



BRIEFING PAPER

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Dealing with civil contingencies: emergency planning in the UK

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Summary

The recent fire at Grenfell Tower in North Kensington, London has raised questions about how the emergency services, local authorities and other agencies plan for and respond to civil contingencies. This briefing therefore looks at emergency planning in the UK: the responsibilities of each of the responding agencies and how those fit within the framework for planning for and responding to civil contingencies laid down by Government.

The statutory framework: the *Civil Contingencies Act 2004*

The statutory framework for planning for and dealing with civil contingencies derives from the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#) (the 2004 Act).

The [Civil Contingencies Act 2004 \(Contingency Planning\) Regulations 2005](#) (as amended) add further detail to the emergency planning regime.

Definition of an emergency

Section 1 (1) of the 2004 Act defines an emergency as

- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom
- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the United Kingdom or
- war, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

An event or situation threatens damage to human welfare only if it involves, causes or may cause loss of human life, human illness or injury, homelessness, damage to property, disruption of a supply of money, food, water, energy or fuel, disruption of a system of communication, disruption of facilities for transport, or disruption of services relating to health (Section 1 (2))

What goes into an emergency plan?

In its guidance on the [responsibilities of the various agencies](#), the Cabinet Office says that emergency plans should cover three areas:

- preventing an emergency
- reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of an emergency and
- taking other action in connection with an emergency

Who does what? Category 1 and Category 2 responders

The 2004 Act divides local bodies in the UK into two categories - Category 1 and Category 2 responders – with differing responsibilities.

- **Category 1 responders** must assess the risk of an emergency occurring and maintain plans for dealing with that emergency. They include local authorities, emergency services, health bodies, the Secretary of State in relation to maritime and coastal emergencies, and the environmental protection agency for each jurisdiction. The 2004 Act also empowers Ministers to require Category 1 responders to take certain actions.
- **Category 2 responders** must cooperate with category 1 responders. They include (amongst others) utility companies and transport providers.

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The National Resilience Capabilities Programme

The Cabinet Office's 2013 [guidance on preparing and planning for emergencies](#), outlines the National Resilience Capabilities Programme, which aims to increase the UK's capability to respond to and recover from civil emergencies, however caused.

Local Resilience Areas and Local Resilience Forums

The 2004 Act requires Category 1 responders to organise within Local Resilience Areas, most of which follow police force boundaries.

In London, arrangements have been slightly different. There had been six Local Resilience Areas, but in 2011 a single pan-London Local Resilience Area was created, based on the Metropolitan Police and City of London Police areas. With the closure of the Government Office for London, a formal role was also given to the Greater London Authority.

Local Resilience Forums are multi-agency partnerships. The Cabinet Office's [reference document on the role of Local Resilience Forums](#) sets out how the process should work.

The impact on communities: role of the local authority

The [Government's non-statutory guidance on emergency response and recovery](#) observes that local authorities are likely to be called upon to support the emergency services in various ways during the response to an emergency and in the recovery phase.

In 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) published a [good practice guide for local authorities on preparing for civil emergencies](#). This sets out what local authorities must do, to formulate plans that provide for emergency response and business continuity.

Community resilience

Another plank of the emergency planning approach is building and supporting community resilience.

The Cabinet Office's [guidance on preparing for emergencies](#) offers advice and links to resources on how communities can prepare. Another aspect of emergency planning on which the Cabinet Office has published guidance is [building resilient communities](#). The guidance lists what the Local Resilience Forum can do to provide oversight and support and champion community resilience.

The Grenfell Tower fire: criticism of Kensington and Chelsea's response

After the fire at Grenfell Tower, [it was reported](#) that the local authority's poor initial response had led to Kensington and Chelsea being relieved of their responsibility for caring for survivors and that responsibility being handed to a multi-agency team.

In a [statement on 22 June 2017](#), the Prime Minister Theresa May, said that "the support on the ground in the initial hours was not good enough". The Prime Minister referred, too, to the forthcoming public inquiry.

The chief executive of Kensington and Chelsea council has [announced his resignation](#).

The Commons Library briefing [Grenfell Tower fire: Response and tackling fire risk in high rise blocks](#) looks in more detail at the fire and the response to it. Its [landing page](#) also provides links to other related and supporting documents.

Other Commons Library briefings on related topics are available from the pages for [emergency services](#) and [emergencies and disaster management](#).

1. The statutory framework

1.1 The *Civil Contingencies Act 2004*

The [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#) (the 2004 Act) was introduced to create a single framework for civil protection in the UK. It received Royal Assent on 18 November 2004.

It repealed and replaced the *Civil Defence Act 1948* and the *Civil Defence Act (Northern Ireland) 1950*. Reflecting the political climate of the time, those Acts had dealt only with “civil defence” (in other words, measures (short of actual combat) to defend against a hostile attack by a foreign power). They related only to local authorities, police authorities and certain fire authorities.

More background on the Act is available in the Commons Library briefing [Civil Contingencies Bill](#) (RP 04/07, 15 January 2004)

How does the *Civil Contingencies Act 2004* define an emergency?

Section 1 (1) of the 2004 Act defines an emergency as

- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom,
- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the United Kingdom, or
- war, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

An event or situation threatens damage to human welfare only if it involves, causes or may cause loss of human life, human illness or injury, homelessness, damage to property, disruption of a supply of money, food, water, energy or fuel, disruption of a system of communication, disruption of facilities for transport, or disruption of services relating to health.¹

The 2004 Act was intended to improve the quality of planning for civil contingencies and the response to them, around four main aims:

- Establishing a clear set of roles and responsibilities for organisations with a front line emergency response role, ensuring that they are prepared to deal effectively with the full range of emergencies;
- Delivering greater structure and consistency of civil protection activity at the local level;
- Facilitating more systematic co-operation between local responders; and
- Establishing a sound basis for robust performance management of local responders.²

The 2004 Act divides local bodies in the UK into two groupings - Category 1 and Category 2 responders. The [Explanatory Notes to the](#)

¹ Section 1 (2)

² [Explanatory Memorandum To The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 \(Contingency Planning\) Regulations](#), SI 2005/2042

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[2004 Act](#) explain their respective responsibilities and duties, which include

- **For Category 1 responders:** Assessing the risk of an emergency occurring and maintaining plans for how to respond to that emergency. Ministers may also require Category 1 responders to take certain actions.
- **For Category 2 responders:** cooperating with category 1 responders and providing them with information in connection with their civil protection duties.³

The [Civil Contingencies Act 2004 \(Contingency Planning\) Regulations 2005](#) (as amended) add further detail to the emergency planning regime.⁴

1.2 How is the 2004 Act working?

The Grenfell Tower fire has raised questions of how well responders are planning for and responding to civil contingencies.

Governance issues

In March 2017, the Cabinet Office published the [report of its latest review of the 2005 Regulations](#).

One of the review's objectives had been to assess whether there were what it called "governance deficiencies or inefficiencies"⁵ The review found that there was no evidence that the law needed to change; the legislative framework appeared fit for purpose. The knowledge held by the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat the Department for Communities and Local Government's Resilience and Emergencies Division did, though, suggest that there may be (the report argued) a need to consider how government and responders were interpreting the 2004 Act, 2005 regulations and statutory guidance.⁶

³ [Civil Contingencies Act 2004: Explanatory Notes: Summary and Background: Part 1](#)

⁴ SI 2005/2042

⁵ Cabinet Office, [Report Of The Post Implementation Review Of The Civil Contingencies Act \(2004\) \(Contingency Planning\) Regulations 2005](#), March 2017

⁶ As above: [page 8](#)

2. What should plans cover?

In its guidance on the [responsibilities of the various agencies](#), the Cabinet Office says that emergency plans should cover three areas:

- preventing an emergency
- reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of an emergency and
- taking other action in connection with an emergency.⁷

2.1 The duty to risk-assess and plan: Category 1 responders

[Schedule 1 to the 2004 Act](#) - as amended by the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004 \(Amendment of List of Responders\) Order 2011](#) and other subsequent legislation - lists Category 1 responders:⁸

