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# NEWS

## **DISASTER RELIEF CHARITY OVERCAME MAJOR OBSTACLES TO GET £11 MILLION DONATIONS TO VICTIMS OF LONDON TERROR ATTACKS AND GRENFELL TOWER**

Pop-up disaster-response charity, the London Emergencies Trust (LET) had to deal with tough obstacles to ensure every penny of the £11 million donated for the bereaved and injured by the four London terror attacks in 2017 and by the Grenfell Tower fire reached them, according to an independent review of its work published today, Monday 19 November.

The review by Dr Diana Leat, *Distributing Funds in a Disaster*, outlines the challenges the charity faced. These included uncertainty about amounts of money raised and the likely number of recipients. At the same time, it needed to hold on to some of the donations for those who came forward later. The charity managed this difficult balancing act by making speedy initial payments and topping these up in phases later.

LET was also hampered by the absence of data and by other organisations' caution in sharing it, slowing down its ability to pass on charitable donations to beneficiaries. For example, there was no straightforward, reliable source of accurate casualty data for many weeks and LET faced difficulties in getting access to hospital admission and discharge data for those hospitalised following the Grenfell Tower fire. Despite

many efforts on the part of LET staff and others, there has been little consistency of approach between and within NHS trusts, leading to applicants becoming frustrated at LET's pace in being able to verify short hospital stays.

Donors also expected their donations to flow out to beneficiaries as fast as pledges were made, and there appeared to be no recognition of the complexity of verifying applications or that the money was still making its way – via fundraisers – to the charity. This created considerable pressure on LET to distribute charitable gifts quickly. which was not always possible.

LET was able to attract pro bono support by borrowing staff from other organisations and for its office space and other services to get the job done; and had to scale up as the number of events grew during 2017. LET was also widely praised by other charities working around Grenfell as 'calm', 'co-operative', 'helpful but not directive' and 'adult about sharing'.

LET had a partnership with the British Red Cross which raised most of the funds distributed. By August 2018 just over £8 million had been awarded to the bereaved and injured at [Grenfell Tower](#), and another £773,000 was also distributed to 165 households at Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk who survived the fire.

£962,500 was passed on to the bereaved and hospitalised following the [Westminster Bridge](#) attack on 22 March. Awards topped £1,364,500 to those bereaved and hospitalised following the attacks at [London Bridge and Borough Market](#) .

£189,500 was distributed to those bereaved and hospitalised after the attack at [Finsbury Park](#). And LET distributed £85,500 to people who were hospitalised following the attack at [Parsons Green](#) tube station in September last year.

Commenting, Gerald Oppenheim, LET's chair of trustees, says:

“LET's trustees recognised from the outset, when the first terror attack took place on Westminster Bridge and at the gates of Parliament on 22 March 2017 that we would need to put into practice what we had learned from the distribution of charitable relief funds after the 7 July 2005 London bombings twelve years before.

“As other attacks took place, we were clear that we would need to build on that body of learning and commission a review of the experience, especially as responding to the fire at Grenfell Tower meant that our approach needed to be reviewed and adapted very quickly to meet the needs of those affected by an equally calamitous event which challenged existing working assumptions.

“I hope this report will add to a growing resource at a time when calls are being made for a national framework for responses to the sorts of events experienced, whether at London Bridge and the other places in the capital where attacks took place, Manchester Arena or Grenfell Tower.”

ENDS

(651 words)

**Notes to editors:**

The [London Emergencies Trust](#) (LET) is a registered charity and came into being after the terrorist attack on Westminster Bridge in March 2017, having been set up in shadow form in December 2015.

LET worked with the [British Red Cross](#) to distribute charitable donations by the public to the bereaved and injured who were caught up in the terror attacks at:

- [Westminster](#)
- [London Bridge](#)
- [Finsbury Park](#)
- [Parsons Green](#)

It also helped with the distribution of donated cash to the bereaved and injured of [the Grenfell Tower fire with other charity partners](#).

All of the donated funds raised for each incident are distributed to the bereaved next of kin and injured. LET fundraised separately to cover its operating costs, receiving grants from several charitable foundations and corporate organisations.

Report author Dr Diana Leat is a highly respected independent commentator and researcher on the UK and international voluntary sector. She has published extensively and been a consultant to various grant-making foundations reviewing their policies and practices. She has held various academic appointments including Visiting Professor at City University (Cass Business School) and at the Centre for Philanthropy and Non-profit Studies at QUT, Brisbane, Australia.