

Talking rubbish

Media reports that suggest fortnightly bin collections will leave residents without a service for over four weeks are '*simply talking rubbish*' according to APSE, a local government organisation that supports councils deliver frontline services.

In a survey of local councils APSE found that disruptions to bin collections over the Christmas period will be minimised as Councils have put into place plans to deliver either additional collections or change collection days with notice to residents to make sure services are maintained throughout the Christmas period.

Paul O'Brien Chief Executive of APSE said '*It is not clear why some quarters of the media are stirring up a bin war over Christmas collections. In reality Councils and the thousands of front-line bin collectors will be working hard to ensure residents get their bins emptied.*'

The APSE snapshot survey found that councils have taken measures that include:-

- Collections in some areas on the Sunday and Monday immediately following Christmas Day and Boxing Day
- Rounds being changed to allow collections for those residents whose normal collection day falls on Christmas day to ensure gaps in service are reduced to matter of days – not weeks as some have suggested
- Additional collection of 'side waste' the waste that will not fit into wheelie bins - recognising that Christmas brings extra rubbish
- Specific collections of Christmas Trees and Wrapping paper for recycling
- Switching some recycling teams – such as those that collect garden waste which is minimal in the winter months – into collecting normal household waste collection to ensure services are covered
- Emergency plans to deal with late collections because of the snow and ice conditions which can make some areas inaccessible to collection vehicles

Councils are also taking the opportunity to notify residents of the 'Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle' message when sending out information on Christmas Bin Collections. Encouraging residents to think about the opportunity to recycle even more at Christmas and encouraging families and their relative to think about waste minimisation with the amount of packaging used in products and gifts.

Notes to editors and snapshot survey findings

- The average gap for service collections is less than 3 days
- Over 80% of respondents have put additional resources into Christmas cover including switching recycling collectors into household waste
- 90% of respondents whilst encouraging residents to use the wheelie bin system will if asked collect side waste with the waste collections

- Councils are also using additional vehicles to pick up side waste such as wrapping paper and card from gifts and will introduce tree collections or drop off points for Christmas tree recycling
- Some Collection crews are working the 2 Saturdays and 1 Sunday after Xmas/New Year in lieu of the 3 days taken off over Christmas to get collections back on track
- 15% of respondents have reported introductions of weekly household waste just for the Christmas period with less recycling collections for the recyclates that drop off in the winter months such as garden waste. Rural areas are also often offered weekly collections where there is no kerbside recycling.
- All councils responding said that they had notified residents of changes with some even issuing specific calendars in November with new dates
- Many councils will operate collections on Saturday 2 January 2010 to catch up on collections missed on New Year's Day.
- Councils advise residents to check their local council website and local newspapers for details of changes to bin collections and ensure that they keep any council leaflets about changes in a safe place so they are aware of date changes

About APSE

APSE is the association for public service excellence working with over 300 local authorities, police and fire authorities throughout the UK, promoting excellence in front line service delivery

For further details or to arrange an interview please contact Mo Baines on mbaines@apse.org.uk or mobile 07971 843515