Local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council (Scotland) • county council • county borough council (Wales) • district council • London borough council • the Common Council of the City of London and the Council of the Isles of Scilly • The Greater London Authority
Emergency services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A chief officer of police within the meaning of section 101(1) of the <i>Police Act 1996</i>. • The chief constable of the Police Service of Scotland • The Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland • The Chief Constable of the British Transport Police Force • A fire and rescue authority within the meaning of section 1 of the <i>Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004</i> • The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS Commissioning Board • An NHS trust insofar as it is responsible for ambulance services, hospital accommodation and services for accidents and emergencies or public health in Wales. • An NHS foundation trust insofar as it responsible for ambulance services or hospital accommodation and services for accidents and emergencies. • Local health board (Wales) • Health board (Scotland) • The Secretary of State insofar as the Secretary of State's functions include responding to emergencies

⁷ Cabinet Office, [Guidance: Preparation and planning for emergencies: responsibilities of responder agencies and others](#), 20 February 2013

⁸ SI 2011/1223

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Port health authority
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Secretary of State in relation to his functions in responding to maritime and coastal emergencies• The Environment Agency• The Natural Resources Body for Wales• Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Category 2 responders include (amongst others) utility companies and transport providers.

2.2 Preparing and planning for emergencies: good practice

In 2013, the Cabinet Office published [guidance on preparing and planning for emergencies](#). This outlined the National Resilience Capabilities Programme, which aims to increase the UK's capability to respond to and recover from civil emergencies, however they may be caused.⁹ The National Resilience Capabilities Programme comprises 24 workstreams, including local resilience, mass casualties and evacuation and shelter.

The Cabinet Office has also published [expectations and indicators of good practice set for Category 1 and 2 Responders](#).¹⁰ The expectations document sets out mandatory requirements, issues to consider and indicators of good practice around the duty to assess risk; the duty to maintain plans; communication with the public; business continuity and cooperation for Category 1 and Category 2 responders. It also sets out the 10 guiding principles underpinning effective emergency management:

- anticipation
- preparedness
- subsidiarity
- direction
- information management
- cooperation
- integration
- continuity
- resilience and
- sustainability

Further guidance on aspects of emergency planning from various government departments and agencies is available on the gov.uk website.

⁹ Cabinet Office, [Preparation and planning for emergencies: the National Resilience Capabilities Programme](#), 20 February 2013 (updated 27 January 2014)

¹⁰ Cabinet Office, [Expectations and indicators of good practice set for Category 1 and 2 Responders](#), Version 5, revised October 2013

The lessons learnt from previous emergencies have been captured in the [Cabinet Office's non-statutory guidance on emergency response and recovery](#).¹¹

For central government, the Cabinet Office has published a [list of lead government departments' responsibilities for planning, response, and recovery from emergencies](#).¹²

2.3 Local Resilience Areas

The 2004 Act requires Category 1 responders to organise within local resilience areas, most of which follow police force boundaries.

In London, arrangements have been slightly different, as Lord Taylor of Holbeach explained in November 2011 in Grand Committee, when considering changes to the list of responders. There had been six Local Resilience Areas for London:

Rather than a single local resilience area based on police force boundaries, there have been six local resilience areas for London, each with a local resilience forum, based on multi-borough groupings. This reflected London's particular patterns of public service provision and the different local planning needs of the London boroughs.¹³

The 2011 changes therefore created a single pan-London Local Resilience Area, based on the Metropolitan Police and City of London Police areas, and (with the closure of the Government Office for London) gave a formal role to the Greater London Authority.

2.4 Local Resilience Forums

[Local Resilience Forums](#) are multi-agency partnerships of Category 1 responders, supported by Category 2 responders and working with other partners in the military or voluntary sectors.

The Cabinet Office's [reference document on the role of Local Resilience Forums](#) sums up that role:

The purpose of the LRF process is to ensure effective delivery of those duties under the Act that need to be developed in a multi-agency environment and individually as a Category 1 responder. In particular the LRF process should deliver:

- the compilation of agreed risk profiles for the area, through a Community Risk Register;
- a systematic, planned and co-ordinated approach to encourage Category 1 responders, according to their functions, to address all aspects of policy in relation to:
 - risk;
 - planning for emergencies;
 - planning for business continuity management;

More information about emergency planning in London is in the Cabinet Office's [Revision to Emergency Preparedness: London](#) (March 2012)

Coordination between Category 1 responders is provided by the Local Resilience Forum.

¹¹ Cabinet Office, [Emergency response and recovery](#), updated October 2013

¹² Cabinet Office, [List of lead government departments' responsibilities for planning, response, and recovery from emergencies](#), 17 January 2011

¹³ [HL Deb 27 April 2011 ccGC1-2](#)

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- publishing information about risk assessments and plans;
- arrangements to warn and inform the public; and
- other aspects of civil protection duty, including the promotion of business continuity management by local authorities; and
- support for the preparation by all or some of its members of multi-agency plans and other documents, including protocols and agreements and the co-ordination of multi-agency exercises and other training events.¹⁴

It also sets out what LRFs must do (the statutory and mandatory requirements) and other things that they might do as a matter of good practice.

2.5 Cooperation between LRF areas

The LRF provides a venue for cooperation between emergency responders and other agencies within the LRF area but, clearly, emergencies may occur in a location or on a scale that demands a response from responders from more than one LRF area.

The Cabinet Office has published further guidance on [collaboration and cooperation between LRFs in England](#). This guidance sets out why LRFs need to work together:

Planning for, and responding to, large-scale emergencies cannot be done in isolation in each LRF. Mechanisms for cross-boundary working and relationship building are essential as some emergencies will overwhelm localities' resources and/or boundaries.¹⁵

The guidance leaves LRFs free to determine how they will work together, saying that cross-locality working is done on a permissive basis and the law and guidance do not impose any structures or limits.¹⁶

2.6 Who leads the emergency response?

The emergency response is based around the concepts of command, control and cooperation and operates at three levels – operational, tactical and strategic.

The [Government's non-statutory guidance on emergency response and recovery](#) refers to the generic national management framework for managing emergency response and recovery and its benefits:

Adoption of this nationally agreed management framework will help integrate plans and procedures within and between agencies and across geographical boundaries. It also ensures that all agencies understand their roles and responsibilities in the combined response.¹⁷

¹⁴ Cabinet Office, *The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document*, July 2013 (V2)

¹⁵ Cabinet Office, *Revision to Emergency Preparedness: Chapter 16: Collaboration and Co-operation between Local Resilience Forums in England*, March 2012: page 3

¹⁶ As above: [page 4](#)

¹⁷ HM Government, *Emergency Response and Recovery: Non statutory guidance accompanying the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, revised October 2013*: page 52

The structure for responding to any emergency will depend on the nature and circumstances of that emergency. Single agency groups will take command of their own personnel and assets, but a multi-agency Strategic Coordinating Group may be convened to provide coordination - but not control - across agencies:

4.2.1. (...) No single responding agency has command authority over any other agencies' personnel or assets. Where multi-agency co-ordinating groups are established to define strategy and objectives, it is expected that all involved responder agencies will work in a directed and co-ordinated fashion in pursuit of those objectives.¹⁸

In some emergencies, the sub-national tier in England, devolved administration or UK central government may be involved.¹⁹

2.7 Are plans published?

Section 2 (1) (f) of the 2004 Act requires Category 1 and Category 2 responders to arrange for all or part of an assessment or plan to be published "in so far as publication is necessary or desirable for the purpose of preventing an emergency, reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of an emergency, or enabling other action to be taken in connection with an emergency".

The law provides for emergency plans to be published

The [Civil Contingencies Act 2004 \(Contingency Planning\) Regulations 2005](#) (as amended), though, say that in performing this duty the Category 1 responder "must have regard to the importance of not alarming the public unnecessarily".²⁰

2.8 Exercises and training

Category 1 responders are under a duty to train staff and to carry out exercises (which might be discussion-based, table top or live). Again, [the Cabinet Office has issued guidance](#).²¹

2.9 Devolved administrations

The Cabinet Office [guidance on emergency response and recovery](#) contains chapters on the emergency response in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, outlining the various devolution settlements and the consequent civil protection arrangements.²²

¹⁸ As above: [page 53](#)

¹⁹ As above: [page 54](#)

²⁰ SI 2005/2042

²¹ Cabinet Office, [Guidance: Emergency planning and preparedness: exercises and training](#), updated 11 November 2014

²² Cabinet Office, [Emergency response and recovery](#), 20 February 2013

3. The impact on communities: role of the local authority

As discussed earlier, in any emergency the local authority is likely to be amongst the Category 1 responders.

