

SPRING 2024

# NEWSLETTER



## Keeping the Vision Alive

As I write this piece, it is exactly four weeks until the 21st of May, a hugely significant date for the charity.

The date that our founder's son, Anthony, was injured in Afghanistan was indeed the first rock thrown in the pond that created the ripples of our foundation as a charity.

I keep in regular contact with Julia and her colleagues who helped to create the charity, and we often reflect on how The Ripple Pond has stayed true to its mission since its inception.

Although changes in society, the COVID-19 pandemic, and ever-increasing numbers of Members have required the charity to evolve, we are still very welcoming, non-judgmental, open, honest, and inclusive as a community.

The Ripple Pond still listens to its Members and ensures that services are accessible, relevant, collaborative, and responsive to Members' needs.

Inclusive and accessible are not just words for The Ripple Pond. They are a golden thread that runs through everything we do. So this year, we will continue to be true to Julia's vision and work to reach out and be more accessible to "harder-to-reach" communities.

The charity still aims to reduce isolation and improve understanding, wellbeing, resilience, empowerment, and confidence.




We have no doubt that our rapid growth in Members will continue, but we are very aware that specific military communities are under-represented in our Membership; this includes reservists, LGBT+, and Royal Naval Families.

So, we cannot be complacent; we must continue evolving, improving, and keeping pace with a changing society.




*Rodger Cartwright*

Chief Executive Officer


 THE RIPPLE POND | YOUR FORCES FAMILY NETWORK

### Professional's Information Session

**Next dates:**

-  **Wednesday 19th June 2024**  
At 2pm - 3pm
-  **Thursday 5th September 2024**  
At 1pm - 2pm
-  **Friday 29th November 2024**  
At 11am - 12pm

[Register Now](https://tinyurl.com/23vd3kux) <https://tinyurl.com/23vd3kux>



If you are a professional working with, or in contact with serving or veteran families and would like to find out more about who we are and what we do, join us on Wednesday 19th June at 2.00pm for a short virtual presentation on Microsoft Teams.

Please feel free to share with colleagues and anyone within your network who may benefit from the session.

To register your place



# 2024 CELEBRATING FORCES FAMILIES AWARDS



We have spent the whole year since April 2023 on a high from the Celebrating Forces Families Awards as the Military Family Charity of the Year.

The recognition this gives to our Members to show they are key figures who are valued and cared for and included in the 'forces families' network is incredible. As a team of staff and volunteers, we are committed to the charity and work hard to ensure we deliver the best possible service we can, that is always informed and led by the needs of our members.

There is nothing we appreciate more than connecting with Members to genuinely listen and hear what they have to say - and to constantly learn and develop our services to meet the needs identified.

We have had so many 'congratulations' for winning the award from our Members and from professionals within the

community; and it has been amazing to receive the testimonies about what we offer and how we offer it, from both statutory and voluntary organisations that we partner with or work alongside.

We know we make a huge positive impact on the lives of so many but to hear that from respected others is rewarding for the whole charity, and for our Members highlights the vital part they play in their loved ones recovery alongside the impact that has - both good and bad - on the whole family. We are delighted to be handing over that baton to the Naval Children's Charity who we hugely admire and appreciate all that they do. Let's ALL keep working together to improve lives of those we are here to care for.

*Gemma Procter*  
Operations Manager

# Stress Awareness

Over Spring, The Ripple Pond will be focusing on STRESS, what it is, how to avoid it, and how to manage its adverse effects.

I have been reflecting on how I manage my stress. I work from home and try to maintain healthy daily routines: good regular meals, time with other people, exercise, daily chores, and recreational activities. I have a problem with my mobile; it has become my entertainment centre, where I listen to music, film, newspapers, reading, research, games, etc., and I don't use social media!

My routine involves disengaging from my mobile in the evening to make sure it does not disturb my sleep.

Sleep is fantastic for helping you to relax and replenish yourself, but the screens of mobile devices and computers typically emit a blue light that is fine for daytime use but can disrupt your sleep. The light tricks the brain into thinking it's time to wake up instead of going to sleep.

From blue screens to green grass, being outdoors is so important. The colour green and sunlight (even when cloudy) are beneficial for health and wellbeing. Even stepping outdoors with a cup of tea can help.



It is often not easy to do when you are busy during the day, but we are rapidly marching towards Summer; do not waste good weather.

I also try to dedicate a small amount of the day to just putting on earphones and listening to a few minutes of music without distractions.

Please note that I use the word TRY repeatedly. It is important to look after yourself, but do not set unrealistic targets in your self-care; that can have the opposite effect and create stress.

*Rodger Cartwright*



Our Members continue to amaze us at their resilience and ability to manage Stress. This year The Stress Management Society launched the #LittleByLittle Campaign, highlighting the power of small, everyday actions in combating stress and improving mental well-being. As part of their campaign they talk about the importance of having communities of support.

The Ripple Pond is exactly that, a community of support, that is there to help people manage the stress they experience. The peer support is a wonderful example of being a place where little by little we can make some changes that mean everyone supporting a loved one with service related injuries is seen, heard and supported.

As a small part of this month, some of The Ripple Pond staff team put together a little video talking about some of the small things they do. You can find out more here:  
<https://youtu.be/nqKBirPjFaY>

## Case Study

*The help that The Ripple Pond offer is so much better to hear when described by a Member themselves. Below is a case study we have produced with John and Janet, TRP Members who are supporting their son.*

We knew our son was in trouble whilst he was in the British military, and tried to get welfare involved. We were told that they could only help if our son approached them directly, otherwise they weren't able to do anything. The problem with that is that our son would never have reached out for help, because he didn't see that there was anything wrong with him. He's been sectioned several times now and, despite him sometimes saying that he's glad he was sectioned, he still doesn't see that there's anything wrong.

We had to watch him deteriorate, and see his relationship fall apart, and we weren't able to find any information or get any help. We felt completely powerless as parents, and that had a big impact on both of us, both emotionally and on our relationship.

We called RBL to see if they could offer us support, and they signposted us to The Ripple Pond.

*That initial call with the team was the first time we had felt listened to, and we've felt supported ever since.*



All of a sudden, we didn't feel like we were the only parents in our situation, it wasn't just us up against the world. Realising that we weren't alone helped to shift the focus with our son too, and everything became different.



It can be hard for other people to understand that the issues can feel so different for parents – even though he isn't living with us day to day, our son will always be our child. Although we have a good relationship with him, and we see him regularly, the worry doesn't ever disappear.

It has been so helpful to see other members' stories, and to be able to take a little bit away from each one. We mainly use the parents' WhatsApp group, because we don't use Facebook, but we don't often tend to get actively involved with the chats. As parents, we feel that our focus is more on sorting out our son and his issues; but we do discuss what we've seen between ourselves, and we'll always reach out and offer support to anyone who is struggling.

Up until joining TRP, we had felt isolated and alone. Finding an outlet where we feel listened to and heard has been a saviour.

*John and Janet*

**FAMILY**

- Spouses
- Partners
- Parents
- Siblings
- Aunties/Uncles
- Chosen family

WE SUPPORT ALL ADULT FAMILY MEMBERS OF PHYSICALLY OR PSYCHOLOGICALLY INJURED BRITISH FORCES PERSONNEL AND VETERANS...

THAT INCLUDES YOU

theripplepond.org

A graphic with a dark purple background. On the left, there is a white paperclip icon and a checklist titled 'FAMILY' with six items, each with a checked box. In the center, there is a white pencil icon pointing towards the right. Below the pencil is a white teardrop-shaped logo. At the bottom right, the text 'theripplepond.org' is written in white.

