

THE RIPPLE POND

NEWSLETTER



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

www.theripplepond.org

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THINKING FAMILY

Spring Resources

Spring is a season of growth, renewal, and new beginnings, the perfect time to focus on nurturing connections within our families. Families with a loved one affected by injury or trauma from serving in the military often face unexpected hurdles, shifts in routines, changes in relationships, and the need for new ways of communicating. That's where The Ripple Pond comes in, supporting families to strengthen bonds, communicate better, and work together, even in the most challenging times.

We are launching a brand new E-magazine, Thinking Families for our Members to help families celebrate growth in every way, from seed to garden, from conversation to communication.

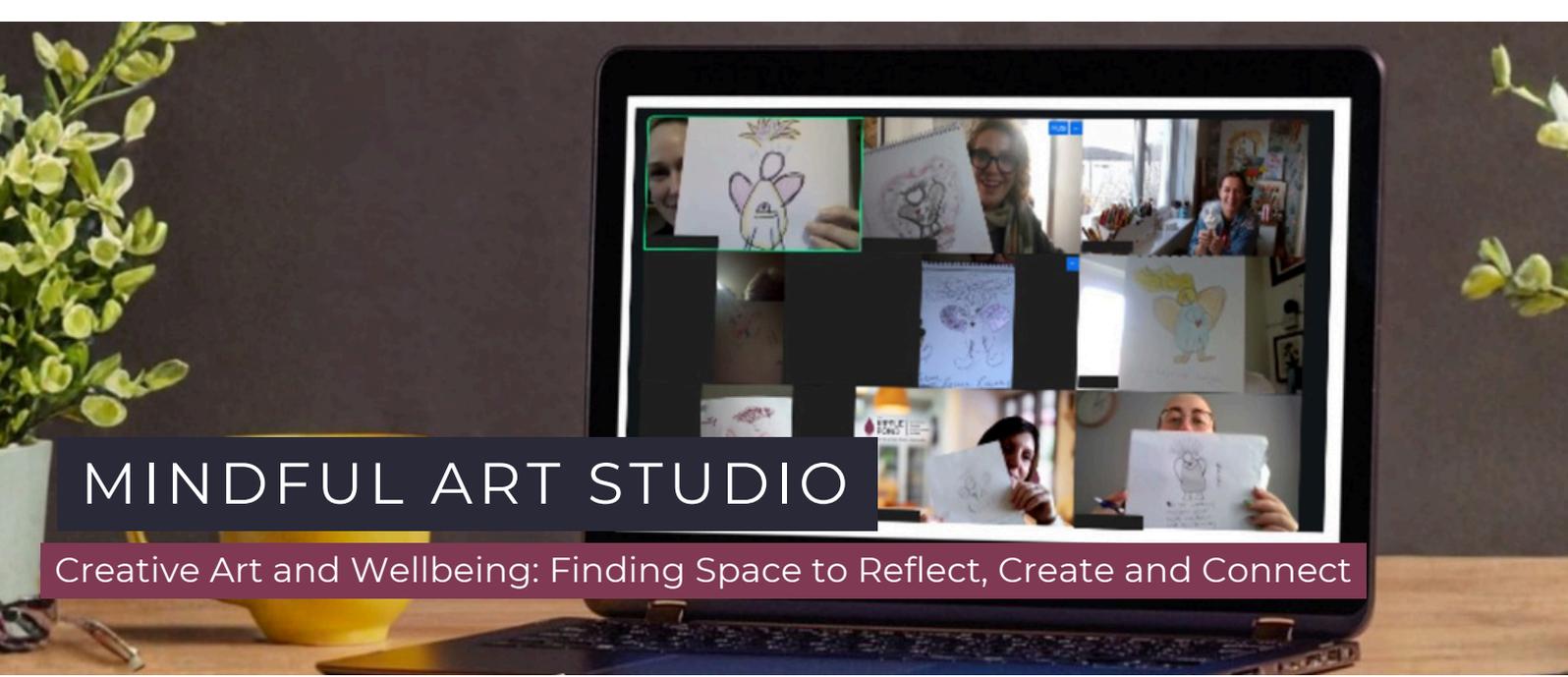


Inside the magazine there are ideas and resources to try at home, worksheets to print, and activities to enjoy together.