Much of the discussion of the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire has concentrated on the part played by the local authority and so this section of the briefing examines (in broad terms) the role of local authorities in planning for and responding to emergencies. It also examines the expectations placed on local authorities by the various volumes of guidance issued by the Cabinet Office and others.

The guidance from the Cabinet Office is supplemented by further guidance specific to certain sectors or agencies

The [Government's non-statutory guidance on emergency response and recovery](#) sets out the expectations of local authorities in some detail, observing that they are likely to be called upon to support the emergency services in various ways during the response to an emergency and in the recovery phase:

3.2.34. The local authority will play an enabling role in close collaboration with a wide range of bodies which are not routinely involved in emergency response e.g. building proprietors, land owners, etc. In particular, the local authority will work with partners to:

- provide immediate shelter and welfare for survivors not requiring medical support and their families and friends via evacuation, rest, humanitarian and other centres to meet their immediate to short term needs. See [chapter 4](#) (for evacuation) and [7](#) (for humanitarian centres);
- provide medium to longer-term welfare of survivors (e.g. social services support and financial assistance which may be generated from appeal funds and also provide help-lines which should answer the public's questions as a one stop shop). Local authorities
- have a large part in addressing community needs via drop-in centres and organising anniversaries and memorials as part of the recovery effort;
- provide Investigating and Enforcement Officers under the provision of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 as requested by DEFRA;
- facilitate the inspection of dangerous structures to ensure that they are safe for emergency personnel to enter;
- clean up of pollution and facilitate the remediation and reoccupation of sites or areas affected by an emergency;
- liaise with the coroner's office to provide emergency mortuary capacity in the event that existing mortuary provision is exceeded. For further details on arrangements for dealing with fatalities in emergencies see [chapter 7](#);
- co-ordinate the activities of the various voluntary sector agencies involved, and spontaneous volunteers;
- may provide catering facilities, toilets and rest rooms for use by all agencies in one place, for the welfare of

emergency response personnel in the event of a protracted emergency. This will depend on the circumstances and available premises;

- lead the recovery effort, which is likely to carry on for a considerable time and is likely to involve many organisations who are not ordinarily involved in, or used to the speed and scale of the recovery effort. They may also put in place arrangements for supporting communities to become more resilient to the risks they face.²³

The guidance also notes that local authorities' emergency plans should cover the role of both officers and elected members.²⁴

In 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) published a [good practice guide for local authorities on preparing for civil emergencies](#).²⁵

The chapter headings also serve as a summary of the duties and expectations on local authorities in planning for and responding to civil emergencies:

- A prepared local authority plans for emergencies
- A prepared local authority is an active member of the Local Resilience Forum
- A prepared local authority is ready to provide advice before, during and after an emergency
- A prepared local authority trains, tests and exercises
- A prepared local authority is ready to provide community leadership
- A prepared local authority is represented at a senior level at the strategic coordinating group
- A prepared local authority has plans in place for assessing the impacts of an emergency

Referring to the response to flooding in December 2013/January 2014, the guidance remarked that, although most local authorities had performed well, the response out of normal working hours had not universally been good.²⁶

The guidance set out what local authorities must do, to formulate plans that provide for emergency response and business continuity. The plan (it said) should cover scaling-up staffing to support the response and providing appropriate "front line" support:

Local authorities should have clear plans to scale up their staff resource to support the response directed by the strategic coordinating group or other multi-agency response group. The plans should be clear about what 'front line' support the local

The non-statutory guidance is backed up by further guidance from DCLG and SOLACE, aimed at local authorities.

²³ HM Government, [Emergency Response and Recovery: Non statutory guidance accompanying the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, revised October 2013](#), page 33

²⁴ As above

²⁵ DCLG and SOLACE, [Local authorities' preparedness for civil emergencies: A good practice guide](#), October 2014

²⁶ [As above](#): page 6

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authority will put in place for different emergencies, and how this can be activated 'out of hours' and scaled up according to the duration, geographical extent and severity of the emergency. The local authority response may involve support from other agencies including the voluntary and community sector and plans should be clear about how this support will be activated. This support could include on the ground community alerting e.g. door knocking, checking on vulnerable residents and operating rest centres.²⁷

