

## News story: Improved mail service ensures loved ones can stay in touch

The new contract with Neopost will mean Britain's Armed Forces will continue to receive hard copy, secure mail, including photos, from their loved ones, for free and with no break in service as the new imail INTouch system takes over from the e-bluey on 1 April 2017.

The new imail INTouch system will allow users to send up to eight pages, including high definition photographs and official documents. The old e-bluey system that is being replaced only allowed single pages to be sent and did not support high definition photographs. Use of the e-bluey has dropped by 98% since 2007, with the same fixed cost, meaning it no longer provided value for money for the taxpayer.

With around 4000 personnel on over 20 operations around the world, communications are very important to personnel and their loved ones, especially for those who do not typically use electronic communications.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

We are investing in a better mail service to make sure our Armed Forces can stay in touch with their loved ones for free when they are away from home.

Along with improved internet connections and global post deliveries, imail means families can now send longer messages and share higher quality photos than before with personnel serving around the world.

The MOD's new contract with Neopost will reflect actual usage and offer around half a million pounds worth of savings, which will be reinvested into welfare services like improved internet and Wi-Fi provision around the world.

By offering both secure internet calls, emails, a letter and parcel service, as well as the imail INTouch service, we have ensured that our personnel have a range of ways of keeping in touch with their loved ones while they are deployed.

Sara Baade, Chief Executive, Army Families Federation

It's good news that this service is being rolled out and there will not be a gap between e-Bluey ceasing and the new contract with Neopost beginning.

Communication with families whilst on operations is vital for morale and it is encouraging that this service will offer a raft of ways for families to stay in touch with their loved ones.

We will monitor this contract to make sure it is offering families the best service possible and we eagerly await news of how the reinvested money will be used to support Army welfare services around the world.

The MOD is committed to the welfare of its people and enshrined the Armed Forces Covenant in law, a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly. Replacing the ageing e-bluey service is recognition of the fact that, to provide the best possible communication system for service personnel overseas, we must take advantage of the latest technology. This is why the funding for e-bluey is being redirected to imail INTouch and development of cutting-edge communications solutions.