 16 we've got our loved ones maybe in the tower, you know,
 17 we just want to know some information, you know, please
 18 just help us, and they wasn't interested. They didn't,
 19 you know, "Here, we've got a sergeant here, we've got
 20 the commissioner or whoever, you know, is in charge,
 21 come and have a look at him, speak to him, and he will
 22 help you and guide you". There was none of that,
 23 you know. It was literally ... it was terrible. It
 24 was — you know, it was such awful, awful, bad service,
 25 you know. It was so very unhelpful and, you know, in

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1 such an awkward time, you know.
 2 Q. What, looking back on it, do you think should have been
 3 done differently in that immediate aftermath to support
 4 you and people like you, looking for their loved ones?
 5 A. There should have been more help. There should have
 6 been more help given. There should have been more — it
 7 should have been more organised. It should have been
 8 more co-ordinated. It should have been, you know,
 9 "You've lost a loved one, come, please, step inside, we
 10 need to know more about them, where are they?", you
 11 know, not just a phone call and, yeah, you know — there
 12 was none of that organisation. We was left to fend for
 13 ourselves, left to try and find help, and, you know,
 14 anything and everything. It was just — you had to do
 15 what you can do and make do with what you knew kind of
 16 thing, you know. And that shouldn't be the case of —
 17 when there is an emergency, it should have been all
 18 co-ordinated and worked out. And, you know, it was
 19 disorder. There was chaos. There was like, you know,
 20 everyone running around with their hats off, as in — it
 21 was so unorganised. Nobody knew what they were doing,
 22 you know. It was so ... it was terrible. It was ... to
 23 say the least, you know.
 24 Q. Did you see anybody wearing an RBKC badge or tabard,
 25 like a slip that they put over their shoulders to say

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1 who they were, at any stage during that week?

2 A. No, I did not see anyone, you know. I was just looking

3 and trying to concentrate for my family at the time.

4 Q. If you look down, please, to page 7 of your first

5 statement {IWS00001069/7}, at paragraph 34 at the foot

6 of your screen, you say this:

7 "This has devastated our lives as more than half of

8 our family have now died. Life will never be the same

9 and it is hard to accept. The pain and suffering is

10 unbearable. I don't know if I can ever come to terms

11 and accept what has happened with this ordeal as the

12 family that we loved and they loved us have gone.

13 I don't wish this ever to happen to anybody else. I am

14 seeking rehabilitation as a result of what I saw on the

15 night of the fire as I will never be the same again."

16 Is there anything further, Mr Choucair, that you

17 would like to say to the panel about the impact of the

18 fire on your life, or anything else more generally?

19 A. It has totally destroyed our lives. I wouldn't want

20 anyone to go through what we're going through. I would

21 gladly swap my shoes to be in a position where I'm not

22 going through what I'm going through, and what we're all

23 having to go through, losing our loved ones. Our lives

24 will never be the same ever again. It's destroyed our

25 families. Rehabilitation and — it's very hard,

33

1 you know, it's had a big effect on us, and, yeah, I just

2 don't want anyone to go through what we're going through

3 and what we've had to go through.

4 MR MILLETT: Well, I'm very sorry.

5 Mr Choucair, those are all the prepared questions

6 I had for you, but I'm going to ask the Chairman to take

7 a break now to see if there's anything that I've missed

8 or that others would like me to put to you.

9 Mr Chairman, can we do that?

10 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes, I think we need to do that, and

11 I think it would be sensible to combine that with the

12 morning break.

13 So we'll stop now. We'll come back, please, at

14 11.15. While you're out of the room, I have to ask you,

15 as I have all the other witnesses, not to talk about

16 your evidence to anyone else.

17 THE WITNESS: Sure.

18 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: When you come back at 11.15, we'll

19 see if there are any more questions we need to ask you.

20 All right?

21 THE WITNESS: Okay, thank you.

22 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you. Would you like to go

23 with the usher, please.

24 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

25 (Pause)

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1 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you, Mr Millett. 11.15,

2 please. Thank you.

3 (11.01 am)

4 (A short break)

5 (11.15 am)

6 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: All right, Mr Choucair?

7 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

8 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes, Mr Millett.

9 MR MILLETT: Thank you, Mr Chairman.

10 Mr Choucair, I have no further questions for you,

11 other than one, and that is whether you would like to

12 add anything further to the evidence that you have given

13 in your two statements and that you have very helpfully

14 given us this morning.

15 A. Yes, there is quite a few things I would like to add.

16 The first thing is that it's been a hell of

17 a journey, you know, what we're having to go through and

18 what we're going through. It's been forced onto us,

19 what we're having to go through. You can't imagine what

20 we're going through, and, you know, like I said,

21 I wouldn't want it upon anyone else.

22 The second is in order to get into the Inquiry,

23 I was refused the first time, in Phase 1, three times.

24 I asked to have a say, and I was refused and wasn't

25 allowed, and that shouldn't be the case, where one as

35

1 a core participant needs to say something, it should be

2 a lot more simple and simplified. That's one of the

3 things.

4 Another thing is, on the night — in Phase 1, on the

5 night of the fire, we asked — we was asked, you know,

6 what they would like to see as part of the terms of

7 reference, and we mentioned helicopter, and this

8 wasn't — it was taken into consideration, but it wasn't

9 fully elaborated in Phase 1, where the transcripts were

10 read in to the Inquiry, because on the night my family

11 and many other families relied on the helicopter,

12 and ... they was hoping that they would be rescued, and

13 I had a few questions I wanted to ask the helicopter

14 pilots, who was not available, which I was hoping they

15 would be available and that was that — they were part

16 of the terms of reference, but I never got to ask the

17 helicopter pilots. The transcripts were read into

18 the Inquiry, so I never got to — and like many other

19 families, never got to ask the pilots the questions. So

20 we find that we felt left out and lost for — because

21 it's not something that you ask the questions through

22 your solicitor. It's based upon their reports and what

23 they say that you ask the questions. And at the time

24 there was questions I wanted to ask about the pilots and

25 never got the chance to, because it was read into

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1 the Inquiry. So, you know, we felt — I felt very let
2 down in that sense.
3 The final thing is: part of the terms of reference,
4 when they asked and they was enquiring what would you
5 like to see as part of the terms of reference, you know,
6 we mentioned helicopters, a lot of people mentioned
7 helicopters, a lot of people — because they couldn't
8 understand why people was going up and down and not
9 going out when they should have been going — when they
10 were lower — at the lower ground they were going up,
11 rather than — you know, which we got to find out and
12 understand more later on, why this was happening. But,
13 you know, we asked to really — you know, because it was
14 on the night of what happened, the helicopter, but we
15 also asked for institutional discrimination to be looked
16 at, and it's not institutional discrimination when
17 you're looking into discrimination in a report or from
18 what they have said, but looking into and examining it
19 so that you can come and fully understand what people
20 were saying who lived in the tower, our loved ones, what
21 they was fighting for, and understand how they were
22 treated, to really understand, and, you know, this was
23 a crucial part that should have been part of the terms
24 of reference. We had a QC, Mr Imran Khan, who asked
25 the — who asked yourselves to look into institutional

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1 discrimination, and it didn't happen. Then we had
2 Mr Leslie Thomas, who asked for institutional
3 discrimination to be looked into, because it plays
4 a vital role for what happened.
5 Mr Chairman, and panel members, I, who work with
6 many family members who have lost, and we represent our
7 families, and most of them who died on the night, are
8 asking you all please to really look into institutional
9 discrimination, not to come out with a report, but
10 really to examine it as part of the terms of reference.
11 This is the only chance where we have to really fully
12 examine what went wrong and what was going on and what
13 was happening, not to come out with recommendations from
14 the complaints that was given from family members and
15 so, but really to examine it.
16 The same way how we are being — how we are
17 cross-referencing Lakanal House and looking back and
18 saying, "Oh, if they had sorted it all out at the time,
19 then Grenfell wouldn't have happened", if we have
20 another catastrophe, they will look back at
21 Grenfell Tower's inquiry and say, "Well, you know, you
22 had these recommendations and that was it". That can't
23 be the case.
24 So I'm asking, Mr Chairman, and panel members, that
25 you really please look into it and have it thoroughly

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1 investigated, that this is a crucial part to our
2 families, to have some closure for them, to give them
3 some justice.

4 Recommendations are sometimes not always implemented
5 and not always done. So that's why we need to have
6 institutional discrimination looked at as a part of the
7 terms of reference. We was told that recommendations
8 can be terms of reference — terms of reference can be
9 changed, and can be changed later on. Whether that is
10 true or not, I'm and many family members are asking you
11 all to re-look at it and investigate it properly. It's
12 the only chance we have, so we cannot come back and have
13 another inquiry when something goes wrong —
14 catastrophe — when another catastrophe goes wrong, and
15 say that, "well, you know, you should have looked at
16 Lakanal House so you don't have — so Grenfell wouldn't
17 have happened", but if another catastrophe happens, you
18 don't look back at Grenfell and be blamed for it and
19 say, "Well, you should have done that recommendation —
20 not just the recommendation, but you should have
21 thoroughly examined it". We can't have that. We can't
22 go back and keep questioning and keep going back and
23 blaming, "Well, you should have done that". It has to
24 be done and it has to be done properly. So I'm asking
25 you, please, to reconsider and to re-look at it so we

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1 can have some justice, please.

2 Thank you.

3 MR MILLETT: Well, Mr Choucair, thank you very much for that
4 and for all your evidence. It just remains for me to
5 express our gratitude as an inquiry to you for coming
6 here today and giving us your evidence. So thank you
7 very much.

8 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, and, Mr Choucair, I ought to
9 thank you very much on behalf of not just myself but all
10 three members of the panel for coming here and giving us
11 your account of things. I think we all understand how
12 difficult it's been for you to do that, and we're sorry
13 to hear how difficult things still are for you and other
14 members of your family. So we're very grateful to you
15 for coming along and it's been very helpful to hear from
16 you.

17 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

18 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much indeed. Would
19 you like to go with the usher, please.

20 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

21 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: You're free to go, of course.
22 Thank you.

23 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

24 (The witness withdrew)

25 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Millett.

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1 MR MILLETT: Yes.
 2 Mr Chairman, there's now going to be some reading in
 3 of evidence, and Ms Islam is going to continue the
 4 reading that she paused with in the week before —
 5 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Good, thank you.
 6 MR MILLETT: — we started hearing or in the middle of
 7 hearing the oral evidence, and then there will be some
 8 further material which she will also read in.
 9 What I would suggest is that rather than you rising
 10 now and coming back in three minutes, I vacate the spot
 11 for her and swap over, if you don't mind.
 12 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Of course. We will sit here happily
 13 while you do that. Thank you.
 14 MR MILLETT: Thank you.
 15 (Pause)
 16 Thematic Summary of BSR Evidence (continued)
 17 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes, Ms Islam. Now, you're going to
 18 continue the reading that you started the other day; is
 19 that right?
 20 MS ISLAM: I am.
 21 Before I do that, Mr Chairman, members of the panel,
 22 can I make one correction. When I was reading from the
 23 summary of evidence on the last occasion, I was reading
 24 from an extract from the statement of David Lewis, and
 25 I said that he was visiting his ex-wife,

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1 Mariko Toyoshima—Lewis, and their two children.
 2 I should have said their three children. Can I please
 3 apologise for that error.
 4 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you.
 5 MS ISLAM: Before I begin the reading, can I reiterate the
 6 trigger warning from the last occasion. Some may find
 7 hearing about their experiences and the experiences of
 8 others in the immediate aftermath distressing. If
 9 anybody would wish to leave the room or pause the live
 10 stream, please do so now.
 11 (Pause)
 12 Mr Chairman, members of the panel, you will remember
 13 that we had eight sections, and I managed to complete
 14 six out of those eight. I'm now going to turn to
 15 section 7, dealing with the observations on the
 16 response.
 17 A number of witnesses have made observations about
 18 the adequacy of the emergency relief response,
 19 particularly in relation to overarching leadership and
 20 co-ordination of support.
 21 Peter John Murphy says {IWS00001722/5}:
 22 "There was no central structure, no central body
 23 taking charge, and no leadership. No one seemed to be
 24 working together; nothing was getting done and it just
 25 felt like responsibility kept on being [passed] around

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1 in a never ending circle."
 2 Charlotte McMahon says {IWS00001966/16}:
 3 "I found the coordination of Central Government,
 4 RBKC and the TMO in the immediate aftermath of the fire
 5 to be non-existent. They were nowhere to be seen. They
 6 were silent. They were impossible to contact and had no
 7 knowledge when I did speak to them."
 8 Simon Jolly says {IWS00001621/11}:
 9 "... on the ground, no one was visibly taking
 10 control of or responsibility for coordinating the relief
 11 effort. There were so many helpful sites and hubs which
 12 volunteers had set up, but they had no means of easily
 13 communicating with each other in the immediate
 14 aftermath."
 15 Some witnesses comment on their interaction with the
 16 Prime Minister at the time. Manuel Miguel Ferreira
 17 Alves says {IWS00001587/25}:
 18 "The Government did not support us in the immediate
 19 aftermath of the fire. I thought that things would
 20 change after Theresa May's apology and her promise to
 21 rehouse us in 3 weeks, but it all turned out to be
 22 a lie."
 23 Hiwot Dagnachew lived in flat 26 and says
 24 {IWS00001742/33}:
 25 "Even the Prime Minister when she visited avoided

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1 seeing the survivors as though we were contagious. It
 2 is beyond comprehension and shows a complete lack of
 3 responsibility, compassion and a complete failure of
 4 duty."
 5 Emma O'Connor lived in flat 171 and says
 6 {IWS00001699/7}:
 7 "It was disappointing that Theresa May failed to
 8 meet with the bereaved and survivors in the days
 9 following the fire. I was invited to attend
 10 10 Dow[n]ing Street a couple of months after the fire.
 11 However, when we attended she was out of the country.
 12 I felt we were treated with contempt."
 13 Contrastingly, Nicholas Burton describes attending
 14 a meeting with the Prime Minister at St Clement's Church
 15 on Friday, 16 June. He says {IWS00001661/26}:
 16 "... I just got swept into that Friday meeting
 17 without really knowing what was going on ... People were
 18 shouting outside during the meeting, because the
 19 community was angry that she had not come earlier and
 20 met with those affected ... I could see why people were
 21 unhappy about the way she responded on 15 June 2017,
 22 but, for my own part, she seemed sincere and moved when
 23 she listened to me talk about my experience."
 24 Jason Miller comments on his interaction with
 25 Nick Hurd, who was the Minister of State for Policing

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1 and the Fire Service at the time. He says
 2 {IWS00001940/15-16}:
 3 "I was speaking to Nick Hurd and he was not paying
 4 attention to what I was saying. I felt like he was more
 5 of a mouthpiece for RBKC ... I had the impression that
 6 he was there to sponge information from us while keeping
 7 an ear open for any points of interest to Central
 8 Government and RBKC as they also had staff present in
 9 that meeting."
 10 Rashida Ali describes a meeting at the Rugby Club,
 11 approximately four days after the fire, where members of
 12 government attended. She says {IWS00001617/13}:
 13 "The members of the government that were taking our
 14 information broke down while we were telling them about
 15 our situation ... The government was simply not equipped
 16 to deal with this level of tragedy. They just did not
 17 know what to do."
 18 Edward Daffarn, who lived in flat 134, describes
 19 meeting Andrea Leadsom, then leader of the
 20 House of Commons, at the Rugby Portobello Club on
 21 16 June. He says {IWS00002109/123}:
 22 "This was the first time I was aware that anyone
 23 from Central Government had spoken to anyone at the RPT.
 24 At the meeting I explained that the fire was preventable
 25 ... I requested that Central Government needed to send

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1 someone with resources and responsibility to the RPT to
 2 take control because nobody was taking control from the
 3 emergency services, central or local government. There
 4 is further detail on what we discussed in emails that
 5 followed, sent ... to Andrea on 17 June 2017, with
 6 a follow up on 22 June 2017. Leadsom had assured us
 7 that she would respond to our requests. However, the
 8 emails show that she didn't."
 9 Shahin Sadafi attended a meeting of Gold Command at
 10 the Westway Centre on 19 June 2017 with government
 11 representatives in attendance, including Eleanor Kelly,
 12 Hilary Patel from DCLG and others from the
 13 Cabinet Office. He says {IWS00001806/9}:
 14 "I sat and listened for over an hour as leaders from
 15 charities such as Red Cross introduced themselves and
 16 explained what they were doing. As I listened I became
 17 more and more concerned as it was all so irrelevant and
 18 it seemed nobody had any clear sense of priority or
 19 leadership or sense of urgency. I felt many in the room
 20 were overwhelmed by the number of people affected and
 21 they were all clear that the local council and central
 22 government were not doing enough."
 23 He continues:
 24 "Finally I stood up and explained that I was trying
 25 to find my neighbours and loved ones from the Tower ...

