



LandWorks Evaluation

April 2020 – March 2021

The Covid Era

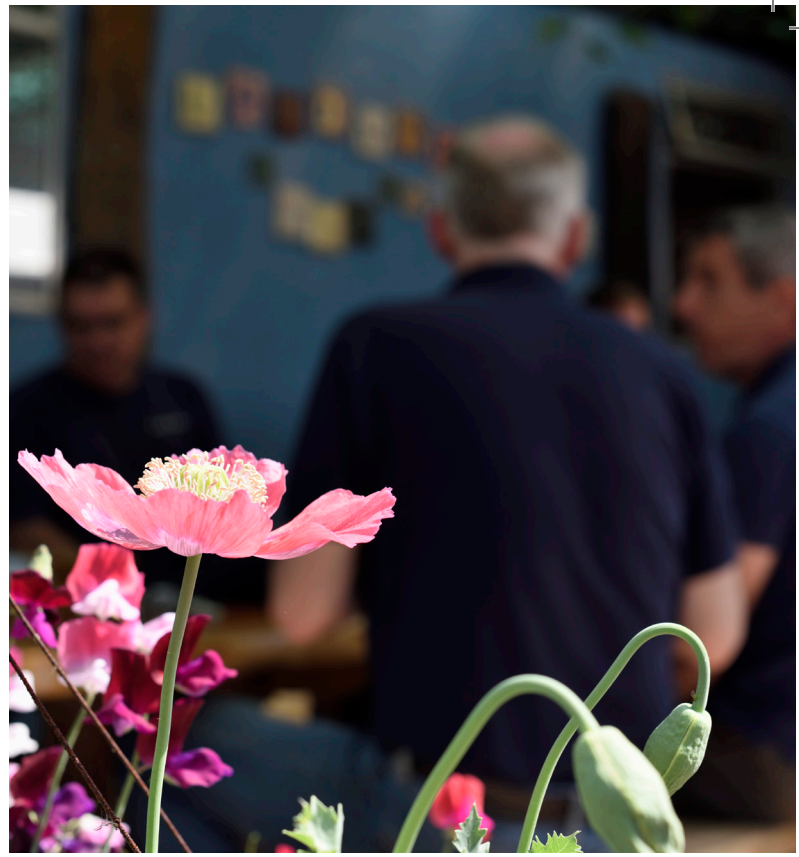
Dr Jane Grose and Dr Julie Parsons

Contents

Introduction	3
LandWorks Placements – ‘A life-line’	4
Covid-19 A novel pandemic	5
The Covid experience at LandWorks	5
Trainee Placements	6
Headline Statistics April 2020 – March 2021	7
Fig 1: Total numbers of LandWorks placements delivered each year	7
Fig 2: Numbers of LandWorks placements by type (ROTL and non-ROTL/Community)	7
Fig 3: LandWorks Placement Types (Overall)	8
Fig 4: LandWorks Trainees – gender	8
Fig 5: LandWorks Trainees – ages	8
Impact of Covid-19 on the LandWorks offer	9
Introduction	9
Theme 1: Coming to LandWorks	10
Theme 2: The trainees	10
Theme 3: The ethos as key to success	12
Theme 4: Developing an enterprise lead role	14
Theme 5: Covid and beyond	14
Concluding comments	15
Graduate experience	16
Rodney’s story	17
Quentin’s Story	19
Jarvis’s story	21
Concluding comments	22
Summary	24
Recommendations – issues to be included in the next report	24
Publications and outreach	25
Trainee Stories	25
Academic Conferences	25
References	25
Acknowledgements	25

Introduction

LandWorks is a resettlement and rehabilitation charity that works with people in prison and those at risk of going to prison (referred to as trainees) to enhance their opportunities and prevent reoffending. This is achieved by working one-to-one with trainees through a range of enterprises, which are used as a platform for building trusting relationships, enhancing confidence and social skills. LandWorks also develops bespoke resettlement plans with individuals which are practically focussed on issues such as helping to secure ID, providing a resettlement pack (toiletries and basic foodstuffs) on release, securing appropriate accommodation, help and advice with benefits and health care and addiction issues, alongside developing skills and offering advice to help with employment.



Significantly, this all happens in one place with a dedicated team of people committed to the LandWorks ethos. Indeed, one of the most important things for successful resettlement is for those who are looking to change their lives to be given a supportive environment in which to do this, as Max commented on placement during 2020-21:

“[LandWorks] helps in a big way, in many ways. It shows people they’ve actually got it in them to work. You can lose your confidence in prison. You don’t think you could work again. It gets into your head that bad and then you come out and LandWorks it’s like a job. It shows people they can work again. Also, you’ve got people there as back-up, a bit of help. You’re not on your own. Even a big strong male like me. It’s done in a way where you feel like you’re earning it, which is important. It’s hard to take help, especially as a male... People like to value themselves, don’t they? Also, it’s good to add value to yourself, whichever way you want it. It gives you a bit of value and self-worth.

(Max, PeN project interview 28/1/21)





LandWorks Placements – 'A life-line'

A consistent message from people on placement is that LandWorks offers a non-judgemental and safe environment for people to rebuild their lives following a criminal conviction. A LandWorks placement offers more than just practical support with benefits, accommodation, work and family relationships, as Robin said during a PeN project interview:

“My confidence is just so much higher. You know that’s because of coming in and being around the staff... They kind of install that confidence in you. They have belief in you and when you’ve not really had that, that’s a big difference. It gives you a boost. (Robin, PeN project interview, 14/1/21)

This year has been a challenge. The Covid-19 pandemic hampered the offer at LandWorks with the prison in lockdown, and probation services curtailed. However, LandWorks still managed to deliver 28 placements over the year, supporting people released from prison and others referred through probation. Significantly LandWorks continued and in some cases increased its offer to former trainees (graduates), many of whom remain in touch with LandWorks beyond the end of their placements, again as Robin notes:

“The fact that people come back to stick their head in and say ‘hello’, that speaks more than words. That’s real respect and love for the place. (Robin, PeN project interview, 14/1/21)

This year’s report provides an overview of placements over the 12 months, April 1st 2020 – March 31st 2021, some analysis of trends on placement provision since the project started and headline statistics for the year.

