



Ben Schmidt
Coordinator, Manawatu Tenant's Union
fyi-request-14678-04e5a573@requests.fyi.org.nz

12 MAR 2021

Dear Ben Schmidt

On 14 February 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the Ministry's policies, processes, and/or guidance documents regarding:

- *How MSD should respond when someone presents in person to a Service Centre requesting emergency housing or advising that they are homeless?*
- *How MSD will assess an individual or household's eligibility for emergency housing, and what emergency housing providers (such as a motel or boarding house) the individual or household may be eligible for, or not?*
- *How MSD will determine if someone is fulfilling their obligations to look for alternative housing or not, and how non-compliance will be managed before emergency housing is terminated or the costs made recoverable.*

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 dependant on individual 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 and 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 here: www.housing.msd.govt.nz/housing-options/emergency-housing.html.

Some people may struggle to access suitable housing due to a lack of available supply or they simply may not be able to meet the high cost of housing which may result in them receiving EH SNG support for an extended period of time.

There are also distinct groups of people that face a range of complex issues that may be a barrier, such as mental health and addictions, criminal history, or family violence.

There are also others that need to live in a specific area, due to the need to access specialist care or educational needs for them or their family.

For people with high and complex needs, it can sometimes be challenging to identify suitable long-term housing, which can lead to longer stays in emergency housing. Work and Income work closely with these people to see what can be done to ensure that once they have a home of their own, if needed, they have the skills to sustain it, and the support they need to keep it.

I will now answer your questions in turn.

- *How MSD should respond when someone presents in person to a Service Centre requesting emergency housing or advising that they are homeless?*
- *How MSD will assess an individual or household's eligibility for emergency housing, and what emergency housing providers (such as a motel or boarding house) the individual or household may be eligible for, or not?*

Depending on where the Work and Income Service Centre is, and what the current COVID-19 restriction levels are, the individual will be encouraged to arrange an appointment with a Case Manager. Depending on the urgency of the client's need, this may happen on the same day, or at the same time, the client presents. If the region is in Alert Level 3 or above, the appointment will take place over the phone. If the region is in Alert Level 2, the Work and Income Service Centre will only be open to individuals with an appointment.

While your question is specifically relating to a client presenting to a Service Centre, it is worth noting that clients can approach the Ministry through other channels, such as our Contact Centre. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry has expanded our phone-based supports, which allow us to engage and interview clients by phone.

During this appointment, the Ministry would first assess if there was an immediate need for Emergency Housing for the individual by understanding their situation and what led them to the Ministry. Once the Ministry has established the individual's situation, then the client's housing need can be determined, and more specific steps can then be established accordingly.

The Ministry knows that while working with the client to help resolve their immediate, short-term housing need, it is important to support them to meet their longer-term housing need.

An EH SNG is considered a last resort, however, if it is established that a client has an immediate need and has no other alternative options and they meet the eligibility criteria they may then get an EH SNG.

To be eligible for an EH SNG a client must:

- meet an income and cash asset test, unless exceptional circumstances apply. You can learn more about what the Ministry classifies as exceptional circumstances here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/exceptional-circumstances-01.html.
- meet residency and ordinarily resident requirements

- require payment for actual and reasonable costs of the Emergency Housing when not making the grant would:
 - worsen the client's position
 - increase or create any risk to the life or welfare of the client or the client's immediate family or
 - cause serious hardship to the client or the client's immediate family.

Additionally, part of assessing whether the client has an immediate Emergency Housing need is establishing whether the client is not able to access any adequate accommodation for some or all of the next 7 nights from when they applied.

Further information about this is available online at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/emergency-housing.html

Another important aspect of this process is ensuring the accommodation meets the needs of the individual or individuals. Generally, a single person or a couple without children will be assisted to stay in a hostel or night shelter unless there are good reasons why a hostel is not adequate for their needs in the short-term. These reasons may include:

- health and disability reasons for not being able to be in shared accommodation or shared flatting,
- distance from the hostel to work or to other essential services such as medical services, is unreasonable, or
- there is no hostel available.

