# AUTUMN 2025

# NEWSLETTER

Supporting adult family members of physically or psychologically injured British Armed Forces Personnel or Veterans

www.theripplepond.org

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# FAMILIES FOCUS PROJECT

### Supporting the whole family

When someone is injured in service, the impact doesn't end there.

It ripples out, through homes, relationships, and into the lives of children. The effects of a physical or psychological injury touch every part of family life, often in ways that are hard to see but deeply felt. Parents and carers are left navigating not only their own emotions but also the questions, worries, and changing realities their children experience.



The Ripple Pond exists to make a difference, so that trauma isn't passed from generation to generation.





That's why we've launched the Family Focus Project, with grateful thanks to the Armed Forces
Covenant Fund Trust, with a clear aim: to change the story of how families are supported when a loved one is injured through Armed Forces service. We believe that supporting recovery means supporting the whole family.

This project is about giving parents the tools, confidence, and community they need to help their children make sense of what's happening and to move forward together.









Over the course of this project, we're investing our time and energy into producing resources, events, and workshops that create meaningful spaces for families to have conversations together. These moments of connection matter. They help families navigate difficult topics, strengthen relationships, and remind each person that they're not alone in their journey.

We began in July with a family quiz night, where Members and their families came together for an evening of laughter and light-hearted fun. The event wasn't about competition, it was about connection. Through creative rounds and "Taskmaster-style" challenges, families were encouraged to work together, share a few laughs, and rediscover the joy in simply spending time together. It was a wonderful way to start conversations and build confidence in a relaxed, positive environment.







A lovely moment for my family, started with my son joining in then my husband which surprised me. It may seem a little thing but for us a family it was quite an event and we we all ended the evening happy and chatty. Thank you " In October, we launched some Family Focus resources, designed to help parents and carers navigate challenges around fireworks season and remembrance. These resources offer practical tools such as conversation starters, activities, and worksheets to help families explore feelings and experiences in age-appropriate ways.

We've hosted a number of workshops to work alongside our Members, demonstrating how to create safe, shared spaces to talk, and to listen.

Throughout this project, we're working hand-inhand with our Members to ensure every resource reflects real family experiences. Their feedback, ideas, and voices are shaping what we create, helping us design support that truly fits their circumstances and needs.

And this is just the start. In the months ahead, we'll be expanding our collection of resources and hosting more events that continue to build connection, confidence, and community. Together, we're working to change the way families are supported after an armed forces injury, ensuring that every parent, carer, and child has the tools, understanding, and space to thrive.



SUPPORTING
FAMILIES
STRENGTHENING
FUTURES

for the armed forces community



in conjunction with

THE ARMED FORCES

COVENANT FUND TRUST

I met my husband following his service in the British Army. At first, I didn't think much of the little things I noticed in his behaviour, I just assumed it was part of military life. But as the years went on and we settled into life together, those little moments began to form a pattern.

Eventually, we realised this wasn't just the culture he'd been part of, it was trauma. What started as fleeting behaviours became more intense and harder to ignore. On one memorable day, I looked at him and didn't recognise the person in front of me.

Life became confusing. One moment he was calm and gentle; the next, I was faced with anger or complete withdrawal. Neither of us knew what to do or how to handle it. I started to feel isolated, anxious and alone in my own home.

It felt like the door to his trauma had been opened and suddenly everything poured out. What had been hidden for years was now a constant presence. He became completely lost in what he was going through. I was left outside, trying to manage work, home life, being a mum – all while feeling shut out by the person I loved.

A few years later, a friend encouraged him to get help. That's when he was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It was a mix of relief and fear. On one hand, we finally had an explanation for what had been happening, but on the other, we didn't know what the road ahead would look like.

As he began to get treatment, the full scale of his mental health injury became clear. Life felt out of control and I wasn't equipped to handle it. It wasn't until I was referred to The Ripple Pond that things started to change.

That first conversation with The Ripple Pond made all the difference, I was heard, someone truly saw me in my situation. From there, I began to understand more about what PTSD really meant – not just for him, but for me too. I started to feel less alone.