However, given the country has been dealing with a major pandemic since March 2020, the main focus of this report is based on analysis of interviews carried out with LandWorks staff including the Enterprise Leads (ELs) (pottery; woodwork; market gardening; site maintenance), with a view to exploring how they support trainees and specifically how this was managed during the pandemic.

This report also provides some insight into the support LandWorks offers to its graduates (former trainees). LandWorks’ graduate support is the focus of a British Academy 12-month research programme (September 2020 – April 2022), findings from which will be included in next year’s evaluation report. In the meantime, some insight into graduate support is offered here through case studies from three former trainees who participated in the British Academy research.

The aims of this year’s report are therefore to:

- Explore the impact of Covid-19 on LandWorks, and how it adapted to meet the needs of its trainees.
- Explore the impact of Covid-19 on graduates through case studies.



Covid-19 A novel pandemic

In March 2020 the UK was ordered to lockdown. There were 'stay at home' orders, prohibiting people from leaving home without 'reasonable excuse' (Late March – June 2020) and the police were provided with the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for lockdown offences (approx. 26th March 2020) (Parliament. House of Commons, 2021, p.6). LandWorks had to decide how best to maintain support for its trainees and those who had graduated from the scheme who might be left without their usual forms of support from statutory services. For example, the probation service moved to an Exceptional Model of Delivery (late March 2020), with many offices closed and staff working from home (Parliament.uk, 2020). Those trainees who had been released on temporary licence (ROTL) returned to prison and initially all placements referred through probation were stopped. In the early stages of the first lockdown (March – June 2020), LandWorks placements were suspended. The general population was actively encouraged to 'work from home' if it was "reasonably possible" (March 2020), this included services who could work remotely instead of being office based (Parliament. House of Commons, 2021, p.6).

Gradually, from June 2020 as lockdown was eased and probation began to deal with a backlog of cases, it was possible for placements to restart and these have continued since. The measures taken at LandWorks to prevent infection were regularly assessed, with trainees most likely to be working in the open air, where transmission of Covid-19 was considered much less likely. It was during the first lockdown that LandWorks decided to systematically increase its contact with people who had previously been on placement with them since the project started in 2013, and a more formalised approach to 'graduate' support began. Several graduates had expressed difficulty in contacting statutory services and many were now isolating on their

own. A system of weekly texts began and these were supported where possible by emails and telephone calls.

The Covid experience at LandWorks

Immediately after the first lockdown was announced the LandWorks staff created a safe environment at the LandWorks site. Visitors to the site were reduced to essential only. Then, as lockdown measures eased and in compliance with government guidelines, LandWorks set in place procedures for measuring people's temperature on site, and provided hand sanitiser around the grounds. The team built a gazebo which had its own log burning stove and plenty of ventilation. This meant staff and trainees could still come together at mealtimes and breaks, which is an important part of developing social skills. Cooking as an activity was stopped but as the lockdown eased volunteers began to bring meals to the gates, which is an important part of the LandWorks model, so that there was a hot meal available at lunchtime. Sandwiches and biscuits in individual wrappers were available for break times and meetings held outside, or in fully ventilated spaces and socially distanced. Those staff that could do so continued to work from home.

It is a mark of the dedication of LandWorks staff that throughout the pandemic they continued to provide support to graduates and trainees, both those able and unable to visit the site. The Director Chris Parsons noted in his report to Trustees that he felt the pandemic had given staff an opportunity to do some of their most effective work to date. Smaller numbers early on in the pandemic meant more emphasis on one-to-one working enabling a greater agility amongst staff involved in resettlement to respond to individual crises, whilst the impact of the pandemic increased the levels of need amongst those on placement.

Trainee Placements

Trainee placements this year were lower than forecasted due to Covid-19. The table (figure 1) shows the total number of placements delivered each year at LandWorks since its inception. Overall, the mix between prisoners released on temporary licence from prison (ROTL) and other 'community' (non-custodial) placements (typically those referred through probation, including those on licence following release from prison) has varied over the years, due to changes in restrictions on ROTL licences and whether the prison has been able to grant them.

Over 12 months from April 1st 2020, LandWorks provided 28 placements to trainees. Day release (ROTL) placements to LandWorks direct from prison were suspended due to the pandemic. LandWorks have been in regular contact with the prison service and are hopeful that placements can resume by Autumn 2021. However, over the period of this report there was a high demand for placements from people based in the community.

The employment rate for former trainees has remained the same as last year, and the reoffending rate is fairly static and well below the national average.

LandWorks were in regular contact with over 70 graduates during the first lockdown, and at any one time during the last year have provided support and advice to 30 graduates. Over the past year a traffic light system has been developed so each contact with a graduate can be tracked. Those who need no support for now receive a green light but those in the amber or red categories are more closely monitored and where necessary action is taken. This has proved useful as new issues such as substance misuse or problems with accommodation can be flagged and the appropriate member of staff is brought in to support the graduate until the situation improves.

On-going support for trainees who have been on placement at LandWorks continues to remain key to its ethos. For some graduates, the interaction with the team may be minimal; just knowing LandWorks exists helps them feel secure. During the pandemic, when statutory services may not have been able to offer support or advice, being able to drop in, text or telephone staff meant graduates avoided turning to their familiar coping mechanisms, whether this is drugs, alcohol or gambling. For others being able to discuss difficulties with finding accommodation, filling in forms or dealing with difficult work colleagues, friends or neighbours has been of benefit.

As Chris Parsons commented:

“LandWorks recognises the time required to facilitate change and importantly a structure that allows for failure and then repair, no resettlement journey is without bumps. We have a carefully developed a support structure that I believe our evidence demonstrates that LandWorks neither 'babysits nor causes dependency' but encourages self-reliance, personal development and independence but we (bravely) acknowledge that time is required, and that time differs for every individual.

