

SPRING 2025

NEWSLETTER

www.theripplepond.org

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CRAFTING COMMUNITY

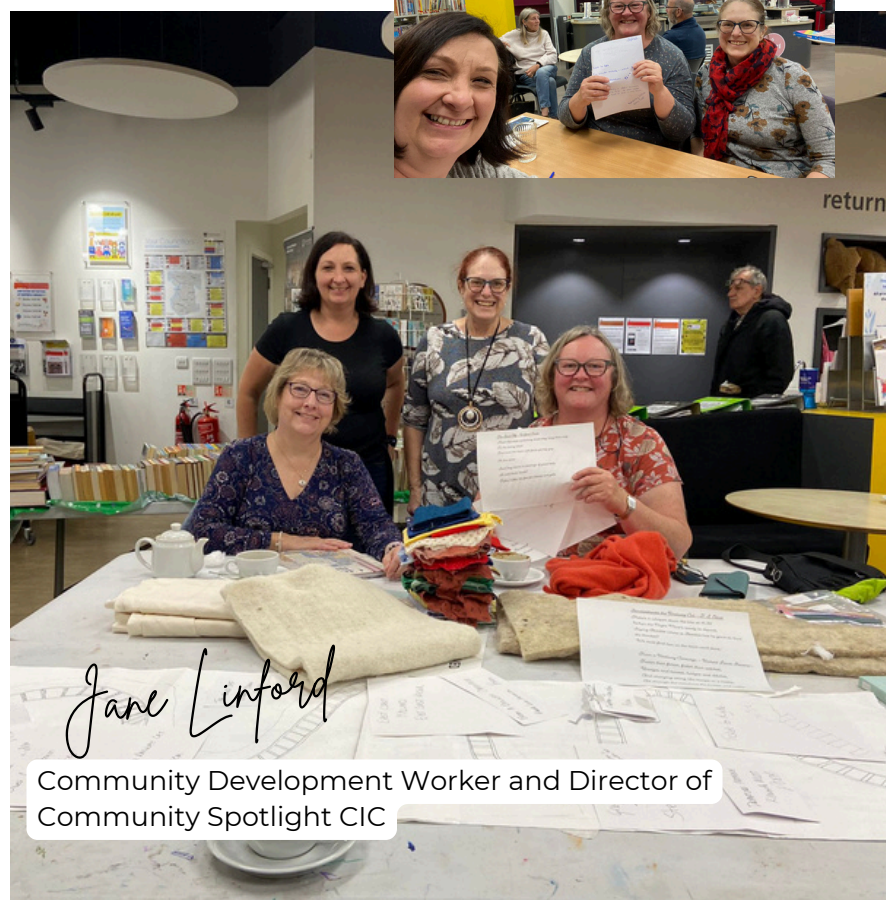
Four members of The Ripple Pond have come together to take part in an exciting textile project which is being organised by Dan Ball the Education Officer at The Watercress Line Heritage Steam Railway in East Hampshire. The project has been created to celebrate 200 years of the Railway.

We have been meeting up for 2 hours every week in Southsea Library, Portsmouth since September to bring together ideas, share skills, get creative and most importantly chat, as this is the essence of The Ripple Pond.

Our textile panel is themed around music and poetry inspired by the railway but we all decided to add elements of the armed forces into our panel to reflect our partners and The Ripple Pond. We are also including some interactive elements to our panel which we are keeping top secret for now.

There are 18 community groups across Hampshire taking part in the project in total, each with a themed panel based on the history of the railway and throughout 2025 and 2026. The panels will be exhibited at venues across the region. We will all be attending a celebration event for the big reveal in March at Ropley Station and can't wait to see all of the textile panels together.

We are all on the last push to finish with two weeks to go, so watch this space to see our finished panel soon!



Community Development Worker and Director of Community Spotlight CIC

PROFESSIONAL TOOLKIT

We believe that all military carers should be seen, heard and supported. It's our mission to do just that.

If you work with adult family members who are supporting a loved one with physical, emotional or psychological injury from their time in the military, we are here for them and you.

