

25 March 2024

Our Ref: FOI 316

Request

We wish to better understand the Housing Executive's current use of hotels, B&Bs, guest houses and similar as non-standard temporary accommodation and its impact on the households placed there. To that end, please provide

1. The number, by council area, of hotels and similar currently being used by the Housing Executive as temporary accommodation as at the end of the third and fourth quarters of 2023 (so as of September and December 2023). (If this information is publicly available online, please let us know where)
2. The number of households placed by the Housing Executive in temporary accommodation in hotels and similar by council area at the end of the third and fourth quarters of 2023. (If this information is publicly available online, please let us know where)
3. Whether any of these households included children under the age of 18; if so how many households and how many children affected as at the end of the third and the fourth quarters of 2023
4. Any guidance or operating guidelines about placing families with children in hotel / similar accommodation (eg physical space; proximity to school; duration of stay)
5. Information or guidance on any support that has been made available to residents to help them cope with strains imposed by hotel / B&B / similar accommodation (eg transport support to work / school / medical appointments in their previous area of residence; help with hotel meal vouchers / food costs / availability, given lack of access to kitchen facilities; any other similar)
6. The estimated spend associated with the use of hotels/B&Bs/guest houses / similar as temporary accommodation at the end of the third and fourth quarters of 2023 (so as of September and December 2023), broken down by accommodation costs and any support programme costs. (If this information is publicly available online, please let us know where)

Response

1. *The number, by council area, of hotels and similar currently being used by the Housing Executive as temporary accommodation as at the end of the third and fourth quarters of 2023 (so as of September and December 2023). (If this information is publicly available online, please let us know where)*

The Housing Executive records use of non-standard accommodation (Hotels/B&Bs) by the number of placements rather than by number of hotels. The table below details the number of placements by council area as of 30th September 2023 and 31st December 2023.

<i>Council</i>	<i>Non-Standard Placements as of 30th September 2023</i>	<i>Non-standard Placements as of 31st December 2023</i>
<i>Antrim & Newtownabbey</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Ards & North Down</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Belfast</i>	<i>127</i>	<i>190</i>
<i>Causeway Coast & Glens</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Derry & Strabane</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>167</i>
<i>Fermanagh & Omagh</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Lisburn & Castlereagh</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Mid & East Antrim</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Mid Ulster</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Newry, Mourne & Down</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>388</i>	<i>395</i>

- 2.** *The number of households placed by the Housing Executive in temporary accommodation in hotels and similar by council area at the end of the third and fourth quarters of 2023. (If this information is publicly available online, please let us know where)*

Please see table provided in response to Q1. Each placement aligns to a distinct household and therefore the table provided in Q1 provides details of the number of households placed in non-standard accommodation as of 30th September 2023 and 31st December 2023.

- 3.** *Whether any of these households included children under the age of 18; if so how many households and how many children affected as at the end of the third and the fourth quarters of 2023*

The table below details the number of placements by council area where the household type was family as of 30th September 2023 and 31st December 2023. It should be noted that the household type family denotes any household where there was a child listed as a household member and under the age of 18 years old at the time of application.

<i>Council</i>	<i>Non-Standard Placements as of 30th September 2023 (Family Household Type Only)</i>	<i>Non-standard Placements as of 31st December 2023 (Family Household Type Only)</i>
<i>Antrim & Newtownabbey</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Ards & North Down</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Belfast</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Causeway Coast & Glens</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Derry & Strabane</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Fermanagh & Omagh</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Lisburn & Castlereagh</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Mid & East Antrim</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>

Mid Ulster	0	0
Newry, Mourne & Down	2	1
Total	68	70

4. Any guidance or operating guidelines about placing families with children in hotel / similar accommodation (eg physical space; proximity to school; duration of stay)

The statutory duties of the Housing Executive towards those experiencing homelessness is set out in the Housing (NI) Order 1988, (the '88 Order). The accommodation duty can arise immediately under this legislation on consideration of a homelessness application, wherein the emergency accommodation of a temporary nature will be offered in response to their housing crisis. This is referred to as the Interim Duty.

If the Housing Executive concludes the Applicant is a Full Duty Applicant (FDA) it is then under a full housing duty to secure that accommodation is made available for occupation of that Applicant. In the phased discharge of the Full Duty and until the full duty ends, emergency accommodation of a temporary nature continue to be made available. Provision of such accommodation during the phased discharge is not exclusively bound to consider the Applicant's choice. Nor do the Rules of the Housing Selection Scheme, which limits the number of permanent offers of housing accommodation, bear upon the discharge homelessness duty to accommodate.

To respond to its homelessness duties to accommodate, the Housing Executive has access to a pool of temporary accommodation units. These units include Housing Executive and Voluntary sector hostels, units from within the Private Sector such as Diverse Intensively Managed Emergency Accommodation (DIME) and single lets. However, it should be noted that the duty does not extend to the provision of a specific form or type of accommodation.

The decision regarding the suitability of emergency temporary accommodation offered in the discharge of the homelessness duty is made in accordance with the '88 Order. In determining suitability, specific Designated Officers within the Housing Executive will consider factors such as the individual circumstances and the needs of a given Applicant and will take on board any representation made on behalf of the Applicant. Placements can be offered in emergency temporary accommodation that does not meet all of the relevant suitability factors. While an individual may feel the emergency temporary accommodation which has been made available is unreasonable, it should be noted that the Housing Executive can meet its homelessness duty by keeping an Applicant in accommodation that would not be suitable to occupy on a long term basis but it would not be unreasonable for the Applicant to occupy for a short period. This is while the Housing Executive continues to look for a permanent housing solution, which can be a Housing Executive or Housing Association property, within their area of choice.

If an Applicant with FDA does not agree with the Housing Executive's decision as to the suitability of the accommodation offered in the discharge of the homelessness duty, they have rights within the '88 Order to request a review as to the suitability of accommodation offered to them in discharge of the duty.

5. Information or guidance on any support that has been made available to residents to help them cope with strains imposed by hotel / B&B / similar accommodation (eg transport support to work / school / medical appointments in their previous area of residence; help with hotel meal vouchers / food costs / availability, given lack of access to kitchen facilities; any other similar)

Staff within Housing Solutions and Support Teams will seek to identify the most appropriate placement from options which include voluntary sector hostels, Housing Executive hostels, Single Lets, and options such as non-standard (B&Bs/Hotels) which is used as a last resort and for as short a duration as possible.

The Housing Executive will also work with households to provide additional necessary support from other agencies to support clients who are placed in temporary accommodation. This involves referrals to floating support funded by the Housing Executive via our Supporting People programme.

6. *The estimated spend associated with the use of hotels/B&Bs/guest houses / similar as temporary accommodation at the end of the third and fourth quarters of 2023 (so as of September and December 2023), broken down by accommodation costs and any support programme costs. (If this information is publicly available online, please let us know where)*

Information on costs for Temporary Accommodation is available on an annual basis (April-March) and spend on non-standard accommodation will be available subsequent to the close of the current financial year.

This concludes our response.