Headline Statistics
April 2020 – March 2021

LandWorks has supported
28
placements
and
70+
graduates

LandWorks has an overall
reoffending rate of
5%
(compared with 48% national
average for prison and c.40%
for prison and community
sentences combined)

LandWorks graduates
(eligible for employment)
have an overall employment
rate of
97%

Landworks Placements 2013–20

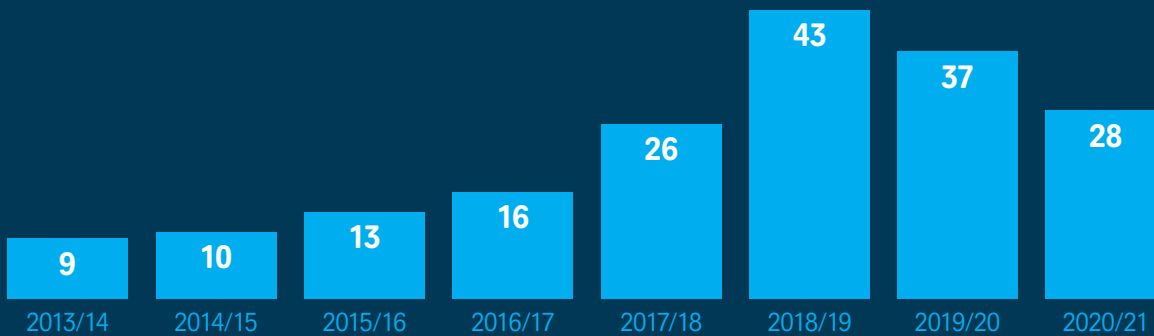


Fig 1: Total numbers of LandWorks placements offered each year

LandWorks Placement Types

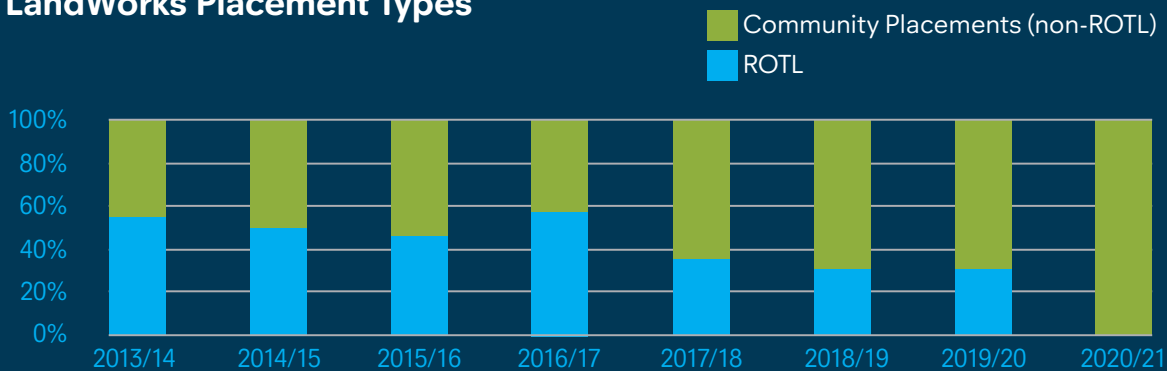
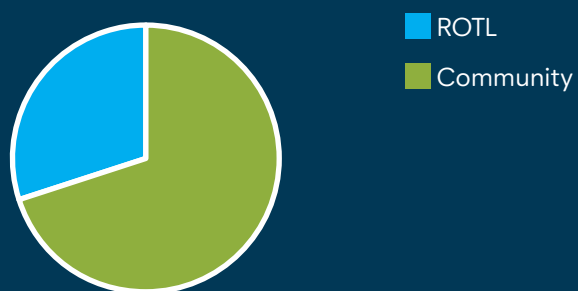


Fig 2: Numbers of LandWorks placements by type (ROTL and non-ROTL/Community)

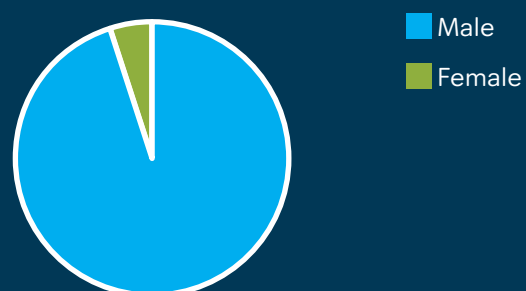
Types of Trainee Placements 2013–21



The suspension of ROTL placements from prison during the pandemic has slightly altered the overall proportions of different placement types that have been undertaken at LandWorks since its establishment, with 70% now having been referred through community partners and only 30% from the prison service.

Fig 3: LandWorks Placement Types (Overall)

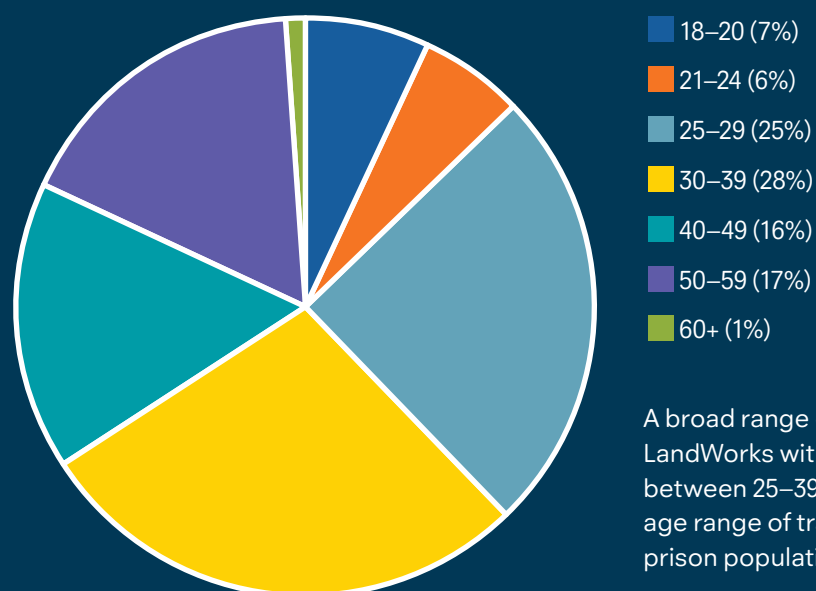
LandWorks Trainees – Gender (2013–21)



LandWorks is open to both men and women, but as reflected in the prison population as a whole there are fewer women in the criminal justice system available to take up the offer of a placement.

Fig 4: LandWorks Trainees – gender

LandWorks Trainees – Ages (2013–2021)



A broad range of ages have attended LandWorks with the majority being between 25–39. Again, like gender, the age range of trainees is a reflection of the prison populations in England & Wales.

