



LandWorks Evaluation

1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

Generating a harm reduction and
desistance community

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Awards, accolades and sadness

This year, LandWorks has experienced both highs and profound challenges. In July 2024, LandWorks won the Overall Award for Excellence at the Charity Awards – the most prestigious awards scheme in the charity sector. The judges highlighted LandWorks’ greatest achievement as “the way it built trust with its trainees and helped them rebuild their lives by understanding the experiences that led to their criminal behaviour in the first place.” Staff, trainees, and graduates were deeply proud of this recognition, which serves as a national endorsement of LandWorks’ accomplishments since its establishment in 2013.

Alongside this success, the past twelve months have been marked by the deaths of six graduates. The Project Director reflects on these losses:

“In different ways, each of these individuals gave a great deal to LandWorks, and we hope and believe they gained much from their experience here. Their passing reminds us of the challenges faced by people in the criminal justice system, yet it also reinforces why our work, supporting people to overcome inequalities, past traumas, and rebuild their lives, is so vital.”

Despite these challenges, LandWorks continues to make a meaningful difference. This year’s evaluation report highlights both the obstacles’ trainees and graduates face as they move away from a criminal lifestyle, and the ways in which LandWorks supports them to build skills, confidence, and a future in the law-abiding community. In celebrating achievements and reflecting on losses, the organisation remains committed to fostering hope, resilience, and lasting positive change.

1.2 The LandWorks Vision¹

LandWorks is a specialist rehabilitation and resettlement charity that provides a supported route into employment and the community for people either on licence following release from local prisons or serving community and/or suspended prison sentences. LandWorks provides intensive placements which aim to enhance the overall wellbeing, social and employment-related skills of its trainees to enable them to reduce reoffending and rebuild their lives.

Placements² at LandWorks are structured around a 'working day' with trainees able to take part in a range of enterprises that offer produce for sale to the local community, including a wood workshop, market garden and pottery. Arts and crafts, small building projects, site maintenance and cooking also provide worthy activities to achieve the aims of the project. Placements are designed to offer the opportunity for meaningful work, developing employment skills and providing a sense of achievement which has often been missing in trainees' lives. Lunch and tea breaks, when trainees can chat, cook and eat together with staff and visitors, are also seen to have an important place in the programme, providing opportunities to strengthen feelings of belonging and build social skills.

Apart from the core working day, each trainee has an individual resettlement plan with access to tailored resettlement support. On site this can include practical help with finances, housing, benefits, seeking employment and mental health, with the latter ranging from simple emotional support to more complex trauma-informed counselling delivered by a qualified psychotherapist. Some external welfare services also deliver specialist sessions on-site to complement those offered in-house. Referral to other outside organisations with specialised expertise, for example in substance misuse, is also possible.

Overall LandWorks prides itself in adopting a holistic person-centred approach, in which relationships are based on trust, honesty and respect and embedded in a non-judgemental

climate of hope and acceptance, where trainees can self-actuate and build the self-confidence to sustain their resettlement journey despite the obstacles.

Beyond the placement LandWorks continues to offer regular resettlement support to its graduates.

1.3 Outline of this report

This report evaluates the processes, impacts and outcomes of the LandWorks project from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Chapter 2 presents the main outcome statistics for this evaluation year.

Last year the evaluation used the voices and lived experiences of trainees and graduates to explore why they consider LandWorks is the ideal 'desistance-supporting' community³. This year in Chapter 3 the evaluation adopts a slightly different approach which highlights the social harms experienced by trainees and graduates and explores how, in their own words, LandWorks helps them to address these harms and so give them the confidence and practical support to pursue the complexities of their resettlement journey free from crime.

This year there have been some significant changes in the way resettlement support is delivered and interesting developments in LandWorks engagement with research and influencing policy in the resettlement arena. Chapter 4 updates the reader on those changes and developments with a spotlight on the role of the *Health and Wellbeing Lead* and the *Charity Manager*.

Chapter 5 summarises key findings of this report and outlines LandWorks' plans for the forthcoming year.

1 Parts of this discussion have been drawn from LandWorks' submission to the Justice Committee Inquiry into Rehabilitation and Resettlement: ending the cycle of reoffending. Go to: <https://www.landworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Justice-Committee-Resettlement-and-Rehabilitation-Inquiry-2025-LandWorks-Submission-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>.

2 These on average can last 6 to 9 months, with flexibility about the number of days attended each week.

3 Go to: <https://www.landworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Evaluation-Report-2024.pdf>.



Chapter 2

Impact and Achievements

2.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises key outcomes and achievements at LandWorks from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The statistics used in this chapter have been taken from monitoring data recorded by the Project Director⁴ and further monitoring data recorded and now collated for the new *Reimagining Rehabilitation and Resettlement* research project.⁵ This includes data and evidence from the LandWorks registration documents, these include life measures that form part of building a trainee's continuous action plan.

This period has been a turbulent time for the criminal justice system. The ongoing crisis in prison overcrowding and the subsequent solution sought through early release schemes placed considerable strain on an already overstretched probation service struggling with shortages of staff and resources (National Audit Office, 2025). The recent annual inspection of the probation service (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2025) severely criticised the quality of supervision and support that it provided and rated its performance as 'inadequate'. Similarly, third sector welfare organisations such as those providing mental health and housing provision have also experienced staffing and resource constraints linked to underfunding of public services (Clinks, 2025). Overall, the decline in resettlement support provided by both the statutory and third sectors⁶ has had a detrimental impact on LandWorks' trainees and graduates whose needs as this chapter will evidence have become increasingly more complex. Despite these obstacles, LandWorks has continued to successfully deliver its core programmes and provide essential support to its trainees and graduates.

⁴ In this evaluation year LandWorks' data recording system has been revised and simplified. Refer to chapter 4 for details of the changes.

⁵ See Chapter 4 for a discussion of this research.

⁶ In May 2025 the Independent Sentencing Review was published. It recommended that there should be investment in the probation service and third sector to strengthen the rehabilitation element of community sentences. The impact of these recommendations on LandWorks will be assessed as part of next year's evaluation. Go to: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/682d8d995ba51be7c0f45371/independent-sentencing-review-report-part_2.pdf.



2.2 Trainee placements and sources of referral

The prison and probation services⁷ continue to be LandWorks' main sources of referral. This year LandWorks has provided 42 trainee placements (of which 26 are new) and 1710 training days. This year (see Table 2.1) there have been 52% on licence from prison and 48% on community sentences. Given the importance of the probation service in referring trainees to LandWorks, much work this year has focused on strengthening this partnership, for example by encouraging new probation officers to visit the site as part of their orientation. However, this has not precluded maintaining strong links with local prisons such as HMPs Exeter and Channings Wood⁸.

Table 2.1: Trainee placements and sources of referral

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Placements provided:				
on licence ⁹	4	22	32	22
on community sentence	32	18	20	20
TOTAL	36	40	52	42
New trainees	24	30	30	26 ¹⁰
Training days delivered	1360	1787	1661	1710
<p>Since 2013 up to 31 March 2025, LandWorks has provided 255 placements. In this evaluation year 78.6% (n=33) of trainees identified themselves as male, 19.0% (n=8) as female, 2.4% (n=1) as non-binary, 92.9% (n=39) as White /British and 2.4% (n=1) as mixed White/Black Caribbean¹¹. In recent years the number of new trainees who identify as women has been steadily rising, from 2 out of 24 (8.3%) in 2021/22 to 8 out of 26 (30.8%) in 2024/25.</p>				

⁷ Their official title is His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

⁸ HMP Dartmoor was temporarily closed in August 2024.

⁹ This includes trainees on suspended sentences.

¹⁰ This is lower than last year because some trainees stayed longer in placements due to needing more support which was not available in the community.

¹¹ 4.8% (n=2) did not state their ethnicity.



2.3 Age and offending history

Most trainees (61.9%) in this year's cohort are aged 40 and below. See Table 2.2 below.

Age Group	Count (Percentage)
Under 20	2 (4.8%)
21–30	11 (26.2%)
31–40	13 (30.9%)
41–50	10 (23.8%)
51–60	5 (11.9%)
Over 60	1 (2.4%)
Total	42 (100%)

This year summary motoring offences featured prominently in trainees' 'current' offences at 23.8% (n=10). The other most common offence committed by trainees which resulted in their referral to LandWorks was 'violence against the person', also at 23.8% (n=10) (see Table 2.3). Violence against a person was also the commonest 'most serious previous offence' at 45.2% (n=19). Anecdotal evidence additionally suggests that most crimes committed by trainees were in some way linked to substance misuse, whether domestic violence or robbery/theft to get money for drugs. Violent crime in general frequently took place when the trainee was under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.

