

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

Oral evidence: Local Authority Support for Grenfell Tower Survivors, HC 1037

Wednesday 18 July 2018

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Members present: Mr Clive Betts (Chair); Bob Blackman; Helen Hayes; Kevin Hollinrake; Liz Twist; Matt Western.

Questions 67 - 147

Witnesses

I: Yvette Williams, Justice4Grenfell; Clarrie Mendy-Solomon, Humanity for Grenfell.

II: Hanan Cherbika, Vice Chair, Grenfell Walk Residents Association; Nahid Ashby, Silchester Residents Association; Samia Badani, Bramley House Residents Association.

III: Rt Hon. Mr Nick Hurd MP, Minister of State for Policing and Fire Service, with responsibility for Grenfell Tower victims work, Home Office; Jillian Kay, Director for Grenfell Recovery and Resilience, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Yvette Williams and Clarrie Mendy-Solomon.

Chair: Good morning. Thank you very much for coming. This is the second session the Committee has had in our brief inquiry into local authority support for residents affected by the Grenfell Tower fire. Before we come over to you, members of the Committee are going to put on record anything of interest that they have to declare because it may be relevant to this particular inquiry. I am a vice-president of the Local Government Association.

Bob Blackman: I too am a vice-president of the Local Government Association.



Kevin Hollinrake: I employ a councillor in my office.

Liz Twist: I employ a councillor in my office.

Q67 **Chair:** Those are just things we do as MPs that may affect our view of these matters, so we put them on the record formally to indicate that.

Now we come over to you. Thank you very much for coming to give evidence to the Committee this morning. We are pretty relaxed here. We want to hear your views, and it is equally an opportunity for you to get your views across to us and say what you feel about the situation. That is why we are here this morning. Please begin by saying who you are and the organisation you represent.

Clarrie Mendy-Solomon: Good morning. My name is Clarrie Mendy-Solomon. I represent Humanity for Grenfell.

Yvette Williams: My name is Yvette Williams and I am a co-founder of Justice4Grenfell.

Q68 **Chair:** Thank you very much for coming. We heard last week from some representatives of organisations representing people directly affected by the Grenfell fire, looking at what was happening and how the Government and council have engaged with your organisations and other members of the wider community. Could you give us some feeling for how things have gone, how the council has responded—whether it has been in touch and kept in touch with you—and your feelings about the situation?

Clarrie Mendy-Solomon: Thank you for facilitating us here today. I have quite a few points in relation to that question. First, there has been no substantive engagement by the Minister for Grenfell or the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea with me, as a founder of Humanity for Grenfell. We have over 200 members.

Secondly, Humanity for Grenfell's diverse members have found that the council and the Government are still very selective as to whom they choose to listen to and engage with. They have simply imposed a solution by consulting a minimum number of groups. This has been very lazy and has excluded quite a few people and community organisations. There have never been any invitations to Humanity for Grenfell to any meetings, official appointments or roundtable meetings. Because of the problem of the lack of consultation, needs have not been met and are still not being met today. Anxiety is increasing; tensions are still spiralling; there is ill health and trauma. Nothing is decreasing; it is actually increasing.

There are many categories and strands of people affected by the Grenfell tragedy. We have the bereaved, survivors, evacuees, local affected residents, wider affected residents and the community. I find the Government to date have been dealing with maybe one, two or three strands at the most. As I said, most of the community on the ground have had no engagement. We still find today, through these



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consultations, that paperwork has been drawn up with some privileged groups in the community. They have not really taken into consideration the macro-community, as opposed to the micro. We need the opinions of all the community felt and included. We want to feel included as well.

For example, we have members in Humanity for Grenfell who have twice applied to become a core participant and been refused. Their best friend died in the tower, along with her two-year-old son, while they were downstairs on the phone. The last breath of air she took was on the phone while he was fighting to get in the building. How does one deal with this trauma? We are out of the loop. In fact, two weeks after the fire local residents were going to centres that were set up and established by the local council and the Government, and no services were available to them. They were told, "You are not a survivor; you are not a bereaved family. You cannot access these services". I do not know how this all came about, but it mystifies us still and it shows that we are not connecting with the community.

Q69 **Chair:** You are saying that was two weeks after. Has it improved since?

Clarrie Mendy-Solomon: No, not to a great degree. There are still people who cannot access services. There are still people who have illnesses. Another thing is the air quality control in the area. No one has taken this into account. The school is due to open. If we are looking at building trust, we need to see reports to make sure this school is safe for children to go to. There have been no reports produced to give people and parents a sound mind and confidence to send their children to this school. You can hear my voice; many people in Grenfell have the same gravel voice. We do not know what toxins we have endured and taken into our bodies. We know there is cyanide and asbestos in the area. Why have these tests not been carried out? Why has someone not been implemented to come and do these tests?

There are a lot of failings. In the first week, we should have had an ombudsman specifically for Grenfell. Why has it taken a year for us to have an independent adjudicator? There are many gaps in the service provision. Legal aid is not available to the affected residents. Why is this?

Q70 **Chair:** There are some good questions there, which we will need to follow up. Yvette, do you have the same issues or others?

Yvette Williams: Neither central Government nor the local authority have engaged with us. We did meet with the new chief exec in September. We initiated that meeting with him. We thought it was a productive meeting. We left there and indicated to him some things that he should do, which he did not do. They have now gone wrong.

At the commemorative hearings, the deputy leader tried to find me, but mixed me up with another black female, who I think is here today. I do not think I am that difficult to find in the borough. I have lived there for 35 years. That is the limit to how they have chosen to engage with us.



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That engagement has been wrong. You asked if things have changed from how they were at the beginning, in the chaos. Thirteen months on, I can say they have not. I am actually presenting at the council meeting this evening. Nothing has changed.

What are the foundations for that? We say what happened at Grenfell was unprecedented and, because of that, they should not have used old policy and models of working to try to fit in with their response to what happened. In north Kensington, it is quite clear there was no confidence in the local authority prior to Grenfell. They did not have a good relationship with our end of the borough, in the north. You can see that because five days before we voted our first Labour MP into the area, so it is quite clear that something was wrong down there and things needed to change. They have tried to slot old things into something so unprecedented that your old ways of working were never going to work.

Q71 Chair: Yvette, you have explained how your organisations have not had a good response from the council, and that they have not been contacted or involved. What about the way council officers treat individuals? Has that changed? Has that improved at all? Have you had feedback from that?

Yvette Williams: I had a complaint in two days ago from a former resident of the tower, who has a huge issue with how they have been treated by the council this week.

Clarrie Mendy-Solomon: I do not feel they have approached this correctly. It has been a make-it-up-as-you-go-along strategy or no strategy at all. One of my main concerns, which I did not mention, is the attitude to the policy of next of kin. I do not know if anybody has done any research here, but you can look at the proportion of family breakdowns due to next of kin. I lost two relatives in the fire, by the way. I am a cousin. I have a relationship with my cousin's appointed next of kin, so I can know what I want, but there are people who do not have a relationship with their next of kin. As a result, for some people there are burials taking place and family members do not even know where the burial is.

There have been disputes. There are still body parts sitting in the mortuary today because there is discord over their next of kin. As for the befriending centre, their next of kin can go to the befriending centre. I have never even been directed, signposted or invited, and I am a direct relative. You go to the befriending centre and, once you sign in, you automatically become a member of Grenfell United. I think I would prefer to stay outside the befriending centre.

The lack of transparency is a major concern from both the council and the Government—local and central. I happened to meet Nick Hurd once, and that was when I went to meet Theresa May. He was present and I told him, "I am not here to engage with you. You have ignored us for 11 months, so why now are you trying to make yourself available when we



have come to meet with Theresa May?" I left my card. I told him, "We need to meet and talk". This was on 10 May. Up until today, I have never had a phone call, an email or any redress.

Q72 Chair: He is coming to sit in the chair where you are sitting in a few minutes' time, so maybe you will have another chance to grab him after the hearing.

Clarrie Mendy-Solomon: I will keep it hot for him.

Chair: We will certainly ask him those questions as well.

Q73 Liz Twist: I would like to ask about the mental health impact. The local NHS trust has estimated that more than 11,000 people in the area will have suffered significant mental health trauma due to the fire. Have affected people been given sufficient and fast enough access to the mental health support that they need?

Yvette Williams: It was not necessarily fast enough, but the biggest and best response to trauma and post-traumatic stress came from the community—from those gifted people in our community who could deal with it and knew where those people were at, whether that was cultural influence or whatever. Later on down the line, you have seen the NHS trying to frame themselves as the main people to deliver that service, as a public service, and that is not going to work. You have to understand the history that black and minority ethnic communities in particular have in terms of confidence in mental health services provided from the NHS. It has not been a good one over many years.

It would be best for them to bolster the services that are already there. I understand there will be a cost to that, but we paid the ultimate cost at Grenfell, so cost should be irrelevant. It should be left in the hands of the community. There are some very good community-based services that people feel confident to use, which they have built up a relationship with since 14 June. You can see peaks where it happens in the community. In the lead-up to the anniversary, you could really start to see the fall-out. From the campaign's point of view, we will always signpost people to the community because we know that is where they feel best.

My mum worked for the NHS so I think it is a great institution. But, in order to provide a satisfactory and quality service at the moment, they need to leave it with the community.