Fig 5: LandWorks Trainees – ages

Impact of Covid-19 on the LandWorks offer

The majority of staff at LandWorks are trainee facing, in that they work directly with the trainees, others work in management and administration. Some of the trainee facing staff are also tasked with leading enterprises such as wood-work, pottery, market gardening and more general landscaping/site maintenance activities. Each of these activities is managed by an Enterprise Lead (EL) whose job it is to pass on their experience, but more importantly, to listen and to value the contribution of the trainees.

In order to gain an understanding of the impact of Covid-19 on the LandWorks offer a series of in-depth interviews were carried out with LandWorks staff. The interviews were digitally recorded and conducted via Zoom or in a socially distanced space on site. They were transcribed and then analysed by two experienced qualitative researchers. Each transcript was coded and then recoded to identify common themes and particular areas of significance. These relate to how staff understand their roles and for those staff engaged in trainee facing activities, how they understand both the transfer of skills and emotional support of trainees. Results were then compared.

The quotes used here have been anonymised. Five themes emerged 1: The route to LandWorks, 2: The trainees, 3: The ethos as key to success, 4: Developing an enterprise lead role, Theme 5: Covid and beyond.

Introduction

The current staff, including ELs have worked at LandWorks for between 1 and 5 years. Some had been trainees themselves, some had skills from previous employment they could offer, and others had experience of working within the criminal and social justice sectors.

Of relevance was the variety of activities carried out by the enterprises. For example, the woodworking enterprise produces multiple items for sale through the shop and attracts private orders for items such as picnic tables; pottery designed and made by the trainees is also sold to the public through the shop; vegetables and salad from the market garden are available daily; compost and firewood is produced and sold in the shop, and 'off-site' landscaping work commissioned. This gives the trainees 'real work' experience, that helps cover the costs of the charity and crucially builds self-esteem.

Theme 1: Coming to LandWorks

Each member of staff described how they approached their role.

Key Finding: All staff expressed commitment to their particular area of work and emphasised the pastoral, emotional and supportive aspects as central to how the charity works with individuals.

“...it’s actually about assessing what their needs are and looking at how we can help, monitoring that and ongoing support... There are some subtleties there as well in trying to build their confidence and getting them to recognise where their strengths lie. s7

Another member of staff talked about the therapeutic nature of getting involved in an activity that may never have been attempted before:

“I try to keep people engaged with making [...] in a therapeutic kind of sense... It’s kind of like a meditation, I think, focusing on something and allowing other thought patterns to happen, positive feedback, making mistakes, problem solving, a safe environment. s5

Staff talked about the long-term nature of the trainee’s relationship with LandWorks and how crucial this was to permanent change. They described LandWorks as offering a ‘family feel’ with a ‘sense of security’ away from being ‘in security’ and a holistic, individualised approach to resettlement.

Staff had multiple reasons for working at LandWorks. For some it was about ‘giving back’ having been through the system themselves and they described the ‘amazing atmosphere’ and the opportunity to ‘give people a chance to overcome barriers’. It was evident amongst trainee facing staff that their commitment to their roles came from genuinely caring about trainee outcomes, coupled with a determination to keep them out of trouble permanently.

“LandWorks is a shining light in the system, in my opinion, of the sort of things that need to be done and what really is the current reality of what is needed for people that are in the criminal justice system, other than what people think they need. s7

Theme 2: The trainees

Most trainees at LandWorks have led chaotic lives. Some had experienced abuse and a dysfunctional family life or lived their lives in and out of care. This was not true of all trainees. Yet the route to involvement with the criminal justice system often arose due to a combination of individual struggles with addiction and/or manging emotions, alongside structural issues relating to lack of education, employment, housing and/or social support.

One member of staff described how small infringements of the law over a long period of time would eventually increase the criminal justice system’s awareness of a particular person and this would finally lead to a custodial sentence.

“... there’s people with heroin addiction or crack or something like that, and then you’re pretty much doomed anyway because it’s just one of those drugs that just eat you up and you’ll do anything to get the money for it. s3

These factors did not apply to all trainees, staff were keen to point out that like any institution, prison and LandWorks was full of people from all walks of life.

“...You’ve got people that are totally homeless to people that have got quite a lot of money, they’ve got a good family, they’ve got a nice house, they’ve had a good job all their life, but they’ve obviously done something they shouldn’t have done to get themselves into prison. s1

Key Finding: The wide range of life experience amongst trainees means that staff at LandWorks are engaged in a process of continual assessment of trainee needs, so they are able to tailor activities and requirements for support on an individual and ongoing basis.

Trainee facing staff at LandWorks engage in a continual process of assessment within a holistic model of care, that aims to improve self confidence and build trusting relationships.

Staff suggested that the key to the success at LandWorks was the lack of pressure and judgment towards trainees. Providing a daily structure to their lives and a listening ear meant that, over time, each trainee had the possibility to learn and develop without fear of retribution. Trainees often made mistakes, but what was important was that their achievements were praised.

“I always make sure that they realise there’s no rush for anything and if something goes wrong, we just start again. s1

“...we do listen and we talk and we let people vent and get things off (their chest). We try not to give them advice as such, but, steer them in a way so they can figure it out themselves or think about things... have you tried a different approach or something like that. s3

Each trainee is offered the chance to make something for a family member. This is often enthusiastically taken up and a trainee might make a chopping board or a piece of pottery. In this way LandWorks includes relatives and friends and recognises the value of those relationships.

“...but the majority of people want to make something for their partners, children or their parents. I think they take a pride in it. s1

Staff talked about the pleasure of being able to offer a 'way out', and of being able to provide an environment for people who wanted to change to be facilitated to do so. The trainees might get vocational skills they could use after they left LandWorks but they also had the opportunity to grow in confidence, to be listened to and to have help with housing and employment.

Key finding: So many of the trainees had spent their lives feeling someone was looking over their shoulder waiting to judge them but staff at LandWorks maintain a highly individualised and flexible approach, which allows trainees to find their own niche and way of working.

By 'learning by doing' the trainees begin to take control of their lives. This was not a seamless progression. Those on placement in the community might not have work or accommodation which might tempt them to return to harmful behaviour. By working closely with trainees the LandWorks team are able to support people into accommodation and employment after a placement, whilst making smaller gestures of support, such as food to take away or small loans during difficult periods.