Table 2.3 additionally shows that 16.7% of trainees (n=7) had a placement at LandWorks for a first offence¹². However, this paints a slightly misleading picture, as further statistics (not shown in this table) indicate that most trainees not at LandWorks for a first offence had high rates of previous convictions, for example 61.9% (n=26) had between 3 and 6 previous convictions, 19.0% (n=8) had 7 to 10 and a further 2.4% (n=1) had 11 or more.

Table 2.3: Offending history

	Current offence	Most serious previous
Violence against the person	10 (23.8%)	21 (50%)
Robbery	6 (14.3%)	5 (11.9%)
Possession of weapon	4 (9.5%)	/
Drugs	3 (7.1%)	4 (9.5%)
Theft	2 (4.8%)	/
Sexual	2 (4.8%)	/
Public order	2 (4.8%)	1 (2.4%)
Criminal damage and arson	1 (2.4%)	/
Fraud	/	1 (2.4%)
Summary motoring	10 (23.8%)	3 (7.1%)
Summary (non-motoring)	3 (7.1%)	/
No Previous Convictions	/	7 (16.7%)
Total	42 (100%)	42 (100%)

The probation service provides a 'risk of harm to self and others' assessment for all trainees before placement at LandWorks. In this evaluation year the majority have been assessed as 'medium' (78.6%) or 'low' risk (11.9%). However, a sizeable number have been assessed as 'high' risk (9.5%), but it should be noted that such referrals are only accepted if the categorisation refers to a specific risk that the trainee is unlikely to encounter at LandWorks.

¹² This is lower than the previous evaluation year when the figure stood at 34.6% (n=18).



2.4 Trainee resettlement support

Most trainees have had severely chaotic lives and can have multiple needs. Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of their personal situation. The resettlement support provided by LandWorks is a vital component to meeting these needs. Over the last year LandWorks has adjusted the way in which this support is delivered, placing greater emphasis on strengthening the overall wellbeing of its trainees in line with its holistic, person-centred approach to resettlement (see chapter 4). As can be seen in Table 2.4, this has led to a significant increase in the number of in-house resettlement sessions (468) provided by the newly appointed (June 2024) *Health and Wellbeing Lead*. Chapter 4 outlines this role in detail. Greater emphasis on internal support has meant that assistance with resettlement can be tailored to individual needs and provided swiftly particularly in crisis situations, rather than waiting for referral to outside agencies and allowing issues to escalate.

Table 2.5: Trainee Counselling and Resettlement Support				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
In-house (one-to-one) resettlement sessions	198	310	356	468
In-house yoga sessions to improve general wellbeing				58
In-house (one-to-one) psychotherapist sessions	87	122	183	72

In keeping with the new emphasis on health and wellbeing, 288 people attended a yoga session run by the LandWorks psychotherapist. Familiarity with the psychotherapist was useful in encouraging people to take up individual counselling sessions, which were then taken by trainees and graduates facing the most complex and traumatic mental health difficulties (n=72). Moreover, external social welfare agencies continue to deliver specialist sessions on and off-site to complement those offered in-house. This is discussed in detail in chapter 4.



2.5 Graduate Support

LandWorks places considerable emphasis on providing individualised, on-going support to its graduates. This recognises that integrating into community life after stopping offending is a long and onerous journey, fraught with challenges and obstacles (Weaver et al., 2024; Suzuki et al., 2025). Support can take a variety of forms from a simple wellbeing catch-up through to practical resettlement help with housing, mental health, benefits or employment. A return placement can also be arranged in crisis situations. Basically, graduates like trainees can access, when necessary, the same type of support.

In 2024/25 LandWorks was in contact with 174¹³ of its 237 graduates (73.4%), provided 588 support sessions¹⁴ and has created its own distinctive ‘traffic light’ alert system for assessing their needs and the urgency with which they must be dealt with. ‘Green’ signifies that the graduate is progressing well and simply needs a ‘listening ear’. ‘Amber’ means that the graduate may be facing some difficulties that have the potential to worsen if not swiftly addressed. A ‘Red’ alert is flagged up when a graduate is facing severe difficulties or is in a state of crisis, highlighting the need for immediate assistance and possibly even a return placement. Table 2.5 shows that in 2024/25 ‘Red’ (2.9%) and ‘Amber’ (2.9%) alerts were rare, with most graduates safely in the ‘Green’ (94.2%) category.

Table 2.6: Graduate support and the Traffic Light System				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Graduates in contact	121	128	151	174
On Red alert (high level of support)	6 (5.4%)	4 (3.1%)	6 (4.0%)	5 (2.9%)
On Amber alert (medium level of support)	13 (11.6%)	7 (5.5%)	6 (4.0%)	5 (2.9%)
On Green alert (low but regular support)	93 (83.0%)	117 (91.4%)	139 (92.1%)	164 (94.3%)

¹³ It is known that 15 graduates have died, 2 are in prison and 46 are no longer in contact.

¹⁴ This includes texts, phone calls and face to face contacts.



2.6 Reoffending and employment

The rate of reoffending is often used as a key indicator of how successful a resettlement organisation is at reducing reoffending. Based on this indicator LandWorks has an exceptionally good track record. Currently the rate of reoffending of its graduates stands at 5.65% within one year of finishing their placement, as shown in Table 2.6. This rate has remained below 6% for the last 4 years. Whilst Ministry of Justice statistics are not strictly comparable because of the way rates are calculated, they do provide a rough measure of how successful LandWorks has been in reducing reoffending. Ministry of Justice statistics (4 September 2025) show that the proven adult reoffending rates for court orders (community orders or suspended sentences) and imprisonment are 33.9% and 41.3% respectively. An even bleaker picture appears for adults released from custodial sentences of less than 12 months, where the proven reoffending rate is 62.4%.

Research repeatedly shows that being in employment increases offenders' chances of ceasing offending and successfully leading a law-abiding life (Weaver et al., 2024). Ministry of Justice (2025) statistics evidence that after six weeks release from prison the proven reoffending rate for those who were unemployed was 36.5% while for those who were employed it was 20.2%. Despite this research evidence which shows the importance of employment to reducing reoffending, only about 31% of people are in work six months after release from prison (Prison Reform Trust, 2025). LandWorks challenges this trend. Its latest statistics (see Table 2.6) show that 91.8% of its graduates who are economically active are currently in employment and this figure has remained consistently high for the last 4 years.

Table 2.6: Reoffending and Employment Rates at LandWorks

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
One year reoffending rate	5.4%	5.2%	5.35%	5.65%
Employment rate	94%	94%	93.2%	91.8%

2.7 The staff team

This year has been particularly difficult for the staff team, as several of LandWorks' graduates have died under tragic circumstances. These losses have had a profound impact on the team, who have had close working relationships with the individuals and have shared in their journeys of personal development and reintegration.

Recognising the emotional toll of these events, significant effort has been made to support staff wellbeing and maintain a safe and supportive working environment. This has included 22 individual supervision sessions and 7 group sessions facilitated by the in-house psychotherapist. Many of these sessions specifically addressed the grief and emotional challenges experienced by the staff team, providing space to reflect, process loss, and find collective support.

By prioritising staff wellbeing in this way, LandWorks aims not only to care for its team but also to ensure they remain able to provide consistent, compassionate support to trainees and graduates during challenging times.

¹⁵ The Ministry of Justice (2025: 12) advises that reoffending rates should be viewed with caution 'when comparing the effectiveness of different sentences because the presented rates do not control for differences in offender characteristics'. As part of the *Reimagining Rehabilitation and Resettlement* research project which will be discussed in Chapter 4, LandWorks has provided statistics to the Ministry of Justice *Justice Data Lab* which will allow a more precise calculation of its reoffending rate. This should be available for next year's evaluation.



Chapter 3

Social harm and generating a culture of harm reduction and desistance

3.1 Introduction

Last year's evaluation report explored the key features of the ideal 'desistance-supporting' community. This year we intend to approach the evaluation from a slightly different angle by adopting a social harm perspective. We begin by examining the lived experience of social harm of this year's intake of trainees before going on to piece together from their point of view, what it is about LandWorks' holistic person-centred approach to harm reduction that successfully generates a culture and environment supportive of desistance and (re)integration into the law-abiding community.

3.2 Data that informs this chapter

This chapter draws on three sets of data. First, statistics on the social harms experienced by the cohort of 42 trainees who had placements at LandWorks in this evaluation year. This data is recorded by LandWorks for monitoring purposes, during trainee registration and as part of building a trainees' action plan. It also now forms part of the *Reimagining Rehabilitation and Resettlement* research project (see the discussion of this in chapter 4). Second, the voices and lived experience of 4 graduates and 14 trainees¹ interviewed for the PeN (Photographic electronic-Narrative)² research project between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025³. Third, a focus group interview with a mixture of trainees, graduates and staff conducted in December 2024 as part of LandWorks' submission to the *Independent Sentencing Review* (see chapter 4 for details).

The PeN interviews are an important data source for the evaluation because they 'bear witness' (Anderson, 2016) to the lived experience of trainees and graduates by giving them the opportunity to share with family, supporters and the wider community the challenges they face on their desistance journeys (Parsons, 2018). Respondents also give permission for the interviews to be used for the annual evaluation.

The PeN interviews for this chapter were transcribed verbatim and the transcripts analysed both deductively (drawing on the research literature) and inductively (arising from the interviews) to identify themes. Each of these themes appeared within and across several interviews to ensure reliability and are evidenced in the text through direct quotes from respondents.

3.3 Social harm, victims and offenders

Pemberton (2015:24) defines social harm as 'shorthand to reflect the relations, processes, flows, practices, discourse, actions and inactions that constitute the fabric of our societies which serve to compromise the fulfilment of human needs and in doing so result in identifiable harms'. Canning and Tombs (2021) have developed a sixfold typology of indicators of human needs⁴ which must be met to enable people to flourish and realise their potential. Social harm arises when these needs are not fulfilled.

1 One of whom was interviewed twice.

2 Further details of this project can be found in chapter 4.

3 While the size of the sample means that it is not representative of all trainees and graduates who had a placement at LandWorks this year, we are confident that it does provide a reliable insight into their views as the findings resonate with those found in the more than 200 PeN interviews conducted since 2016. The content of these have provided the basis of previous Annual Evaluations. Go to: <https://www.landworks.org.uk/prisoner-resettlement-charity/landworks-annual-reports/>.

4 This typology is informed by the work of several social harm theorists.

We shall draw on this typology to assess the main social harms experienced by LandWorks' trainees and graduates when their needs are denied.

Many people would question why it is relevant to address the social harms experienced by LandWorks' trainees when as the previous chapter clearly shows they have undoubtedly inflicted harm on their victims through the crimes they have committed. But as Weaver et al. (2024:675) point out 'there is a well-documented relationship between economic deprivation, social marginality and offending'. As this chapter will show the men and women who have participated in LandWorks' project are disproportionately affected by a range of social harms arising from such factors as social disadvantage, distressed mental health and ruptured relationships which if not addressed mean they are likely to continue offending and so perpetuate a vicious cycle of further harm and victimisation.

3.4 Lived experience of social harm

The six core indicators of social harm in Canning and Tombs' (2021) framework are: (1) physical harms; (2) emotional and psychological harms; (3) financial and economic harms; (4) relationship harms; (5) harms of recognition; and (6) autonomy harms. These harms do not stand alone but are multiple, cumulative and intersecting which grossly amplifies their effects (Weaver et al., 2024). They also impact differently at different stages of the life cycle (Pemberton, 2015). Based on LandWorks' project data, data collated for the *Reimagining Rehabilitation and Resettlement* research (see chapter 4) and the PeN interviews for this year's evaluation, we will now explore how these harms have impacted on trainees and graduates.





3.4.1 PHYSICAL HARMS

In Canning and Tombs' (2021) typology, 'physical harm' alludes to physical disabilities, debilitating illnesses and injuries and encounters with violence in prison, on the streets and at home. Table 3.1 shows that in this evaluation year, 42.9% of trainees reported having a physical ailment.⁵ High levels of complex trauma⁶ were common (95.2%) often arising from witnessing violence, drug and alcohol abuse and criminalisation arising from adverse contact with the criminal justice system and imprisonment.

Table 3.1: Trainees' Experience of Social Harm⁷

Physical problems	18 (42.9%)
Complex trauma:	
• High	40 (95.2%)
• Medium	2 (4.8%)
Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs):	
• High	39 (92.9%)
• Medium	2 (4.8%)
• Low	1 (2.4%)
Chaotic lifestyles:	
• High	35 (83.3%)
• Medium	4 (9.5%)
• Low	3 (7.1%)
Mental health issues	38 (90.5%)
Drug and alcohol issues	39 (92.9%)
'Toxic' relationships	39 (92.9%)
Unemployed	32 (76.2%)
Homeless + Rough sleeping	11 (26.2%)
Experience of imprisonment	19 (45.2%)

3.4.2 EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HARMS

Emotional and psychological harms in Canning and Tombs' (2021) schema refer to childhood trauma, neglect and abuse, alcohol and substance abuse, mental health issues, self-harm, emotional distress related to everyday pressures, depression and anxiety. Amongst the trainees (see Table 3.1), 92.9% had been exposed to high levels of 'adverse childhood experiences' (ACEs)⁸ which continue to haunt them by triggering painful emotional responses well into adulthood (Fiddler et al., 2024). Over four fifth reported some mental health issues (90.5%), mostly anxiety and depression (57.1%), but also post-traumatic stress disorder (38.1%), borderline personality disorder (16.7%), suicidal ideation (11.9%), psychosis (9.5%), bipolar (9.5%), obsessive compulsive disorder (7.1%) and paranoid schizophrenia (4.8%). Some were also diagnosed with autism (9.5%). Alcohol and drug misuse issues were significant and only 7.1% of trainees reported no previous alcohol or drugs misuse issues. To put these statistics in perspective in the general population, only 20% have experienced abuse as a child, 15% identified as suffering from anxiety and depression, 4% had symptoms indicative of psychosis and 10% of women and 16% of men reported drinking daily and only 6% had ever attempted suicide (Prison Reform Trust, 2025).

3.4.3 RELATIONAL HARMS

Relational harms cover several factors in Canning and Tombs' (2021) framework. At one end of the spectrum, it entails family and social ties that have been completely severed and at the other family adversity and social breakdowns where repair was still possible. It also included social isolation and exclusion from significant social networks. Such networks, which Kemshall and McCartan (2022) describe



as 'recovery' or 'social capital', are essential to resettlement as they facilitate ex-offenders to develop new friendships, job opportunities and social ties beyond their criminal connections. At LandWorks 92.9% of trainees (see Table 3.1) reported being involved in 'toxic' personal and family relationships and 83.3% in highly chaotic lifestyles⁹.

Only 7.1% of people from this year's cohort of trainees might be considered to have access to constructive social networks and relationships as defined above by Kemshall and McCartan (2022).

3.4.4 FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC HARMS

Currently there is a lot of interest in the links between adult trauma, ACEs and offending. However, research in this field is subject to increasing criticism as it tends to personalise and pathologize the problem by portraying offenders as psychologically damaged and in need of treatment (Anderson, 2025). However, as Canning and Tombs (2021) point out, it is important not to focus exclusively on individual harms but also to explore the impact of wider financial and economic harms, for example poverty, economic deprivation, precarious employment and limited job opportunities, as these factors have significant effects on life experiences from birth to death.

Trainees at LandWorks have been exposed to a range of economic harms (see Table 3.1), with the majority being socially disadvantaged and having experienced multiple forms of social exclusion¹⁰. 76.2% of people on placement were unemployed and relying on welfare benefits at the time of their convictions. Only 33.8% were in employment at that time, mainly in temporary or precarious positions. A large number (26.2%) were homeless with no fixed accommodation¹¹. Of these, 14.3% of this year's cohort were rough sleeping. The general population fared far better experiencing significantly less economic harm. Less than ten percent (7.7%) of the economically active population are unemployed, 3.9% have never had a job and only 4% have been homeless or in temporary accommodation (Prison Reform Trust, 2025).

3.4.5 HARMS OF RECOGNITION

In Canning and Tombs' typology the harms of recognition refer to situations where the individual's sense of self-worth and self-esteem are shattered. All research equivocally shows that the stigmatising and labelling effects of involvement in the criminal justice system, particularly imprisonment, are some of the most significant factors for the destruction of offenders' feelings of self-respect, self-worth and self-esteem (Barry, 2016; Gray and Parsons, 2024). The latter feelings provide essential

5 This included ankle, knee, leg, hip or head injuries, arthritis, collapsed lung, breathing issues, epilepsy, pancreatic problems, asthma, bladder issues due to excess Ketamine use, severe liver and kidney damage from substance misuse, incontinence.

6 There are 3 types, acute (low) exposure to one significant event, chronic (medium) which is repeated or prolonged (such as Domestic Violence) and Complex (high) exposure to varied and multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature. For further information go to: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK594231/>.

7 Definitions of social harms and how they are measured and interpreted appear in the text and linked footnotes above and below. Percentages are based on all 42 trainees in this year's cohort.

8 These are measured using the Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACE-Q) which is a 10-item self-report measure designed to retrospectively assess exposure to potentially traumatic experiences from birth to age 18 years (Felitti et al., 1998). Developed within a public health framework, the ACE-Q evaluates two broad categories of adverse childhood experiences: abuse and neglect, and household dysfunction. A measure over 4 is high and above 6 very high.

9 This is also about poor decision making, lack of self-care, poor mental health support and failure to attend probation appointments etc., as well as being involved in drug/alcohol dependent cultures and criminal gangs.

10 For example, living below the poverty line and precarious, insecure employment.

11 Living in precarious conditions, 'sofa surfing' or relying on others for accommodation.



incentives to change and so are crucial for successful resettlement (Weaver et al., 2024). All LandWorks' trainees and graduates are 'criminal justice-affected people', with slightly less than half of those on placement this year (45.2%) having prison experience. Most have had limited opportunities to acquire respect from others and recognition of social achievements to boost their sense of self-worth and self-esteem whether because of their links to the criminal justice system or exposure to social disadvantage and multiple forms of social exclusion.

3.4.6 AUTONOMY HARMS

In Canning and Tombs' typology 'autonomy harms' relate to self-actualisation and empowerment or having the ability to make choices and the capacity to act upon them. All the harms so far discussed in this chapter, particularly when operating together, compromise people's ability to self-actualise and engage in autonomous actions. Over 98% of trainees in this year's evaluation have experienced not just one of Canning and Tombs' indicators of social harm but six or more, exposing them to heightened and interlocking levels of psychosocial distress. Exposure to multiple layers of social harm severely limit trainees' ability to make choices, take control of key decisions and achieve their life goals, thus thwarting their potential for autonomy.

3.5 A generative culture of harm reduction and desistance

Desistance is defined by Anderson and McNeill (2019: 412) as 'moving away from crime and towards social integration and participation'. It is a painful process full of challenges and

constraints that need to be carefully navigated (Nugent and Schinkel, 2016; Suzuki et al., 2025). Patton (*forthcoming*: 163) makes use of a generative justice approach¹² to explore the desistance journeys of drug and alcohol addicted people. He argues that generative justice endeavours to mitigate social harm and 'to cultivate conditions for inclusivity and human flourishing' as a way of supporting such people 'to envision and create a new life beyond' addiction. Seven key principles underly a generative justice approach which Patton (*forthcoming*: 169) argues are deeply embedded in successful drug and alcohol recovery communities. They are¹³:

- Authentic, open and honest
- Non-hierarchical and person-centred
- Supportive and socially connected
- Mutual support and empowerment/reciprocal concern
- Hope that recovery is achievable/ moral recognition
- Creative expression and healing/material provision
- Change beyond the individual¹⁴

As evidenced in the next section, these same generative justice principles emerge very strongly in the PeN interviews with the trainees and graduates interviewed for this year's evaluation. A thematic analysis of these interviews evaluates from their perspective what it is about the cultural environment and relational practices at LandWorks which reduces the social harms outlined earlier in this chapter and so generates successful pathways to desistance and integration into the law-abiding community.¹⁵

¹² See Parsons and Auchterlonie (*forthcoming*) for a more explicit illustration of LandWorks as a case study of generative justice in practice.

¹³ Patton adapted his seven principles from McNeill et al. (*forthcoming*).

¹⁴ The achievement of this principle is explored in chapter 4.

¹⁵ See Annual Evaluations over last five years for further discussion of why trainees and graduates consider LandWorks to offer the ideal 'desistance-supporting' environment. Go to: <https://www.landworks.org.uk/prisoner-resettlement-charity/landworks-annual-reports/>.

3.5.1 REDUCING PHYSICAL HARMS

Although not far from surrounding towns, LandWorks is situated in a rural environment. Trainees often commented that what they most enjoyed about the location was that it provided a secure, peaceful, 'safe haven' far removed from the turbulence of their previous (and current) lives and as Seb (trainee) commented 'it's like a really good retreat to sort of clear your mind, get advice if you need to...and the support is always there'. Working outdoors or in the workshops in such an environment created a comfortable space for healing and self-reflection as trainees embarked on their resettlement journeys.

Below T-Bunny (trainee) talks about why she found LandWorks' location so refreshing:

“...it's lovely being outdoors amongst the trees and the beautiful setting, you know, and just everything's really nice. It feels really organic... I just felt like it was really good to be outdoors and amongst the trees as well, like you know, coz I'd quite happily live in a field I would. I love being outside. I've been in so long and that, it's really nice. It's really good to be outside and breathing good air and just have like, you know, everything fresh and nice around you.’ (T-Bunny – trainee)

George (trainee) had been 'on and off drugs for about 20 years' and deeply dependant on the company of other drug addicts. He felt that the safety and security that LandWorks offered was important for his recovery journey:

“...it's nice to just come here and just be safe... Sometimes I don't. If you go into certain places in * and you see people who are on drugs, you can tell who's on drugs. You either know 'em or you can tell, you know, you just know. It's just a sixth sense. You know that there's nothing going on here, it's a safe





environment. You ain't gonna come here and like people's gonna sell you drugs or you ain't gonna use, so I know coming here for the two days that I'm gonna be ok and it just gives you a bit more experience of keeping safe, you know, as I say, you ain't gonna come here and take heroin coz you know no-one's gonna give you it, but if you're on the streets, you tend to ... someone might come up to you and give you a number and they might've seen you before and say are you still taking it? You say no, but they still give you a number. Yeah, you always get poachers, dealers. They try, you know, it's an income for the drug dealers.' (George – trainee)

3.5.2 REDUCING EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HARMS

LandWorks fosters a person-centred environment, where relationships are non-hierarchical and based on trust, openness and honesty. Emotional and psychological support is available throughout the site as members of the staff team work alongside trainees in the kitchen, market garden, pottery and wood workshop. This includes the designated Health and Wellbeing Lead (see chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of this role) who not only works hand-in-hand with trainees, but also co-ordinates more structured, practical, 'tailored' resettlement support, with for example benefits, housing and substance misuse, either in-house or through facilitating access to specialist external organisations off site. A part-time psychotherapist is also available on-site to deal with more complex mental health issues and trauma.

Deer (trainee) has a long history of serious mental health issues, including a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder, which she sees as being linked to 'unprocessed trauma'. Ugelvik (2025) argues that the experience of interpersonal trust is a core ingredient of successful desistance and building a non-criminal identity and Deer wholeheartedly agrees with this argument as reflected in the quote below:

“...I find it hard to trust people, especially people like in authority or whatever, but I instantly like trusted ... everyone who works here, and I want to say everyone else like who is here... with me. So that's quite rare for me, like trusting ... people very quickly, but yeah, I very quickly established that this is a place of trust and like safety. I don't have much of that outside of this place ... or I haven't had in the past... so it's a breath of fresh air.' (Deer – trainee)

Currently Deer is working with a specialist drugs and alcohol worker with mental health expertise in the community. They seem to have built a constructive relationship:

“...I am pretty much sober at the moment, but because of my sobriety I am struggling a lot with my mental health and trauma that I haven't processed yet. So, we're just kind of working through ways that I can get through that without having to drink and we talk a lot about my triggers and what I do when I'm triggered. I've got like a little diary or like a journal on my phone. If I get triggered



by something I'll write it down and then I'll write down what I do to cope, sometimes it's drinking, sometimes it's other stuff, ... most of the time it's not great stuff, not very good coping mechanisms, so we are working to find the better ones... We're challenging like patterns.' (Deer – trainee)

But it is the day- to- day emotional and practical support that she gets from the people at LandWorks who she feels genuinely care about her which provides the glue to hold her together, manage the triggers that lead to psychotic episodes, and 'take control' of her life without resort to alcohol:

“Tomorrow is a big trigger day for me, and I'm terrified because in the last couple of years I don't remember a time where I wasn't drunk for the whole day basically, and not dealing with it very well and not having a good time. So, I'm coming here and I'm terrified but... it's nice to have the help if I need it...it just doesn't feel like they're doing it because it's their job, it feels like they're genuinely doing it because they care about me and that makes me feel like really happy and good...If I need help with anything... I'm not afraid to ask for it... I still have days where I completely shut down, but I'm much more withheld now, like drawn back if I get into those episodes.' (Deer – trainee)

KJ (trainee) also talks loquaciously about how LandWorks helped him to sort out his mental health issues:

“But yeah, coming here has actually helped with my mental health a lot ... keeps my mind distracted. Again,

everyone here is nice people. If I want to have a rant to someone, everyone's willing to listen. So yeah, I've come quite far in quite a short period of time..... Out here, I'm out and about doing something. Do you know what I mean? Yeah, it just keeps my mind occupied. Even when I've got problems going on outside of this place, as soon as I walk in here, I just completely forget about all of them really ... It's just helped me take my mind off a lot of things. When you're here, nothing else seems to matter... That's all I can say really. It's definitely helped change my life around and I don't think I'm the only one that's gonna say that ... I think it's just helped my mental health just doing what I do here.' (KJ – trainee)

3.5.3 REDUCING RELATIONAL HARMS

Earlier in this chapter we discussed the 'relational harms' experienced by trainees. Many were disengaged from or had fraught relations with family, friends and the wider community. In the PeN interviews trainees often talked about how LandWorks generated a sense of belonging, inclusion and comradeship, acting as a surrogate family and friendship circle as well as being a mutually supportive community. Below Jack (trainee) and T- Bunny (trainee) talk about how LandWorks provided a sense of family where support was readily available:

“...it's like a family, a second family. I think it works really well. It works for others as in they probably don't have that at home, coz not many people do coz you know, they've got their own problems or something's going on or their life's hectic, coz there's a lot of people that have that... So, when I come here, you



know, everything outside, it just goes... You haven't got time to think about out there or what you're gonna do tomorrow or what you're gonna do when you get home, you know, so it takes your mind off all of that... they've got good support here; they've got a therapist, yoga ... really good... If you ever do feel down and stuff, there's support. If you ever feel unsafe or something, there's support here...' (Jack – trainee)

“ I feel like it doesn't matter where my head is particularly at, whenever I come here, I can speak to you guys or turn my family upside-down and that, so that's a big tower of strength for me...you guys provide that family connection network and community feel, which is really important for positive decisions and support.' (T-Bunny – trainee)

All the PeN respondents highly valued the chance to socialise and spend time together at LandWorks while eating and working. An opportunity to socially connect while learning and strengthening life and social skills which had often been damaged or even destroyed by past traumas or involvement in the criminal justice system.

Below Sam (graduate), Clive (trainee) and Tom(trainee) talk about the significance of 'togetherness' at mealtimes and work:

“ Normally when you go to work, you get an hour to go off in your van and stuff, like separate yourself from work, but here you all eat together, you end up talking with people. Like you find out what they're here for, their problems,

why they've come here... There're conversations all around the table all the time. I really enjoy it and the roast dinner.' (Sam – graduate)

“ We get to socialise, get to know each other, you know, make friends and stuff. ... if you're ever in need or if you feel like you're gonna go downhill, at least you've got some people to talk to, an ally to talk to, you know, instead of people that don't even know you and stuff and then they'll just treat you like a bag of crap.' (Clive – trainee)

“ I like feeding the chickens. I just like animals. I like talking to different people and that as well, people that have also been in similar circumstances as me, so they understand a bit better. You can talk about that sort of thing if you wanted to. Yeah. I found it a bit awkward to start with and weren't sure what to do but then chatting away now towards the end has built my confidence up, it's much better for me now.' (Tom – trainee)

The social side of LandWorks was particularly important for some trainees because in an attempt to break away from criminal and drug connections they had socially isolated themselves. Hence the friendships at LandWorks provided their only meaningful human contact with the outside world, as KJ (trainee) shares below:

“ I've cut quite a lot of people off because there was times when I was trying to get off it and they'd start doing it ... oh go on, have a little bit, have a little bit ... well I know for a fact, as soon as



I touch that first bit I don't want to stop doing it and like I'd carry on doing it for three days straight sometimes and not get any sleep. So yeah, I ended up getting really frustrated with it, so I was like you know what, leave me alone, I don't want to be around it. I've literally only been to a pub once since then and that was just with my uncle a few weeks ago because his dog got put down. I was there when it happened. We were both quite sad, so he was like go down and have a quick pint. That was literally the last time I went to a pub ... literally two pints and we was gone. It was fine.'

(KJ – trainee)

Beyond being a surrogate family and friendship circle, LandWorks was also an important source of what Kemshall and McCartan (2022) describe as 'recovery' or 'social capital', by helping trainees and graduates to build supportive 'social networks' where, for example, job opportunities might become available. A sentiment clearly felt by Clive (trainee), Tom (trainee) and Jarvis (graduate) as they discuss what they see as one of the highlights of LandWorks:

“...it keeps you out of trouble, gives you opportunities to get a job when you've finished here or work ways and stuff like that, and if you wanna go back into college they can help you with that as well. So, keeps you on the straight and narrow basically.’ (Clive – trainee)

“It just keeps me busy and occupied and it opens up opportunities for me. Hopefully I'll be able to get a job. Employment.’

(Tom – trainee)

“...that's another thing that LandWorks can do, so what it's quite clever at doing is finding different avenues for you to do different things, yeah, because you have literally got to change your whole lifestyle, yeah, you know, so they've got access to all sorts of different work prospects, courses, you can go to college, you know, they'll sort out all that sort of stuff and they'll support you in so many different areas, which you don't in most places, like you come to the end of it and that's it. Well, I've still been having contact with 'em for like years and years, and most of the lads still do, you know, and that's really important for 'em...So, the bottom line is it's a bit of kindness, a bit of care, a bit of love, yeah, and knowing the right people to put you in the right direction, yeah.’

(Jarvis – graduate)

3.5.4 REDUCING ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL HARMS

Life at LandWorks is structured around a working day with lunch and tea breaks. Trainees revelled at having this kind of structure and routine which often compensated for the chaos in their personal lives and as Dave (trainee) commented instilled a 'work ethic'. Although they had personal preferences, they enjoyed the 'real work experience' of working in the market garden, pottery, wood workshop and kitchen. They found all this work very purposeful and meaningful. While trainees did not necessarily learn skills specific to a particular job or industry in the outside world, they did acquire a host of 'soft' employability skills, such as the value of mutual support, collective effort and teamwork. All the activities they engaged in also allowed their creativity to blossom and gave them a sense of achievement.



Below Patrick (trainee), George (trainee) and John (trainee) talk about how the structure and routine at LandWorks changed their mindset:

“I like the routine, the structure, having a purpose in life. I love what I’m doing here with the woodwork, the fact that I was just like enjoying sanding the chopping-boards and like being told I was doing a really good job of that, to now be on the actual lathe making bowls.’ (Patrick – trainee)

“This is giving me, you know, more structure each day. That’s why maybe a lot of people like coming here. I’m sure they say the same things, but different. Yeah, it’s a safe structure...When you come from where we’re coming from, it’s just totally different. Another day done. It’s nice to come here. People appreciate you coming as well, you know, I don’t have to come here, but it must be something bringing me back coz I could just stay home and do all the stupid things what I’ve been doing, but I don’t want to.’ (George – trainee)

“...(it’s) brilliant... just the set up and how everyone is here ... you could just tell it was a well-run organised place... The fact that I knew I’d be able to get out of the house and go somewhere that ... has structure, is organised, I know what I’m doing, there’s a routine to it, like the fact I’m coming on certain days, having that routine. When I know I’m coming here I wake up in the morning and I’m looking forward to getting here and cracking on ... and because I enjoy being here. I want to come here. I don’t wake up in the morning and think oh god, I’ve gotta go out there again.’ (John – trainee)

For Deer (trainee) and Clive (trainee) the sense of achievement and pride are equally important as they talk about the work they did at LandWorks:

“I love the pottery, and I love the woodwork. I don’t know, who knows, maybe I’ve found my calling, and I go onto work as, you know, have my own business ... selling chopping-boards. I don’t know, probably not, but you know what I mean. It makes me think that I have like the possibility, and it makes me think that I can do it and like I have the potential to do those things. Like a couple of months ago I was just so ready to give up.’ (Deer – trainee)

“I get to do new stuff coz like strimming and stuff... I can actually fix up things. I’m doing maintenance ... never done that before...I’ve been strimming, cooking. It’s therapeutic. It keeps the mind occupied and it’s good feeding everyone. The satisfaction of doing it and getting the compliments. Yeah, it is coz I’ve been around people that’s been treating me like trash, always putting me down. That’s coz we’re on drugs and that and we’re all like you’re a pile of crap, you are, mate. I’m sick of it. Having a nice compliment, it’s strange but normal.’ (Clive – trainee)

Beyond supporting trainees to develop their social and employability skills, sort out their finances, seek employment and stabilise their housing situation, there are limits to how much LandWorks can be expected to intervene at the individual level in reducing economic and financial harms. However, as chapter 4 indicates, LandWorks has been ramping up its attempts to influence public policy over the last few years. This is likely to have an impact on reducing



economic and financial harms in the longer term by raising awareness in public policy circles of the economic and financial constraints that trainees and graduates must navigate in their desistance journeys. Below Deer (trainee) reflects on how such societal level constraints impact on the lives of socially disadvantaged people and concludes that the former can only be alleviated by change at the policy level:

