

Participant Information: Community Volunteers Research project

What is this research about?

This research is about the community role in relief and recovery in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower Disaster. It is widely appreciated that volunteers and the local community stepped in to provide a lot of the necessary help in the early days. Over the longer term, community members have continued to play important roles, alongside and sometimes despite the official response. Challenges and controversies have also arisen.

This research aims to learn lessons for future disaster recovery efforts, from the experience of community volunteers and community organisations. It aims to (i) compile the practical wisdom of community workers and volunteers in the aftermath of Grenfell, to be able to share experience, challenges and solutions for future volunteers; and (ii) to make recommendations about how emergency planning and disaster responses can better support effective volunteer efforts, and pre-empt problems, in future disasters.

What is the research NOT about?

The research is not an investigation of why the fire happened. It is not an investigation of whether the official response was adequate or not. Those are crucially important issues subject to a criminal investigation and public inquiry. This research is completely separate to those investigations. The timespan may overlap partly with the focus of the public inquiry, but this project is entirely focused on the community response, and learning lessons for the future. If you have evidence that you consider relevant to the criminal investigation or the public inquiry, you should contact the police or the public inquiry team.

This research is not an evaluation of Gold command or RBKC. The role of the official response in relation to volunteers is relevant to the study, but we are not in a position to evaluate it.

Who is doing this research?

This research is funded by the London School of Economics as part of its mission to use research for the public good in local London communities and worldwide. The research is independent of any official or voluntary organisation.

Dr Flora Cornish is an Associate Professor at the London School of Economics, who specialises in qualitative research and community development. She has previously researched community volunteering and disasters in other countries. She is doing this research as part of her role at LSE to produce useful knowledge to inform disaster management.

Cathy Long is a local resident, community volunteer after the fire, and independent consultant. She worked as a volunteer after the Hillsborough Disaster, setting up the Appeal Shop for those affected, and was actively involved in campaigning for justice. She now runs Two Halves, a consultancy specialising in football and community engagement. She has examined the response in relation to

other disasters such as Katrina and Aberfan and is doing this research to ensure that useful knowledge is passed on to future volunteers.

Why am I being invited to take part?

We are inviting four groups of people to take part: (i) people affected by the disaster who engaged with community volunteers (ii) community volunteers and community centre representatives, broadly understood to include people who provided or coordinated practical help, advocacy, public awareness raising, liaison with officials, community organising, etc; (iii) officials who engaged with community volunteers as part of the official response; (iv) emergency planners and disaster management experts.

You are being invited because we have learned that you have experience or expertise relevant to this research, either through our own engagement in the community, or through recommendations made by others.

What am I being asked to do?

You are invited to take part in an interview with Cathy or Flora. Depending on how much you want to say, the interview will take 1-2 hours. We will ask you to talk about your role in the aftermath, what you did, what challenges you faced, the solutions you came up with, the support you received from any organisation, and how you interacted with the official response. We will ask your permission to audio-record the interview, so that we don't forget anything.

What will happen to the recording?

If you agree to the interview being recorded, the recording will be held securely (encrypted and in a password protected computer) before being transcribed. The transcription will be anonymised so that it does not contain any identifying information. The transcription will be held securely (encrypted and in a password protected computer). All of the transcriptions will be compiled together and Flora and Cathy will analyse them, to come up with general findings. The findings will be reported anonymously.

The data will be stored securely for 10 years to allow the researchers to do them justice in analysing them and learning lessons. Afterwards, they will be securely destroyed.

What will be the outcome of the project?

There are two main outcomes: (i) to learn lessons to share with future community volunteers and (ii) to feed into the work of emergency planners and disaster management professionals.

We will invite you to a workshop in North Kensington to discuss the findings with other research participants.

We will produce policy recommendations, reports and one or more journal articles. These will all be open access and freely available on the internet. It might be suitable to publish the findings as part of a book.

Who will benefit from the project?

The major beneficiaries are future community volunteers and emergency planning professionals. We aim to help them to learn from the experience of the response to the Grenfell Tower disaster.

We hope that producing a record of the experiences and response of the North Kensington community is also a beneficial outcome.

We do not expect anybody to benefit financially from the project. If a book is written, any royalties or proceeds will be donated to projects benefitting communities affected by the disaster in consultation with representatives of affected communities.

There are no direct benefits to you personally of taking part. We hope you will consider it worthwhile to document the history of the community response, and to contribute to learning important lessons for the future.

Who can I contact about the research?

We welcome your feedback on the research and your experience of taking part in it.

Dr Flora Cornish is the lead researcher with responsibility for this project. She can be contacted on 07963241544 or by email f.cornish@lse.ac.uk

Cathy Long is interviewing people and contributing to the research and can be contacted by phone on 07884 002180 or by email cathy@twohalves.co.uk

Community Volunteers Research project agreement

Participant consent

1. I have had the study explained to me and I understand what it is about.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, or decline to answer any question if I so choose.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I agree to my interview being recorded, transcribed anonymously, and stored securely for analysis.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I agree that the researcher may use the material to write up a general report on the role of community volunteers in the aftermath of the Grenfell tower disaster.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I agree that anonymised quotations from my interview may be used in the report so that I am not identifiable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature Date

Researcher commitment

1. I agree that the information gathered for this project will only be used (i) to learn lessons to share with future community volunteers, and (ii) to feed into the work of emergency planners and disaster management professionals.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I commit to keeping recordings and transcripts secure (in encrypted files, without identifying information, and using devices protected with strong passwords).	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I agree that our reports of the interview material will always be anonymous	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature Date

[One copy for participant; one copy to be archived by researchers]