Theme 3: The ethos as key to success

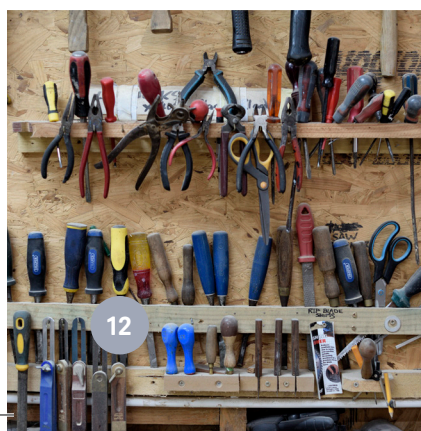
LandWorks is trainee centred. Key approaches to working with trainees relate to giving praise, listening, valuing people equally, as well as setting clear boundaries on what is acceptable behaviour within the team. As one member of staff commented:

“I think so many of them have gone through their lives without praise. It just seems to mean so much and you can see their faces light up. s4

Key Finding:

Developing a sense of community and allegiance to LandWorks enables trainees to feel part of something. They are encouraged so that they want to go back to the garden or the pottery or the workshop. They develop pride in their work.

“I do genuinely believe people like it when you give them a bit of responsibility and put the task on themselves. I like that, personally and I think that definitely applies in the [setting I work in], definitely. It just encourages people. s1



Not all trainees when they first arrive feel they want help, some are angry and can act out their anger and so trainee facing staff have to be alert to the things some trainees might say that might be dangerous to either themselves or others. There are systems in place to manage these situations and staff are trained in setting boundaries. The Project Director is also prepared to refer trainees back to prison or probation if they are not ready to take responsibility at LandWorks, or find life too difficult to cope. But stepping in is not without problems:

“You don’t want to break the trust. That’s the problem. It’s about being transparent. In that case, I think we spoke to the probation officer and they were aware of the situation and the police had been involved. We make sure we log everything and the responses to that. s7

“...you’ve got to be genuine and honest, but at the same time, kind of have a level of self-protection. s5

When things go well, and trainees are having a series of successes the whole team benefits. There is a sense of a job well done. All staff talked about the joy of seeing trainees move on and begin to start their life on a firmer footing.

“It’s quite inspiring seeing that transition from hopeless, in their own eyes, to improvement and reduced addiction. s6

The sensitivity of the staff to the emotional experience of the trainees is marked. One member of staff talked about the importance of just saying thank you to trainees for a day’s work. Trainee facing staff also monitor the moods of trainees they are working with, and try to explore any difficulties they might be having.

“I teach them lots of practical skills, but it’s bigger than that. I’m sort of facilitating a space for them to just talk to me about anything that’s on their mind, tell me about their life, talk through any practical issues they’re having around housing and jobs and really just to hold that space for them and be there to listen to them and help them in any way I can that’s challenging their behaviour or helping them to see different perspectives, things like that. s3

Theme 4: Developing an enterprise lead role

The ELs talked about the counselling course that had been offered at LandWorks and how useful they found it. Even those that didn't particularly enjoy it found it useful. They all do mandatory training such as safeguarding and have the opportunity to learn extra skills. Over time they develop their listening skills and adapt what they learn to their working relationships with trainees. As one EL explained:

“Something I've had to learn is immediacy, when to be immediate with someone, which can be quite tricky because you don't want to raise levels of anger or wind people up or upset them. Immediacy is being immediate in the right moment, being able to listen without judgment. I've definitely learnt on the job. I think I've understood it on a more conscious level. s5

In addition to in-house training, every morning staff meet with the Project Director to allocate the tasks and trainees to the work in each area. This was described as 'incredibly useful' because it also offered them a time to share any potential difficulties or concerns they had about particular trainees. In addition, they have a code of conduct that they are all aware of and have to sign and it can guide them if they are not sure about how to handle a particular situation. Another meeting is held at the end of the day to appraise progress, as one EL commented, these meetings are useful:

“Sometimes to offload it, but sometimes it also puts things into perspective, especially if it's been a really difficult one, something that tugs at the heart strings. An example of that... somebody told me quite recently [...] it was about their confidence and self-esteem and I was trying to explore why that was and they said, because I never felt loved. It's always heart-breaking, so heart-breaking and I can't take that away from them. s4

Key Finding: There is no doubt that the work can be emotionally taxing. Clear pathways to follow to raise concerns and staff boundaries are essential. The Project Director is readily available and has an open-door policy and there is access to a counsellor for staff who may need a little more help.

Theme 5: Covid and beyond

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that LandWorks had to curtail its services in March 2020 and this had an impact on the LandWorks offer. The suspension of ROTL meant that the balance of ROTL and community trainees on the site together at the same time, which was seen as beneficial to both groups (Grose and Parsons 2020) has been absent. This has also meant that the valuable deterrent effect of hearing from prisoners who are released on temporary licence from the prison can no longer be shared with trainees on community placements.

Key Finding:

Instead, the occasional graduate visiting for lunch or for a morning or afternoon's advice or work, gives current trainees a valuable insight into what might be possible for them in the future.

Some of those on community placements have a certain number of hours to fulfil at LandWorks and this was difficult before lockdown measures were eased, as numbers on site were limited. Work in the gardens was also difficult with fewer people present. Staff helped as much as possible. Also, of concern amongst staff was that the pandemic was taking its toll on the mental health of those on placement,

“I think the biggest thing for me is just noticing how people's mental health has been really affected by the isolation.... Just people being more isolated and not seeing family. There's quite a lot of people here who have been sleeping rough and they're trying to find housing and that's really difficult anyway. s5

It has also been a time when staff have been able to think about other new developments such as a larger space for woodwork and a potential greater focus on those doing community sentences.

“We have talked about that maybe there is a greater need for us to help people who are in community as opposed to those who are in prison, but also the

types of people that we work with. This unique experience has given us the opportunity to really work with those who are most at need, rather than just working with whoever is sent. s3

Concluding comments

The interviews with staff provide a valuable insight into the challenges and rewards of working with LandWorks trainees. There are clear avenues of support, systems and policies in place for staff, who like trainees work in a supportive environment. All of the ELs are committed to the LandWorks ethos working with the individual needs of the trainees, whilst developing trusting, non-judgemental relationships. Covid-19 presented particular issues for the LandWorks offer, not least in reduced contact with trainees on site. However, these limitations also presented opportunities, such as more one-to-one outdoor working and more visits from former graduates to the site.

Graduate experience

Since the first lockdown in March 2020 regular contact with LandWorks graduates has enabled staff to monitor individual progress and alert appropriate services if extra help is needed. In addition, data has been gathered which reflects their experiences of the pandemic and how LandWorks support has contributed to that experience.

The data was collected as part of a British Academy funded project the aim of which was to map 'what works?' in supporting criminalised individuals during the Covid-19 crisis. The research further aimed to explore the lived experience of criminalised individuals negotiating changing circumstances as a consequence of Covid-19. The research is ongoing and is due to be completed in September 2021. This will be discussed in the next evaluation report.

The data collection involved a researcher texting, emailing and/or phoning a small number of graduates. In addition, the researcher kept her own record of her impressions of how graduates were managing, following the LandWorks traffic light system. From the correspondence it became clear that concerns about lockdown were creating difficult choices for some former trainees. It also highlighted the benefits of having access to LandWorks as a place to visit and to contact, as it continues to offer security and support long after a placement there has finished, as Quentin says:

“it's a wee bubble, and in that little bubble is quite a safe place, you are away from all the stresses of normal life, like everything, which is why I like to go back now and again to recharge just for the day

The pandemic affected graduates to varying degrees, some experiencing work issues/job loss, others reporting worsening mental health. On the other hand, some graduates were keen to stress that they were managing or not managing the pandemic the same as everyone else or it had little impact on them as their working lives continued as before. Graduates generally stated that LandWorks has helped them/continues to help them beyond the end of their placements.

However, despite this, most acknowledged that having a criminal record meant they had additional challenges and obstacles such as finding a job, re-establishing relationships, and dealing with stigma related to criminalization. For some, they reported the feeling that everyone's life had moved on, apart from theirs.

Key Finding: What is most evident is that these challenges and obstacles are ongoing and do not end when the prison sentence does or when their time at LandWorks comes to an end.

Lockdown inevitably exacerbated many of the usual difficulties and LandWorks was keen to evaluate the impact of their on-going support for former trainees. The following three case studies offer a brief insight into the graduate experience of the pandemic. These were drawn from a range of data, one to one interviews (carried out by a second researcher), text messages, alongside notes and reflections about contact. All data were anonymized and qualitatively analysed.

Rodney's story

Rodney was a LandWorks trainee from May 2016 to March 2017, when he was 18 years old. He was referred through probation with a suspended sentence and a number of community hours to complete. He participated in the PeN project when he was on placement (his story can be read here: <https://penprojectlandworks.org/category/rodney/>) and he has been in regular contact with LandWorks since.

Rodney was enthusiastic about being involved in the study. The researcher contacted him by text message. At the beginning he was busy mending his bike so he would be able get out to LandWorks. He had support from a care coordinator and support staff where he lived for what he described as his 'borderline personality disorder'. He felt lockdown had negatively affected his mental health,

“Sleeping has been harder, eating has gone sideways, I'm just not motivated, I sleep in half the day, I'm much more depressed. Just all round struggling. TXT message

As an example of how LandWorks was helping he described the work he was doing at LandWorks? Rodney was proud, to have put a new roof on one of the LandWorks buildings. He encouraged the researcher to come and admire it and was clearly upbeat about having been involved in the job. A couple of weeks later though he was once again depressed, he hadn't been out much, he had not gone boxing, an activity which he loves, and was sleeping more. These yo-yo mood swings were difficult for him to manage and he dreaded the gym closing as a result of lockdown which would mean the end of his boxing. If he didn't get the outlet of boxing, he was concerned he might 'go

back to his old ways'. When he was asked about what this meant he said,

“...drugs and alcohol, pent up frustration turning to fighting, just generally becoming the person I fought so hard to get away from.

TXT message

During the second lockdown he thought he had caught Covid so got tested and had to isolate at home. He wasn't getting on with his neighbours and this led to him having a mental collapse which took him to the hospital emergency department. They described his experience as a disassociation and related it to his ongoing personality disorder. He did make it home again but it took him some time to begin to get back on his feet.

When he was interviewed about his overall experience of lockdown, he said:

“It's been a rollercoaster if I'm honest with you. Some days I'm inspired to help others and I'm motivated, and other days I'm barely able to do much. Int text

He was lonely. He said he knew that being in lockdown with your family could be stressful too but said he would like to have someone around, he said:

“The silence is too loud sometimes. TXT message

His difficulties in managing daily living were exacerbated by the fact that his mental state made him 'twitchy' 'fidgety'. He had managed to get his new flat painted as a friend helped keeping socially distanced and painting opposite walls. Every time he managed to achieve something another problem presented itself. The financial management of the flat seemed to be particularly trying. He had budgeted for his outgoings in line with his benefits but then the housing association was trying to charge more. This is exactly the sort of trigger that sends Rodney spiralling again and he ends up in bed and not eating well.

“Usually, all I do by drinking is get myself into trouble because I bottle it up, then I drink, then it comes out and every single time I've been in any sort of trouble with the law has been drug and alcohol related. Never once been arrested sober, ever.

So, Rodney gets to LandWorks as often as his mental state allows him. Being at LandWorks allows him to be active, he meets other people and he is fed. He recognises the value of the programme at LandWorks to keep him going when he feels oppressed by the systems he has to work with in terms of accommodation and employment,

“I'm forever grateful for the things that they've done and what I love is they never ask for anything in return, ever. I've always said to them just ask. I'm happy if they ask, but they don't. Every time they

do invite me out here, it's for my benefit not for theirs.

Rodney says LandWorks gives him the opportunity to laugh at himself, it gives him insight into negative behaviours and he enjoys the company of the staff and the other trainees. He says LandWorks staff don't contact him regularly and he doesn't always contact them but if it's been a while someone from LandWorks will check in on him.

Key Finding: This awareness that someone cares and is looking out for him means he checks negative behaviours when he can. He knows he can reach out when things are going badly for him. A relatively hands-off approach from LandWorks, offering non-judgemental occasional input from the team helps Rodney to feel a bit more in control of his life.

“Unless you actually tell people you're struggling how are they supposed to know.

