

SUMMER 2025

NEWSLETTER



www.theripplepond.org

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ARMED FORCES DAY

Portsmouth, Saturday 21st June

On Saturday 21 July, some of our team attended Portsmouth Armed Forces Day. It was a real celebration for all the family of all things Armed Forces, with pipers, working dogs, parades and fly pasts. We loved the opportunity to meet and chat with some of our lovely Members in person, and meet other professionals, previously only a face on Teams or LinkedIn and network with them. We also need to take a moment to celebrate our team working skills - with gazebos and banners put up for the first time with not even a nail broken!

Thank you to all those who took the time to meet and chat with us, your support is very much appreciated. Thank you also to our young artists who drew us some lovely pictures! And also thank you to the staff team, some even coming from as far as Doncaster to help out!



GAMBLING HARMS IN THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

Parliamentary Event with BetKnowMore

In June, The Ripple Pond alongside many of the partners that we work alongside attended an afternoon tea hosted by Alex Ballinger, MP and **Betknowmore UK** in the House of Commons to raise awareness of gambling harm in the Armed Forces Community. We know that gambling is an issue within the Armed Forces Community and amongst our Members with 6.5% reporting to be affected by gambling harm. It was a privilege to talk about the needs of families in this environment with representatives across the Armed Forces. It was a brilliant event, huge thanks to all those who organised.

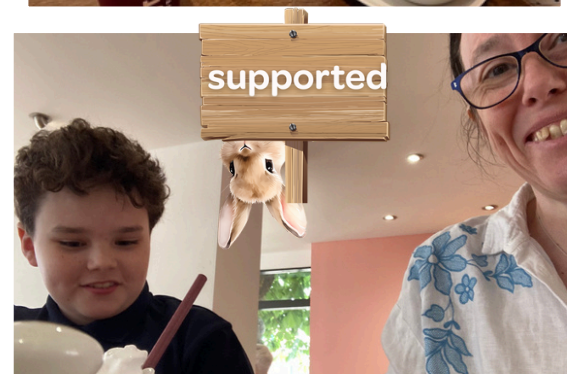
If you work within the Armed Forces Community and not yet invited Betknowmore to deliver their FREE 'Battling the Odds' sessions supporting our armed forces community. Find out more here www.betknowmoreuk.org



EASTER COMPETITION

Over Easter we had some fun, hiding some bunnies on our website for a very special Easter egg hunt. The task was to find the rabbits and send us the words they found. "Seen, heard and supported" - absolutely why we exist!

We had a brilliant response and sent a Costa voucher to five people as a prize, to have their moment of self care or share with a loved one. Here's our Members enjoying their treat!



STAFF TRAINING:

Over the past 6 months all our operational team have been offered the chance to complete the **Mental Health First Aid** certification. One of our team Toni, shares what they have got out of it.

Completing the Mental Health First Aider course has significantly helped me as an employee of The Ripple Pond, by building my knowledge and confidence to support anyone facing mental health challenges. It has enhanced my understanding of mental health conditions and enabled me to respond appropriately in crisis situations. I am grateful to have been given this learning opportunity and hope I can use my new-found skills to better support our Members moving forward.



Amanda attended a Domestic Abuse training session with Safe Lives and here's what she had to say:

Last month, as well as attending mental health first aid training alongside Heather and Toni I also completed a Domestic Abuse course with "Safe Lives".

I now feel better informed and equipped to support our members who may have been or still are victims/survivors of domestic abuse. The course was very informative, and I took a lot away from it.



Domestic Abuse Facts

On average, over 2 million people experience domestic abuse in the UK per year.

'Abusive behaviour' is defined in the act as any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional, or other abuse

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION SESSIONS

SCOTLAND SCOTLAND SCOTLAND SCOTLAND



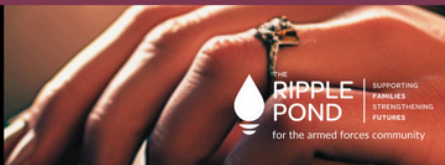
REMINDER

Coming Up



Professional Session

16th September, 12pm and 2pm - Register at:
www.theripplepond.org/professionals



EAST OF ENGLAND EAST OF ENGLAND

These professional sessions continue to be a real success and opportunity for collaboration. Our first four sessions have seen us connecting with individuals from various sectors: from GPs doing remarkable work in challenging primary care settings, to NHS professionals like those at Op COURAGE, advocating for the best care for our armed forces community, those involved in government and of course, our colleagues in the charity sector, whose determination and resilience continue to drive meaningful change.

