



19 JAN 2021

On 30 November 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How many children have been placed in emergency accommodation over the past six months*
- *How many children have been in emergency accommodation for longer than 3 months / longer than 6 months / longer than one year*
- *In which regions are children staying in emergency accommodation*
- *What ages are the children staying in emergency accommodation*

The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) is available to people who cannot remain in their usual place or residence, if any, and do not have access to other accommodation which is adequate for them or their family's needs. The Ministry pays EH SNGs directly to the accommodation supplier and assistance is generally granted for up to seven nights but can be extended depending on the individual's circumstances.

After these seven nights, Work and Income arrange another appointment with the client to discuss their housing situation and if another grant is required. The Ministry works hard to support people in emergency housing to secure a long-term housing solution, either through public housing or private rental accommodation. Other options including transitional housing can also be explored as an option depending on availability and the individual's circumstances.

The Ministry recognises that motels are not a long-term solution or the solution that we want to deliver for people who are potentially in a vulnerable situation. They provide a short-term solution while more sustainable options are progressed. More information about EH SNGs is available at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html.

There has been a growing demand nationally for emergency housing as the shortage of affordable housing and rising rents continues to impact low-income whānau, particularly those who are beneficiaries. The year 2020 saw a significant increase in demand for emergency housing, as the Ministry supported people through the COVID-19 pandemic period with accommodation where they could safely self-isolate. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, people also could not easily move out of emergency housing into long-term accommodation which contributed to longer durations of stay and higher costs.

The Ministry records information about the household composition of clients in Emergency Housing (i.e. whether the client is living with a partner and children.); not the number of distinct children that have been placed in Emergency Housing. Therefore, I am refusing all four questions of your request for information about the number of children placed in Emergency Housing under section 18(g) of the Act, as this information is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

The Ministry started capturing information about household composition of EH SNG applicants from 1 April 2020. Please note that this data does not record distinct children and therefore is not representative of the number of children housed in EH over the relevant period. However, in order to meet the intent of your request, the Ministry has provided you the following two tables attached in **Appendix A:**

- **Table One**, the number of grants, distinct clients, and the amount granted by the Ministry for EH SNG for the quarters ending June 2020 and September 2020.
- **Table Two**, the number of distinct clients for EH SNG for the quarters ending June 2020 and September 2020, broken down by household composition.

Please note that household composition is based on the adults and children staying in the Emergency Housing and may not be reflective of their ordinary family/household situation.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding children in Emergency Housing, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Hocking', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Karen Hocking
General Manager
Housing

Appendix A

Table One: The number of grants, distinct clients, and amount granted by the Ministry for Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants for the quarters ending June 2020 to September 2020.

	Quarter Ending	
	June 2020	September 2020
Grants	38,883	44,581
Clients	9,614	9,823
Amount	\$79,286,768.92	\$82,986,198.54

Notes:

- EH-SNG is Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants.
- This contains counts of grants, distinct clients, and total amount granted in each quarter.
- Distinct clients can be counted in more than one quarter if they have had grants in multiple quarters, so they should not be summed up across quarters.
- The amount granted may not be the amount spent.

Table Two: The number of distinct clients for Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants for the quarters ending June 2020 to September 2020, broken down by household composition.

Household composition	Quarter Ending	
	June 2020	September 2020
1 adult no children	5,482	5,183
1 adult with child(ren)	2,894	3,351
2 adults no children	460	468
2 adults with child(ren)	725	813
Unknown	53	8
Total	9,614	9,823

Notes:

- Household composition of EH-SNG applicants was not captured prior to 1 April 2020.
- Household composition is based on the last grant in each quarter.
- Household composition is based on the people staying in the Emergency Housing and may not be reflective of their actual family size.