Now, I have a community of people who get it. We're all going through different things, but there's this shared understanding that's incredibly powerful. I know I have people I can talk to, peer support that's there when I need it, and a space where I feel safe to share what's really going on.

There have been times when I've reached crisis point and The Ripple Pond has always been there. The team regularly check in, and I know I can turn to them for practical advice, emotional support, and a way to steady myself when everything feels overwhelming.

They've given me tools to make sense of things and helped me find a way forward, even when I couldn't see one. Through The Ripple Pond, I've found people I've never met in person, but who understand me better than anyone.

The Ripple Pond has reminded me to look after myself, not just him. That has been transformational.

I've also started to give back. Using what I've learned to help others feels really meaningful. I know how hard it is to go through this alone, and I'm proud to be part of a community that supports one another.

"The Ripple Pond are the only people who have been there immediately to stop me from free falling. Their support is invaluable. When you feel there's no way out, The Ripple Pond gave me the tools and resources I needed."

Thanks to The Ripple Pond, I'm not just surviving – I'm growing. I'm stronger, more informed, and no longer alone.







## INTRODUCING EVE BRIGHTLIGHT

Award winning Artist | Wellbeing Expert | Online Mindful Art Studio

## We're thrilled to spotlight an artist who's joining forces with us

Eve Brightlight is an artist whose creative vision and dedication to wellbeing are inspiring communities across the UK. Eve holds a master's degree in illustration. Her creative practice explores how the connection between hands and mind through crafts can nurture a positive state of being.

Coming from a veteran family, Eve brings a deeply personal perspective to her work. Her creative workshops are designed to be both relatable and adaptable, offering participants of all ages and abilities a chance to unwind, reconnect, and discover new strengths. Whether supporting high-level sports professionals in their journey of resilience or guiding families through art-based wellbeing sessions, Eve's approach is rooted in care, empowerment, and community connection.

Her creative ventures often lead to unexpected discoveries. One memorable project exploring the Positive State of Mind through puppetry left her surrounded by onion skins, while another, transforming a simple used tea bag, ultimately contributed to her nomination for the prestigious World Illustration Award. These playful yet profound experiments serve as reminders that creativity can turn even the most ordinary materials into meaningful outcomes. That same spirit of curiosity and innovation earned her a distinction from her university and continues to shape and inspire her practice today.

Through every session, Eve aims to create a welcoming environment where attendees leave feeling lighter, more confident, and inspired to see themselves and their circumstances from a fresh, positive perspective.







### A Christmas Invitation from Eve Brightlight

I am thrilled to invite all The Ripple Pond Members to a very special Christmas taster session on <u>10<sup>th</sup> December 12pm - 13:30pm</u>. Christmas is a time when we share joy, exchange gifts, and look for those sparks of magic, and I cannot wait to bring a little of that magic to you.

I will be hosting a safe and welcoming space where no artistic skill is required, just an open mind and a touch of curiosity. Together, we'll explore creativity as a way to connect, unwind, and discover new perspectives.

My hope is that this session will create inspirational ripples in your lives, leaving you feeling lighter, more confident, and uplifted by the spirit of the season.

I warmly invite you to join me in celebrating Christmas through creativity, care, and community connection. Let's unwrap the gift of imagination together.

with joy, Eve Brightlight





Peer support is at the heart of The Ripple Pond, people coming together through shared experiences, understanding, and care. The value of community and understanding cannot be underestimated.

That support can be valuable talking about challenges, but also strong connections form when we spend time doing something we enjoy.

We've seen this through book clubs, courses and events we've hosted. When peer support is built around shared interests and hobbies, it becomes more relaxed and authentic, it's a space to laugh, create, and share moments that aren't defined by injury, recovery, or service life.

That's why we're creating spaces for that.

### Craft Club

At the start of October, we launched The Ripple Pond Craft Club WhatsApp group, and it's already buzzing with creativity! From the very first week, members have been sharing photos, tips, and inspiration from their projects, and it's been such a joy to see the incredible range of crafts on display. We've had everything from knitting, crochet, and cross-stitch to painting, papercraft, woodworking, and jewellery-making.

