



The Grenfell Curriculum

Honouring the legacy of Grenfell through
teacher professional development

Final project report

April 2026



1. Executive summary

The Grenfell Curriculum Project is a collaboration between the University of Southampton, the University of Oxford, and the Grenfell community, working to ensure that the legacy of the Grenfell Tower fire is carried forward through meaningful, justice-centred education. Funded by Research England, the Grenfell Foundation, and the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account, and developed in partnership with Grenfell United and the Grenfell Tower Memorial Commission, the project supports schools in teaching about Grenfell with accuracy, sensitivity, and respect.

In July 2025, the project published *Teaching about Grenfell: Recommendations from the Community*, a landmark report developed through two years of community-engaged research with bereaved families, survivors, young people, and local educators. This established a shared framework for what teaching about Grenfell should include and why it matters. Building on this foundation, the project launched *Teaching about Grenfell: Education and Social Justice after Disasters* in April 2026: a free, structured online CPD course offering research-informed professional learning for teachers across phases and subjects.

The project's approach is rooted in three principles: long-term partnership with the Grenfell community so that educational work reflects their experiences and priorities; framing Grenfell as both a human story and a case of systemic injustice; and providing practical support that enables teachers to engage with sensitive material confidently and safely. Community voice has been central throughout, with bereaved families, survivors, and young people actively shaping the curriculum. A Grenfell Education Working Group, comprising survivors, bereaved families, and local educators, guided the CPD's design across three intensive co-design sessions in 2025.

A pilot lesson in a Year 5 classroom demonstrated that, with appropriate preparation, primary-aged children can engage thoughtfully and sensitively with difficult local histories, providing early evidence of the CPD's real-world impact.



2. Introduction

On 14th June 2017, a fire broke out in Grenfell Tower, a residential block in North Kensington, London. Seventy-two people lost their lives. The disaster exposed deep failures of governance, housing policy, and building regulation, and laid bare longstanding inequalities in how working-class and minority ethnic communities are treated by the institutions meant to protect them. Nearly a decade on, the pursuit of justice for those affected remains ongoing.

For the Grenfell community, ensuring that the fire is remembered accurately and honestly is inseparable from that pursuit of justice. There is a clear and urgent need for Grenfell to be taught in schools: not as a footnote in recent history, but as a case study in systemic injustice that speaks directly to questions of power, accountability, and the value placed on human life. Yet many educators feel underprepared to approach this material. Teaching about a recent tragedy, one that continues to affect living families and communities, requires care, knowledge, and confidence that standard teacher training rarely provides.

The Grenfell Curriculum Project was established in response to this need. Its founding premise is that education has a vital role to play in carrying forward Grenfell's legacy, and that this role must be shaped by the community itself. Too often, curriculum decisions about sensitive historical events are made at a distance from those most affected. This project takes a different approach, placing bereaved families, survivors, and young people at the centre of the educational process, from the earliest stages of research through to the design of classroom materials.

This report summarises how the project has developed, the principles that have guided it, and the CPD course it has produced for educators across the UK and beyond.



3. Project activities

Phase 1: Community-engaged research (February 2024 to August 2024)

The first phase involved an extended programme of community-engaged research. Working closely with bereaved families, survivors, young people, and local educators, the research team sought to understand what teaching about Grenfell should involve, what the community needed from schools, and how educational content could be developed with rather than for those most affected. This work formed the basis of *Teaching about Grenfell: Recommendations from the Community*, which was subsequently published in July 2025.

Phase 2: CPD design and development (September 2024 to January 2026)

The second phase focused on translating that community knowledge into a structured CPD course. Central to this work was the Grenfell Education Working Group, an advisory group of survivors, bereaved families, and educators from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The Working Group met across three evening sessions held in community locations,

collaborating with the research team to shape the emerging CPD. This was followed by wider consultation with community members to ensure that the programme accurately represented community knowledge and experience of Grenfell. The result of this phase was the completed CPD programme, *Teaching about Grenfell: Education and Social Justice after Disasters*, launched in April 2026.

Phase 3: Piloting and resource development (February 2026 onwards)

The third phase moved into classrooms. In February 2026, the research team worked with a London primary school to co-design and pilot a lesson in a Year 5 classroom. The pilot demonstrated that, with the right preparation, primary-aged children can engage thoughtfully and sensitively with difficult local histories. It also provided important early evidence of the CPD's practical effectiveness: the teacher reported that the programme gave them the confidence and subject knowledge to approach the material in a way that honoured the community's experience. Lesson resource writing has continued alongside and beyond the pilot.