“...if you grow up poor, you’ll almost probably be in the Criminal Justice System. If you grow up abused, you’ll most likely end up being in the Criminal Justice System. If you grow up an addict, you’ll probably be in the Criminal Justice System. If you grow up with people who are also in the Criminal Justice System, you’ll probably end up going into the Criminal Justice System. If you grow up in an area that lacks funding and social care, you’ll probably end up in the Criminal Justice System. If you grow up mentally ill, you’ll probably end up in the Criminal Justice System. Obviously that means there’s so many factors into how not to be in the Criminal Justice System and it really does depend on people coz I’m not saying all people who have grown up in those situations do end up in the system, but statistically they do, and I think it’s the job of the council and the government to correctly fund schools and rehab centres and prisons and domestic violence centres, homeless shelters, poverty, food banks. If we had more funding and more awareness in those places, these people wouldn’t end up where they are ... from my understanding anyway.’ (Deer – trainee)

3.5.5 REDUCING THE HARMS OF RECOGNITION

Earlier we discussed how many trainees who came to LandWorks arrive with their self-esteem and self-confidence shattered because of the stigma attached to being labelled as a criminal or drug addict or alcoholic. The non-judgemental and accepting cultural environment at LandWorks was viewed by trainees and graduates as a welcome change. Everyone was made to feel that they could make a valuable, worthwhile contribution to the project whether working in the market garden, the pottery or the wood workshop. This recognition of worth boosted trainees’ self-esteem and self-respect and stimulated their resolve to change and engage with the rigours of desistance. Below KJ (trainee) and Deer (trainee) talk about how the non-judgemental and accepting culture at LandWorks boosted their sense of self-worth and self-confidence:

“...since I’ve started coming out here, it’s just made me feel a lot more positive, made me feel a lot better about myself because when I start doing something, I’m always getting told that I’m doing a good job. If you’re not doing something perfect, then it doesn’t matter too much, they’ll just show you how to do it again. Do you know what I mean? It’s just nice to be appreciated because I feel like I’ve not had that enough or I’ve not really been appreciated with anything that I’ve been doing. Since I’ve started coming out here, I’m like actually I’m not such a waste of oxygen as I thought I am, I am actually a decent lad like. I weren’t even thinking that when I first came here, but again, everyone here seems to love me. It gave me a good confidence boost, I guess.’ (KJ – trainee)



“I think one thing that I’ve noticed is there seems to be a mutual understanding between us that we are like equal to each other. It doesn’t matter what any of us has done because obviously we’ve all done something to be here. It doesn’t matter if some have been to prison and is on day release or if someone, like me, is just on probation, or someone is just coming... Like we are still equal to each other, no-one is better than anyone else, no-one is worse than anyone else, no-one has done worse than another people because at the end of the day we’re still human and we’re still people... there are people who don’t see us as criminals or see us as bad people, they see us as people who have a story and have gone through a hard time or had no choices or decisions, or mistakes that can be changed or can be made into something great.’ (Deer – trainee)

Interacting with graduates who regularly visit the site and hearing their stories of life after placement was an added bonus in communicating hope and a belief that desistance and a non-criminal identity are achievable. Below KJ (trainee), Clive (trainee) and Tom (trainee) talk about how they are inspired by graduates and see them as a symbol of hope and aspiration:

“It makes me quite happy to see that people have sorted themselves out...It just proves that this place works dunnit. I’d like to be one of them people one day.’ (KJ – trainee)

“They can guide you coz they’ve been through it all and they’re older than you and you know, they’ve got more experience in life.’ (Clive – trainee)

“...they can relate with some of the problems and might even have advice for you over certain issues coz they’ve been through the same or similar situations. They may have been through the similar situation where they can guide you with what you’re doing now like, from their experience.’ (Tom – trainee)

3.5.6 REDUCING AUTONOMY HARMS

Canning and Tombs (2021) argue that a person’s capacity for self-actualisation and autonomous action is undermined and frustrated by blocked opportunities. LandWorks provides its trainees with an abundance of opportunities to engage in meaningful and creative activities which enable a sense of achievement and empowerment through making decisions and acting on them. This learning experience mimics the transferable skills that trainees and graduates can use to take control of their own lives beyond LandWorks. Below Casper (trainee) talks about how coming to LandWorks gave him the opportunity to redesign part of the garden through which he gained the confidence and learnt the skills to make autonomous plans and implement them:

“I love doing construction work, I love doing it, you know. Basically, I saw this garden bit, it was like a mess basically, I saw it, so I think to myself I want something really nice there, I said to (the Project Director) is it alright? ...I started on it, got all the weeds out and said you could make something really nice there...I



can make a nice bench area and that. I start weeding it and that, fastening it down, getting all the stones out, make a little pathway and that, I've got good ideas what I'll do and that, and I'll start doing it and that, and it's gonna be nice... Yeah, yeah. I designed this, yeah. I did all of that. It's gonna be really nice actually, to be fair... a bench up there, plants down there, it's gonna be lovely, it's gonna be nice. Yeah, yeah, it's really nice now coz last time it's a mess...not now, it's actually really nice now...I actually done it all myself... I like things that you do, you just sort of crack on really. Yeah, I love construction... I did everything. I love doing construction. I love it. I love doing it. Yeah, it's one thing I like doing.' (Casper – trainee)

Likewise, Clive (trainee) talks about how at LandWorks he no longer feels trapped by drugs and alcohol because he now has the freedom to engage in meaningful activities:

“I don't feel that trappedness and that horrible feeling that I normally have 'ere, when I need a smoke or I need a bloody drink or I need some cocaine or something, you know, I don't feel that anymore coz I've detoxed off it... If I weren't 'ere, I would probably be dead by now... an overdose or owing someone a shitload of money or just getting killed full-stop... Coming here has changed my life. Happy days... It's a fresh start. I get to work... Keeping everything ship-shape. It's perfect. That's what I love about it. It's freedom. You can actually, you know, do what you need to do here.' (Clive – trainee)

Stef (graduate) also comments below on how they have now become more capable of sorting things out for themselves:

“I'm just more responsible now, but I've got things to be responsible for. I've got more belief that I can do things like sorting out whatever. I insured my car the other day, yesterday, and yeah, I've had to do housing applications and things like that, and I just know that I can do it, whereas like back then I thought ... I didn't even know how to begin. There was no-one to show you either...' (Stef – graduate)

3.6 Successful pathways to desistance and social integration

This chapter has evidenced the physical, psychological, relational and economic harms experienced by the men and women who did a placement at LandWorks in this evaluation year. LandWorks provided them with a 'safe haven' or 'retreat' where these harms could be addressed, and where there were opportunities to engage in meaningful activities, discard the stigma attached to being labelled a criminal and receive positive recognition for achieving a non-criminal, pro-social identity. For most trainees and graduates this transformation was liberating, empowering them to take back control of their lives, engage in autonomous decision-making and envision a future free of crime. Below Steff (graduate) sums up what is different about the holistic 'desistance-supporting' culture at LandWorks and why he thinks it is so successful in ensuring that its graduates have such a low rate of reoffending:

“... (it works) on every other part of their life other than the criminality... building that and then lo and behold, the criminality evaporates.' (Steff – graduate)

Deer also highlights why she thinks LandWorks' emphasis on harm reduction is so successful in supporting its graduates to move away from crime and onto 'the right path':

“...people are starting to realise that prisoners aren't just the stereotypical dirty criminal that has no hope in hell... (but) with the right help and the right tools and the right funding and the right amount of people who shows them happiness and shows them that there is love and hope in the world, that they can actually rehabilitate... I think people are starting to kind of open their eyes to that. They realise that everyone gets lost, and everyone can find their right way and the right path in their life, they just need enough people to help and enough people to show kindness and enough people to give them hope.’ (Deer – trainee)



Chapter 4

Personal Troubles and Public Issues

4.1 Introduction

Desistance research has been heavily criticised because it places too much emphasis on the significance of agentic, individual change factors (such as hope, choice and motivation) and neglects the impact of wider social and economic constraints (such as poverty, unemployment and homelessness) on men and women struggling to move away from crime (Farrall et al., 2025). A famous socialist (Mills, 1959) once commented:

'Know that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues – and in terms of the problems of history-making. Know that the human meaning of public issues must be revealed by relating them to personal troubles – and to the problems of the individual life.'

Following in Mills' footsteps, much of the research of Farrall et al. (2025) has stressed the importance of giving greater attention to how structural forces (such as those arising from economic and social policies) shape criminal careers and the desistance process. This chapter will explore how LandWorks, while recognising the need to address the 'personal' wellbeing of its trainees and graduates, also attempts to influence 'public' policy through its research and response to governmental consultations and inquiries. In this way it challenges criticisms made by writers like Mills (1959) and Farrall et al. (2025), by adopting a more balanced approach to effecting change at the 'personal' and 'public' levels.