More dates on the website, but next one is on the 16th September, 12pm for Scotland and 2pm for East of England.

We'd love to see you there.

www.theripplepond.org/networking



JANE'S STORY

Building my health, confidence, and resilience

I call myself a 'retired Army wife', because my husband and I weren't together when he was serving. He left the Army seven years ago, then 6.5 years ago he was sent to prison.

At that time, I didn't know where to turn for help. I posted on The Ripple Pond Members Facebook group about my husband having PTSD and being in prison, and members responded straight away, to say 'we're here for you' and 'what can we do for you?'.

Two members even called me, with one talking to me until 2am, and staying in touch with me afterwards. She was the person who set me the challenge of finding three positives every day – without using the same one twice in a week – and asked me to send them to her in a message. This was absolutely a saving grace for me.

What also helped was the fact that I was never asked why my husband was in prison, and nobody ever told me to walk away from him. They just understood, and they supported me. At a time when all other support was focused on my husband, The Ripple Pond supporting me as an individual made a big difference.

After I'd shared my story with the community, a dozen other members shared that they were – or had been - in a similar situation to mine. Those conversations helped me because they made me feel useful, and they gave me the chance to show other people the light at the end of the tunnel. The community, and having the support of The Ripple Pond, even got me to a point where I was able to do a lot of advocacy for my husband whilst he was in prison.

Funnily enough, it had actually been my husband who suggested that I join The Ripple Pond in the first place, to give me a private outlet where I could relate to people in similar positions.

The fact that it's grown so much in such a short space of time shows how much The Ripple Pond is needed. I like that there's never any set commitment or pressure with The Ripple Pond. The services and support are there when you want it and help is always at hand. Members don't have regular free time, so the fact that The Ripple Pond can fit around our lives, or we can drop in and out, is really important. Nobody thinks twice if a member posts for support after having been quiet for 6 months – we just give the support that's needed, without question.

There's no judgement, and everyone is willing to be there for each other. We share our common ground and our own experiences, to help answer each other's questions. That lived experience is so important, because it's a real person saying 'this has worked for us', or 'that didn't work for us'. Our knowledge grows as the number of members grows. Thank you The Ripple Pond

WITH GRATEFUL THANKS

To our funders



A photograph of three people standing in front of the entrance to the Battle Back Centre. On the left is a woman with long brown hair and glasses, wearing a pink jacket over a striped shirt. In the middle is a woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark blue hoodie with a red logo. On the right is a man with a white beard and glasses, wearing a bright green puffer vest over a dark blue shirt and tan trousers. They are all smiling at the camera. The background shows the large glass doors of the building.

VISITING BATTLEBACK

by Carolyn Aggar, Engagement Officer

There are very few places that I can walk into and immediately feel at home, but I got that feeling as soon as I walked in RBL's Battle Back Centre in Lilleshall, along with our CEO, Rodger Cartwright.

Having a fitness background myself and being a wife of a veteran, it's everything I love in one, albeit huge and very gorgeous country setting. The centre was set up in 2011 to support wounded and injured service personnel returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. They aim to help ensure the best possible recovery for the Armed Forces community, whether it's returning to duty or successfully transitioning to civilian life. As well as continuing to support wounded, injured and sick service personnel, more recently they have expanded their service with the introduction of wellbeing courses for veterans.

We were fortunate enough to be able to join a group of people playing games on the lawns of the stunning former manor house and hear first hand about how life transforming the courses are. I was so impressed not only by the incredible facilities

that are shared with the National Sport Centre, where several GB teams regularly train, but also by the dedication and ability of the whole team to inspire confidence and a renewed sense of self belief in the people attending their courses.

There's a Dr Seuss quote, "If you get a chance, take it. If it changes your life, let it." If you or your loved one gets the chance to visit the Battle Back Centre, I would strongly encourage you to consider it. You might become one of the many people they've helped.

