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LandWorks Evaluation Report (2019-2020)

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LandWorks Evaluation Report

2019–2020

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Introduction

Brief context

The focus of this report is the 12 months from April 2019 until March 2020, so pre the restrictions created by the global pandemic of Covid-19. It draws upon the recommendations from the previous annual evaluation report (Walker and Parsons 2019). Developing these themes, this report concentrates on the stories of those at LandWorks as they move towards re/integration into the community after punishment. It also reports on the experience of trainees once they have left LandWorks, drawing on interview data from the Finishing Time project funded by the Independent Social Research Foundation (ISRF).

LandWorks: An overview

LandWorks is a resettlement and rehabilitation project delivered to those released on temporary licence (ROTL) from prison and those living in the community under supervision of the National Probation Service (NPS) and the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) in the community (collectively referred to as trainees). While not all trainees have been in prison, those who have not may be at risk of prison through further reoffending. And for those who have been in prison, they may not necessarily have been involved in what may be called a 'criminal lifestyle'. Nevertheless, the trauma of criminalisation has an impact on all trainees and their families so any intervention that helps mitigate against this has to be beneficial for society.

The training at LandWorks involves the development of social and practical skills and aims to increase the confidence of those on placement as they plan for resettlement and move towards employment. Practical activities include art, construction, gardening, woodwork and cooking. Trainees can also take advantage of



Since opening the gates in 2013 the project has flourished from a germ of an idea that resonated enough with our local community to get over 1,200 people involved. LandWorks has matured into a resettlement project that now involves many people from the core team, to daily volunteer input, advisers, ambassadors and a growing number of Trustees.

(Director and Business Managers report 2019)

the support offered to find accommodation and jobs, receive skills training, financial and money management advice. Trainee placements last on average about 6 months but are followed by 'graduate' support, which is developing and will be discussed in this report.

According to the LandWorks Directors report (2020) as of the end of March 2020, LandWorks had delivered 1585 training days over the financial year. In total, 37 trainees were supported along with 39 graduates between April 2019 and the end of March 2020. The overall one-year reoffending rate was maintained at just 4%, and 97% of economically active trainees had gone on

to employment after leaving LandWorks.

LandWorks aims

LandWorks identifies four main aims (see Walker and Parsons 2019).

1: Reduce offending

LandWorks offers training, information, and support to increase confidence and self-esteem and reduce the likelihood of reoffending. It does this in the context of listening to the life stories of trainees to understand how they arrived in prison or on probation. The PeN interview report pages 12–16 describes their journeys.

2: Improve individual wellbeing

Trust and listening is the focus of the LandWorks approach. Counselling is available for more in depth support towards behaviour change. Activities improve self-esteem and the lack of judgement enables learning. A process assessment (Life measures) (page 7) is conducted with individual trainees (when possible) at the beginning middle and end of their time at LandWorks to enable focussed support.

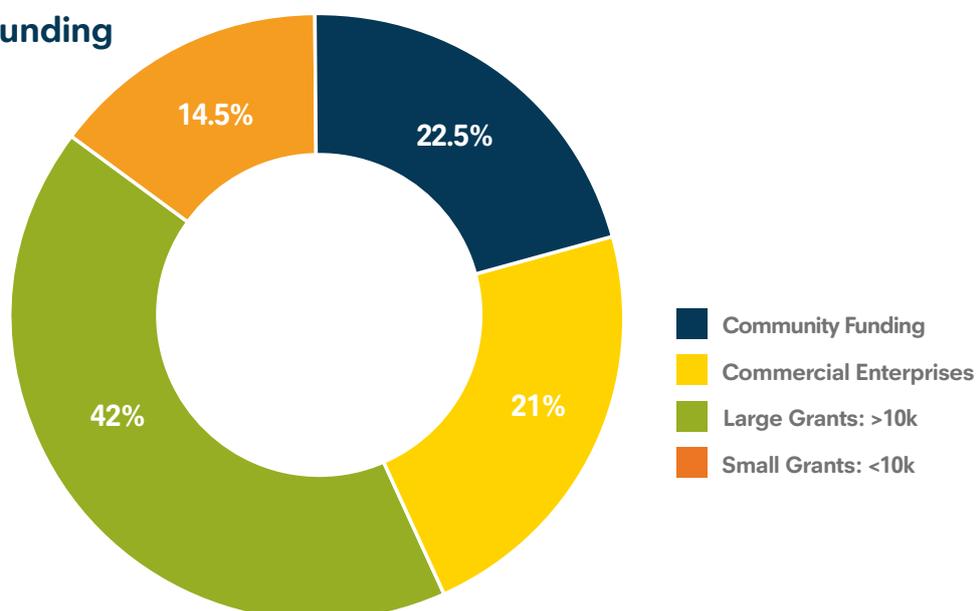
3: Change attitudes towards offenders in society

Supporters of LandWorks are invited to volunteer in a variety of roles. They are also welcome at open days and the Director provides a fortnightly blog so that supporters can keep up to date with news from the project. The supporters then act as community advocates for the LandWorks approach and help with fundraising and changing hearts and minds.