Figure 1 Project timeline

4. CPD overview

Teaching about Grenfell: Education and Social Justice after Disasters is a free, online CPD course supporting educators across all phases and subjects – from primary through to further education – in teaching about the Grenfell Tower fire with care, accuracy, and a commitment to justice. Hosted on Canvas, it requires no prior knowledge of Grenfell and provides example lessons, classroom activities, and curriculum links adaptable to different age groups, subjects, and local contexts.

The course comprises three modules delivered over three weeks, totalling around six hours of learning. Each week is structured in two parts: one building educators' knowledge of Grenfell itself, the other developing confidence and skills in teaching about it responsibly. An introductory module sets out the project's context and principles, followed by three weekly modules combining historical content with pedagogical frameworks. The programme is designed as a coherent learning journey but can also be used selectively by those with limited time.

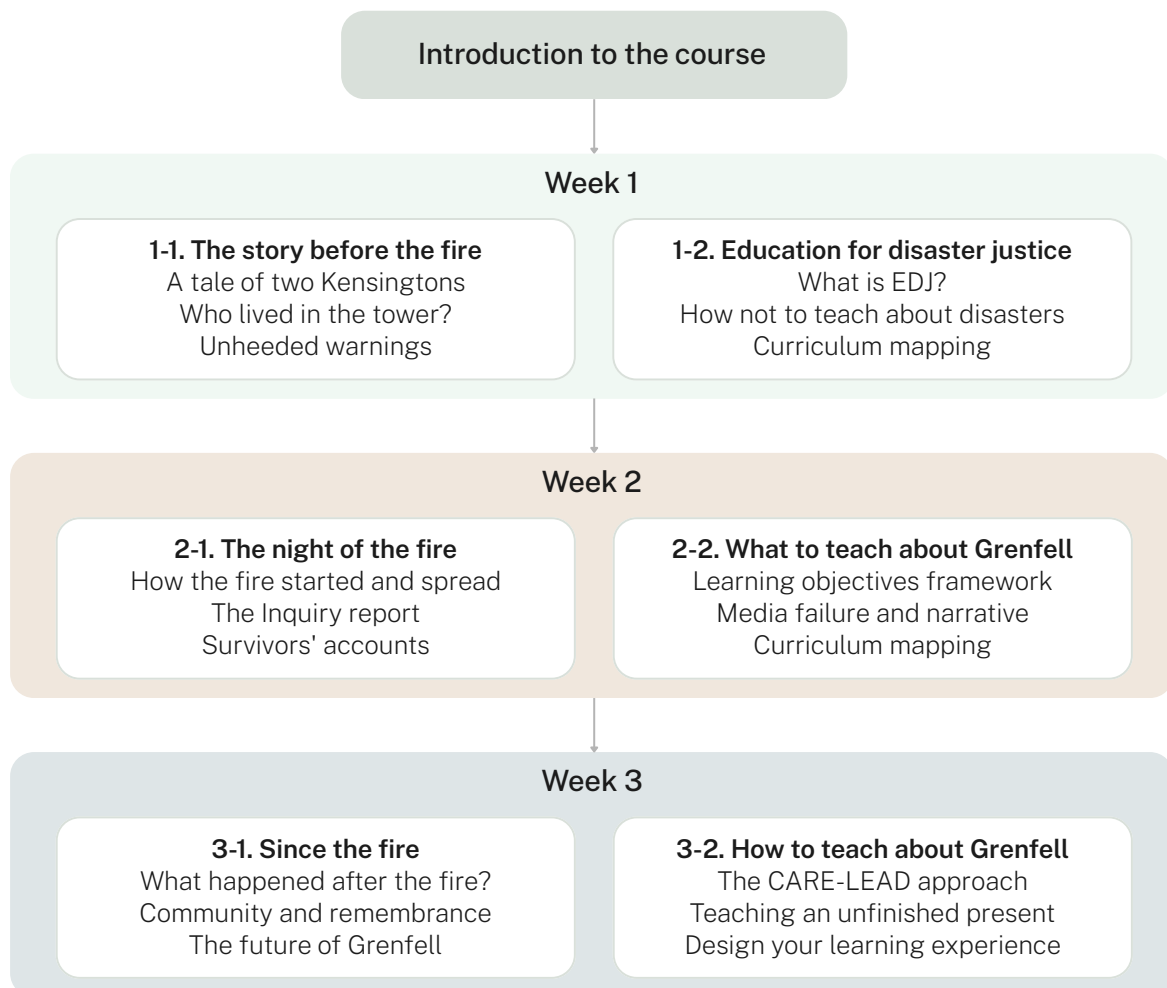


Figure 2 CPD structure

Key design features

1. Education for disaster justice framework

The course articulates five principles for education for disaster justice (EDJ), drawing on the views and priorities of the Grenfell community. It asks educators to: Start with humanity, not the horror; Honour lived experience; Situate events in social and structural context; Emphasise justice, not just memory; and Support emotional safety and dialogue. Together, these principles support respectful, critical, and justice-oriented learning about disasters.

2. Learning by doing: embedded activities and reflection

Rather than presenting content for passive absorption, the CPD builds active exercises into each week. For example, in Week 1, participants are invited to explore inequality in Kensington through a structured Google Maps activity, comparing the built environment around Grenfell Tower with that of South Kensington using Street View. Reflection prompts follow each activity, often with a modelled sample response. After exploring the tension between hesitancy and urgency in teaching about an unresolved event in Week 3, participants are asked:

"Where do you sit on that spectrum — and what would help you feel more confident to begin?"

3. Modelling bad practice as well as good

Drawing on the knowledge developed with the community, the CPD addresses how not to teach about disasters. Four detailed case studies present well-intentioned but problematic approaches, each followed by a justice-oriented alternative. These cover graphic imagery without preparation, role-play that reduces lived

experience to performance, framing that blames victims rather than systemic failure, and symbolic remembrance that avoids critical engagement. The scenario format makes the risks concrete:

