# Family reaches settlement over fatal Tower crane crash as investigation continues



A family who lost a relative following a crane crash that devastated their home in Bow, East London, has reached an out-of-court financial settlement with the involved housing association and contractor. The incident occurred on 8 July 2020, when an approximately 27-metre tower crane collapsed through the roof of the house shared by June Harvey, aged 85, her niece Jacqueline Atkinson, 67, and her great-nephew Sam Atkinson, 32.

The High Court was involved in the case against PGCS Partnership, a subsidiary of the former Squibb Group, and the Swan Housing Association along with its subsidiary, Swan Commercial Services. The details of the settlement have not been publicly disclosed.

Jacqueline described the immediate aftermath of the crash, stating, “I was sorting some clothes out under an ottoman bed so I had my head under and there was a bang, I felt something hit me and thought [the lid] had fallen down.” The havoc unleashed by the crane's fall was so intense that both she and Sam believed a bomb had exploded. Sam added, “I thought a plane had come down,” as he desperately attempted to rescue his family amidst the chaos.

The crane had been in operation as part of a construction project for 65 units of social housing at Watts Grove when the devastating event transpired. Both Swan and its subsidiary were later taken over by Sanctuary Housing Association in 2023. Following the incident, PGCS Partnership went into liquidation in July 2022, while their parent company, Squibb Group, was wound up by the High Court in December 2023.

While the family has received compensation, both the police and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident. Sam described the settlement as “a small piece of justice” and expressed concern over the lengthy criminal investigation, remarking, “It shouldn’t have happened at all. Until that investigation is concluded, what is to say it won’t happen again?”

The psychological impact of the tragedy has been profound, with both Jacqueline and Sam experiencing significant mental health challenges. Sam, who was once a chef, has been unable to return to work owing to PTSD and anxiety. He shared, “I still wake up with nightmares... I struggle with bad anxiety, struggle to sleep and have some anger issues.”

Lawyer Helen Clifford, representing the family, criticized the ongoing delays in the investigation, stating, “The delays that Jacci and Sam have faced and continue to face are unacceptable. They are entirely innocent victims of a disaster that should never have happened.” She related these delays to insufficient resources from the police and HSE, exacerbated by government cuts since 2010.

Clifford also urged for the reinstatement of a tower crane register, which was previously abolished in 2013. This register had required notification to the HSE whenever a tower crane was in operation, a measure she believes is essential for improving safety standards.

In a statement regarding the settlement, a spokesperson for Sanctuary expressed condolences to all affected by the incident, noting that legal proceedings following their acquisition of Swan Housing Association remain ongoing.

A spokesperson for the Metropolitan Police confirmed that their investigation is active and ongoing, collaborating closely with the HSE and the Crown Prosecution Service. They also communicated their commitment to keeping the family updated on the progress of the investigation.

The case highlights broader concerns within the construction industry, where investigations into fatal incidents often take extended periods. In 2023, Construction News reported that it can take more than a year to investigate around one in five fatal construction incidents, raising questions about safety and regulatory compliance in the sector.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-66120622> - This article discusses the family's dissatisfaction with the investigation into the Bow crane collapse, highlighting their legal actions against the involved companies.
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