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1 I asked for help. They simply said: 'No, this isn't
 2 possible. Data protection laws don't allow it ...
 3 I felt abandoned. These people were supposed to be
 4 there to help but they felt like they were against us.
 5 They did not make me feel safer but seemed like
 6 adversaries. The officials did not care that was how it
 7 felt and I just could not understand their attitude."
 8 In relation to the meeting at the Westway Centre, he
 9 continues:
 10 "Looking at the meeting as the only Grenfell
 11 resident, it appeared they were caught in the headlights
 12 and simply did not know how to behave or show any
 13 empathy for what people were going through.
 14 I appreciate honesty and if officials such as these are
 15 so disconnected from the people they are to serve, then
 16 they should remove themselves from such an important
 17 responsibility ... I felt as if they were hiding behind
 18 policies and protocols and yet had no real idea of what
 19 was going on or what to do ... I explained to the
 20 meeting 'I've just lost my home, my neighbours and
 21 I have been listening to you for 2 hours introducing
 22 yourselves and explaining how ill prepared and incapable
 23 local and central government has been. There is no
 24 sense of priority. I was amazed that Government leaders
 25 and those that are supposed to plan for major disasters

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1 could be so poorly organised and show so little
 2 leadership."
 3 Particular concerns have been expressed about the
 4 absence of RBKC in the immediate aftermath and their
 5 failure to offer support.
 6 Ines Alves, who lived in flat 105, says
 7 {IWS00001596/14}:
 8 "I do not think that RBKC were prepared to respond
 9 to what happened, but the community was also not
 10 prepared and yet somehow they managed to provide support
 11 faster than RBKC was able to. RBKC should have been
 12 quicker. If the community were able to act, why
 13 couldn't they?"
 14 David Andrew Benjamin says {IWS00001764/10}:
 15 "There was a difficult dynamic with many people
 16 blaming RBKC for the fire; yet they were now supposed to
 17 be supporting those affected. There was a lot of anger
 18 and upset over RBKC's invisibility and lack of action
 19 immediately after the fire."
 20 Leanne Mya Jackson Le-Blanc says
 21 {IWS00001271/27-28}:
 22 "... RBKC should have offered a lot more help.
 23 Sending Social Workers and keyworkers was a cop-out ...
 24 existing members of the Council, even Council managers,
 25 should have been sent out, not random key workers. The

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1 people that had been in the offices with knowledge of
 2 the estate and the community before the fire should have
 3 been more involved. They sent people from outside of
 4 the area which caused delay and confusion and doubt
 5 which was avoidable."
 6 She goes on to describe the first seven days as:
 7 " ... like hell on earth. I didn't know who to speak
 8 to, where to go or what to do."
 9 Mohamed Hariri says {IWS00001295/15}:
 10 "RBKC left us to struggle and struggle and didn't
 11 ever let us feel safe, especially after the fire."
 12 Elizabeth Sobieszczak says {IWS00001539/13}:
 13 "There would frequently be representatives of RBKC
 14 stationed in the lounge of the hotel ... We had lost
 15 faith in them from early on anyway because they were
 16 useless and couldn't even deliver their promises, and
 17 they couldn't answer anything ... We ended up having to
 18 beg them and it took such a long time, and we just felt
 19 disregarded again."
 20 Noha El-Baghady says {IWS00001535/11}:
 21 "No one from RBKC or the TMO reached out to me in
 22 the first seven days or even a few months after the
 23 fire. We as a family did not hear from them. It was
 24 like they were hiding away from bereaved families, even
 25 though some people had lost everything and needed help.

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1 They disappeared from us. I expected RBKC and the TMO
 2 to reach out, to offer assurance and support and give us
 3 information about where to go to get support and help on
 4 how to look for Hesham. Without this support, we had to
 5 do things ourselves ... this placed added stress on us."
 6 A number of witnesses share concerns about the
 7 culture within RBKC and how this manifested in the
 8 emergency response.
 9 Beinazir Lasharie, who was an RBKC Labour councillor
 10 at the time of the fire, says {IWS00001546/9}:
 11 "The Council were completely incompetent at managing
 12 the crisis ... there was no procedure in place, it was
 13 all chaos. I think that the community are seen by the
 14 Council and the TMO as simply poor working-class people
 15 in need of social housing, and that we should just be
 16 grateful for any and all help we get. It feels like we
 17 are looked down upon by the Council and the government."
 18 Tomassina Hessel says {IWS00001645/9-10}:
 19 "There was a real sense of 'us and them' between the
 20 authorities and the community at that time. I remember
 21 that it seemed like everybody came to North Kensington
 22 to support us, but what we didn't have was the Council
 23 there for us. There were services available eventually,
 24 but what people were there from the Council were there
 25 in such small numbers that we didn't notice them. We

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1 later found out that council staff were deployed but
 2 told to hide their ID for their own safety. This
 3 illustrates how the council perceive residents as
 4 dangerous and a threat. They didn't make their presence
 5 felt. I can't tell you what they did in the first
 6 seven days. I understand why RBKC told their staff not
 7 to wear Council clothes, but this reinforced the
 8 perception that they just didn't care. This says a lot
 9 about them, and it was this kind of lack of leadership
 10 that trickled down from the Leader of the Council,
 11 Nicholas Paget-Brown, and Robert Black of the TMO down
 12 to the staff on the ground. The leadership has since
 13 been replaced, but a lot of the staff are the same. The
 14 culture hasn't changed. If you're not able to see
 15 things through other people's eyes, then you shouldn't
 16 be in that role."
 17 Zakaria El-Sawy says {IWS00001822/10}:
 18 "My overwhelming feeling is that the response to the
 19 Grenfell tragedy lacked continuity, responsibility and
 20 above all accountability from our landlords, RBKC, TMO
 21 and other relevant authorities. Information was very
 22 slow and inconsistent and services would be available
 23 one day and not the next. We would also have to keep
 24 explaining ourselves to the people allocated to assist
 25 us as they came and went. This unlike before made us

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1 feel like we didn't matter and didn't deserve to be
 2 treated with dignity. This has caused my physical and
 3 mental health to decline significantly at a time when
 4 I needed recovery and a space to mourn the loss of those
 5 that have passed away in the tragedy. I will never
 6 forget the actions of those responsible and will not
 7 forgive them for this."
 8 Sepideh Minaei Moghaddam says {IWS00001266/7}:
 9 "RBKC did not care about us after the fire, and
 10 in fact, at times they were rude and dismissive ...
 11 I had to get what I needed by 'force or by fight' and
 12 indeed when I asked for certain things, they told me
 13 that they were 'doing enough' and 'they didn't have to
 14 do these things' for me. This perfectly sums up the
 15 attitude of the council."
 16 Hicham Cherbika lived in Grenfell Walk. He says
 17 {IWS00001305/12}:
 18 "When I would go to the Council to ask for support,
 19 they would always make me feel like I was begging. It
 20 was humiliating."
 21 Farhad Neda says:
 22 "We, as survivors, had no access to those high up in
 23 leadership ... I remember RBKC organised a meeting but
 24 I was shocked to found out that we were only allowed
 25 into the gallery area of the town hall; but the meeting

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1 was about us! I was initially refused entry as the
 2 gallery was already full ... I was shocked to see that
 3 most of those who had been let in were not even
 4 residents of the Tower ..."
 5 Ismail Hadgay lived in Testerton Walk. He says
 6 {IWS00001287/9}:
 7 "The RBKC have such power that no—one will take
 8 action, and the TMO were protected through RBKC. We
 9 used to complain, not just me but the hundreds of people
 10 in the community around Grenfell. I think there is
 11 a feeling of discrimination, of being under—privileged."
 12 In terms of the TMO, Beinazir Lasharie says
 13 {IWS00001546/9}:
 14 "Overall, the TMO were extremely deficient. I think
 15 a lot of the problems came from the fact that they
 16 ignored residents. I had known this from some time and
 17 experienced it first hand and it is why I became
 18 a councillor and eventually deputy—mayor. I wanted to
 19 try and change the way the TMO and RBKC was run,
 20 particularly in the way they related and communicated
 21 with local people."
 22 Jessica Gomez says {IWS00001264/14}:
 23 "RBKC, TMO, they were very slow. I was angry about
 24 how long it took them to come forward. They were
 25 nowhere to be found. Their approach was very corporate,

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1 very posh, they are not the sort of people to come and
 2 talk to us. I think they got that feedback: We did not
 3 feel supported. TMO disappeared."
 4 Giuseppe Razza says {IWS00001607/9}:
 5 "During the immediate aftermath of the fire, I never
 6 saw anyone from the TMO. They were invisible."
 7 Otmane Benkhaoula says {IWS00001269/9}:
 8 "... the TMO were not there immediately after the
 9 fire. They should have been first on the scene at the
 10 aftermath ... with support and services to care for the
 11 resident[s]. The fact that they had no plan or
 12 organisational structure to keep residents informed,
 13 only contributed to the chaos on the scene. The TMO
 14 were unprepared for this emergency. I never saw the TMO
 15 after the fire. Perhaps they feel guilty about the
 16 fire."
 17 Turning now to the observations on the community
 18 response, a number of witnesses praise the response of
 19 the community and charities.
 20 Hime Haymanot Gashaw says {IWS00001738/26}:
 21 "I feel it was the charities and other similar
 22 organisations who were the ones who seemed to take on
 23 the role of helping survivors, rather than the
 24 government and RBKC who should have been responsible.
 25 The charities appeared organised especially considering

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1 the short time scale that they undertook the task of
 2 assisting survivors. The charities were there from the
 3 very beginning unlike the government and RBKC."
 4 Rawda Said says {IWS00001729/22—23}:
 5 "It was the voluntary organisations, charities and
 6 faith centres that were the first to step up to help
 7 survivors of the fire. RBKC and central government were
 8 conspicuous by their absence. One of the problems ...
 9 was that they did not have access to the information
 10 held by local and central government in terms of those
 11 who were resident in the tower, those in hospital and
 12 the ability to ID people. However, despite this, the
 13 voluntary organisations, charities and faith centres
 14 dealt with us and other survivors with compassion and
 15 were as organised as could be expected ..."
 16 Guiseppe Razza says {IWS00001607/8}:
 17 "The support that came from all of the charities and
 18 community groups was overwhelming. It was more than
 19 enough and great to see. They provided a lot of food
 20 and water; provisions, places to stay during the night
 21 and more."
 22 Meriam Abdulkadir Yousuf lived in flat 121 and says
 23 {IWS00001626/4}:
 24 "I think the voluntary and community groups were
 25 excellent and I was overwhelmed by their generosity and

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1 kindness. It has made us want to be more charitable and
 2 help those in need."
 3 Michael Sobieszczak says {IWS00001562/12}:
 4 "The generosity of the volunteers and charities
 5 never went unnoticed however, it was breath—taking. You
 6 really see the amazing spirit of people in the aftermath
 7 of such a tragedy."
 8 Turning now to the last section, dealing with
 9 impact.
 10 A number of witnesses shared their experiences on
 11 the impact of the fire and the impact that that had had
 12 on their lives.
 13 Jenny Fei Quang says:
 14 "... the Grenfell Tower fire has had a huge impact
 15 on me and my family (and on other residents in the
 16 community). It has put an immense strain on our
 17 personal and working lives, as well as our physical and
 18 mental health. At times, this has been copiously
 19 overwhelming and I sincerely hope that we will all
 20 recover from this and it won't hurt us for the rest of
 21 our lives. Although it is easier to believe that this
 22 may have brought some families and the community closer
 23 together; it has actually torn some apart. I feel that
 24 the trauma experienced by those affected is often
 25 under—appreciated and forgotten in the system; and it

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1 hurts to think that children around the area may always
2 hang onto this suffering."

3 Antonio Roncolato says {IWS00001774/22-23}:
4 "... the horrifying events from 14 June 2017 will
5 always stay with me. The fire has turned [my son] and
6 my lives upside-down many times over. There has not
7 been a single day since the fire where I have not had to
8 deal with something connected to it ... It is difficult
9 to put into words the pain, upset and distress that the
10 fire has had upon [my son] and me. I feel guilty that
11 [my son] had to watch the Tower burn whilst I was still
12 inside and that others did not make it out alive."

13 Omar Alhajali says {IWS00001533/27}:
14 "The trauma of the loss of my brother Mohammad, the
15 fire, and the aftermath of the fire have affected me
16 mentally and physically. I lost my home and I lost my
17 beloved brother ... Mohammad and I moved to the UK from
18 Syria to be safe."

19 Elsa Afeworki says {IWS00001756/7}:
20 "The fire at Grenfell Tower had a huge impact on my
21 life, and being in a hotel prolonged the traumatic
22 experience. I still feel the impact and am only now
23 beginning to come to terms with some aspects of what
24 happened."

25 Asia Ghamhi says {IWS00001706/8}:

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1 "I feel broken in pieces. I have changed so much in
2 my mental state and physical health. I keep working but
3 I just don't function as I used to ... I am trying to
4 find myself again but it's hard ... the grief is
5 overwhelming for all of us."

6 Philip King, a Hurstway Walk resident, says
7 {IWS00001601/7}:
8 "The night of the fire changed me as a person and
9 I feel as though I am living in the shadow of the Tower.
10 It is the centrepiece of my community and I have to walk
11 past it every day. Seeing it takes me straight back to
12 the night of the fire and I feel like I am experiencing
13 it all over again."

14 Marlene Anderson says {IWS00001561/2}:
15 "This tragedy has left my family with the enormous
16 task of trying to repair and rebuild our lives. My
17 father should never have lost his life in the way in
18 which he did. He was taken from us and the memory of
19 how my dad lost his life will remain with me forever ...
20 my dad was a loving, caring and gentle soul. He opened
21 his door to many others on the night of the fire, which
22 is testament to his giving, supportive nature. My dad
23 lived in Grenfell Tower for over thirty years of his
24 life. The Tower was home, his sanctuary, and where he
25 sought solace ..."

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1 To the bereaved, survivors and residents, we
2 thank you for your courage in sharing your experiences
3 which have been at the heart of this Inquiry.

4 Mr Chairman, members of the panel, that concludes
5 the evidence to be read from the BSR for Module 4.

6 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much, Ms Islam.
7 I think there may be other matters to read; is that
8 right?

9 MS ISLAM: That is. I'm now going to read a summary of
10 evidence from the community, voluntary and faith
11 sectors.

12 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Right, thank you very much.
13 Summary of Evidence from the Community, Voluntary
14 and Faith Sectors

15 MS ISLAM: There was a significant spontaneous community
16 response in the immediate aftermath of the
17 Grenfell Tower fire. As part of the Inquiry's
18 investigations, we have spoken to 28 individuals who
19 were involved with the community, voluntary and faith
20 sector response. This has shaped the development of
21 this stream of evidence and the Inquiry has received 24
22 witness statements relating to this area.