"An English teacher opens a lesson by showing graphic images from news coverage of the fire to 'capture attention' and generate emotional reactions. Students look distressed, and one asks to leave."

The accompanying analysis names precisely what has gone wrong before offering an alternative rooted in EDJ principles.

4. Teaching an unresolved event

The CPD addresses directly one of the most common reasons teachers give for not teaching about Grenfell: that its legal proceedings feel unresolved. Rather than treating this as a reason for caution, the programme reframes it as a pedagogical opportunity, presenting four tensions educators face and concluding with a guiding principle:

"Teaching about Grenfell is not about having all the answers. It is about being willing to engage with the questions — and building pedagogies capable of holding uncertainty and supporting learners to think critically about events that are not yet resolved."

5. From knowledge to action: lesson design exercise

The programme closes with a structured design exercise in which participants plan their own Grenfell learning experience. The prompt integrates the programme's full range of concerns: educational purpose, learner context, resource selection, and ethical accountability to the community. This final task is deliberately open-ended, positioning the CPD as preparation for professional judgement.

6. Connecting to the curriculum

A common barrier for teachers is uncertainty about where teaching about Grenfell fits within their existing subject responsibilities. The CPD addresses this directly through a dedicated curriculum mapping section that draws on the National Curriculum for England, to show how Grenfell-related themes connect to core learning objectives across multiple subjects and key stages.

The mapping demonstrates that Grenfell is not the exclusive territory of any one subject. History, Citizenship, English, PSHE, Geography, Religious Education, and Drama all have natural points of connection, whether through analysis of primary sources and institutional failure, exploration of community, critical media literacy, or ethical reasoning about power and accountability.

As the course puts it:

"The story of Grenfell connects closely to core learning objectives across multiple subject areas in the national curriculum. We draw on selected objectives from the National Curriculum for England to illustrate what the story of Grenfell can help learners understand and explore."

To make this practical rather than abstract, the section includes an interactive matching activity in which participants map Grenfell-related themes to specific curriculum objectives, actively building the connection between the programme's content and their own teaching context. This design choice reflects a broader principle running through the CPD: that professional learning should produce something usable, not just something understood.