The level of talent and enthusiasm in our community is truly inspiring, and the group has quickly become a warm, welcoming space where people encourage each other, swap ideas, and celebrate their creative wins, big and small.

Crafting is more than just a hobby. It's a wonderful way to relax, unwind, and take a mindful moment for yourself. As the days get shorter and the weather turns colder, having something creative to focus on can make a real difference to your wellbeing. Whether it's the satisfaction of finishing a project, the joy of learning a new skill, or simply taking some time out to make something with your hands, crafting can bring peace, calm, and connection when we need it most.



If you're already into crafts, or even if you've just been thinking about giving it a try, we'd love for you to join the Craft Club. No experience or fancy equipment needed, just curiosity and a willingness to have fun. Come along, share your work (or your works in progress), get inspired by others, and discover the comfort and joy that creativity can bring this winter.





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I got into cotton spun crafting last year. I titled it "I healed my soul by crafting things" and dedicated it to all those who craft for soul joy and healing A TRP Member

### Gardening Club

Launched in July, our little digital patch of green has already started to bloom with joy. From the first few messages, Members have been sharing snapshots of thriving plants, tales of not-quite-successful experiments, and clever tips that make all the difference. Whether it's a bumper crop of courgettes or a towering giant sunflower reaching for the sky, every story adds to the fun.

This group isn't just about gardening, it's about connection, curiosity, and celebrating the simple pleasures of watching things grow. As the days grow shorter and the light fades a little earlier, there's something grounding about swapping stories, cheering each other on, and finding joy in muddy boots and miracle seedlings.



Whether you're a seasoned grower or just wondering what compost actually does, you're welcome here. No pressure, no perfection, just a bunch of friendly folk sharing the ups, downs, and delights of gardening. Come dig in with us!

What a savoy . Nearly the size of a football.



From dahlias to cabbage and everything in between. We've loved celebrating together

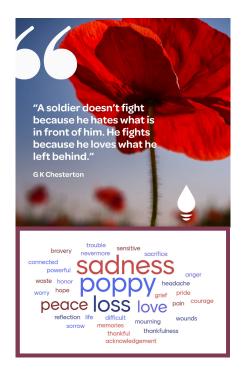


On Remembrance Day, we came together online with our staff and Members for a special moment of reflection. It was a time to pause, connect, and honour both our shared experiences and the strength of our community.

During the session, Members spoke about how Remembrance can sometimes feel disconnected, with public events often focusing on service itself, rather than the experiences of families and loved ones who continue to carry the impact of injury and loss in their daily lives.

Together, we took time to honour the sacrifice and challenges our Members live with every day, and to remember the families who so often go unrecognised. We listened to personal stories, shared moments of reflection, observed a two-minute silence, and looked ahead; exploring what hope might look like today and in the future.

Remembrance is a complex time for many, but it becomes richer and more meaningful when we take the time to listen to the whole community's story.



## THE RIPPLE POND REMEMBERS

All across the UK our Members and staff team marked Remembrance, remembering both the sacrifices made and those that live on in their homes. We honour our Members and the stories they represent. The unseen sacrifices they bear and the cost of their loved ones.

We remember



One Member laid a wreath remembering The Ripple Pond community and the stories they represent.







# WELLBEING WORKSHOPS



Our Wellbeing Workshops have been going from strength to strength, bringing Members together to share experiences, learn practical strategies, and support one another through the ups and downs of everyday life. Each session creates a safe, relaxed space for people to talk openly, connect, and take away something useful for themselves and their families.

### **Managing Low Feelings: Tools for Mental Resilience**

Together we explored managing low feelings and recognising the early signs of low mood.

We shared strategies for coping with difficult emotions, from mindfulness and grounding techniques to building a support network and giving ourselves permission to rest. The sessions encouraged honest conversation and offered practical ways to manage everyday challenges.

"Great workshop and very helpful, and comfortable friendly"



When you feel low in mood you can often feel like reducing what you are doing, but find gentle ways to continue to do things that bring you joy, in order to help stop the cycle.