In this case study Rodney describes how the chaos of his life is steadied and supported by occasional interventions from LandWorks. Rodney accesses LandWorks when he needs to and LandWorks occasionally contacts Rodney to see if he is managing with accommodation and employment and whether his mental state is preventing him from progressing. From the case study it is clear Rodney knows what needs to be done and is able to manage his life for the most part. When he becomes anxious or depressed, he needs a small amount of contact to keep him going.

Quentin's Story

Quentin was on placement at LandWorks towards the end of 2017 and then again towards the end of 2018. He was released on temporary licence from the local prison and was on placement LandWorks until his release. He lost the use of his right arm in a motorbike accident some years previously and it took some time for him to find something he felt able to do at LandWorks, until he started working with Sarah Hodge in the pottery. He also participated in a number of interviews for the PeN project blog <https://penprojectlandworks.org/category/quentin/>

“There's a very fine line between people on the outside and people in jail. PeN project 2017

Quentin was interviewed as part of the 'Finishing Time Project' which aims to understand the impact of prison on those who have left and how LandWorks may have supported the next stages of their lives <https://finishingtime.online/>

Quentin is a middle-aged married man, home-owner, father and grand-father, ex-army and educated. Reflecting on his prison experience he observed that whilst some people in prison 'need to be there', i.e. their crimes are those that make them a danger to society, others made a mistake, and the mistake was found out. The shock for Quentin is that he feels the 'sentence is never spent'. The conviction 'follows you all your life'. He has difficulty finding jobs and he feels he is being judged by people who, he says, 'don't bother to get to know you' and may have made mistakes themselves. About his experience in prison Quentin said,

“I couldn't do another year, put it that way. Not a chance. It's tougher than I thought. PeN project 2018

He described the atmosphere in prison as 'menacing' and that although the discipline was similar to the army he felt constantly on guard for potential disruptive behaviour. On leaving prison he feels society's attitude towards him as a human being and his place in society has fundamentally changed.

Quentin like the rest of the UK has also had to deal with the negative effects of a national lockdown in response to the Covid -19 pandemic. As part of the investigation into how graduates from LandWorks have coped with the Covid -19 lockdown Quentin was asked about his experiences. He said he left his job because he felt his boss had 'made it too difficult to work there'. Now he works as a potter and has been producing pottery, a skill he had learned at LandWorks, and has put to good use since leaving. He sells his pots throughout Cornwall and credits LandWorks with teaching him to be a potter.

“Loving being a potter at the moment, it's going from strength to strength, I feel like I'm a proper potter now. Quentin researcher notes

Day to day life has been difficult because he feels his life is currently unstable. Working on his pottery helps his mental health. Importantly he knows this constant anxiety is not just to do with lockdown but it's also to do with having been in prison and managing the stigma which stays with him in every choice he makes post prison.

“It’s not to do with lockdown, its more to do with the after-effects of being found guilty of something.

Finishing time Jan 2021

Like many of his fellow graduates Quentin can ruminate about the ‘quick fix’ to get him out of the constant lack of material security. Turning back to crime, he feels, is one way out of his current situation but he is unlikely to follow it through because too much is at stake in terms of his family life. The constant battle to stay solvent puts a strain on his marriage ‘There is a lot of bitterness and angst aimed at me’.

“It’s like being in an enclosure with a fence and trying to find the entrance. You know it’s there but you can’t find it. Finishing time Jan 2021

Lockdown has also affected the way Quentin can market his pottery. The lack of visitors to Cornwall, where he lives, has meant he has lost his customer base. Despite this he is upbeat about the situation because he is confident in his ability as a potter.

“I’m confident that I can get through this, that once I’ve got this back to normal. I think my pottery will sell and I’ll make a decent living, but it’s getting from here to there.

Finishing time Jan 2021

Finding alternative occupation to help with his current financial situation is made more difficult because of his criminal record and ongoing unspent conviction. His earning potential is very poor and full-time employment which might support his outgoings is unlikely.

“It’s always going to be part of my life and that pisses me off... that’s what goes on in my head everyday constant and you’ve just got to try to keep a lid on it all the time. It’s always there. Finishing time Jan 2021

Quentin came to LandWorks when he was released on temporary licence (ROTL) from prison, he said some of the trainees just treated a LandWorks placement as ‘an escape from prison’, but it is much more than that, and this will be explored in more detail in the following report. In the meantime he added:

“It’s somewhere that you can tell people your shit and they won’t judge you and they make you feel like a human being again. Finishing time Jan 2021.

Once Quentin had left LandWorks he came back as a volunteer to help in the pottery shop and he enjoyed re-uniting with the staff and some of the trainees. Once the pandemic hit the contact has been more sporadic apart from an ‘occasional phone call to Chris to have a moan’. He also emails Chris to let him know what he is up to and any problems he might be having.

However, his self-esteem has increased because of his ability to produce high quality pottery.

“I’m getting the impression that people now want me (his pottery) in their shop because of who I am ...It’s like I don’t need them as much as they need me, it’s a subtle change and it’s quite nice.

Researcher notes

Key Finding: Quentin says people continue to need help to rebuild their lives long after they have left LandWorks, especially in terms of managing the impact of stigma and its impact on employability.

Jarvis's story

Jarvis was on placement at LandWorks in July 2016 and then again in October 2017. His first placement was when he was released on temporary licence, but this was cut short due to a prison lockdown. He then had another placement as a newly released prisoner, which ended in March 2018. He contributed a couple of interviews to the PeN project <https://penprojectlandworks.org/category/jarvis/>

Jarvis describes himself as a 'long-term criminal'. He has had many periods of time in prison, lasting from 2-10 years. Now in his 50's he feels he has come to a crossroads. He looks back over his life and thinks about all the people he has hurt and all the things he has done and he wants to make a change, to be a different person and to live a better life.

“Sometimes I think to myself I don't recognise myself. Did I do that? PeN project blogs

When he was trying to turn his life around LandWorks offered him a range of skills he had not had the opportunity to develop before. He has learned to cook and now quite enjoys cooking, though paperwork still continues to cause him anxiety and it's at these times he talks to the staff at LandWorks to get advice on what official letters are asking for. Living life outside prison presents continuing challenges.

As a graduate he has work and accommodation, but he says lockdown has left him 'a little bit lost'.