To find out more about The Battle Back Centre, see

<https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/how-we-help/recovery-services/battle-back-centre>



ADVOCATING FOR FAMILIES

How The Ripple Pond Stands with You and How You Can Help

At The Ripple Pond, we understand that when one person serves, the whole family serves. That's why we're not just here to support families; we're here to speak up for them too. Whether you're navigating life with a loved one who has been injured, is struggling with their mental health, or is adjusting to life after service, we believe your voice matters and deserves to be heard.

Our Engagement Officer, Carolyn works hard behind the scenes, engaging with policymakers, the NHS, other charities, and service providers to ensure that family members are included in conversations about care, support, and recognition. We push for policies that reflect the real experiences of families, championing better mental health support, improved access to services, and recognition for the vital role families play in recovery and reintegration into civilian life.



Since August 2024, after the general election in July 2024, we've:

- Submitted evidence to two parliamentary inquiries, one around the Armed Forces Covenant and one around carers allowance overpayments.
- Our CEO, Rodger Cartwright gave evidence at a round table discussion on carers allowance overpayments.
- Written, on several occasions to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Minister for Veterans and People, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, and Secretary of State for Defence as well as MPs with large numbers of serving people and veterans in their constituencies across both the UK and Devolved Administrations. We will be providing all of the above with regular relevant updates on our work as a charity and how we can support them in their work.
- We have met with the policy leads at the Office of Veterans Affairs and highlighted our work as a charity and ways in which we feel that families could be better integrated into policies. They took away many points and will integrate them into a policy that they are currently working on regarding families.
- We receive invites to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the Armed Forces Community and will be regularly attending these moving forward. We also keep a keen eye on the work of several other APPGs.
- We are looking to strengthen the links with the devolved administrations and healthcare provisions in these areas and whilst this work is in the initial stages. We have already met with the Veterans Commissioner for Wales and been involved in discussions about improving referral pathways with one of the Welsh health boards.



ADVOCATING FOR FAMILIES (CONT.)

How you can help us make noise

One of the most powerful ways to amplify our collective voice is by reaching out directly to your local MP. Personal stories have the power to spark change, especially when they come from constituents.

To make it easier, we've created a template letter that you can personalise and send to your MP. It's a simple but impactful way to share your story, highlight the work that The Ripple Pond does for its Members and express the importance of ensuring that families are at the forefront of policy-based decisions and discussions.



www.theripplepond.org/mp



How to Find Your MP

Not sure who your MP is? It's easy to find out. Just visit:

<https://members.parliament.uk/members/Commons>

and enter your postcode. You'll be able to see your MP's name, contact details, and even their recent voting record.

Your experiences, your voice, and your story have power. By taking a few minutes to send a letter, you can help us ensure that families are no longer the invisible backbone of our Armed Forces community, but are seen, heard, and supported.

Join us for a relaxed and laughter-filled Online Quiz Night (suitable for the whole family)!

Whether you're flying solo or bringing the whole family, everyone's welcome. No pressure, no prizes—just a great chance to have some fun, test your trivia knowledge, and meet new people in a light-hearted setting.

What to expect:

- Easygoing quiz rounds (nothing too serious!)
- Feel free to come alone or bring family, all welcome!

Grab your snacks and come and join us.

Check your emails or peer support for registration link or email us at help@theripplepond.org

TUES 23RD JULY

INFORMATION TALKS

CONFIDENT | EMPOWERED | RESILIENT

RECENT TALKS RELEASED:



John and Janet are Members of The Ripple Pond and they have shared their story supporting their son. It's such an impactful conversation, looking at the highs and lows and their journey. We can't recommend it enough.

Check out this short snippet from John and Members check your emails for the full link, it's one to watch.

<https://youtube.com/shorts/aF85wwB0IFw?feature=share>

We had a brilliant time chatting with Gill Charlton as she shared with us from her wealth of experience as a military veteran, Events Executive ABF, Comedian and Veterans Comedy Club CIC Director. Gill talks of her journey with injury, exploring neurodiversity, getting involved in comedy, being a celebrant and so much more.

