

# LandWorks Evaluation Report

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Why LandWorks?

The prison population is continuing to increase, product both of the number of prison sentences and the length of the sentence (MOJ, 2013). Specifically, the prison population of England and Wales rose by about 90% between 1990 and 2016 (Allen & Watson, 2017) and now stands at just under 84,000 (The Howard League, 2018). Rates of re-offending are also continuing to rise (MOJ, 2014). This has resulted in a crisis in the criminal justice system that is never far from media headlines as evidenced, for example, by the BBC's Special Report: '*Prisons under pressure*' (Shaw, 2017) and Neilson's review in the Independent of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons' Annual Report (Neilson, 2017).

Alongside these headlines, The Prison Reform Trust, in their quarterly '*Prison: the facts*' briefing for summer 2017, cited the following information which appears to demonstrate even further the need for projects such as LandWorks, projects that seek to break the cycle of re-offending and social exclusion and facilitate community reintegration:

- Prison has a poor record for reducing reoffending – 44% of adults are reconvicted within one year of release. For those serving sentences of less than 12 months this increases to 59% (MoJ, 2017);
- Reoffending rates for female offenders are similarly high - 48% of women are reconvicted within one year of leaving prison. This rises to 61% for sentences of less than 12 months and to 78% for women who have served more than 11 previous custodial sentences;
- According to HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2016), fewer than half (44%) of prisons received a positive rating from inspectors in 2015-16 for purposeful activity work. Purposeful activity work is described by the Prison Reform Trust as '*education, work and other activities to aid rehabilitation whilst in prison*';
- The HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2016) also reports that '*in too many prisons, work remains mundane, repetitive and is rarely linked to resettlement objectives*';
- Only one in four people (27%) had a job to go to on release from prison (MoJ, 2015).

Of interest in terms of the experiences of women with vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system, is The Corston Report (Home Office, 2007). Despite its 2007 publication date, this document remains important in terms of good practice in improving outcomes for female offenders. The report identifies that '*women have been marginalised within a system largely designed by men for far too long and there is a need for a "champion" to ensure that their needs are properly recognised and met*' (p2). The report also recommends that an additional two resettlement pathways specifically for women should be added to the existing seven, '*Pathway 8 -*

*support for women who have been abused, raped or who have experienced domestic violence. Pathway 9: support for women who have been involved in prostitution' (p7).*

To date there remains limited evidence as to the efficacy of resettlement projects, particularly in terms of those working with prisoners released on temporary licence (ROTL). Of significance is that LandWorks is delivered outside the prison setting, and provides a unique combined training **and** support for release package. We have not been able to identify a similar model currently operating anywhere else in the UK with the majority of programmes focusing on only one aspect of the rehabilitation process such as skills training, and being delivered in a prison setting. This evaluation begins to address the issue of understanding better the efficacy of resettlement projects. The evaluation has been funded as part of the Big Lottery award. It ran from June 2015 until April 2018 and this final report follows on from an initial interim evaluation report of June 2016 (Halliday et al., 2016).

## **1.2. Why evaluation?**

The aims and objectives of the study were to enable LandWorks and its sponsors to learn *what works* in order to improve the efficacy of the project and become an example of good practice. This required an understanding of *process* (why and how the project works) and *impact* (who it works for and how it affects their lives) as well as the measurement of *outcomes* (enumerating the changes, expected or otherwise, that have occurred).

Our initial proposal and report focused primarily on providing the core information required to meet the nine indicators specified in the original Big Lottery bid's outcome and monitoring framework. These covered changes in re-offending behaviour, employability and human capital. As the project has developed, these original indicators have become less of a focus for LandWorks and the project has developed activities according to the needs of the trainees who have undergone the programme.

This reflexivity has in turn shaped the focus of our evaluation. The first report thus laid out the evaluation focus for subsequent years to include ongoing consultation and discussion around the project database and the Outcomes Star, a rolling interviewing programme, and visits to the LandWorks' site by the evaluation team<sup>1</sup>. This report, which covers the period July 2016 to May 2018 covers these areas<sup>2</sup> as well as drawing together the findings of the evaluation as a whole.

## **1.3 An evolving project**

LandWorks was established in 2013 and now defines itself as an 'independent charity providing a supported route back into the community and employment for people in prison or those at risk of going to prison (collectively referred to as trainees)' (LandWorks, 2018:1). It remains a young and reflexive project with the programme on offer continuing to evolve. This reflects both an increased understanding of the needs of the trainees and changes in its operational context.

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<sup>1</sup> All numbered (LW) references relate to interviews conducted by the Evaluation Team.

<sup>2</sup> It had been hoped to draw on data from the Offender Assessment System (OASys) but changes in and pressures on the community offender management teams made this impractical.

It was, for example, conceived primarily as a prison release project, drawing on the resettlement unit of the local prison to take men released on temporary licence (ROTLs). Changes at national level early affected this operational context. Many ROTL schemes closed and the local prison is felt to have become more risk adverse in its approach (LW04), constraining numbers. Parallel changes to the offender management system have seen the Probation Trust (a second source of trainees) disbanded and replaced by Community Rehabilitation Companies (which manages lower risk clients) and the National Probation Service (which handles higher risk clients). LandWorks community trainees are drawn primarily from the former (a cohort that is mostly in possession of a community order (i.e. they have not received a prison sentence) and largely consists of prolific offenders with complex needs (LW01). The CRC also incorporates (and LandWorks works with) the local multi-agency Turnaround Integrated Offender Team, comprising police, probation, drugs treatment agencies and the community voluntary sector. This team too targets persistent offenders with the aim of breaking cycles of offending. A fourth source, again shifting the emphasis to the community, is Devon and Cornwall Police's GPS Pathfinder Deferred Charge Scheme, introduced in 2017 with the aim of challenging and changing the behaviour of first time offenders.

Trainees have thus become more diverse in terms of referral routes and characteristics. At the same time pressures on funding have meant a reduction in the number of community-based diversionary activities suitable for this group, increasing the need for projects such as LandWorks.

LandWorks is aware that the majority of trainees passing through the project have been male; when female trainees have been referred in to the project, their engagement and attendance has been inconsistent and they have left before any significant progress has been achieved. Towards the end of this evaluation, however, we were able to interview the first female participant to have engaged meaningfully with the LandWorks' offer and her experience is presented at section 5.7 below.

The first report described the development of the project up to June 2016, including the increase in: available time on site; numbers and range of activities and support services; staffing and volunteer activity and the move to become an independent registered charity in March 2016. During this second period, LandWorks has continued to develop as a project and key events have been: achieving registered charity status; establishing a new Board of Trustees; securing funding from new sources, including matched funding from a supporter of the project; and, most significantly, expanding the support offer.

LandWorks has continued to identify the importance of research and evaluation alongside its core activities and the The Photographic electronic Narrative (PeN) project, funded through an Independent Social Research Foundation (ISRF) mid-career fellowship, was launched in October 2016 to enable a dialogue with the wider community and give the 1000+ LandWorks supporters an insight into the lives of trainees, as they work to turn their lives around. The research lead co-creates anonymous online blog posts with trainees, using their words and photographs, which are then shared with the wider community through a variety of social

media,\* *'critically giving trainees a voice, one that is otherwise unheard, the voice of an "offender" talking to the community they have hurt'* (LandWorks Project Manager).

To date the PeN project has published 71 blog posts from 23 trainees and the website has had 11,192 views from over 60 countries. The comments, likes and shares across the various social media platforms has been beneficial for trainees, encouraging them to continue with their desistance journeys. Moreover, it gives them a sense of pride (possibly for the first time) in what they are trying to achieve and an acknowledgment that the community is supportive. The PeN project has also proved beneficial to those looking to fund LandWorks as it clearly illustrates the work happening on site (\*Website:<https://penprojectlandworks.org>; Facebook: @penprojectlandworks; Twitter: PeN\_Project; Instagram: Penproject at\_landworks).

LandWorks is also working with the prison service to develop a progression route for prisoners from the standard prison block arrangement through to LB6, the resettlement block being only available to those prisoners who have demonstrated a willingness and desire for change. The project has also delivered presentations at various community based events such as the Probus Club, which is a meeting place for retired businessmen/professionals.

The project remains funded by a diversity of grant making bodies<sup>3</sup>. The largest is the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, awarded in December 2014. This covers 60% of the total project costs for three years, the majority of which is revenue funding (contributing towards staff salaries, training materials, travel, evaluation and overheads).

## **2 The Monitoring and Evaluation Process**

As noted above, the overall aim of our evaluation was to enable LandWorks and its sponsors to understand *what works* in order to help both maximise effectiveness of the project and enable other projects to learn from its work. The methods used to this end were largely laid out in our first report but briefly comprised:

- The establishment of a project database to enable LandWorks to collect and analyse routine information, including information from trainees' registration forms, together with attendance and destination statistics
- Phased interviews with trainees, designed to capture trainees' self-esteem, well-being and readiness for work together with their perceptions of the effectiveness of the different elements of the LandWorks' training programme and overall experience. These interviews originally included a series of ranking questions designed to evaluate progress across the course of the project but the introduction of the Justice Star provided a more robust measure
- Interviews with project staff and partners

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<sup>3</sup> In the period of this report, awards ranged from a hundred pounds to £60,000 and variously contribute towards the operation as a whole and to specific activities, such as mentoring, counselling, and the market garden.

- Analysis of project documentation
- Observation at project events
- Introduction to and analysis of the Justice Outcomes Star, designed by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Limited for use with people on short sentences, approaching release from long sentences or in the community(<http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/using-the-star/see-the-stars/justice-star/>). This is a collaborative tool for supporting and measuring an individual's progress. The end goal, as with LandWorks, is self-reliance
- Log frame exercise

For the purposes of this report, information from the following data sources has been included:

- Review of the database
- Analysis of completed Justice Stars (Outcomes Star)
- E-mail interviews with LandWorks Co-ordinator and LandWorks Resettlement Co-ordinator
- Semi-structured interview with Prison Officer
- 16 semi-structured interviews with trainees (9 x ROTL; 7 x community) across the period July 2016 to May 2018

### **3 Trainees' Progression through LandWorks (project database)**

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of the monitoring and evaluation process has been the design and implementation of a comprehensive Excel database for the programme. As discussed in our last report, a database was set up to capture information under four main headings: registration, attendance, programme delivered, and programme completion. Registration information has been relatively straightforward to collect and input but it has been less so in terms of the remaining three areas.

#### **3.1 Attendance**

Attendance has been considered in terms of what LandWorks as a programme requires and the needs of the various criminal justice agencies. In the case of ROTL this is straightforward and trainees attend LandWorks five days per week. For community based trainees their attendance is determined through the requirements of Rehabilitation Activity Requirement orders (RARs) or Community Orders imposed by courts and the Community Rehabilitation Company. In some cases, this can mean a very short engagement with LandWorks, although some trainees choose to stay on beyond their mandatory 'sentence'.

#### **3.2 Programme delivered**

Measuring the way in which the programme is being delivered is problematic due to the flexibility of the programme in terms of its content and the varying ways in which each trainee engages with it according to the number of days they attend the site as discussed in 3.1 above. The individual needs of trainees also impact on the range of

skills they gain through the course of the programme, where ‘soft’ skills rather than more tangible ones are in fact the ones that have made the biggest difference for some individuals. Recording baseline and follow-up dates in a systematic way has not been achieved for the same reasons which make attendance difficult as described above. The intention was that the database would flag up follow-up points for Outcome Star completion and evaluation interviews but these events are often sudden and do not provide an opportunity to plan in advance. The availability of the evaluators to get to the site to carry out interviews at short notice<sup>4</sup> has also hampered the systematic collection of interview data.

### **3.3 Programme completion**

Measuring programme completion is also challenging as keeping track of trainees in terms of interview follow-up isn’t always possible; trainees might maintain contact with the project but organising interviews isn’t always possible due to time and logistics. This is exacerbated by the limitations of the Community Rehabilitation Company to provide ongoing feedback about trainees.

Conversations between the evaluators and LandWorks’ staff suggest that the database perhaps needs some simplification and a revised assessment made of what information is collected to best support the project as it moves forward. This does not, however, negate the value attributed to the routine collection of data as an ongoing monitoring and evaluation tool.

## **4 The LandWorks’ Resettlement Journey**

Supporting trainees in their resettlement journey is a difficult task given the heterogeneous nature of the cohort of trainees at any one time. The trainees’ offending histories vary, for some imprisonment has come about through a one off incident, *‘I know this is a one off, it was a blip in my life and I’ll move on from it’*. Others, however, have a long history of being caught up in the criminal justice system, *‘in the last twenty years, I’ve done fifteen [years in prison]. I need to find employment a million percent... I’ve been ending up with a couple of big sentences, nine years, eight years eight months is a long time’*.

Development of the resettlement and support offer has, however, been largely driven by the recruitment of community based trainees. This has been in response to the loss of ROTL trainees following periods of lock down at the prison. Community based trainees have presented with multiple and complex issues which have required a more nuanced and creative support response from the LandWorks team.

### **4.1 The Outcomes Star**

At the time of our last report, LandWorks was considering implementation of the Outcomes Star (Work Star). The Outcomes Star is a tool designed to support and measure change when working with people (more information can be found here <http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/about-the-outcomes-star/>). Use of the Star offers an

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<sup>4</sup> The evaluation is only funded for a few hours a week and thus runs alongside other contractual obligations.



opportunity to support people both in their journey towards work and to address other issues impacting on stability. The Star also offers a simple system of scoring to identify individuals' progress, and is both useful for monitoring purposes and more in-depth analysis of how a service or intervention is working. At the time it was also identified that a Justice Star was in development, and this replaced the Work Star in September 2016 and was adopted by the project. The Justice Star covers 10 different areas: accommodation; living skills and self-care; mental health and wellbeing; friends and community; relationships and family; parenting and caring; drugs and alcohol; positive use of time; managing strong feelings; a crime free life. All areas are scored according to the journey of change, which is depicted as a ladder: 1-2 stuck; 3-4 accepting help; 5-6 motivated and taking responsibility; 7-8 learning what works; 9-10 self-reliance.

The LandWorks Co-ordinator (LWC) holds responsibility for completion of stars with trainees. Feedback from the LWC via an online 'interview' provides the information in this section. Use of the Star appeared to provide the anticipated benefits described above, and is viewed as an ongoing asset to the project.

In particular, use of the star has enabled the collection of quantitative evidence to complement the more anecdotal and qualitative data. Its strength is that it is a well-respected tool and is beginning to provide the project with '*tangible evidence of the difference it makes*' (LWC). It also provides a systematic process of producing resettlement plans for trainees with clear action and review points.

Another benefit has been the Star's contribution to the building of relationships and a framework within which issues and concerns are brought to light. In one instance, such a conversation revealed that a trainee was at high risk of self-harm and suicide, '*we were then able to action urgent support and inform probation*' (LWC). The tool's contribution then to the risk assessment process is also evident.

Use of the Star with community based trainees has been most successful and has proved very motivational:

*...community trainees can see clearly from the initial star where most improvement is needed, and can straight away work towards improving it, with help from LandWorks (LWC).*

This view is supported by the feedback received from trainees in the interviews:

*Cool, yeah, good idea isn't it' (LWT011).*

*...we'll redraw the star and see what's changed and what hasn't and see what we can improve... I find it very helpful... (LWT012).*

*It gives you your targets and things to look forward to, things that you might have in your head that you want to do, and to get it on paper and see the targets that you're getting, and then the targets that you're going to get... it's nice to see an action plan, and then you can take each step running towards each target that you've got... so I feel like I'm going to get to all my targets and it's really positive (LWT014).*

Challenges have presented alongside the benefits. LandWorks provides support to both ROTL and community based trainees and use of the Star has been less meaningful for those trainees still in prison. The difficulty here is that some ROTL trainees will still *'have many months until release [and] it is difficult to make changes in certain areas (accommodation, employment, bills/benefits, etc.) and so it doesn't necessarily show progress'*. This is concerning for the project's co-ordinator who worries that this could have a demotivating effect and *'it could just serve to remind of the powerlessness of being in prison'*. The areas of wellbeing, however, are relevant to the ROTL trainees and use of the Star impacts positively in this area.

While the Star provides a systematic way of collecting information, trainees' engagement with the LandWorks programme is flexible and varies in length as discussed above. Completion at baseline is relatively straightforward, but completion at systematic follow-up points and at exit can be challenging,

*...sometimes trainees will end their placement unexpectedly as a result of gaining employment, and so, we might only capture baseline and exit. And the exit star information might have to be captured a little while after a trainee has left because work commitments make coming out to LandWorks difficult (LWC).*

Overall, the Star has been most beneficial in the building of relationships with trainees:

*I believe in lots of cases it has been a real motivator for trainees and, at the end, a visible depiction of their journey. One trainee became emotional at our exit conversation because the star was a reminder of just how bad his life was before, and how far he had come in a relatively short period of time (LWC).*

Relationships, however, particularly in terms of trust, can take time to establish and deciding when best to introduce the star has been a source of concern for the co-ordinator:

*One of the most challenging things has been finding the most appropriate timing to use the star. I have found that trainees need to have settled into LandWorks for a couple of weeks before they 'trust' the process. I need to have developed enough of a relationship with them before a) they will trust me enough to be fully honest and b) I feel confident to challenge them on their self-assessments if I think they are untrue... It took a while to find the right timing, but it is usually best carried out around two weeks after starting at LandWorks. Sometimes, I will wait longer (LWC).*

A further benefit of the star has been the straightforward data entry and analysis process, which the co-ordinator has found *'refreshingly simple'*. Star data is entered on to a basic Excel spreadsheet, which records 'scoring' at baseline and follow-up points.

#### **4.2 Evaluators' perspective**

Eight stars have been completed in total (n=6 community trainees; n=2 ROTL trainees). In keeping with the co-ordinator's feedback, systematic completion of the

stars has not been attained, but the goal would be to achieve follow-up once monthly (more about this below). The table below shows the frequency of Star completion amongst the 8 trainees for whom stars have been completed:

**Table 1: Frequency of Star completion (as at 17.10.17)**

INITIAL	FOLLOW-UP 1	FOLLOW-UP 2
2.2.17	(approx. 5 months)	Outstanding
15.11.16	(approx. 1 month)	(approx. 4 months) 4.5.17 (final)
9.1.17	(approx. 5 months) (final)	
7.12.16	(approx. 4 months)	(approx. 5 months) 7.9.17 (final)
11.4.17	N/A left programme	
21.7.17	Outstanding	
8.9.17	Outstanding	
3.9.17	Outstanding	

As noted above, the Justice Star covers 10 different areas: ranging from accommodation through to living skills, mental health, relationships and drugs and alcohol, to positive use of time and a crime free life. All areas are scored according to the journey of change, which (again as described above) is depicted as a ladder ranging from: 1-2 stuck; 3-4 accepting help; 5-6 motivated and taking responsibility; 7-8 learning what works; 9-10 self-reliance.

The highest score recorded across the 10 areas at baseline was 10/self-reliance (with respect to parenting and caring) and the lowest score recorded was 2/stuck (with respect to parenting and caring; drugs and alcohol; and positive use of time). This suggests amongst the eight trainees for whom stars have been completed there is considerable variation in where they are situated on the journey of change. This in turn suggests a varied support response will be needed for each individual. The trainee whose baseline score was 2 across the areas of parenting and caring, drugs and alcohol, and positive use of time progressed to 5, 7 and 7 respectively in the space of nearly four months, at the exit point (approximately 9 months) these scores had increased further to 9, 10 and 9 respectively. Scores ranged as follows in each area for the eight trainees:

**Table 2: Highest and lowest scores recorded for all trainees**

Area	Score range at base line
Parenting and caring	2 to 10
Drugs and alcohol	2 to 9
A crime free life	3 to 10
Friends and community	3 to 9
Relationships and family	3 to 8
Mental health and wellbeing	3 to 8
Positive use of time	2 to 7
Managing strong feelings	4 to 9
Living skills and self-care	4 to 8
Accommodation	5 to 8

Where baseline and exit scores are available (three community based trainees) the change scores range across all areas: for trainees one and two the improvement was plus 1 to plus 4; whilst for trainee three it ranged from plus 3 to plus 8. All three trainees left the programme with scores in the region of 6 to 10 across all areas,

suggesting that all three were not only moving forwards but, motivated and taking responsibility, learning what works and achieving self-reliance in some areas of their life.

Baseline scores were generally lower for community based trainees than ROTLs, particularly surprising perhaps was the high scores recorded for the ROTL trainees in relation to mental health and wellbeing. The lowest score of 4 for one of the ROTL trainees was in relation to living skills and the highest score of 10 for one of the ROTL trainees was in relation to parenting and caring.

Use of a tool like the Star provides confidence in the validity and reliability of the evidence being collected. LandWorks is in a position where only one worker is completing the Star and therefore inter-rater reliability around interpretation of the various Star areas and journey of change is high. The co-ordinator has also gained confidence in their support role with the tool providing a starting point for supportive conversations with trainees. A more consistent, systematic process, however is required in the completion of stars. While it is understood that trainees do not follow similar journeys through the LandWorks programme, prescribed follow-up periods need to be established – these can start from every three weeks (any sooner is deemed by Triangle Consulting to not really be enough time to demonstrate any kind of change following an intervention). If once monthly was agreed, even when trainees are going through the programme very quickly, this should be achievable.

#### **4.3 Expanding the support offer**

Another element of the support offer introduced at LandWorks is a resettlement co-ordinator (LWRC) who is able to work with trainees' individual needs (as identified through the Justice Star). According to the LWRC, the aim is '*to help the trainees remove the barriers to their progression and re-integration*', which appears to be in direct contrast to the prison approach as described by a ROTL trainee during an interview, '*[LandWorks] does everything the prison says it does and doesn't do. So coming here is huge because it gives you all that support. There's no support in prison*' (LWT017a/ROTL). In keeping with the project co-ordinator, building relationships with trainees is also described by the resettlement co-ordinator as an important first step:

*To build rapport I would usually have spent some informal time with a trainee on their arrival at LandWorks and perhaps chatted over lunch, whilst doing the washing up etc. ... the period of rapport building is very important to build trust (LWRC).*

When the 'right' time presents itself, trainees begin their engagement with the resettlement worker and provide further background information and clarification of their needs (as identified through the Justice Star), and what LandWorks can offer to progress towards resettlement. This relationship is ongoing until the exit point of trainees. The resettlement worker has found that community based trainees tend to need support immediately, whereas ROTL trainees' support needs are less immediate.

Engagement with the support package on offer has been well received and in the experience of the resettlement worker, *'trainees have all been very willing to engage and take advantage of the support offered'*.

Similar to the project co-ordinator, the resettlement worker has found that trainees are generally more open and honest as the relationship progresses/develops.

The trainees present with multiple and complex issues relating to:

- Benefits (Job Seekers Allowance/ ESA/Housing) – claims/appeals
- Accommodation
- Education/training/volunteering
- Career choice/employment
- Substance misuse support
- Applying for documents e.g. driving licence, birth certificate, passport

Of these issues, the most frequent support request is in relation to benefits.

Due to the range and complexity of some of the above, support from external agencies is almost always needed, these agencies (illustrating again the widening network of the support offered) include:

- Local Authority – usually for housing benefits/ council tax
- CAB – specialist help with benefits, appeals etc.
- Job Centre Plus – employment, JSA, ESA
- Voluntary agencies
- Education/training providers e.g. colleges
- Probation (Community Rehabilitation Company)
- Community Hubs such as Shekinah at Endeavour House in Torquay
- Employment agencies
- Drug agencies e.g. Addaction, EDP
- Housing providers
- Prison links e.g. housing.

The project also has good links with employers, but it was felt that these could be further developed through closer liaison.

The resettlement worker's experience of working with other agencies has been positive, *'I have not had any issues in dealing with other services and almost without exception they have been helpful', but a big frustration 'is the time spent on hold!'*

Resettlement action plans keep a record of the issue being tackled, actions, responsibility for actions, date raised and completed, and a notes column.

Of interest, is the difficulty trainees can experience in communicating for themselves with the agencies:

*When trainees speak to agencies, they often find it difficult to express themselves and do not present their situation well. As a result I often need to*

*speak to the agencies on their behalf. This creates a dilemma as we want to empower trainees and help them to become more independent (LWRC).*

The resettlement worker is very aware of this situation and acknowledges that they *'have often had greater success on behalf of the trainee'* than if the trainees had tried to communicate themselves. This view was endorsed by a trainee, *'it was like two and a half months of [me] trying to get hold of them and all that, and then they [LandWorks' member of staff] did that and it helped straight away'* (LWT011). This suggests that agencies themselves have to take some responsibility for their approach when working with people with multiple and complex needs.

Another frustration is that agencies are reluctant to process anything prior to trainees' actual release date, which causes delays to benefit claims, etc. This situation is further exacerbated by trainees not having the necessary documentation such as a birth certificate or driving licence.

According to the LWRC, a trainee who has recently left LandWorks would, she was sure, say that he benefitted significantly from the one to one support he received from [LandWorks' staff]. This trainee was described as being *'at rock bottom'* when he came to the project, but progressed through a support package providing assistance across the following areas:

- Engagement with a substance misuse agency and on-site drug tests at LandWorks
- Engaging with children's Social Worker and attending case conferences, which eventually lead to his regaining joint parental responsibility for his [children]
- Applying for and appealing benefits decisions (ESA/JSA/housing)
- Undertaking further external training – peer mentoring at CVS in Exeter
- Careers guidance
- Applying for a voluntary peer mentoring placement

When interviewed this same trainee was clearly emerging from the fog of multiple and complex issues, *'like my life was very unstable, all over the shop, now I'm generally feeling a bit more like there's a bit more direction, there's a bit more I know what's going to happen for certain things to move forward... to recovery'* (LWT011).

The following quote from a Scottish Executive Report (Rosengard et al, 2007) similarly describes just how it feels when individuals are trying to find solutions to their needs:

*Imagine trying to get your car fixed after it breaks down and finding that you have to take it to a different garage to fix each part – one to change the brake cable, another to fix the windscreen, a third to change the tyres and so on. Even worse, each garage is in a different area and none of them share information, so you have to repeatedly explain the problem and fill out separate forms at each visit (Hudson et al, 2005, p.13).*

LandWorks is in the fortunate position that they are able to offer the intensive support to a relatively small number of 'clients', which is so important in navigating

individuals through the type of experience described above. This assists in maintaining engagement and getting to a 'moving on' stage. This is acknowledged by the resettlement co-ordinator, '*I feel very fortunate in having sufficient time to work with trainees on a one to one basis and provide a coherent resettlement service to them*'.

#### **4.4 The role of counselling**

In our 2016 report we recommended that LandWorks continue to offer a counselling service to trainees as this had been an important aspect of planning and building resilience prior to release from prison. LandWorks has continued to secure funding for this aspect of the resettlement offer. Counselling also continues to be delivered by the same counselling professional who has come to know the project and the trainees across time, thus adding again to stability and consistency in service delivery. The Counsellor described the initial phase of engaging with trainees in the counselling process:

*Counselling at LandWorks is not a straightforward process; very often trainees are people who would never considering seeing a counsellor, based on misperceptions of what counselling is, a less than positive past experience of counselling, or a belief that there has to be something wrong them in order to see a counsellor... I approach this by meeting trainees where they are and allowing them some time and space to talk with no agenda, inviting their feedback and making sure they know they have a choice whether or not to come back... mostly, trainees choose to return.*

A focus of work is agreed between the counsellor and the trainee and sessions proceed once fortnightly. The counsellor has found that sessions lead to change on some level across a range of outcomes:

- improved self-understanding coupled with an increased sense of personal responsibility – often linked to the crime committed
- personal development – not repeating past patterns, making positive choices for the future
- processing of loss and change
- improved understanding of communication and relationship dynamics
- post release planning, managing expectations
- better management of being stuck, getting unstuck through making different choices

The counselling provision facilitates the potential of unlocking hidden trauma and enables personal responsibility, both of which are considerable steps forward in terms of trainees coming to terms with themselves and moving into the future. Recognising the value of the counselling element and that LandWorks staff support some very challenging and vulnerable individuals, the team embarked on a year course, NCFE Level 3 Award in Counselling Skills and Theory (funded by a Big Lottery Building Capacity grant). The aim was to enhance their own practice and maximise every opportunity for trainees to access counselling support. These skills are further supported through individual and group staff supervision sessions with the counsellor. The LandWorks Co-ordinator identifies, '*our insight and ability to*

*deal with difficult situations has significantly increased. We are able to make clearer, definite and well thought out decisions with increasing confidence’.*

## **5 The LandWorks Resettlement Journey according to the Trainees**

Our previous report identified three main themes emerging from the interviews with trainees: the journey towards the LandWorks opportunity; being at LandWorks; and, moving into the future. These themes also presented in the tranche of interviews for this report and are revisited in section 5.1 below, ‘previous insights’.

Interviews with trainees across the period for this report have illuminated further the essence of the LandWorks resettlement journey and these themes are presented below under six further headings: previous insights; the LandWorX Factor; doing nice and normal; choices and bridges; 65 feet run of beetroot and a superhero; tackling complexity and moving on; a woman’s perspective.

### **5.1 Previous insights**

In our last report, we reported on the information trainees received about LandWorks, particularly those trainees in the prison setting. This theme also came through in this tranche of interviews, *‘obviously it would have been nicer just to have known more about it [LandWorks] (LWT006), and, ‘you can’t really see it until you come out here really and you see what’s going on’ (LWT0010).* The picture presented to trainees can be sketchy and very much dependent on the probation officer or prison officer presenting it. Suggestions were made about a notice board in the prison or possibly a short video. Information about the project seemed to mostly come from prisoners during their time on the project, including the opportunities LandWorks can offer:

*...and especially with the percentage of people that go from here in to work and in to settled accommodation, they have a good success rate here’ (T006).*

*...what gets related back [to prisoners] is ‘...if you need help finding somewhere to live and a job when you get out, that’s the place for you (LWT017).*

Delays in getting on to the LandWorks programme are still being experienced by some trainees, *‘I put my paperwork in in January, because they normally say it takes about four to six weeks to do... three months later, still not done’ (LWT008).* In fact this trainee finally began with LandWorks with just six weeks remaining before his release date, as opposed to the four and a half months he could have had if the paperwork had been completed in a timely manner. An exacerbating feature of the delay was that not all officers were able to complete the necessary paperwork, *‘...we’ve only got a few officers that know how to do it, and they don’t work on our wing all the time, but they should do, then things get delayed and frustration creeps in’ (LWT017).*

### **5.2 The LandWorX Factor**



Both as a visitor to the site and through conversations with the trainees on the site, the X factor of LandWorks is without doubt the warmth and friendliness of a project that excels in making its clients (trainees) feel valued, not judged and worth something. This continues to be acknowledged by the trainees who come to the project, *'you feel like part of a community or it's more than just a job. You feel like you're making friends and stuff'* (LWT007) and *'a big positive is that I think it's very like a family set up... and it's warm and friendly, it's brilliant'* (LWT017). The LandWorks' setting is undoubtedly a welcoming space with a homestead feel, and an ever changing landscape of evolving construction and growing projects. The location itself inspired some with ideas for future projects, *'I'd like to build a nice big treehouse with offices in. And you know, it can be beautiful, the landscape's absolutely beautiful'* (LWT009).

For community based trainees who had experienced Community Payback, LandWorks provided a much more dignified way of achieving resettlement:

*...and it's quite humiliating as well, when you've got to walk down a pavement, especially near somewhere you live, and you've a vest on that says "community payback"* (LWT011).

*I didn't really like community service... they give you like a pink vest and it said Community Payback and everyone was like looking at you in the street and that, I just didn't really like it. But I like this* (LWT016).

What LandWorks does best is provide the 'nice and normal' elements of life that the majority of us benefit from without even realising it. The presence of nice people and normal every day routines is, however, of huge benefit to many of the trainees who spend time at LandWorks. Other taken for granted experiences such as being valued and having choices are also experienced by trainees in almost transformational ways.

### **5.3 Doing 'nice' and 'normal'**

The LandWorks team is often described as being nice and affording the trainees respect, this should not be underestimated as a powerful contribution to the resettlement journey:

*Yeah, and I mean, the people here are so nice compared to in prison, because there's very few officers that are actually nice... it's a breath of fresh air to come out with people that don't think you're less than them* (LWT006).

*...they make it very easy to have a conversation with people... there's no judgement, no-one's judging you for your past, sort of thing, you know* (LWT009).

*...to me anyway, it's very unusual to have lots of nice people around you, I'm used to having some sort of negativity going on... (LWT010a).*

*For me to be here, you assume that I'm not going to take anything or damage anything, and you don't have an angle* (LWT020)

*I got a really good vibe from everybody, met everyone around here and everyone was really nice and supportive and lovely (LWT011).*

*I just think the whole structure of it, and the people are so not judgmental, so friendly, I just enjoy it (LWT013).*

*There's an absolute non-judgemental atmosphere (LWT015).*

As previously reported, sharing meals at the project's table (made at LandWorks by trainees of course) was an important element of the 'family' feeling. For many of us this is a taken for granted element of everyday life, for some of the trainees however this provides a new experience, particularly in terms of providing an opportunity to share views and experiences:

*Just sitting there you're not judged or... whatever you say at that table, within reason, no one's looking down at you or disappointed with you. It's just a really nice place to sit down, everyone's around, and just say how you feel or what's going on, what's going good, what's going bad... it's a massive help for me because just talking about things seems to release a lot of things, just lifts a weight off my shoulders (LWT014).*

Being in prison can limit conversation between those on the inside and their loved ones on the outside, there is little to talk about when held behind 'the door' day after day. LandWorks provides 'something to talk about' as described by these trainees:

*It [LandWorks] helps communication with my family because we've actually got something to talk about because you're doing something different every day... it was getting to the point I was thinking, because I'd phone them every day, oh God, what are we going to talk about' (LWT006).*

*...when I speak to her [mother] on the phone every night, I'll tell her what I'm doing and that, and she's over the moon that I'm using my head and not going down the slippery slope of taking drugs or getting involved in rubbish.*

In fact, 'nice' and 'normal' were things that ROTL trainees looked forward to most when they left prison:

*Just getting back to my family, back to work, a bit of normality, just like paying bills and stuff as well... (LWT007).*

*Just normality again, being with my girlfriend every day, saving money to buy a house. Getting married next year... I've got to buy an engagement ring... and I can't wait to be the person that makes all these choices (LWT008).*

Trainees at LandWorks benefited from being valued and believed in as wonderfully evidenced in this quote, *'[I've] been asked to make a breadbin for his home... it's something little, but to me it's a lot. It's quite motivating to see that people have faith to go - "I want you to make it"- and to know that it's going to be in their home'* (LWT012).

#### **5.4 Choices and bridges**

LandWorks offers, in the case of ROTL trainees, an opportunity to move away from an institutionalised existence, *'doors of course, you can't go through them without standing by them and somebody unlocking them. Yes, I was amazed after two years I'd been institutionalised, yeah'* (LWT006).

The LandWorks programme both provides structure and choice, *'well there's this, you can try this if you want. If you don't get on with it then don't worry, you can stop'* (LWT014b) and *'what happens here is you come out here and you try a little bit of everything and they seem to see where you're best suited'* (LWT017). Mental health needs have materialised in many trainees and the balance of structure and flexibility has been considerably useful for these individuals, *'there are some days where, if I'm not feeling right, they'll just say, "do you want to help so and so cook today"'* (LWT012).

Involvement with LandWorks provides a helpful transition route from prison to 'real life'.

*Just basically getting ready to go back outside and get back to work... you're just being released and then you've got to find a job, it could be quite daunting I can imagine* (LWT007).

*The only thing I was nervous about of leaving prison was obviously you go from prison straight out, so this is like a structure in between of going in to that stage then... just a bit nervous maybe of what the real world's really like, because you get wrapped up in a little bubble in there [prison]* (LWT008).

*I'm a glazier by trade, so it's good to get back on to the tools. I've been in prison for over three and half years, so it's getting used to working with tools again* (LWT009).

*I come here and work like any other person to earn the benefits that I'm being given, paying my rent, council tax, and the little bit of money that they give you* (LWT014).

This was even the case where ROTL trainees had jobs to return to when they left prison, the experience of prison life had still impacted on their confidence, self-esteem, etc. and LandWorks had reinstated some of these attributes, *'it's given me a bit more confidence I suppose'* (LWT007).

#### **5.5 65 feet run of beetroot and a superhero**

Trainees on ROTL placements are selected from a low risk block in the prison and have already demonstrated a commitment to change in the prison setting which has brought them to the resettlement block and greater freedoms and opportunities. As part of this journey, they have had an opportunity to acquire new skills, *'I've done a bricklaying course, victim awareness, industrial cleaning'* (LWT009).

LandWorks facilitates trainees' existing skills (where possible) combined with learning new ones, which appears to be of benefit to all concerned in one way or another, *'...you learn something every day. And being here I'm learning more every*

*day, not just about what I've been doing in my previous life, but about my future, basically what I'm going to be doing' (LWT014). Another trainee with previous administrative experience was about to support LandWorks in this area, 'I've started doing some today... so I'm going to start some admin' (LWT006).*

The trainees spoke excitedly in some cases about the new skills they were attaining:

*I've been making bench seats, like, I never thought in a million years I'd be able to make a bench (LWT007).*

*We're doing a sculpture of a **superhero**, and we're going to do it in a unique way, and it's going to have positive messages on... I haven't done anything like that before, never, no (LWT011).*

*Every time I help cook I learn a new recipe and it's always, it's wonderful... (LWT012).*

*If you'd said to me five years ago, you've just planted a **65 feet run of beetroot**, I would have laughed at you (LWT017).*

Realising skills that trainees never knew they had contributed to increased confidence and self-belief, '*...doing things that I've been maybe too scared to try before, like some of the tools, when I first got here I was a bit oohh...*' (LWT007).

The development of new skills is clearly attributable to the 'safe' space that LandWorks provides where it's okay to not be sure how to do something and it's okay to try anyway:

*And if you make a mistake, they'll support you and they'll go, "well try again"... which I think helps with your self-worth and self-esteem' (LWT010);*

*...I was hitting it with a hammer and there was a nail and I kept missing it and where I'm from, people laugh, and sort of take the piss out of you for doing it, but out here they came out and helped me do it, so that was quite nice (LWT016).*

*I'm not really a massive cook, I'm not very good, but there's someone else taking the lead and then they're just getting you involved in it. And I quite enjoy it, I'm learning new dishes, it's really good, I'm finding it really nice (LWT014).*

The theme of LandWorks as being a safe space extends to being able to talk without fear of judgement or reprisal, and not getting involved in activities that will lead to trouble, this was particularly true of the community based trainees:

*LandWorks is a safe place, you can talk to anyone, hang around with anyone on the site, you know that whatever goes on here isn't going to lead you into trouble (LWT014).*

One trainee explained that they had only ever had a job once for three days in their entire life, and had been in and out of prison for most of their life, *'for me it's really important to learn new skills just so I can get some sort of work'* (LWT010). Speaking about work, they also spoke of the 'unknown territory of work' and *'simple things bother me that probably wouldn't bother a lot of other people'*. This trainee was also benefiting from support with fundamental life skills such as reading and writing, and cooking, *'I have trouble with my writing and things like that... and I really try to avoid any paperwork... but these know about it and they're going to help me actually... I've been really worried about cooking... and actually now I've started doing it, it doesn't seem that hard'* (LWT010).

Being at LandWorks also distracts from feelings of isolation and negativity, particularly for community based trainees, possibly stuck in unsatisfactory accommodation, without employment and a lack of purpose:

*I'm not working at the moment so you can get bogged down in your own little world, on your own in your flat, whatever, so there's actually a desire to come here beyond my mandatory requirements* (LWT015).

*If I wasn't here and I was sat in my room just doing nothing, claiming benefits, I don't know if I would have made the change whole if you know what I mean. But I think it's helped me coming out here yeah'* (LWT016).

## **5.6 Tackling complexity and moving on**

The Outcomes Star and expanded support offer has worked with trainees to achieve change and move closer towards resettlement and moving on. LandWorks' role in advocating for trainees through the complexity of their lives has undoubtedly impacted on progress and belief that moving on is a real possibility and is well illustrated by this community based trainee:

*I still had a pretty bad amphetamine problem when I came here, and needed to get that under control, because I've got [children] and that was affected obviously, seeing them... they're [LandWorks' staff member] are going to come to the next social services meeting with me and tell them all the positive things that have been happening, that I've been doing. I think that's going to help... a big shift in positivity and moving forward* (LWT011).

## **5.7 A woman's perspective**

Helen attended LandWorks via a community order sentence and had been involved with the criminal justice system for around three years, her engagement with LandWorks spanned a three months period. Helen was single, of no fixed abode, had previously been employed within the civil service, and had experienced domestic abuse. In her own words, *'I call it the three Ds, death, divorce and domestic abuse, and your life all collapses'*. Prior to joining LandWorks, Helen had been offered community work in a charity job, but given her interests, *'I'm a keen outdoor person, adore gardening, crafts, all this sort of thing. And I'm quite into all the organic and natural health and spiritual welfare...'* (LWT021), LandWorks was thought to be a better match. Throughout her interview Helen talked about her experience at LandWorks in very positive terms:

*I would say it is such a positive atmosphere and a way forward, so it really, truly is the meaning of rehabilitation*

*...we can make things for ourselves and just learn'*

*There's all this support network... I feel thoroughly supported*

*It's just been tremendous, I can't praise it more highly*

Bearing in mind Helen had experienced domestic abuse, she was asked how being in such a male dominated environment had felt for her:

*It was a little bit intimidating at first, but then when I sat down and talked to the group, they're just very lovely people... there's no way I feel under any pressure in any way whatsoever... one of the guys came up to me and said, "X, you're part of the team and you're one of us". Isn't that lovely*

In fact, Helen commented on another woman she had met through a domestic abuse support group who had lost all her confidence and who she thought would benefit from being at LandWorks. In terms of more women being referred into LandWorks, Helen suggested it would be useful to encourage women's support groups and probation officers to visit and see what was on offer.

## **5.8 Final words from the trainees**

To conclude this section, some final words from the trainees:

*I think my experience has bypassed my expectations... really, really enjoyed it (LWT007).*

*Couldn't be a more beneficial place to be really (LWT011).*

*They do a fantastic job (LWT018).*

## **6 A Prison Officer's Perspective**

A Prison Officer visits the site three or four times a year and communicates regularly with the site manager via email. She also brings out new officers on the resettlement wing and middle managers so that they gain an understanding of what happens at LandWorks. At the time of the interview with the Prison Officer, LandWorks was the only ROTL placement and future ROTL opportunities appeared to be dependent on different governors' attitudes towards the ROTL arrangement.

The changes in trainees once they start at LandWorks were evident to the officer:

*They come back a different person. Within a few days they come back with their head held high, they look better, they are more upright, they're more full of self-confidence. I think that's what helps reduce re-offending*

LandWorks was unique in that it prepared trainees for release in practical ways, cooking, washing, etc., *'LandWorks is definitely the best for that... they put so much in place for them'*.

Unfortunately, this officer was soon to leave her role meaning potential disruption to what appeared to be a strong and productive relationship. So strong in fact that she said she would *'definitely become a friend of LandWorks, definitely support them and come out. I do think it is really good... you see the difference in prisoners'*.

## 7 Conclusions

- Central to LandWorks is the trainees; moving away from aspects of their past and progressing positively into their future. The LandWorks' model advocates respect, kindness and a non-judgmental approach, which impacts on trainees in the most positive of ways, as clearly evidenced through the interview conversations. Throughout this evaluation it has been apparent that the trainees have benefited on a number of levels, perhaps the most significant being their change in attitudes and values in relation to offending, work, relationships, family life, destructive behaviours and aspiration for their futures.
- The project has evolved largely in recognition of the differing needs of the trainees, but has managed to maintain consistency in terms of the core staff team, location and business model. This stability is of benefit to all involved, particularly those trainees who have experienced significant changes throughout their lives and chaotic lifestyles.
- The numbers of trainees passing through the project has remained relatively small, which could be considered a weakness/risk of the model, but given the amount of progression achieved by the trainees, it is hard to argue that numbers should be increased as this would undoubtedly destabilise the delivery and success of the project.
- Many trainees stay in contact with the project following their release from prison or completion of RAR or community hours. This enables LandWorks to track what happens in trainees' onward journeys. It has proven difficult, however, to gain more concrete evidence from statistics, follow-up interviews or conversations with community rehabilitation company staff as to outcomes post-LandWorks. This has impacted on the systematic collection of information for the database.
- Identifying the most appropriate and useful fields for the database has been a difficult process, particularly in terms of follow-up data. A primary goal has been to make the database as less onerous as possible but this has been challenging due to the different data needs of funders and the organisation itself. This has been further hampered by the non-linear progression of trainees through the programme, especially in terms of their ROTL or community based status. Evidencing the onward journey of LandWorks' trainees in terms of their entry into employment, and desistance from reoffending is an imperative, but we identify that tracking these aspects is not an easy endeavour, particularly as data is not always forthcoming from the criminal justice system, and when it is, it is often not provided in a timely way. We have struggled to find a straightforward solution, especially as we are keen not to burden a busy project with collecting unhelpful data.
- Some trainees have secured employment locally, but as numbers of trainees increase it is likely that more employers will be needed to be recruited to offer employment opportunities post-LandWorks.



- The project depends on external funding and donations from private individuals. Again, this could be interpreted as a risky business model, but in fact is the reality for many charities at this time of budget cuts, particularly in terms of commissioned funding from local authorities, health, etc. The project's strength is that it has captured the imaginations and support of some wealthy benefactors who appear to support the project year on year. This is in part due to the charisma of the project manager and their ability to engage people in the project's aims and successes. Involved supporters are a key to the success of maintaining interest and funding.
- LandWorks invites its supporters to get involved by visiting the site, chatting with the trainees, purchasing fruit and veg and woodwork from the site gate, and signing up to a regular project blog/stories and updates.
- LandWorks has been tenacious in its communication with local prisons and maintained contact and continued to advocate for the release of prisoners via the ROTL arrangement even at times when a 'lock down' has been enforced.
- LandWorks has also worked hard to build relationships with the community rehabilitation company, but this has proved challenging due to the company's ongoing restructuring and caseload burden.

## 8 Recommendations

- LandWorks could improve the information available to potential trainees by producing a range of information resources in different formats (leaflets, notice board material, or a video are some suggestions). The information being taken back to the prison by current trainees in relation to LandWorks leading to accommodation and employment could inadvertently raise expectations so any information resources could be an opportunity to make it clear what LandWorks can and can't offer in these areas.
- Delays in trainees starting their time with the project are obviously out of LandWorks' hands, and we recognise that the team continue to develop their relationships with prison staff. We would recommend that this continues particularly in terms of accurate available and visible information about LandWorks. In terms of the delays with paperwork, etc. perhaps LandWorks could attend a team meeting at the prison and Community Rehabilitation Company to inform them of LandWorks and its aims and objectives.
- Finding solutions and improving the database so it is fit for LandWorks' purpose, and subsequent analysis, is a key recommendation.
- Given the positive experience of the first female trainee, recruiting more women to the project is suggested.
- Community engagement should remain a goal for LandWorks alongside advocacy for appropriate resettlement strategies for prisoners or those caught up in the criminal justice system (revolving door). LandWorks regularly post blogs that include reference to the unfair and ineffective strategies currently in place for supporting those caught up in the criminal justice system. The evaluators identify that LandWorks is in contact with some influential people, but taking the argument to Devon communities, particularly in the surrounding areas of Dartington and Totnes could expand the audience around this important work, and could achieve even further support.
- The reach of the project could also be extended through attendance at national conferences and 'think tanks' around the resettlement of offenders. This could also glean more supporters and potentially more funding.
- Identifying how best to convey the unique nature of the project, particularly in terms of its work with ROTL trainees outside of the prison setting should be explored.
- Demonstrating impact and finding ways to present this innovatively to existing and potential new supporters could be a useful strategy.
- We recommend battling on with the log frame (or theory of change) process. It's recommended that this process begins at the very beginning of a project, and while we only started this in the first year's evaluation, the value of understanding how a project works in this way remains very helpful at any stage of a project, it is a 'live' document and should be revisited regularly. Of

real value is that a clear understanding of these mechanisms can be potentially useful in replicating the model elsewhere, although the evaluators identify LandWorks' unique location as an important element of the context within which the project is delivered.

We end this report with that thought in mind, as articulated by one of the trainees:

*I mean if this place was mirror imaged throughout the country it would be fantastic, wouldn't it (LWT006).*

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