Clarrie Mendy-Solomon: We have heard that the National Health Service has been recruiting heavily, with a lot of new staff. However, hearsay has it that one new member of staff has been recruited for children with mental health. I would like us all here to maybe do further research on this. All National Health Service staff who are based at the hotel and attended the public inquiry, we feel, should be fully trained counsellors. At the moment some are not trained counsellors and obviously they are dealing with vulnerable, stressed and traumatised people, so it is of concern.



The clinical commissioning group—the CCG—needs to be more open to the learning from organisations on the ground, such as Hestia, which have a proven track record of working well within the BAME communities. They were there before Grenfell. They have done a tremendous job and, right now, a lot of people have concerns that their support is being withdrawn and the National Health Service staff, who have no bond with them after one year, are taking over. They find themselves being more isolated. There are cultural norms that are not even taken into consideration, whereas the outreach community workers have really built these bonds and ties.

Again, there are affected people who do not fit in the strands that the Government and council are helping, which is bereaved survivors. For example, I told you earlier about my friend Francis; I hope he is here today. Up to today, this man is still deeply traumatised. It took him about six months to even access the service. He was given a keyworker who ticked a few boxes; after that, "The case is over". I have had to take Francis back to the keyworker and say, "This man's case should not be closed. It is still ongoing. I do not know what kind of tick-box paper we have here, but this man's case cannot be closed". Then, "Whomever you need to speak to in RBKC, please go and see about it". Francis is still having nightmares. Imagine it yourself: you are on the end of the phone until your last cry. He has still not been dealt with.

There are many others like Francis. I myself have never been signposted for any help at all. Thank God I am strong, but I do have my moments. Again, we need help for the community. The catchment area is a circle. If I live opposite the boundary where the line was drawn, on the day of the fire me and you could have been having the same effect, seeing the fire, feeling trauma, but because I live across the road to you I cannot access services and you can.

I do not know who drew this up, but we need to think outside the box because one outfit here does not fit all, and this is why people are being left out of the hoop.

Yvette Williams: Many of the local authority workers also live in the borough. Many of them were there on the night. We know there has been a huge turnover of staff down at the local authority, so it would be interesting to see what they are doing to support their very own workers. Many of them are front-line keyworkers working with the bereaved families, et cetera, so it will be interesting to see what support they are accessing. We know from MacPherson that, if you tend to have a poor service for victims and witnesses, you are likely to treat your staff appallingly as well.

Q74 Liz Twist: Both of you have talked about community services being more helpful. Could you tell me a bit more about what kind of community services there are? You have mentioned Hestia, which was engaged to do some work. Are there other community services?



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Yvette Williams: There are. There are community psychotherapists; we have one here. There are massage and holistic outlets. There are spaces where, historically, we have always come together to talk. There is a good skill base in the local community, so there is more than enough.

Q75 **Liz Twist:** These are people within the community who are helping the community.

Yvette Williams: Yes, they are getting what I would call a more holistic response than a purely medical model. That is often where people's fears come from, being fitted into a medical model. If you feel you are healing in more of a creative and cultural space, you tend to have a better outcome to that.

Q76 **Liz Twist:** You mentioned Hestia, I know. Did I get it right? Did you say that those services were coming to an end or have I misunderstood that?

Clarrie Mendy-Solomon: The National Health Service is now coming in. Instead of learning and working more closely with Hestia, they want to be implemented and have their services implemented firmly. They could be saying to Hestia, "Okay, why is it everybody is engaging with you and not us?" They are not thinking about the track record and the time it has taken to build relationships. This is one of the latest things: "Okay, well we will be available this day. You will be available that day". There is a calendar and it is still not working because nobody wants to engage with the NHS—not nobody, but a minority. I was speaking to people in the hotels just last night, and they were saying that the Hestia staff have had their hours in the hotel cut down to four, and these National Health Service people are coming in. Nobody wants to engage with them because they do not know where this information, this data, is going to be stored. They already have confidence in the people they are working with, whose services should not be dwindling.

There are a lot of well-being groups in the area. Within Humanity for Grenfell, we have a WhatsApp group. We have specialists within our group to deal with trauma, psychologists, et cetera. When one of our members is down, straight away one of them is on the phone building them back up or going to visit them. Within our group, we deal with well-being. There are places like the SPACE, which I am sure you are going to learn about after.

The Government set up a place with the council called The Curve. Even this is not working. I do not believe that the Government or the council are fully engaging with the staff at The Curve. Their services have dwindled. I went there once, when I had a question to ask. The citizen's advice office was set up there. I went there at 3 o'clock. The desk was empty. "Nobody will be available until 5 o'clock". There was a notice there. I thought, "Let me hang around", because I had a question and I was looking for an answer. I waited until 5 o'clock. One student came: "I cannot answer your question".



The local citizens advice bureau that was accessible for disabled people has been closed. There is only one, so there is some dispute about the disabled access in this area.

- Q77 Bob Blackman:** You are probably aware that we have taken lots of evidence from various different groups and, indeed, on this Committee, we have been doing an inquiry into building safety, the regulations that cover how buildings should be built and the specifications, so that we never get what you have all suffered ever again. Today, we have published a report on what should happen in the future.

The Government are, at the moment, running a consultation to see what happens about cladding on buildings. Their proposal is that combustible materials will be banned from being put on high-rise buildings. What message do you have to the Government on their consultation and what should happen for the future?

Yvette Williams: They need to take it down from all buildings now. How many more lives do they want to lose? Is it a rhetorical question?

- Q78 Bob Blackman:** No, I just want to get it on the record. It is your opportunity to give the Government a message.

Clarrie Mendy-Solomon: At Humanity for Grenfell, we are strongly of the view that the Government's consultation on the banning of combustible materials on high-rise buildings was unnecessary and merely functioned to delay the ban. Far from building trust, failure to take decisive action regarding the ban has done nothing but further erode public trust in the Government. Many residents living in the Kensington area are living in fear of a fire similar to Grenfell Tower happening in their block. This especially applies to residents living in tower blocks. However, whether a resident lives in a tower block or a low-rise, hazardous building materials and dangerous building practices are a threat to all residents' safety. If combustible materials have been used on buildings, they must prove again that other measures supporting fire safety make them an acceptable risk. If they cannot show this, they must be removed.

People are not prepared to be used as some kind of experiment. If there is any risk, the materials must be removed. The ban must commence immediately.

- Q79 Chair:** Thank you very much for coming and explaining your concerns as an organisation, the way you feel individual residents have not been listened to, and how their concerns and needs have not been properly addressed. That has been very helpful to the Committee today.

Clarrie Mendy-Solomon: It is not just about the residents. It is the survivors, bereaved family and the community organisations. The whole area is suffering. Someone is at fault in this.

Chair: Yes, and we are going to hear now from representatives of the organisations from the wider community. Thank you very much.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Hanan Cherbika, Nahid Ashby and Samia Badani.

Q80 **Chair:** Thank you very much for coming to be with the Committee today and to give evidence to us. To begin with, could you go down the table and say who you are and the organisation you are representing today?

Samia Badani: Good morning. My name is Samia Badani. I am the elected chair of Bramley House Tenants and Residents Association. I am also on the Notting Dale Residents Advisory Board, which is a network of 11 residents associations in the local area.

Hanan Cherbika: My name is Hana Cherbika and I am Grenfell Walk's vice-chairman.

Nahid Ashby: I am Nahid Ashby, chair of Silchester Residents Association and co-chair of Notting Dale Residents Advisory Board.

Chair: Thank you very much for coming. We want to hear from you about the concerns you have on a number of issues, and we will put the individual questions to you on those.

Q81 **Kevin Hollinrake:** Good morning. I want to understand more about the wider Grenfell rehousing policy. We had one of the previous witnesses saying that the whole area is suffering. Can you, in your own words, tell us how the policies are working in terms of rehousing, for example, for those in close proximity to the tower or affected in lots of different ways by the Grenfell tragedy?

Samia Badani: Bramley House is in category B, which gives it a bit of priority in terms of the Grenfell recovery. Bramley House residents are included in the rehousing policy. This is after the local authority broke its promise and took us out of the draft policy. It put us back after we made a number of representations.

My answer is going to be brief: I cannot tell you how it works, because the local authority has failed to engage with Bramley House residents in terms of the implementation of the policy. The only communication we had from the local authority was a letter saying, "You need to apply by a certain date". We have not been able to participate and we have questions unanswered. We were under the impression that our leaseholders would be included in this policy. As a matter of fact, the deputy leader of RBKC promised a leaseholder last year, I think in August, that they would look at buying back the properties. That has not happened. Our leaseholders feel completely discriminated against.

If you allow me, I have testimony from one of our leaseholder. They said: "As a leaseholder in category B my mental health and well-being has



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been ignored by the council. This is discrimination. As a leaseholder I should have the same rehousing options, where they buy my flat and I buy another in exchange, and my daughter should be able to get a council flat like tenants' adult children".

This policy creates categories of different people in different sets of circumstances and, unless their rights are enshrined in the policies, the local authority will act in a manner that is quite divisive and inconsistent. Our residents need guarantees and their rights need to be in that policy. We are not too clear, in terms of non-dependent adults, whether they would be offered their own rehousing options. We have residents in hotels and temporary accommodation. We are not really clear as to what will happen to them in terms of charges in both properties, and we are receiving feedback that they are under pressure from the local authority to return to their home.

Hanan Cherbika: Grenfell Walk has the same priority as Grenfell Tower. We still have a number of people in hotels, some being forced into temporary accommodation. I want to talk a lot about that later on, or I can talk about housing and Grenfell Walk's situation now, if you want. Would that be better?

Kevin Hollinrake: Yes, please do.