23 The evidence provides an overview of the emergency
24 relief response offered by a number of key organisations
25 that were involved in the immediate aftermath. In due

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1 course, we will hear live evidence from the British
2 Red Cross and from two community leaders who set up
3 spontaneous rest centres.

4 We will be taking a thematic approach to the
5 evidence to be read and addressing the following three
6 themes: firstly, the community response; secondly,
7 observations on the official response; and, lastly,
8 challenges faced and lessons learned.

9 Turning to the community response first.

10 A number of organisations in the vicinity of
11 Grenfell Tower became heavily involved in the provision
12 of emergency relief on 14 June and in the days and weeks
13 that followed.

14 Abdurahman Sayed is the CEO of the Al Manaar Muslim
15 Cultural Heritage Centre. In the immediate aftermath of
16 the fire, Al Manaar opened its doors and offered shelter
17 and sanctuary to those affected. The response included
18 the provision of food, water, and the distribution of
19 donations, including financial donations through the
20 National Zakat Foundation and the Rugby Portobello
21 Trust. As the fire occurred during Ramadan, Al Manaar
22 was already catering for approximately 300 people every
23 evening. This increased to approximately 600 people per
24 day after the fire. Al Manaar later facilitated
25 a number of services, including counselling, art therapy

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1 and survivors' groups.
 2 Abdurahman Sayed says he was told about the fire by
 3 a member of staff in the early hours. He says
 4 {CFW00000043/2}:
 5 "I immediately instructed him to open our doors to
 6 anyone who needed help and I put out a WhatsApp message
 7 informing our network that Al Manaar was open to assist
 8 survivors ... by the early morning some residents from
 9 the Tower and surrounding accommodation blocks ... had
 10 arrived at the centre. At one point there were
 11 approximately 100 people in the centre. The staff and
 12 volunteers' first actions were to make food and water
 13 available to those who needed it."
 14 In describing their response, he says:
 15 "Al Manaar quickly became the centre of efforts to
 16 support the local community. Given the fact Al Manaar
 17 is located some distance from Grenfell, it is
 18 significant that it became a hub for those seeking help
 19 as well as for those wishing to volunteer their time to
 20 support the work of the centre. Al Manaar was
 21 well known within the local Muslim community as a place
 22 of compassion that would offer help and support."
 23 He continues:
 24 "Had it not been for the support of the local
 25 community, those volunteering and the generous donations

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1 we would not have been able to support the survivors and
 2 residents in the way that we did."
 3 Father Gerard Skinner is the Catholic parish priest
 4 of Notting Hill. The St Francis of Assisi Catholic
 5 Church offered a variety of support to those affected,
 6 including food and drink, spiritual and emotional
 7 support services, practical assistance such as mobile
 8 phone chargers and the distribution of financial and
 9 physical donations.
 10 He says that volunteers began arriving at
 11 St Francis of Assisi Church at 9 am on 14 June and the
 12 church closed at midnight. He says {CFV00000002/2}:
 13 "Over the course of the next two days, circa 170
 14 volunteers assisted at various times and in various
 15 ways. Thousands of donations of every kind arrived
 16 continually for the first two days ... children brought
 17 new toys, adults wheeled suitcases of clothes and
 18 toiletries, locals were offering accommodation ...
 19 financial donations were also received ... all of which
 20 have been dispersed to former residents of Grenfell
 21 Tower and bereaved families from the disaster."
 22 In describing the volunteer effort, he says:
 23 "The volunteers were from everywhere, of all ages
 24 and backgrounds ... taking a lead with sorting
 25 donations, organising their distribution and using

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1 social media to disseminate information for those who
 2 needed help and for those who wanted to help. Our
 3 volunteers formed human chains to move boxes of
 4 donations ... such was the outpouring of compassion and
 5 the horror at the tragedy that had befallen so many,
 6 people simply came together as one — united by the need
 7 to help."
 8 Reverend Michael Long is the minister at
 9 Notting Hill Methodist Church. The church provided a
 10 base for emergency relief in the first few days
 11 following the fire. They were particularly involved in
 12 the provision of clothes and toiletries to those from
 13 the walkways and Grenfell Walk. The Ascension Trust
 14 provided a team of emergency response pastors to the
 15 church, who assisted in listening to people and calming
 16 the atmosphere. Additionally, the church assisted
 17 people with making copies of missing posters for those
 18 looking for their loved ones.
 19 Reverend Michael Long praises the response of
 20 spontaneous volunteers. He says {CFV00000010}:
 21 "During Wednesday — Saturday many volunteers worked
 22 in the church sorting goods, attending to residents from
 23 the walkways who were in need, and generally helping
 24 out. A few particularly dedicated volunteers
 25 coordinated ... emergency clothing, communications,

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1 storage, warehousing and transportation of donated goods
 2 under significant pressure — and I remain immensely
 3 grateful to them in particular. Volunteers managed to
 4 organise themselves and the operation into sections and
 5 the operation was incredibly smooth considering few
 6 people knew each other. Volunteers showed immense
 7 initiative and resourcefulness ... There was a very
 8 intense focus to concentrate on the immediate issues and
 9 decisions were made collaboratively but also very
 10 quickly. Volunteers compiled spreadsheets of volunteers
 11 names, skills (such as languages spoken or practical
 12 skills that we might need) and contact details."
 13 Jackie Blanchflower was the leader of the Latymer
 14 Community Church at the time of the fire. The church
 15 provided a safe space, refreshments and support for
 16 people to talk to. A Muslim prayer room was set up
 17 within the church for those observing Ramadan. They
 18 initiated a memorial wall, where people left messages
 19 and flowers, which became a focal point for the
 20 community.
 21 In describing the Latymer Community Church's role,
 22 she says {CFV00000045/5}:
 23 "We had a different role to some of the other places
 24 that were offering support. Partly because of our
 25 location, people flowed through us. Early on we made

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1 the decision that we did not need to provide beds as we
 2 understood these would be available at the Westway
 3 Sports Centre, and that other community centres were
 4 making provision. We supported some of the bereaved,
 5 survivors and members of the local community as well as
 6 those coming from outside the area to help."
 7 Alison Norman worked for Everyone Active. Through
 8 their contract with the Westway Trust, she oversaw the
 9 management of the Westway Sports Centre in the immediate
 10 aftermath. The Westway Sports Centre started as
 11 a spontaneous rest centre and later became the official
 12 rest centre. She says {CFV00000061/2}:
 13 " ... we agreed that we would open the doors to the
 14 sports centre to assist with any residents who may have
 15 been displaced by the fire , or anything else we could do
 16 to assist ... I didn't have any contact with the Council
 17 initially , this was much later that day, around 6pm ..."
 18 She continues:
 19 " ... I went onto the streets around the centre and
 20 into Latymer Road church which was overrun with
 21 residents to tell residents to the sports centre was
 22 open and we were serving drinks, food, offering showers
 23 and a safe space for those affected."
 24 Adrian Clee from the Salvation Army was asked to
 25 take the lead role in response to the Grenfell Tower

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1 fire . The Salvation Army is part of the overall
 2 Voluntary Community Sector response in London and sits
 3 on the voluntary community sector panel, which is part
 4 of the London Resilience Forum. He says that the local
 5 authority made a request for the Salvation Army Church
 6 Centre on Portobello Road to be open as a place of
 7 safety on 14 June as the two nearby centres being used
 8 were being accessed by the press. He says
 9 {CFV00000059/4}:
 10 "The Centre was used in that capacity to give safety
 11 and emotional support to a group of around 30 people
 12 until part way through Thursday 15 June when activities
 13 to support those individuals were consolidated back into
 14 the Westway Centre. The Salvation Army in Notting Hill
 15 is an integral part of the local community and continued
 16 to provide emotional and practical support to those who
 17 approached us in the days and months following the
 18 fire ."
 19 Additionally , the Salvation Army was asked by RBKC
 20 to assist with the sorting and distributing of new
 21 donated goods. They re—purposed an empty Salvation Army
 22 building and, for four weeks after the fire , sorted
 23 those donations and delivered them to the
 24 Westway Centre.
 25 Turning now to observations of the official

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1 response.
 2 In respect of the response and support of RBKC,
 3 Abdurahman Sayed of Al Manaar Mosque says
 4 {CFV00000043/4}:
 5 "On the third day of the fire , we received a visit
 6 from some RBKC Councillors. During that meeting,
 7 I explained to the Councillors that we were struggling
 8 to cope with the numbers of persons who had become
 9 reliant on Al Manaar, the logistical demands of
 10 receiving and dispersing the large volume of clothing
 11 and other donations and coordinating activities of
 12 volunteers. I asked the Councillors to liaise with the
 13 RBKC in order to assist the coordination of activities
 14 within Al—Manaar. We received no such support."
 15 He goes on to say that one week after the fire the:
 16 "RBKC Family Services Unit set up a stall in one of
 17 our halls to assist Grenfell residents with issues
 18 regarding housing and other services ... this
 19 constituted the only official presence at Al Manaar in
 20 the weeks after the fire ."
 21 He continues:
 22 "In the immediate aftermath of the fire we received
 23 no assistance or support from Central Government."
 24 In respect of the TMO, he says:
 25 "We received no support or assistance from the TMO

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1 after the fire or since."
 2 In the weeks following the fire , Abdurahman Sayed
 3 describes being asked to be involved with official
 4 meetings attended by representatives of central
 5 government, RBKC, the Fire Brigade and senior police
 6 officers . He says:
 7 "The representatives of Central Government, RBKC and
 8 the police were utterly underprepared and unable to
 9 answer questions put to them or address in a meaningful
 10 way the concerns of residents ... many of whom were left
 11 with the sense that Central and Local Government simply
 12 did not care."
 13 He continues:
 14 "In my opinion, these meetings exposed the
 15 catastrophic failure of Central and Local governments to
 16 plan and execute a response to an event like Grenfell ."
 17 Jackie Blanchflower of Latymer Community Church says
 18 {CFV00000045/5}:
 19 "I do remember seeing some individual people
 20 I recognised from the Council and TMO ...
 21 Nicholas Paget—Brown was there at one stage. He seemed
 22 detached from the situation and I am not sure if this
 23 was because he was in a state of complete trauma and
 24 shock, or if he was just there to see that as an
 25 organisation receiving funding from RBKC we were dealing

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1 with the disaster appropriately. It was bizarre. He
 2 was just standing at the entrance to our building.
 3 Judith Blakeman also came. I know her well as she is
 4 a long standing local Councillor who has been involved
 5 in community issues. I know that other Labour
 6 Councillors did come and visit, but they were not there
 7 as part of any official response as far as I could
 8 tell."

9 She continues:

10 "I was expecting that at some stage someone official
 11 would come and tell me what to do. In the afternoon, at
 12 about 4pm, I think it was a pastor at the Notting Hill
 13 Community Church who gave me the number for the RBKC
 14 control room. I rang to ask what RBKC wanted us to do.
 15 The response was that they had the Westway Sports Centre
 16 open and so everyone should just go there. They asked
 17 us to shut at 9pm that day to get people off the
 18 streets. I thought that this at least was sensible and
 19 so we closed as requested, probably by about 10pm ...
 20 The next morning I called the control room again. The
 21 woman I spoke with told me that we did not need to do
 22 anything and did not need to open the Church up as
 23 everyone could go to the Westway Sports Centre. She
 24 simply said that there was no need for us to be open.
 25 It was as though I was speaking to someone who had no

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1 idea at all what was going on. This was quite early in
 2 the morning and we already had a room full of distressed
 3 people. There were people who needed help everywhere.
 4 I told her we would be open and did not bother trying to
 5 contact them again. By Thursday morning I thought there
 6 would be a plan and anticipated that there would be some
 7 sort of briefing but this still hadn't happened and in
 8 fact never did."

9 She continues:

10 "In the first few days after the fire, we received
 11 no real help from the authorities. No one from local
 12 government offered meaningful assistance until Friday
 13 16 June 2017, when two helpful people from the Council
 14 turned up and asked if we needed any assistance with the
 15 storage of donated items. However, by this stage we had
 16 already sourced alternative storage. It felt as though
 17 there was a time lag and that the authorities were
 18 always behind events, offering help after it was really
 19 needed."

20 Father Gerard Skinner says {CFV0000002/5}:

21 "Memories of council involvement are sketchy, not
 22 least because there did not seem to be any coherent
 23 emergency plan or if there was one, it seemed not to
 24 have been activated. Councillors were certainly walking
 25 around the area in groups, including the two councillors

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1 for Norland Ward, and visited but my only memory of any
 2 attempt at organisation was a council worker who was
 3 trying his best to communicate and get answers to
 4 questions such as how to handle offers of accommodation,
 5 how to distribute or send into storage donations, what
 6 services were being organised for victims and where were
 7 they based. But the gentleman was not able to provide
 8 answers to these questions despite trying to make
 9 contact with RBKC."

10 Reverend Michael Long says {CFV00000010/6}:

11 "The first few days were a chaotic fog in which
 12 little reliable information was available. It was
 13 astonishing that in the midst of so much distress and
 14 need, there appeared to be no overall coordination of
 15 provision, other than for the survivors at the Westway
 16 Centre ... it was hard to find out information about
 17 those who were injured or missing ..."

18 In terms of official support made available to the
 19 Westway Sports Centre, Alison Norman says
 20 {CFV00000061/4}:

21 "I don't recall any support being offered in the
 22 initial hours or first day. After the first visit by
 23 the TMO mid-afternoon, RBKC arrived early evening to
 24 give us an update on what was happening and to discuss
 25 the possibility of keeping the centre open overnight,

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1 which of course we were expecting to do anyway."
 2 She continues:

3 "There was some presence by the TMO and RBKC — from
 4 early evening, they started to work with us to try and
 5 coordinate the centre, but this reality was this took a
 6 few days. It felt like we were on our own until that
 7 point."

8 In terms of when the Westway Centre was designated
 9 the official rest centre, Alison Norman says:

10 "I think it was a few days after the fire ... I was
 11 informed by RBKC that's what would be happening — I was
 12 not involved in any consultation. I was happy to
 13 support where we could, but it was a huge strain on my
 14 team (physically and emotionally) and felt a bit
 15 bulldozed at times, but it was a difficult situation
 16 for all. I was desperate for my team to have a break
 17 but this was not possible ... I never felt that the
 18 sports centre was the right location for those who had
 19 been bereaved or traumatised and raised this point on a
 20 number of occasions."

21 She continues:

22 "I don't think the sleeping arrangements were at all
 23 suitable. No consideration seemed to have been given to
 24 the trauma that residents had been through. Residents
 25 were sleeping on mats and donated mattress in the Tennis

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1 Hall floor. It was upsetting."
 2 In respect of the management of the centre, she
 3 says:
 4 "RBKC had a rota of cover along with the other
 5 authorities. Some were better than others, sometimes it
 6 felt like we were going backwards when authorities
 7 changed over duty."
 8 She continues about the co-ordination and leadership
 9 of the centre and says:
 10 "Initially the leadership and coordination was
 11 appalling, but after a few days things improved."
 12 One particular concern that she raises was not
 13 having enough staff or expertise.
 14 Valerie Patterson was the head of learning and
 15 skills at the Westway Trust. Although the Westway Trust
 16 was not responsible for the management of the sports
 17 centre, which was sublet to Everyone Active, the
 18 Westway Trust offered support to the local community in
 19 the days and months that followed the fire. She raises
 20 concerns about the lack of clarity about what support
 21 was available. She says {CFV00000055/4}:
 22 "There was no one that was making clear what people
 23 were entitled to. When individuals turned up, unless
 24 they were quite forceful, some were not receiving the
 25 necessary support ... There were a number of cases ...

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1 that needed strong advocacy. We became aware of people
 2 sleeping in cars or in local gardens and our worker
 3 supported them to access support."
 4 She raises concerns about some of the processes at
 5 the Westway Centre:
 6 "Some of the staff were very empathic but others
 7 were not and the experience for deeply traumatized
 8 people could feel like a purely bureaucratic,
 9 form-filling process. Some people went over and beyond
 10 but others were very matter of fact. There was an over
 11 reliance on emailing, for example, one person who had
 12 lost 5 people was told to send an email when what was
 13 really needed was for someone to sit with that person,
 14 listen and perhaps work with him to send the email."
 15 She continues:
 16 "The Westway Trust received no direct support from
 17 central or local government nor from the TMO ... It took
 18 significant time before any level of coordination was
 19 set up. Local organisations and local residents were
 20 able to respond on the ground quickly. This helped in
 21 terms of the immediate relief. However, there was no
 22 central communication and coordination which led to
 23 considerable confusion for bereaved and survivors."
 24 Dr Alan Everett was the vicar of St Clement
 25 Notting Dale and St James Norlands. He says

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1 {CFV00000009/4}:
 2 "At no point in those first few days was I aware of
 3 any significant coordination from Central Government,
 4 RBKC and the TMO. Those traumatised by the fire were
 5 badly failed."
 6 Turning now to the key challenges that were
 7 experienced and lessons to be learned.
 8 A number of witnesses say that their organisation
 9 did not have a pre-agreed plan with RBKC in the event of
 10 an emergency, nor were they aware of RBKC's emergency
 11 plan.
 12 Jackie Blanchflower from the Latymer Community
 13 Church says {CFV00000045/7}:
 14 "A major question that remains in my mind is: what
 15 was the disaster response plan? I always thought there
 16 must be a plan. Given that there is a terrorist threat
 17 in this city I assumed that someone must have thought
 18 about the response to a major event like this. However,
 19 it quickly became clear that there was no contingency
 20 planning that covered anything of this scale. I look
 21 back and I wonder whether as the leader at a community
 22 centre I should have been contacting the Council before
 23 the fire to ask what the plan was, but I assumed that
 24 they would contact us if they thought we might be needed
 25 as part of a disaster response. A serious but small

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1 scale incident a few years before had led to the police
 2 using our building to provide support to local residents
 3 affected, so it was clearly not that we were an unknown
 4 organisation. It was this that I found particularly
 5 hard. I was waiting for someone to tell me what to do,
 6 expecting to be part of a co-ordinated plan, but instead
 7 we were left to try and support people as best we could
 8 with what resources we could gather."
 9 Similarly, Father Gerard Skinner says {CFV00000002}:
 10 that the emergency response of St Francis of Assisi
 11 Church:
 12 "... was not part of the official response. We
 13 became involved as part of the spontaneous outpouring of
 14 compassion as we wanted to help in any way that we
 15 could. We had no preexisting plan or agreement with
 16 RBKC for emergencies such as the Grenfell Tower fire."
 17 Witnesses also reflected on the need for a disaster
 18 management plan that is properly rehearsed.
 19 Alison Norman from Everyone Active says {CFV00000061/9}:
 20 "There should be a rehearsed response to major
 21 disasters. One agency should coordinate, there should
 22 be a documented plan that can be adapted. It took too
 23 long for a Council response to emerge. The Red Cross
 24 should have been engaged instantly. They told me they
 25 can't unless instructed to do so in these situations."

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1 Reverend Mark O'Donoghue, the Area Dean of
 2 Kensington at the time of the fire, describes a meeting
 3 with community leaders on 20 June and says:
 4 "I tried calmly to explain ... that the difficulty
 5 was that a disaster response plan had not been created
 6 by RBKC for anything more than a bus crash on the
 7 High St and that the community organisations had not
 8 been consulted on any such disaster response plan. In
 9 such a disaster, it was always the community groups, as
 10 on this occasion, who opened their doors and turned on
 11 their kettles and began offering relief and so, going
 12 forward, it would be a benefit to RBKC to involve the
 13 community groups."
 14 Witnesses emphasise the need for personnel involved
 15 in emergency response to be properly trained.
 16 Valerie Patterson from the Westway Trust says
 17 {CFV00000055/16}:
 18 "Workers were brought in from other areas of the
 19 Council or different Boroughs that would have had very
 20 different roles in their substantive post. They were
 21 put in a very difficult position when supporting
 22 traumatised bereaved and survivors and neither they nor
 23 bereaved and survivors benefited from this position.
 24 There should be designated emergency support personnel
 25 identified in every Council to step in for emergencies

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1 to ensure those affected receive an empathic appropriate
 2 response."
 3 Adrian Clee from the Salvation Army describes there
 4 being one individual from RBKC who was sent to the
 5 Salvation Army on Portobello Road. He says
 6 {CFV00000059/6}:
 7 "... the individual sent along had no training or
 8 experience of rest centres or emergency support and was
 9 clearly totally out of her depth. She was unable to
 10 give a lead or to answer any questions we had. She also
 11 struggled to readily link us to anyone else within the
 12 Local Authority who could answer important questions i.e
 13 was any accommodation being arranged for those who were
 14 at our centre and who had been displaced by the
 15 fire ..."
 16 He continues talking about the availability of
 17 trained personnel to take the lead at rest centres and
 18 says:
 19 "... in terms of a learning going forward, I would
 20 reflect that this needs to be a priority for situations
 21 where it may be the case that more than one rest centre
 22 is required."
 23 There were issues with a lack of information
 24 relating to support services available and an absence of
 25 information for the bereaved. Father Gerard Skinner

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1 says {CFV00000002/7}:
 2 "The biggest organisational challenge was
 3 discovering from official sources what services were
 4 available to help us help those who most needed help and
 5 communicating with other relief centres. The second
 6 biggest challenge was the sheer volume of donations that
 7 poured into the church and parish centre ... A further
 8 great challenge was discovering contact details of
 9 bereaved relatives to offer support."
 10 Jackie Blanchflower says {CFV00000045/3}:
 11 "When I arrived, Latymer was packed with a whole
 12 mixture of people. Some were survivors, others were
 13 people searching for loved ones as well as local
 14 residents who were shocked and appalled by what they had
 15 witnessed. It was particularly distressing that people
 16 could not access information about who had come from the
 17 Tower so they were searching not knowing if their loved
 18 ones were still in the fire, in hospital or safe
 19 somewhere."
 20 She continues:
 21 "In the early period after the fire it was very
 22 difficult to know where to go and look for people who
 23 were missing. We were struggling to get accurate
 24 information ourselves about which community centres,
 25 churches and other faith groups were providing support.

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1 What information we did have was all obtained through
 2 word of mouth and the situation was constantly changing
 3 ... It seemed as if the emergency services had not set
 4 up an immediate place of refuge and that the Council
 5 spent so long setting up the Westway Sports Centre as
 6 a relief centre that by the time it opened many people
 7 had already dispersed. In those first few hours people
 8 were left to find help for themselves as the authorities
 9 were slow to respond to their immediate needs. To fill
 10 the gap they turned to the voluntary and faith sector,
 11 and to organisations they trusted or were directed
 12 towards by those out in the street watching events
 13 unfold."
 14 In terms of what may have assisted,
 15 Jackie Blanchflower says:
 16 "Someone from the Council should have come on the
 17 first morning to assess what was happening and then
 18 briefed us and other organisations accordingly. It
 19 seems clear to me that the authorities can access
 20 support and information in a more coherent and
 21 co-ordinated way, and so could have provided strategic
 22 input early on. Instead chaos ensued and the voluntary
 23 and faith sector as well as individual volunteers
 24 stepped up to fill the gap."
 25 Witnesses say there is a need for better

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1 co-ordination and oversight. Jackie Blanchflower says
 2 in relation to this {CFV00000045/10}:
 3 "The lack of official involvement and oversight in
 4 the first day led to a power vacuum which was, I think,
 5 very unhelpful for the community and its recovery ... it
 6 is important that people are directly involved in the
 7 relief effort, but proper coordination and oversight is
 8 vital. As no one was taking control it was anarchic,
 9 and many people did things spontaneously following their
 10 own initiative. In the short term this was fine, but
 11 the long term consequences were sometimes not so
 12 beneficial ... I am not an expert, and it is
 13 complicated, but while it is vital that the authorities
 14 engage with and listen to the community it is also very
 15 important that there is direction to the work that is
 16 done. There was so much more that could have been done
 17 by the authorities. Better planning and a more prompt
 18 and co-ordinated response could have mitigated more of
 19 the effects of the disaster, than the 'hands-off'
 20 approach that we witnessed."
 21 She also reflects on the need for organisations on
 22 the ground to be co-ordinating with each other. She
 23 says:
 24 "Initially there was a disconnection between the
 25 various centres offering emergency provision. One thing

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1 we found particularly helpful was when an individual on
 2 their own initiative went round to the various centres
 3 involved in the relief work and made sure that each
 4 centre knew about the others, and ensured that we all
 5 had each other's contact numbers. This was brilliant as
 6 it enabled us to better understand what was available
 7 elsewhere, and to work in a more coordinated way. It
 8 was just one guy on a bike, but it was the most
 9 effective external coordination that we received. As
 10 brilliant as it was that he did this, I would have
 11 thought that there should have been a central or local
 12 Government plan in place even before the fire happened
 13 so that voluntary agencies could be involved in an
 14 appropriate and co-ordinated way. I felt that our
 15 disaster response was powered by WhatsApp and post—it
 16 notes."
 17 Reverend Michael Long says {CFV00000010/6}:
 18 "What we needed (and I expected) was a visible
 19 presence of RBKC staff to provide clarity of information
 20 (principally), and be a point of communication
 21 (secondarily). Although some RBKC councillors were
 22 present in the streets by the church in the first few
 23 days, what was required was something far more tangible
 24 and visible: people wearing identifying insignia (or
 25 hi-vis jackets), equipped with notebooks/clipboards,

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1 communications with others etc. Without this we felt
 2 abandoned without information and support ... At no
 3 stage did anyone approach us in any official capacity to
 4 ask what we were doing, if we needed support or
 5 assistance."

6 Abdurahman Sayed describes the importance of
 7 recognising the needs of diverse communities. He says
 8 {CFV00000043/8}:
 9

10 "On 14 June 2017 Al Manaar found itself at the
 11 centre of a relief effort for bereaved and traumatised
 12 families and residents. We were unprepared for the
 13 human tragedy that arrived at our doors on the morning
 14 of the fire and in the days and weeks that followed.
 15 I am proud of the fact that, with our limited resources,
 16 we managed to ameliorate some of the suffering. I wish
 17 we could have done more."

18 He continues:

19 "I share the frustration of many in the community
 20 who feel that both Central and Local Government were
 21 absent at a time when they were needed most. The
 22 support that came was often too little and too late.
 23 Whilst I recognise that Grenfell was a tragedy of
 24 catastrophic proportions, more could have been done to
 25 prepare for and meet the obvious and immediate needs of
 displaced residents and those affected. There should

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1 have been better coordination between Central and Local
 2 Government and those organisations 'on the ground,' such
 3 as Al Manaar, that were addressing immediate needs of
 4 residents ... At the centre of the Grenfell tragedy is
 5 a community diverse in terms of religion, ethnicity and
 6 culture. There was a failure by Central and Local
 7 Government to recognise that such communities might
 8 react differently to other communities when faced with
 9 such acute adversity; a failure to recognise the
 10 importance of religious and cultural norms within those
 11 communities and a failure to recognise the resources
 12 that were available within the community, including
 13 adopting a community-led response to the tragedy."

14 He also highlights wider cultural needs and says:

15 "The need for a counselling service became apparent
 16 in the week after the fire when some parents expressed
 17 concern about the emotional well-being of their
 18 children. It became apparent there was an absence of
 19 faith and culturally sensitive counselling available to
 20 these families, particularly having regard to the
 21 diversity of the communities and the variety of
 22 languages spoken within the community."

23 Andrew Langford was the lead major incident
 24 responder for Cruse bereavement care at the time of the
 25 fire. He says {CFV00000050/8} that whilst the overall

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1 response to the incident improved during the
 2 humanitarian assistance group meeting on 20 June 2017:
 3 "Upon reflection, the response ... to the incident,
 4 was a general one, and there was no overt indication of
 5 the group taking into account any issues relating to
 6 equality, diversity and inclusion. In retrospect, this
 7 could have been cited and a specific analysis undertaken
 8 relating to the specific needs of prevalent groups."
 9 Andrew Langford describes that initially Cruse was
 10 not invited into the humanitarian assistance centre, the
 11 Westway Centre, until they spoke to the lead responder
 12 at the British Red Cross. He says {CFV00000050/5}:
 13 "This meant that people were not able to access the
 14 detraumatizing support that our organisation could and
 15 has in the past provided as a response to other major
 16 incidents (including 07/07, 9/11, the Borough Market
 17 attack in 2017 and also the Manchester Bombing in
 18 2017)."
 19 He says:
 20 "... there was a distinct lack of psychological
 21 support immediately following the incident, for those
 22 directly involved. The focus was very much on catering
 23 for immediate physical needs, which is entirely
 24 understandable. However, if more engagement with
 25 voluntary sector and statutory health resources took

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1 place sooner, this could have further minimised the
 2 negative psychological impact to those affected.
 3 Furthermore, there was variable support for the key/link
 4 workers involved in supporting those affected by the
 5 fire. Cruse offered such support in the HASG meeting on
 6 the 20th of June. However this was not taken up ...
 7 more short term psychological interventions
 8 detraumatizing and debriefing could have contributing to
 9 minimising immediate distress, and the impact of
 10 traumatic memories that surfaced later on."
 11 He continues:
 12 "The understanding of the full psychological impact
 13 of an incident such as the Grenfell Tower fire needs to
 14 be more fully understood and held by Local Authorities
 15 commissioning services to support people following a
 16 major incident. Some brief support could have been
 17 provided by Cruse and other organisations, to those most
 18 affected. It is our considered belief that this would
 19 have reduced the amount of trauma experienced later,
 20 that we saw emerging ... at the Friends and Family
 21 Assistance Centre some weeks after the incident."
 22 A number of witnesses describe how the numbers of
 23 volunteers and volume of donations presented
 24 a challenge.
 25 Abdurahman Sayed says {CFV00000043/3}:

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1 "In the immediate aftermath of the fire we were
 2 contacted by many people who wanted to volunteer their
 3 time supporting the work of the centre ... there were
 4 numerous volunteers but we did not have the capacity or
 5 the time to log details due to being overwhelmed with
 6 the needs of the community and the need to meet those
 7 needs."
 8 He continues:
 9 "Many of the volunteers were persons from outside of
 10 the community. This raised obvious safeguarding
 11 concerns particularly given those volunteers were in
 12 contact with children and vulnerable adults. However,
 13 without their support Al Manaar would not have been able
 14 to provide the support it did in the critical days after
 15 the fire."
 16 Jackie Blanchflower says {CFV00000045/9-10}:
 17 "One conclusion I would draw is that as an
 18 organisation it is really helpful when you have
 19 volunteers that you already know. It was very helpful
 20 when other churches contacted us with people who wanted
 21 to help because we knew that any volunteers they
 22 provided would come with a degree of pre-vetting and so
 23 we could accept them with a higher degree of trust.
 24 That is not to say that ordinary spontaneous volunteers
 25 were not very useful at times ... there needs to be a

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1 whole piece of public education on responding to a
 2 disaster in terms of effective volunteering and
 3 appropriate donations. The public outpouring of grief
 4 and shock is really important and I would not dismiss
 5 how important it is that people are involved, but there
 6 are the unintended consequences. Donations are
 7 important, but there are specific things that we needed
 8 and not just general second hand things. We had the
 9 logistical problem of storing items and of getting rid
 10 of unsuitable donations."
 11 Andrew Langford highlights the importance of
 12 utilising the voluntary sector and local community
 13 groups. Referring to the humanitarian assistance group
 14 meetings, he says {CFV00000050/5}:
 15 "The early coordination meetings on the 15th, 16th
 16 and 17th of June 2017 seemed to demonstrate that there
 17 was an unsureness on the part of the Local Authority, as
 18 to what the official voluntary sector partners and the
 19 wider community could offer in terms of support ... a
 20 clear understanding of what the voluntary sector could
 21 offer at an earlier stage, by the Local Authority, would
 22 have in Cruse's view, hastened further support to people
 23 [a]ffected by the incident."
 24 He continues:
 25 "There needed to be more of an understanding about

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1 how the voluntary sector could be utilised in order to
2 assist the relief effort ... Further understanding of
3 how Local Authorities can engage local community groups
4 and resources will be useful. There was much capacity
5 to support people affected, through local community
6 groups. However, there seemed to be no links between
7 the Local Authority and those community groups in North
8 Kensington area just post incident. It would have been
9 beneficial for there to be a protocol or mutual aid
10 agreement in place between community organisations, to
11 support should there be such an event."

12 Luke Jonathan Miller is the Archdeacon of London as
13 well as resilience lead for the Diocese of London. He
14 is a member of the London Resilience Forum and chair of
15 the Faith Sector Panel. He says {CFV00000058/11}:

16 "Curating relationships before you need them and
17 ensuring that there are good local links increases
18 community resilience very considerably. Building into
19 the protocols for a Strategic Coordination Group that
20 the Faith and Belief Sector should be engaged and
21 ensuring it is also drawn into the Humanitarian
22 Assistance in the recovery phase is important. The
23 Faith and Belief Sector can be effectively supported by
24 regional and local government but its inherently bottom
25 up, devolved and diverse nature means that it cannot

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1 easily be managed through policies, procedures or
2 uniform methods of working. It is above all about
3 relationships at each level of the life of our
4 communities."

5 Adrian Clee from the Salvation Army says
6 {CFV00000059/12}:

7 "One key gap prior to 2017 was the level of
8 engagement with the VCS (Voluntary Community Sector) at
9 a Local Resilience Forum/Local Authority level. Some
10 LRFs were heavily engaged with their VCS partners with
11 strong relationships, mutual understanding and genuine
12 partnership working in responses to major incidents.
13 Other LRFs were very much content to pay lip service to
14 the role of the VCS with the role of the 'non
15 professionals' being very much an after-thought. The
16 various tragic events in 2017 have made a difference to
17 the engagement with the VCS by statutory partners which
18 will be helpful in future emergencies, but there is
19 still some way to go before this approach is across the
20 board and the VCS is truly viewed as a trusted partner."

21 He continues in terms of learning for the voluntary
22 community sector itself:

23 "There has been genuine reflection and action with
24 regard to bridging the gap between the response from the
25 main VCS National responding charities — Red

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1 Cross/Salvation Army etc and the myriad of support
2 available from Local Churches/Faith/Community groups ...
3 I believe that the Civil Contingencies Act needs to be
4 strengthened to make it a requirement for Category 1
5 responders/LRFs to involve the VCS in their Emergency
6 planning and exercising. The Act currently just says
7 they must pay 'due regard' to the Voluntary Sector and
8 the role that it can play in responding to emergencies.
9 As a result, there is not a consistent approach across
10 the country within LRFs or Local Authorities. Some are
11 examples of best practice in terms of LRF/LA/VCS
12 engagement, some are very poor. The VCS itself can
13 continue to advocate for more engagement, but unless
14 involvement in the LRF/LA Emergency planning process is
15 mandated, there will continue to be an inconsistent
16 picture across the country."

17 He states:

18 "The need for much more of a person centred rather
19 than task orientated approach to the humanitarian
20 aspects of an Emergency Response is key, as is having as
21 full an understanding of the richness, diversity,
22 capacity and characteristics of whichever community has
23 been affected. These elements are firmly embedded in
24 the VCS approach to responding to future major
25 incidents."

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1 Turning lastly to final reflections, Reverend
2 Mark O'Donoghue says {CFV00000054/5}:

3 "Amidst the anguish, anxiety and suffering on that
4 first day, there were some remarkably encouraging signs.
5 Many have remarked on the phenomenal outpouring of
6 compassion in the days following the fire. Churches,
7 gurdwaras, mosques and synagogues, including my friends
8 at the Al-Manaar Mosque and the Holland Park Synagogue
9 and also other community groups such as the Harrow Club
10 and the Rugby Portobello Trust threw open their doors to
11 help those affected ... Nor was the compassion confined
12 to the community of Kensington. People came from all
13 over London and across the UK arrived with offers of
14 help and supplies."

15 He continues:

16 "It is hard for local churches and faith groups to
17 feel like we can do much to lift the burden of grief in
18 tragedies such as Grenfell. But we committed to walk
19 alongside the community of North Kensington, to pray
20 with them and for them and to share their burden as best
21 we could. We were equally committed to being critical
22 friends of those in power, seeking honest answers and
23 a transparent process that keeps the survivors and the
24 community at the heart of it, holding all to fulfil
25 their promises and seeking the will from all sides to

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1 rebuild trust and rebuild the community. William Wake,
 2 who struggled to sleep that first week, told the Prime
 3 Minister that if it wasn't for the churches, they would
 4 have been utterly abandoned. Nicholas Burton, who
 5 escaped from the 19th floor, ended one meeting by
 6 telling us that although he was homeless, he was no
 7 longer hopeless."

8 Mr Chairman, members of the panel, that concludes
 9 the evidence to be read from this portion of the
 10 evidence.

11 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Ms Islam, thank you very much.
 12 Now, we have another witness today, don't we, but
 13 I think she's scheduled to be here at 2 o'clock; is that
 14 right?

15 MS ISLAM: That's right.

16 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: In which case, I think we'll have to
 17 rise at this point, and we'll sit again at 2 o'clock.

18 MS ISLAM: Thank you.

19 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: All right? Thank you very much.
 20 (12.37 pm)

21 (The short adjournment)

22 (2.00 pm)

23 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes, Ms Islam. Now, you have
 24 another witness for us, I think.

25 MS ISLAM: I do. Can I call Ms Wahabi, please.

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1 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you very much.
 2 MS HANAN WAHABI (sworn)

3 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you very much. All right, sit
 4 down, please, and make yourself comfortable.

5 (Pause)

6 All right. We can take this quite slowly, so feel
 7 relaxed, as far as you can.

8 THE WITNESS: Yeah. Thank you.

9 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: All right?

10 Yes, Ms Islam.

11 Questions from COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY

12 MS ISLAM: Thank you.

13 Thank you very much for attending today to give your
 14 evidence to the Inquiry and assist us with our
 15 investigations.

16 By way of introduction, please try and keep your
 17 voice up so the transcriber over there can hear what
 18 you're saying and so that we can capture it on the
 19 transcript. It also helps to say "yes" or "no" rather
 20 than nod.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. If any of my questions are unclear, please let me know
 23 and I'll ask them in a different way.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. If at any point you need to stop for a break or anything

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1 like that, please let us know and we will make those
 2 arrangements.

3 A. Yes, I will, thank you.

4 Q. You have made three statements to the Inquiry. The
 5 first is dated 18 April 2018. If we could go to that
 6 statement, please, it's {IWS00000074}. If we could go
 7 to page 21, can you confirm that that's your signature?

8 A. Yes, that's my signature.

9 Q. Thank you.

10 If we could turn to your second statement, please,
 11 dated 22 October 2018, that's {IWS00001146}, and if we
 12 could turn to page 10 of that statement, can you confirm
 13 that that is your signature?

14 A. That is also my signature.

15 Q. Thank you.

16 If we can turn to your third statement, which is
 17 dated 26 February 2020, which is {IWS00001714}, and if
 18 we could go to page 18 of that statement, please, can
 19 you confirm that that is your signature?

20 A. Yes, it is.

21 Q. Have you had the opportunity to read all of those
 22 statements recently?

23 A. I have.

24 Q. Can you confirm that the contents are true to the best
 25 of your knowledge?

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1 A. They are.

2 Q. Thank you.

3 I'm going to ask you some background questions
 4 first.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. You were a resident at flat 66 of Grenfell Tower at the
 7 time of the fire and you had lived there since 2001; is
 8 that right?

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. You lived there with your former husband and your two
 11 children; is that correct?

12 A. That's correct.

13 Q. Your brother, Abdulaziz El—Wahabi, lived in flat 182
 14 with his wife, Faouzia El—Wahabi, and their three
 15 children, Yasin, Nur Huda and Mehdi; is that right?

16 A. That's right.

17 Q. And they tragically perished in the fire.

18 A. Yes, they did.

19 Q. I'm now going to ask you some questions about the night
 20 of the fire on 14 June.

21 You gave evidence in Phase 1 of the Inquiry, where
 22 you told us about your escape from the fire. We know
 23 from the CCTV image you were shown that you left the
 24 tower at 1.21; is that right?

25 A. That's correct.

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1 Q. After leaving the building, is it correct that you and
 2 your family remained at the scene until it got light
 3 outside?
 4 A. That's also correct.
 5 Q. During this time, you outline in your statement that you
 6 made a number of calls to your brother; is that right?
 7 A. That's correct.
 8 Q. Do you remember roughly how many hours you were outside
 9 of the tower for?
 10 A. Many hours. Many, many hours. I'm not sure exactly
 11 what time. Yeah. We were there all day. All day.
 12 Literally all day.
 13 Q. Okay. How would you describe the atmosphere during
 14 those early hours on the scene?
 15 A. Chaotic, very chaotic. A lot of us were in shock. It
 16 felt surreal and felt like I was watching a movie and it
 17 wasn't actually happening.
 18 Q. During your time outside of the tower, was there anyone
 19 from RBKC, the TMO or other official presence providing
 20 information about where to go or what to do?
 21 A. No. No. The only presence that was there was the
 22 police, and I remember them ushering us further back,
 23 yeah, and then there was at one point where I wrote —
 24 one of the policemen had a notepad and I remember giving
 25 our names to the policeman.

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1 Q. Thank you.
 2 There's a reference in your statement where you
 3 mention seeing somebody from the TMO.
 4 A. Yes.
 5 Q. I'm going to take you to paragraph 26 of your second
 6 statement {IWS00001146/8}, please. It should come up on
 7 your screen in just a moment.
 8 A. Okay.
 9 Q. You say:
 10 "During the night of the fire and the next day on
 11 14 June 2017, I didn't notice anyone from RBKC or KCTMO
 12 taking charge of the situation. The community organised
 13 itself. I did see someone who said that he was there to
 14 represent KCTMO. He was wearing a lanyard with a name
 15 badge, but I don't remember his name. I saw him at the
 16 end of Walmer Road towards the Rugby Portobello Club.
 17 I told him the names of my family and he wrote down
 18 their names and my mobile number on his notebook.
 19 I asked him to get back to me but he never did.
 20 I didn't see anyone from RBKC or TMO until much later
 21 that day."
 22 Do you remember roughly when you saw this person
 23 from the TMO?
 24 A. I would probably say — it was still dark. It was still
 25 dark, but it was approaching light, but it wasn't quite

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1 light just yet. Yeah, so I'm not sure exactly what time
 2 though, to be quite honest.
 3 Q. Did the person you spoke to tell you what he was going
 4 to do with the information about your family that you'd
 5 provided?
 6 A. No. No. No, he didn't. I kind of volunteered that
 7 information about my family and he wrote them down —
 8 wrote it down, and I asked him to get back to me and he
 9 said he would, but which he didn't. But it was more of
 10 me telling him as opposed to him asking me.
 11 Q. Thank you.
 12 Did he give you any information about what to do,
 13 where to go, any rest centres or anything like that?
 14 A. No, nothing.
 15 Q. I'm now going to ask you some questions about the
 16 Rugby Club.
 17 Is it right that at some point in the morning of the
 18 14th you went to the Rugby Club?
 19 A. I did, yeah.
 20 Q. Are you able to say roughly what sort of time that was?
 21 A. It was still quite dark. My nephew, Anas Ghamhi, is the
 22 one who actually organised the Rugby Club to be opened.
 23 He had booked the place before for his own — his
 24 wedding, he had a reception in the Rugby Club, and he
 25 had a contact, I believe the gentleman was called Chris,

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1 he knocked on his door and asked him, and said, "There's
 2 people outside, can we open the Rugby Club to let people
 3 in, so they're not out on the streets". I know Anas,
 4 when it was — because Anas was the first family member
 5 from my family that was on the scene to come and support
 6 us. He — it was still dark when he went to have it
 7 opened.
 8 But I didn't go into the Rugby Club immediately
 9 because I needed to see where my family were, my brother
 10 and his wife and his children, and just I couldn't leave
 11 knowing that they hadn't got out yet. So although the
 12 Rugby Club was opened and people began to use the space
 13 and be in the Rugby Club, I just couldn't go in for
 14 a while. I didn't go in until much later. It was
 15 day — daylight had been — that's when I went in, yeah.
 16 Q. Okay.
 17 Do you remember whether the conversation with the
 18 person that you just mentioned, the TMO member, was
 19 before or after you went to the Rugby Club?
 20 A. Before I went to the Rugby Club.
 21 Q. Okay.
 22 At the Rugby Club, were you aware of a list of safe
 23 and missing residents that had been started by members
 24 of the community?
 25 A. So when I went into the Rugby Club, I can't remember if

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1 her name's Jan, a lady who worked at the Rugby Club,
 2 we — I just said, like, "We've just come out of the
 3 tower". There was no like immediate list straight away,
 4 and then she said, "Oh, maybe let's write up" — you
 5 know, she kind of suggested, "Let's write a list of
 6 those of you who have come out", and said, "Would you
 7 like to write your name?" So I did write my name. Then
 8 I took it upon myself to say to her, "My family haven't
 9 come out, can we write a list of people that were
 10 missing?", and so we then made — created two lists;
 11 there was one list of people that had come out, and
 12 another new list that was created with my family's name
 13 first on there to say who we were still looking for.

14 And then, as time went on, somehow there was
 15 confusion and those lists must have merged together,
 16 because we then were given information that our family
 17 were on the safe list, they called it the "safe list".
 18 That's what — that's — so there was a bit of a mistake
 19 about that. I think the lists must have somehow been
 20 put together.

21 I don't know if anybody else added the people they
 22 were waiting for. I know that I did. I didn't see any
 23 other names after my family, but there was a list of
 24 people who came out.

25 Later on, William Thompson, Edward Daffarn and

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1 Mahad, I don't know his surname, I know they created
 2 a big massive list within the Rugby Club on big sheets
 3 of paper so we could just write who we were still
 4 looking — you know, who was out and people we were
 5 looking for. So that was done by the community, by
 6 those — by survivors themselves.
 7 Q. Yes.
 8 Now, you have told us that at some point the lists
 9 became confused and your family members were listed on
 10 the safe list.
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. How did that make you feel when you saw that?
 13 A. I remember being in the hotel when that happened, and we
 14 were given — again, just word of mouth — the community
 15 saying, "There's a safe list and your family's name are
 16 on the list". That safe list was not just the
 17 Rugby Club, because I think they must have been
 18 merging — having discussion between the different
 19 community spaces, and I think Clement James as well, and
 20 the lists were — you could find — you know, there were
 21 all these lists, but they were merging them together,
 22 and we were given information, and I still have text
 23 messages where I messaged, you know, colleagues and
 24 friends saying, "My family are fine, they're on the safe
 25 list, I don't know where they are but they're fine".

