



BRIEFING PAPER

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Grenfell Tower Fire: Background

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Summary

On 14 June 2017 a fire broke out at Grenfell Tower, a 24 storey residential housing block in North Kensington, London. The Metropolitan Police have stated that 71 people died in the fire.

The tower, which provided social housing, contained 129 flats. The block is owned by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea but management of the block was the responsibility of the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation.

The fire appeared to spread rapidly up the building and concerns have been raised over recent renovations and fire safety measures in place.

This briefing sets out the Government response to the fire, including details of the building safety programme, public inquiry and recovery taskforce. It includes relevant press articles from immediately after the fire and from recent months but does not aim to provide comprehensive coverage from the last year. Parliamentary statements and debates on the issue are also included.

A public inquiry, reporting to the Prime Minister, was announced on 15 June 2017. A debate on an e-petition on the inquiry was held in [Westminster Hall on 14 May 2018](#). The petition called for additional panel members to be added to the inquiry, and on 11 May 2018 the Government announced that an additional two panel members would be added for the second phase of the Inquiry. Further detail is given in a [written statement](#). A Library briefing on [Inquests and public inquiries](#) provides further detail on how they work.

The Government created a [Grenfell Tower Recovery Taskforce](#) which last reported in March 2018. In addition it announced a [review of building regulations and fire safety](#) on 28 July 2017; an interim report was published in December 2017 and the final report is expected in the coming months.

Government information on the fire is [available online](#).

An Opposition day debate on Grenfell Tower is due to take place on 16 May 2018 and the motion covers rehousing, remedial work on tower blocks and reform of building regulations.

A further Library briefing covers issues around paying for work on leasehold properties: [Leasehold high-rise flats: who pays for fire safety work?](#), March 2018

On rehousing, The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has adopted an [Exceptional Rehousing Policy](#) for Grenfell Tower residents (revised November 2017). A further, [wider rehousing policy](#), has been adopted to cover certain residents in the surrounding area (February 2018). Government updates on rehousing have featured in statements (see sections 5 and 7 of the paper).

Other Library briefings contain detail on some of the relevant aspects not covered here, including a POSTnote providing a background on fire safety in construction products:

- [Grenfell Tower fire: Response and tackling fire risk in high rise blocks](#), August 2017 – covers in the initial response
- [Dealing with civil contingencies: Emergency planning in the UK](#), July 2017
- [Cladding and remedial fire safety work](#), March 2018 – a briefing for a debate on the subject
- [Fire Safety of Construction Products](#), POSTnote, May 2018

1. Grenfell Tower Fire

On 14 June 2017 a fire broke out at Grenfell Tower, a 24 storey residential housing block in North Kensington, London. The fire was reported shortly after midnight and affected the majority of the floors.

The tower was built in 1974 and contained 129 flats.

A refurbishment of the tower was completed in 2016, including new exterior cladding, replacement windows, heating systems and remodelling of the bottom four floors.¹

The tower, which provided social housing, was managed by Kensington and Chelsea TMO (Tenant Management Organisation) on behalf of Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council.²

The Metropolitan Police have stated that 71 died as a result of the fire. A criminal investigation is ongoing.

There has been speculation over the cause of the fire, the impact of the renovations and the fire safety measures in place.

Press coverage after the fire

A number of the following stories highlight some of the issues raised after the initial fire. Section 6 of this briefing contains links to recent press articles that have commented on issues such as fire safety measures in the building and the public inquiry. Overall this briefing does not contain a comprehensive list of press articles nor is it an endorsement of the contents:

- [London fire: A visual guide to what happened at Grenfell Tower](#), *BBC News*, 21 June 2016'
- [What we know and what we do not know about the Grenfell Tower fire](#), *Financial Times*, 16 June 2017
- [Grenfell Tower residents kept warning that their home was a deathtrap](#), *The Times*, 15 June 2017
- [Fire safety: repeated calls for retrofitting sprinklers to high-rises were ignored](#), *Guardian*, 18 June 2017
- [Grenfell Tower: fire victims left in lurch by chaotic relief effort](#), *The Times*, 19 June 2017
- [Flammable Grenfell panels withdrawn from sale for high-rises](#), *Financial Times*, 26 June 2017
- [May orders national inquiry after 100% failure rate in high-rise cladding tests](#), *Guardian*, 27 June 2017
- [Fire-risk cladding discovered in hospitals and student halls](#), *The Times*, 28 June 2017
- [How lax building rules contributed to Grenfell disaster](#), *Financial Times*, 29 June 2017
- [Grenfell Tower: Government sends in 'taskforce'](#), *BBC*, 5 July 2017

¹ [London fire: What happened at Grenfell Tower?](#) , *BBC News*, 19 July 2017

² <http://www.kctmo.org.uk/index>

2. Government response

The Government responses to the fire can be tracked through a number of Government press releases and statements to the House as listed in sections 7 and 8 of this briefing.

A [Gov.uk page](#) sets out the support available for those affected by the fire.

On 15 June 2017 the Prime Minister announced a public inquiry into the fire, chaired by Sir Martin Moore-Bick.

On 16 May 2017 the Prime Minister announced a package of support measures following the fire. This included commitments around re-housing and a £5 million Grenfell Tower Residents' Discretionary fund.³⁴

Key developments since the fire include:

- [Announcement](#) of Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety on 28 July 2018;
- [Updates and guidance on fire safety](#) – published between July and September 2017;
- [Government update](#) on the response to the fire and building safety, 5 September 2017;
- [Publication of the terms of reference for the public inquiry](#) on 15 September 2017;
- [Publication of the first report](#) from the Grenfell Recovery Taskforce on 6 November;
- Publication of the interim review of building regulations – the Hackitt Review - accompanied by a [statement to the House](#) by the Secretary of State also providing an update on the response on 18 December 2017;
- [Written principles being agreed](#) (1 March 2018) on the way decisions would be made on the future of the site with the Government stating that it “reaffirmed its commitment to putting survivors, bereaved families and the community at the heart of deciding what happens to the future of the Grenfell Tower site”(also confirmed in a [written statement](#));
- Publication of [the second report](#) from the Grenfell Recovery Taskforce on 16 March (see section 5 of the paper).
- [Announcement by the Prime Minister](#) to appoint an additional two panel members to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry panel for phase two of its work on 11 May 2018.

2.1 Police Investigation

The fire is currently the subject of a police investigation and details were given in 2017 by the Metropolitan Police:⁵

The Met is leading a criminal investigation, working closely with the Fire Service, Health and Safety Executive and experts in fire and building safety.

At the heart of the police investigation is seeking to establish what happened to each and every person who lost their life.

³ Prime Minister's Office, "Support for victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster", 16 June 2017

⁴ Other immediate support details were set out in DCLG, ['Update to MPs on the Grenfell Tower disaster: 22 June 2017'](#)

⁵ Metropolitan Police, [Grenfell Tower incident](#)

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It is a significant and far reaching investigation that will seek to identify how the fire started, how it spread and importantly why this happened.

The investigation will examine a number of areas including how Grenfell Tower was managed and maintained, fire safety measures and the most recent refurbishment that was carried out.

The Met will investigate any criminal offences that may have been committed including examination of all relevant legislation, Fire Safety Regulations, Health and Safety legislation, building regulations and any other relevant statutory or regulatory frameworks.

The Metropolitan Police stated in November 2017 that 71 people died as a result of the fire.⁶ An update to the investigation was reported in December 2017 in the press.⁷ It was reported in early 2018 that a woman rescued from the fire had died in hospital in January 2018.⁸

⁶ BBC News, [Grenfell Tower final death toll stands at 71](#), 16 November 2017

⁷ ["Police chief: Grenfell Tower criminal inquiry may take years"](#), *The Guardian*, 13 December 2017

⁸ ["Grenfell Tower death toll rises as woman dies months after being rescued from blazing tower"](#), *Evening Standard*, 28 February 2018

3. Building Safety Programme

Following the Grenfell Tower fire the Government set up a Building Safety Programme under the then Department for Communities and Local Government.

The government appointed an expert panel, chaired by Sir Ken Knight, to advise the Government on immediate measures needed to ensure building safety and to help identify buildings of concern. The independent panel advised the government to undertake identification screening of residential buildings over 18 metres tall to identify the type of aluminium composite material (ACM) used.⁹ Testing was undertaken by the Buildings Research Establishment (BRE). The Safety Programme states:¹⁰

On 6 July 2017, having also spoken to a group of technical experts from a wide range of professions and organisations, the expert panel recommended further large scale testing of cladding systems. This was to better understand better how different types of ACM panels behave with different types of insulation in a fire (these tests can be used to show compliance with the building regulations guidance).

These large scale tests, undertaken by the BRE, looked at 3 different types of ACM cladding combined with different types of insulation, in accordance with British Standard 8414. This involved building a 9-metre high demonstration wall with a complete cladding system fixed to it - including panels and insulation. This was then subjected to a fire designed to replicate the circumstances in which a severe fire breaks out of a window. The spreads of the fire up the outside wall, if any, was then monitored.

The programme has published consolidated advice for building owners in: [Government Building Safety Programme – update and consolidated advice for building owners following large scale testing](#), updated 27 February 2018. This includes detail of the tests undertaken and the action building owners should take.

The key findings include the following:

Based on the tests conducted and the Expert Panel's advice, the key points are:

- ACM cladding with unmodified polyethylene filler (category 3) presents a significant fire hazard on buildings over 18m with any form of insulation.
- ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler (category 2):
 - presents a notable fire hazard on buildings over 18m when used with rigid polymeric foam based on the evidence currently available.
 - can be safe on buildings over 18m if used with non combustible insulation (e.g. stone wool), and where materials have been fitted and maintained appropriately, and the building's construction meets the other provisions of Building Regulations guidance, including provision for fire breaks and cavity barriers.
- ACM cladding with A2 filler (category 1) can be safe on buildings over 18m with foam insulation or stone wool insulation, if materials have been fitted and maintained appropriately, and the building's construction meets the other provisions of Building Regulations guidance, including provision for fire breaks and cavity barriers.

In all instances, building owners have been advised that they should seek professional advice on what further steps to take with respect to their cladding system based on

⁹ Taken from [Building Safety Programme](#) [accessed 5 March 2018]

¹⁰ [Building Safety Programme: Advice for building owners on external wall systems with ACM cladding](#) [accessed 5 March 2018]

the specific circumstances of their building, and to satisfy themselves that their building is safe.

All building owners have also been advised to ensure their local FRS has visited to complete a fire safety audit of their building, and that they have implemented the recommended interim measures.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) releases a monthly Building Safety Programme bulletin which contains data on progress in identifying high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding combinations. The April 2018 bulletin notes that, as at 12 April 2018, 317 buildings over 18 metres had been confirmed as having ACM cladding, of which 304 were “unlikely to meet current Building Regulations guidance.” 158 of the affected buildings are social housing blocks owned/managed by a local authority or housing association, while 132 are privately owned residential blocks, including hotels and student accommodation, and 14 are public buildings.¹¹

Concluding a recent debate on fire safety and cladding, Dominic Raab, Minister for Housing, set out a summary of Government action:¹²

...Immediately after the fire, the Department set up a building safety programme with the aim of ensuring that all high-rise residential buildings are safe from the threat of fire and crucially, as Members have rightly said, that residents can feel safe and can rest assured in their homes. To support that, the Secretary of State appointed an expert panel to ensure that the necessary steps are taken to ensure the safety of residents of high-rise buildings. We have consistently relied on that expert advice, because the issue of public safety is central to what we need to achieve.

Through screening tests, we swiftly identified social housing blocks and public buildings with unsafe cladding. Working with the expert panel, the Government provided advice to building owners on the interim measures that they should put in place to ensure the safety of their residents. Of course, that depends on the individual property, as hon. Members have rightly said, but interim measures can include warden systems, measures to prevent the spread of fire to or from car parks, and all sorts of other things. All the affected social sector buildings that have been identified have those measures in place. We are confident that that addresses the immediate issue of safety for residents. I do not think that that should be elided or confused with the wider remediation efforts that, quite rightly, also need to take place. We can give that assurance to residents.

At the same time, we tested different combinations of cladding and insulation to see which met the building regulations guidance. We published consolidated advice last autumn confirming the results of those tests, with advice for building owners, as the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) discussed. Since then, we have been working with building owners and the industry to support remediation work. The hon. Gentleman suggested that the Government have not provided clear guidance on the materials for remediation. Actually, the expert panel published advice on 5 September, and further advice was published in December, including an information note for building owners. The Building Research Establishment has also published a catalogue of past BS 8414 tests to assist building owners choosing compliant materials. I hope that that gives the hon. Gentleman some reassurance.

We have been working with local authorities to help them identify private residential buildings with similar cladding, and to ensure that they, too, are made safe. At the same time, as hon. Members know, we have asked Dame Judith Hackitt to undertake an independent review of building regulations and fire safety, to ensure that buildings are safe in the future, in recognition of the clear flaws that have been discovered in

¹¹ MHCLG, [Building Safety Programme: Monthly Data Release](#), 27 April 2018

¹² [HC Deb 6 March 2018 c100WH](#)

relation to the previous system. We welcomed her interim report, which was published in December, and have committed to implementing all her recommendations.

3.1 Hackitt Review

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, the Government asked Dame Judith Hackitt to lead a review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety. The full report is expected in Spring 2018. The interim report, published in December 2017, highlighted concerns around the complexity of regulations, roles and responsibilities, and enforcement. While the report mostly related to high-rise residential buildings, any changes in fire safety regulation will have a wider application to all building work.¹³ A [shorter summary of the report is available](#).

The report finds that:¹⁴

The overall conclusion is that the current regulatory system is not fit for purpose in relation to high-rise and complex buildings.

The report made the following points (taken from sections 1.8 to 1.52 of the summary):

- Current regulation and guidance is unclear – the Building Regulations are ‘clear’ but concerns are raised with the ‘Approved Documents’.
- The clarity of roles and responsibilities in the system is unclear – the report raises concerns with identifying specific responsibilities.
- The means of assessing and ensuring appropriate levels of competence throughout the system are unclear and inadequate – this relates to the building process and fire risk assessments.
- Enforcement and sanction measures are poor and do not provide adequate means of compliance assurance, deterrence or redress for non-compliance – this includes changes through the building process, changes in regulations during the life of a building, compliance issues with building control and information flows for fire safety information.
- A lack of clear way for resident concerns to be raised and addressed with respect to fire safety;
- Current methods for testing, certification and marketing of construction products and systems are not clear;
- There are lessons to be learned from other international regulatory regimes and that there could be greater alignment between building and fire regulatory systems and other regimes.

The report made interim recommendations around building regulations and fire safety (taken from p25-6 of the interim report):

- The Government should consider how the suite of Approved Documents could be structured and ordered to “to provide a more streamlined, holistic view while retaining the right level of relevant technical detail,” with the Government asked to consider presentational changes as an interim measure.

¹³ For more information see [Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: interim report](#), 18 December 2017

¹⁴ [Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: interim report](#), 18 December 2017, Para 1.6 (summary)

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- The professional and accreditation bodies should work together to come up with a system to ensure those working on the design, construction, inspection and maintenance of complex and high risk buildings are suitably qualified.
- Consultation with the fire and rescue services is required on plans for buildings that are covered by the Fire Safety Order, but does not work as intended. Consultation by building control bodies and by those commissioning or designing buildings should take place early in the process and fire and rescue service advice should be fully taken into account.
- It is currently the case under the Fire Safety Order that fire risk assessments for high-rise residential buildings must be carried out 'regularly'. It is recommended that the responsible person ensures these are undertaken at least annually and when any significant alterations are made to the building. These risk assessments should be shared in an accessible way with the residents who live within that building and notified to the fire and rescue service.
- The Government should significantly restrict the use of desktop studies to approve changes to cladding and other systems to ensure that they are only used where appropriate and with sufficient, relevant test evidence. Those undertaking desktop studies must be able to demonstrate suitable competence.

There were further recommendations on the phased handover of buildings by building developers, and the transfer of fire safety information from builders to the responsible person.

It is expected that the final report will be published in Spring 2018.

4. Public Inquiry

On 15 June 2017 the Prime Minister announced a public inquiry into the fire. On 17 June the Prime Minister confirmed that the “public inquiry will report back to me personally. As Prime Minister, I will be responsible for implementing its findings.”¹⁵

The Prime Minister appointed Sir Martin Moore-Bick, a former Lord Justice of Appeal, as the Chair of the Inquiry, following a recommendation from the Lord Chief Justice.¹⁶ The terms of reference, which followed a full public consultation, are:

1. To examine the circumstances surrounding the fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017, including:
 - a) the immediate cause or causes of the fire and the means by which it spread to the whole of the building;
 - b) the design and construction of the building and the decisions relating to its modification, refurbishment and management;
 - c) the scope and adequacy of building regulations, fire regulations and other legislation, guidance and industry practice relating to the design, construction, equipping and management of high-rise residential buildings;
 - d) whether such regulations, legislation, guidance and industry practice were complied with in the case of Grenfell Tower and the fire safety measures adopted in relation to it;
 - e) the arrangements made by the local authority or other responsible bodies for receiving and acting upon information either obtained from local residents or available from other sources (including information derived from fires in other buildings) relating to the risk of fire at Grenfell Tower, and the action taken in response to such information;
 - f) the fire prevention and fire safety measures in place at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017;
 - g) the response of the London Fire Brigade to the fire; and
 - h) the response of central and local government in the days immediately following the fire;
- and
2. To report its findings to the Prime Minister as soon as possible and to make recommendations.¹⁷

The Inquiry formally opened on 14 September 2017. It has appointed three assessors¹⁸ and ten expert witnesses.¹⁹ There have been calls for additional panel members to be appointed to greater reflect the issues of those affected (see 4.1 below).

Procedural hearings were held in December 2017 and in February – March 2018. As of 20 April 2018, 519 individuals and 28 organisations had been awarded the status of ‘core

¹⁵ Prime Minister’s Office, “[Grenfell Tower: Statement from the Prime Minister](#)”, 17 June 2017

¹⁶ Grenfell Tower Inquiry, [Sir Martin Moore-Bick appointed Chair of Grenfell Tower public inquiry](#), 29 June 2017

¹⁷ Grenfell Tower Inquiry, [Terms of Reference](#), 15 August 2017; see also [HCWS 135 2017-19](#), 14 September 2017; and the exchange between the inquiry chair and the Prime Minister in [DEP 2017/0558](#)

¹⁸ Grenfell Tower Inquiry, [Inquiry appoints assessors](#), 15 November 2017

¹⁹ See Grenfell Tower inquiry, [What is an expert witness?](#), undated. At the time of writing this document does not include Duncan Glover, who was appointed on 8 May 2018.

participants', which gives them certain rights to access information and question witnesses.²⁰

The inquiry aims to complete the report on its first phase of investigation by autumn 2018.²¹ A timetable for hearings published in March 2018 envisages hearings running from 21 May to early November 2018. The inquiry has published a [protocol for vulnerable witnesses](#). An [NHS outreach team](#) has also been set up to provide support to affected individuals.

4.1 E-petition

On 14 May there will be a debate in Westminster Hall on an e-petition that "Call[s] on PM to take action to build public trust in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry" by widening the panel members. The e-[petition states](#):

Bereaved families & survivors call on PM to exercise her powers under the Inquiries Act 2005 to appoint additional panel members with decision making power to sit alongside Chair in Grenfell Tower Inquiry: to ensure those affected have confidence in & are willing to fully participate in the Inquiry

To secure trust in an establishment we feel has been distant & unresponsive, & to avoid a collapse of confidence in the Inquiry's ability to discover the truth, it is fundamental that;

1. The Inquiry is not led by a judge alone. Panel members must be appointed with relevant background, expertise, experience, & a real understanding of the issues facing those affected
2. Legal representatives of bereaved families see all evidence from the start & are allowed to question witnesses at the hearings.

The petition attracted 156,601 signatures as of 10 May 2018.

The Government response to the petition was updated on 8 February 2018 following a request from the Petitions Committee who asked that a response answered the petition more clearly. The updated response reads:

The Grenfell Tower fire was a truly unimaginable tragedy that should never have happened.

The Government's highest priority remains making sure that survivors, bereaved families and the wider Grenfell community receive all the support they need.

The independent public Inquiry into the fire is an important part of the process and will help those affected get the answers they need to get to the truth of what happened.

The Prime Minister committed to considering the issue of panel members once the Chair had confirmed who had been appointed as assessors to assist the Inquiry. Section 7 of the Inquiries Act 2005 allows the Minister responsible for an inquiry to appoint further panel members during the course of an inquiry with the agreement of the Chair.

In October 2017, the Chair announced the appointment of 7 expert witnesses with backgrounds in fire safety, forensic fire analysis, fire engineering, disaster resilience and also anatomy and human identification. The expert witnesses will provide a range of technical advice and expert reports to assist the work of the Inquiry in delivering its terms of reference.

²⁰ Grenfell Tower inquiry, [Update on core participants](#), 12 April 2018; the Library briefing paper [The Inquiries Act 2005](#) provides an explanation of the various terms used (assessors, core participants etc.)

²¹ [PQ HC119029 2017-19](#)

In addition, in November 2017, the Chair announced the appointment of 3 assessors with backgrounds in community engagement and social housing, local authority administration and structural engineering. The Chair also confirmed at the Inquiry's preliminary hearing in September that he would expect the assessors to see all the evidence and sit with him when taking oral evidence. The Chair has also confirmed that he may make further appointments if needed.

Following the announcement of these appointments, the Prime Minister carefully considered the composition of the Inquiry panel in light of the diversity and expertise of advice now available to the Inquiry.

The Prime Minister wrote to the representatives of the survivors and bereaved families on 21 December 2017 and informed them of her decision not to appoint additional panel members. The Prime Minister's decision was similarly communicated to the Inquiry on the same date.

Having regard to the terms of reference and the assistance to be provided by the assessors, and the expert witnesses, it is the Prime Minister's view that the Inquiry panel has the necessary expertise to undertake the Inquiry as it is currently constituted. The Prime Minister is also conscious of the need for the Inquiry to complete its initial report as quickly as reasonably possible. The Prime Minister therefore considers that additional panel members should not be appointed at this stage.

In reaching this conclusion, the Prime Minister fully took into account her duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Public Sector Equality Duty – PSED).

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring that those most affected by the tragedy are able to contribute fully to the Inquiry and that is why the Prime Minister welcomes the consideration being given by Sir Martin Moore-Bick to the establishment of a community advisory panel, as proposed at the December procedural hearing.

Such a panel, similar to that which has worked well for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, could play a very beneficial role in putting those most affected at the heart of the Inquiry and enabling them to ensure that their views and experiences are heard. It is for Sir Martin, as Chair of the independent Inquiry, to take this forward, in consultation with the Grenfell Tower community, and the Government hopes that he will be able to do this as soon as possible.

In line with the Inquiry Rules 2006, legal representatives of the Grenfell community core participants will receive in advance of hearings disclosure of relevant evidence; will be able to make opening and closing statements at certain hearings and can suggest lines of questioning to be pursued by Counsel to the Inquiry. They can also apply to the Chair to ask questions of a witness.

News articles on the petition highlight some of the views of resident groups on the inquiry make up, for example in: "[Grenfell inquiry to have most core participants in UK history](#)", *The Guardian*, 20 March 2018 and "[Grenfell: Parliament forced to consider demand for Theresa May inquiry action after Stormzy pushes petition past 100,000 signatures](#)", *The Independent*, 24 February 2018. An event was hosted in Parliament in advance of the 14 May 2018 debate and further detail can be found on the [Grenfell United twitter feed](#).

On 11 May 2018 the Government announced that an additional two panel members would be added for the second phase of the Inquiry to "ensure that the Inquiry panel itself also has the necessary breadth of skills and diversity of expertise relevant to the broad range of issues to be considered". The [written statement](#) said:

The fire in Grenfell Tower was an unimaginable tragedy, and I am determined that justice is done for the victims, survivors, bereaved and the wider community.

On 21 December 2017, I wrote to Sir Martin Moore-Bick, chair of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry with my decision not to appoint additional panel members to the Inquiry at that time. The Inquiries Act 2005 affords me the power to appoint panel members at

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any time during the Inquiry and I previously indicated my intention to keep the matter under review.

Since December, the Inquiry has made significant progress. It has received some 330,000 documents, and expects that figure to grow to 400,000. Sir Martin's team have conducted a first stage review of approximately 183,000 documents. The Inquiry has confirmed that it is continuing to identify potentially relevant providers of documents as work progresses.

The process of gathering and identifying relevant documents for phase 2 has started in parallel with the phase 1 disclosure exercise. The Inquiry has confirmed that it is expecting that a "significant volume of documentation will be disclosed at this stage".

Sir Martin has appointed 547 core participants to the Inquiry – 519 of them individuals from the Grenfell community. This is an unprecedented number.

Given the extent of the tragedy, we should not be surprised by the scale and range of issues that are emerging from the Inquiry's early work.

Phase 2 of the Inquiry will be the largest phase in terms of the number of issues to be considered, and it is appropriate for me to reflect now on the two distinct phases of the Inquiry's work and to consider the most appropriate composition of the Inquiry panel for phase 2.

To ensure that the Inquiry panel itself also has the necessary breadth of skills and diversity of expertise relevant to the broad range of issues to be considered in phase 2, and to best serve the increasing scale and complexity of the Inquiry, I have decided to appoint an additional two panel members to support Sir Martin's chairmanship for phase 2 of the Inquiry's work onwards. I wrote to Sir Martin yesterday, informing him of my decision.

Once suitable panel members have been identified, I will write to Sir Martin again to seek his consent to any appointment, in accordance with section 7(2)(b) of the Inquiries Act 2005.

The resulting debate on the e-petition can be found at: [HC Deb 14 May 2018 c1WH](#).

5. Grenfell Recovery Task Force

The Government announced the creation of a [Grenfell Recovery Task Force](#) to support the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) on 26 July. The role of the task force was to “to develop and implement a long term recovery plan following the Grenfell Tower fire”.

The Taskforce published reports in [October 2017](#) and [March 2018](#) which monitored the performance of local agencies, in particular Kensington & Chelsea Borough Council, in addressing the aftermath of the fire.

Following the publication of the second report on 22 March 2018, the then Secretary of State Sajid Javid, made a statement to the House: ²²

With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement to update the House on support for those affected by the Grenfell tragedy and on the second report from the independent recovery taskforce. This report will be published in full on gov.uk and placed in the Library of the House.

Nine months on, the shocking and terrible events of 14 June continue to cast a long shadow. I know that it cannot have been easy for the survivors and the bereaved to hear last week about the failure of a fire door from the tower, which was tested as part of the Metropolitan Police Service’s investigation. I am confident that the police and the public inquiry will, in time, provide answers. But, having met survivors and heard their stories, I know that that does not take away from the pain and loss being suffered now by those left behind. Their welfare remains our highest priority, and we see that through our continued work supporting the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and through the valuable work of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner (Mr Hurd), the Minister responsible for the Grenfell victims. We are ensuring that the voices and concerns are heard right across Government. That work is supported by my Department and, more widely, by the NHS, by local government and by the voluntary sector.

I give my thanks to everyone who has gone that extra mile to be there for a community that has gone through so much. I also thank the taskforce for its work in helping us to ensure that, after the slow and confused initial response to the disaster, the people of North Kensington are receiving better support from RBKC to help them to recover and to rebuild their lives.

I was clear when I reflected on the taskforce’s first report in November that, while progress was being made, I expected to see swift, effective action to address all the issues that were highlighted, particularly the slow pace of delivery and the need for greater empathy and emotional intelligence—two things that are vital if RBKC is to regain the trust of the people that it serves.

My Department has been working closely with RBKC throughout to provide the support and challenge necessary to drive this work. I am pleased to see, from the taskforce’s second report, that some important progress has been made. RBKC, alongside the Government, has put in significant resources and increased its efforts to provide those affected with greater clarity about the support that is available to them. We have also seen a stronger focus on implementing new ways of working to drive much needed cultural change across the council in collaboration with external stakeholders, and a greater candour about the improvements that still need to be made. But there is much more to do to ensure that residents can see and feel that things are getting better on the ground. Nowhere is this more important than the vital task of rehousing those who lost their homes—a task that I have always been clear

²² [HC Deb 22 March 2018 c411](#)

must be sensitive to individual needs, but not use these needs as an excuse to justify any type of delay.

Five months on from the fire, at the time of the taskforce's first report, 122 households out of a total of 204 had accepted an offer of temporary or permanent accommodation. Only 73 households had moved in, and only 26 of those had moved into permanent homes. Today I can report that 188 households have accepted an offer of accommodation. Just over two thirds of these—128 households—have already moved into new accommodation, including 62 into permanent homes. This is welcome news but, as the taskforce's second report highlights, progress has been far too slow.

It was always going to be a challenge to respond to an unprecedented tragedy on this scale and to secure new accommodation in one of the country's most expensive locations, but progress has not been made as quickly as it should have been. There are still 82 households in emergency accommodation, including 15 in serviced apartments, with 25 families and 39 children among them. This is totally unacceptable. The suffering that these families have already endured is unimaginable. Living for this long in hotels can only make the process of grieving and recovery even harder. As the taskforce has said, it is unlikely that all households will be permanently rehoused by the one-year anniversary of the fire. This is clearly not good enough. I hoped to have seen much more progress. It is very understandable that the people of North Kensington will feel disappointed and let down, even if there are encouraging signs that the pace of rehousing is speeding up.

The council now has over 300 properties that are available to those who lost their homes, so each household can now choose a good quality property that meets their needs, with the option of staying in the area if that is what they wish. To ensure that these homes are taken up, I expect all households, regardless of their level of engagement, to be given whatever support they require to be rehoused as quickly as possible. The Government will continue to play their part, providing help with rehousing and other support for survivors, including financial support currently worth more than £72 million. The weeks ahead will be critical for ensuring that efforts to rehouse survivors go up a gear. I will be closely monitoring progress and will of course keep the House updated.

As I said earlier, if the council is to regain trust it is paramount that the Grenfell community is not just being told that things are changing, but can see that its views and concerns are being heard and acted on. A good example of this, as highlighted by the report, is the transfer of responsibilities from the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation to RBKC on an interim basis. This happened after residents made it clear that the tenant management organisation could no longer have a role, not only on the Lancaster West estate but more widely in housing management throughout the borough.

Residents have been engaged in the process of refurbishing the Lancaster West estate, with the Government matching the £15 million that the council is investing in this programme. Alongside this, the council will shortly be consulting residents on the long-term delivery of housing management needs across the borough. The voices and needs of the residents will also be at the heart of the process to determine the future of the Grenfell site and the public inquiry, which has just begun its second procedural hearing.

There must be an even stronger focus on needs as we step up efforts not just to rehouse survivors, but to help them to rebuild their lives and, vitally, to rebuild trust. It is a process that will clearly take time and unstinting commitment on all sides. As the taskforce has noted, some progress has been made, but there is no room for complacency. I expect the council to take on board the taskforce's recommendations and do more to listen to the community, improve links with the voluntary sector and act on feedback that it gets from those on the frontline.

I thank the members of the taskforce once again for their valuable contribution, which will continue for as long as it is needed. As they have noted, despite the many challenges, there is

“a level of community spirit and attachment not often seen in local communities in London”.

It is a dynamic and diverse community spirit made stronger during the darkest of days—a spirit that is determined to secure a brighter future for the people of North Kensington. We share that determination and will continue to work with the bereaved, survivors and others. I commend this statement to the House.

6. Press Articles

The following selection of press articles is taken from the last three months, and is not intended to be comprehensive or cover every issue raised.

Guardian

[Grenfell rally demands urgent removal of flammable cladding](#)

14 May 2018

Guardian

[MPs urge government to release cash for removal of Grenfell-style cladding](#)

10 May 2018

Guardian

[Grenfell Tower: fire-resistant cladding plan was dropped](#)

8 May 2018

The Times [sub]

[No shroud for Grenfell Tower 11 months after blaze](#)

6 May 2018

Guardian

[Grenfell Tower public inquiry timetable unveiled](#)

27 April 2018

FT [subs]

[Fire safety tests need urgent overhaul after Grenfell disaster](#)

25 April 2018

The Times [subs]

[Grenfell fire 'would not have spread without cladding'](#)

17 April 2018

Evening Standard

[Leaked Grenfell dossier reveals how disastrous refurbishment turned tower into a 'tinderbox'](#)

16 April 2018

The Times [subs]

[Grenfell cladding safety downgraded before fire](#)

6 April 2018

The Times [subs]

[Survivors of Grenfell fight for right to buy](#)

26 March 2018

Independent

[All homes should be fitted with sprinklers to save lives, says Grenfell Tower safety report](#)

22 March 2018

The Times [subs]

[Grenfell inquiry rejects anonymity for witnesses](#)

21 March 2018

Guardian

[Grenfell inquiry to have most core participants in UK history](#)

20 March 2018

BBC News

[Grenfell inquiry: Survivors and bereaved to pay tribute to victims](#)

21 March 2018

The Times [subs]

[Grenfell waterproof exterior 'thwarted firemen'](#)

15 March 2018

BBC News

[Grenfell Tower doors 'resisted fire for half the time expected'](#)

15 March 2018

7. Parliamentary Statements and Debates

Written or oral statements

[Grenfell Tower](#)

HC Deb 11 May 2018 HCWS678

[Building Safety Update](#)

HC Deb 16 April 2018 | HCWS620

[Grenfell Update](#)

HC Deb 22 March 2018 | HC Vol 638 c411

[Building Safety Update](#)

HL Deb 15 March 2018 | HL Vol 789 c1781

[Future of the Grenfell Tower Site](#)

HC Deb 1 March 2018 | HCWS498

[Update on Building Safety Programme](#)

HC Deb 18 December 2017 | HCWS359

[Grenfell Tower and Building Safety](#)

HC Deb 18 December 2017 | Vol 633 c733

[Grenfell Tower fire six months on](#)

HC Deb 14 December 2017 | HCWS346

[Grenfell Recovery Taskforce](#)

HC Deb 06 November 2017 | HC Vol 630 c1212

[Grenfell Tower \[urgent question\]](#)

HC Deb 19 October 2017 | HC 629 c993

[Grenfell Tower Fire](#)

HC Deb 11 October 2017 | HCWS157

[Grenfell Tower Inquiry Terms of Reference](#)

HC Deb 14 September 2017 | HCWS135

[Grenfell Tower and Building Safety](#)

HC Deb 05 September 2017 | HC Vol 628 c68

[Grenfell Tower Fire](#)

HC Deb 29 June 2017 | HCWS18

[Building Safety](#)

HC Deb 18 July 2017 | HCWS69

Debates – Commons

[Grenfell Tower Inquiry](#)

HC Deb 14 May 2018 vol 641 c1WH

[Fire Safety and Cladding](#)

HC Deb 6 March 2018 Vol 637 c77WH

[Grenfell Tower Fire](#)

HC Deb 26 June 2017 Vol 626 c430

[Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry](#)

HC Deb 12 July 2017 Vol 427 c311

8. Government press releases

[Fire safety advice unchanged after issue identified with fire door](#)

15 March 2018

[Survivors, bereaved families and community will help determine the future of the Grenfell Tower site](#)

1 March 2018

[Immigration deadline for Grenfell Tower residents extended](#)

31 August 2017

[Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: publication of terms of reference](#)

30 August 2017

[Government completes large-scale fire safety testing programme](#)

25 August 2017

[Latest large-scale government fire safety test result published](#)

21 August 2017

[Second wall cladding system passes latest government fire safety test](#)

14 August 2017

[Latest government large scale fire safety test results published](#)

11 August 2017

[Further results published from government's fire testing programme](#)

8 August 2017

[Independent review of building regulations and fire safety](#)

28 July 2017

[New taskforce to support recovery from Grenfell fire disaster](#)

26 July 2017

[Expert panel recommends tests on cladding and insulation](#)

6 July 2017

[Independent Recovery Taskforce for Kensington and Chelsea council](#)

5 July 2017

[Protection from prosecution for unlawful subletting at Grenfell Tower](#)

2 July 2017

[Expert panel on safety meets for the first time](#)

30 June 2017

[Statement from the Independent Expert Advisory Panel](#)

30 June 2017

[Expert panel appointed to advise on immediate safety action following Grenfell fire](#)

27 June 2017

[£1 million for local charities responding to Grenfell Tower disaster](#)

26 June 2017

[PM chairs Grenfell Recovery Taskforce meeting](#)

26 June 2017

[Statement from the Secretary of State regarding the cladding testing failure rate](#)

24 June 2017

[Department responds to police identification of Hotpoint fridge freezer involved in Grenfell Tower fire](#)

23 June 2017

[Charitable grants for people directly impacted by the Grenfell Fire](#)

23 June 2017

[Government and utility companies announce package of support for Grenfell victims](#)

22 June 2017

[PM chairs fifth meeting of the Grenfell Tower Recovery Taskforce](#)

21 June 2017

[First new homes secured for victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster](#)

21 June 2017

[PM chairs third meeting of the Grenfell Tower Recovery Taskforce](#)

19 June 2017

[Details of Grenfell Tower Residents' Discretionary Fund](#)

18 June 2017

[Statement from the Prime Minister on Grenfell Tower](#)

17 June 2017

[UK to observe minute's silence for victims of Grenfell Tower fire](#)

17 June 2017

[Government confirms emergency funding available in response to Grenfell Tower incident](#)

15 June 2017

[Statement on Grenfell Tower: A Downing Street spokesperson gave a statement on the Grenfell Tower fire](#)

14 June 2017

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