4.2 Personal troubles: Health and wellbeing

Chapter 3 clearly evidences that LandWorks' trainees and graduates have experienced and continue to face a range of complex and

traumatic psycho-social difficulties which have severely challenged their health and wellbeing and are often linked to their offending behaviour. As they turn their backs on criminal pasts and engage with mainstream community life, they need a lot of emotional sustenance and practical resettlement support. In March 2024 the *Resettlement Manager* resigned for personal reasons. This provided LandWorks with the opportunity to review the role and realign the way resettlement support was delivered. At the end of this review, it was decided that under the umbrella of resettlement there are two quite distinct roles – one that requires therapeutic working skills and the other practical knowledge of available social welfare support such as those related to housing, benefits and substance misuse. In June 2024 a *Health and Wellbeing Lead* was appointed to not only take on the therapeutic role but in addition have a working knowledge of relevant welfare organisations. However, it was also recognised that a deeper knowledge and expertise of how these systems operate was better taken up by external agencies themselves working in partnership with LandWorks.

4.2.1 WELLBEING ROLE

With the appointment of the *Health and Wellbeing Lead*¹⁶ most resettlement support is provided in-house (468 on-to-one sessions in 2024/25. See chapter 2). The *Health and Wellbeing Lead* works closely alongside the trainees in the gardens and workshops tuning into their individual needs and offering 'bespoke' emotional and practical support. Many of the trainees have had negative experiences in accessing help and the value of this 'hands-on' person-centred approach is that they can feel more comfortable to open up and talk about their concerns with the understanding that they are being genuinely listened to.

¹⁶ This section is informed by an interview with the Health and Wellbeing Lead and their reports to Trustees over this evaluation year.



4.2.2 TAILORED RESETTLEMENT SUPPORT

Beyond working alongside trainees in a relaxed environment which provides the space to talk, the *Health and Wellbeing Lead* also provides more tailored, practical resettlement support such as sorting out benefits, filling out forms, looking for jobs, finding safe accommodation, and accessing substance misuse services. The key factor in this process from the point of view of the *Health and Wellbeing Lead* is that their job is not to do things for trainees but to empower them to do things by themselves. Many trainees distrust welfare organisations and so the *Health and Wellbeing Lead* sees their role as one of ‘orchestration’ and ‘coordination’ by ‘breaking down barriers’ and ‘bridging the gap’ between trainees and such organisations and role modelling how to access support from them.

4.2.3 PARTNERSHIPS WITH THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

To facilitate the ‘orchestration’ and ‘coordination’ of holistic support, this year the *Health and Wellbeing Lead* has been building partnerships with several external agencies, for example the *Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)* (debt), *Job Centre (benefits)*, *Together* and *Scrublands* (substance misuse), *Salvation Army* (employment) and housing. The CAB comes to LandWorks every 6 weeks and Together provides a weekly drop-in service. The *Health and Wellbeing Lead* considers that one of the biggest challenges facing trainees is the shortage of appropriate housing. As indicated in chapter 2, some trainees are homeless, rough sleeping or sleeping in tents or park benches. Research clearly shows that stable and secure housing is an essential component of successful resettlement (Prison Reform Trust, 2025).

4.2.4 CONSTRAINTS

Over the last year statutory and third sector social welfare organisations have continued to face considerable constraints (see chapter 2). Many are overstretched with high staff turnover which has meant that tracking down the correct person and accessing the right kind of support is not easy. From the perspective of the *Health and Wellbeing Lead* this has had a knock-on effect for LandWorks as often it must make up for the deficits in support provided by other organisations to ensure that the needs of trainees and graduates are met.

4.2.5 REGISTRATION

Last year’s evaluation report stated that the LandWorks third-party Case Reporting Management (CRM) system was under review. In this evaluation year it was decided to discontinue its use because it collated a lot of unnecessary information. It has been replaced by the registration form and action plan, which over the course of this year have been undergoing continuous modification and refinement to better meet LandWorks’ case management and reporting needs. Each trainee completes a registration form and action plan upon arrival at LandWorks. These utilise the LandWorks ‘life-measures’ measuring tool, which has been used in various guises since 2019/20 (as reported in the 2020, 2021, evaluation reports). The action plan is a living document, which is updated on a regular basis as the trainee’s situation changes and their needs become better understood over the course of a placement, to ensure that they are receiving appropriate support. Progress on the use of the registration form and action plan will be reported in next year’s evaluation.



4.3 Public issues: Outreach and influencing public policy

According to LandWorks' *Charity Manager*¹⁷, despite being a small organisation reliant on charitable funding, LandWorks 'punches above its weight' in terms of bridging the gap between the 'personal' and the 'public' in its attempts to influence policy in the resettlement arena. This is guided by its belief that 'even when people are motivated to change, there's huge personal and societal barriers that they face'. LandWorks therefore places considerable importance on raising awareness of the issues faced by its trainees and graduates in their resettlement journeys and ensuring that their voices and experiences are used to inform and influence resettlement and wider criminal justice policies at the local, regional and national levels. At LandWorks' website there is a dedicated section which provides regular updates on its work in the sphere of public policy. Go to: <https://www.landworks.org.uk/prison-placement-work/public-policy/>.

4.3.1 SUBMISSIONS TO GOVERNMENT REVIEWS AND ENQUIRIES

The *Charity Manager*¹⁸ (part time 3 days a week) takes the lead in LandWorks' activities to outreach and influence public policy. LandWorks has made two significant policy submissions this year. The first to the Government's *Independent Sentencing Review*¹⁹ and the other to the Justice Committee Inquiry into *Rehabilitation and Resettlement*²⁰. In both submissions LandWorks has raised specific issues²¹ faced by its trainees

and graduates and made the case for adopting the LandWorks' approach as a model for resettlement. Both submissions also emphasised the importance of sharing the views of its trainees and graduates, with the submission to the *Independent Sentencing Review* including the feedback from a focus group with them about the sentencing system using the terms of reference of the review.

4.3.2 ADVOCACY

LandWorks' advocacy role is a central component of its work to influence public policy. In this respect it puts a lot of work into building relationships with senior politicians and significant criminal justice policy makers. This has included developing strong ties with local MPs who have raised LandWorks and its approach to resettlement in parliament. As stated above, LandWorks have also made submissions to the Justice Committee *Inquiry into Rehabilitation and Resettlement and the Independent Sentencing Review*.

4.3.3 CRIMINAL JUSTICE FORUMS

LandWorks maintains regular contact with a range of key regional and national players in criminal justice third sector forums such as *Clinks*, the *Criminal Justice Alliance* and the *Corbett Network*. Such contacts act as information exchanges, allowing LandWorks to input into policy consultations and obtain updates on new criminal justice policy and practice initiatives.

17 This section is informed by an interview with the *Charity Manager* and their reports to Trustees over this evaluation year.

18 The *Charity Manager* also engages in work relating to general charity governance, internal policies (e.g. reviewing safeguarding and data protection policies and procedures), communication and fundraising.

19 Go to: <https://www.landworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Independent-Sentencing-Review-Call-for-Evidence-Response-from-LandWorks.pdf>.

20 Go to: <https://www.landworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Justice-Committee-Resettlement-and-Rehabilitation-Inquiry-2025-LandWorks-Submission-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>.

21 For example, inappropriate recalls, insufficient access to various services and accommodation problems.



4.3.4 DIRECTOR'S BLOG

The Director of LandWorks continues to produce fortnightly blogs which discuss the issues faced by trainees and graduates and what is happening in the project. The blogs have over 1000 subscribers and keep the community informed of LandWorks' work. Go to : <https://www.landworks.org.uk/category/news/chris-parsons-blog/>.

4.4 Research: The personal and the public

4.4.1 THE PEN PROJECT

The PeN project²² continues to be a significant source of data documenting the success of the LandWorks approach to resettlement. Interviews or conversations with current trainees and former graduates tend to take place on site at LandWorks. The PeN project was initially funded by the Independent Social Research Foundation (ISRF) in 2016. Since 2022 the Aurum Trust has supported the running of the project, and this will end in October 2026. In August 2024 the lead researcher²³ gave the following speech about the PeN project at the LandWorks Supporters Day:

'...The PeN project is a research project that started in 2016 with funding from the Independent Social Research Foundation and the interview data from that feeds into the ongoing LandWorks evaluation. PeN works across three areas, firstly it gives people on placement the opportunity to share their stories, what brought them to LandWorks, what they have been doing and their hopes for the future. Secondly it aims to engage the wider community with their stories. And thirdly, it has played a significant role in how LandWorks has developed through listening to and understanding those it seeks to support.

