

At €1,300 it's the cost of a family holiday!

By Eamon Donoghue

THE real bill for a family of four could be as high as €1,180 a year once the capping period has passed, and large families could be billed as much as €1,350.

Mother of two Laura Haugh, of the MummyPages.ie website, said the cost was equivalent to a family holiday and could be too much for families.

She said: 'I am really concerned as I've no concept as to what the bill will be. I don't understand what the average use is at all or how much I'm using at the moment.'

'I think it will be a big shock for people, once people get over the capped period as people aren't conscious of it.'

'Talking to mums, it's what most people's views are: all these additional taxes and costs are all creeping in and it's the equivalent of a family's annual family holiday.'

Typical families of four use an estimated 6,036 litres a week or 313,898 a year. Once annual allowances of 30,000 litres per household and 21,000 litres per child are taken off, the billable usage comes to 241,898 litres, giving rise to an annual bill of €1,180. The cost per 1,000 litres is €4.88.

Based on similar assumptions, a couple with six children would be hit for a bill of €1,350 based on annual billable usage and once allowances are deducted.

Ms Haugh said that she took a daily shower as does her husband, who would also 'shower at least five of the seven days as he goes to the gym and he prefers to come home afterwards, although that might have to change now.'

With a seven-minute power shower taking up 175 litres, her family are using 3,325 litres a week just on basic hygiene.

Meanwhile, her three year old daughter and five year old son would between them have four baths a week, an additional 320 litres.

She also calculated that she would flush her toilet approximately 112 times a week using 1,008 litres. She said she would put on four clothes washes a week, using 220 litres weekly.

'Do you say you won't shower the children?'

Ms Haugh also said that she washes the dishes at least once a day, using 70 litres a week, along with also using the dishwasher daily, which adds 385 litres.

She added that 'another way we'd use water is for the children playing'.

'They like to blow bubbles and do painting, and my daughter likes to play mother in the kitchen.'

'So between the playing we'd be using five litres a week easily,' she said.

Other usages for such families include 28 litres of drinking water, 3.5 litres for meals and 672 litres for brushing teeth.

Another mother, Mandy O'Rorke, from Kildare, Co. Kildare, is facing a considerable water bill. 'You're only guessing with it,' said the mother-of-four last night.

'Some days you use the water more than others. In the summer you might be out spraying the kids for example. Do you say we're not going to this today because it's going to cost this?'

'You don't want to change the way you live, do you say you're not going to shower the kids? It's going to be a huge amount of money and it's a change a lot of people aren't aware of.'

Ms O'Rorke, the owner of www.BabyBay-Market.ie, has a newborn baby and three children aged six to nine.

She said that while only using the dishwasher once a day there's 'always stuff to wash up. I'd use the full sink at least three times a day'. One full use of the sink used in washing the dishes uses up 10 litres.

Flushing the toilet once uses as much as nine litres of water while brushing your teeth with the tap running for two minutes uses 12 litres of water.

'We all brush our teeth twice a day except for the baby who has no teeth,' Ms O'Rorke said, 'and they would let the tap run although we do try to stop them.'

On average, even with no-one in the house for long periods, her family would flush the toilet 20 times per day.

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Worried: Mandy O'Rorke from Kildare with three of her four children



Disability groups hit out at bills

By Helen Bruce

A WOMAN with Crohn's disease has taken a High Court case in a bid to stop meter installations.

Elizabeth Hourihane made her move as disability groups voiced concerns over how they will be treated under the new regime.

Paddy Connolly, the CEO of Inclusion Ireland, said the powers that be show no real understanding about the cost of a disability.

And two mothers of disabled children have told the Irish Daily Mail of their alarm over the growing bills they will face because of the amount of water they have to use.

Ms Hourihane also wants to have the decision to set up Irish Water quashed. Though, Ms Hourihane of Passage West, Cork, failed in her bid to take a judicial review yesterday, the judge advised her that she should alter her case into a plenary action in which she could sue the Environment Minister, the State and the Attorney General.

Ms Hourihane told the court that due to her illness she had to



High costs: Lisa Domican be constantly hydrated or she would become very sick.

She said she felt intimidated by Irish Water's threat to reduce her water supply to a trickle should she not be able to pay.

Households with people who have a disability or a medical requirement for additional water will have their water charges capped at the assessed charge rate for the number of people in their household.

Full-time carer Aisling McNiffe said water charges would be



Aisling McNiffe and son Jack another bill she could not afford to pay given her fixed carer's allowance income. At her home in Kildare, she cares for her disabled son Jack, eight, who requires 24-hour care. She also has a daughter, Molly, ten.

Jack is the only child in the world to have Down syndrome as well as CINCA syndrome, a rare degenerative disease, and Ms McNiffe needs to use enormous amounts of water to care for him.

Jack is fed through a tube, takes 16 medications a day and is incon-



Court: Elizabeth Hourihane tinent. She doesn't know where she is going to find the money to pay her water bill. 'I can't afford the mortgage, I don't know what I am going to do,' she said.

Lisa Domican - a mother of two autistic children Liam, 16, and Grace, 15, - said of the water charges: 'I've been very, very anxious about it to be honest.'

'As a special needs family, we use a lot of water - there's a lot of cleaning up without going into detail,' Mrs Domican from Greystones, Co. Wicklow, added.