We're also thrilled to launch our "Sunflower" competition. We can't wait to see how tall our sunflowers grow! We're encouraging families to spend time in nature together, nurture something from seed to bloom, and enjoy the simple, joyful moments of watching life grow.

In order to encourage families into the garden this spring we have some seed packs to send to families, who can apply for them through peer support or email.





MINDFUL ART STUDIO

Creative Art and Wellbeing: Finding Space to Reflect, Create and Connect

Our Creative Art and Wellbeing sessions offer members a welcoming space to pause, reflect and explore creativity as a tool for wellbeing. These sessions are about more than making art, they are about finding space, sharing experiences, and gently exploring themes such as change, resilience and emotional strength together.

The sessions are hosted by Eve, a qualified illustrator whose work explores artistic expression as a source of peace, strength and resilience. Eve is also part of our member community and brings lived experience to her practice, giving her a genuine understanding of the challenges and needs our members may face. This shared understanding helps create an atmosphere of trust, empathy and care within each session.

Each workshop provides a warm, safe and supportive environment, where members are guided step by step through a simple creative process. Participants create a piece of artwork alongside a short piece of reflective writing, using creativity as a form of gentle journalling. This approach offers space to slow down, reflect together, and explore personal experiences of change and resilience in a way that feels manageable and supportive.

Upcoming Dates:

- 10th March, 12pm
- 17th March, 12pm
- 24th March, 12pm

Evening course begins on 6th May 2026. It will run every Wednesday at 7.30pm for 5 weeks.



The programme is designed to be inclusive and accessible to all members, regardless of artistic experience or resources. Sessions deliberately use low-cost, readily available household items, such as tea bags for painting, alongside pencils and paper, to ensure that everyone can take part without pressure or expense. By keeping materials simple and celebrating imperfection, the focus stays on self-expression rather than skill or outcome.

Through creativity, reflection and shared experience, the Creative Art and Wellbeing sessions continue to support members in nurturing wellbeing, building resilience, and discovering new ways to express and understand themselves.



in conjunction with THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND TRUST

CELEBRATING FUNDRAISING

We are always so encouraged when friends of The Ripple Pond choose us to fundraise with us. If you are planning a fundraiser for us, we would love to hear about it!



A massive thank you and well done to one of our Members who hosted a bake sale on behalf of The Ripple Pond in her workplace. The bake sale was well attended and raised £190.

Next month David Crossthwaite and Steven Downey are doing the Las Vegas Sky Jump to raise funds for The Ripple Pond. Find out more here, or watch one of the videos. If you want to help them to reach their target consider donating.

JustGiving

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/steve-downey-1>



We caught up with David to find out more:

Tell us about yourself:

I'm David, Veterans Lead at Ashfields Primary Care Centre in Sandbach, a busy GP practice with over 30,000 patients. As the Veterans and Families Lead, I help those veterans and families access health care when there are barriers, and support them to get the help they need.

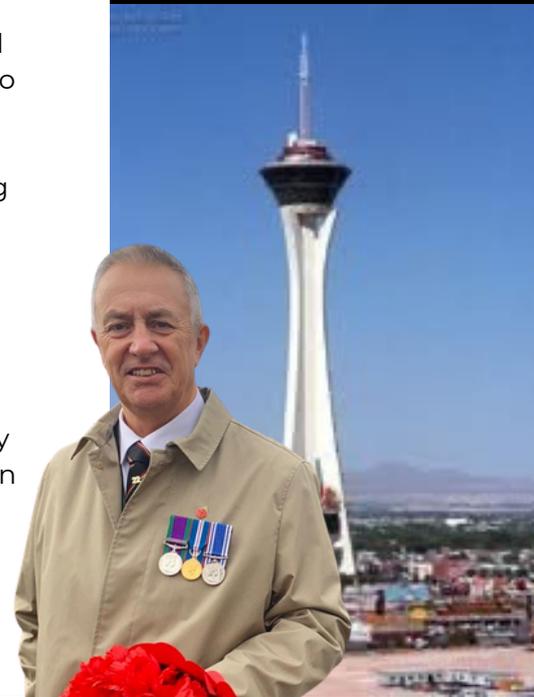
What you are doing:

I am going to Las Vegas to get married. We are getting married on April 9th with Elvis and then straight afterwards my wife and I are going to do an 800m zip line!

