



Big bills: Laura Haugh with son James and daughter Lucy

# Q&A

## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WATER CHARGES

**Q: Will everybody be paying for water from now on?**

A: From this morning, all households that do not have access to a private source and group schemes for water and sewage will be paying water charges whether a meter has been installed outside their home or not. The exceptions are group scheme members (who already pay a fee) and those with their own wells.

**Q: When will I start to pay?**

A: The first bills for the period of October to December 2014 will be sent out in January 2015.

**Q: How much will I have to pay?**

A: This will depend on the number of people living in your home. For the coming nine months, all households will pay an assessed charge, regardless of how much water they use. A household with one adult will pay €88 for water supply and €88 for waste-water treatment or €176 per annum. This is based on the calculation by the Commission for Energy Regulation which sets the prices Irish Water can charge, that the first adult in a household will use 66,000 litres per year. Each additional adult adds €102 to the total annual cost, based on the assumption that he or she will add another 21,000 litres to the total.

**Q: How often will I be billed?**

A: Every three months.

**Q: I take my water supply from a well or a private water scheme, will I have to pay?**

A: If your water comes from a well but your supply is connected to the sewerage system, you will still have to pay for wastewater treatment but not for water supply.

**Q: I am on a septic tank and am not connected to the sewerage system, will I have to pay?**

A: Household on a septic tank won't have to pay for wastewater treatment but will have to pay for their water if it comes from a public sources.

**Q: What about children?**

A: Children receive free water during the assessed charge period so there will be no additional charge for the first nine months.

**Q: Will I still get a meter reading during the assessed period?**

A: Yes, householders will receive bills every three months, with the first bills arriving in January. For people with water meters already

installed, these bills will show you how much water you used but the charge will be capped at the assessed rate regardless of use.

**Q: What if I use less water than the estimated amount during the assessed period, do I benefit for being thrifty with water?**

A: Yes, if your usage falls below the assessed allowances, Irish Water will give you a rebate applied as a one off credit to your account.

**Q: A meter hasn't been installed at my home yet: what do I pay?**

A: About one in five people such as those in apartments will not have a meter installed by the end of 2016. These people will remain on the assessed charge during this time. Once a meter is installed outside a house, the nine-month clock starts ticking, meaning a person will start to be charged according to their usage nine months later.

**Q: What is the metered rate?**

A: The metered rate will be €4.88 per 1,000 litres of water supply and wastewater services combined. But the Government will pay Irish Water for the first 30,000 litres of water you use. In addition, an allowance of 21,000 litres will be given to a household for each child it has per year.

**Q: I have a medical condition that means I need additional water. Will I be charged for this?**

Customers with medical conditions requiring extra water consumption will be capped at the assessed charge for that household even if they have a meter.

**Q: How will this be checked?**

A: Once a customer makes a declaration to Irish Water, they will stay at the assessed charge. There is no requirement for the customer to state the medical condition and there will be no list of qualifying medical conditions. However, Irish Water may seek evidence of a medical cert.

**Q: I live in an area with a boil-water notice. Do I have to pay for water that's not fit for human consumption?**

The Commission for Energy Regulation has decided to apply a 100 per cent discount to households where water is unfit for human consumption for the duration of the Boil Water Notice. These households will still have to pay for wastewater services if they are connected to the main sewerage system.

### Bills could rise in two years' time

WATER charges for householders could go up in just over two years' time.

Although the prices are set for now, reviews will take place at the end of 2016. There are warnings this could see charges rise closer to €500 than the current €278 rate for a households with two adults and children. The charges announced yesterday last from October 1 to December 31, 2016. At that stage there will be a review, with critics warning Irish Water could take the opportunity to hike prices.

Last night Fianna Fáil environment spokesman Barry Cowen said the real costs for Irish Water would not be known until after the initial nine-month set charges period.

He said: 'It will take another nine months before metered assessment takes place, that means it will take a further 12 months before we know the real costs and absolute costs.'



Furious: Mary Murtagh

### 'A supply I can't drink'

PENSIONER Mary Murtagh is furious that she has to pay for 'water she cannot use'.

The 67-year-old, who lives with her husband Aiden, 69, in Castle-rea, Co. Roscommon, has to buy bottled water as their home has a boil water notice. This means they will be charged for only half of their water supply.

However, Ms Murtagh said: 'They say they are giving the drinking water for free. They say they are giving it for nothing but I'm spending €240 a month on bottled water, it's not free. We're not getting anything for free at the end of the day, only this extra waste water charge now.'

### Boil-water notice but still billed

HOUSEHOLDERS with undrinkable water are furious that they will be hit with water bills.

Homeowners whose water supply is not fit for human consumption will not have to pay a water supply charge, but they still have to pay for waste water which makes up half of the bill.

Earlier this month, the Irish Daily Mail revealed almost 26,000 Irish Water customers still have undrinkable water which may lead to a fatal disease - cryptosporidium.

Fianna Fáil councillor Paschal Fitzmaurice says he has had to fork out €3,000 on bottled water due to a boil-water notice in his area and he says there is anger in his constituency that people still have to pay a water charge. He said: 'They'll have to pay for water that's going out but not in, but the people are already paying massive money on bottled water so they are in fact paying for both.'