

# Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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The Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP  
Minister for Grenfell Victims  
Home Office

Councillor Elizabeth Campbell, Leader of the Council  
Barry Quirk, Chief Executive  
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

23 July 2018

Dear Nick, Elizabeth and Barry,

## Local authority support for residents affected by the Grenfell Tower fire

Thank you for giving evidence to the Select Committee for our short inquiry into local authority support for residents affected by the Grenfell Tower fire. We are particularly grateful to the Minister for attending both of our evidence sessions and listening to the concerns of all the representatives and campaign groups who gave evidence to the Committee.

Over two evidence sessions, we heard from representatives of Grenfell United, Lancaster Walk Residents' Association, Grenfell Walk Residents' Association, Silchester Residents' Association, Bramley House Residents' Association, Justice4Grenfell, Humanity for Grenfell, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and the Government. We feel we have heard from a broad and representative range of groups; most importantly, of course, those directly affected in the Tower and immediate surrounding area, but also from the wider community and those that lost loved ones following this terrible tragedy.

We wanted to highlight some of the key concerns we heard during these two evidence sessions and ask the Government to take specific actions in respect of these as it works with the Council to support the community in the months and years ahead.

1. It is encouraging that, in the central group of residents requiring rehousing following the fire, 200 of the 204 households have now accepted an offer of temporary or permanent accommodation, and there are now only 16 households yet to accept an offer of permanent accommodation. However, with just 89 of these households having actually moved into their new permanent homes, the challenge is now to ensure that residents are able to move out of temporary accommodation as soon as possible. We are concerned by reports of delays in making permanent homes ready for residents, with issues including disrepair, damp and limited accessibility, and that children may still be temporary accommodation, including B&Bs, for longer than legally permitted. **We believe that the Government should set a formal deadline for the Council to ensure that everyone has moved into their new homes before the end of the Summer, as long as that accommodation is acceptable to those who are offered it. Further, the Council should write to the Committee to confirm the number of children who are still in temporary accommodation, and whether any have been in such accommodation for longer than legally permitted.**
2. As many housing decisions are being made in profoundly stressful situations, many witnesses asked the Government and Council to ensure that residents would be given the

right to change their minds about their choice of accommodation in the future. **Residents should be given the right to change their minds and move to different accommodation in the future, if they wish.**

3. We heard concerns around the operation of the Wider Grenfell Rehousing Policy. Many witnesses told us the Policy excluded too many people, including those in the nearby Silchester Estate. The North Kensington Law Centre highlighted concerns that residents are being required to leave their emergency accommodation in order to access the policy, potentially having to return to the Estate and risking trauma for residents, in particular, children. Further, witnesses questioned whether the council had sufficient properties to rehouse everyone in the wider group, while it was noted that there is no agreed timeframe for rehousing. **The Government should work with the Council to ensure that the Wider Grenfell Rehousing Policy captures everyone affected within the wider community and that there are a sufficient number of properties to rehouse everyone within the scope of this Policy, purchasing more if necessary.**
4. Every witness acknowledged the profound deficit in trust that existed between residents and the Council and Government in the aftermath of the fire. The Council must always put local residents first and ensure it is no longer seen as “a property developer masquerading as a local authority”, as Grenfell United noted Mr Quirk has himself described it as in the past. The Council told us that restoring that trust has been a key priority over the last year. However, rebuilding trust will be impossible without further, radical cultural change and consistently high standards of service provided by front-line staff to residents. As the Grenfell Recovery Taskforce reported “unsympathetic or inappropriate responses from Council staff and Councillors”, so too we heard reports of Council staff telling residents that they “need to get over it now” or that their requests were “becoming tiring”. Of course, the vast majority of staff are doing their best in difficult circumstances. **However, if further recruitment is necessary to provide a higher level of support to residents, or additional training is needed for existing staff, then resources must be made available for this.**
5. It is estimated that over 10,000 residents in the North Kensington area are believed to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues following the fire. This is likely to be an ongoing challenge for the NHS over many years, with many residents only now starting to experience these traumas. **The Government should provide reassurance to residents that additional funding provided for mental health services after the Grenfell fire will be retained for many years to come.** We heard that the mental health services provided by Hestia were widely respected across the community. **The Council should ensure that Hestia have sufficient resources to continue to provide this vital service in future.**
6. It is entirely reasonable for the Government and Council to focus much of its work on the residents who were in the Tower and immediate surrounding area, and Grenfell United represent many of these residents. However, people in the wider community – including bereaved relatives living in other areas – have also been deeply affected by this tragedy, but feel forgotten and ignored. Greater effort should be made by the Government and Council to ensure that these groups are appropriately represented in central and local government. **While you told us, Minister, that your door is always open, there was a strong feeling expressed to us from witnesses that you and other key individuals need to be more proactive at engaging with the very large number of groups who represent people affected by the fire, be they those in the Tower itself or in the wider community.**

This is, of course, not a comprehensive list of the concerns that were raised during the evidence sessions. We therefore urge you to carefully read the transcripts from our inquiry, which can be found on our website, and reflect carefully on what our witnesses told us:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/housing-communities-and-local-government-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/grenfell-tower-fire-support-for-survivors-inquiry-17-19/publications/>

We also understand that, following our session last week, representatives of some of the witnesses have written to the Minister regarding specific concerns related to the provision of mental health services, rehousing waiting times, and the requirement for residents going through the rehousing process to show bank statements to the Council. We hope these issues will be addressed immediately and we would appreciate an update as soon as this is completed.

As mentioned during last week's session, we may decide to ask all of you to return to give evidence later in the year, to discuss progress made on these issues.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clive Betts', with a large, stylized initial 'C' at the start.

**Clive Betts MP**  
**Chair, Communities and Local Government Committee**