

UP & CLOSE PERSONNEL



The RAF Families Federation's Dawn McCafferty shares some of their casework

Dear Families Federation...

I LIVE in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) and am so angry about the customer service I have received from MoDern Housing Solutions (MHS).

All four rings and the grill on my cooker stopped working so I contacted the MHS Customer Service Desk and reported the fault, making sure that I gave them all the pertinent details. As cookers are an essential piece of kitchen equipment, I expected MHS to treat the call as an emergency but no, this was not the case. I was told that, as I could still use the oven, and had a microwave, it would be treated only as an urgent repair so they would send someone out within five days. Even after telling them I have a toddler and would really appreciate the full range of my cooker's facilities to allow me to feed my child appropriately for the next five days, they wouldn't change their minds, and told me to talk to DE if I had a problem with the rules.

An engineer came to inspect the cooker two days later and confirmed it was broken but could not fix it as he did not have the right spares on his van, even though I had told the MHS staff exactly what make the oven was. I was then told it could take up to three weeks to get these replacement parts – a response time I felt was completely unacceptable but the contractor clearly thought was fine. The cooker was actually repaired five days after the initial problem was reported, but I believe this was only because of my numerous calls to MHS and DE and after my Unit welfare staffs and the Families Federation had intervened on my behalf. Without their hastening, I'm sure MHS would have taken the full three weeks, and maybe more.

This is just one of many problems I have had with MHS over the last few months. Because of the poor condition of my SFA, I have had to put in several work requests and lost count of the number of leave days I've had to take, only to sit at home waiting for contractors who don't turn up or seem unable to fix the problem when they do.

As a serving lone parent who loves her job, I make sure I fulfil all my work and deployment commitments, so my time off is precious to me and my child. Why should I have to waste annual leave because MHS can't seem to organise themselves? I've complained formally about the service I've received in the past but that didn't seem to achieve much as I just got sent one of their standard, impersonal replies, which infuriated me even more.

Is it too much to ask that MHS provide an effective maintenance service, deal with their complaints properly and actually communicate with their customers? Being treated as an individual rather than as part of a process would go a long way towards enhancing MHS's reputation which, to my knowledge, is universally appalling and not helped in the least by my recent interaction with them.

Sgt C



KITCHEN SINK DRAMA: Sgt C had a long wait for her cooker to be repaired

Dear Sgt C...

YOU may not be surprised to learn that, since the Federation was launched in 2007, housing has been our 'most reported issue' category.

One of the most frequently reported complaints is about the quality of service provided by MHS and their sub-contractors. As a result, we are in almost constant dialogue with MHS at various levels, from Help Desk to Directors, on behalf of families who have contacted us because, like you, they are literally at the end of their tether because of problems with their SFA.

In your particular case, MHS were correct when they quoted the rule that states that your repair would only be treated as 'urgent' as you had not suffered a total loss of cooking facilities. However, we believe that in situations like yours, there should have been some flexibility with the response times, especially as you had a small child.

The fact that you had to call them several times, then call your Unit staffs and us before you saw any progress at all, leads us to agree that the customer service was lacking and communication with you as the occupant non-existent.

There is light at the end of the tunnel

– following the appointment of a new Chief Executive at MHS, the company have appointed a new Director, brought in specifically to review and improve their customer services.

He has already engaged with all three of the Families Federations to find out where MHS are going wrong and we have highlighted all the concerns families have raised with us – there were pages of evidence, thanks to the likes of you for taking the time to tell us what's been going wrong.

From our perspective, those at the top appear to understand there is a problem and we have had repeated assurances from them that they are taking action.

Further down the chain, particularly at sub-contractor level, we find regular instances, such as yours, where their mantra 'Right First Time' and 'Pride in our Services' are simply not delivering the quality of customer service that SFA occupants deserve and expect.

Having taken all our comments on board, the Director is already making plans to meet individual families to find out more about their frustrations so we await the outcome with interest. We have suggested he come to see you soon.

● If you have been affected by this issue, or find yourself in a similar situation, please speak to one of the Families Federation team on 01780 781650 or go to the website at www.raf-ff.org.uk