

# UP & CLOSE PERSONNEL



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

## Dear Families Federation...

**SEVERAL** months ago we moved out of a Service quarter as my family and I were posted to another part of the country. After we had moved into our new home however, I was sent a bill for the previous house.

It was more than £150, with some of the charges being, quite frankly, ridiculous. I was charged more than £70 for a cooker clean, when all that was picked up at the inspection was cleaning fluid residue (the cooker was actually a lot cleaner when we left than when we arrived!); I was also charged £25 to have the green wheelie bin cleaned, although the move-out was the day before the fortnightly collection was due and I know there is a company on camp which provides a cleaning service to families for £3.

I was also billed £25 to have the windows cleaned, in spite of the fact that it had been raining solidly the whole week prior to moving-out and it was raining at the time of the inspection!

During the move-out I stated my intention to contest the charges to the DE representative and was informed that, although it was my prerogative, I still had to sign the house over that day.

I was not offered any time or opportunity to correct the issues but was told that my signature had nothing to do with the charges. I then wrote a letter challenging the bill but it was some three months before I received a reply. The letter stated that I had already signed to agree the charges during the move-out inspection and it was impossible to now give me time to correct anything as someone else had moved into the house.

I feel like I've been scammed!

After talking to a lady from the MOD Financial Management Shared Service Centre, who sent me a demand for the money, it seems that I am not alone.

She told me that they have a huge number of complaints about how DE Ops Housing does its business and that the only option I had was to write another letter to DE if I wished to contest the charges further.

My frustration is that there doesn't seem to be any other recourse open to me other than going back to DE.

Nobody can tell me who DE Ops Housing is answerable to, and funnily enough the DE website gives no details on any complaints procedure. A breakdown of their extremely inflated charges is also nowhere to be seen.

I really will only pay this charge as a last resort and, after writing another letter of complaint to DE, will be visiting the Citizens Advice Bureau to find out what legal recourse I have.

As it stands, Servicemen and women are totally at the mercy of DE and have little option but to 'pay up and shut up'.

**Sergeant S**



## Dear Sgt S...

WE'RE sure that you, and many others, will not be surprised to hear that standards of cleanliness in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) at move-in, and move-out, is one aspect of housing highlighted to us on many occasions.

Many feel that the prescribed standards are not applied equitably across the SFA estate by DE and often vary even from one Station to another.

Families have told us of their frustrations when, like you, they have spent a considerable amount of time preparing their SFA for a move-out inspection only to be billed, in some cases, huge amounts of money for what they believe to be minor discrepancies.

We have also spent time looking into the matter of charges used by DE staff when billing occupants for outstanding works but, like you, were unable to find

any details anywhere either!

Prompted by your letter, we have approached DE to find out what the policy is regarding the publication of their charging rates. Once we have more information we will put an update onto our website at: [www.raf-ff.org.uk](http://www.raf-ff.org.uk).

We have also asked DE to clarify the procedures followed by staff during move-out inspections.

We have asked what scope families have to rectify problems themselves, on the day or at a later date, and who it is that is responsible for checking that the work is actually carried out on the property if a family does pay and once they have moved out.

We know that in your particular case, having submitted a letter of complaint several weeks ago, you are still waiting for a response from DE but, as always, we stand by ready to offer any support you may need to take this matter forward.

● 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](http://www.raf-ff.org.uk)