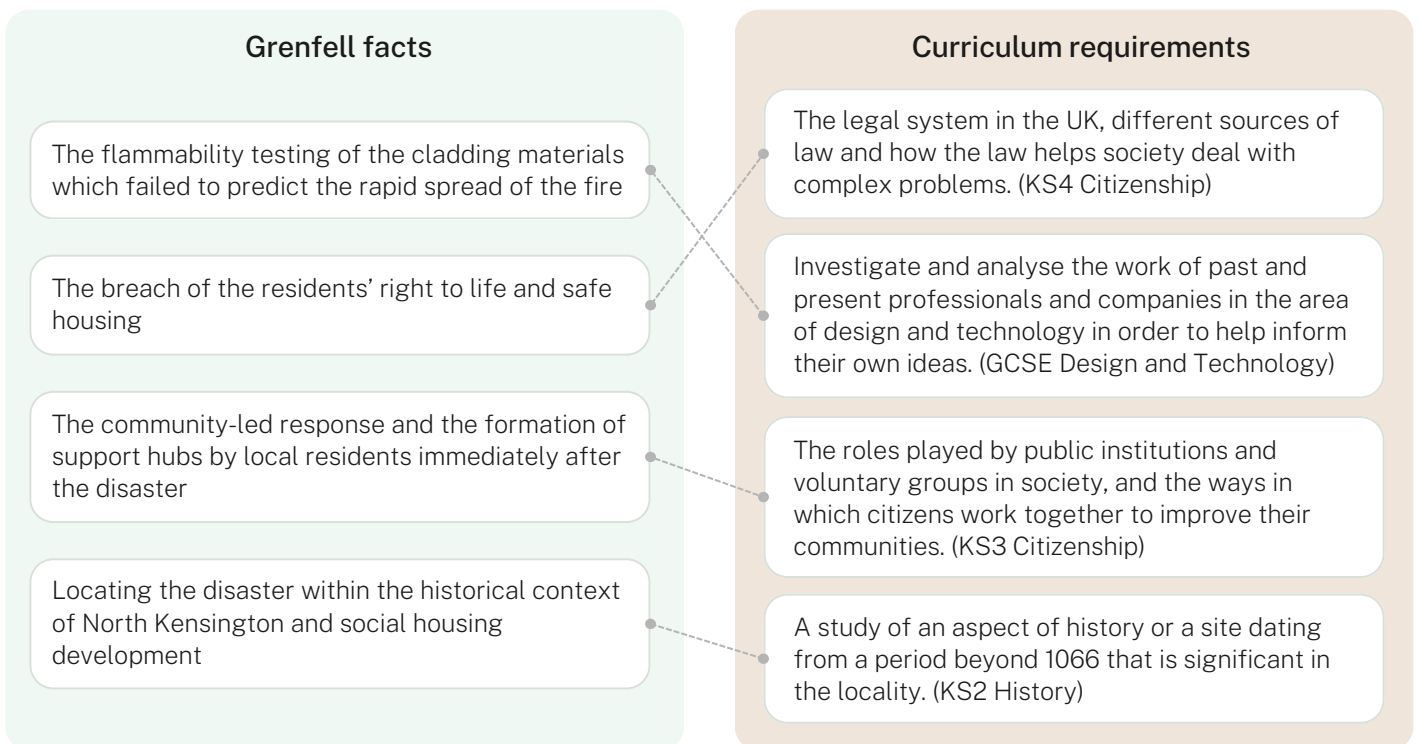


Figure 3 Curriculum mapping activity from CPD Week 2

Week 1: Understanding Grenfell and education for disaster justice

Week 1 has three learning objectives: to describe everyday life in and around Grenfell Tower prior to the 2017 fire; to explain the structural, social, and political injustices that created the conditions in which the fire became a disaster; and to understand EDJ as a framework and apply it to the analysis of specific disasters.

The first section of the week, *The Story Before the Fire*, begins not with the fire itself but with the community. Through an exploration of the stark demographic contrast between North Kensington and its wealthier neighbours, a section titled "A Tale of Two Kensingtons", participants develop an understanding of the social geography and inequality that shaped life in the tower. This is followed by material examining who lived in Grenfell Tower, the residents' repeated unheeded warnings to management and authorities in the years before the fire, and a timeline of the systemic failures that preceded the disaster.

The second section, *Education for Disaster Justice*, introduces the theoretical and pedagogical framework that runs throughout the programme. Participants explore the concept of EDJ through five guiding principles: starting with humanity rather than horror; honouring lived experience; situating events in structural and social context; emphasising justice rather than just memory; and supporting emotional safety and dialogue. The section includes an examination of how not to teach about disasters, using four detailed case studies that contrast problematic approaches with justice-oriented alternatives. These cover the use of graphic imagery, role-play involving real people's trauma, the risk of blaming victims rather than analysing systemic failure, and the reduction of Grenfell to symbolic remembrance without critical engagement.