Observe when in the day you have the most energy and plan tasks for then.

Routines are not just for tasks, build connection and self care into your routines

### **Healthy Routines for Everyday Balance**

This workshop explored healthy routines and how small, consistent habits can make a big difference to wellbeing. From setting gentle goals to creating daily moments of calm, we looked together at how to build structure that supports mental and physical health, and yet also be flexible, without adding pressure.

"I have found these workshops very helpful and they have greatly improved my confidence knowing that there are others that understand how my life can be. Thank you"



19	20	21/	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

16

# ONLINE WELLBEING WORKSHOPS



### Wintering Well: Thriving Through the Darker Months

As the days get shorter, our Wintering workshop focused on finding ways to stay connected, energised, and resilient through the colder months. Members explored practical strategies like embracing natural light, creating uplifting home environments, and keeping social connections strong even when the weather makes it harder to get out and about.



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Thank you so much for the Wintering talk, it was really helpful, warm and friendly. The whole series has been so useful, each one I am taking away small bits and building on them and feel myself slowly becoming more me again, a person I thought I'd lost many years ago. Thank you

Create simple family rituals that anchor everyone, like lighting a candle before dinner, sharing one "good thing" from the day, having a regular family movie night or taking a short evening walk together. These gentle rhythms help us find warmth and connection no matter the season.

### **Looking Ahead:**

The feedback from all the workshops has been overwhelmingly positive, with Members saying how much they value the time to pause, reflect, and focus on themselves. Each session not only provides practical tools but also fosters a growing sense of community and shared understanding.

We're excited to continue this series, bringing more workshops and activities that help families and individuals thrive, because when we look after ourselves, we're better able to look after each other.



We are hosting the next Ripple Pond Quiz Night, a fun and friendly evening open to everyone. Whether you're joining on your own or with family, you'll be very welcome. With a mix of interesting and varied rounds, there will be something for everyone to enjoy, whether you're a trivia fan or just in it for a bit of lighthearted fun.

This time the theme is "Hobbies and Pastimes" to celebrate the shared spaces our community has created to connect over mutual interests. From bonding over books to gossiping about gardening and getting creative with crafts, our Members have shown that shared passions can bring us closer together.

The quiz will be a lovely way to celebrate that spirit and enjoy some laughter and connection along the way.

So come along, test your knowledge, meet others from the community, and take part in a relaxed evening of fun and friendship. Who knows, you might even leave as The Ripple Pond Quiz Champion!



Pop the date in your diary and join in the fun. Family welcome

# **BOOK CLUBs**



### HAVE FUN | MAKE CONNECTIONS | CHAT ABOUT BOOKS

Inspired by our friends at Reading Force we host across the year a few different book clubs:

- The Ripple Pond book club open to any Member to join at any time.
- Reading Force short term book clubs.

#### Find our more about both:

Our book club is a cosy corner for curious minds and kind conversation. Each month, we choose our next read, everyone gets a say, and the final pick is always a shared decision. Our selections reflect the diverse tastes, current mood and thoughtful suggestions of the group.

In a busy world, carving out time to read is a gentle act of self-care. It's your moment to slow down, breathe, and get lost in a story that's just yours for a while. Whether it's a few pages before bed or a quiet weekend escape, reading offers a chance to recharge, reflect, and reconnect with yourself and with others.

So if you love a good story and even better company, come join us. Share your favourites, explore new genres, and be part of a community where every chapter brings something new.



#### Just finished:

A tender, hopeful, and beautifully written story about starting over, finding strength in unexpected places, and the quiet power of kindness. Fans of authors like Jojo Moyes, Katie Fforde, or Jill Mansell will find plenty to love here.

### **Currently Reading:**

The Authenticity Project by Clare Pooley is about a lonely man who writes the truth about his life in a green notebook and leaves it in a café, sparking a chain reaction among strangers who find it and share their own secrets. As these individuals connect through the notebook, their lives intertwine in unexpected and heartwarming ways. The story explores themes of honesty, vulnerability, and the power of human connection.