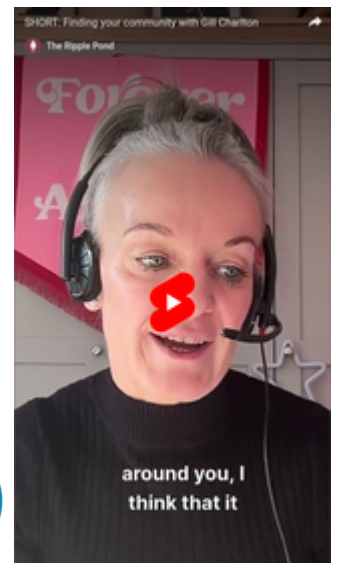
In this short snippet of the talk Gill talks of the power of community.

https://youtube.com/shorts/K3hM_vddUp4?feature=share

For our Members, check your peer support and emails for the link to the full video.

To follow the Veterans Comedy Club:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-veterans-comedy-club/>



JJ Hrycak joined us for a conversation, JJ is the Armed Forces Lead for Milton Keynes Council, Veteran, Reservist and Army Spouse and talks about her journey, what she has learnt along the way. This episode is full of down to earth wisdom including learning: * It's ok not to be ok * Getting the right support at the right time * Adjustment disorder * Vicarious trauma

Check out this short snippet of the talk:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/-hd-GDPRhTs>

For our Members, check your peer support and emails for the full video.

ONLINE WELLBEING WORKSHOPS

7:30PM- 9PM



THE
RIPPLE
POND
SUPPORTING
FAMILIES
STRENGTHENING
FUTURES
for the armed forces community

We are really excited to introduce you to our new Online Wellbeing Workshops. We know that sometimes you need a space to focus on your wellbeing and take some time to explore what you need. These are just that, and are friendly interactive spaces to explore your wellbeing, hosted by Kirsty.

Listen to Kirsty as she tells you a bit more about them:



https://youtu.be/N1__BBsgPd8

Meet Kirsty. Kirsty is warm, friendly and down to earth. She is an experienced mental health nurse who loves people, pets and generally doing stuff! If you want someone in a team to say, yes, it's Kirsty! If you want a bit of banter and catch up, go to Kirsty! She's a brilliant addition to Team Ripple Pond and we know you are going to love meeting her.

Anxiety: Tues 20 May

You're not alone—many of us deal with anxiety, and this workshop is a space to talk about it openly. Let's explore together the science of anxiety, what creates the responses we have and some practical tools to help us manage anxiety in our lives. Expect open conversation, supportive atmosphere, and a chance to connect with others who get it. No pressure—just come as you are.

Stress: Tues 24 June

This relaxed, peer-focused workshop is a space to talk about stress, what causes it, and how we can manage it together. We'll share tips, try simple stress-relief techniques, and support each other in finding calm in the chaos.

Getting Active: Thurs 17 Jul

We know keeping active is good for us, but how do we prioritise it and what does that look like for us individuals? In this guilt-free zone, join us as we explore what active is for us and some practical steps we can take to getting more movement in our daily routine. Whether you're just starting out or looking to get back on track, this session offers simple, practical tips and motivation to keep you moving.

Managing Low Feelings: Thurs 21 Aug

Everyone feels low sometimes—this workshop offers a supportive space to talk about it. We'll explore what low moods can look like, share simple ways to cope, and connect with others who understand. No judgment, just honest conversation and practical support.

Healthy Routines: Tues 23 Sept

Small habits can make a big difference. In this workshop, we'll explore simple ways to build healthy routines that support your wellbeing—like better sleep, balanced meals, movement, and mindset. Come share ideas, get inspired, and start creating a routine that works for you.

Wintering: Tues 21 Oct

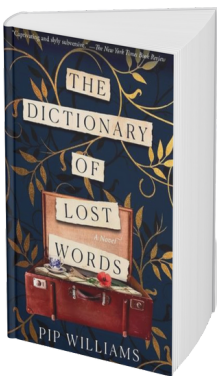
Inspired by the idea of wintering—those times in life when we naturally slow down, withdraw, or face challenges—this workshop explores how to navigate life's quieter, more difficult seasons with gentleness and self-compassion. Together, we'll reflect on what it means to embrace rest, let go of pressure, and find meaning in the pause. A calm, supportive space for anyone moving through a personal "winter."

BOOK CLUB



HAVE FUN | MAKE CONNECTIONS | CHAT ABOUT BOOKS

The Ripple Pond book club recently welcomed some new Members, and just in time for the next book – chosen at random by one of the group, The Dictionary of Lost Words by Pip Williams.



Set in Oxford and based on true events, this is the tale of Esme, who along with her father and a team of lexicographers are compiling the Oxford English Dictionary. As she navigates her childhood Esme becomes fascinated with words, particularly those that are often

overlooked or deemed unworthy of inclusion. Through her journey she seeks to reclaim these 'lost words' highlighting the power of language in shaping identity and history.

We thoroughly enjoyed this read with one Member saying

"Absolutely loving this book.....best book I've read in the group so far."

During our meeting, there almost wasn't enough time to squeeze in all the conversation! The Members had so much to say about it and we all agreed it was most certainly a book we would highly recommend!

If you would like to know more about the Ripple Pond book club or are keen to join in the fun, please email admin@theripplepond.org or reach out to a staff member to express your interest. We'd love to have you onboard!

DATES FOR THE DIARY

We have further dates for the diary til the end of the year to connect with our New Members with Virtual Members Meet Ups as well as opportunities to meet the team in an informal environment. Please see peer support and emails for how to attend or book your place at help@theripplepond.org:



Various evenings at 7:30pm on Zoom

- Tues 12th August,
- Wed 10th September
- Thurs 9th October
- Mon 10th November
- Tues 9th December



First Wednesday of the month at 12:30pm on Teams

- 6th August
- 4th September
- 2nd October
- 5th November
- 3rd December



In our last newsletter we shared about the textile project one group of Members took part in organised by Dan Ball the Education Officer at The Watercress Line Heritage Steam Railway in East Hampshire. The project has been created to celebrate 200 years of the Railway.

Their textile panel is themed around music and poetry inspired by the railway but with elements of the armed forces to reflect partners and The Ripple Pond.

The project is now complete and we think you'll be impressed as to what this group have accomplished. Congratulations from all at The Ripple Pond!



CHAVASSE CLINIC

Spotlight

In March, our Founder, Julia Molony spoke with the Chavasse Clinic who offer a musculoskeletal clinic for the armed forces community. For those supporting a loved one with physical injury, this information may be of benefit. Referrals must be completed by an appropriate medical practitioner.

How to refer:

Referrals are welcomed from an appropriate medical practitioner (e.g. GP/physio) for patients with musculoskeletal problems who have served in HM Armed Forces - regular, reserve or veteran.

Please note that this is not a walk-in clinic.

Please complete a Chavasse Clinic Referral form and contact our appointments team at the Booking Hub, RSCH with the referral to the Chavasse Clinic.



Fax referrals to:
01273 664751



Or email referrals to:
bsu-tr.outpatientbookings@nhs.net



Email GP queries to:
bsuh.outpatients.bookingcentre@nhs.net



ARMY



The Chavasse Clinic

Royal Sussex County Hospital
Eastern Road
Brighton
BN2 5BE

NHS
Brighton and Sussex
University Hospitals
NHS Trust

Chavasse Clinic



What is the Chavasse Clinic?

A specialist musculoskeletal clinic for Service Personnel (Regular or Reserve) and Veterans.

Clinic dates:

This clinic is held monthly within the Fracture Clinic at the Royal Sussex County Hospital, Eastern Road, Brighton, BN2 5BE.

Sessions currently run on a Thursday morning and pre-booked appointments are available between 08:30-13:00.

We are looking to expand our session times and dates within the near future and further details of this will be made available at the time.



Legacy behind the clinic

In Spring of 2014, the BOA published a report that they had commissioned Professor Tim Briggs to write with regards to the Service Personnel and Musculoskeletal problems. This report built upon Prof Briggs previous work on "Getting It Right First Time", and was dedicated to the memory of Captain Noel Godfrey Chavasse VC and Bar.

Noel Chavasse qualified in medicine from the University of Liverpool in 1912 and worked for Sir Robert Jones, the founder of the British Orthopaedic Association (BOA) as his houseman.

He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) in 1913 and was attached to the 10th Battalion of The Kings (Liverpool Regiment), the Liverpool Scottish, a Territorial battalion.

During World War I (WWI) Chavasse was promoted to Captain and remained attached to the 1st/10th (Scottish Battalion) of The Kings (Liverpool Regiment). He saw action in Belgium in June 1915 where he was awarded the Military Cross (MC) and mentioned in Dispatches.

In 1916 Noel was awarded his first Victoria Cross whilst rescuing men from no-man's land during the battle of Guillemont despite being injured himself.

His second Victoria Cross was awarded during the Allied offensive of Passchendaele in 1917 where he was again wounded but refused to leave his post and continued to care for his men. He died two days later of his injuries on the 4th August 1917.

Chavasse's headstone is in a small cemetery in Brandhoek New Military Cemetery Vlamertinge and is the only one on the Western Front carved with two Victoria Crosses.



How did the clinic start?

As a serving officer in the RAMC and an orthopaedic surgeon who had trained at the prestigious Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital in Oswestry, Lt Col Benjamin Caesar, a Consultant Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgeon at BSUH, was inspired by this story of selfless commitment and sacrifice. He felt compelled to follow in Noel Chavasse's example and set up the Chavasse Clinic to run on his days off in spare rooms in fracture clinic at the Royal Sussex County Hospital in 2016.

With support from the Sussex Armed Forces Network, the clinic proved to be a success and popular with not only the Veteran population, but also the Regulars and Reservists who attended. This was recognised by the Trauma and Orthopaedic Directorate, who formally recognised this clinic as part of Lt Col Caesar's work and has continued to support the clinic as it develops and grows.

The plans for the future are to increase the number of clinics each month, and Lt Col Caesar will be joined in this venture by Sqn Ldr Tom Crompton, a fellow orthopaedic consultant working at BSUH and RAF Reservist with 4626 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. This will allow the clinic to run uninterrupted during periods of deployment, such as Lt Col Caesar recent work with the UN in South Sudan.

SPOTLIGHT ON FUNDERS

At The Ripple Pond, our mission to ensure that no one supporting a loved one with a service attributable injury feels alone, is made possible primarily through the generosity of our funders. Their belief in our vision and commitment to our cause have been the bedrock upon which we've built our supportive and non-judgemental peer support communities, allowing us to make sure that our Members continue to be seen, heard and supported. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to these remarkable organisations.



We receive funding from and are proud to work in partnership with Op Courage Midlands and London, the NHS mental health service for veterans. Our collaboration with them strengthens the vital bridge between families and the mental health services available to veterans, providing guidance, community and understanding every step of the way. Together we are committed to improving health and social outcomes for the whole armed forces family, so that no one has to navigate the challenges of life after a service injury alone.

FIND OUT MORE:



<https://www.opcouragemidlands.nhs.uk/>
<https://londonveteranservice.nhs.uk/>



The Veterans' Foundation stands as one of the UK's fastest-growing military charities, collaborating with numerous smaller organisations to uplift Armed Forces families in need. Their generous grant award scheme has empowered us to deliver life-changing projects, reinforcing our capacity to offer peer-led support networks and resources. Being featured in their 'Care, Support & Wellbeing' Hub is a testament to our shared dedication to the welfare of injured serving people, veterans and their families.

FIND OUT MORE:

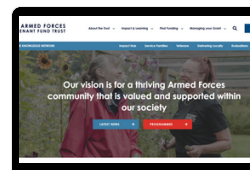


www.veteransfoundation.org.uk



The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has been a cornerstone of support for our initiatives. As a charity dedicated to delivering funding programs that create tangible change across the UK Armed Forces community, their backing has enabled us to enhance the quality of life for countless families. The Armed Forces Covenant have an annual fund of £10 million, from which we have received funding that has been instrumental in helping us provide unique support and information services to those who need them most. In fact, they're funding our most recent project, helping us to extend our support offering to parents.

FIND OUT MORE:

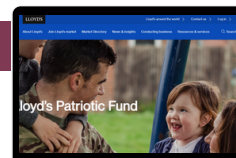


<https://covenantfund.org.uk/>



Established in 1803, Lloyd's Patriotic Fund is the oldest military charity of its kind, having provided support to the Armed Forces community for over two centuries. Their contributions have supported numerous initiatives aimed at ensuring successful futures for those who have served. Their support has been pivotal in helping us extend our reach and deepen our impact within the community.

FIND OUT MORE:



www.lloyds.com/about-lloyds/responsible-business/community/patriotic-fund/

To each of these funders, we express our sincere gratitude. Your support has not only sustained our programmes but has also paved the way towards healing and hope for countless families navigating service attributable injuries. Together, we can continue to do more.