Hanan Cherbika: Without disrespecting any of my neighbours here, I should not be sitting with these guys. I should have been with Grenfell United because we are in the same category, but we have had to fight from day 1 for Grenfell Walk because we have not been noticed. We have been welcomed on to Lancaster West Residents Association but, because our priorities are different to theirs, we wanted to be with Grenfell United. In the beginning, Grenfell United refused to do that, so we had to, as Grenfell Walk, make our own residents association because nobody was listening to us. No one from the Government or RBKC asked Grenfell Walk to come forward. No one suggested helping us and up until this day—we started our residents association in September—nobody has given us any space, and we have requested that so many times.

Q82 **Kevin Hollinrake:** Requested to whom?

Hanan Cherbika: We have asked RBKC to give us a space. The Government have supplied Grenfell United with a space and I do not know how many millions of pounds or how much it has cost them. As Grenfell Walk are not members of Grenfell United, we cannot use that space, so we are still to this day going round the community. When we have meetings, we have to go round begging people for a space so we can address our housing issues.

No one is updating us on our housing. We have to go out there personally and look for it. I am in permanent accommodation now, but I am still using a hotel. Up until two months ago, I had never, ever received a letter through my hotel door on anything, not one single letter. I do not



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know the amount of times I have addressed RBKC about this and they have said, "We are going to fix it; we are going to fix it". I am going out to the community. Sometimes I have to go to Grenfell United and ask them for updates on housing. That is disgraceful, because we are in the same situation. We did not ask to be put in this situation and, up until now, we have never even had an explanation about why we have been removed from our houses. This is permanent evacuation, not temporary, and they have never told us why we have left. That is terrible.

Q83 Kevin Hollinrake: Communication has been poor, particularly with RBKC.

Hanan Cherbika: Yes. There has been no support at all for Grenfell Walk. Nobody has told people that Grenfell Walk is in the situation that we are in, exactly the same as the tower. When we have gone out for help regarding housing, people, even our local youth clubs, have said to us, "No, we are not helping you. We are going to help only Grenfell Tower". It is disgraceful. I walked out of that house on 14 June 2017 with my children. I have a one-year-old baby, a 10-year-old child and a 13-year-old daughter. Everywhere I went, doors were closed on me. "We cannot help you". "We cannot help you". I walked out with my pyjamas on. I had to go round with my mother's clothes on for three days. I am a Muslim lady and I had to go out revealing stuff that I did not need to, because I did not have appropriate clothing.

It was terrible and there was no support anywhere. It was really, really bad. They could have made it more public. They could have said, "Help Grenfell Walk" because we are exactly the same as Grenfell Tower. There are 33 flats that were not burnt in Grenfell Tower. We are in exactly the same position. There are 22 flats in Grenfell Walk in exactly the same position, and nobody listened to us.

I am still fighting this because I still believe that you guys maybe do not even know the severity of Grenfell Walk. I would not be sitting here had you known exactly what was going on. I should have been with Grenfell Tower. I do not mean to disrespect you guys or any of you, but that is how I feel.

Nahid Ashby: I do not have anything to say about the housing. Silchester is completely excluded from the policy because we are not in the catchment area.

Kevin Hollinrake: We would like to know more about that.

Nahid Ashby: We have not been engaged. We have not been told anything. The only thing I have heard, which is unofficial and I cannot prove it, is that the points of people who were on the transfer list have been reduced, because the points have been given to other people who were closer to the tower and in the catchment, but I do not know if that is true.

Q84 Kevin Hollinrake: It is interesting because, Samia, you mentioned



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category B. Is it simply a line drawn on a map? Is that how you end up in category B, rather than a category that is not covered by this?

Samia Badani: Your guess is as good as mine. I think it was an early decision from Gold Command. When you look at disaster management, there is always one early decision that dooms the whole process. Perhaps, with hindsight, it is that early decision to arbitrarily draw a line on who is affected or not. We are all human beings. There is not a price for suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. If I can think about the rationale behind the decision, Bramley House was part of an evacuation zone, and because of the chaos they simply forgot us in there. It is possibly a matter of distance from the tower. We are less than 80 metres from the tower.

Q85 **Kevin Hollinrake:** You are not clear on what the criteria are?

Samia Badani: No. We thought we were clear but then RBKC changed its mind, took us out and we had to fight to be put back in.

Q86 **Kevin Hollinrake:** Do you know why there was that change in terms of policy?

Samia Badani: Because they can get away with it.

Q87 **Kevin Hollinrake:** You feel that they were trying to avoid certain—

Samia Badani: I think they wanted to reduce the liability. If there is a justification for ignoring your own residents, I cannot tell you what it is.

Q88 **Kevin Hollinrake:** Clearly, a lot of people were traumatised by this who were not in category B or the immediate environment of Grenfell. You are saying that, if you went to RBKC and said, "I need to be rehoused because of the trauma that I have suffered", that would cut no ice. It would make no difference in terms of your ability to get rehoused. That is quite clear.

Samia Badani: Yes, because you are not part of the policy, although under the legislation any local authority would have a discretion and would have to assess any person coming through the doors. They would have to make a decision on merit. Rather than a Grenfell criterion that applies to everybody, which you assess on individual cases, they made that blanket policy. Ultimately, it discriminates against other people because they happen to live across the road or in another block.

Q89 **Kevin Hollinrake:** Yes, so there is no judgment happening here; it is simply a blanket policy: "There it is".

Samia Badani: Yes. As far as Bramley House is concerned, and despite some widespread belief, this local authority in the last 13 months has made decisions about Bramley House for Bramley House, without us, which is quite a bad record. We are meant to be in this so-called category B. Within category B, we are promised by the local authority to be treated on an equal footing as the residents of the walkways in Lancaster West. The local authority managed to treat people differently within the



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same category. If I can use an analogy that one of our residents mentioned the other day, Bramley House is RBKC's illegitimate child. They cannot acknowledge it. It is sad, but this is what it is.

My neighbour told me this morning that a senior NHS member of staff said she was a walking breakdown. Every day when I leave my home, I look in the eyes of my neighbours who do not sleep at night, have flashbacks and are treated as third-class citizens. This must end. We are human beings. We are responsible taxpayers, reasonable people and not uneducated. We just want to be engaged in a meaningful way, and to be in the driver's seat in making decisions that affect our very lives. This is not happening in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Q90 Kevin Hollinrake: When residents are rehoused, are people satisfied with the quality of accommodation that is being offered, and the timescales for offers and people actually being rehoused?

Hanan Cherbika: I am glad that you asked this question. I am going to go personal. I viewed a property in October and was promised that I would be moving in January at the latest. I did not sign the contract until—

Q91 Kevin Hollinrake: Was this permanent housing?

Hanan Cherbika: Yes, I refused to go temporary because I do not trust them. I do not want to up my family again and go into temporary accommodation, for them to leave me and forget about me. I waited for permanent. I told them in October, "Yes, I will accept this property. I like it". They had to buy it. They promised me, "By the beginning of January you will be moving in". I did not sign my contract until the end of March.

The transition is very hard for my daughter. She is suffering bad panic attacks. I approached Barry Quirk about this. I told him that, the night before, my daughter had a massive panic attack. I called 999 on that night and survivors were there in the hotel with me, while my daughter was going through this panic attack. He sat down there and he promised me that he would help me and get me into a serviced apartment.

The next day I got a phone call from Amanda Gill. She said, "You are not having a serviced apartment because we do not do them anymore". I said, "But people are in a serviced apartment. Why can you not give me that? I sat down and I told you my daughter's mental health". I said, "I called 999. I got an ambulance". I had to wait 20 minutes for an ambulance. Hestia, thank God, was downstairs. They came up to my daughter and tried to calm her down. Had Hestia not been there, I do not know what would have happened to my daughter. He completely disregarded what I said and just said, "You are not having it". Amanda Gill said, "You are not having it". He got Amanda Gill to do his dirty work.

When people have been told that they are going to have permanent accommodation, they say, "The works are not done yet". They are not telling us exactly what is happening with the works. It is wasting millions



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of pounds leaving people in the hotel when these works could have been done, and they could tell us what is happening with them, but they are not telling us. They will not tell us anything because they said, "It is to do with safety checks; works are being delayed".

Now there is a new thing. I would really appreciate it if you could put this question to Nick Hurd because I do not believe it for one minute. I have just been told—like I said, I signed my contract at the end of March—that I need to provide proof of bank statements. I said, "Why do I need to provide proof of bank statements when I have given you my passport? That is my ID. You know my contract. It is TMO. I have been there for 13 years. You know who I am". They know who I am. I have never moved out from there. They are now saying Government are requesting that we give them bank statements.

I said, "Why do I need to give you my bank statement?" Whether I have £1 in there or £1 million, it has nothing to do with anybody. "I have given you my ID". They said, "The Government have requested that you give us this". I really do not believe that, so I would really, really appreciate it if you could ask that question to Nick Hurd.

Q92 **Kevin Hollinrake:** He is right behind you, so I am sure he has heard that point very loudly and clearly.

Hanan Cherbika: Please do. I am vice-chair of Grenfell Walk. A lot of people are coming to me now and saying, "Is this true? Do I really have to give them bank statements?" I do not understand why. They are just forcing a lot of Grenfell Walk residents to go to temporary accommodation.

Q93 **Kevin Hollinrake:** I am sorry; we are just conscious of time. Are there any other points on the accommodation being offered, additional to Hanan's comments?