The guidance also set out what local authorities should do, to assess the impact of an emergency, saying that there should be clear processes for gathering information and assessing the implications for local authority services:

All local authorities should have a clear process for collecting and reporting information that supports shared situational awareness across organisations. This could include the consequential impact on local authority services of an emergency and the arrangements in place for consequence management of business critical services such as schools and, care provision. It is also important to gather information on the effects on local businesses which employ local people and also support the local economy, such as tourism, retail or catering.²⁸

3.1 Community resilience

The Cabinet Office's [guidance on preparing for emergencies](#) offers advice and links to resources on how communities can prepare.²⁹

Another aspect of emergency planning on which the Cabinet Office has published guidance is [building resilient communities](#). The guidance lists what the LRF can do to provide oversight and support and champion community resilience. It also talks of "real community empowerment" and outlines what community members of the LRF might do.³⁰

Another plank of the emergency planning approach is building and supporting community resilience.

3.2 The Grenfell Tower fire: criticism of Kensington and Chelsea's response

The Commons Library briefing [Grenfell Tower fire: Response and tackling fire risk in high rise blocks](#) looks in more detail at the fire and the response to it.³¹ Its [landing page](#) also provides links to other related and supporting documents.

After the fire at Grenfell Tower, it was reported that the poor quality of the local authority's initial response – and the anger that that had provoked – had led to Kensington and Chelsea being relieved of their responsibility for taking care of survivors and that responsibility being handed to a multi-agency team. [Media reports](#) mentioned the criticisms that had been made of the initial response:

Gov.uk offers information on the [support available to people affected by the Grenfell Tower fire](#).

²⁷ As above: [page 11](#)

²⁸ As above: [page 19](#)

²⁹ Cabinet Office, [Preparing for emergencies](#), 6 April 2016

³⁰ Cabinet Office, [Roles, responsibilities and partnerships to build resilient communities](#), 26 October 2016

³¹ CBP 07993, 30 June 2017

Opposition councillors are angry at the way council leaders appeared to freeze when confronted by a disaster on the scale of the fire. They said they were kept in the dark and repeatedly given incorrect assurances that accommodation had been found for residents. The Conservative-led administration had failed to return calls from neighbouring councils offering to provide accommodation and other help, the councillors said.

Other criticisms include a failure to communicate with survivors and their families; a lack of visible staff on the ground providing advice; a failure to distribute any of the money being donated; and a failure to ensure that surviving residents were allocated suitable accommodation nearby.³²

The chief executive of Kensington and Chelsea council has announced his resignation.³³

In a [statement on 22 June 2017](#), the Prime Minister, Theresa May, said that “the support on the ground in the initial hours was not good enough”. She went on to refer to the chief executive’s resignation and the establishment of the central command force:

What became clear very quickly was that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea could not cope, and it is right that the chief executive officer has now resigned. It is also why I set up the Grenfell Tower recovery taskforce, which I have been chairing personally.

On Friday morning, the Government established a central command centre under the leadership of John Barradell, the chief executive of the City of London and former lead for London local government on resilience, and Eleanor Kelly, chief executive of the London borough of Southwark.

I also pay tribute to the London boroughs for their fantastic response, including a number of chief executives who are currently working at the command centre, as well as the Mayor of London and leading figures from a number of councils from outside London. I thank the army of volunteers who stepped in to provide shelter, sustenance, comfort and practical support. I also thank the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Ministers for Housing and Planning, for London and for Policing and the Fire Service for the work that they have been doing.³⁴

The Prime Minister referred, too, to the forthcoming public inquiry:

As the scale of the tragedy became clear we quickly decided there had to be an independent public inquiry. As I said to the House yesterday, it will be chaired by a judge to get to the truth about what happened and who was responsible, and to provide justice for the victims and their families who suffered so terribly.³⁵

³² Ewen MacAskill, “[Council sidelined in Grenfell Tower response as leader refuses to quit](#)”, *Guardian* online, 18 June 2017

³³ Henry Austin, “[Grenfell Tower fire: Chief executive of Kensington and Chelsea council resigns amid criticism](#)”, *Independent* online, 21 June 2017

³⁴ [HC Deb 22 June 2017 c166 onwards](#)

³⁵ As above

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