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Our ref: CG 2016 37

Your ref: M07/0716

Dear Mr Murphy



Thank you for your letter in relation to bin waivers.

The charges applied by waste management companies are a matter between those companies and their customers, subject to compliance with all applicable environmental and other relevant legislation, including contract and consumer legislation.

An interdepartmental working group, established in line with national waste policy to report to Government with options to minimise the impact of waste charges on low income households, submitted two reports to the previous Government. It should be noted that there has never been a national waiver scheme for household waste collection. During the period in which local authorities were directly involved in the collection of household waste, a minority of individual Councils offered different levels of discount to selected households, based on different qualification criteria. As local authorities exited the waste collection market, some required the private operators which took on the Councils' customers to provide a level of discount for existing waiver customers only, and even then, for only a limited time. The vast majority of such contractual commitments for private operators to provide a waiver have now expired. In that context, the number of households in receipt of waiver discounts is likely to decline over time, especially as some householders were able to take advantage of special reduced offers elsewhere which actually undercut the waiver price. However, selected private operators still offer some level of discount to former waiver customers on a voluntary basis. With the exception of one or two municipal districts, local authorities no longer collect waste. Waste collection is now serviced by a diverse range of private operators, where the fees charged are a matter between the service provider and customer and the range of services and fees offered vary amongst providers and across the country. In that regard, it became increasingly apparent that a national waiver scheme could not be imposed in the context of an open market for waste collection.

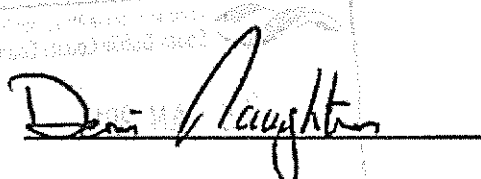
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A mandatory pay-by-weight charging structure for household waste collection was due to be introduced in mid-2016. The waste management industry had committed, on a voluntary basis, to providing a full weight allowance for the disposal of non-infancy incontinency wear to patients supplied with such products by the HSE, if a mandatory pay-by-weight per kilogramme charging system was introduced for household waste collection. However, on 30 June 2016, regulations were signed to remove the requirement for mandatory pay-by-weight charging structure.

My Department is currently reviewing, together with the regulatory authorities and industry representatives, the introduction of an incentivised pricing system, such as pay by weight, for household waste collection. The review is due to be completed by July 2017. The issue of medical waste will be examined as part of the review.

The provision of healthcare risk bags would be a matter for the Health Service Executive. A copy of your letter has been sent to the HSE for their attention and direct reply.

Yours sincerely,



Denis Naughten, T.D.

Minister for Communications, Climate Action & Environment