Then the next day, I will be jumping off the top of the tallest building, the Strand Hotel, with my cousin. It's 1100ft tall. So I thought, if I'm going to do it, why not try and raise some money for a good cause that supports veterans and their families.

Why the Ripple Pond?

In the work I do, I know that families are often overlooked. Families live with the conditions and injuries that the serving person or veteran is living with and they are so in need of that support. I know families in my area who have accessed the support from The Ripple Pond and it's been a huge help. Lots of families are providing unpaid care for our injured serving people and veterans and you're helping them, so that's why I wanted to do that.





PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT

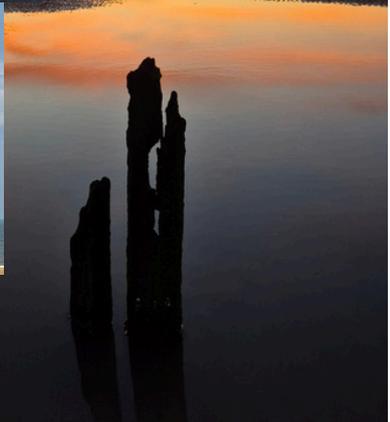
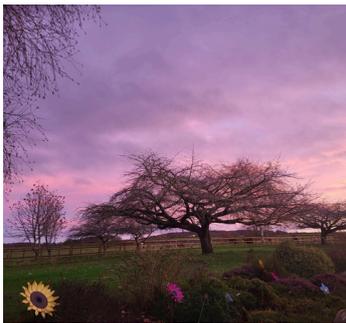
What does hope mean to you?

In February, we launched a special photography project where we invited all Members to take part by sharing an image that answers the question: What does hope mean to you?

In times of challenge and change, hope can be found in big moments and small details alike, and photography gives us a powerful way to pause, reflect, and capture that meaning.

We know that engaging in creative expression is not only inspiring, it also a powerful aid to wellbeing. It helps us to slow down, see things differently, and tell our own stories.

Have a look at some of the photo's so far, looking through the lens of our Members, seeing the world with resilience, beauty, and possibility.



Ducks - hope peace and freedom of mind

This is hope for me. It's February, it's 1° and my car needed defrosted this morning but these wee guys still make an appearance and thrive



.....although close up things may feel dark there is always hope that tomorrow can be better



Hope peace and freedom of mind - sunset



ONLINE WELLBEING WORKSHOPS



As we've started 2026 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. We've hosted workshops on a number of subjects, but we really enjoyed our session on building confidence.

Building Confidence:

We held a reflective and practical workshop focused on developing confidence, where we explored what confidence means in everyday situations and identified realistic, actionable ways to build it over time.

“Finished the confidence workshop and it was definitely worth booking onto. There is a day time session next week so try as I don't know many of us that don't have self doubt or judge ourselves harshly from time to time and this workshop was so gentle, non judgmental and welcoming- so glad I went and got some great reminders and tips for gaining confidence slowly but surely “

I have just joined and this was really good. No pressure to engage, but really interesting to hear everyone's experiences. I felt really inspired and boosted afterwards. If you have time, I'd definitely hop on and check it out. X

Dates for the Diary:

ONLINE WELLBEING WORKSHOP

NAVIGATING SLEEP



TUESDAY 24TH MARCH (7:30PM)
WEDNESDAY 25TH MARCH (12PM)



with Kirsty and Sarah

EXPERT WORKSHOP

TRAUMA AND CHRONIC STRESS



TUESDAY 21ST APRIL, 7:30-PM



Dr Tom Matthews is a former GP and expert in mental wellbeing and emotional health. He is coming to deliver a workshop for us on Trauma and Chronic Stress, and how to navigate that as families. One not to miss!



with Dr. Tom Matthews

PEER SUPPORT GROUPS



We recognise that peer support works in different ways for different people, so we've been working hard not just to have a one size fits all approach.