Samia Badani: We also operate a resident-led support and well-being hub called the SPACE. As part of the co-production work we do with other agencies, including Shelter, we get housing inquiries. I would echo what Hanan said in terms of people being offered properties and it taking months and months for the property to be made habitable.

In terms of Bramley House, we do not get direct offers. We are expected to bid for properties. The feedback I am getting from some of our residents on the register is that there are no properties available. I would like you to ask that question: whether there will be provision for the procurement of properties for those who are in that category.

Nahid Ashby: That is the failure of engagement, when they buy properties that people do not want or are not suitable for people. If they had engaged with the people and asked them what their needs are, they would not have that problem.

Q94 **Bob Blackman:** In the aftermath of the terrible tragedy, the



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concentration was on people who were living in the tower or immediately outside, but, as you said earlier, it is not just the immediate vicinity; it is a wider area. How much help and assistance have you had from the council and, therefore, the Government in dealing with the problems, the issues you face, and moving forward?

Nahid Ashby: Silchester is the second-largest estate in the area, Lancaster West being the first. It is situated just across the road from Grenfell Tower and Lancaster estate. Part of Silchester is about 80 metres away from the tower. There are four residential towers within the estate, most of them directly facing Grenfell. Silchester was completely and utterly forgotten: people felt abandoned and left. People who on that same night came out and tried to do whatever they could, people who lost friends and family, even people who did not lose anyone. Just witnessing that from their window traumatised them. They were profoundly traumatised.

As the vice-chair, in August I called a meeting with the council and we highlighted all these problems. We were promised that they would do something about it. That is 11 months ago now. Nothing was done. Everything that we did, we did ourselves. There was no therapy offered; there was no nothing. People from the Silchester estate, on the first or second week when they went to disaster centres, were turned away because they were not in the catchment area.

As far as engagement goes, we were not engaged in any shape or form. Even when we tried to engage, we were just pushed aside or made to wait. People were really angry and they still are. Because they have not been treated, some of them had to go and seek help elsewhere, on their own. We have not had any help or support at all, 13 months on.

Samia Badani: May I make a distinction between the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the local NHS? The responses are different. Our experience of council services and access to support services is that RBKC adopted a very divisive approach, which created tension within our community. Many of our residents were turned away for help, so we did what all our neighbours did on 14 June. As the invisible local residents, we identified the needs of our neighbours and made sure they got support. Our residents got some support services through direct work between the residents association and the local NHS, through co-production of services.

Residents now access services at the SPACE. SPACE stands for "supporting people and community empowerment". It operates on a new model of service delivery, which is responsive rather than reactive. That is the problem with the local authority: 13 months later, they are still reactive. They are not planning. They do not have an engagement and inclusion strategy, which I find appalling. All those services are failing because, if you do not know who your recipients are—the service users, the people you are meant to serve—or how to target them, how do you expect them to access your services?



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We are in a situation where millions of taxpayers' money has been spent, our residents are not accessing the services and, on top of that, we as local residents are volunteering our time to provide the services. It is not value for money in my books; it is value for money for them. They need to recognise that the approach that they are taking is not working.

We need to talk about the lack of trust. We are expected to trust the local authority. Being objective, let us take a step back and look at this local authority: a local authority that is under criminal investigation for potential, possible breaches of health and safety. Tell us why, 13 months on, we should have hope that this local authority will exercise its duty of care towards us. People feel suicidal. People are not getting the services. What tangible action has this local authority taken for us to even hope that there will be a change? People cannot access the services of someone they do not trust. Nobody is recognising this. We are not just complaining or moaning about services. Some RBKC officers are depicting us as activists who are criticising them.

We are solutions-driven. All we want is to rebuild our lives, rebuild our neighbourhood and make it more vibrant and sustainable. We have more of a vision for our future than our own local authority. I would like you to ask the Minister what needs to happen now for some action or intervention from central Government, because engagement is key, and they have failed. We are the ones engaging with our residents. Can we work directly with central Government? Can they second MHCLG staff to the residents association, build the capacity of the residents association and let us do the job we have been doing for 13 months, but recognise and resource it? We cannot turn away from our neighbours. We will always be there to support them.

Q95 Bob Blackman: We are conscious of time, and we have to be careful about straying into any investigation work that is going on. I did not want to interrupt you during your flow, but you have to understand that we cannot interfere in that process, and we have to be cautious about what we are saying, because we do not want to prejudice anything that happens in any investigations.

Samia Badani: Yes, by all means. I am not asking for a determination.

Q96 Bob Blackman: I just do not want to disappoint you. Ms Cherbika, do you want to add anything?

Hanan Cherbika: I want to talk about Hestia. Clarrie has already touched upon Hestia. One member of Grenfell Walk has been given over seven support workers. They change them constantly and do not inform us when they are changing them. I myself have built a relationship, along with my children, with my support worker. I have just been told that she is no longer going to be my support worker. I personally have had over six support workers. It is ridiculous and it is not helping me, my children or my husband.



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Like I said to you earlier on, when my daughter was in the middle of a panic attack, Hestia was downstairs in the hotel reception. They came up and helped my daughter. As I said to you, I have my permanent accommodation, but I am still using the hotel because my daughter does not feel safe in the new house. That is the worst thing to feel, for a child. Every time she has a panic attack, she thinks she is dying, and that is at least once a month. Hestia has been there since day 1. They have been helping my daughter so much.

Now, as Clarrie said, they have cut down on their hours: they are there now from 6 o'clock until 10 o'clock in the evening. I personally did not go back to the hotel until after 11 o'clock because my children did not want to stay in the hotel. There are still over 15 families in the hotel that I was staying in. The time when we want to access Hestia is way after 11 o'clock, and I know this because I talk to other residents in the hotel.

They have taken that service away. They say that they want to cut down on Hestia. They have done it without even telling us, without even asking us. I told them straight away that Hestia has been there to help. The week after I told them that, I heard that Hestia are cutting down their hours.

I was in a meeting with my support worker just last week and I took a photo of two people in the reception of the hotel. I took a photo of them and said to them, "Hestia is no longer there. They are there, but they are there for four or five days a week". Do not quote me on that. "They have these other people". When I showed them the photo, they said, "Oh, I know who that is. That is—whatever—and she works at Kensington and Chelsea". I said, "Thank you very much" because I will never go to them. I personally will never go to a Chelsea and Kensington worker, talk to them and tell them my business. I have built that relationship with Hestia. I will tell them.

Who gives them the right to take that service away from people who are still using it? We have told them that we need that service there. Four hours is not enough. They were there from 8.00 pm until 3.00 am. It is now 6.00 until 10.00. That is not the time we need them.

Q97 **Bob Blackman:** Can I ask all three of you a couple of quick questions, with quick answers because of time? You will appreciate that we have a lot of areas that we want to cover. The Grenfell Recovery Taskforce says that it still hears of unsympathetic and inappropriate comments being made by council staff and councillors. Is that the experience that you have had?

Nahid Ashby: Yes.

Q98 **Bob Blackman:** You have said that you do not engage with the authority, but have you had a change in your experience of the attitude of council staff and councillors?



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Hanan Cherbika: A resident from Grenfell Walk has been told by her support worker, "You need to get over it now. You need to move on. You need to go forward". That is worse. That is disgusting. That is off the top of my head.

Samia Badani: When we tried to beg for attention I was told by our PTSD officer, "This is becoming tiring".

Q99 **Bob Blackman:** Finally, here is your opportunity to send a message to the Government. You have all talked about a breakdown of trust in the council and Government. What do the council and the Government have to do to rebuild that trust, as far as you are concerned?

Hanan Cherbika: Be transparent. Tell us what you are doing. If you are going to change something, ask us. Involve us. We are the ones who are going through this. We are the ones who need the help.

Nahid Ashby: They need to realise that, no matter how many times they say they are changing, until they have actually changed that is not going to happen. They have to change and to show a sign that they have changed; otherwise nobody is going to believe them. We do not see any changes at the moment.

Samia Badani: We want central Government to hold RBKC accountable, because we have tried over the last 13 months, or to empower us as local residents to hold our own local authority responsible. That is in the interim. There is longer-term work, but while they change the culture we cannot afford for people to suffer for any longer than they have.

Q100 **Helen Hayes:** You have spoken in some detail about mental health services and access to services locally. We heard from the previous panel about some issues, some good community work happening, but also some problems accessing NHS services and some patchiness of provision. Without going over that ground, I wondered if you could talk about what the unmet need is within the wider Grenfell area for mental health services, what it would look like if everybody's needs were being met in that area, and what needs to happen to make it right.

Nahid Ashby: The people who do not want to be branded as suffering from mental health are in one group. Some people do not even realise that they have a problem. Because there is so much stigma attached to mental health, people do not want to access it. For instance, there are a lot of alternative therapies, which they call art therapy, music therapy and all that.

We at Silchester held an art therapy session starting in December, which finished in June, but we did not call it art therapy. We just called it an art project or workshop. It was really welcomed by people. It was well attended. We had an exhibition at the end of June. It was amazing. Anybody who came, even the people from wider areas who came to the exhibition, thought it was amazing that people produced such fantastic work. It was a really positive public health outcome for people coming in



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twice a month for two or three hours. They get completely absorbed in what they are doing and forget all their troubles. The comments that we had are proof of that, so that is another area.

A lot of people do not even know where these services are, because there is no engagement. Nobody knows where they can go. It is not just mental health; it is well-being as well, so, rather than the mental health part, maybe they should concentrate more on the well-being part of it.