Week 2: The night of the fire and what to teach

Week 2 turns to the events of 14th June 2017 and to the question of what Grenfell-related content is appropriate across different subjects and year groups. Its learning objectives are: to understand the events of the night using evidence and survivors' accounts; to explain key considerations when teaching about Grenfell; and to select appropriate and relevant content for teaching.

The first section, *The Night of the Fire*, draws on the findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry to explain how the fire started, how it spread, and why it spread so quickly. Material on the technical and regulatory failures that enabled the cladding fire is combined with direct survivor testimony, ensuring that the factual account of the disaster is grounded in human experience rather than reduced to a sequence of events. Course participants are invited to consider their own relationship to the fire, where they were that night, and what they knew, as a way of situating their own perspective before engaging with community testimony.

The second section, *What to Teach About Grenfell*, provides frameworks for curriculum planning. It sets out what learners should understand about Grenfell, covering dignity and humanity, systemic failure, community response, and ongoing justice processes, and what learners should be able to do, from critically analysing decision-making to practising empathy and applying professional ethics. A curriculum mapping activity encourages participants to explore where Grenfell-related themes might meaningfully sit within their own subject and phase. The section also addresses the role of media failure in the Grenfell story, examining parallels with the Hillsborough disaster and exploring how to support learners in developing critical media literacy.

Week 3: Since the fire and how to teach

Week 3 completes the programme by addressing the aftermath of the fire and equipping course participants with concrete pedagogical tools for the classroom. Its learning objectives are: to analyse responses to the fire and their impact on community and wider society; to explain recent developments in memorialisation and justice; to apply understanding of Grenfell's temporal dimensions to instructional decisions; and to design a learning experience grounded in EDJ principles.

The first section, *Since the Fire*, examines the community's experience in the years since 2017: the immediate aftermath, the long process of the Inquiry, the ongoing campaigns for justice and criminal accountability, and the complex questions surrounding the future of the tower site and its memorialisation. Literature is considered as a form of remembrance, and participants engage with how artists, writers, and community members have given form to grief and the demand for justice. The section takes seriously the fact that Grenfell remains, in important senses, unresolved.

The second section, *How to Teach About Grenfell*, brings together the pedagogical content of the programme in its most practical and applied form. Central to this section is the CARE-LEAD model, an eight-part framework developed through community-based research with survivors, bereaved families, young people, teachers, and support workers. CARE stands for: Clarify Purpose; Assess the Room; Resource with Legitimacy; Enact with Trauma-Informed Structure. LEAD stands for: Leverage Medium Deliberately; Evaluate Without Extractive Assessment; Aftercare and Continuation; Duty of Accountability. The model is explicitly non-sequential: it is a framework for reflective practice rather than a set of steps, and it is designed to support educators both before and after individual lessons, not only during them.

The section also addresses the particular challenge of teaching about an event that is not yet concluded. Grenfell's legal proceedings, political consequences, and community grief remain ongoing, and this creates real tensions for educators: between hesitancy and urgency; between the rawness of the event and the risk that delay will allow it to fade from public memory; between the lived reality of those directly affected and the more distant perspective of learners elsewhere. The course argues that these tensions are not reasons to avoid teaching about Grenfell but are themselves rich material for critical, ethical education. The week concludes with a design exercise in which participants plan their own Grenfell learning experience, drawing on the full range of content and frameworks from across the course.

Further resources

Each week of the course closes with a curated further reading list, organised thematically and drawing on a wide range of source types: official inquiry reports and government publications, journalism, academic research, community-produced materials, documentary photography, and literature. These lists are designed to support participants in deepening their own subject knowledge and in identifying high-quality, legitimate resources for classroom use.