He finds it very boring. 'It's like an easy form of prison'. He spends a lot of time not doing very much except going for walks. He was put on furlough at the beginning of the pandemic and so only does a few hours and then goes home. He described the monotony of lockdown and how it has left him feeling a bit withdrawn.

“I've gone a little bit withdrawn I suppose ... since this lockdown I haven't been bothered to talk on WhatsApp and messenger. Finishing Time Jan 2021

Not knowing how to manage the boredom he called Chris and was invited to spend afternoons at LandWorks and that helped to 'move him on'.

Key Finding: Jarvis comments that whenever he has a 'bit of a struggle' he knows he can turn to LandWorks for support.

Jarvis says he can ask for advice when he needs it and most of the time he manages well. He is proud though of being financially stable now. He runs a car and has paid back the majority of the loan his Mum gave him to buy it so he feels he is in control. He feels his personality has changed too and now he tries to think about what he can do for others.

“When you go to LandWorks you mix with different people and it rubs off on you, to try to help people... Researcher notes

Jarvis feels he has been lucky to have LandWorks help but knows he will soon be living on his own and has to stay out of prison. He still has two years left on licence and has to start to be more independent,

“When you’ve been doing something your whole life (prison), it takes time to change... But when you are changing your whole life, its going to take years. It doesn’t happen overnight. Researcher notes

Concluding comments

Graduate support takes many forms from practical help and advice when filling in forms to just knowing that someone is there on an emotional level when needed. For trainees and graduates accepting help can be difficult as Max says in the opening comment to this report, when reflecting on his time as a trainee at LandWorks “it’s hard to accept help, especially as a male.” One of the benefits of coming through the LandWorks programme is that graduates learn as Rodney says, that “unless you actually tell people you are struggling, how are they going to know”. For graduates, having established trusting relationships at LandWorks, they are able to ask for help, or just text, phone or call in, which is important especially for those who are continuing to rebuild their lives. As noted, the challenges and obstacles faced by LandWorks trainees are ongoing, they do not end when the prison sentence does or when their time at LandWorks comes to an end.





Summary

The aims of this report were to:

- Explore the impact of Covid-19 on LandWorks, and how it adapted to meet the needs of its trainees.
- Explore the impact of Covid-19 on graduates through case studies

Considering the very difficult year in relation to the Covid pandemic and the consequent limitations on the offer at LandWorks the organisation has still been able to meet its goals and to develop further. All the staff complied with Government guidelines and the trainees that were able to attend benefitted from 1-1 attention and were kept safe and secure from infection following the end of the first lockdown in June. The enterprise leads all felt they had been challenged to develop new ways of working while at the same time maintaining the ethos of LandWorks, trust, listening and skills development for trainees. As the pandemic restrictions continue to ease there will still be a need to monitor infection levels and act in the light of these results.

LandWorks is steadily progressing the plan to establish a new Resettlement and Graduate Support Manager role having secured funding towards this post. This will be important for overseeing the practical support provided to trainees while on placement at LandWorks and continuing to develop the ongoing support provided to former trainees after their placements end.

In the previous evaluation report (Grose and Parsons 2020) the development of the Life Measures toolkit described how each trainee was monitored over time and issues relating to accommodation, employment, relationships, and other issues relating to offending were highlighted, with attention paid to levels of support and possible interventions. This will be looked at again in the next evaluation report alongside discussion about how the tool has been used and developed over time.

Recommendations – issues to be included in the next report

1. Measure trainee outcomes – revisit the use of the LandWorks Life Measures toolkit.
2. Give voice to the trainee experience – maintain the ongoing evaluation of trainee journeys through the use of the PeN project.
3. Analyse graduate support – reflect on the outcomes of the British Academy research and the lessons learned about graduate support during and after the Covid pandemic.
4. Present the LandWorks Theory of Change model – consider how it will be used to develop strategy and management.



Publications and outreach

Trainee Stories

The PeN (Photographic Electronic Narrative) project that captures trainees' stories in their own words, alongside photographs of their time at LandWorks, continues to operate. There were three PeN project interviews over the 12 months of the report, but only two blog posts published, one from Glyn in April 2020, where he discusses being 6 months out of prison <https://penprojectlandworks.org/tag/glyn/> and another from Robin documenting his time rough sleeping during lockdown and how LandWorks helped secure him accommodation <https://penprojectlandworks.org/tag/robin/>. A blogpost following an interview with Max highlighting how LandWorks helped him get back into a work frame of mind following his time in prison, is awaiting his approval prior to publication.

Academic Conferences

- Parsons, J.M. (2020) 'dreaming of fishing' – i-poems as reclamation, The 7th International Conference of Autoethnography, 20th-21st July 2020, Online, see <https://collaborations-in-research.org/2020/09/02/julie-parsons-and-rob-giles-i-poems-timelines-photographs-film-making-a-methodological-toolkit-for-giving-voice-to-stigmatised-storytellers/> and <https://finishingtime.online/>
- Keynote: Parsons, J.M. (2020) Community at a distance and the coproduction of narratives of transition with those re/integrating into the community after punishment. British Sociological Association Auto/Biography Winter Conference, 4th December 2020, Online – <https://britsoc.co.uk/media/25449/bsa-ab-christmas-conference-2020-programme-and-abstracts.pdf>

References

Grose, J., and Parsons, J.M. (2020) LandWorks Evaluation Report 2019-20, <https://www.landworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/LandWorks-Evaluation-Report-2020.pdf>

Parliament.uk. (2020) Coronavirus (Covid-19): The impact on probation services. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmjust/461/46103.htm> (Accessed: 28.07.2021).

Parliament. House of Commons Library. (2021) Coronavirus: A history of English lockdown laws. (HC 9068 2021). London: The Commons Library.

Acknowledgements

Thanks as ever to all of the LandWorks trainees and former trainees who have shared their time and lived experience with the researchers. Also, to Emma Winslet from Fotonow CIC, who provided all of the photographs, with funding from a University of Plymouth grant.







University of Plymouth
Drake Circus
Plymouth
Devon PL4 8AA
United Kingdom

The University is committed to the promotion of equality and diversity. If you require this publication in an alternative format, please contact us on +44 (0)1752 585850.

LandWorks



UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH
School of Society & Culture