



27 JUL 2021

Tēnā koe

On 29 June 2021, the Ministry for Children – Oranga Tamariki transferred part of your request to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) to respond to your questions relating to Emergency Housing. The Ministry will be responding to the following questions under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

- 1. The number of children and young people placed in motels and hotels in the past three financial years, broken down by year.*
- 2. The amount of money given to motel and hotel providers to place children and young people in the past three financial years, broken down by year.*
- 3. The top five motel and hotel providers in terms of spend and how much they were given, broken down by financial year.*

The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH SNG) is available to people who cannot remain in their usual place of 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.

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. 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 lockdown restrictions, people also could not easily move out of Emergency Housing into long-term accommodation, which contributed to longer durations of stays and higher costs.

For the sake of clarity, the Ministry will answer your questions in turn.

1. *The number of children and young people placed in motels and hotels in the past three financial years, broken down by year.*

When a client applies for an EH SNG, the client will provide the appointed Case Manager the total number of adults and children who will likely be staying in the emergency accommodation with them. No other information that identifies the relationships of these adults and children to the applicant is recorded for an EH SNG application, nor is confirmation of whether the children and/or adults will be staying in emergency accommodation for the duration of the EH SNG. As mentioned above, EH SNG clients may have complex family or caregiver relationships and it is not uncommon for children of one parent to stay with another family member or there could be scenarios where the same child is recorded in multiple EH SNG applications, (i.e. both parents are in separate emergency accommodation at the same time).

Children may also be counted more than once, as the Ministry are unable to verify if the child/children are included in more than one household living in emergency housing.

The Ministry centrally records the total number of children, and separately, the total number of adults who are likely to be staying in emergency accommodation. This is recorded in the main applicant's EH SNG application.

Please note, the Ministry only started recording information about the household composition of EH SNG recipients on 1 April 2020, and although general household information has been available since then, the Ministry has only recently been able to report on the exact number of children included in an application for Emergency Housing.

Information relating to children in Emergency Housing was first released in the Ministry's 19/20 Annual Review to the Social Services and Community Committee. In the past, the Ministry has chosen to publish emergency housing data in line with other official reporting on hardship assistance, however, due to the increased public interest, the Ministry decided to publish operational data, which is at a point in time, or a snapshot, of children in emergency housing for the purposes of the Annual Review.

Operational data is taken at a point in time or a snapshot, therefore the data is taken from a narrow window and can fluctuate significantly from day to day. Any clients that are entering emergency housing on the day the reporting takes place, will not be counted within the reported snapshot of data resulting in a significant portion of EH SNG clients that will be missed in this method of reporting. Standard reporting is based on quarterly data and thus, provides a clearer indication of the trends and patterns of the emergency housing population. This reporting aligns with the methods used across all government agencies, and is quality assured which ensures the data provided is as accurate as possible.

As the Ministry cannot provide you with the information requested in question one broken down by financial years, this part of your request has been refused under section 18(f) of the Act. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

In the spirit of being helpful, the Ministry can provide you with the following tables that are enclosed in **Appendix A**.

- **Table One:** The number of clients and children who were in receipt of a EH SNG as at 30 June 2020 and 30 June 2021, broken down by number of households, households with children and the number of children.
- **Table Two:** The number of EH SNGs made to Youth Payment and Young Parent Payment clients during the financial year ending June 2019, 2020 and 2021, broken down by grants, distinct clients and amount granted.

Please note that the number of Young Parents Payments and Youth Payments receiving EH SNGs has increased over the years. This is due to the increase in the cost of housing and renting. The Ministry has other programmes to assist those that are receiving a Young Parent Payment or a Youth Payment to support them such as getting training, jobs and accessing other support they may require.

2. *The amount of money given to motel and hotel providers to place children and young people in the past three financial years, broken down by year.*

The Ministry cannot disaggregate the motels and hotels that are suppliers of Emergency Housing for children. Regional Case Managers know where to best place families and this information is then recorded on individual client files. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act. To provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of individual files. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

3. *The top five motel and hotel providers in terms of spend and how much they were given, broken down by financial year.*

Please see enclosed in **Appendix A, Table Three** which shows the top five suppliers that received payments for EH SNGs for the financial years 2019, 2020 and 2021, broken down by number of grants, distinct clients and amount granted.

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 and
- 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 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 in regard to the number of children and you people 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.

Ngā mihi nui



 Karen Hocking
**General Manager
Housing**

Appendix A.

Table One: The number of clients and children who were in receipt of a EH SNG as at 30 June 2020 and 30 June 2021, broken down by number of households, households with children and the number of children.

	Number of Households	Households with Children	Number of Children
As at 30 June 2020	4,086	1,920	3,795
As at 30 June 2021	4,026	2,130	4,233

Table Two: The number of EH SNGs made to Youth Payments and Young Parent Payment clients during the financial year ending June 2019, 2020 and 2021, broken down by grants, distinct clients and amount granted.

Financial Year Ending	Youth Payment			Young Parent Payment			TOTAL		
	Grants	Distinct Clients	Amount Granted	Grants	Distinct Clients	Amount Granted	Grants	Distinct Clients	Amount Granted
June 2019	567	135	\$657,573.96	1,356	228	\$1,874,067.45	1,923	363	\$2,531,641.41
June 2020	1,152	216	\$1,650,124.03	2,088	294	\$3,744,525.63	3,237	504	\$5,394,649.66
June 2021	2,667	360	\$3,501,583.84	3,492	408	\$5,494,992.04	6,162	753	\$8,996,575.88

Notes for Table One and Two.

- The number of households is the number of distinct clients who were granted an EH SNG that covered 30 June 2020 and 2021
- The number of children is declared at the time of that specific EH SNG.
- When a client applies for an EH SNG, MSD records the household make up including the number of children.
- In some cases, children may have alternative or alternating living arrangements and may not necessarily be living in emergency housing for the entire duration in Emergency Housing.
- Children may also be counted more than once, as MSD are unable to verify if the child/children are included in more than one household living in emergency housing.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data. These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals. The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.

Table Three: The top five suppliers that received payments for EH SNGs for the financial years 2019, 2020 and 2021, broken down by number of grants, distinct clients and amount granted.

Financial Year Ending	Registered Name	Grants	Distinct Clients	Amount Granted
June 2019	Silverfern Property Services Ltd	1,437	213	\$3,005,513.42
	Anglesea Motel & Conference Centre	1,314	225	\$2,765,487.36
	540 Motel Limited	1,161	288	\$2,328,279.02
	Dupont Motel	1,440	237	\$2,236,800.12
	Grange Motor Lodge	891	219	\$2,154,460.25
June 2020	Silverfern Property Services Ltd	4,137	396	\$9,925,350.59
	Anglesea Motel & Conference Centre	1,839	240	\$5,184,517.25
	Sheltering Arms Limited	1,947	267	\$4,722,678.52
	Caretaker Property Limited	1,695	171	\$4,251,186.09
	Hygate Motor Lodge	1,491	207	\$4,156,468.00
June 2021	Mcentral Apartments Manukau	2,532	357	\$8,370,281.94
	Kerrs Motel And Homestay	2,967	717	\$5,055,158.32
	Anglesea Motel & Conference Centre	1,296	213	\$4,841,182.41
	Oakwood Manor Motor Lodge	1,653	270	\$4,242,020.01
	Allenby Park Hotel	1,920	309	\$4,112,337.86

Notes for table three:

- To protect confidentiality the Ministry of Social Development uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data. These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals. The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.