

‘Central’ expenditure for the provision of emergency and temporary accommodation

1. We understand that as part of the NIHE pandemic response there was a provision of emergency blocked temporary accommodation which has been categorised as 'Central.'

Can NIHE how much of the expenditure defined as 'Central' was spent in the Derry/Strabane area for the provision of Emergency B&B and hotels temporary accommodation in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

The categorisation of 'Central' reflects the provision of emergency block booked temporary accommodation that was introduced in response to a significant increase in homeless presenter demands during the pandemic period as per the following figures.

Year	Number of Placements
2017/18	3,024
2018/19	3,354
2019/20	4,527
2020/21	9,752
2021/22	9,265

This increase in demand resulted in the need to acquire additional temporary accommodation and in an effort to avail of more Single Let accommodation the Housing Executive entered in to block-booking arrangements. In such arrangements gross weekly charges are paid direct to the Landlord while for those properties acquired on a block booking basis the Housing Executive receives Housing Benefit income in respect of eligible tenants. The management of such payments is via an interface which is updated manually and not via our Housing Management System as with Single Lets managed outside the block-booking arrangements. As per this link, we have previously provided details on spend and have provided details for temporary accommodation outside block-booking arrangements as this is more readily accessible on an area basis.

Regrettably it is not possible to readily provide a breakdown of 'Central' expenditure according to Local Council area from NIHE systems. This information would only be attainable by undertaking a detailed manual analysis of individual transactions, which would take at least 449 hours of staff time.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for the Housing Executive is set at £450. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours in determining whether the Housing Executive holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting it.

We have considered the possibility of this request being refined to come within the appropriate limit and would estimate that even providing a breakdown for one month would commit us to a significant resource obligation that would go well beyond 18 hours. It should be noted that the FOI Act does not require the Housing Executive to search for information up to the costs limit and we consider there is no meaningful conclusion that could be gained from the provision of data up to the 'Appropriate Limit' of 18 hours.

We understand the importance of being able to provide information in the format requested, and will therefore re-evaluate how this information is captured in the future to aid Local Council reporting.