

Bin visits discriminate against vulnerable petition claims

A decision to move household waste collections from fortnightly to every three weeks discriminates against the most vulnerable in society, campaigners have told East Lothian Council.

A petition signed by more than 2,700 people calling for household waste collections to be every two weeks will be put to councillors next week.

Angry residents have claimed the local authority is sending workers to look into the amount of incontinence waste a house is producing to determine whether they need more support.

And they say households dealing with nappies, female sanitary products and adult incontinence pads which are not recyclable are being unfairly disadvantaged.

However the council has insisted it is still collecting 'medical waste fortnightly, and workers are visiting home only if invited to provide support.

The petition states; "The new system is discriminatory to any family affected by this, as we are asked to store them and bag them for collection.

"Why are families expected to handle waste in this manner,

when previously we could bag it and leave it in our bin, then wheel out the bin discreetly.

“East Lothian Council is offering a home visit to families to check they are using their recycling bins and to see how much incontinence waste there is – this is completely unacceptable and discrimination against the most vulnerable in society.”

The council has come under fire after switching the household waste bin collection to the longer cycle.

The county has among the highest number of waste and recycling receptacles in the country with a total of six available for use including a garden waste bin which it charges residents £35 a year to empty.

A Facebook page for residents impacted by the three weekly bin collection has been swamped with stories from locals who are struggling to cope with the longer wait for household waste to be collected.

Many say they are now having to make regular trips to the local dumps while others claim neighbours are putting bags in other people’s bins creating tension in streets.

Some have also resorted to paying private firms to empty their bins as they say they cannot wait for the council’s three weekly collections.

The petition was due to go before councillors in the weeks running up to the general election by the local authority deemed it ‘too political’ to be discussed during purdah – the pre election period when public bodies must remain neutral.

It will now be heard by the council’s petitions and community empowerment committee next Thursday.

A council spokesperson said of the concerns over nappies, sanitary and incontinence waste: “This refers to our specialist yellow bag service, which is fortnightly and free

to households who qualify.

“The service is designed to provide an optional additional collection for those with small children who use nappies and older / disabled residents who use incontinence products.

“Recycling advisors will visit properties to verify the service is required, speak with the customer and to discuss options with them. Apart from the service itself, residents with disabilities or lifelong conditions may be offered a larger bin, for example. It’s a supportive conversation to determine what will best meet their needs.

“This is a purely voluntary service – residents have the option to use the service or continue to use their green bin if they feel uncomfortable with this alternative arrangement.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter