



Tēnā koe

On 26 July 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- A) The number of under 25s in emergency accommodation on 26 July?
And for the same date:*
- The number of under 20s*
 - The number of 18s and under?*
- B) the number of emergency accommodation providers who will rent to under 18s.*
- C) Any information to hand around policies when it comes to providing youth with emergency housing that would be helpful too.*

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 Ministry provides assistance for young people between the ages of 16 and 19 who have experienced a significant whānau-family breakdown and/or have other high and complex needs through the Youth Service. Eligible young people are supported by dedicated youth coaches to access income and housing support (such as emergency housing, transitional housing, and/or public housing). These young people are also supported to access other services to address other immediate needs e.g. mental health, employment etc.

The Ministry only considers emergency housing for young clients after assessing other options, such as staying with family or friends, or helping with rental payments through hardship assistance. While young clients are in emergency housing, the Ministry continues their support and acts to help the client find longer-term housing options. You can find more information regarding the Youth Service and their housing options at the following link: www.youthservice.govt.nz/housing/.

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.

For the sake of clarity, I will address each question in turn.

A) The number of under 25s in emergency accommodation on 26 July?

And for the same date:

- The number of under 20s*
- The number of 18s and under?*

Please refer to **Table One** below, which shows

Table One: The number of Grants, Clients and Amount granted for youth receiving Emergency Housing Special Needs for quarter ending 30 June 2021

Age Group	Grants	Clients	Amount Granted
Under 18	927	171	\$1,139,213.35
18-19	1,671	342	\$2,874,786.77
20-24	4,164	1,065	\$9,525,975.93
Total	6,765	1,548	\$13,539,976.05

Notes for Table One:

- This data only includes clients aged 16-24.
- The amount granted may not be the same as the amount spent.
- The number of clients is not the same as the number of grants. A client may have more than one grant within a period.
- A client may be counted in more than one age group over the period.
- To protect confidentiality the Ministry 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 published counts will never differ by more than two counts.
- The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.

B) The number of emergency accommodation providers who will rent to under 18s.

The Ministry does not hold information on the number of EH providers who will accept under 18-year olds. Under the current model, emergency housing provision involves

paying for a client's accommodation using Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH SNG) and relies on commercial accommodation suppliers for this. These suppliers are not contracted and therefore under no obligation to accept all clients.

Clients who need a place to stay come to the Ministry with a variety of different situations, and their needs are responded to by staff at the time. Staff converse with the client about where they need to be and what kind of accommodation might be suitable and assist in the process of finding somewhere to stay. Staff may also use local knowledge and/or known suppliers who may be able to offer accommodation suitable for the whānau or individual at the time they present with their housing need.

Therefore, this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information on accommodation providers who accept under 18 year olds 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.

C) Any information to hand around policies when it comes to providing youth with emergency housing that would be helpful too

Emergency housing provides somewhere warm and dry to stay for people who would otherwise be homeless, while a more permanent solution can be found. The Ministry provides and administers financial assistance for young clients between the ages of 16 and 19 through the Youth Service, who assist by working to understand each young person's particular situation and how the Ministry can help.

A Youth Coach works with young people in urgent need of accommodation, to provide support to look at a range of housing options that may be available. This could include staying with extended family or friends, providing assistance if they are behind on rent, helping with rent and bond for a new property, assistance for costs to shift to another suitable place, negotiating with landlords and looking at other accommodation options.

If none of these options are suitable, Youth Service will assist with emergency accommodation. While a young person is in emergency housing a Youth Coach will continue to work with them to find longer-term housing options, including public housing and other support that may be available.

The principles and purposes of the Act 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 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 youth in emergency accommodation, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Magnus O'Neill', written in a cursive style.

p.p. Magnus O'Neill

Karen Hocking
General Manager
Housing