

# LandWorks



**Celebrating 10 years  
in 10 numbers**





# clear vision

LandWorks is an award-winning independent charity providing a supported route back into employment and the community for people in prison or at risk of going to prison.

Reoffending costs society an estimated £18 billion each year. 47% of prisoners have no qualifications on release and over 70% suffer from more than two mental disorders. Over 50% of prisoners serving less than 12 months go on to reoffend.\*

LandWorks was founded in 2013 in the strong belief that it doesn't have to be this way, and with a clear vision of what we wanted to achieve: to reduce reoffending, improve individual wellbeing, and change attitudes towards offenders in wider society.

Back then, we were very much the new kid on the block, with no proof that we could do anything at all—and no money. Like the trainees we support, we needed people to believe in us, and a sheltered environment in which we could develop and grow. The Dartington Trust stepped up with an abandoned quarry site on their estate. Volunteers came forward, supporters generated vital seed funding, and in 2016 we achieved independent status as a registered charity.

Fast forward 10 years. Working closely with our local prison and probation service, we have provided over 200 participants (called trainees) with life-changing placements that are individually-tailored to tackle the root causes of their offending. LandWorks offers people on placement a safe place to be vulnerable; a place to build trusting, non-judgemental relationships; a place to find acceptance; and above all, a chance to develop a non-criminal identity. 94% of former trainees seeking employment are in work and less than 6% go on to reoffend in their first year.

\*Ministry of Justice 2023



## acres transformed

LandWorks officially began on 15 th July 2013 at Quarry Fields, Dartington. The bramble covered site had no electricity, but there was a water pipe allegedly buried somewhere near the field gate. We had a donated portacabin (with no roof), three prisoners on day release from our local prison, one offender on licence, and a plan – to help these guys back into the community and employment.

With the help of volunteers, we set to work developing the site, turning every activity into a learning experience for the trainees. Together, we built a basic workshop. Wasteland was cleared and veg planted. A polytunnel was donated. Pipes and paths were laid. Money was tight, but community support was growing. So much so, that in late 2014 we received a large National Lottery grant which helped to fund a new building, complete with a kitchen where lunch is prepared, and we teach our trainees valuable cooking skills.

Additional land was acquired (and a new rotavator) to feed the growing demand for our fresh produce. We established a pottery and expanded our carpentry workshop. And we opened our road-side market stall (since expanded into a shop) selling our fresh veg, and a growing range of wooden and ceramic products. Today, the shop generates around 25% of our income.

Visitors to LandWorks are struck by the beauty and tranquility of the place. But beneath this utopian surface lurk many stories of broken families, broken people, addiction, and abuse. LandWorks exists because of the courage, commitment and hard work of our trainees who have been given an opportunity to be a better version of themselves, and who have grasped it with both hands.





# 203

## **trainees supported**

Over the past 10 years, LandWorks has helped some 203 people in prison, or at risk of going to prison, to find a route back into the community and employment, by building the foundations for lasting change.

We support 7-8 trainees each day who generally come for 6-9-month intensive placements. Some come on day-release from our local prison, HMS Channings Wood. Most, newly released after serving time inside, or on a community sentence, are referred by probation services.

Our placements are based around a 'working day' with trainees gaining practical skills in wood working, vegetable growing, cooking, landscaping, construction, and arts and crafts. Around this we weave more social skills including eating and talking together, helping to break down the barriers that often prohibit inclusion. Each trainee has an individual resettlement plan and access to a range of support to address their needs and build on their strengths. This includes 1-2-1 counselling and substance misuse sessions, and practical support with housing, finances and future employment.

When placements end over 90% of trainees stay in touch and we provide a range of ongoing advice and support tailored to their circumstances. Just knowing we are here to help can be an important factor in maintaining confidence and keeping on track.





## picnic benches made

Picnic benches were one of the first products out of our wood workshop ten years ago, and they remain a best seller today – alongside our ever-expanding range of handcrafted wooden bowls, plates, clocks, chopping boards, planters, and more.

Picnic benches can be built in a relatively short space of time, and the end-result not only gives trainees an instant thrill, but also a sense of having created something solid and of lasting value.