Samia Badani: It is rather shocking that, 13 months on, there has not been a comprehensive needs assessment. Before you commission services, you need the basis for commissioning them. This has not happened. On the positive side, we know what works and the panel members have talked about that. When the community is involved in the delivery of or shaping services, we reach the hard-to-reach groups and that is what we do in this space. We do co-production work with Hestia and the NHS, and we find that we are achieving public health outcomes and people feel more confident.

Now we all need to sit together, look at what works and support the residents in doing what they are doing, but we need resources from central Government and the NHS needs resources. I know there is £10 million for mental health; it might not have to go to RBKC. Perhaps it should go to the NHS, because RBKC is not delivering and the NHS is delivering better. We want to be part of that decision.

Q101 **Chair:** Finally, now the tenant management organisation has ended, responsibility has gone back to the council for dealing with things like repairs and cleaning services. Has the service improved at all or is it just the same?

Nahid Ashby: There has been a welcome change in the housing management services, but there have been years and years of mismanagement and neglect. We cannot expect everything to be put right overnight or in an instant; it takes a while, but at least we are seeing small signs of improvement and that should be rolled out to the other departments within the RBKC. That is what I always say: show us a sign; if you say you are changing, show us a sign. That culture of contempt has to go before anything will feel as if it is changing.

Samia Badani: We have seen some slight improvement. Bramley House is under the management of a localised office, the Lancaster West neighbourhood office, which is different from the rest of the borough. We are not involved in co-designing the housing management services. We are having some difficulties with contractors being taken away.

For example, there is a litter collection programme, which we are very happy with and local people work in. The council has just issued a notice to terminate the services and to get another contractor to do it. We are under the impression that the council is going back to the old ways of trying to cut corners and save money, so we are concerned about that.



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We are concerned that, for example, when you raise an issue of safety it takes time for the local authority to act on it. It is work in progress and it will only work if we are fully engaged. We are still waiting for the local authority to engage with our residents associations.

Briefly, we are under a refurbishment programme—this is Bramley House—for the rotten windows that we have had for the last 35 years. In 1985, there was a residents meeting where we were already asking about changing the windows and the local authority response is, “Why do you not come and have a chat?” That is 35 years. Do we not deserve to live in decent homes? This is just an example. Look at the windows. We are human beings; we just want to live in a decent home that is safe.

Q102 **Chair:** There are small signs of improvement but a long way to go. Thank you very much indeed for coming to give evidence to the Committee today; it is really appreciated. Thank you very much.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Rt Hon. Mr Nick Hurd MP and Jillian Kay.

Q103 **Chair:** Minister, thank you very much for coming before the Committee today to give evidence. Could you just introduce the official who is with you today?

Mr Hurd: Jillian can introduce herself.

Jillian Kay: Good morning. My name is Jillian Kay; I am the director for Grenfell recovery and for resilience in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Q104 **Chair:** Thank you very much. As a first question, you are a Minister from the Home Office and the official is from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Where does one’s responsibility begin and the other’s end?

Mr Hurd: We work together.

Q105 **Chair:** We often hear that in Government, but it does not always happen in practice, does it?

Mr Hurd: This is true. I am supported in my role as Minister for Grenfell Victims by a superb team of officials who work for Jillian in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, so it is genuinely joined up.

Q106 **Chair:** In the end, the Ministry of Housing is responsible for most of the key issues about making sure that housing provision is available and delivered, but you are the Minister responsible for it. Is that right?



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Mr Hurd: Let me clarify my role. I am the Minister for Police and the Fire Service, but the Prime Minister asked me to play an additional role, which is Minister for Grenfell Victims. The context for that role is one you have heard very clearly from both your sessions with residents and victims of this disaster. We have been operating in a context of zero trust at best, in fact, negative trust, certainly in the relationship between victims and the council, but also very low levels of trust between victims and the state more broadly. The Prime Minister realised that.

She also realised that the road to supporting victims of the disaster back to finding a new normal, whatever that means, is going to be an extremely long one. She wanted to have a Minister in the system whose role was to try as best we could to engage with the victims of this disaster, the bereaved, the survivors and residents, to make sure as best we could that we understood the feelings, needs and priorities of victims when we take decisions about what we do as central Government, but also in our role of challenging the local authority. *[Interruption.]*

Chair: I am sorry; this is an opportunity for the Minister. We have tried to listen to representatives from survivors, families, residents from the wider community, and now we have a chance, as Members of Parliament and members of the Committee, to put the questions to the Minister, which is what we will do. We will raise with the Minister the concerns that we have had raised with us. We can only do that if we can get on and do it without interruption.

Mr Hurd: Chair, let me be clear. I do not mean to cause any offence to anyone at all, because language is very important. I have always used the expression "victims" because the context of this is a disaster that should not have happened and 72 precious lives were lost, which should not have been lost. We use the word "victims" for those who are struggling with loss and struggling with what they experienced as a result of something that should not have happened. That is the expression we use and I know it can be emotive. I certainly do not mean to cause offence to anyone.

At the heart of this is a disaster in which 72 lives were lost, which should not have been lost. It should not have happened and we are discussing how we recover from that. I am trying to explain the role that the Prime Minister asked me to play, which was to help us get a better understanding of the feelings and needs of those whom we have a duty to support on this long road of recovery, as well as our duties in making sure that we honour the dead in the most appropriate way. That is the role I have been asked to play, which is primarily about engagement. It is also about trying to build some bridges of, if not trust, at least communication between the state, the local authority and the bereaved, the survivors and the residents.

Finally, my role is to lead in some very sensitive conversations and processes in which the council cannot lead. The primary example of that is the discussions around the future of the site and the journey towards



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an appropriate and, I hope, beautiful and dignified memorial for the lives lost. That is my role. I happen to sit in the Home Office, but I work very closely and am supported by officials from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, who sit in the same building.

Q107 Chair: Thank you for that clarification. You quite appropriately came and listened to the evidence that was given to us previously. Were you surprised or disappointed by the regular—refrain, almost—repeating of concerns by community representatives that they, as organisations, were not being listened to, the wider community was not being listened to, individuals were not being listened to and the same old attitude of “we know best; we will tell you what is going to happen” pervaded right the way through this? Were you concerned that lots of people felt nothing had changed?

Mr Hurd: No, I am not surprised at all, because they tell me that and it has been a regular refrain from all the conversations and engagement I have had over the year, whether it be with individuals, individual families, groups that represent people or civil society organisations. The refrain has been the same. It is rooted, as I am sure the Committee has picked up, in a belief that, before the disaster, the council did not have the right attitude towards the residents in that area in terms of their engagement, their listening, their culture and their approach. I believe that has been recognised by the local authority and we can discuss how credible that is but, in terms of how the broader community feel, the bereaved, survivors and residents, nothing I have heard in either session comes as a surprise to me.

Q108 Chair: But, Minister, to be fair to the comments we heard, some of them were directly addressed to the council, with the feeling that there had always been that attitude of contempt there, that it was continuing and that change, if it was coming at all, was very slow and often imperceptible. But some of the criticism was directed at Government, was it not? Some of it was almost personally directed at you, saying, “We have never met the Minister. We have never seen him. What is he doing on our behalf?” It was almost a cry for more engagement, was it not?

Mr Hurd: I did hear that. All I can simply lay out for the Committee is the approach I have taken from the start, because I have been involved from the start. I can try to make myself as present and accessible as possible, speaking to anyone who wants to speak with me, and some do not. My approach, particularly at the start of this process, where it was very unclear who represented whom, was to go and try to speak directly to individuals and families.

My priority has been to do that, so I have made it my business to personally meet over 100 families or households in private meetings, to discuss their particular circumstances. My observation, which I am sure would be shared by anyone involved then, was that at the start it was chaotic. There were lots of public meetings, but they tended to be dominated by the noisiest and, as we know from our business as MPs,



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sometimes you have to try to reach out to the quiet ones to find out what is going on. That has been my approach, as well as to speak to everyone who wants to speak with me. I have had regular engagement with organisations such as Grenfell United, which we believe is the most representative of the bereaved and the survivors.

Q109 Chair: Would you accept, though, Minister, that there seems to be a feeling in the community that the approach, however well intended, has not worked so far, as far as the community is concerned? Would you accept that you and the Government have to improve in trying to reach out to communities and genuinely engage with them? Would you want to do that in the next few months?

Mr Hurd: Yes. We all have to improve. I have gone about this role in the way that I felt was appropriate, particularly in terms of trying to reach out to individual families and households, so they could talk about their issues privately with me. I have also tried to make myself available to anyone who wants to speak to me, and I have spoken to a huge number of people over the last year and been present in many meetings.

Chair: I am sorry; I cannot have interruptions from anyone at this stage.

Mr Hurd: Chair, what I will say is that I will speak to anyone who wants to speak to me. That has been my approach.

Chair: The community is listening. Maybe we can have people back in six months' time to see whether they think it has improved.

Mr Hurd: Yes.

Q110 Chair: That is an important test, which we will do. What would you like to see change in the next 12 months? Do you have a number of key objectives that you want to see achieved?

Mr Hurd: Yes. Again, the starting point is that 72 people lost their lives. We cannot make that right—we cannot bring those lives back—but there are things that we have to get right. We have to honour the dead in the most appropriate way. As I said, I am leading a good, healthy process of engagement with the community about the future of the site. The common assumption is that we are working towards a memorial, hopefully a beautiful and dignified memorial. We have to get that right.

We have to make sure that all those who lost their homes or who want to move are resettled; I use the word “resettled” rather than “rehoused”, because this is about much more than just handing over a set of keys to a new property. This is a very big change for people who have lost homes and lost community. The whole business of resettling and the support that people get in that process is really important to get right. We need to make sure that the bereaved and the community have the mental health support they need for as long as they need it.

Chair, I know you have probed this in other inquiries, but we have to be absolutely sure that we learn the lessons from the worst disaster to hit



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this country since Hillsborough—lessons around the change in needs of fire safety, of social housing and, more locally, the changes that Kensington and Chelsea needs to make in terms of its approach and its longer-term strategy for the community in the north Kensington area.

On that point, I bring to the attention of the Committee that they published yesterday a set of commitments that set out their stall, not just in terms of things that they want to prioritise but, critically, how they want to work with the community going forward. That is really important to the point that you were making before. They have moved on from, perhaps, the traditional role of a local authority and saying, “This is what we are going to do for you” to a statement on record, published yesterday, which is how they want to work with the community going forward.

To my eyes, and I have talked to them extensively about it, this embodies a lot of the themes that Samia and others were talking about, which are about the need to work with residents, to co-produce, to co-design, all those powerful things, which are fundamentally about trying to give residents a greater sense of agency in this process. Those are the issues that matter to me, which I will be monitoring very closely.

Q111 **Chair:** The evidence we heard in the two sessions we have had is that people will believe that when they see it in practice as opposed to words in a document, which is going to be the key test at the end of the day.

Q112 **Matt Western:** Minister, with your pre-existing responsibilities, you have your work cut out with the day job of the police and the fire, and the challenges you face there. I am just interested to understand the logic of the Prime Minister in appointing you to do this and what explanation was given. You obviously work in a different Department with a pretty high workload and this is a massive issue that we have. As we have been hearing from the previous panel, there is this frustration about not being heard. What was the logic given by the Prime Minister when she appointed you and do you think you have the capacity?

Mr Hurd: You will have to ask her.

Q113 **Matt Western:** Did she not explain it to you?

Mr Hurd: I think it is because I was involved right from the start. I was the first Minister involved post-Grenfell as a result of my responsibilities for police and fire. I was involved right from the start and, for whatever reason, she felt I was the right person to take on this role of engagement with the bereaved, survivors and residents. I have made the capacity to do it. You always want more time in our world, but it has been a very high priority for me, as anyone who has worked with me or talked with me knows. I attach a huge amount of importance to it.

Q114 **Liz Twist:** Having heard the evidence today and from our previous session, which I believe you attended part of, will you be reviewing your approach to how you communicate with, contact and engage with the



local community, in your ministerial role?

Mr Hurd: I am always open to suggestions; I am always open to criticism. I know that I have made myself as available and as accessible as I possibly could, in terms of sending the signal that I am here to talk to anyone who wants to talk to me. I engage and I communicate very regularly. There will always be people and groups who feel that I have not done so, but some of them have never asked to see me. I do not force myself on people; I simply try to explain what my role is and say that I am here and available to talk to anyone who wants to talk to me. I restate that. I am very open to challenge on that.

Q115 **Liz Twist:** You have said that you are available to people, so people need to take the initiative to contact you. Might there be a place for going out and engaging with the community?

Mr Hurd: We do. I do not operate on my own, and Jillian can talk to this. We have a group of officials who work with me and who do nothing but that.

Jillian Kay: It might be helpful if I explain a bit about MHCLG's role in all this and how we work together with Minister Hurd in his role. Of course, MHCLG's role in this is about housing and the relationship with the local authority. But, actually, our role in this is one of leading a cross-Government effort. It is not just about MHCLG and the Home Office; it is about a number of different Departments. As lead Government Department for recovery, our Secretary of State and his predecessor chair the Ministerial Recovery Group, of which Minister Hurd has been a member throughout the whole year. The Minister for Housing is also a member of that and those members—the Secretary of State and his predecessor, the Housing Minister and his predecessors—have also taken a role in going out and engaging with people. I would not want to give the impression that it is only falling on Minister Hurd's shoulders to do this.

There is also within my team the unit that was set up the weekend after the fire, which supports the Minister in his role. It was modelled on a unit called the Victims of Terrorism Unit, which was stood up by the Home Office in the course of last year. It was modelled on that unit in the sense that it was intended to be a single point of access into Government to really simplify, for those affected by the tragedy, their interactions with the state as a whole.

It differs from the Victims of Terrorism Unit model in two key ways, because of the circumstances of this tragedy. In one way, we have a dedicated casework team, which supports Ministers in their engagement with individuals in their individual circumstances, and follows up with the council, with other Government Departments or, in many cases, with all of those, because people have complex needs, so we have that casework team. We also have a team of individuals who are involved in community engagement, who go out proactively and have done since the early days



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after the fire, to build relationships on the ground. It is through that that we have made a number of different contacts with organisations and individuals, and been able to, in many cases, assist them, although not in all cases, of course.

Q116 Liz Twist: I want to go on to a separate issue now, which is about housing. I wonder if you could tell us the most up-to-date figures of the number of residents who have been permanently rehoused since the fire last year.

Mr Hurd: My data is that, as of 16 July, 200 out of 204 category A households have accepted an offer of either temporary or permanent accommodation and 142 have moved in. There are 96 households that have now moved into permanent homes out of the 188 that have accepted an offer of permanent accommodation. In terms of households in hotels, there are 40 households from Grenfell Tower and Walk in hotels, of which seven have children. That is the headline data.

I can give more data in relation to the wider estate. There are 11 households from the wider estate that are eligible for rehousing that remain in hotels, and three remain in serviced apartments. Those numbers are continuing to move, albeit slowly, in the right direction. That is the latest state of play and these are numbers that we monitor very closely in the Ministerial Recovery Group.

Q117 Chair: If people are not happy with those figures and feel they are wrong, the way to do it is to please drop a note to the Committee and we will have it further investigated. If there is anything you are not happy with, please drop us a note, and we will deal with it that way.

Mr Hurd: I will do more than that: I am very happy to send the latest numbers to all the groups that are represented here.

Chair: There you are, and the Minister has agreed to have a meeting.

Mr Hurd: We have met. We met with the Prime Minister. I am happy to meet whenever you want.

Q118 Liz Twist: Thank you for those figures, Minister. We were talking earlier about the wider rehousing policy, particularly the category B properties. You said there are 11 households that are eligible that have been rehoused. Did I hear that right?

Mr Hurd: There are 11 households from the wider estate that are eligible for rehousing that remain in hotels, and there is another three that are in serviced apartments.

Q119 Liz Twist: Is that the total number of people who are eligible in the wider housing area?

Mr Hurd: As I said, there are 11 in hotels and three in serviced apartments that are eligible under the wider Grenfell rehousing policy. There are another 12 households in hotels that, as was picked up in the



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previous conversation, are not eligible under that policy but are covered by general housing policy. Again, I can set that out in writing to the Committee if that would be helpful.

Q120 Liz Twist: Yes, that would be helpful, because we have heard some concern today about whether the wider housing policy adequately covers the circumstances that we have. Can you tell us a bit more about that? Perhaps it is unfair in your role.

Mr Hurd: No, it is not unfair, because part of my role is to challenge the council on its responsibilities to the bereaved, the survivors and the residents. The whole process of trying to help people back into homes that they feel secure and safe in is fundamental to the process of recovery and the journey back to the new normal so, yes, it is appropriate.

Q121 Liz Twist: The challenge we have heard today is whether the right people and enough people are covered by that policy and whether enough is being done to support those families who are affected from that wider area.

Mr Hurd: You have heard a strong voice suggesting not, from residents. That is something I take seriously and something that we will take, as we always do, to the Ministerial Recovery Group, where the council comes every fortnight now to be challenged by Ministers about housing policy and these numbers are scrutinised very carefully. The Committee will have an understanding of the complexity around the resettlement challenge, but I have a lot of sympathy for residents of the walkways. If you have stood on their balconies or in their gardens and seen the view of the tower, you will understand why a number of those residents feel that they cannot or will not go back there, and want to be housed somewhere else.

The system understands that. There are processes and people in place to support that, but part of our role is to keep challenging and keep holding the council to account for delivering on the words and for reducing the number of people who are in hotels or temporary accommodation, which is what we all want.

Q122 Liz Twist: Last month, residents raised concerns that people are being asked to make decisions about rehousing at a difficult time and in difficult circumstances, and may want to change their mind for their well-being in the future. Will special provision be made for those Grenfell residents to give them the right to change their mind in the future?

Mr Hurd: There is an understanding that that may happen. The Committee will fully understand that we are dealing with a situation and trying our best to support people in an environment of deep and very wide trauma. In that process, it is sometimes very difficult for people to make decisions and for people to stick to those decisions, and they will want to revisit them. We need to respect that and have some flexibility in our processes to respect that. That is a challenge for the system, but it is



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a challenge we have to be alive to, because Grenfell is not like any other situation and we have to work in different ways. If we have learnt one thing over the last 12 months, it is that. People will change their minds and we have to be open to that.

Q123 Liz Twist: It sounds like there are quite a few challenges and issues to be looked at, in the light of how things develop and the evidence from survivors.

Mr Hurd: There are huge challenges here. You are talking about an enormous decision for people who have been through a deeply traumatic experience, who have lost their home, possessions and community. As others will know better than I, this was a very tightly knit community. They are being asked to accept the keys of a new home and, sometimes, accept the finality of that move. That is a very difficult process.

I come back to that point. We have to make sure not only that the accommodation is one in which people feel safe and secure, but that they are supported beyond the point of just handing over the key, in terms of the introduction to the community of all the support services that I would expect to see. The council is committing to all this in the document that I referred to and in a brochure that I have seen and commented on, which is going out to everyone. It will explain what people can expect, and we have to hold them to account for that.

Q124 Kevin Hollinrake: Minister, we appreciate you being here to listen to the previous residents talking about their issues. One witness told us, despite the fact that they were a resident, that they have to provide bank statements to move into another property. Are you surprised by that?

Mr Hurd: The honest answer is that there are still things I come across that surprise me, where I shake my head and wonder, "What the hell is that about?" My pledge to Hanan is that I will investigate that personally. I deal regularly with Aziza, who is chair of the Grenfell Walk Residents Association. Part of my role is to pick up issues that may or may not be misunderstandings and wrestle them down to try to sort them out. That has been a big part of the role for the last 12 months.

I am grateful to Hanan for raising that; I would not have known about it if she had not. I am also grateful to those who raised the issue around the possible dialling down of the Hestia overnight services, which I picked up yesterday. It sounds like it has been handled in the wrong way and, again, I will pick that up, because it is clearly important to people.

Q125 Kevin Hollinrake: Would you be willing to write back to the Committee on that?

Mr Hurd: Of course, yes.

Q126 Kevin Hollinrake: Is there a channel that residents can use when they are dissatisfied with local services and the communication, as we have heard so much of this morning, where they can alert you to things that



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are not right? Clearly, there needs to be some kind of escalation process for that.

Mr Hurd: They can communicate either directly to me or to Jillian's Victims Unit. We correspond regularly, so the information should be out there through all the channels that we use, but I am happy to provide the information to the Committee as well.

Q127 **Kevin Hollinrake:** Is there an email address we can point to today, for example?

Jillian Kay: There is an email address that I can send to the Committee. I am sorry; I do not have it immediately in my mind.

Q128 **Kevin Hollinrake:** Okay, we can publish it on our website, because I think people would appreciate that kind of channel being available.

Q129 **Helen Hayes:** Last month, in an article in the *Evening Standard*, the Prime Minister said it had taken too long to find houses for Grenfell residents. Do you regret promising to rehouse all the residents who needed rehousing as a consequence of Grenfell and then failing to do that within the timescale that had been set?

Mr Hurd: I do not regret the commitment, because it gave a discipline and a pace to the process and something clear to aim at. I am deeply frustrated that we did not meet that commitment, because of what I said before. There is nothing more important in this process than allowing people to, in many cases, start their process of recovery and healing in places where they feel secure and safe as their home. That is No. 1 in terms of the hierarchy of need and, if we have not delivered that for the number of households that still, to this day, do not know where their permanent home is going to be, that is a failing, which I regret deeply. I remain deeply motivated to try to get us to the point, as I said before, where everyone is resettled and can start that process properly.

Q130 **Helen Hayes:** As a Committee, we have heard from a variety of different witnesses and sources about significant concerns around the process of understanding and assessing the needs of many of the households, and about a mismatch between that lack of understanding of the needs and then the homes that the council has been purchasing in order to meet the rehousing need. Are you aware of those issues? Could those issues have been picked up on and action taken to address them many months ago?

Mr Hurd: My lens on this is through my meetings with over 100 individual families or households. Many of those meetings have had a housing issue at their core, even though often the main issue is really not housing; it is something else, but they come to talk to me about housing. I draw a differential between the start of this process 12 months ago and what I observe now. At the start, where we had housing allocation officers from different boroughs coming in to do a job under a lot of pressure, with limited stock, people were clearly being offered properties that were inappropriate for them and based on insufficient understanding of their situations.



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In all my meetings I had a housing officer, and I was struck by how often the housing officer was having to ask again for details that they should have already known. I am very clear that, at the start of the process, admittedly under a lot of pressure and with insufficient stock of housing to offer, people were being offered stuff that was clearly inappropriate and that was causing huge stress.

Because it did not have the stock, the council then moved to buy 300 properties, and you will appreciate that that is not a straightforward task in a densely populated and expensive area. That could not all happen at the same time. That was staged and it was a difficult thing to get right. They did a needs assessment, which was quite high level, in that they had an understanding of what types of properties they needed and the amount of accommodation they had to provide. They took a decision not to buy bespoke and, as others have commented, I do not think there was sufficient information in the system around the aspirations and hopes, and the particular priorities that individuals had. Again, we were in a situation where people were being offered things that did not work for them.

We also had a situation where, because not all the housing was being bought at the same time, quite understandably—and I think I would have been exactly the same in this situation—people were saying, “Something better may come along, so I will wait until they have finished this process to see what the offer is”. That, for quite understandable reasons, delayed some decisions.

Then we had a situation where a number of people, again quite understandably, found it very difficult to make a decision, partly because of their particular circumstances or situation and the trauma they were having to deal with, but also because, in some situations, what they were being offered did not work for them and, quite rightly, they said, “I have not been offered anything that works for me. I am going to hang on until I get offered something that does”.

Those were all the factors that I saw coming into play over the year, which help explain why this process took longer than we expected. It was a bigger, more complex challenge than we expected. Of course, it became a bigger challenge, because we started off with 138 households to rehouse and we have ended up with 204 as a result of the decision, quite rightly, to allow so-called “splitting” of households. Through the year, the challenge got bigger.

Those are the various factors that I saw at play, through the lens of sitting in a church hall, sitting in a hotel room, listening to families or individuals talk about their experience of engaging with the council about their housing need.

Q131 Helen Hayes: Has that purchase process created a series of quite fundamental problems for rehousing the remaining families? We heard evidence of, for example, properties that have been purchased at height



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for residents who cannot contemplate living at height; properties that have been purchased that do not have a sufficient number of bedrooms; properties being offered to a household with a family member with a disability that are not suitable for meeting the needs of that household. Those purchase decisions, it would seem to me, have become something of a problem to rehousing several families as quickly as now needs to happen. Is there the possibility of undoing some of those decisions and revisiting the purchasing process, to make sure that the homes that are being offered are fit for purpose for the needs of those families?

Mr Hurd: I accept that there is some truth underlying what you are saying. When I look at the information, for example, on the 16 households that have not yet accepted a permanent home—for reasons the Committee will understand, I cannot share the specific cases with you—I can see that these are conversations that Kensington and Chelsea is having with the households that have specific needs that have not been met through the purchase process. There are discussions about how those are being met.

I am persuaded, because we have pressed very hard for this, but on an open door with the council, that it now has very good information on the people and the families it has struggled to rehouse. I am also satisfied that the conversations with those individuals and families are being conducted in the right way now. Some of these are very complex. In a recent case I have got involved in, because I have an open offer to help with some of these conversations as a fresh voice, we had a two-hour conversation with a resident involving a keyworker, housing officer and, critically, someone from the NHS. Actually, it was the NHS person who helped unlock the conversation.

We may be tempted to wonder what is complicated about finding someone a home. Some of these situations are extremely complicated and require intensive, personalised work to help that individual with a decision that they feel comfortable with. I hope the Committee will approve of the instinct, which we felt quite deeply, that we cannot push people into these decisions by virtue of a target or statistic. These are very human conversations.

Q132 **Helen Hayes:** If I may say so, Minister, I do not think there is any lack of appreciation of the complexity of the situation that has to be resolved. What we are trying to probe on today is the lack of fitness for purpose of the systems that have been put in place to address that complexity.

Mr Hurd: On that point, as I said at the top, 200 out of 204 category A households have now accepted an offer of either temporary or permanent accommodation, and there are 16 ongoing conversations with households that have not found a property. We are now into finding solutions for 16 too many, but these conversations are highly personalised now.

Q133 **Helen Hayes:** I want to ask very briefly about one further aspect of the rehousing, and that is the refurbishment works to homes that have been



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purchased. Again, we have heard reports of a lack of fitness for purpose in that system too, in terms of shortage of skills, slowness in undertaking the works, but also things like lack of appropriate regard for fire safety checks and measures in homes that have been purchased, failing to recognise the trauma of the families that might be moving into those homes and their need for the highest possible level of reassurance about those issues. I wonder if you could comment briefly on that.

Mr Hurd: In her evidence to you, Liz Campbell was quite candid about that. They had a difficult job to do to buy 300 properties, and some of those properties were not, in certain aspects, to the standard that the council wanted to offer, quite rightly, to residents, so quite a lot of work was required. It has been too slow. We have given specific help in that process in terms of cash and practical things, like housing surveyors. The council was let down by a contractor, which cost a month.

Everyone is deeply frustrated by that aspect of the process, but I am as reassured as I can be at this moment in time, although I will continue to hold the council to account on this, that we have, at the latest count, 24 properties accepted by households from Grenfell Tower and Walk that are not ready to be moved into. My latest information is that all those will be completed by the end of August.

Q134 **Chair:** It has probably taken longer than it should have, has it not?

Mr Hurd: It has taken longer than it should have. Some bits of the council could not help that, if contractors do not meet their obligation, but there are bits that could have been driven harder, for sure.

Jillian Kay: It is right that the vast majority of properties we expect to be ready by the end of August. There is literally a handful of properties where the works to be done are so complex that we expect them to take a little longer than that, but we are keeping a very close eye on that, as the Minister said. In addition to us working very closely with the council, the Independent Recovery Taskforce has been asked specifically to work very closely with the council on this. There are just a few that may not be ready at the end of August.

Q135 **Chair:** In reality, the stories we heard were that properties have taken a long time to do and, when promises have been made about when they would be completed, they have not been kept; they have taken longer still. In this circumstance, that is not really very good, is it?

Mr Hurd: No.

Q136 **Chair:** No, so are you not able, from the Ministry, to get the council to do it better?

Jillian Kay: It has got better. I absolutely accept what you say and the council accepted that, in terms of where it was in the early days. It has now improved, and we are scrutinising it line by line and day by day to ensure that things do not slip.



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Q137 **Chair:** Well, I am sure, if that is felt not to be the case, we will get some representations about properties where that is not working.

Mr Hurd: You will, yes.

Q138 **Matt Western:** Minister, I just want to explore further the relationship between residents and council officers. Last month, we heard from Grenfell United. They were very strident, understandably, in describing what they viewed as an attitude of incompetence and indifference by RBKC. Do you think the approach the council is adopting currently is working, or are there other areas where it urgently needs to improve?

Mr Hurd: There are definitely areas where they need to improve, but my candid view, based on my experience and observation over the last year, is that they are making progress. To the charge of incompetence and indifference, have I been in situations where I have seen mistakes or evidence of less empathy and compassion than I would like? Yes, absolutely. Have I been in situations where I have shaken my head and said, "What on earth is going on here"? Yes, absolutely true.

But I have been watching human beings at work, being asked to perform roles that they are not used to, under very difficult circumstances. Yes, absolutely, mistakes have been made by all of us, but I do not accept an institutional charge of incompetence or indifference. I have been dealing with and challenging people who care a lot about doing their best to get this right, but mistakes have clearly been made.

In terms of areas for improvement, clearly this process of resettlement—and I use the word "resettlement" rather than "rehousing", for reasons I have elaborated—needs to be concluded in the best possible way, so that people feel they have ongoing support in their new accommodation, and feel safe and secure in their homes.

There is a big challenge for the council, in its engagement with and continuation of delivering on the ambition in relation to the Lancaster West estate, in terms of the refurbishment of that, and in its broader recovery strategy for the community, which is not just about the council; it is about the Government, the NHS, the voluntary sector and the local business community. They published their commitment on it yesterday, so the community has a sense of how they are preparing to go about it. It is words, which need to be challenged, but it does, to me, send quite a strong signal of change in approach from the council and a move away from "what we are doing for you" to "how we would like to work together to try to secure a better future for this community". That is, people tell me, a big change in attitude of the council. It will be challenged and there will be lots of scepticism about it, but we need to engage with them and support them on that.

Q139 **Matt Western:** Can you give more specific areas where you think they could be improving their performance?



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Mr Hurd: In terms of community engagement, there are clearly some big gaps. Samia has been very eloquent for some time about the fact that residents of Notting Dale feel excluded and they do feel that, because I have spoken not just to Samia but to others about that. That feeling is real and it has taken too long to structure a proper engagement for and with those residents. I understand that there is a plan being discussed involving a locally elected councillor and it is for residents to, basically, say whether they think that is the right forum or process of engagement with the council. Samia and others will have strong views on that, but it is for the local authority to come forward with a proper process of engagement and forum to engage with its residents who feel excluded. I am taking a close, personal interest in that.

They also do not have an effective process of local scrutiny for their work on Grenfell. Something was set up that broke down and failed, got too heated and difficult. The council knows this. It has to come forward with an alternative process whereby residents can hold it to account for its performance on Grenfell. I have used two specific examples within the context of community engagement, which continues to be a big challenge for the local authority.

Q140 **Matt Western:** In terms of the relationship between the council and individual residents, we have heard a description of “unsympathetic” or “inappropriate” responses. Has the relationship improved this last year?

Mr Hurd: You will always get examples and anecdotes, and I have no reason to think they are wrong, where people have heard things they thought were inappropriate or felt they were being treated in an inappropriate way. That is undeniable and we have heard today that that is still taking place. Coming back to my point at the top about our starting point of negative trust in relation to the local authority, I observe now—and these may seem like little things, but they are important—that senior officials at the council have a regular programme of engagement with Grenfell United. That has been going on for some time. I now understand that, for the first time, the elected politicians are going to be invited to have a meeting with Grenfell United. That is an important milestone.

I looked at the memorial service on the first anniversary and I could see all the senior council officials invited and made welcome there. That is a sign of some progress. I know many residents will criticise this or even contradict it, but I have observed personally—and I can only talk from personal observation—that senior officials such as Barry and Robyn have been persistent, consistent and present from the start and have gone out there, engaged and been available, and people have recognised that.

We have not really touched on it, but consistency of personnel is very important in this process. You have heard some very valid criticism of a situation where too many people have had their keyworkers changed, and that is really unhelpful in terms of a process of trying to help people rebuild their lives. There is more consistency now as the council is relying



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less on people from other boroughs. As for the support service they are structuring around people in the new homes, a lot of thought has gone into how that is structured, to try to give people a greater sense of consistency in terms of the people who are there to support them.

Q141 Matt Western: I will move on to the issue of provision of mental health services. Grenfell United has highlighted that it has a major concern over the provision of mental health services and the matter of post-traumatic stress disorder. The concern is about not just providing these services today, but having sufficient funding, as these conditions and issues will last for a great length of time. Is that funding going to be in place?

Mr Hurd: Yes. It is in place and my determination is to make sure it is placed and clear in the next spending review, which is the next set of decision-making. You will know that there is significant additional money going into the NHS, and I think everyone is clear about the need for support services to be in place for as long as is necessary. We also know that this is going to be a long journey, so there is an absolute determination on my part to secure that and nail it down. I can see the funding in place towards the end of this spending period. There is a discussion imminent about the next spending period, and part of my role is to make sure that that long-term commitment is nailed down. It is helped by the fact that there are significant additional resources going into the NHS, as you know.

Q142 Matt Western: The spending period is, what, five years or one year?

Mr Hurd: It will be more than one year, but the length of the spending review is determined by the Treasury. Normally, it is five years.

I know we are running out of time, but I will say that the scale and challenge of the mental health support process run by the NHS is absolutely huge: 7,000 outreach contacts, over 2,000 people screened, 800 adults receiving care, over 500 children and young people. This is a huge, titanic effort and the NHS deserves great admiration. You heard this a bit from Samia. Particularly, the local NHS has been very flexible in trying to do its best to listen to residents, work with them and be flexible about things like helping people to visit the tower, to try to help them with closure. They have done an excellent job. I am always open to criticism, but I am determined to make sure that the support is in there for the long term, because it is going to be needed.

Q143 Kevin Hollinrake: Minister, you may be aware that the Committee published a report today on building regulations and fire safety, and the next steps. While we welcome the Government's proposed ban on combustible materials on the outside of new buildings, we also recommend that the Government should ban combustible materials on existing buildings. In your capacity as Minister for the Fire Service, what is your view on that?

Mr Hurd: You know that we are consulting on it.



Q144 **Kevin Hollinrake:** Yes, you are consulting on a ban on new buildings, but that consultation, as I understand it, does not include a recommendation to ban materials on the outside of existing buildings.

Mr Hurd: We are going through a process, which I know many people will say is taking too long, to remediate existing buildings where we know or suspect the cladding is unsafe. That process is underway; it needs to be driven hard. There are issues around the private sector and all the stuff that the Committee has investigated. I have a strong personal view on the need to ban combustible material, particularly in new buildings, because it is very hard to explain to the public why you would not do that. I understand Judith Hackitt's position about prioritising changing the system, because we are contemplating, as I have said publicly, a very big system failure. I completely understand that point, but I think we were right to go further than that and consult, as we have to, on the banning of combustible cladding on new buildings. As a politician, it is very hard to explain to the public why you would not do that.

Q145 **Kevin Hollinrake:** You also might say it is very hard to explain to the public why you would not carry out remedial work to existing buildings as well.

Mr Hurd: I am always open to argument on this, but my priority is to work with colleagues to push hard at the process of remediating the existing buildings that we know have or are at risk of having this type of cladding. I know the Committee has looked at that exhaustively.

Q146 **Chair:** Currently, the remedial work is about cladding that is not allowed under the current building regulations, which should never have been put on. But then there is the additional sort of cladding, which would not comply with the term "limited combustibility", but is still legal under the current building regulations. The consultation is to ban that sort of cladding, which is not of limited combustibility but legal under the current building regulations, on future new buildings, but not to take it off existing buildings. How can that be reasonable?

Mr Hurd: That is a question best directed to the Minister who leads on building regulations, which is not me. But the Committee has put out a report today, and the Government will respond to it.

Q147 **Chair:** As Fire Service Minister, we hope you will look at it.

Mr Hurd: Of course. I work very closely with the lead Department on implementing the Hackitt review, which will be a challenge, but we have to do it.

Chair: We make our recommendations based on evidence. The fire chiefs came to give their evidence, and supported the recommendation we have made very strongly. We will leave that with you, Minister.

Minister, thank you for coming today. We appreciate the tension and concerns that many people feel. People just about managed to keep them under control during the course of the meeting, but we heard them. You



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have said today, Minister, that your door is open to all the various representative groups that are around and you will make yourself available.

All I would say to the groups is that, if you are not able to walk through the door at some appropriate point, I am sure you know where we are and you can come and complain to us. We are here to listen. You have heard the offer that the Minister has made today. We expect him to keep to it and we are sure he will, but we are here if you have any concerns about that in the future.

Thank you, Minister and Jillian Kay, for coming to give evidence to us today. Thank you to everyone who has come to listen. We will take an interest in this matter as a Committee and will monitor to see, hopefully, real progress in the next few months as well. Thank you very much.