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1 But I just kept waiting for news, waiting for news,
 2 thinking that they were out, and I was given — I know
 3 obviously people were in shock, and ... but I was given
 4 information by people, somebody who said that they'd
 5 seen Mehdi wearing a gas mask, that was somebody who —
 6 you know, somebody said they'd literally seen that
 7 himself. I'd heard from somebody else that my brother
 8 came out of the tower and they saw him disorientated.
 9 We got other information saying that Yasin was in
 10 hospital, which is why my family were running around the
 11 hospitals.

12 So these were information that we were given from
 13 people saying that they'd spotted them alive. It gave
 14 us hope. And the lists — the fact that those lists
 15 were together also — it gave me hope. And then
 16 obviously it turned out that they weren't on the safe
 17 list and they didn't survive.

18 Q. Now, you've told us about the various miscommunication
 19 that was shared about members of your family. In your
 20 view, what do you think led to inaccurate information
 21 being shared?

22 A. The lack of presence from any government, you know, be
 23 it local or — you know, local government, central
 24 government, there was no one there to kind of organise
 25 anything. It was very chaotic. So it was for people

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1 from the community, a lot of them being survivors and
 2 bereaved themselves, just trying to create these lists,
 3 and people — you know, local residents, and they tried
 4 their best to do what they could do. The fact they were
 5 merged — it's a human error. It was a human error.
 6 But the fact that there was no one there from any
 7 authority to support us was the problem.

8 Q. Just taking that one step further, what do you think
 9 would have prevented inaccurate information being
 10 shared?

11 A. I think, one, obviously having somebody there, having
 12 somebody from local authority to create those lists. So
 13 they'd have a list — so the council knows who lives in
 14 those towers. They knew who lived in those towers.
 15 They knew that I lived in that tower with my ex-husband
 16 and my children and my brother lived — they knew, so
 17 they could have had a tick list and kind of ticked off,
 18 "Are you out? Are you out?", and seen, but there was
 19 none of that, so it was left to the community to create
 20 those lists themselves, in the best way they knew how.

21 Q. Thank you.

22 You have just mentioned that a number of your family
 23 members attended hospitals. Do you know whether they
 24 were able to get any information?

25 A. They attended various hospitals. I can't remember the

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1 names of all of them. I've listed them in my statement.
 2 But they attended hospitals because that information
 3 came from the local community saying that people had
 4 been taken to particular hospitals. So I think
 5 St Thomas' was one of them, St Mary's. I can't remember
 6 all of them. They are in my statement. So that was all
 7 through word of mouth, of where the ambulances were
 8 coming, where they were taking people, so that's where
 9 they went, and they did go there and they asked and they
 10 questioned, but there was — they were told that they
 11 weren't there, they weren't there. Especially I think,
 12 like I said, we were told that Yasin was in a particular
 13 hospital. Somebody had said that they'd seen him in
 14 a bed. But, like I said, people were — you know, you
 15 see things that you think you saw because you're just —
 16 it's trauma.
 17 Q. Yes.
 18 A. Yeah.
 19 Q. Is it right that you also tried calling the
 20 Casualty Bureau telephone number?
 21 A. Yes, my family did. I didn't personally call them
 22 myself. I was in shock of being a survivor myself and
 23 coming out of the tower. All the information was being
 24 relayed to me and I was asking all the questions and
 25 saying, "Go and ask or find this, go there", and all the

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1 information was coming — it was my nieces that were
 2 going round to hospitals, and they called the
 3 Casualty Bureau. The number was put up, I'm not sure by
 4 who, whether it was community, I'm not sure, but it was
 5 just a matter of calling, giving the information, but
 6 you weren't getting anything back.
 7 Q. Thank you.
 8 Do you remember when you received any official
 9 information about your brother and his family?
 10 A. Weeks. Months. Months. I do remember the — not
 11 immediately, I don't know how many days later, the FLOs.
 12 We had two initial FLOs. Jennifer Anderson and
 13 Andrew Brown were the two initial FLOs that we got, and
 14 I — they somehow found my mum's address. I know my
 15 brother previously lived at my mum's address, so maybe
 16 that's how they knew where my mum's address was, but
 17 obviously there were lots of people from the community
 18 coming to kind of see the survivors and see, you know,
 19 bereaved families, and — or didn't know they were
 20 bereaved at that point. It was quite a busy place.
 21 So then they were asked to just meet at my sister's
 22 house, Amina Chaer—Yemlahi. That's where all the
 23 meetings took place, which is also on Lancaster
 24 West Estate. It's not immediately in front of the
 25 tower, but you can see the tower from where my sister

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1 lived at the time. So lots of those meetings took place
 2 there, and I remember getting information from my sister
 3 saying, "The detectives are here to give information".
 4 But there wasn't any information they could give us.
 5 They were just basically coming to ask questions about
 6 them, asking where there — you know, they took DNA from
 7 myself and my brother, Amin El—Wahabi, and they asked us
 8 about their dentists, which dentists they went to.
 9 Q. What were your experiences of the FLOs that were
 10 assigned to you? Were they responsive to yours and your
 11 family's needs?
 12 A. The FLOs that we had were very responsive to us and our
 13 needs. They tried their best. I mean, they didn't have
 14 all the information, they didn't know, they could only
 15 tell us what they did know, and obviously there were
 16 things that they couldn't tell us until things were
 17 confirmed. But every time, you know, they — there was
 18 any glimpse of information, they made sure they came and
 19 met with us face-to-face. Yeah. Yeah.
 20 Q. How would you describe the overall process of trying to
 21 find information about your family in the immediate
 22 aftermath?
 23 A. It's the worst experience ever. It's the unknown. It's
 24 the unknown. We didn't have any information. No one
 25 could tell us any information for a very long time.

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1 I can't put it into words. It was very, very difficult.
 2 We didn't have any information. I mean, like I said,
 3 the FLOs came, but they didn't — it was just — I think
 4 you took comfort in having somebody that was from,
 5 I don't know, an authority that was there to kind of —
 6 you kind of take comfort in authority being there. You
 7 think they're here, they can give you information, or
 8 they're just there so when there is something, they'll
 9 come to you. But I think we took comfort in having the
 10 FLOs, but it didn't mean we had any information, because
 11 they didn't have any information to give.
 12 Q. Yes.
 13 I now want to return to 14 June and ask you some
 14 questions about your time at the Rugby Club.
 15 Is it right that there were RBKC staff members
 16 present at the Rugby Club on 14 June?
 17 A. Not initially, they weren't present at all. It wasn't
 18 until much, much later in the day that I was
 19 downstairs — my daughter came out, she wasn't wearing
 20 any shoes, so people from the community were bringing
 21 things to wear because we came out in our pyjamas, and
 22 I remember being downstairs trying to find a pair of
 23 shoes that would fit her, and somebody said there's —
 24 basically RBKC are upstairs — hotel rooms, basically,
 25 accommodation. But it wasn't like — I didn't get

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1 a phone call. I had my mobile phone with me, which RBKC
2 are — they had my number, so they could have called me
3 and said, "We're here". I never got information from
4 them. It wasn't — it was just through word of mouth,
5 people saying, "Do you know what, there are — RBKC are
6 here, they're sending people to accommodation", and
7 that's the first I heard of it.

8 So I remember my sister taking me upstairs,
9 saying — because I was just in shock, she would just
10 guide me and said, "Hanan, you know, let's go and see
11 what's going on", so we did go. But it was very —
12 there was no privacy, there was literally a table,
13 another table, another table, and I'd had a conversation
14 with the RBKC representative, and then there's another
15 surviving family right next to me talking about their
16 own — you know, about themselves. So there was no
17 privacy, and they weren't polite in any way. I remember
18 them saying they were going to put me in a hotel very
19 far out, not within RBKC, it was quite far, and
20 I remember saying to them, "This is my area, I need to
21 be here, I've lost — I don't know where my brother is",
22 and they said I had to take whatever I was given.

23 Q. Yes.

24 A. And I remember pleading, saying, "I need to be close",
25 and it just happened, something came up, "Oh, actually,

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1 we've got one here". But it was like no eye contact,
2 there was no, like, empathy, there was nothing. It was
3 very cold, the conversation with the RBKC
4 representative. My sister sat with me throughout the
5 whole conversation and, like I said, you could hear what
6 was going on with everybody else.

7 So I was given the hotel, Premier Inn on
8 West Cromwell Road. I know there's another one in
9 Earl's Court, but I was given the one in West Cromwell
10 Road. There were I think three other families there
11 that were also in that hotel with me.

12 Q. Okay.

13 I just want to take you to a passage in your third
14 statement, please, which deals with this in a little bit
15 more detail, if that's okay. It's paragraph 54
16 {IWS00001714/11}.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. You have just covered some of it, but just to revisit
19 it, you say:

20 "At this point I was in shock and someone had to
21 guide me up to meet with them. I recall there were
22 maybe 3 or 4 people from RBKC sat at desks. I told RBKC
23 that I needed to stay within the area. I was informed
24 they would give us whatever came up. The person went
25 through a tick box interview. We were not asked about

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1 whether we had access to money, food or water or given
2 a way to access them. The person conducting the
3 interview was robotic and did not have any empathy. The
4 room was very small and there was no privacy. You could
5 hear what was being discussed with the other people in
6 the room."

7 Now, you've dealt with some of these points already,
8 but I just want to ask you some follow-up questions, if
9 that's okay.

10 Did there appear to be a clear system in place for
11 the allocation of emergency accommodation during this
12 interview?

13 A. No. No. No clear system. No. We were just like
14 cattle coming through, and they were like — you know,
15 like I said, it was a tick-box exercise, and, yeah, and
16 when you discussed with other survivors and stuff, it
17 was just — the conversations were very different, so it
18 was just — I don't think there was any consistency with
19 the questions or — I mean, apart from the fact of,
20 you know, "How many are you in the household?", or
21 whatever, which didn't really make a difference because
22 they put us all in one room anyway.

23 Q. Now, you have mentioned that there was somebody sitting
24 next to you during your interview, but do you remember
25 if there were other people within the room at the same

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1 time?

2 A. Yes. There was a desk that was — a Rugby Portobello
3 Trust representative that was there, that was making
4 sure everybody that was coming in; there was a desk that
5 I was sat at; there was another desk — I think there
6 were about three or — one, two — three or four desks,
7 and each desk had an RBKC representative behind the
8 table, and there was a family in front. So all of this
9 was happening in one room, and it wasn't a big room at
10 that.

11 Q. Yes.

12 Do you feel that you were treated with dignity and
13 respect in that interview?

14 A. Absolutely not.

15 Q. In your view, what should have been done differently by
16 RBKC staff in those interviews with families?

17 A. Well, you had the — there was bigger spaces downstairs
18 in the Rugby Portobello, you could use bigger spaces, or
19 you could have had a bit more — there was another room
20 next door where you could have had a bit more privacy,
21 a bit more privacy, and I think a bit more humanity and
22 empathy with the way you speak to people. We've just
23 come out of a burning building. We're looking for our
24 family. You know, we've got children with no shoes on.
25 We're wearing our pyjamas. We're like in shock.

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1 You know, have a bit of empathy for people. There was
2 none of that. I think the way they conducted themselves
3 was absolutely disgusting.

4 Q. Thank you.

5 I'm now going to turn to ask you about the emergency
6 accommodation that you were provided, and you have told
7 us that you and your family were allocated one room at
8 the Premier Inn in Kensington, and is it right that that
9 was one room for the four of you, and it contained
10 a double bed, a single bed and a sofa bed?

11 A. That's correct, a small sofa bed. It was very tight
12 with four of us in one room, yeah.

13 Q. Were these sleeping arrangements suitable for you and
14 your family?

15 A. Absolutely not. We were all — you know, there were
16 four of us, PTSD, children who were looking for their
17 cousins and their uncle and aunt, you know. I just
18 remember collapsing, and you've got nowhere to collapse,
19 just right in front of your children, and I remember
20 people — my family and friends trying to come and
21 support you, and, you know, you've got a bed and you've
22 got this little area right next to the bed, and I just
23 remember, I just — I kept collapsing, and there's no
24 space.

25 Q. How long were you in that accommodation for?

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1 A. 18 months.

2 Q. And were you in that same room for that 18 months?

3 A. The same room for 18 months.

4 Q. In terms of the provision of food, is it right that food
5 was provided at set times, at breakfast and dinnertime?

6 A. Initially, I didn't know there was any food provision.
7 I didn't know. I wasn't aware of that at all. No one
8 told us there was food provision at all. So my friends
9 would bring me food, we had the local community bringing
10 us food. The Sikh community were very supportive, the
11 Muslim community, they were all bringing us food to the
12 hotels. That's how we were able to eat. Or I'd go to
13 my mum's and people from the community were bringing
14 food there as well. I didn't know anything about there
15 being food. It was my sister, Asia, who passed away
16 a few months ago, who went to the hotel manager and
17 said, "Is there anything for my sister to eat?", because
18 we were fasting, and there were particular times of the
19 day that we need to break our fast, particular times of
20 the day that we need to eat before we start our fast.
21 That — there was no accommodation for that at all.

22 What they did say was that we had — we could have
23 breakfast, but to have breakfast, you had to leave your
24 room, you couldn't take anything to your room, you had
25 to go and mix with people who were staying there having

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1 a holiday. People having a holiday, we had to go in the
2 same room, breakfast area, food space, and that's where
3 we could get some breakfast, and we'd have to eat it
4 there in front of everybody, regardless of what we'd
5 been through. And that's not the hotel's fault, that's
6 their system. That's RBKC's fault. They should have
7 thought about that, and they didn't.

8 There was no lunch provided at the hotel. There was
9 a dinner service, but it was very — a particular time,
10 and it was basically frozen food that they heat up in
11 the microwave, and that was it, really. There was
12 nothing healthy.

13 So eventually, within time — as time went on, we
14 were given financial support to be able to purchase our
15 own food, so we would just get takeout. This is
16 Earl's Court. I mean, there's nothing healthy you can
17 get there, to be quite honest, so I put on a lot of
18 weight after the tragedy, and I still suffer from gastro
19 problems now because of the unhealthy food that
20 I consumed within those 18 months that I — I might need
21 to have an operation now because I've got quite a few
22 gallstones as a result of unhealthy eating.

23 Q. You've told us about the timings of the food; is it also
24 right that the food was not Halal?

25 A. The food was not Halal. It was not Halal. And even the

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1 vegetarian option, there was no — there wasn't much.

2 And my children are quite fussy, you know, they're used
3 to a home-cooked meal. But, yeah, we couldn't — there
4 was nothing — it was all frozen. The only thing

5 I could get them was fish fingers, so they literally had
6 that every single day. So they had the same food every
7 single day. Yeah.

8 Q. Overall, what impact did the hotel accommodation have on
9 you and your family?

10 A. It broke my family. It broke my family. My son, who
11 still today struggles with insomnia, was literally
12 walking — you know, he was 16. You know, 16, you know,
13 again in shock. He was literally just walking the
14 streets. He would just walk the streets. I mean, what
15 was he going to do, come and sleep in the same bedroom,
16 where his mum and dad are in the same bedroom and his
17 sister's there and — so he would just walk in the
18 streets. There was a 24-hour Tesco's. He literally
19 used to walk to that Tesco, walk around it and — he
20 just literally used to walk the streets, that's all he
21 did.

22 My daughter was in shock, so she would literally be
23 stuck to me. She wouldn't let go of me. We had to hold
24 hands, like — it's only been the last two years that
25 she's been able to sleep in a separate bedroom. She had

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1 to sleep in my bed, and I still have to have nightlights
2 on and everything for her. But, yeah, so we'd have to
3 hold hands, and I remember just her shaking. She would
4 just continually shake like a leaf.