As with many things we do here, there are tense, faltering starts, even complete collapse; but confidence slowly builds and then suddenly, not only do items of great practicality and beauty appear, but trainees are engaged, feeling good and wanting to do more.

As new skills are acquired, the more experienced trainees step up to help, reassure and encourage the others – to the extent that former trainee Graham is now fully employed by LandWorks, running our woodworking enterprise.

Graham and his team of trainees have just completed an impressive extension of our workshop that will allow us to build to order on a bigger scale. If you've got something in mind, give us a call on **01803 864891** or email **[info@landworks.org.uk](mailto:info@landworks.org.uk)**.





## **7,220 bags of lettuce grown and sold**

Quick to grow and easy to harvest, our ever-popular mixed lettuce has generated a constant income stream for LandWorks over the years. Today it jostles for space on our market stall with tomatoes, radishes, beetroot, cavolo nero, parsnips, leeks, green beans, sugar snap peas, celeriac, fennel, courgettes, pumpkins, peppers, fresh herbs – in fact, when it comes to vegetables, you name it we pretty much grow and sell it!

Obtaining more land at the back of the quarry site in 2016 allowed us to add new polytunnels, create a herb garden and permanent beds for cut flower production, and to introduce a flock of chickens to supply freshly laid eggs. Although not officially certified organic, we work completely to organic principles – no agrochemical pesticides, fungicides, or fertilisers.

Trainees are involved in every stage of growing our produce: from preparing the ground, to sowing the seeds, nurturing their growth, cutting flowers, collecting eggs, and preparing produce for the market garden stall. Time spent outdoors, close to nature, offers people on placement an oasis of calm and stability in contrast to the chaos of their daily lives. It also provides opportunities to gain new experience and vocational skills, to operate as a team and take on responsibility.

In 2023, for the first time, we are providing a one-year horticultural qualification for one of our trainees, who will learn the theory and practical side of market gardening leading to a Royal Horticultural Society qualification.

**Visit the LandWorks Shop at the Quarry Field gate, Dartington, for fresh vegetables, herbs, eggs, flowers, bags of organic compost, and much more!**





# 2,300

## **lunches shared**

There is an old ship's bell hanging in the LandWorks yard which is clanged daily to gather us all together for lunch, usually about one o'clock. On a quiet day we will be around 14 people; on a normal busy day we can reach 20+.

Eating together has always been at the core of LandWorks. It brings together so many fundamentals that it is easy to take for granted – good food, conversation and companionship. Sharing lunch around a table is a new and intimidating experience for many trainees; but over time, as relationships build, along with confidence and self-esteem, it becomes normal, and normality is one of the keys to rehabilitation.

Most days we are joined by an invited guest or two – members of the local community who are interested in the project; local employers we hope to partner with; judges, police and probation officers; and most rewardingly, LandWorks graduates who have come back to say hello.

In the beginning, the kitchen at Schumacher College on the Dartington Estate provided us with vegetable soup and fresh bread every day. With the opening of our own kitchen in 2015, regular volunteers began taking it in turns to come in and cook, working one to one with the trainees, sharing recipes, techniques and life stories.

Ten years after five of us first broke bread together around a rickety table, our communal lunches are more nurturing than ever. In early 2023, we added regular chef Djamilia to the team, who is now preparing lunch with the trainees three days a week, sharing her cooking and budgeting skills with them – and encouraging them to replicate the experience at home.





## **blogs posted**

Since the earliest days of the project, our director Chris Parsons has been engaging, informing and inspiring our growing community of supporters with his regular updates on the day-to-day goings on at LandWorks. Touching, funny, sometimes angry, always thought-provoking, they shine a vital light on the difficult and complex lives of offenders, the challenges of rehabilitation, and the potential for change in every trainee.

In 2016, volunteer Dr Julie Parsons launched the PeN (Photographic electronic Narrative), to encourage trainees to give voice (anonymously) to their own experiences. Delivered in partnership with the University of Plymouth, the project allows trainees to tell their stories in their own words. They document how they spend their time at the project, how they became involved in the criminal justice system, and their hopes for the future.

Since it was launched, this unique project has published over 100 blogs, and been viewed in over 140 countries, allowing the public to engage with their stories, and helping to change attitudes towards offenders in wider society.