An accommodation provider would generally be considered appropriate to provide accommodation if they:

- are a commercial provider, a not-for-profit accommodation provider or a marae,
- are approved by the relevant authority to provide accommodation services such as fire and safety, disability access and building requirements, and
- meet the requirements to become a Work and Income supplier.

Further information on the adequacy of Emergency Housing accommodation, please visit the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/adequate-accommodation-for-emergency-housing.html.

- *How MSD will determine if someone is fulfilling their obligations to look for alternative housing or not, and how non-compliance will be managed before emergency housing is terminated or the costs made recoverable.*

Clients can be in Emergency Housing for various reasons and each client's circumstances can greatly differ and could depend on their family situation, reason for the need, housing history, and area they live in.

The obligations and conditions of payment for accommodation funded by the EH SNG and the SNG for a security deposit for emergency housing are discussed between the case manager and client during the grant process.

These generally include:

- the requirement to pay an emergency housing contribution towards the cost of their accommodation after the first 7 nights for a new emergency housing event
- being aware of the accommodation provider's rules of stay while staying in the accommodation. Examples may include, keeping their room clean, obeying noise and other usage policies such as maximum occupancy rates and not removing any of the motel property,
- the consequences of not following the rules of staying at the specific accommodation could result in being liable for the costs arising from damage,
- the consequences of not making reasonable efforts or contributing to their immediate emergency housing need,
- if there are costs that aren't covered by the SNG for security deposits, the accommodation provider will follow these up with the client directly,
- if any of the payment needs to be refunded, the accommodation provider will pay this refund to the Ministry and if the client is paid a refund directly by the accommodation provider, the client will need to repay this to the Ministry, and
- if there is damage or loss that is the responsibility of the client, and the client agrees with the amount of costs incurred and responsibility for the loss or damage when checking out, or if the client fails to check out, the Ministry will pay the provider up to the security deposit amount, and this must be recovered from the client.

A requirement of the EH SNG grant is to seek alternative housing, however, the capacity of the client to do this will vary greatly depending on the client's needs and what opportunities are available to the client to meet the obligation to seek alternative housing. For this reason, the steps a client is required to under-take are established between the Case Manager and client. Examples of these steps could be attending viewings; completing the Social Housing process to be placed on the register; meeting with a Transitional Housing provider or be referred to a Housing Navigator.

While all clients have these obligations, the Case Manager will also consider additional support the Ministry can provide the client. Examples of this include ensuring a client has their full and correct entitlement; referring a client to a Navigator or Transitional Housing provider or ensuring the client is aware of products and services that could assist them.

Some examples of when a client's grant becomes fully recoverable include:

- the client has failed to make a reasonable effort in the circumstances to access other sources of housing assistance or
- the client has unreasonably contributed to their immediate emergency housing need or
- the Ministry has been unable to recover the client's contribution for a previous Special Needs Grant for emergency housing or
- the client has not used the Special Needs Grant for emergency housing for the purpose, or for the period, for which the grant was made.

Please note, whether a grant is recoverable is considered at the of each grant, therefore if a client has had one recoverable EH SNG future grants will not necessarily also be recoverable. If the EH SNG is made fully recoverable, the client will have to repay the contribution and repay the grant, over time. The Ministry would discuss this repayment plan with the client at their appointment.

Regarding your request for guidelines Ministry staff use, please find enclosed, internal guidelines that staff refer to when working with Emergency Housing clients, *Emergency Housing end to end process*, dated 2 January 2021.

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

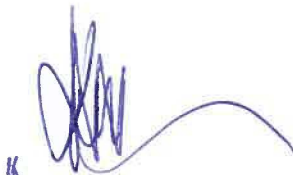
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

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 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 Ministry's approach to assessing a client's eligibility for an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant, 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



Karen Hocking
**General Manager
Housing**

Emergency housing end to end process

The below process assumes you have received a task from S2P or Q-Manager. If you are in a face-to-face appointment, start the process from step 4.