5 But, yeah, it was too much for my ex-husband at the
6 time, so he couldn't stay. He couldn't stay. He left.
7 He went away to Morocco to spend time with his family
8 because he just couldn't be there. He couldn't be there
9 for us.

10 Q. I'm going to turn now to ask you some questions about
11 financial assistance.

12 In paragraph 66 of your third statement
13 {IWS00001714/14}, and we can go to it if we need to --

14 A. Yes, please.

15 Q. So paragraph 66, you say:

16 "I recall we were given payments by RBKC. I cannot
17 recall how much."

18 Do you remember whether that assistance was provided
19 in the first week following the fire?

20 A. I can't remember. There was one lady that came, I can't
21 remember if it was the first week or just after the
22 first week, I remember her coming, and I think she gave
23 us about a hundred--and--something pounds in an envelope,
24 and then that was it. She gave us that in an envelope.
25 And she brought a lady with her. I put it in my

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1 statement I think it was Sarah Cheetham or something
2 like that. I put her name in there. And she said that
3 this is the link person, and she gave me her number,
4 and -- yeah, and that was it, really, but -- and that
5 number just wouldn't work anymore, so I didn't even have
6 that contact. I never heard from the lady again and
7 that was it.

8 Q. We will come on to that in just a second.

9 Is it also right that you received cash payments
10 from donations from charities?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Do you remember if that was in the first week?

13 A. Yes, in the first week, yes, there was. Because

14 obviously we didn't -- you know, we'd left our ID.

15 I couldn't access any of my funds. I've always worked,

16 I would have had money in my bank to pay for what

17 I needed to pay -- to purchase for me and my children,

18 but I couldn't access those funds. So I remember

19 Human Aid coming to the hotel. But then again that

20 was -- I mean, I'm not saying that would have happened

21 to everybody. Somebody that I know, her mum works for

22 them, and so it was like, "Oh, we know somebody who this

23 happened" -- so they came to the hotel. So that's why

24 they came. So I'm not sure if that happened to

25 everybody, but we did have somebody -- and I remember

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1 them giving us maybe again some money in an envelope,
2 and I remember them giving me a prayer mat and a Quran.

3 Q. Turning briefly to ask you about communication and how
4 information and support was communicated to you, did you
5 receive any information from RBKC or the TMO about the
6 support available to you, such as through leaflets or
7 phone calls, within the first week following the fire?

8 A. Nothing. Nothing from them. It wasn't until much later
9 that I even -- it wasn't until much later, it was in the
10 summer break, I was going to visit my sister, Asia, and
11 there was a lady who lived downstairs, her -- I think
12 they knew that we'd been impacted, and her daughter
13 said, you know -- I'd had a discussion about who we were
14 and what have you, and I said, "I'm just coming to see
15 my sister", and she said that her sister was in the
16 Henry Dickens Estate supporting children with art
17 therapy, and that we could use that service for my
18 daughter, because she was struggling.

19 So I remember going to Henry Dickens Estate, there's
20 the community hall there, and I remember meeting
21 somebody there called Malcolm from Hestia. I remember
22 meeting him there, and they were talking about certain
23 support and, you know, leaflets, and I said, "I don't
24 get any of them". We didn't get any leaflets at the
25 Premier Inn. I know that there was another Premier Inn,

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1 I don't know if they did, but the Premier Inn that we
2 were in on West Cromwell Road, we didn't get any
3 leaflets, nothing. I don't know if that's because there
4 was only like a handful of -- there were like four --
5 one, two -- three families -- four families, there were
6 four families in the hotel that I was in, and then two
7 of them left to somewhere else, there were only two
8 families in that hotel. Maybe that's why we didn't
9 get -- there wasn't a large number of us in that hotel.
10 There was no information. But I remember Malcolm then
11 making contact, because he said he would, and he ensured
12 that we then started getting newsletters to that hotel
13 as well.

14 Q. Do you remember roughly when that was?

15 A. It would have been -- so I would have met Malcolm in the
16 summer months, August -- probably September, end of
17 August/September. September, maybe.

18 Q. Okay.

19 Turning now to ask you about key worker and social
20 worker support.

21 If I can take you, please, to paragraph 67 of your
22 first witness statement {IWS00000074/19}, so here you
23 say:

24 "I was not assigned a keyworker or anyone I could
25 call from RBKC initially. No one from the Council came

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1 to see if we were okay in the days following the fire .
 2 They just left us. A lady from RBKC eventually came,
 3 I don't know how many days after the fire. She brought
 4 another lady with her, named Sarah Cheetham. I wrote
 5 down Sarah's full name and contact number. They told me
 6 Sarah was my link person. I contacted her, but she
 7 stopped responding and I was told she'd been transferred
 8 somewhere else. It was all very confused."
 9 Is that what you were referring to briefly earlier
 10 on?
 11 A. Yes, that's what I was referring to, yes.
 12 Q. Is it correct that several weeks later you were
 13 allocated someone you had met at the Rugby Club who was
 14 a social worker?
 15 A. Yeah, so somebody — again, through word of mouth — was
 16 saying that — had told — somehow the information got
 17 back to one of my sisters saying that at the
 18 Rugby Portobello there were people there supporting with
 19 ID, passports, because obviously we'd lost our
 20 passports, we didn't have any identification, and
 21 apparently at the Rugby Portobello there were people
 22 there supporting, so we went there — that's why I went
 23 back to the Rugby Portobello, and I met Ashley Drake
 24 there. She was supporting, and I had my children with
 25 me, and — yeah, so we were there, and then I met

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1 Ashley. She was a social worker, but she wasn't my
 2 key worker at that point. But then I didn't have any
 3 kind of key worker or link worker or whatever they
 4 wanted to call them, I didn't have anything at all.
 5 Then there was a meeting at Holborn Bars that the
 6 FLOs — the FLOs used to have some meetings there, they
 7 took us there and there were — the Red Cross being
 8 there to support us, and we were there, and — because
 9 I said to the FLOs — it was the FLOs, basically, that
 10 got us — made sure that we had a key worker, because
 11 nobody else came and asked us, and I'd relayed that
 12 information to them, and I'd heard other people had
 13 key workers, but we didn't have anybody, and then when
 14 we went there, there were people from RBKC there, and it
 15 turned out they said I had been allocated a key worker,
 16 there were four allocated to me — four — and I didn't
 17 know about either one of them, and they didn't know
 18 about each other. They were from different boroughs,
 19 they weren't RBKC.
 20 And then Ashley Drake happened to be there that day
 21 as well supporting, and she then said, "Do you know
 22 what, do you want me to be your key worker?", and I said
 23 yeah, because I'd met her already, so it made sense, and
 24 she'd met my children. So at that point there was
 25 a representative from RBKC who said, "Okay, well, we'll

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1 tell the other four" — not Ashley Drake — "they're no
 2 longer to be your key worker", although I didn't know
 3 they were mine anyway, they hadn't contacted me. So
 4 I then remained with Ashley Drake, which was — it was
 5 good to have somebody we'd met. She was very
 6 supportive. She helped with — obviously my children
 7 were struggling and she helped with like school
 8 meetings, especially for Zak, because he had to move —
 9 because he was in the middle of doing his AS levels when
 10 the tragedy happened, so she helped with meetings of
 11 transition, which was a big problem anyway. But we had
 12 Ashley, but Ashley wasn't part of the key worker hub, so
 13 we had support, but it wasn't adequate support. She was
 14 good with what she did as a social worker, because she's
 15 a professional and she knew her job, but she couldn't
 16 tap into services though RBKC, the key worker hub,
 17 because she wasn't one of them. It was very, very
 18 confusing.
 19 So there were lots of support services that were
 20 offered to families that wasn't offered to my family
 21 because Ashley Drake wasn't part of the key worker hub.
 22 Q. Thank you.
 23 Overall, how would you describe your experience of
 24 the key worker system and the support provided to you by
 25 the social worker?

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1 A. Like I said, Ashley Drake did her best, she was very
 2 supportive, in the best way she could, and like,
 3 you know, the essentials. I mean, she helped with
 4 making sure we had funds to buy food, that's what she
 5 was allowed to do. But anything else, we didn't get any
 6 of that — no support.
 7 I, obviously being bereaved and wanting to know
 8 where my family was, I was sleeping at the hotel but
 9 I was spending the whole day at my mum's. Trying to get
 10 to my mum's, obviously she lives in W11 and I was up
 11 near Earl's Court, so I know — I've heard that there
 12 were support service with regards to taxi services that
 13 could take you to where you needed to go. I remember
 14 being given a TfL, like, kind of Oyster card for us, me
 15 and — us as a family individually that we could use.
 16 That was there for one month, and they wouldn't give it
 17 to us anymore, they just said, "You've got to make your
 18 own way". And then I'd heard that there was — some
 19 people who had their own cars — I did have my own
 20 car — they could help with £50 a week towards your
 21 petrol. So I said, "Okay" — so I then said, "Instead
 22 of paying — because you said, look, I can't have a TfL
 23 card, and you're saying that I can't have the taxi
 24 service that everybody else is getting, we weren't
 25 allowed it, can you please just pay the £50 towards my

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1 petrol for the week because I'm going back and forth
2 quite a few times", and I was told they would, and it
3 never ever happened. Never happened. Wasn't supported
4 at all with any transport between my mum's house and the
5 hotel or any appointments meeting FLOs or anything. It
6 was all on me.

7 Q. Thank you.

8 I'm going to turn now to psychological support.
9 Were you aware of any counselling services or mental
10 health support being available in the first week
11 following the fire?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Did you receive — and you have touched on this — any
14 information about this type of support being available
15 whilst you were at your hotel?

16 A. No, no, not initially. I heard later on — again
17 through word of mouth, not through RBKC or any support
18 services — I heard much later on within the weeks,
19 I heard that there was — there were therapists or
20 support workers going to hotels, but again, like I said,
21 we had — there were two of us by this point in the
22 hotel. We didn't have anybody coming to our hotel to
23 support us. So if you wanted to access that support,
24 that I only found out through word of mouth, I had to
25 then go to another hotel to access that support, and I'd

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1 already heard from other survivors and bereaved that
2 that was happening just openly in the meeting — in the
3 reception area of hotels. There was no privacy. And,
4 you know, we were bereaved. I was still trying to find
5 out — I didn't have any — I didn't know where my
6 family were at that point still. I think we had maybe
7 one identification in the summer and then we had to
8 wait. It wasn't until October 2017 that the final
9 identification was confirmed. So there wasn't — I'm
10 not going to be travelling to a hotel and then you don't
11 even know if you're going to see someone.

12 So again, through Malcolm at the — I had contact
13 with Malcolm at this point, so Malcolm would just — he
14 was my contact person. I don't think Ashley Drake knew
15 about much because, again, she wasn't part of the
16 key worker hub, and then Malcolm put me in touch with —
17 so there was David Bailey, who supported my son, Zak,
18 from CAMS, and who — actually, Ashley Drake did
19 organise that. But then Malcolm supported with being
20 put in contact with a therapist, who I still see today,
21 I still see her today, so it's the same therapist I see,
22 but that was, again, not through any RBKC, that was
23 through, you know, a community organisation that gave me
24 that information.

25 Q. Yes.

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1 A. Like I said, I didn't tap into — I had an assessment,
2 but it took a while before you could start the sessions,
3 not because I couldn't have sessions at St Charles,
4 because I wasn't in a good place to start them
5 immediately myself.

6 Q. Yes.

7 If I could turn you, please, to paragraph 84 of your
8 third witness statement {IWS00001714/17}, it's just at
9 the bottom of the page, and you say:

10 "People need to understand that time is not
11 a healer. Myself and my family are still suffering from
12 the physical and mental effects of the Grenfell fire."

13 Do you feel as though you have been sufficiently
14 supported by way of mental health provision following
15 the fire?

16 A. Like I said, I still see my therapist every single week
17 since 2017 until today, it's 2022, and I feel that that
18 support is there. What I feel is absent isn't the
19 actual fact I'm having therapy, it's the understanding
20 between the physical and — what mental health does to
21 you physically. I feel that there still needs to be
22 some learning.

23 I have been reading a book called The Body Keeps
24 Score, and your body keeps score. After — I know
25 I gave evidence in Phase 1 of the Inquiry, and I was

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1 walking around. As you can see, I've had to have
2 adaptations to my feet now, I need to have adaptations,
3 but my body was in so much pain. I know that the way
4 I evacuated impacted my discs, which I didn't think
5 about at the time, I was just literally fighting and
6 flying because I just needed to know where my family
7 were, and it was a long process. It wasn't until I —
8 you know, 18 months later, that I moved into the
9 property that I was living in, and then in June 2019,
10 a week after the second year anniversary, I ended up in
11 hospital. I couldn't walk. I couldn't walk. I had
12 to — I was bedbound. I couldn't go to the bathroom on
13 my own. I couldn't do anything, and I had to have
14 adaptations at home.

15 So I just think — what I'm trying to say is the
16 fact that yes, there is support, for counselling and
17 therapy, but I don't think there's an understanding of
18 what this does to us, not just mentally but physically.
19 It's physically draining, what we have been through, and
20 it impacts us, where we hold it, we have to hold it,
21 because if we didn't hold it, I wouldn't be able to have
22 meetings with the FLOs, I wouldn't be able to come here
23 today. I have to hold it. When you hold it, it hurts.
24 It hurts physically, not just mentally.