That's why when you come to The Ripple Pond we now offer:

- Regional Peer WApp Peer Support Groups
- Online FB private group
- Interest-based Peer Support
- Online events for connection using Teams and Zoom

If you want to find out more about your options, please reach out to us and we will help you find the support you need for you: help@theripplepond.org



BOOK CLUBS



HAVE FUN | MAKE CONNECTIONS | CHAT ABOUT BOOKS



With grateful thanks to Reading Force for partnering with us for this latest book club. We've just finished this club and participants are able to join our long standing TRP Book Club

Just Finished:

Grown Ups is a contemporary novel about a large Irish family whose carefully managed image unravels during one dramatic weekend. When long-buried secrets, resentments, and misunderstandings surface, each family member is forced to confront the gap between who they pretend to be and who they really are. The story blends humor and emotional depth while exploring themes of marriage, mental health, and the messy reality of adulthood.



The Reading Force Book Club was important to me on many levels. I'm disabled and housebound. We live in a rural community where it's possible to feel very isolated. This group enabled me to join in with something in a very safe place. The FaceTime chats were the one time I could meet with people outside the family and was the first time I had met so many people to talk to since becoming disabled.



I've loved the Reading Force Book Club as I haven't bought myself a book for years, listening to audiobooks instead. Having a book arrive in the post reminded of what is special about books. Having the books sent out with a book mark and log really felt special too and got me excited to read again. Thank you



Currently Reading:

The Reading List by Sara Nisha Adams tells the story of Mukesh, a grieving widower, and Aleisha, a young library assistant. When Mukesh discovers a list of book recommendations, he bonds with Aleisha through the shared experience of reading. The novel explores themes of healing, loss, and the power of books to connect people.



DATES FOR THE DIARY

As always, 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.

Here are just a few of the dates to pop in your diaries.

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

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.



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. Coming up:

- 1st April 2026
- 6th May 2026
- 3rd June 2026
- 1st July 2026

Look out for: New Information Talk with Andy Davies from Op COURAGE Midlands.



A place to chat with others, 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.

Thursday 12th March - Let's talk: Getting to know you
If you're a newer member (joined in the last year), this is an opportunity to get together with others, see some faces and make some connections. Hosted by Toni, expect a warm, friendly and low stakes opportunity to get to know others in our community.

Tuesday 7th April - Let's Talk: Gardening
If you're a keen gardener or looking to get into it, join Holly to share with and learn from each other. Last time we had some excellent tips for sweet pea growing and shared our gardening goals!



GRANT FROM ARMY BENEVOLENT FUND

Partnering with Families

Carers play a vital but often unseen role within the Armed Forces community. Partners, parents, siblings and other family members can find themselves supporting loved ones who have sustained physical or psychological injuries through service, often while coping with significant strain themselves. The Ripple Pond exists to provide support to these carers.

We are pleased to announce that we have been awarded a £30,000 grant from the Army Benevolent Fund. This funding will enable The Ripple Pond to expand its reach and strengthen its impact, including targeted support for parents managing the dual challenge of caring for an injured loved one while supporting children through uncertainty.

"The Ripple Pond plays a crucial role in supporting the families behind injured soldiers and veterans. Their work ensures carers are not left to face challenges alone; and provides them with the understanding and practical help that makes a real difference."

BRIGADIER (RET'D) PETER MONTEITH,
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER AT THE
ARMY BENEVOLENT FUND



Army Benevolent Fund

www.theripplepond.org



A TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR NICOLA FEAR CBE

We were deeply saddened by the death of Professor Nicola Fear CBE after a short illness. Nicola was so much more than a distinguished academic and Co-Director of the King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR); she was a wonderful, steadfast friend to our charity and a true champion for our members. Her heartfelt dedication to understanding the complexities of military life touched countless lives and has left a lasting legacy across the Armed Forces community.

