

AFF Removals Survey March/April 2012

To gauge how Army families felt about the service provided by the new removals contractor, Agility, which took over the contract from M&S Shipping on 1 October 2010, AFF conducted a short Removals Survey earlier in the year. The survey, which was available on our website for five weeks, was open to all Service personnel and their families who had moved in the last nine months.

Of the 133 responses received, respondents were generally happy with the overall service offered by Agility - especially with the care of families' belongings and the time it took to pack household contents.

However, the responses showed that the unpack service and collection of boxes after a move, needs to be tightened up. More information on the importance of families having their own insurance when moving also needs to be addressed.

Although many families were happy with the accuracy of the volume estimation prior to a move, other respondents felt that their belongings had been either over or under estimated compared to previous moves.

AFF will feed the results of this survey back to Agility, and an article based on the survey results will be in the autumn 2012 AFF Journal.

Q. Did you find the online removals booking system more efficient than the previous manual system?

'It would have been but that the form does or did not differentiate between the different types of move, which caused confusion'

'The answer is actually yes; however, having to print it off a fax is still a backward step. I was in Afghanistan and fax machines are not easily located'

Answers to this question showed that 65% of families are finding that the electronic system is easier to use than the old manual system - although some moves which don't fit the 'normal mould' appear to have caused a few issues. Responses included;

'We moved under the AGAI 108 system and had no assignment order reference number. They didn't have a clue what I needed to do as I could not proceed with the online application. It took several phone calls and some hours to sort'

Q. Assessors visit - how satisfied were you with the following:

The information given about what could and could not be taken, and how the volume of your belongings was assessed?

Whilst the majority of families were satisfied with being told what the removals company would and would not take, there were still 13% of respondents who remain dissatisfied. Comments included;

'We didn't receive a prohibited list of items'

AFF View - the list of prohibited items is in the JSP 800 found on the Agility website which families are required to read before applying for removals.

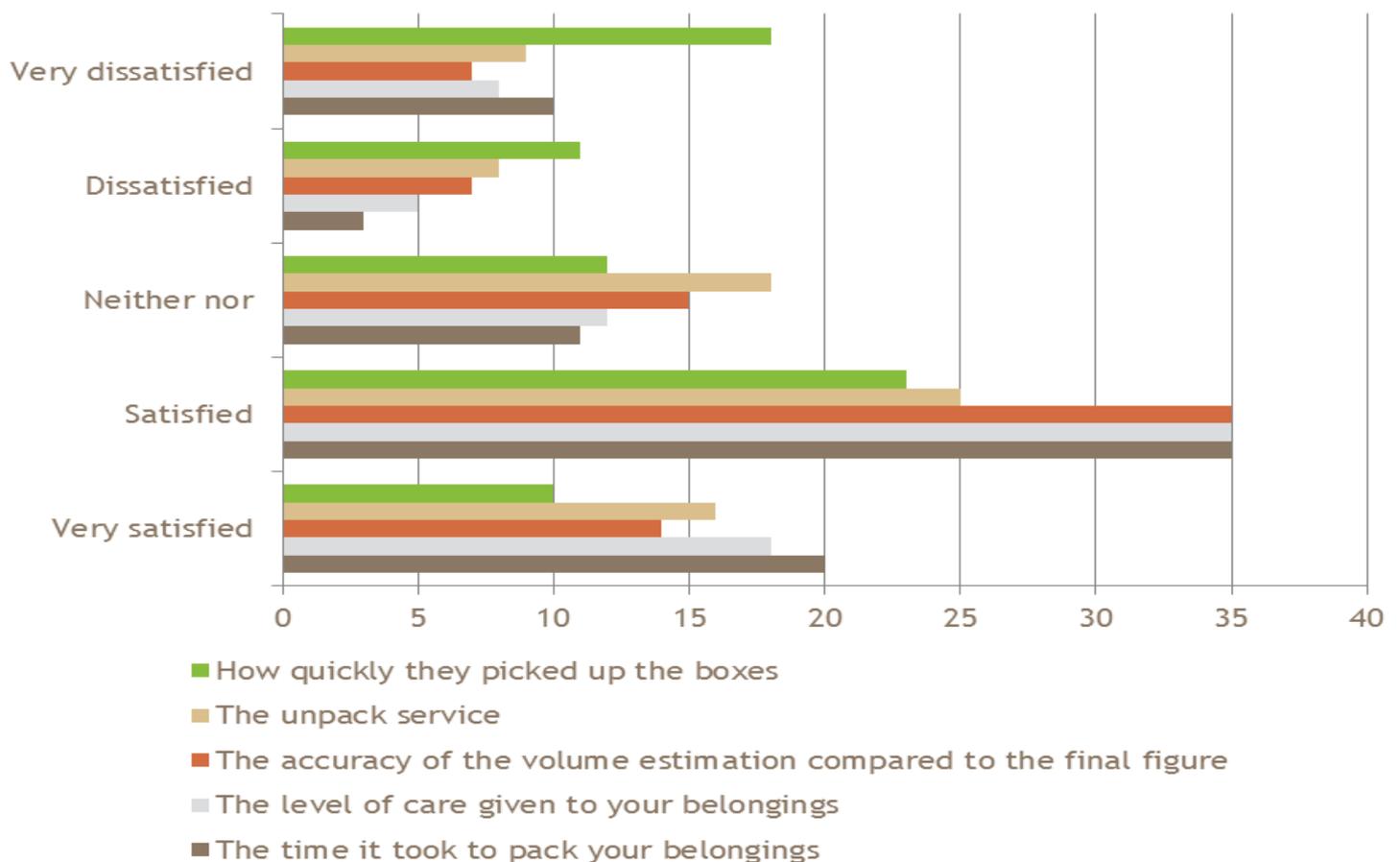
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20% of families were unhappy with the way the volume of belongings was assessed. Respondents told us;

'They misjudged the volume of belongings and spent a couple of hours waiting for another vehicle to arrive to load up the contents of the garage as this did not fit on the lorry'

'We moved from Australia back to UK. Our freight was assessed to be almost twice our allowance. We had not significantly increased our belongings since we moved out to Australia with the same allowance'

Q. Packing and unpacking - how satisfied were you with the following?



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'Very efficient service. They had a good idea where things were going, as if it was their own house. Very impressed'

'No unpack service was offered to us'

'I have never known a company to return to collect any boxes. I thought this was an urban myth'

The collection of the boxes appears to be an issue along with the unpack service whereas the care of belongings was felt to be very good by most families. Families said;

'Very dissatisfied with volume estimation'

'The service from Agility was good - it was the removal company that was awful'

Q. Do you have your own insurance?

Worryingly 6% of respondents didn't have their own insurance in place.

'Removal insurance is part of our house contents insurance and as a consequence we pay ten times the amount of comparable contents insurance in the UK'

'I think the insurance should be put back on the company as an incentive for them to take care of what they are doing. Why should we have to pay for their incompetency?'

AFF View - All families should have their own insurance for belongings whilst in transit as the MOD and removal company do not cover you. The industry standard will only give you a maximum of £40 per item damaged and this can only be claimed through your insurance company. Disturbance Allowance includes an element for transit insurance and AFF would encourage all families to take out the correct transit insurance for removals - this is, after all, your entire worldly goods being moved in a lorry. For a fuller piece on insurance during removals see the housing page on the AFF website

Feedback

If you have any feedback on removals issues that you would like AFF to address, contact Cat Calder, AFF Housing Specialist at housing@aff.org.uk