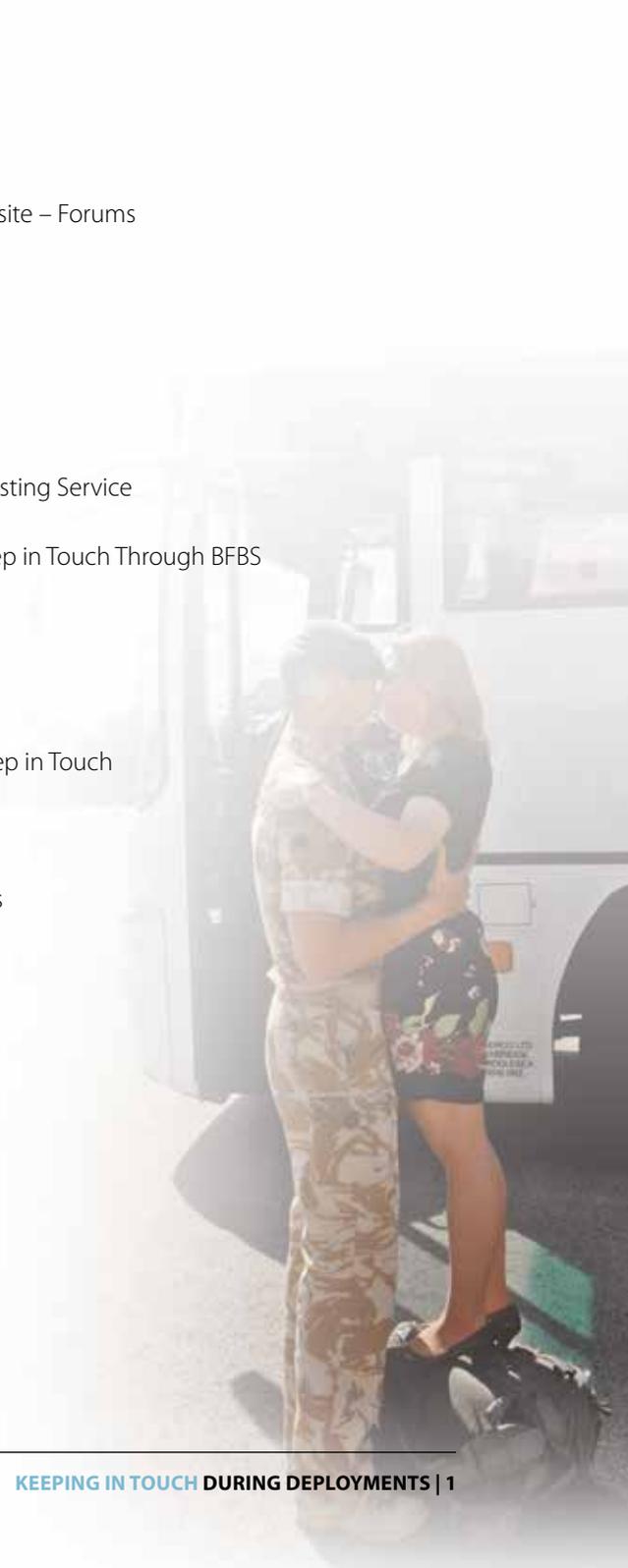




Keeping in Touch
During Deployments

Contents

- 2 RAF Community Website – Forums
- 4 Forces Mail
- 6 E-Bluey
- 7 Skype
- 8 British Forces Broadcasting Service
- 10 How Can Families Keep in Touch Through BFBS
- 11 Cable & Wireless
- 12 WelComE
- 14 How can Children Keep in Touch
- 15 Storybook Wings
- 16 Useful Contact Details





<http://www.raf.mod.uk/community>

The RAF Community website is aimed at keeping you informed and in touch. The website has a wealth of useful information, news and downloads.

In addition, it provides Forums and Chat facilities (through Airspace), which enable you to keep in touch, both with your family and friends and with what is happening on your unit.

The Forums allow you to upload photographs to share with loved ones, wherever they are. It also allows units on ops and back home to publish photos, newsletters and details of forthcoming events.

The Chat facility is instantaneous and fun! You can 'chat' privately with your loved one, or in a group.