Step #	Actions	Helpful links
1.	<p>Bring up the client information in CMS and SWIFTT. Confirm what information we already have on the client's file and what we know of their circumstances (partner/children; income; current situation).</p> <p>If there is information missing, check what we require so you can follow this up with the client.</p> <p>Attempt to call the client:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> if the call is not answered, leave detailed client event notes and requeue the task for one hour if the call is answered, verify the client and confirm client's CMS record is current 	<p>Processing standards [http://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/processing-standards/index.html]</p>
3.	<p>If you identified verification was required (in step 1), advise the client. Where we need to store of these documents, have the client:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> upload the documents via MyMSD; or e-mail a copy of the verification (you will then need to upload it to CMS) 	<p>Processing standards [http://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/processing-standards/index.html]</p> <p>Upload docs via myMSD [http://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/products-services/service-delivery/mymsd/upload-documents-into-mymsd-process.html]</p>
4.	<p>Assess the client's situation and establish an immediate emergency housing need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure the client is receiving their full and correct entitlement <p>Note: if the client does not have an immediate emergency housing need, assess what products and services are available to support the client with their need.</p> <p>If the client has no SWIFTT record you will need to register them as NONBEN</p> <p>Explore alternative options that may be available to the client</p>	<p>Immediate emergency housing need [https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/emergency-housing/establishing-an-immediate-emergency-housing-need/index.html]</p>
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hardship to pay for rent arrears for the client to remain in their tenancy Rent redirection Staying with friends or family 	<p>Exploring alternative options [https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/emergency-housing/exploring-alternative-options/index.html]</p>
6.	<p>Check if transitional housing is available</p> <p>If a transitional housing home is available ensure the client meets the residency and income and asset (EH SNG) criteria and advise them of the information below in points A and B. Then refer them to a provider.</p> <p>See: Referring clients to a transitional housing provider [http://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/social-housing/transitional-housing-referral.html]</p> <p>If a transitional housing home is not available, advise the client that they may be referred when a suitable property becomes available and the information below in points A and B</p> <p>Point A</p> <p>If/ When they are placed in transitional housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> they will be able to stay with the provider while they find longer term accommodation (on average a maximum stay of up to 12 weeks) 	<p>Checking transitional housing [https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/emergency-housing/transitional-housing/index.html]</p>

- the provider and MSD will work with them to identify longer term accommodation options
- they will be required to make a contribution towards the accommodation cost while staying in transitional housing. The amount paid will be at the provider's discretion, but the client will contribute no more than 25 percent of their net income (including main benefit and FTC (if applicable))
- if they receive a main benefit, their transitional housing contribution will be paid to the transitional housing provider through a benefit redirection
- if they decline a transitional housing place, which is adequate for their needs, without a good reason it may affect their entitlement to other emergency housing assistance.

Point B

Ask for the client's permission to share their details with the transitional housing provider which includes information the provider may need to know about when determining suitability to their service and any potential safety concerns. These details need to be captured in the client event

When all other options have been explored and the steps above have been taken but the client still needs emergency housing, we can continue below to grant an EH SNG.

Have the client complete the EH SNG application form and, ensure they understand the:

- 7.
- conditions of payment
 - emergency housing contribution
 - security deposit
 - repayment options for the contribution (such as redirections)

Note: you can fill the application out on behalf of the client, but they still need to understand the above.

Check any previous grants and EHCs, and confirm (where applicable):

- 8.
- the client has met their previous housing requirements
 - the dates of the previous grants do not overlap the current grant period. If the dates overlap, determine why and when calculating the EHC, only calculate it for the period that has not had a contribution applied to
 - the EHC has been paid (this can be checked in **CMS>Products and Services>Debt Details**)
 - Look for the last receipt date or how many EHCs still remain unpaid. (Note: if the EHC has been paid in full, it drops off the list.)