A FINAL WORD:

If We Want a Resilient Armed Forces, We Need to Tell the Whole Truth



by Rodger Cartwright

Eighty-one years ago, British paratroopers began the liberation of Europe on D-Day. Today, as war returns to Europe and global tensions rise, from Russia's aggression and China's assertiveness to Iran's nuclear ambitions and North Korea's threats, the UK faces a stark reality: the world is dangerous, and readiness is vital.

But true readiness isn't just about weapons, strategies or spending; it is about people. The Strategic Defence Review 2025 outlines ambitious plans for expanding the Armed Forces. Yet recruitment is faltering, retention is fragile, and morale is uneven. Without addressing the lived reality of service life, these plans risk becoming hollow.

Military life is demanding and transformative. It builds resilience and fosters extraordinary talent, but it also brings psychological strain, risk, and sacrifice. Increasingly, however, recruitment campaigns present a softened image of military life, glossing over the hardships in favour of broader appeal. This not only misleads the public and potential recruits but also undermines trust and long-term strength.

Yes, military life is often an exciting and positive experience. But we do a disservice by hiding the uncomfortable truths: injury, trauma, abuse, and moral injury. These issues exist, and honesty must not be compromised for the sake of public relations.

To build and sustain a battle-ready force, we need root-and-branch honesty. We must listen — really listen — to service personnel, their families, and those leaving the services. This is the key to transformational change.

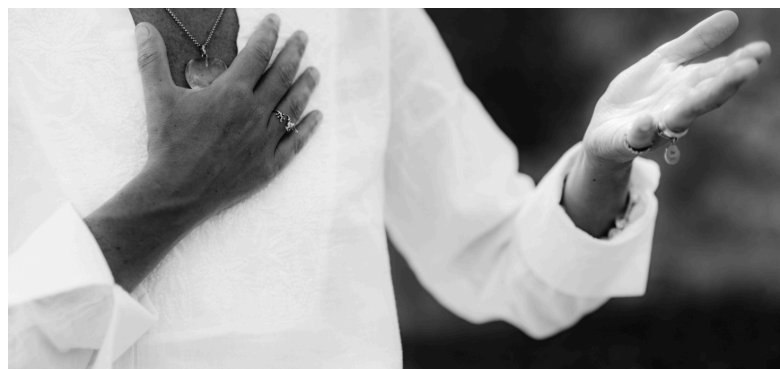
Through listening to our Members, I've come to recognise two key areas where support and reform are essential:



1. Recognise and Integrate Families

Families should be seen as an integral part of our defence infrastructure, not treated as an afterthought. Yet they are often overlooked. We must invest in families at every stage: recruitment, training, active service, transition and post-service life. That means looking beyond the outdated concept of a 'dependent' and acknowledging parents, partners in new relationships, and broader support networks.

The MoD must invest in up-to-date effective two-way communication with families, enabling access to accurate information, and develop an integrated healthcare provision, where Defence Medical Services and NHS care align and communicate.



2. Build a Trauma-Informed, Mentally Healthy Culture

Many personnel hide their mental health struggles out of fear. Fear of stigma, career damage, or being seen as weak. In a culture that prizes stoicism and self-reliance, this silence can deepen shame and isolation.

Support must begin on Day One, not only after crises emerge. Mental health needs to be normalised across all ranks, and leadership held accountable for the wellbeing of their people. This is not just about damage control. It is about building a healthier, more sustainable force.

Thriving should be as expected as surviving, and that expectation must be embedded in our training, leadership, and everyday culture.

Organisations like The Ripple Pond hear, time and again, from families carrying the invisible weight of untreated trauma. Cultural change is not sentimental; it is strategic. People who feel seen, supported, and safe are more likely to stay, perform, and recover.

The UK Armed Forces are among the world's best. But sustaining that excellence requires moral courage. The courage to face hard truths, to listen without defensiveness, and to act decisively.

If we are serious about building a resilient and capable force, we must begin by telling the whole story and backing it with real change.

Rodger Cartwright

Chief Executive Officer



THANK YOU

To our funders and partners



KEEP IN TOUCH:

✉ help@theripplepond.org

☎ 0333 900 1028

🌐 www.theripplepond.org