Registering for an account is easy, just click the 'Login To Forums' button on the home page (www.raf.mod.uk/community). Once the Service person has registered for an account, up to 3 family members can have guest accounts.



Contact with Unit & The Point of Contact (POC) Scheme.

To ensure that families of deployed personnel have access to current information and support, units will normally send the details of key personnel and organisations that are able to provide necessary support to the family's home address. Additionally, the unit may arrange deployment briefs and families are advised to attend, where possible. Each family should be offered a single Point of Contact (POC) from within the unit to maintain regular communication, as agreed with the family, and to act as the first port of call for any queries and concerns.



Forces Mail

'Blueys'

Otherwise known as 'Forces Free Air Letters', these are a way of sending letters and messages FREE to personnel on operations. Blueys can be obtained from your local Post Office, your nearest HIVE or Unit. Blueys sent to operational theatres do not need a stamp, however normal letters do (unless posted under the Enduring Free Mail Service – see below).

Addressing your mail

Please use the format below:

12345678 SAC Smith CD
121 EAW
Op XXXXXX
BFPO XXX

Enduring Free Mail Service

This scheme enables packets and letters, up to 2Kg, to be sent free to named Service personnel on operations. Only family and friends in the UK and at BFPO addresses may send packets free to Service personnel and MOD deployed civilians in authorised operational theatres. Items listed below should not be sent (please also refer to the list of prohibited items on the BFPO website):

- Aerosols – e.g. hairspray, deodorant, etc
- Perishable goods – foods like fruit and meat
- Fragile items – glass, etc.

- Magazines containing pictures that might offend the cultural values of host nations. 'Top shelf' magazines are an obvious example.

Operational BFPOs are generally all included in the enduring free parcel scheme, however please note that any items must be taken to a Post Office rather than being posted in a pillar box.

Please refer to <https://www.gov.uk/british-forces-post-office-services> or the BFPO Enquiries Team on **08457 69 79 78** for further information.

Check out the BFPO website to read about the BFPO Info app and Track & Trace app at <https://www.gov.uk/british-forces-post-office-services#bfpo-track-and-trace-app>

Fax-Bluey

Where a Fax-Bluey machine is available, handwritten letters (written on special Fax-Bluey paper) can be sent to deployed personnel with the same speed and privacy as an e-Bluey. The Fax-Bluey machine scans and sends the letter via an electronic and automated system that prints, folds and seals it in theatre before delivery to the recipient. Contact your local HIVE to see if they have a Fax Bluey machine.

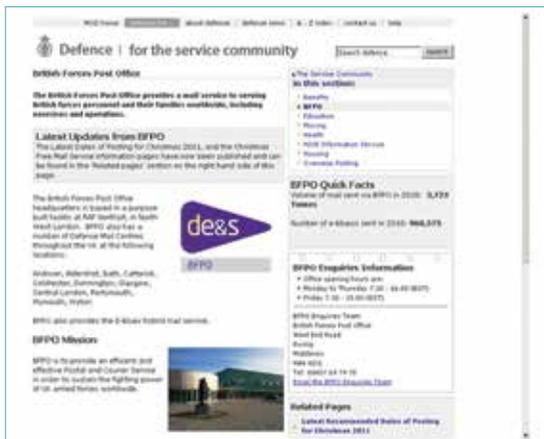


E-Bluey

Is a two-way method of communication that can be used by anyone with access to the internet. Deployed personnel, family and friends can compose an e-bluey and once they hit 'send', their letter is sent via a completely automated system to the recipient. When the letter is received by the specialist Forces Post Office machinery, it is printed, enveloped and sealed before onward transmission. E-blueys are completely private, and they combine the speed of electronic communication with the personal touch of a letter. Transmission time varies, however an e-bluey will arrive in theatre much quicker than a handwritten bluey or letter.

Photo-bluey is a feature within e-bluey that allows you to insert a photo, either colour or black and white, at the top of an e-bluey. The photo to be inserted must be on your computer and can be any size.

<https://www.gov.uk/british-forces-post-office-services-e-bluey-what-it-is-and-how-to-use-it>





Skype allows you to video message across the globe through PC's and Laptops.

Laptops must have Skype installed and have a webcam and built in microphone. To download Skype visit www.skype.com. Available on Windows, Mac and Linux operating systems. Skype is *not* available in *all* operational theatres due to bandwidth restrictions.