This toolkit contains a whole host of resources to help you champion the voice of families and be an effective referral hub.



Have you discovered our professional toolkit yet?

We have a wealth of resources available, from flyers, posters, videos, quotes, and stories of our impact as well as referral forms, both paper and online.



www.theripplepond.org/toolkit

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION SESSIONS

Professional Sessions 2025
Networking and Information

SCAN HERE!

DATES FOR 2025

- 11th February 2025, 12pm - South West
- 11th March 2025, 2pm - North England
- 13th May 2025, 12pm - Midlands
- 8th July 2025, 2pm - Wales
- 16th September 2025, 12pm - Scotland
- 16th September 2025, 2pm - Eastern Region
- 14th October 2025, 12pm - Central Southern
- 14th October 2025, 2pm - London and South East
- 25th November 2025, 12pm - Northern Ireland

visit our website for more information
www.theripplepond.org/professional

Across 2025 we are looking forward to hosting Networking and Information Sessions with professionals to ensure that families are getting the support they need.

In order to do this well, please would you help us get the word out. We have leaflets for each region, registration links, and loads more ideas so that we can make the best of the opportunity.

Check out all the info or visit www.theripplepond.org/professionals:

www.theripplepond.org/networking



STACEY'S STORY

Building confidence through The Ripple Pond: A Member's Journey

Stacey initially contacted The Ripple Pond in 2020. She had taken on the role of carer for her partner who was an Army veteran living with PTSD and struggling with addiction. Stacey and her partner were raising two young children while navigating these significant challenges. Stacey faced considerable anxiety, low confidence, and an overwhelming fear of social situations, which left her feeling isolated. Simple tasks like leaving the house or speaking to others became daunting.

Stacey's struggles were compounded by the stigma she felt when discussing her partner's addiction issues. However, she bravely reached out for support, and we worked together to integrate her into The Ripple Pond's peer support network and create a pathway toward greater confidence and independence.

Part of this support was a referral to The Poppy Factory's Employment Service. The Ripple Pond and The Poppy Factory worked collaboratively to address Stacey's needs. Together, we provided emotional and practical support to help her build confidence and regain independence. The Poppy Factory's Employment Service became a cornerstone of her journey, offering practical courses aimed at managing anxiety and building skills for the future.

At the start, Stacey was hesitant to engage and found even contacting the job centre to be a source of panic. The Ripple Pond's peer support network provided a safe, judgment-free space where Stacey could share her struggles and feel understood.

One of the early challenges was helping her feel comfortable in a virtual environment. Having never used Zoom or Teams before, she worked with us gradually and at her own pace, eventually gaining the confidence to participate in online meetings.

Through patient, non judgmental support, Stacey achieved significant milestones:

- **Regaining Independence:** She no longer relies on others for basic tasks like booking a taxi or running errands.
- **Building Confidence:** Stacey began venturing out on her own, even if just to the local shop, something that was once unthinkable.
- **Gaining Experience:** With her newfound confidence, Stacey successfully took on a volunteer role, giving her a sense of purpose and an opportunity to contribute to her community.
- **Expanding Comfort Zones:** With encouragement, she started engaging in conversations and forming connections outside her immediate family.

At every stage, we prioritised her well-being, ensuring she never felt pressured or judged.



RESPONDING TO GAMBLING HARM

A culture of gambling in the military means that veterans are more than eight times more likely than non-veterans to develop problems with gambling. These statistics have profound effects on the whole community. The Ripple Pond are looking to work with other organisations to provide information, support and advice for families.

GAMCARE TRAINING

The staff and volunteers at The Ripple Pond received training from GamCare, here's one of our volunteer's reflections

The GamCare presentation was thought-provoking, informative, and challenging at times. It made me reflect on my preconceptions and highlighted the devastating repercussions on the wider family when gambling gets out of hand. The normalisation of gambling and the exposure to non-stop advertising and accessibility, particularly online, makes it difficult to avoid.