5. Pilot lesson

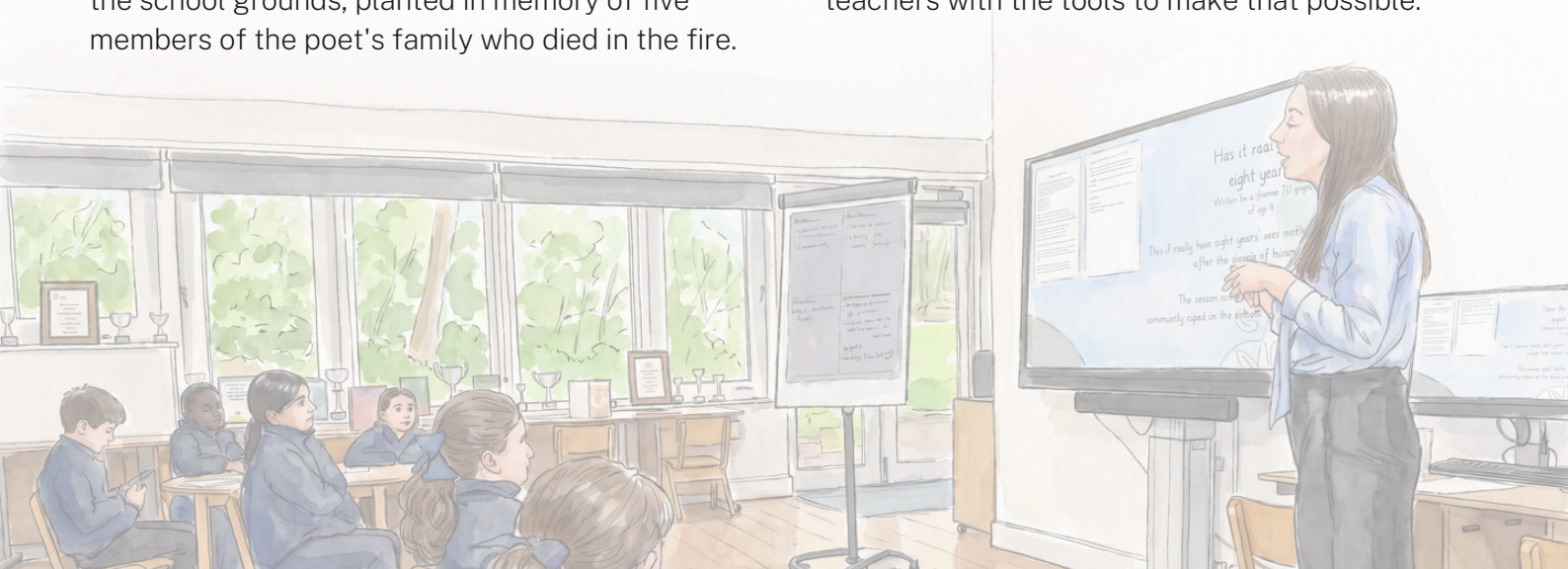
In February 2026, the project worked with a Year 5 teacher at a primary school in North Kensington to co-design and pilot a lesson on remembering Grenfell. The teacher had recently completed the six-hour CPD programme, which provided the subject knowledge and pedagogical grounding to approach the material with confidence. The co-design process brought together the teacher, a colleague from the school, and members of the research team including a Grenfell survivor and bereaved community member. This collaboration ensured that the lesson was shaped by community knowledge as well as educational expertise, and that it was both pedagogically sound and emotionally safe before a single child encountered it.

The lesson centred on a poem written by an eleven-year-old former pupil of the school, who had lost family members in the fire. Using poetry as a route into remembrance allowed the teacher to approach the subject with care and distance, without avoiding its emotional weight. The lesson began with the establishment of a safe and structured space, including a question box for private queries, before pupils read and discussed the poem together. A literary analysis activity deepened their engagement, and the session concluded with a visit to a memorial orchard on the school grounds, planted in memory of five members of the poet's family who died in the fire.

The CPD was central to the teacher's preparation. It equipped her with a framework for trauma-informed practice, helped her anticipate the range of emotional responses pupils might have, and gave her the knowledge to handle the historical and political dimensions of Grenfell accurately. Co-designing the lesson with the research team meant that community perspectives were embedded in its structure from the outset, rather than added as an afterthought.

“I was quite pleasantly surprised by some of the things they were saying. I thought they were really mature throughout the session and also really kind of understood the meaning behind the session.” (Teacher)

The pupils' responses demonstrated a striking depth of empathy, analytical thinking, and emotional maturity. They engaged thoughtfully with themes of loss, memory, anger, and community, and made sophisticated connections to other texts they had studied. Their responses offer compelling evidence that, with appropriate preparation and support, primary-aged children can engage meaningfully and sensitively with difficult local histories, and that the CPD provides teachers with the tools to make that possible.



6. Impact

The Grenfell Curriculum Project has already generated meaningful impact across multiple constituencies, with strong evidence of its reach and effectiveness continuing to grow.

