



18 NOV 2020

On 20 October 2020, the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) received a partial transfer of your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development for the following information:

- *Data for Christchurch related to Emergency Housing applications for single men.*

On 21 October 2020, the Ministry clarified aspects of your request with you, and the request was refined to the following information:

- *Data for Christchurch relating to Emergency Housing applications for single men, from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020.*

There has been a growing demand nationally for emergency housing as the shortage of affordable housing and rising rents continue to impact low-income whānau, particularly those who are beneficiaries. The year 2020 has seen an especially sharp increase in demand for emergency housing, as the Ministry supported people through the COVID-19 pandemic by providing accommodation to those with an immediate and emergency need.

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 that is adequate for them or their family. 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 client's circumstances.

After seven nights of EH, Work and Income connect with the SNG recipient and determine whether another grant is required. The Ministry works hard to support those in emergency housing to secure a suitable, long-term housing solution, either through Public Housing or private rental accommodation. Other options, including transitional housing, can also be explored, depending on its availability and the individual's circumstances.

The need to provide EH SNGs reflects the Government's commitment to ensuring that those in need have somewhere to stay, so they are not sleeping in their cars or outside. EH provides a short-term solution while more sustainable options are explored.

More information about the Ministry's housing and support services, including the EH SNG, is available on the Ministry's website, here: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/social-housing/index.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/social-housing/index.html).

Regarding your request, we are unable to provide the number of single male clients in receipt of EH SNGs in Christchurch City. Although the Ministry does record the relationship status of clients in their individual files, this information is not recorded in applications for the EH SNG. Therefore, in order to retrieve the information, Ministry

staff would have to manually review the file of every male who received an EH SNG in Christchurch City over the period you have specified. As such, this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as to provide this information would require substantial manual collation. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

However, in the spirit of being helpful, and to at least give you an indication of the number of single male clients who have received an EH SNG over the specified period, please find the following two tables enclosed in **Appendix A**:

- **Table One:** The number of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants to male clients in Christchurch City from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020, broken down by quarter end, distinct clients, and amount granted.
- **Table Two:** The number of male clients in receipt of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants in Christchurch City from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020, broken down by quarter end and household composition of recipients.

Please note that the Ministry only started capturing information about household composition of EH SNG applicants and recipients from 1 April 2020. Therefore, the Ministry does not have records of EH SNGs to households of one male prior to 1 April 2020. To provide this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review hundreds of files. As such, this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as to provide this information would require substantial manual collation. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

Regarding **Table One**, you may note a steep increase in the number of EH SNGs and the amount spent for the June 2020 quarter. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting nation-wide lockdown, the Ministry extended EH SNG timeframes from 7 days to a maximum of 21 days. In addition, in accordance with Ministry of Health guidelines, during COVID-19 Alert Level 4 the Ministry paused non-essential placement activity, meaning that people could often not move out of emergency housing into more sustainable accommodation (i.e. transitional or public housing or private accommodation) during that period.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 lockdown period saw the Ministry support additional client cohorts, including people who were unable to remain in their usual place of residence after receiving a Police Safety Order.

Combined, these factors contributed to more EH SNG grants, longer durations of stay, and higher costs related to emergency housing borne by the Ministry.

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 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 about single men in receipt of the EH SNG, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz). If you are not satisfied with this response, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KH' followed by a stylized flourish.

Karen Hocking  
**General Manager**  
**Housing**

## Appendix A

**Table One: The number of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants to male clients in Christchurch City from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020, broken down by quarter end, distinct clients, and the amount granted.**

Quarter ending	Male recipients of EH SNGs in Christchurch City		
	Grants	Clients	Amount
<b>December 2019</b>	766	204	\$577,990
<b>March 2020</b>	814	224	\$717,554
<b>June 2020</b>	1,441	382	\$1,605,950
<b>September 2020</b>	1,245	315	\$1,024,428

### Notes:

- A client can have more than one grant in any 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 1 shows grants to clients in the Christchurch City Territorial Local Authority.
- Territorial Local Authority is defined under the Local Government Act 2020 as a city council or district council.
- TLA is estimated based on the clients' address at the time of the grant. It may or may not be the same as the address of the emergency housing provider.

**Table Two: The number of male clients in receipt of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants in Christchurch City from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020, broken down by quarter end and household composition of recipients.**

Household composition	June 2020 quarter ending	September 2020 quarter ending
<b>1 adult no children</b>	335	254
<b>1 adult with child(ren)</b>	22	29
<b>2 adults no children</b>	14	16
<b>2 adults with child(ren)</b>	9	16
<b>Unknown</b>	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>315</b>

### Notes:

- Household composition is based on the declared adults and children associated with an EH SNG and may not be reflective of the family size of the SNG recipient or his relationship status.
- Household composition of EH SNG applicants was not captured prior to 1 April 2020.
- Table Two is a count of distinct clients in receipt of an EH SNG – and their household composition at that time – not the total number of grants for a given quarter.
- If a client was granted multiple EH SNGs in a quarter, his household composition will be reported as that of the last grant he received in that quarter.
- A client may have received grants in both quarters, in which case he will be counted twice in the above table.
- Christchurch City refers to the geographic boundary defined by the TLA.