Sharing some frankly shocking statistics, the presenter explained how gambling companies target advertising to their advantage, seducing those with risktaking tendencies, who buy into the possibility of winning. Looking at the specific reasons why service personnel gamble and learning more about the signs it may be getting out of hand, I am better informed.

It was interesting to learn that a chemical reaction occurs in the brain each time there is a "near miss." It made a lot of sense that the body produces a physical response that fuels the addiction.

This training has given me extra tools - how to open the difficult conversation if I suspect a recreational habit might be spiralling out of control. I now know where to signpost to. It was reassuring to hear of the proactive approach GamCare takes to prevention; working with the military services. It was reassuring to know there are resources available and people trained to help.



SPOT THE SIGNS

Gambling can start as harmless fun, but for some, it can spiral into something more serious. Could this be you or a loved one?

These are common signs that you are at risk of gambling harm:



Struggling to stop or cut back even if you want to.



Hiding your gambling from friends or family.



Chasing losses, hoping to win it all back.



Gambling money meant for essentials like bills or food.



Feeling anxious, guilty or stressed about your gambling habits.



Turning to gambling as a way to cope with stress, sadness or pressure.

Do you have any concerns? Want to talk to someone? Help is out there.

GamCare operates the National Gambling Helpline, a free, confidential service that people can call on 0808 8020 133. Also available through live web chat or directly message on WhatsApp, and funded by GambleAware.

GAMBLING HARM IMPACT ON FAMILIES:



VETERANS'
HABIT
STUDY

Could you take part in this important research?



We are seeing an increase in our Membership of those affected by gambling harm and have the opportunity to be at the cutting edge of how we develop a response to this that includes family and friends. Our friends at Anglia Ruskin University and Swansea University have been conducting the Veterans' HABIT study into problem gambling of UK veterans. They are onto the second phase of the study and now considering the effects of veteran's gambling on their families, friends and personal relationships.

They would like to speak to people who have been impacted by the harmful gambling of a family member, friend or someone they have a personal relationship with who is a UK veteran.

If you feel this applies to you and would take part in an online research interview with one of their staff for around 30 minutes to an hour, please click the following link:

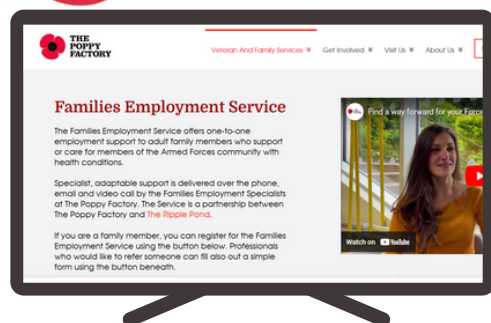
<http://>



tinyurl.com/2834du8n



THE
POPPY
FACTORY



In January, we partnered with The Poppy Factory to host a 'New Year, New Goals' session for our members.

The session focused on helping participants create meaningful and achievable goals for 2025. Through open discussions, practical planning, and strategies to navigate potential setbacks, members were empowered to approach the new year with clarity and confidence. Attendees left the session feeling inspired, focused, and equipped with tools to turn their aspirations into reality.

A top tip for goal setting was to remember that, while January often feels like the perfect time to set goals, it doesn't have to be the only time.

Many people feel pressured to make changes at the start of the year, but meaningful goals can be set and reset at any point during the year. Life isn't always predictable, and circumstances can shift throughout the year. It's important to remain flexible and recognise that personal growth and progress aren't confined to the calendar.

Whether it's May, July, or November, the right time to set a goal is when you feel ready and motivated.



TOP 10 TIPS FOR INCLUSION

by Stacey Denyer



Stacey Denyer, Diversity & Inclusion Consultant & Facilitator | Invictus Games 2023 Medallist | Veteran | Keynote Speaker | Blogger and most importantly friend of The Ripple Pond gives her top tips for creating an inclusive community:

Whether in your local community, workplace, or social circles, small actions can make a big difference in creating a world where everyone feels valued and included. Here are some practical tips to promote inclusion, diversity, equity, and belonging in your daily life:

1. Foster an environment of Psychological Safety

Create an environment where individuals feel safe to express themselves, share ideas, and admit mistakes without fear of retribution, judgment or mockery. I've seen parents brush off their teenage kids coming out to them as bisexual, or genderfluid. Being told 'it's just a phase' is almost a guarantee that the next time they have something important to share, they won't tell you.

2. Embrace and Celebrate Differences

Recognise cultural, racial, gender, and other forms of diversity within your team or community. Celebrate them too. I don't align with any faith, but if my friends or colleagues are celebrating Eid, Diwali, Chinese New Year, or anything else, you bet I'm going to be there – usually to sample new foods – but I get to learn new things too!

3. Join Staff Networks / Employee Resource Groups

If your organisation has them, get involved! Often, you don't have to be part of the community it is aimed at, but an ally. For example, you can join a Race Diversity Network as a white ally, or an LGBTQ+ Network as a straight ally. At the very least, attend events and read articles.



4. Be an Ally

Be aware of your privilege and use it to help others! If someone is making a decision which looks like it could impact someone else negatively, do something about it. An example could be a group of people organising to go for lunch for the first time in a few months and they set a date during Ramadan when some of the group is Muslim or go to an all you can eat Brazilian Steakhouse which has no meat free options, despite some of the group being vegetarian or vegan.

5. Be an Active Bystander

If someone is telling a racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic or other derogatory joke, step in and tell them it's not OK. If someone looks like they're in trouble somewhere, help them out. Don't just walk on by. Even the shyest of people can be an Active Bystander; you can distract someone by asking the targeted individual a question, or you can report it to someone; be it a manager or the Police. British Transport Police and Transport for London have produced great poster campaigns surrounding being an Active Bystander.





TOP 10 TIPS FOR INCLUSION

continued

6. Check Your Bias

We all have unconscious biases that shape how we view the world. Reflect on your own assumptions and how they might affect your actions. Challenge stereotypes or discriminatory comments when you encounter them. Not all infantry soldiers eat crayons, not all of the Navy are weird, and not all of the RAF are posh!

7. Think Twice

Be mindful of your language and behaviour. Microaggressions also known as microbehaviours are comments or actions that can be consciously or unconsciously prejudiced towards marginalised groups. From a racially diverse perspective it could be asking someone 'Where are you really from?' or touching someone's afro hair. Do you really need to ask the trans woman what her 'man name was?' (known as a deadname)? It's irrelevant and can make the individual feel unsupported.

question and if my partner is present, I'll say '... and that's my partner over there. Pretty isn't she?'.

9. Respect People's Identities

You may not understand why someone identifies as gender neutral, why someone is gay, why someone follows a particular religion, or why someone chooses to support Arsenal. Treat people with kindness and curiosity – but don't be judgemental.

10. Keep Learning

Read, watch, and listen to resources that expand your knowledge on inclusion. BFBS have a great Podcast called The Culture Colonel available on most streaming platforms. I can also deliver tailored training at a discounted rate for those working in armed forces charities or organisations that have signed the Armed Forces Covenant.

Change This:

To This:

Good morning ladies and gentlemen

Good morning everyone

Husband / Wife / Boyfriend / Girlfriend /

Partner

Son / Daughter

Child(ren) / kid(s)

Chairman

Chair

In Summary: Start Small, Create Ripples

Even small acts of kindness and understanding can create ripples of positive change. As part of The Ripple Pond's community, let's lead by example in building a world where everyone feels seen, valued, and included.

Stacey Denyer

If you want to get in touch, and we'd recommend you do:

stacey.denyer@ateaseinclusion.co.uk

8. Don't Make Assumptions

As a woman veteran, nothing annoys me more than being asked during Remembrance 'Are those your husband's medals?'. I tend to educate them that if worn on the left, they're the person's own, on the right, they're a family member... then depending on who asked the



**AT EASE
INCLUSION**

<https://ateaseinclusion.co.uk>

INFORMATION TALKS



CONFIDENT | EMPOWERED | RESILIENT

We know that information, experience and connecting our Members with subject specialists enables our Members to be confident, empowered and resilient. We are so thankful to those who have helped us record information so our Members have the resources they need. We are recording talks regularly, and if you've got a story to share we'd love to hear from you.



Tom Harrison House

In Conversation with
Tom Harrison House
Dougie Dunsmore-Dawson
tomharrisonhouse.org.uk

Huge thanks to Tom Harrison House for their support in helping give information to families navigating addiction.

We recorded two separate talks with Tom Harrison House and encourage our Members if you have a loved one who is struggling with addiction, make sure you take a look. Ash shared his story as a graduate of the programme and it was great to hear his story. As well as chatting with Dougie who runs Tom Harrison House and exploring why they do what they do, and how to be the best support you can be.

Tom Harrison House also offer retreats for the affected family members, and so there's loads of good reasons to stay connected.

Trevor Bygate was incredibly generous to share his time to come and speak to The Ripple Pond about his journey, navigating through grief and using his story to be a voice for change. Trevor is also an Invictus athlete and we are cheering you on! This talk is available publicly on YouTube, so would love you to check it out:

<https://youtu.be/ZxuAlpitgyk>



In Conversation with
Trevor Bygate
His story
<https://bit.ly/4fiYraT>

In Conversation with

Alex Meyrick



www.fightingwithpride.org.uk/

We loved speaking with Fighting with Pride about the support they offer, the challenges faced in getting support for LGBT+. We really appreciate their voice for LGBT+ families supporting injured loved ones and we know this is a helpful resource for us all as we set out to be an inclusive and welcoming community for all the Armed Forces Community.

We also recorded a few talks for our Members over the Christmas period which are all still available.



If you've not yet discovered our public YouTube channel, please do check it out:

<https://www.youtube.com/@theripplepond>



For Members, we have more than 50 talks already recorded to help you support your loved ones, if you want an up to date list, please do let us know. These talks are on a huge range of subjects including:

- Self care
- Physical and psychological injury
- Helpful organisations
- People's stories

VIRTUAL MEMBER MEET-UP



7:30PM- 9PM



THE RIPPLE POND

YOUR FORCES FAMILY NETWORK

Dates for the Diary:

We love opportunities to get together online and host regular Virtual Member 'Meet Ups'. These are a brilliant place to meet and connect with other people in a safe and friendly environment hosted by a member of the staff team.

- Monday 3rd March
- Monday 17th March
- Thursday, 3rd April
- Tuesday 15th April
- Thursday 1st May



We also offer specific Virtual Member Meet Ups for our members who are new in the last six months, recognising that our newer members may value the opportunity to meet separately.

- Wednesday 19th March
- Tuesday 29th April

BOOK CLUB



HAVE FUN | MAKE CONNECTIONS | CHAT ABOUT BOOKS

It's been an exciting time for our Ripple Pond reading fans in recent weeks – not only has our Member-led TRP book club continued to run, but through our partnership with Reading Force we have also been able to offer some of our Members the opportunity to join the latest Reading Force book club, which launched in October last year.



Reading Force are a charity passionate about using books to bring Forces children and families closer together, and their adult book clubs bring so much joy to those who take part.

“I loved reading as a child, but find it harder to make the time as an adult - I'm hoping this will give me a push to get back into reading regularly again.”

With three fantastic titles to devour, there really is something for everyone:

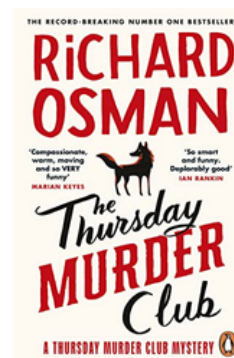
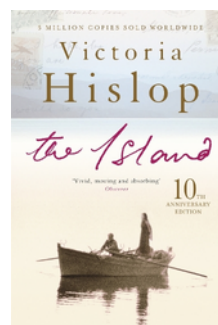


Our first title was *The Last Library* by Freya Sampson with Members saying 'It's nice to read a book I wouldn't normally have chosen' and another sharing 'I'm uncovering my love of reading again.' This is a story of love, loss, self-discovery and courage. It is a feel-good read and one you won't be disappointed with.

Most recently we read the number one best seller, *The Island* by Victoria Hislop which received amazing feedback and is one we would certainly recommend!

It's a dramatic tale of four generations, illicit love, violence and leprosy, from the thirties, through the war, to the present day. A book you simply won't want to put down! One Member said:

“I cannot recommend this book enough – it made me laugh, it made me cry and I didn't want it to end.”

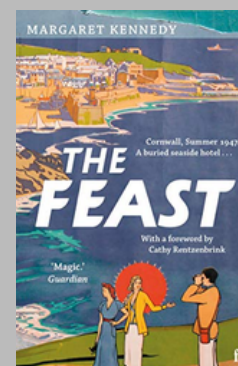


Our third and final book – *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman is well underway and we can't wait to meet next month to talk about it. If you've read it – no spoilers please!

If you missed out on the Reading Force opportunity this time around, don't worry, we will share the next launch with you all in due course. (Please note, Members can only take part in a Reading Force book club once during their TRP Membership period).

In the meantime we would love to welcome more Members to our fabulous TRP book club! The group meet online every 6 weeks to discuss their latest title and there is also a TRP book club WhatsApp group where you can discuss 'all things books' with fellow Members. So if you are interested please email us at admin@theripplepond.org for more information and we can help you get started on your reading journey.

TRP BOOK CLUB CURRENTLY READING...



Cornwall, Midsummer 1947. Pendzack Manor Hotel is buried in the rubble of a collapsed cliff. Seven guests have perished, but is it murder, and what brought this strange assembly together for a moonlit feast before this Act of God - or Man?

What are you reading next? Why not try one of the books that our Members have been enjoying? – after all, there's nothing better than curling up on the sofa with a cuppa and a great book! Take some time out just for YOU.

Thank you for donating



We wanted to thank all our Members and supporters who have supported The Ripple Pond, by donating to us. Your giving helps us continue to grow the support we are able to offer.

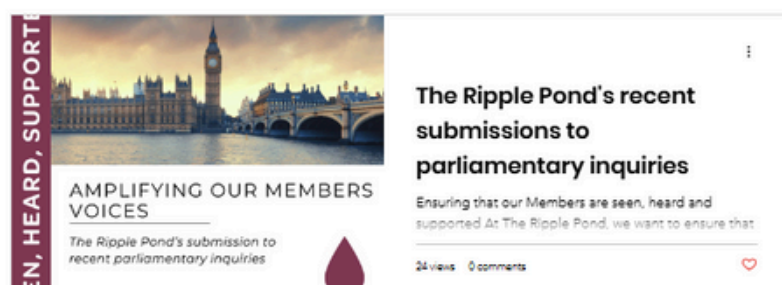
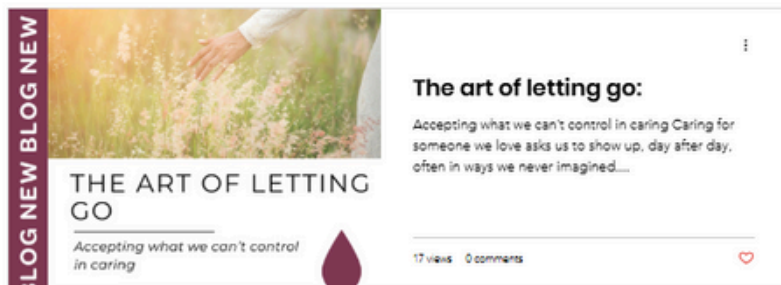
If you are taking on a challenge in 2025 and looking for a charity to support, we'd love to chat more!



Check out our blog

We have recently launched a weekly blog full of information and support for military carers. We would love you to check it out, and use this resource to share with those around you to help resource the armed forces community:

www.theripplepond.org/news



THE NATIONAL TRANSITION EVENT

Monday 24th February



www.nationaltransitionevent.com

Now in its 6th year, the National Transition Event (NTE) brings together Service Leavers, Veterans, Reservists, spouses & partners and family members to aid successful, sustainable transition & networking opportunities, recognising, demonstrating and celebrating the value of the Armed Forces. It uses the backdrop of the iconic GP racetrack to offer a unique event giving those attending a way to find out about careers and roles across different industry sectors while having a memorable day.

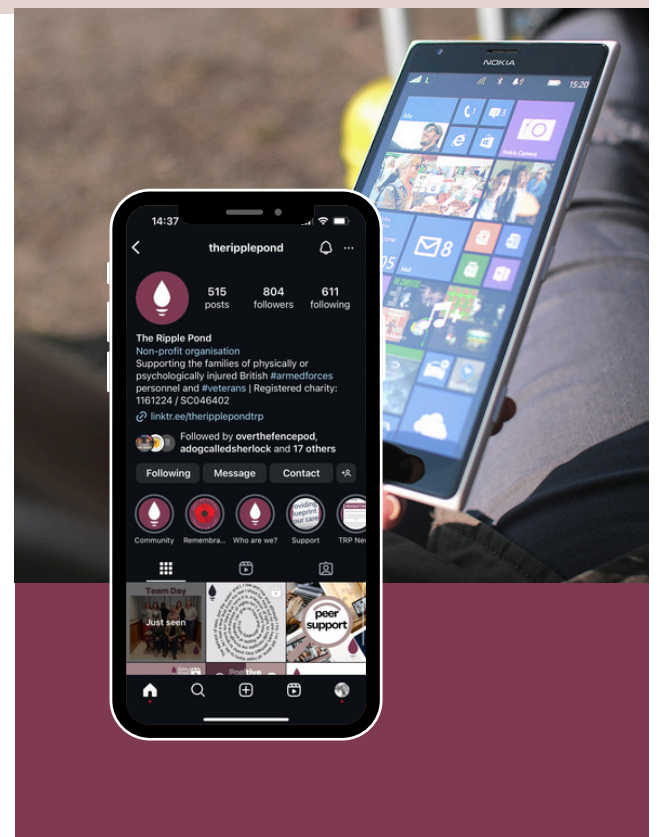
Within the five large Exhibitor Halls there will be exhibitors from sectors including Automotive, Renewable, Manufacturing, Agriculture, Professional Services, Construction, Engineering, Project Management, Cyber, Digital & AI, Facilities Management to name a few. In addition, there will be small business support, CV writing, interview techniques and LinkedIn advice; government and charity support services; a Family Zone and training & apprenticeship information.

Follow us on social media

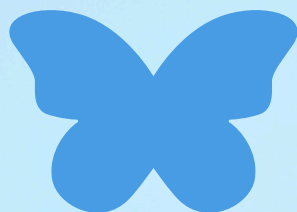
There's some simple ways to keep up with The Ripple Pond and ensure that families remain visible:

1. Follow us on our social media platforms
2. Share our posts to help them reach more people.
3. Like and comment so we can continue to develop these platforms to represent you the best.

 [theripplepond](#)



We have launched on Bluesky, so come and find us there!



[@theripplepond.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/theripplepond.bsky.social)

www.theripplepond.org

A FINAL WORD:

Gambling Addiction: A Hidden Plague in Our Community

by Rodger Cartwright

As CEO of The Ripple Pond, I hear the stories of our Members; carers navigating the realities of supporting loved ones who have served. One recurring theme among new members is gambling addiction, a hidden issue wreaking havoc in the veteran and serving communities.

Gambling is unique among addictions. Unlike alcohol or drugs, it is socially acceptable across all classes and generations. I have seen senior officers and infantry privates alike laughing over lost bets, united in the thrill of the gamble. Yet behind the camaraderie lies an insidious problem, one that can quickly spiral from entertainment to devastation.

