



03 JUN 2021

Tēnā koe

On 19 April 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How much money has been accessed from the Flexible Funding Package, available under the Homelessness Action Plan, for additional (or increased) costs for immediate needs encountered because whānau are staying in Emergency Housing?*
- *What is the funding being accessed for?*
- *Which regions are accessing this funding?*

As part of the New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan, the Ministry introduced Flexible Funding Assistance in November 2020, to compliment the many existing products that provide housing support in our communities. The assistance is in part a recognition that families with children are staying in emergency housing for longer periods and need additional support.

More information about the New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan is available online at the following link: www.hud.govt.nz/community-and-public-housing/addressing-homelessness/aotearoa-homelessness-action-plan-2020-2023/.

At present, the policy only allows for Flexible Funding Assistance (FFA) to be accessed by families with children staying in accommodation funded by an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant Paid under the Flexible Funding Programme, and available until 2 November 2023, FFA is discretionary assistance designed to help meet the educational, early childhood, and wellbeing needs of families with children when additional costs have happened while they are staying in emergency housing. To this end, the Ministry has contracted with providers throughout regions to administer and make payments of FFA on the Ministry's behalf.

For example, the Ministry has partnered with community organisations to deliver after-school programmes and school holiday programmes for children in emergency housing. FFA has also been used for additional early childhood education, employment preparedness, travel (where whānau are financially disadvantaged, and need to attend house viewings in an area of their choice for a long-term home), and a small number of cases, FFA has been used to assist with gymnastics class attendance.

More information about Flexible Funding Assistance can be found on Work and Income's website, here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/flexible-funding-assistance/index.html.

In response to your first question, we can advise that the current amount spent for Flexible Funding Assistance nationwide as at 30 April 2021 is \$120,043.14. Although uptake of Flexible Funding Assistance has not been high to date, it is important to note that the Ministry is one of many organisations with a wellbeing focus who are engaging with families with children in emergency housing. Slow uptake of FFA can also be attributed to the Ministry using a 'launch-and-learn' approach, capturing lessons learned and refining processes and advice as required. The Ministry has recently re-issued some guidance to staff on the use of FFA. This guidance includes examples of how FFA can be utilised, along with more in-depth advice on eligibility criteria, cost verification and process guidance for issuing FFA assistance. This guidance is held on the Ministry's intranet and is accessible to all staff.

Please refer to **Table One** below, which shows the amount of Flexible Funding Assistance by region, as at 30 April 2021.

Table One: The amount of Flexible Funding Assistance by region, as at 30 April 2021.

Region	Amount
Auckland	\$4,538.40
Bay of Plenty	\$2,433.26
Canterbury	\$535.99
Central	\$0.00
East Coast	\$12,793.45
Nelson	\$2,210.10
Southern	\$116.00
Taranaki	\$80.00
Waikato	\$97,335.94
Wellington	\$0.00
Northland	\$0.00
Total	\$120,043.14

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 regarding the Flexible Funding Package, 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

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Housing