At The Ripple Pond, Nicola's research has always been at the heart of what we do. Her work gave us the confidence and knowledge to speak up for the "invisible frontline", the families of our veterans. She gave a voice to those who often felt unheard, always with a genuine care and understanding that made all the difference.

On a personal level, Nicola was someone we admired deeply. Her warmth, her kindness, and her unwavering support for our members will be missed more than words can say. She built bridges between research and the real lives of the families we support, always making sure that knowledge led to better care and greater understanding.

Our thoughts and deepest sympathies are with her family, friends, and colleagues at King's College London during this incredibly difficult time. Nicola, we will miss you so very much. Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for everything you have done for us and the communities we serve.

Rodger Cartwright
Chief Executive Officer





A FINAL WORD:

Why co-production has to be more than a buzz word

Over the past year, co-production has been more than a methodology for us, it has been a mindset. It has shaped how we design services, make decisions, and engage with our members. Rather than building in isolation, we build with our community. This approach has strengthened the relevance, impact, and sustainability of what we offer.

Why We Co-Create

Members Are Experts in Their Own Experience:

No matter how experienced or well-intentioned our team, we cannot fully understand the realities, challenges, and aspirations of our members without involving them. Co-creation allows us to identify real pain points, design solutions that meet current needs, and adapt quickly to emerging trends. It ensures our services are grounded in lived experience rather than assumptions.

Relevance Matters

Expectations evolve and priorities shift. By involving members in shaping our offerings, we reduce the risk of investing in initiatives that miss the mark. Co-creation provides ongoing feedback, keeping services aligned with what matters most.

Engagement Grows Through Ownership

When members contribute ideas, test prototypes, or help shape programmes, they develop a sense of shared ownership. They move from being recipients of services to partners in building them. Participation increases, conversations deepen, advocacy grows, and retention strengthens. People are more committed to what they help create.

Trust Is Built Through Transparency

Inviting members into our design processes signals that their voices matter. It demonstrates openness and a willingness to listen, even when feedback is challenging. Members see how their input influences decisions and recognise that their involvement is meaningful.

What Co-Creation Has Delivered in the Past Year

Targeted, High-Impact Services

Through workshops, surveys, advisory groups, and pilots, we have launched services that directly reflect member priorities. Uptake has increased, feedback has been positive, and services solve clearer, better-defined problems.

Stronger Member Voice in Strategy

Member input has informed broader strategic direction, helping us prioritise initiatives and allocate resources in alignment with community needs. Increased Engagement and Faster Innovation Participation in consultations and collaborative forums has grown steadily. Early testing with members has allowed us to iterate quickly, reduce risk, and refine ideas before full rollout.

Diversity of Ideas and Stronger Belonging

Members bring varied perspectives, enriching thinking and strengthening decision-making. Many now see themselves as contributors, creating a shared sense of ownership and belonging that deepens commitment.

Co-creation has improved what we deliver, reshaped how we work, and strengthened the connections that define our community. Building together has made all the difference.

Rodger Cartwright

Chief Executive Officer





Professional Sessions

Networking and Information

22 APRIL 2026 **WEDNESDAY, 12PM**

For professionals working alongside families and carers in the armed forces community

Join us for a presentation outlining the work of The Ripple Pond and an interactive session exploring the needs of families in the Armed Forces Community, as well as access to our toolkit of resources and opportunity to network with other professionals sharing knowledge and expertise.

The Ripple Pond are a charity that supports adult family members of physically or psychologically injured veterans and British Armed Forces personnel. We have specialist knowledge of supporting families in the military sector and over 1000 Members across the UK.



www.theripplepond.org/professional



THANK YOU

To our funders and partners



KEEP IN TOUCH:

✉ help@theripplepond.org

☎ 0333 900 1028

🌐 www.theripplepond.org



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