For the Grenfell community, the project has offered something many initiatives fail to provide: genuine participation in shaping how their experiences are represented and taught. Community members contributed directly to the CPD's design, and their involvement has been understood as purposeful rather than tokenistic. Most significantly, a family directly bereaved by the fire requested that their child take part in the pilot lesson, a step that Hanan Wahabi, a Grenfell survivor and bereaved community member, described as "a massive step for them." That a family chose active engagement over protective withdrawal speaks to the trust the project has built.

For teachers, the CPD has provided something often missing from professional development: the confidence to act. The pilot teacher reflected

that she felt "very organised and prepared" going into the lesson, attributing this to the CPD and valued its guidance on "what to say and what not to say in certain situations." **For learners,** the evidence is equally promising. Year 5 pupils engaged with themes of loss, justice, and remembrance with a maturity that surprised their teachers: "I thought they were really mature throughout the session."

Looking ahead, the project is well placed to extend its reach. The CPD is freely available to educators across England and beyond, lesson resources are in active development, and the team has presented findings to Parliament. Connections are being developed with other disaster-affected communities, including Hillsborough, Aberfan, and the infected blood scandal, building a broader conversation about justice-centred education after tragedy. This points toward a longer-term ambition to establish principles that could inform how schools engage with systemic injustice and community loss more widely.

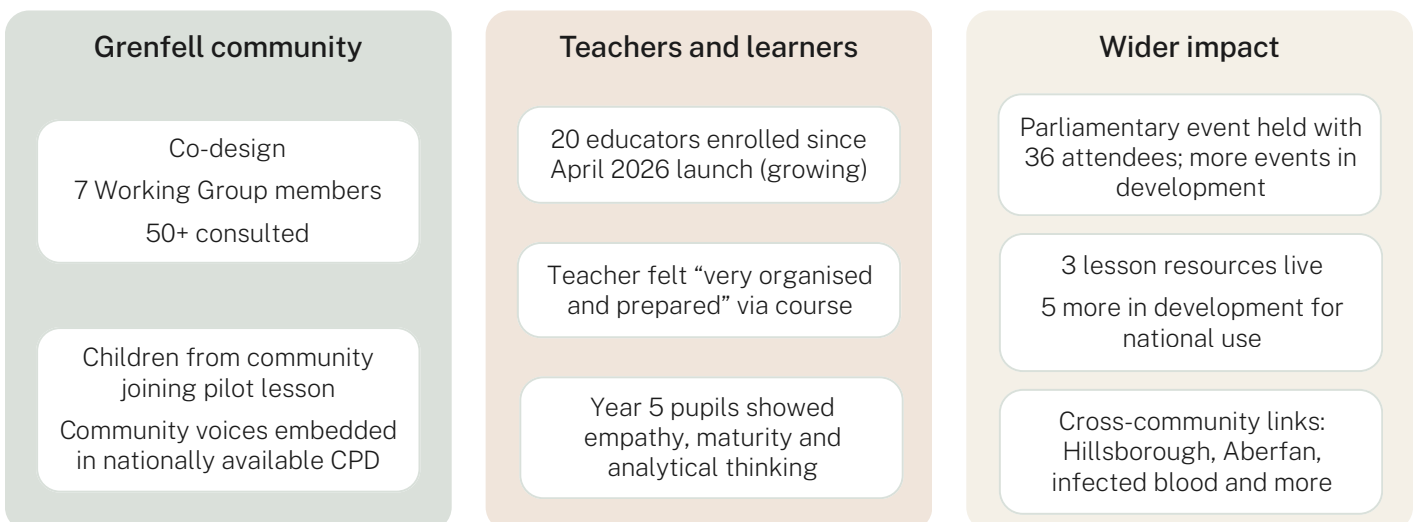


Figure 4 Core pathways to impact

Project team

Wonyong Park
Associate Professor of Science Education
University of Southampton

John Schulz
Professor of Digital Education
University of Southampton

Nigel Fancourt
Associate Professor of Education and Values
University of Oxford

Hanan Wahabi
Community Representative
Grenfell Tower Memorial Commission

Grenfell Education Working Group

Melissa Kiley
Yousra Cherbika
Alaa Hannach
Clare Kitteringham

Rosemary Oyewole
Mouna El Ogbani
Laura Hanley

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Howard Taylor

Harry Russell

Callie Langley

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