Please note that serving personnel taking their own laptops etc are now required to complete an 'Authority for Carriage' form and should ask their Unit staff for one.



The British Forces Broadcasting Service



The British Forces Broadcasting Service provides radio and TV programmes (and more) for deployed Armed Forces personnel in theatres of operations across the world.

BFBS UK is a contemporary hit 'pop' channel. It is similar in style to BBC Radio 2, playing current music and chat, as well as regular news bulletins.

BFBS Radio 2 is a mixture of more laid-back music, talk sequences, news programmes and comedy from BBC Radio 4 and sport from BBC Radio Five Live.

You can also listen to **BFBS Gurkha Radio**, **BFBS Afghanistan**, **BFBS Brunei**, **BFBS Canada**, **BFBS Cyprus**, **BFBS Falklands**, **BFBS Germany**, **BFBS Gibraltar**, **BFBS Northern Island**.

<http://www.bfbs.com/radio>

BFBS TV

Service personnel get nine free channels in operational theatres, including Sky Sports 1 and 2, Sky News, a music and a movie channel. BFBS 1 and 2 show a variety of programmes from UK terrestrial TV channels, and there is BFBS 1 Day Later which shows programmes aired late the previous day at peak time in Afghanistan.

Families in the UK can watch BFBS Reports on-line, which includes news reports from operational areas.

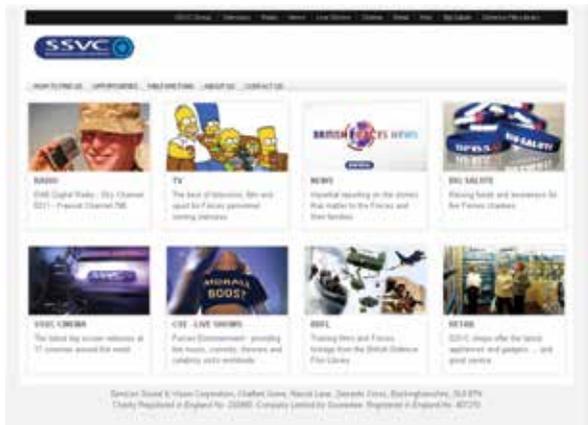


Digital Terrestrial TV (DTT)

BFBS DTT transmitters operate at most operational locations worldwide so that with a digital TV, or any TV and a 'Freeview' box, BFBS TV channels can be viewed anywhere there is a power source.

For serving personnel who wish to take a laptop or PC a 'DTT Dongle' USB DVB-T stick, costing around £35, allows deployed personnel to watch DTT on their own computer. This will also require an external aerial and co-axial cable. More information on DTT areas and equipment to receive BFBS TV is at: www.bfbs.com/tv.

Families can listen to BFBS Radio from the UK on DAB Digital Radio, Sky Digital Channel 0211, on Freesat 786. There is a 'Listen Again' option on the BFBS website too, which includes 'Access All Areas'.



www.bfbs.com

How Can Families Keep in Touch via BFBS?

Radio Dedications

BFBS airs 'Access All Areas' every Sunday on BFBS 1, which consists of dedications made by the family members and friends of deployed Service personnel.

Alternatively, requests and dedications can be aired any day on any BFBS show. Messages to be aired can be requested by any of the following means:

Phone: 01494 372 786

Email: bfbsme@bfbs.com

Text: 07740 377 377 starting your message with ME or AAA (for Access All Areas) then a space

Website: www.bfbs.com/messages

Write to: BFBS Radio, BFPO 786

BFBS Message Board

Service personnel, family members and friends can leave a message on the BFBS Message Board on the BFBS website at www.bfbs.com/messages. Messages can be viewed on line and are also read out by radio presenters during broadcasts. You can also send an audio message (or 'boo' for short) via iPhone or BFBS website.



Cable & Wireless

(If deployed to the Falklands)



Telephone Services

Cable & Wireless enable entitled military personnel to make 30 minutes of phone calls each week to any location in the world. Personnel receive a credited phone card every week, and can purchase extra phone cards if required. Alternatively, personnel can opt to have 100 minutes of free Wi-Fi connection instead.

Calling from the UK using a BT line can be costly. Other providers may have more competitive rates should you wish to telephone the Falkland Islands from the UK.