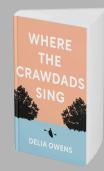


READING In partnership with Reading Force we offer Members the opportunity to have three free books and try a book club. For many of our Members this has been a first step back into reading for pleasure and making a step towards wellbeing for them. It's wonderful to see Members falling back in love with reading.

> This new book club has just started and chosen their three books. Watch this space for the next intake!

### **Currently Reading:**

Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens follows Kya Clark, a young girl abandoned by her family and forced to survive alone in the marshes of North Carolina, where she becomes deeply connected to nature. As she grows up isolated from society, she becomes entangled in a murder investigation when a local man is found dead. The novel weaves themes of loneliness, resilience, and the power of the natural world into a poignant coming-of-age and mystery story.



Just finished the book! Wow! Can honestly say it's not a book I would have picked up normally but I'm so glad I got the opportunity to read it. Very very good



# DATES FOR THE DIARY

As we approach the end of the year and look ahead to Spring 2026, we are looking forward to a whole host of different dates for the diary that put connection, wellbeing, and self-care at the heart of what we do.

We've got loads planned, but here are a few dates to pop in your diaries. We'd love to see you at these friendly and supportive sessions If you need any additional support to help you attend, please don't hesitate to reach out, we're here to help make these spaces accessible and welcoming for everyone. We look forward to sharing these times with you.

Please see peer support and emails for how to attend or book your place at help@theripplepond.org



A lighthearted and informal space to engage with each other and the Team. No agenda just space for connection.

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

- · 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025
- · 7<sup>th</sup> January 2026
- · 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026
- 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026



Join us as we go on a journey together to grow our wellbeing, they are informed by you and places to think about your needs

### **Preparing for Christmas**

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November

### Confidence

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January (7:30pm) Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January (12:30pm)

### Horticulture and growing plants

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February

### **Navigating Sleep**

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March (7:30pm) Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March (12:30pm)

### Supporting Child and Adolescent Mental Health -

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April



A place to chat with others hosted by the team, talking about things that are important to you! Let's Talk! Each month we can pick something new, we'd love to hear your topics going forward.

More information to follow:

- w/b 12th January Let's talk: Gardens and plants
- w/b 9th February Let's talk: Creativity
- w/b 9th March Let's talk: Getting to know you (especially for people new in last year)





The Ripple Pond was privileged to recently attend the parliamentary review of the Forcer Protocol, a vital initiative that helps locate and protect missing members of the Armed Forces community. Already being adopted by police forces across the UK, the Protocol ensures faster, safer responses when veterans, reservists, or serving personnel go missing.



The Protocol was inspired by the story of Alan Forcer and developed by his former wife, Claire Lilly. From personal loss, Claire created a system that records vital information about a veteran's vulnerabilities, triggers, and support networks, giving police the knowledge they need to act immediately. One person's story has sparked a system-wide change, saving lives and showing the power of lived experience.





The review highlighted the impact of collaboration across police, charity, and public sectors. The Ripple Pond believes that protecting the Armed Forces community requires the whole community to work together, from police, to mental health support, family care, and community engagement. The Forcer Protocol is the result of one person's dedication, combined with cross-sector teamwork, that demonstrates meaningful change happens.

To find out more about The Forcer Protocol visit: https://forcerprotocol.org/





On Saturday 13 September 2025, staff from The Ripple Pond were excited to attend the Royal Marines Corps Family Day at the Commando Training Centre in Lympstone. This annual event brings together serving Royal Marines, veterans, and their families for a day of camaraderie, celebration, and support and this year was no exception.

The rain managed to (just!) hold off and families enjoyed a wide range of activities, from dynamic displays and entertainment to opportunities to connect with welfare and support organisations. One of the highlights was being able to have a go on the zipwire, which was deceptively high! The Ripple Pond team were proud to be among those attending, sharing our mission and meeting with many new faces.