PeN uses social media to get the trainees' stories 'out there' allowing them to be heard by the community they hurt. Facebook 'likes' and comments flood in. Their story has been listened to by people that they often suppose rejected them. That can be life changing.

**To celebrate 10 years of Landworks, we are excited to publish 'Acceptance', a book combining highlights from Chris's blogs with extracts from the PeN project. For sale online, and at the LandWorks shop, the book is priced at £10 with all proceeds going to fund the project.**





## **of trainees reoffend within a year**

In the UK, the reoffending rates for imprisonment and community sentences are 36.7% and 28.8% respectively. For prisoners released from sentences of less than 12 months the reoffending rate is 53.9%. (Source: MOJ, 2023). At LandWorks, the reoffending rate has never exceeded 6% during 10 years of operation.

So, why is LandWorks succeeding where others are failing? Support available for offenders locally is piecemeal and not joined-up. For those with chaotic lives, and little money for transport, it is almost impossible for offenders to engage with the help they need. LandWorks offers them support with a broad range of issues, at one location.

Importantly, offenders choose to come to LandWorks; they want to be here. We provide an environment for them to improve their wellbeing and mental health, stabilise their lives, and prepare for employment and a life without crime. We build trusting relationships with people who have lost trust.

Over the years, our experiences have taught us how significant long-term relationships are in underpinning lasting change. In 2022 we increased our capacity to provide vital resettlement support by recruiting a full-time Resettlement Manager. Elli spends her days supporting trainees with benefits, healthcare, housing and emotional support, whilst also building on our programme of graduate support for those who remain vulnerable to relapse.

We are still in touch with nearly all of the people who have had placements at LandWorks since 2013. Our excellent statistics speak for themselves but we view real success as former trainees finding full time employment, perhaps getting married and starting a family, and generally leading settled and contributing lives in their communities.





# 94%

## **of former trainees seeking employment are in work**

Over the last 10 years, over 150 LandWorks trainees have gone on to find employment, a vital step in helping them to live independent, crime-free lives.

But better than the numbers are the personal stories of trainees who have become a better version of themselves.

Jarvis was at LandWorks four years ago and has transformed a long-term criminal career into a career with NHS Reconnect. Now supporting offenders in the criminal justice system he is using his expertise and lived experience to put something back into the society he once hurt.

Quentin (who started potting at LandWorks) now sells his pottery in our shop and through other outlet websites putting a percentage of his earnings back into LandWorks. Bob who learned his woodturning skills at LandWorks does the same.

LandWorks helps people who may never have worked before to gain employable skills; and to understand the importance of being a team-player and taking responsibility. From the very beginning we have been fortunate to partner with local employers who believe in our vision, and who are willing to give people with criminal records a chance. Numerous trainees have gone on to work for Riverford Organic Farmers, Dartington Estate, Anzac Construction and more.

**If you are a local employer, why not join us for lunch one day soon? It's a great way to gain an understanding of the project, and for us to find out what you are looking for in your employees, hopefully paving the way to future jobs for our trainees.**





# 1,370

## **amazing supporters (and counting)**

LandWorks simply could not exist without the dedication and belief of our supporters. In 10 years, you have grown from a small band of volunteers to over 1,370 supporters, fundraisers and partners who engage with us in many different and equally important ways – from cooking, mentoring and driving, to purchasing our produce, donating and fundraising, networking on our behalf, and providing local housing and employment.

It is a remarkable testament to our community that so many people want to help – to be involved and be a part of LandWorks. Every year we invite our supporters to celebrate our joint achievements at our Annual Open Day. This year's event in July, marking 10 years of LandWorks, will be truly special.

As we look to the future, your generosity and compassion will ensure that LandWorks can continue to transform the lives of some of the most socially excluded people in society and to reduce their risk of reoffending.

**If you are not a supporter, but are inspired to learn more about LandWorks, why not [follow us on Twitter](#) and [subscribe to Chris's fortnightly blog](#)? He'll keep you in regular touch with our news, events and opportunities to be involved. You can also make a single or regular donation by visiting [www.landworks.org](http://www.landworks.org)**