Note: if the previous EHC has not been paid, discuss with the client why it has not been paid and consider declining their current application.

- 9.
- Determine if the grant should be recoverable

If the grant is recoverable and an emergency housing contribution does not apply

- calculate the recovery rate (25 percent of the client's and partner's (if any) income)
- Advise the client why the grant is recoverable, the recoverable amount (total accommodation cost) and recovery rate
- add a must view note advising the recovery rate need to be reduced if the client leaves emergency housing or is granted another EH SNG where the contribution applies

If the grant is recoverable and a contribution does apply:

Editable EH SNG application form

[<http://doogle/documents/resources/helping-clients/forms-templates/work-and-income/forms/work-income/emergency-housing-special-needs-grant-application-sha011w.pdf>]

Printable EH SNG application form

[<http://doogle/documents/resources/helping-clients/forms-templates/work-and-income/forms/work-income/emergency-housing-special-needs-grant-sha011w.pdf>]

Conditions of payment

[<http://doogle/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/clients-accessing-emergency-housing-must-be-advised.html>]

Security deposit

[<http://doogle/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/security-deposit-required-by-the-emergency-housing-provider.html>]

Overlapping grants

[<http://doogle/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/working-out-contributions-for-overlapping-grants.html>]

When a Special Needs Grant for emergency housing may not be paid

[<https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/when-a-special-needs-grant-for-emergency-housing-may-not-be-paid.html>]

Recoverable grants

[<http://doogle/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/when-a-special-needs-grant-for-emergency-housing-is-made-recoverable.html>]

How to calculate the EHC using DREW

[[calculate-ehc-using-drew.html](http://doogle/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/how-to-calculate-the-ehc-using-drew.html)]

- the recoverable amount is the EH SNG grant amount minus the contribution payable for the grant
- negotiate a repayment rate for the recoverable amount the client can afford
- advise the client why the grant is recoverable and the recoverable amount

Create the hardship application in CMS:

- Need = Emergency Housing
- Amount = [amount according to the client's circumstance]
- Why does the client need the assistance? = [The reason for the application]
- Select 'Create Application'

Fill in the application level and need specific level questions based on the client's circumstance

Note: you need to answer 'No' to the question 'can the client meet the emergency housing need from their own resources or other sources?'

Contribution Details

10. Use DREW to calculate the contribution.

1. Copy the 'Contribution per night' figure from DREW into the 'Contribution per night' field in CMS
2. Copy the 'Total Client Contribution' figure from DREW into the 'Total Contribution Amount' field in CMS.

Note:

1) The 'contribution to' field in DREW should be the check out date. The 'contribution from' filed is either the check in date or the date following the 7th night in emergency housing, whichever is later.

2) The EHC should only be calculated for the period following the 7th night in an emergency housing funded through EH SNG and for only the nights where a contribution has not already applied.

Select next, then 'Manage recommendation' and complete the recommendation for the 'Emergency Housing' need.

Note: when adding a 'Quote Ref' ensure you add it to the EH and the EHC need

Recoverable

If the grant should be recoverable:

- select 'edit' in the application recommendation screen
- Update the recoverable field to 'Recoverable'
- Add the reason why its recoverable in the discretion used text box
- Select 'save'

Add the recovery rate by:

- select 'edit' in the application recommendation screen
- Update the recovery rate (p/w) filed to the weekly repayment amount
- Add a reason in the discretion used text box
- Select 'save'

Note: only make the 'Emergency Housing' need recoverable, not the 'Emergency Housing Contribution'

12. Add the payment method (e.g. direct credit, payment card) and approve the payment.

[How to calculate the EHC using DREW \[calculate-ehc-using-drew.html\]](#)