Technology has propelled gambling into a new and dangerous era. No longer confined to betting shops or casinos, it now lurks in our pockets—accessible 24/7 via smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Algorithms track behaviours, learn weaknesses, and target the most vulnerable. Advertising infiltrates social media feeds, apps, and even the games played by young people. What starts as a casual bet can rapidly escalate into a cycle of debt, secrecy, and despair.

For serving personnel and veterans, the risks are even greater. The structured environment of military life, coupled with the stresses of service and transition to civilian life, creates conditions where gambling can thrive. A sudden win can mimic the adrenaline highs of operational life. A loss can fuel an urge to chase the next win, trapping individuals in a downward spiral.



Recent statistics paint a stark picture. The UK Gambling Commission estimates 1.4 million adults in Britain experience gambling harm. Among veterans, the problem is even more pronounced. According to the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT), UK veterans are up to eight times more likely to develop problem gambling than non-veterans, with 43% showing problematic gambling behaviours compared to 6.5% of non-veterans. This is often linked to mental health conditions like PTSD, making gambling a dangerous coping mechanism.

Key findings on veterans and gambling:



Higher prevalence: Veterans are significantly more likely to struggle with problem gambling than the general population.



Motivation: Veterans often gamble to escape or cope with distress.

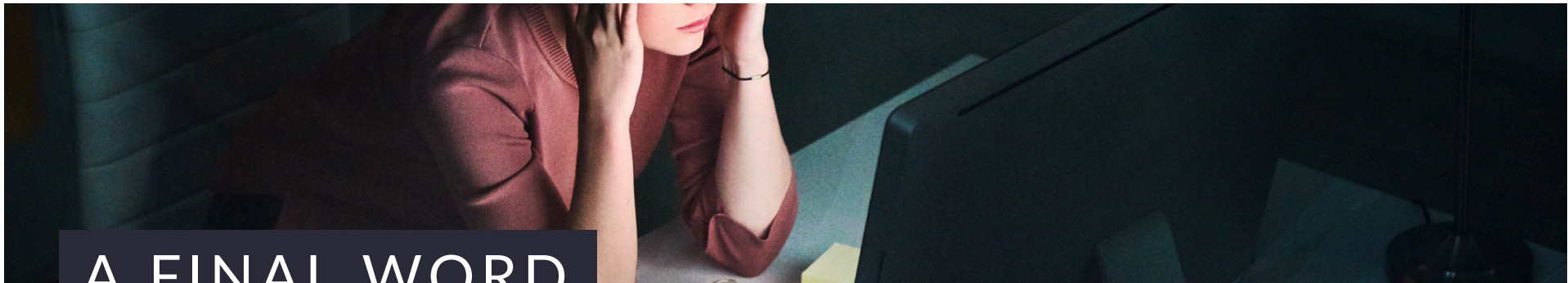


Mental health link: PTSD, depression, and anxiety contribute to higher gambling rates.



Economic impact: Veterans with gambling problems face greater financial and social costs than non-veterans.





A FINAL WORD

continued

At The Ripple Pond, we see the devastating ripple effect on families. Gambling addiction does not just drain bank accounts; it erodes trust, fractures relationships, and isolates those affected. Carers, already stretched thin, are left managing debt, secrecy, and emotional turmoil.

So, is this a modern plague fuelled by technology? Absolutely. Gambling addiction has existed for centuries, but never has it been so accessible, aggressively marketed, or hard to escape.

Awareness is the first step toward action. We must challenge the normalisation of dangerous gambling behaviours, call out predatory online platforms, and demand stronger protections. Most importantly, we must create safe spaces where those affected—both gamblers and their families—can seek support without shame.

If you are supporting someone “injured in service” and they are struggling with gambling addiction, you are not alone. The Ripple Pond is here to listen, connect you with others who understand, and support you in finding a way forward.

Rodger Cartwright

Chief Executive Officer



KEEP IN TOUCH:

✉ help@theripplepond.org

☎ 0333 900 1028

🌐 www.theripplepond.org



THANK YOU

To our funders and partners