Computer Services

Free access to broadband is provided at terminals in "Area 51". This is a busy area at peak times, and broadband speeds can be slow. However, many use MSN and other sites to chat in real time with those at home, and send emails.

There are a number of Wi-Fi hotspots at Mount Pleasant – there is a charge for using this service, but as more personnel opt to take their own laptops and webcams, this is increasingly popular.

At the moment it is much easier for the serving person in the Falklands to sort out their communication arrangements when they arrive. The C&W customer helpline and website do not provide information regarding military communications in the Falkland Islands.

WelComE

Paradigm has been responsible for the provision of WelComE (Welfare Communications Everywhere) services to the UK MOD since September 1999.

Paradigm enables entitled military personnel [users] to make 30 minutes of Government funded phone calls to any location in the world each week. This can be topped up in theatre or by family and friends using the Top-Up Service.

Paradigm's WelComE Customer Contact Centre is based in the UK and provides customers [family and friends] and users with an easily accessible and convenient single point of contact, which provides a speedy and responsive service.

Paradigm, in conjunction with the RAF Association, is installing several 'Video Link Machines' in selected HERRICK locations. These machines allow users to record a short video message which is then emailed back to a loved one at a time when the network is quiet. These machines provide a further method for the Service person to keep in touch with their families back home and there is no limit to the number of messages they can record!



A WelComE Account for Life Card will be provided to serving personnel by unit HR staff. The Account for Life card remains valid for the duration of the individual's Service career.

Top-up service

Paradigm will need the following information from you:

- Service person's name and rank
- Their 9-digit Paradigm account card number
- Your own debit/credit card details

Free voicemail service (UK)

You will need to Dial 0800 051 0737 (freephone number when calling from a UK landline only)

- At voice prompt, enter the 9-digit Paradigm account card number of the person to whom you wish to leave a message
- Leave your message
- Hang up

For further details, please contact:

The WelComE Customer Contact Centre

Telephone: 0800 4334 993

E-mail: customer.support@mywelcome.co.uk

Website: www.mywelcome.co.uk



Helping Children to Keep in Touch

There are a number of resources available for children to use while family members are deployed, including Hello from Home Books and Activity Books provided by RAF Community Support. These can help children keep in touch with those who are away; sometimes emails and phone calls are difficult to do, but writing and sending pictures can be fun. Please contact your local HIVE Information Officer to find out more.



<http://www.raf.mod.uk/community/support/rafhiveinformationservice.cfm>



How it works

Storybook Wings is a project which allows deployed parents to record a story for their children to listen to while they are out of area.

Parents are given access to a recorder and a booklet of stories and record their chosen story, along with a personal greeting. Once recorded, the stories are sent to the Storybook Wings Coordinator along with a Proforma (a cover sheet containing deployment information and the address for the CD to be sent to) and are then professionally edited using specialist software.

The recording is edited using a two stage process. First, any mistakes or distortions are removed. Secondly, music and appropriate sound effects are added, transforming the story into a unique keepsake. The finished story is then downloaded to a CD. It takes two to three hours for an experienced Editor to edit a 10 minute story.



The completed CD is sent to the children in a personalised CD cover, and is ready for them to listen to whenever they like; at bedtime, in the car or even at school during 'show and tell'! This will normally be delivered within 6 weeks of your deployment.

To record a story please contact your HIVE Information Officer.

If you would like any further information on the project, please contact the above or the Storybook Wings Coordinator on 01780 783645 ext 7538.

Email: storybookwings@rafa.org.uk
www.rafa.org.uk/What-we-do/StorybookWings

Useful Contact Details

Airspace	https://airspace.raf.mod.uk/airspaceLogon/
BFBS Enquiries	01494 878354
BFBS Website	https://www.gov.uk/british-forces-post-office-services
BFPO Helpline	https://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/BFPO
HIVE Website	http://www.raf.mod.uk/community/support/rafhiveinformationservice.cfm
HQ Air RAF Community Support Team	01494 496654 www.raf.mod.uk/community
MOD Website	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence
WelComE Customer Contact Centre	0800 4334 993
WelComE Website	www.mywelcome.co.uk
WelComE Voicemail	0800 051 0747



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Sponsor telephone number: 95531 7144

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