Being present at events like this is a vital part of what we do. They allow us to reach out directly to family members and carers who may not yet know that they're not alone. Many partners, parents, and other loved ones expressed how valuable it was to see a peer support network dedicated to them, not just the serving personnel or veterans.







The Ripple Pond team were also able to strengthen connections with other service charities and partners, exploring new ways we can work together to support our shared community. As always, these face-to-face conversations spark ideas and reinforce the importance of collaborative care.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Royal Marines for inviting us to take part in such a meaningful day, and for the warm welcome we received. It was a joy to witness the strength and spirit of the Royal Marines family.

As we continue to support the loved ones of our Armed Forces, events like the Royal Marines Corps Family Day remind us why The Ripple Pond exists; to ensure that behind every service member, there is a strong, supported, and connected family.







13 September 2025

Commando Training Centre, Lympstone



As Remembrance Day approaches, I find myself reflecting not only on the public ceremonies that unite our nation each November, but also on the private memories that this time of year brings. For many of us with links to the Armed Forces, remembrance is not limited to one day or a parade. It is something we live with throughout the year, a quiet reminder of people and moments that have shaped our lives.

Across the country, we see the poppy bloom again. Communities come together to honour those who served. On Remembrance Sunday, people of all ages stand side by side in silence. It is one of the few moments when the nation truly pauses to reflect. Yet behind the pageantry lies another side of remembrance that is less visible.

For some veterans, this time of year brings pride and connection. For others, it brings pain and unease. Many live with physical or psychological injuries that are not always spoken about. Some wear their medals with pride, others cannot face taking them out of a drawer. Some scars cannot be seen, and difficult memories that may never fade. The military can be a tough and demanding world, and not all who serve leave it unmarked.

At The Ripple Pond, we see every day how service can affect not just the individual, but their family too. We support those who care for a loved one who has been injured or traumatised by their time in uniform. For these families, Remembrance Day can be hard. It can bring back painful memories or the sense that life has been changed forever.





When the flags are furled and the crowds disperse, this is a reality for many veterans and families that continues day after day throughout the year. They remember, often quietly and alone. As a nation, we cannot let our remembrance end when the ceremonies do. We have a duty to keep supporting those who served and those who stand beside them, not only in November but throughout the year.

True remembrance is not just about looking back. It is about how we care for people now. It means showing understanding, kindness, and a lasting commitment to the Armed Forces community. We remember because we owe them more than a single day. We remember because remembrance must live on, every day of the year.

Rodger Cartwright

Chief Executive Officer



## **THANK YOU**

To our funders











# **KEEP IN TOUCH:**

- help@theripplepond.org
- **©** 0333 900 1028
- www.theripplepond.org







### Strengthening Connections

Throughout 2025, The Ripple Pond has continued to grow and strengthen its professional outreach by hosting a series of dedicated information and networking sessions. These events have brought together a diverse range of professionals all with one shared purpose: to better support the families and loved ones of physically, psychologically or emotionally injured service personnel and veterans.

Held online, these sessions have provided valuable opportunities to showcase the work of The Ripple Pond, share experiences and perspectives, and explore ways to collaborate more effectively. Whether connecting with a new local veteran support hub or deepening relationships with national service providers, each session has been an important step toward building a more informed and inclusive support network for our Members.

So far this year, we've engaged with around 200 professionals from across all areas of the NHS, service and civilian charities and organisations, local and devolved administrations, the OVA and other government departments and more.

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Some of those we've connected with

Building on the success of 2025, we are excited to announce that our Professional Information and Networking Sessions will continue throughout 2026 and these will be available to book shortly on the professional section of our website.

Whether you're a frontline practitioner, a charity professional, or part of a wider support organisation, these sessions offer a meaningful way to learn, connect, and collaborate. Together, we can ensure that the often-unseen families of those who serve or have served receive the support, understanding, and community they deserve.

If you're a professional interested in attending a session in 2026, or would like more information about The Ripple Pond, please get in touch with our Engagement Officer Carolyn on <a href="mailto:Carolyn.aggar@theripplepond.org">Carolyn.aggar@theripplepond.org</a>.



www.theripplepond.org/networking