25 Q. Thank you. Just take a moment if you need to,

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1 Ms Wahabi.
 2 A. Thank you. Sorry. I just wanted to add to that that
 3 it's not just my pain, it's my children's pain,
 4 you know, my family's pain. My family were running
 5 around to support me as a survivor when they've also
 6 lost their brother and their sister—in-law and their
 7 daughter—in-law and their nephews and grandchildren.
 8 You know, they were like, "Hanan, she's the one who's
 9 the survivor". Yes, I am a survivor and it hurts, but
 10 they've also lost, they've also experienced pain. And
 11 then my children, who are just in one room, and you can
 12 imagine the PTSD that I tried to hold, and they're ...
 13 I just feel like I ... I feel like as a mother I failed
 14 because I couldn't support them.
 15 So there's some support, but it's not enough.
 16 Q. Thank you. Are you okay for me to continue?
 17 A. Yeah. Yeah.
 18 Q. I just want to touch briefly on your experience of the
 19 Westway Centre.
 20 A. Yeah.
 21 Q. In your statement you say that you visited the
 22 Westway Centre at some point to deal with administrative
 23 tasks such as getting documents replaced.
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. Do you remember when that visit was? Was it within the

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1 first week?
 2 A. No, it wasn't in the first week, no.
 3 Q. Okay. Generally, how did you feel about the services
 4 that were available at the Westway Centre?
 5 A. Again, it's something that I found out through word of
 6 mouth, it wasn't somebody that — it wasn't some kind of
 7 professional that told me about it. It would have
 8 been — actually, I think the FLOs did give us
 9 information about that, actually. But, again, the
 10 majority of information was given through word of mouth,
 11 from the community, that would share that information
 12 with my family and who would share it with me.
 13 I mean, you had, you know, the Red Cross that you
 14 would have to kind of — to be allowed in, so you had to
 15 go through that process, queueing up and waiting and
 16 then just saying who you were and saying that — every
 17 day you went, you'd have to repeat the same process, and
 18 then when you went in — I mean, I'm thankful that it
 19 was there, because I was able to get my driver's
 20 licence, I was able to, you know, transfer my brother
 21 who passed away's logbook into my surviving brother's
 22 name, we were able to do things like that, so there
 23 was — the services were there, but it was very exposed.
 24 It wasn't — there was no privacy in it, and, you know,
 25 everything was happening in one space. You had,

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1 you know, I don't know, DVLA in this section, you've got
 2 somebody from housing over here, you've got people
 3 giving out clothes and food over here, and it was
 4 just — it was a lot. It was quite overwhelming. You
 5 would walk in and it's like, "Oh my God, oh my God".
 6 Yeah.
 7 Q. How did your experience of the Westway compare to your
 8 experience of the Rugby Club, for example?
 9 A. The Rugby Club was — in my opinion, the Rugby Club was
 10 the best place for me. They did the best they could,
 11 and I felt that it was very community orientated, and
 12 you felt it, you felt that people wanted to help, you
 13 felt that they would try their best, they would tell you
 14 what's here, whereas in the Westway, there were things
 15 available, but you had to ask what there was there.
 16 No one kind of came and told you, or if you actually saw
 17 a sign, it might say "RBKC housing" — it was very
 18 office style, that's all I can think of. I know it was
 19 open, but it wasn't community friendly, whereas
 20 Rugby Portobello was very community friendly.
 21 Q. Just dealing with the community response more broadly,
 22 how would you describe the support provided by charities
 23 and community organisations in the immediate aftermath?
 24 A. First class. First class.
 25 Q. And how did the response of the community compare to the

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1 official response in your view?
 2 A. No comparison. They were the best, and the officials
 3 were non-existent.
 4 Q. Turning now, please, to ask you a few questions about
 5 your observations on the overarching response.
 6 In your third statement — and we don't need to go
 7 to it unless you need to us, but in paragraph 81
 8 {IWS00001714/17} you say that:
 9 "Alok Sharma, Sajid Javid and Theresa May all
 10 attended to speak to us."
 11 What are you referring to when you say that?
 12 A. So I — Alok Sharma came to the Westway. Again, that
 13 was through — I didn't know he was there, it was word
 14 of mouth that he was there, and you could talk — he was
 15 there about housing, if people needed housing. But
 16 I remember — again, like I said, it was word of mouth.
 17 It wasn't — and you had to get there at a particular
 18 time, otherwise you're not going to see him. And
 19 I remember it was a bit like animals, basically, we're
 20 literally just trying to fight to get to see him, to
 21 like, "It's my housing, it's my housing" kind of thing,
 22 and he just stood — and he's just waiting there to
 23 speak to us. You'd have to sit there and wait, and then
 24 if you get to see him, you're lucky; if you don't, come
 25 back tomorrow. So that's what it was like with

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1 Alok Sharma. And I, you know ...
 2 And then with Sajid Javid, that was all through the
 3 kind of Grenfell United that we got to meet Sajid Javid,
 4 and that was through — so Grenfell United was set up
 5 quite early on, and I was initially part of the
 6 Grenfell United group, and that's how I got to meet him,
 7 otherwise I wouldn't have got to meet him.
 8 And Theresa May again, that was again set up through
 9 Grenfell United. It wasn't — this wasn't — you know,
 10 these were set up by our people, survivors and bereaved.
 11 That's how we got to have these people come and meet us.
 12 I mean, Theresa May, when she came, she just spoke
 13 openly to all of us in I think it was a hotel in
 14 High Street Kensington. And Sajid Javid, again, was in
 15 one of the studios I met with him.
 16 I think the only thing with Sajid Javid, he had —
 17 there was somebody called Hannah Ram in his team that —
 18 and like I said, my son was struggling between,
 19 you know, academically just trying to transfer. Because
 20 he was at KAA, which is by the school, he couldn't stay
 21 there for obvious reasons, so it was trying to find him
 22 a new place to go and study, and Hannah Ram — so that's
 23 one thing I did get from them, they helped me to secure
 24 him a place at Phoenix Academy, which in all honesty
 25 wasn't great because they didn't support with regards to

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1 Grenfell anyway, so ...
 2 Q. Generally speaking, what was your experience of speaking
 3 to these officials from central government? Were they
 4 responsive to your concerns overall?
 5 A. They took the information. You never heard back from
 6 them. The only person I heard back from was Hannah Ram
 7 about Zak's place in Phoenix Academy, transferred from
 8 KAA. That's the only information I got. There was
 9 nothing else. You didn't get anything about housing,
 10 even though you went and shared information about
 11 housing. You didn't get any feedback. You'd go and
 12 give the information, but nothing would come back to
 13 you.
 14 Q. Thank you.
 15 If we could turn to paragraph 72 of your third
 16 statement {IWS00001714/16}, please, you say:
 17 "I feel that RBKC massively, massively failed us.
 18 As a survivor and bereaved, it was extremely hard. I
 19 was dealing with my own shock at what had happened to
 20 us, and then also with worries about my brother and his
 21 family. RBKC supported whoever shouted the loudest, but
 22 I am not a shouter and I didn't have the energy.
 23 I don't have the words to explain how it was, it was
 24 overwhelming."
 25 In what ways do you feel that RBKC failed you?

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1 A. In every way possible. They were not there. There was
 2 no consistency in how they supported people. Like
 3 I mentioned already about transport, there wasn't any
 4 transport for me and my family, but there was for other
 5 people. Yeah, they failed. They were not there. They
 6 didn't look for us. I mean, even the fact that,
 7 you know, the FLOs found my mum's property, they knew
 8 where my mum lived, my brother had lived there. RBKC
 9 didn't ever go and visit my mum. She lost her son, she
 10 lost her daughter—in-law, she'd lost her grandchildren.
 11 They never went. So, you know, they didn't look for
 12 anybody.
 13 I mean, the only reason why they knew where we were
 14 is because they had to pay for our hotel accommodation.
 15 I mean, had they not had to pay or fork out any money,
 16 they wouldn't — they don't care. They don't care. And
 17 we experienced this way back before the tragedy as part
 18 of the Grenfell Compact. They don't care about us.
 19 So they failed us and they continue to fail us. We
 20 are still in our homes now and waiting for repairs to be
 21 done, you know, repairs that — I mean, even today, now,
 22 I have been trying to sort out and organise for repairs
 23 in my property to be sorted, to be fixed, and I just
 24 can't — there's no contact. You don't get any
 25 information back. And I keep saying I need at least

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1 a response because the unknown — I struggle with the
 2 unknown after what happened to me. There's nothing.
 3 I got a text today before I came to the Inquiry saying,
 4 "I hope you're okay, would you like to talk today? And
 5 by the way, good luck this afternoon". They know I'm
 6 coming here, and they text me today of all days. RBKC
 7 all over again.
 8 Q. Thank you.
 9 If we could just go to paragraph 82 of this
 10 statement {IWS00001714/17}, please, you say:
 11 "It was clear that RBKC and the government failed us
 12 in their response. I hope nothing like this ever
 13 happens again. However, there needs to be plans in
 14 place which ensure a coordinated response which enables
 15 people have access to the support and services they
 16 need. Families should be treated with dignity."
 17 You have just touched on this, but if there's
 18 anything else you would like to add, what lessons do you
 19 feel need to be learned from the experience that you and
 20 your family had in the immediate aftermath?
 21 A. I've actually written some words to answer this
 22 question, because I — I mean, thank you for allowing me
 23 to take my time to respond to the questions today, that
 24 has helped, but part of my PTSD is I do kind of get
 25 tongue-twisted sometimes, the simplest of vocabulary

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1 just, you know, go. So I wanted to prepare something
2 that I feel comfortable reading, and I've got that with
3 me today to answer this question.

4 Q. Of course.

5 (Pause)

6 A. Thank you, first of all, thank you very much.

7 So the last time I was asked that question,
8 I implored Sir Martin to ensure there was change.
9 I want to thank you and the entire Inquiry team for the
10 work you are doing to expose the truth about the
11 failings that led to 72 preventable deaths, including
12 that of my dear brother, Abdulaziz, his wife, Faouzia,
13 and the beloved children, Yasin, Nur Huda and Mehdi.

14 There are some things I'd like to say that go beyond
15 my statements and, to some extent, also beyond the scope
16 of the Inquiry. These are not only addressed to you,
17 but to everybody working in housing, the built
18 environment, local and central government.

19 First, to the community, volunteers, charities, and
20 religious groups who rushed to our aid from all over the
21 country and the world, who were present and supported us
22 in the best way they could, words can never express my
23 gratitude. Thank you for everything you did and
24 continue to do.

25 I know the authorities, be they local or central

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1 government, may feel that they have contributed to the
2 support during the aftermath. For me personally and my
3 family, this is far from the truth. No one from
4 government looked for us. No one helped us. We were
5 left exposed and vulnerable, and when the authorities
6 eventually did come, it felt like a tick-box exercise.
7 We were treated like numbers, not humans. This is
8 something that we still feel today.

9 In my experience, in the eyes of local and central
10 government, our Grenfell and North Kensington community
11 are second class, the people with needs and problems.
12 I cannot help but feel that had our community lived in
13 a different part of the borough, on the more affluent
14 side, had we been from a different class, had we been
15 less ethnic, the response in the aftermath would have
16 been immediate. It would have been present. It would
17 have been felt.

18 We may be different, we may be diverse, but we are
19 people. Think of the different professions in the
20 tower, of the challenges that so many from the BAME
21 communities had overcome prior to the fire in 2017.
22 Think of the dignity demonstrated by those of us
23 impacted over the last five years. We are human beings.
24 We contribute. We pay tax. We provide leadership in
25 our communities. In truth, our differences and

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1 diversity are a contribution to the borough and the
2 country.

3 Some people think about the aftermath as straight
4 after the fire, but the aftermath continues today,
5 five years later. The aftermath will last for years to
6 come, and the impact will be generational. You cannot
7 imagine what it is like having no one there to help you,
8 to give you any glimpse or bit of information, anything,
9 any strings to hold onto. When you don't know what's
10 happened to your loved ones, it's torture. We
11 experienced torture. The aftermath was torture. It was
12 physically and mentally torturing.

13 The Prime Minister promised that we'll be housed in
14 three weeks. Four of us, including my 16-year-old son
15 and 8-year-old daughter, were moved into one hotel room,
16 a room I remained in for 18 months. Four individuals
17 who were survivors and bereaved. Can you imagine the
18 PTSD, the impact it had on us as a family? And that is
19 just me. Imagine what it is like for all other
20 families, bereaved, survivors. Imagine what it is like
21 for my mum. She lost her son, her grandchildren, her
22 daughter-in-law. No one checked on her. No one asked
23 about her.

24 And I ought to say something about the children.
25 They are the most forgotten. Even those who had parents

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1 who had lived, in the aftermath of the fire, the
2 children experienced life as if they were orphans. We
3 weren't and couldn't be there for our children. We
4 couldn't even be there for us.

5 My body has never experienced so much pain since
6 14 June 2017. Physical, internal and emotional pain.
7 Life isn't easy anymore. Life is a challenge. Fear is
8 constant. Nightmares never go. Inner peace is what we
9 yearn for. Even when we feel like it's going to be
10 okay, it's just a matter of time that a memory,
11 a thought, a feeling, an experience will interrupt that,
12 and then we're back there again, like it's happening all
13 over again.

14 You may see us smiling at times, you may see
15 children laughing, but that is just the part that avoids
16 and masks. This tragedy has pierced wounds in each and
17 every one of us in ways that one cannot imagine. We may
18 now and again put plasters to hide our wounds, but they
19 are still there, and sometimes, many times, those
20 plasters fall off.

21 To this day, the support that we are given is only
22 provided after jumping through hoops, whether it's
23 fighting to get house repairs done or get the medical
24 support we need. We are forever asked to prove that we
25 have been impacted, forever having to prove our pain.

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1 We are constantly having the impact assessed and
 2 measured to prove that we need mental or physical
 3 therapy, to prove we are still in pain.
 4 Is it not enough that we walked out of the building
 5 and had to watch my family, my brother and his family
 6 die? We still need support. Our children need support.
 7 Local and central government cannot be allowed to
 8 abandon us, to wash their hands of us, when they think
 9 they have done enough. What happened to us was through
 10 their failings. Our loss, our pain, our wounds are
 11 because of them.
 12 This duty of care needs to extend beyond us to the
 13 rest of the country, to the thousands of families who
 14 live in communities like us, like we had at Grenfell,
 15 who are still treated as second-class citizens. It
 16 needs to extend to the thousands impacted by the
 17 building safety crisis up and down the country.
 18 We are still impacted. We still hurt. We still
 19 remember. We haven't forgotten. All the issues we
 20 have, the PTSD, the mental and physical trauma that you
 21 see as problems in us, this isn't who we were; this is
 22 who some of us are now because of what the government
 23 did to us. Because of your absence, because you were
 24 not there, because you did not show that you cared, you
 25 have sapped all the energy from us. Those that caused

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1 this tragedy need to be held accountable. Their duty of
 2 care to us now has no limit.
 3 Thank you.
 4 MS ISLAM: Ms Wahabi, can I thank you very much for sharing
 5 those closing remarks.
 6 We're going to pause now to see if anyone else has
 7 any more questions for you.
 8 THE WITNESS: Thank you.
 9 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, thank you.
 10 Well, I think you know, don't you, that we have
 11 a pause at this stage to see if anyone wants to suggest
 12 questions that ought to be put to you.
 13 THE WITNESS: Yeah.
 14 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: So we'll break now until 3.15, or
 15 just after.
 16 THE WITNESS: Okay.
 17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: And then we'll see at that point
 18 whether there are questions.
 19 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much.
 20 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right?
 21 THE WITNESS: Thank you.
 22 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much. Would you go
 23 with the usher, please.
 24 THE WITNESS: Yeah. Thank you.
 25 (Pause)

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1 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Right, Ms Islam, we'll say 3.15. If
 2 you need any further time, which I think is unlikely,
 3 you can ask the usher to tell us that. All right?
 4 MS ISLAM: Thank you.
 5 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.
 6 (3.02 pm)
 7 (A short break)
 8 (3.15 pm)
 9 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right, Ms Wahabi. Well, let's
 10 see if there are any more questions for you, shall we?
 11 THE WITNESS: Thank you.
 12 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Ms Islam.
 13 MS ISLAM: Ms Wahabi, there's no further questions for you.
 14 I just want to say thank you very much for coming to
 15 give your evidence. I appreciate it may have been
 16 a challenging process for you, but we're very, very
 17 grateful. So thank you.
 18 THE WITNESS: Thank you. Thank you.
 19 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I should add my thanks, Ms Wahabi,
 20 on behalf of all three of us on the panel here.
 21 THE WITNESS: Yeah.
 22 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: It's been very helpful to hear from
 23 you. I'm sorry it's been difficult, because I know it
 24 has from time to time, and I know you're still finding
 25 life very difficult, but we are very grateful to you for

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1 coming along. It's always helpful to hear what people
 2 have to tell us, and in your case particularly helpful.
 3 So thank you very much indeed.
 4 THE WITNESS: Thank you for giving me the time and space to
 5 do that, and thank you to all three of you. It's good
 6 to see three of you, because last time there was just
 7 one of you. So thank you.
 8 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.
 9 Well, now you're free to go. Perhaps you'd just go
 10 with the usher, she'll look after you.
 11 THE WITNESS: Yes. Thank you.
 12 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.
 13 THE WITNESS: Thank you.
 14 (The witness withdrew)
 15 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well, thank you very much, Ms Islam.
 16 Now, is there anything else that we can do this
 17 afternoon?
 18 MS ISLAM: Not today, no.
 19 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Not today, all right. Thank you
 20 very much.
 21 Well, in that case, we'll break at this point, and
 22 we'll resume, because we have another witness coming
 23 tomorrow, at 10 o'clock tomorrow, then, please.
 24 MS ISLAM: Thank you.
 25 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.

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1 10 o'clock tomorrow. Thank you.
2 (3.17 pm)
3 (The hearing adjourned until 10 am
4 on Tuesday, 26 April 2022)

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