# Celebrating a Year of Partnership with The Poppy Factory



## THE POPPY FACTORY

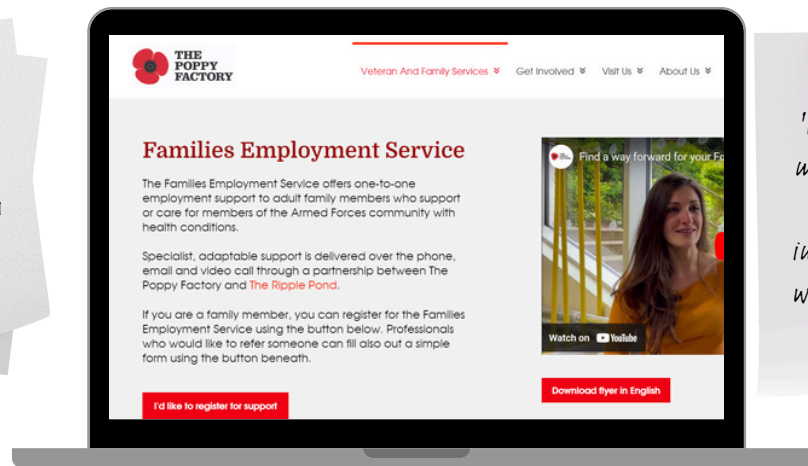
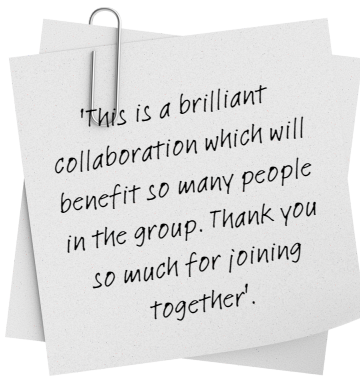
getting you back to work

April marked a year since the launch of The Poppy Factory's Families Employment Service.

Throughout the first 12 months of our partnership 46 TRP Members have benefitted from the service. The feedback has been amazing, and we have seen so many positive outcomes, including gaining new employment, support with securing a volunteer role, entering further education and in-employment support.

There are a number of challenges and barriers to employment associated with military life and caring for an injured loved one. Frequent relocation can interrupt both current employment and completion of further education, resulting in difficulties planning and achieving career progression. Caring for or supporting an injured loved one can create extra pressure and add further barriers to employment.

Through our continued work with The Poppy Factory, we are seeing more of our Members overcome barriers and unlock their full potential.



The Poppy Factory is helping to deliver the Veterans, Places Pathways and People (VPPP) programme in London, supported by The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. We're gathering views to help improve services for the Armed Forces community.

We are now seeking the views of veterans and those who work within statutory services, non-statutory organisations and organisations that support families. This consultation will help shape a strategic plan for London.

There are two ways to take part:

### Join an online consultation meeting

Wednesday 29 May, 1-5pm at

The Poppy Factory

To register, please email: [JimM@poppyfactory.org](mailto:JimM@poppyfactory.org)

### Fill in an online survey

[Click here if you're a veteran](#)

[Click here if you're a family member](#)

# Meet The Team

We have had the pleasure of 2 new operational staff members joining the team this month. Please welcome Hayley and Toni – we are delighted to have them onboard and already seeing all the skills they offer in action.

I've been lucky enough to meet both Hayley and Toni in person for a couple of days each to introduce them fully to the wonderful community and ethos of The Ripple Pond. We talked lots about the charity's values, our services, our aims and specifically about our member led approach to what we offer to Members;

They are both committed to how we work as a charity to be the best we can for our Members.

Both Hayley and Toni are keen to be an integral part of the TRP community, with both Members and Professionals having the opportunity to virtually meet with them both soon.

## Hayley Hard

Hayley is a Veteran herself and comes to us with a wide experience having worked within the NHS and social care fields, latterly focusing specifically on mental health support.



## Toni Browning

Toni is a military spouse who has lived just about everywhere possible - embracing all that is involved with regular postings and deployments, whilst managing to maintain her own varied career and bringing up a family.

*Gemma Procter*

Operations Manager

# Upcoming Dates for the Diary

**VIRTUAL MEMBERS' MEET UP** 7:30PM-9PM

**Upcoming Dates:**

- > Thursday 9th May
- > Tuesday 11th June
- > Thursday 11th July

For New Members in the last 6 months

- > Wednesday 26th June



**Virtual Quiz Night**

**Tuesday 28th May, 7.30pm**

A fun, virtual, hour of trivia!



**BOOK CLUB**

**Tuesday 14th May 7:30pm**



HAVE FUN | MAKE CONNECTIONS | CHAT ABOUT BOOKS