



Home Office

Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP
Minister for Grenfell Victims
Minister of State for Policing and the Fire
Service

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

www.gov.uk/home-office

Clive Betts MP
Chair
Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

30 July 2018

Dear Clive,

I am writing to you following my appearance before the Select Committee on 18 July on local authority support following the Grenfell Tower fire, and in response to your letter of 23 July.

The Government's highest priority has been, and remains, to ensure that the bereaved, survivors, and all those affected by the fire, receive the support they need, now and in the months and years to come.

This work is led by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State James Brokenshire chairs the Ministerial Recovery Group which coordinates the cross-government effort to help those affected, as well as supporting and challenging the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) in delivering services to the community. MHCLG's Housing Minister oversees the delivery of RBKC's rehousing programme.

I was appointed by the Prime Minister as the Minister for Grenfell Victims following the fire to ensure that the voice of all those affected is heard at the highest levels of Government. I therefore work closely with MHCLG, attend the Ministerial Recovery Group and am supported in my role by MHCLG Grenfell Tower Community Engagement team, which provide a single point of access into Government services for those affected and has co-ordinated delivery of Government services on the ground. They can be contacted at GrenfellCorrespondence@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

You raised the important point regarding engagement with the wider community in relation to Grenfell. I wanted to set out to you how I have endeavoured to balance the very specific needs of bereaved and survivors with the more widespread trauma experienced by the surrounding community.

When I undertook the role of Minister for Grenfell Victims it was right that my primary focus was, and is, on the needs of the bereaved and survivors. I did this by reaching out to survivors from the Tower and holding individual surgeries, facilitated by them, at the Clement James centre. A number of individuals came to those surgeries from the area who were not known to the Council. The Secretary of State and I have written regularly to the bereaved and survivors and these letters are available on gov.uk and the Grenfell Support website with contact details. I wrote to all those in hotels offering meetings with myself and the previous Housing Minister. The new Housing Minister has maintained this offer.

In parallel, it became clear early on that the devastation was felt by the whole community. Ministerial letters, again with contact details, were accessible in hard copy at the London Resilience public engagement meetings that took place in the two months after the fire, and residents were invited to sign up to receive the copy electronically.

Over the last 12 months I have held proactive meetings and visits with resident association chairs local charities and faith groups, local volunteers, businesses and schools at which I provide the contact details for my office.

I continue to have an open door policy and while I have now met with all of the witnesses presented at both select committee sessions, I am not complacent in this regard and will continue to work with MHCLG officials to ensure those who would benefit from my advocacy have the opportunity to do so.

I agreed to write to you with a clear explanation of the rehousing figures. The latest figures I have from RBKC are that as of 26 July. Of the 204 households from Grenfell Tower and Walk who require housing, 200 households have accepted temporary or permanent accommodation, of which 105 households have moved into permanent accommodation and 41 households are living in good quality interim accommodation. There are 38 households still living in a hotel, 17 living in serviced apartments and 3 living with family and friends.

In addition to those households, there are a number of households who lived on the wider Lancaster West Estate, who are eligible for rehousing under the Wider Grenfell Rehousing Policy, which applies to Council tenants from the Walkways (Barandon Walk, Hurstway Walk and Testerton Walk) and Treadgold House and Bramley House.

Prior to confirming the Wider Grenfell Rehousing policy, the Council consulted local residents on which blocks on the Lancaster West Estate should be eligible for priority rehousing; the Council listened carefully to the views of residents and subsequently added Treadgold and Bramley Houses, to be included alongside the Walkways, to the rehousing policy. This importantly recognised the difficulties experienced by residents of those blocks.

Of those who are eligible for this policy, 129 households did not return immediately home following the fire. Of these; 73 have since moved into high-

quality temporary accommodation while they decide whether to return home to the Lancaster West Estate or be rehoused elsewhere, 2 have moved into new permanent homes, 6 remain in a hotel and 3 in serviced apartments. 45 households have decided to return home following refurbishments to their properties. Eligible households who do not feel able to return home are given 900 priority points for rehousing on the general housing register; the Council recently decided that residents living away from home should make a decision about whether to return home or relinquish their tenancy on the Lancaster West Estate by 30 September 2018, if possible. The Council understands that some residents will find this decision difficult, and are offering individualised and sensitive support to all residents.

As of 20 July (latest available figures from RBKC), there is a further group of 10 households from the wider Lancaster West Estate who are not eligible for priority rehousing and are currently staying in hotels. These households are eligible for the Council's general housing policy. Those who do not feel able to return to the Estate have been offered suitable temporary accommodation.

The rehousing statistics on households from Grenfell Tower and Walk as well as from the wider Estate are published on the Council's Grenfell Support website, and updated weekly. These can be found by visiting <https://grenfellsupport.org.uk/rehousing-residents-from-grenfell-tower-and-grenfell-walk/> and <https://grenfellsupport.org.uk/housing/>.

The Council also sends out a weekly Grenfell Support newsletter to all Grenfell Tower, Walk and wider Lancaster West residents, which includes the rehousing statistics. You can also subscribe to receive this newsletter via email, by emailing CommsTeam@rbkc.gov.uk.

In your letter you recommended that the Government should set a formal deadline for the Council on rehousing those affected. It was important, immediately following the fire, to set a deadline to focus the rehousing effort. While I accept that progress has been too slow, I am pleased that the vast majority of properties that have been accepted are ready to move into, and the majority of those remaining will be completed by the end of the summer. The issues that surround moving into a permanent new home can be complex and in some cases deeply personal. For that reason, I do not believe that setting a catch all deadline would be appropriate, and risks further damaging trust from the community. That does not in any way undermine the Government commitment and efforts to ensure the Council works to rehouse survivors as quickly as possible.

On providing flexibility for residents to change their minds, I laid out our position during the Committee's evidence session; we understand that it is sometimes very difficult for people to make such life-changing decisions, and to commit to those decisions. The Council understands that residents may change their mind and I expect them to accommodate that and to deal with each case sensitively, and on an individual basis.

On the issue of RBKC requesting bank statements, this is common practice by local authorities as part of compliance with current legislation. As the Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk families were homeless after the fire, they were provided with accommodation in line with homelessness legislation, which requires local authorities to carry out an affordability assessment. Requesting bank statements is a common part of this process. I am clear that the Council should carry out its statutory duties as sensitively as possible and I am assured that, having reviewed its processes, the Council is no longer asking households to provide bank statements.

Finally in relation to support offered by Hestia, I can tell you that following the fire, and in response to unmet mental health needs within the community, the local authority extended the support offer available in hotels to include a full overnight counselling service provided by Hestia and Total Family Coaching. This commenced in September 2017 and funding was agreed up until 30 June 2018. The changing needs of the community over time were monitored via on-going intelligence gathering and engagement from residents and providers.

Working closely with Hestia and Total Family Coaching, the offer was recently amended to better target the support needs of people as they move out of hotels. Since the beginning of June counsellors have been speaking with individuals accessing the service to discuss next steps and what support they need to move forward to recovery.

The current offer consists of evening support being delivered by Hestia's Counsellors and members of the Community Contact Team (part of the Keywork service) in two hotels: The Hilton Kensington and the Copthorne Tara, between the hours of 6pm – 10pm, seven days a week. These hotels were chosen because of their location in close proximity to other hotels and relatively higher number of residents remaining.

Workers are based at each hotel on alternate nights, with Hestia Counsellors covering the weekend shifts. The offer is available to residents in other hotels. Anyone staying at the Holiday Inn Express, which is in close proximity to the Copthorne Tara, can arrange a visit from a Counsellor or member of the Community Contact Team. In addition, residents can also access telephone support as there are dedicated numbers to access Hestia Counsellors and/or CCT members during these hours.

Information relating to the change in arrangements was circulated to all residents remaining in hotels and included details of the new offer, alternative evening and daytime support available, and contact numbers for urgent help, when support is not available on-site. Keyworkers also discussed these changes with residents where they were aware that they were accessing the service.

Every morning Hestia Counsellors and the Council's Community Contact Team liaise to discuss any individual issues raised so that these can be

addressed as soon as possible. Weekly meetings are held between providers and commissioners to review the arrangements and any arising issues.

Hestia services are also accessible to the wider community through the Recovery Café, which offers a safe, welcoming space for people who are struggling to cope. Hestia offer therapeutic support and 1 to 1 counselling at The Oremi Centre, Unit 3, Trellick Tower, Golborne Road, London W10 5PA or the drop-in at The Grove Resource Centre, 1-9 St Mark's Road, London W11 1RG.

We have raised the individual concerns highlighted at the Select Committee with RBKC. Both the Council and Hestia are fully committed to ensuring that the support needs of those individuals still living in hotels are met, with individual plans in place, and have agreed on the need to continually review arrangements.

I will continue to work closely with the Department for Health and Social Care to ensure that Grenfell victims' health needs are addressed and services have the resource they need both now and in the future. Funding for 2019 and beyond will be addressed as part of Government's spending review.

I hope that this provides some reassurance to those affected by the fire that their concerns are being taken into account and appropriate support is being provided.

I understand that My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State James Brokenshire intends to provide the Committee with a Grenfell recovery update following summer recess.

I am copying this letter to Yvette Williams, Justice4Grenfell; Clarrie Mendy, Humanity for Grenfell; Hanan Cherbika, Grenfell Walk Residents Association; Nahid Ashby, Silchester Residents Association; and Samia Badani, Bramley House Residents Association.



Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP