

News story: Support for victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster

During a meeting with survivors of the fire, she announced a £5 million fund would be made available to pay for emergency supplies, food, clothes and other costs.

The proposals followed a visit by the Prime Minister to Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, where people who had escaped the blaze said they had been left with no possessions or money.

The PM then chaired a meeting of a cross-Whitehall group of senior ministers and officials to agree a full range of help, which she set out to a group of residents, victims, volunteers and community leaders during a visit to the Clement James Centre near Grenfell Tower.

The package includes:

- a commitment that victims who lost their homes in the disaster must be rehoused at the earliest possible opportunity and that we should aim to do this within 3 weeks at the latest
- a guarantee to rehouse people as close as practically possible to where they previously lived, meaning they can continue to access the same public services, such as their local school or local GP – this rehousing would be in the same borough and, if not, a neighbouring borough
- until people are rehoused, the cost of temporary accommodation will be met on their behalf
- the government will also provide any necessary financial assistance to families who have been rehoused so children and their parents do not incur any extra costs in travelling to their local school
- the new £5 million Grenfell Tower Residents' Discretionary Fund, made immediately available and given to the local authority to distribute – this could be used to cover loss of possessions, funerals and emergency supplies
- confirmation the Treasury will work with banks to ensure that those affected by the disaster who lost possessions like bank cards still have access to their accounts
- the Department for Work and Pensions are working with local job centres to ensure that those affected have access to the benefits and pensions they would normally receive

The Prime Minister also gave reassurance to the victims of the fire that they will be consulted on the terms of reference for the upcoming Public Inquiry. This will allow them to help shape the scope of the Inquiry so they can get the answers they are seeking.

The victims and their families will receive state funding for legal representation at the Public Inquiry.

In addition, the PM announced significant central government support to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

It includes sending in a team of experienced central government civil servants from the Department for Communities and Local Government, which has been embedded into the local council to assist with efforts.

The Bellwin scheme has also been activated – meaning that any immediate and uninsurable extra costs incurred by the council in the aftermath of the disaster will be met by the government.

To reassure people living in similar buildings that they are safe in their homes, the PM announced the government is:

- checking at speed with local authorities whether all high-rise buildings in their area have complied with recent fire orders, where work has been deemed required following an inspection
- identifying all high-rise buildings owned or managed by Housing Associations or Local Authorities and conducting a fire safety review of all buildings similar to Grenfell Tower – the government will also work with the devolved administrations on this issue

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

“The individual stories I heard this morning at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital were horrific. I spoke with people who ran from the fire in only the clothes they were wearing.

“They have been left with nothing – no bank cards, no money, no means of caring for their children or relatives. One woman told me she had escaped in only her top and underwear.

“The package of support I’m announcing today is to give the victims the immediate support they need to care for themselves and for loved ones. We will continue to look at what more needs to be done.

“Everyone affected by this tragedy needs reassurance that the Government is there for them at this terrible time – and that is what I am determined to provide.”