Today with support from the University and some external funding we interview or have conversations with someone on placement here roughly every week. Plus, people who have graduated from LandWorks every so often. It became apparent that it was the opportunity people have to share their stories which is important, what is referred to by criminologists as 'bearing witness to desistance'. This is significant for showing family as well as the wider community how you've changed and are doing good.

These PeN conversations last anywhere from an hour to 2 hours and are recorded and transcribed. Only a selection of the transcript is used for the blogposts with permission from the person interviewed. To date I have interviewed over 200 people and published 140 blogs, some from people more than once. These are viewed by people from all around the world and significantly by the guys themselves, who are known to look back at their blogposts despite having long since left, just so they can be reminded of how far they've come.

These conversations can be difficult at times, especially when discussing how people ended up in the criminal justice system in the first place. However, they are also great at documenting hope and acceptance. In some ways it is perhaps necessary for people to tell their stories as this goes some way to learning to accept yourself. I am always reminded of a quote from Doris – 'you can't expect broken people to fix themselves', and this is what happens at LandWorks, but also what the remarkable people here on placement do. And I say remarkable because I am always blown away by the individual resilience of those on placement in the face of multiple traumas not least the additional trauma of criminalisation. So,

²² Go to: <https://penprojectlandworks.org/>.

²³ This is Julie Parsons who is also one of the co-authors of the Annual Evaluation Report.



I'd like to end on a thank you to all the people who have shared their stories, not just for the PeN project, but with everyone they come across when they're here. It is by sharing stories that healing can occur – thank you – you're amazing!

4.4.2 PUBLICATIONS

The PeN project interviews are not only a vital source of data for the annual evaluation report but are also significant in providing qualitative data for academic publications and LandWorks' written evidence in support of their representations to the Ministry of Justice.

(a) Academic publications:

Gray, P. and Parsons, J.M. (2024) *LandWorks Evaluation Report (2023-2024): A 'desistance-supporting' community which offers 'living proof of active hope'*. University of Plymouth: Plymouth <https://www.landworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Evaluation-Report-2024.pdf>.

Gray, P. and Parsons, J. M. (2024) 'The harms of imprisonment and envisioning a desistance supporting "Good Society"'. *The Journal of Criminal Law* 88(4): 282-301 <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220183241265188>.

Parsons, J.M. (2024) 'The significance of "time" when finishing time – A case-study on holistic relationship-based approaches to supporting re/ integration for criminal justice affected people', in Mahoney, I. and Chowdry, R. (eds) *Holistic Responses to Re/Integration, Resettlement, and Reducing Reoffending*. Routledge: London.

Parsons, J.M. and Wong, K. (eds) (2025) *The Role of Food in Resettlement & Rehabilitation: Good Food – Good Lives*. Routledge: London.

Parsons, J.M. and Auchterlonie, S. (forthcoming) 'Generative Justice at LandWorks: Sam's Story', in McNeill, F., Corcoran, M. and Weaver, B. *Generative Justice: Beyond Crime and Punishment*. Bristol University Press: Bristol.

(b) PeN project data used in the LandWorks submissions to the following:

Justice Committee Inquiry into Rehabilitation and Resettlement: ending the cycle of reoffending. Submission from LandWorks, January 2025. Go to: <https://www.landworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Justice-Committee-Resettlement-and-Rehabilitation-Inquiry-2025-LandWorks-Submission-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>.

The Independent Sentencing Review – Call for Evidence, January 2025. Go to: <https://www.landworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Independent-Sentencing-Review-Call-for-Evidence-Response-from-LandWorks.pdf>.

Sentencing Council – Imposition of community and custodial sentences guideline – revised: consultation – Response from LandWorks, February 2024. Go to: <https://www.landworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Sentencing-Council-Guidelines-Consultation-LandWorks-Response-February-2024.pdf>.

(c) Conference presentations and seminars:

Parsons, J.M. (2024) Reforming food in British prisons: experiences, challenges and opportunities, *Long Lunch Seminar Series, The Centre for Research in Public Health and Community Care (CRIPACC)*, University of Hertfordshire, 16th May (online).



Parsons, J.M. (2024) Thinking through the social life of time for food in prison, “*Crises and Challenges in Public Law*” Inaugural Conference, Université Paris, Nanterre, July 5, 2024.

Parsons, J.M. (2024) The transformational potential of growing and cooking food for people with custodial and non-custodial sentences – a case study, British Society of *Criminology* Conference 2024, *Criminology in Times of Transition*, Strathclyde University, 10th-12th July 2024.

Parsons, J.M. (2024) Conversations in hope, British Society of Criminology Conference 2024, *Criminology in Times of Transition*, Strathclyde University, 10th-12th July 2024.

Parsons, C. and Parsons, J.M. (2025) Roundtable Conversation, with Emily Thomas, Lady Edwina Grosvenor & Chris Parsons, *Our Criminal Justice System: Is it Fit for Purpose?* Greenwood Place, Somerset House, February 4th 2025.

4.4.3 REIMAGINING REHABILITATION AND RESETTLEMENT (RRR) PROJECT

LandWorks has long held the bold ambition to inspire progressive change by making the case for its approach to resettlement to be replicated in other parts of the criminal justice system. It's new *Reimagining Rehabilitation and Resettlement* research project which was launched in January 2025 is an attempt to realise this ambition. The main funders are the Aurum Trust, Greenwood Place and the Benthalls, and the project builds on the research and expertise that LandWorks has accumulated since it began in 2013.

Discussions with trustees and funders leading up to the launch took place from June 2024. The early stage of the project from January to end of March 2025 was taken up with preparing LandWorks' data for submission to the Ministry of Justice *Justice Data Lab (JDL)*. Based on this submission the JDL may be able to give LandWorks an 'official' one year reoffending rate backed up by a statistical analysis of whether it is better or worse that would be expected from a comparison cohort. The *JDL* submission was not completed until June 2025 and therefore the outcome will be reported in next year's Annual Evaluation.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1. Harm reduction and desistance

Despite the ongoing crisis in the statutory and third sectors, in this evaluation year LandWorks has continued to successfully achieve its aims by holistically addressing the wellbeing and resettlement needs of its trainees and graduates. Amongst its graduates, as pointed out in chapter 2, the rate of reoffending remains enviably low and the rate of employment commendably high.

Chapter 3 highlights how LandWorks' trainees and graduates have experienced high levels of social harm which if not tackled will, according to Weaver et al. (2024), result in a vicious cycle of further offending and victimisation. This chapter also evidences how, from the point of view of its trainees and graduates, LandWorks provides a non-hierarchical, holistic, person-centred approach to harm reduction that successfully generates a 'desistance-supporting' environment, in which people feel confident and motivated to strive towards a future free of crime as members of the law-abiding community.

Chapter 4 shows how LandWorks' ambitions to influence public policy through its research and advocacy work challenges the criticisms made against other statutory and third sector resettlement organisations because of their lack of attention to 'public' policy and overemphasis on 'personal' change.

5.2. Looking forward

The next year is likely to see further turbulence in the criminal justice system due to staff shortages and increased pressure from court backlogs. This will mean that the availability of welfare support such as mental health and housing provision will continue to be restricted which will adversely impact on the ability of trainees and graduates to turn their lives around. The support provided by LandWorks will remain crucial in filling gaps in resettlement provision. But, LandWorks has shown itself to be flexible to adapting to pressures thrown at it by the

criminal justice system and to responding effectively to the wellbeing and resettlement needs of its trainees and graduates.

5.2.1 REFERRAL RATES

Over the next year LandWorks plans to continue to make its referral routes for ex-offenders on release from prison or serving community sentences more robust by strengthening its links to HM Prison and Probation Service.

5.2.2 WELLBEING

Over the last year LandWorks has continued to place the wellbeing of its trainees and graduates at the centre of its non-hierarchical, holistic, person-centred approach to resettlement and desistance. This approach will be further refined over the next year and its impact regularly assessed and updated. The outcome will be reported in next year's evaluation report.

5.2.3 RESEARCH, OUTREACH AND INFLUENCING PUBLIC POLICY

There is great excitement at LandWorks with the launch of its new *Reimagining Rehabilitation and Resettlement* research project. This provides an opportunity to share its accumulated research knowledge and practical experience of running a successful rehabilitation and resettlement programme at the local and national levels. Consideration will also be given to the issues involved in replicating the LandWorks approach and any lessons for the wider criminal justice system. An update on how this project is developing will be provided in next year's evaluation report.

5.2.4 THE TEAM STRUCTURE

This autumn a new *Operations Manager* will be appointed with the overall role of supporting and deputising for the *Project Director*. The outcome of this new appointment will be reported in next year's evaluation report.



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