[Manually calculating the EHC \[http://doogle/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/examples-of-calculating-the-emergency-housing-contribution.html\]](#)

[Rounding rules for EHC \[http://doogle/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/emergency-housing/emergency-housing-special-needs-grant/roundingrules.html\]](#)

[Overlapping grants \[http://doogle/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/working-out-contributions-for-overlapping-grants.html\]](#)

[Past periods \[http://doogle/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/client-already-staying-in-emergency-accommodation-applies-late-for-an-emergency-housing-grant.html\]](#)

[Emergency housing contribution \[http://doogle/map/income-support/extra-help/temporary-additional-support/emergency-housing-contribution.html\]](#)

[Adjusting redirections for emergency housing \[http://doogle/map/income-support/core-policy/redirection-of-benefit-payment/changing-and-ending-redirections-for-emergency-housing-contribution.html\]](#)

The following screen is the application summary screen which details the payment summary and the contribution and redirection(s) that will populate into SWIFTT. You will have the option to either select:

Continue – which will populate the contribution and redirection(s) into SWIFTT, or

X- which will not populate the contribution and redirection(s) into SWIFTT. You will need to add this manually and/or arrange a manual payment with the client.

Note: Before deciding whether or not to add a redirection, you must be satisfied there is good cause to redirect the client's benefit, NZS or VP. [Refer here for more information in MAP \[http://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/map/income-support/core-policy/redirection-of-benefit-payment/redirection-for-emergency-housing.html\]](http://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/map/income-support/core-policy/redirection-of-benefit-payment/redirection-for-emergency-housing.html)

Navigate to the application comments. If you selected continue the system would've left a comment detailing the contribution and redirection(s), if applicable, created. It will also detail any redirection(s) it was unable to create which you will have to either manually add or arrange a manual payment for.

Advise the client the contribution and redirection amount(s).

For beneficiaries – advise them of the total amount, the redirection amount and when it will come out of their benefit.

Manually paying: If a redirection is for a past period (i.e. before the previous Friday for beneficiaries or the previous Tuesday for NZS/VP) the client will need to manually pay the redirection amount just like a non-beneficiary.

If the client does not have enough benefit to cover the redirection(s), see if adjusting the redirections and offset will make funds available for the contribution. If there is still not enough funds, advise the client they will need to pay it manually.

13.

If a client is only receiving OB/UCB, CCS, CDA or portable payment they will need to repay the contribution manually.

For non-beneficiaries and students – advise them of the total amount and that they will need to arrange a manual payment.

They can find the ways to pay here.

Please let them know that the reference field needs to have the letter 'E' and their SWN with no spaces (e.g. E123456789)

Note: you will need to add the manual payment arrangement into your client event note. It needs to confirm:

- when the payment is being made
- the amount of the payment
- how often the payments will be made (for non-bens and students) e.g. weekly, fortnightly, etc.

Reassess TAS and/or SB.

14.

If the client is receiving TAS and/or SB, any payments towards their emergency housing contribution and emergency housing debt will need to be included as an allowable cost.

Provide/send the client's hardship summary letter and leave detailed hardship notes.

15.

Note: your hardship note needs to include the emergency housing contribution calculation from DREW. Click 'copy to clipboard' and paste it into the notes. This will ensure the correct redirections and EHC amount is set up in SWIFTT.

[Emergency Housing Note Template - Form](http://doogle/documents/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/emergency-housing/ehc-templates-15102020.docx)

[<http://doogle/documents/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/emergency-housing/ehc-templates-15102020.docx>]

[Emergency Housing Note Template - Word](http://doogle/documents/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/emergency-housing/ehc-templates-word-28102020.docx)

[<http://doogle/documents/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/emergency-housing/ehc-templates-word-28102020.docx>]

16.

Book a follow up appointment in Q-Manager for **before** the end period of the current grant.

Content owner: [Service Delivery - Business Process Management](#) Last updated: 21 January 2021

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