4: Continue to fund project long term

There was an increase in community funding over 2019-20 in comparison with the previous year, from 16% to 22.5%. This included 80 regular donors providing over £15000, 120 one-off donations contributed approximately £30000 (including appeals for a new cooker, a sponsored walk and donations from a memorial service), plus gift aid of £11000. The majority of funding continues to come from large grants (those exceeding 10k). Commercial income was up on the previous year and accounts for almost a quarter of the project's total costs, with £40000 generated from woodwork and £10000 from the market garden.

LandWorks Funding



The LandWorks Experience

Work at LandWorks is supported by a wide variety of statutory and non-statutory organisations. Trainees are referred to and from these organisations. Some trainees will have been given community sentences and others come from the resettlement wing at the local prison



Headline Statistics April 2019 – March 2020

LandWorks has supported

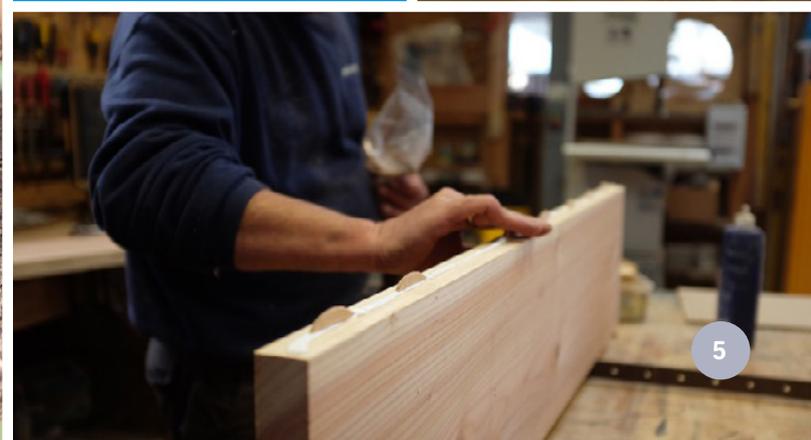
37
trainees
and
39
graduates

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

97%

LandWorks has an overall
reoffending rate of

4%
(compared with
48% national average)



The Evaluation Process

LandWorks continues to grow and develop and this has to be achieved in a changing political and local context. Evaluating their offer and listening to those who work with them to provide services is a fundamental part of the evaluation process. Years of reduced funding have limited the scope of community support services and the prison service generally.

Aims of the report

The aims of this report are to provide the results of the 2019/2020 evaluation to:

- Present the current achievements of LandWorks in the current socio-political climate
- Embed the opinions of supporters, stakeholders and trainees
- Consider next steps

Methodology

We used a mixed methods approach including qualitative semi-structured interviews with:

- Trainees, drawn from the PeN project (see page 12)
- Stakeholders who provide information and support to LandWorks staff and trainees (see page 8) and with
- Previous trainees who have graduated from LandWorks and continue to receive emotional and practical support (see Finishing Time page 17).

Numerical and qualitative data were gathered from the LandWorks supporters survey (pages 23–24). In addition, the Life Measures management tool was reviewed (page 7).

Analysis

The semi-structured qualitative interviews with stakeholders were thematically analysed. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim and read several times. Themes were developed across the interviews based on the narrative. These themes were discussed with another qualitative researcher (JP) and checked that they were similar. The same process was undertaken for all of the PeN interviews conducted over 12 months (April 2019–March 2022) (n=10) and the Finishing time Interviews (n=10). The findings use reported speech to reflect the themes.

We have shown in previous reports that the LandWorks approach works (Walker and Parsons 2019). The approach is based on trust and listening and also mutual support amongst the trainees as they go about their work, share ideas and celebrate achievements. Repeated research shows that resettlement especially for short sentences decreases the chances of recidivism (MoJ Proven reoffending statistics 2013). The LandWorks approach was developed to support those people moving towards release or on community sentences to enable a successful transition and reduce reoffending.

In order to report on the successes and challenges experienced at LandWorks some formal and informal assessment of individual trainee progress is essential. When working with groups of trainees who may have lived chaotic lives and require individual support plans, capturing their experiences and assessing progress needs to be done at regular intervals. The new Life Measures Assessment Tool is now in its second year of use and initial discussions with LandWorks staff suggest that the tool is meeting assessment and planning needs of trainees.

Life Measures

The Life Measures Assessment Tool replaced the Justice Outcomes Star System (www.outcomestar.org.uk/about-the-star) used previously (for full information see previous report Walker and Parsons 2019 page 10). This was partly because valuable qualitative data collected during a Star system progress assessment session was lost in the method of reporting (see previous report page 9).

The Life Measures Assessment Tool is founded on the government's seven 'Pathways to Resettlement' (Home Office 2004), it aims to capture all the pathways that may lead to reoffending

- Accommodation
- Education, Training and Employment
- Health and wellbeing
- Addictions
- Finance, Benefit and Debt
- Children and Families
- Attitudes thinking and Behaviour

The LandWorks Resettlement Co-ordinator conducts interviews with trainees, at the beginning, middle and end of their placements, to assess and record any needs that require action. These sessions provide an opportunity for trainees to speak about their current situation

The system not only offers a useful tool for monitoring progress of the trainees over time but also acts as an aide memoire for the Resettlement Coordinator to plan the needs for each trainee. She can review the previous discussion and actions prior to each new assessment meeting. Comments can be recorded which allow the needed intervention to be arranged.

Information is also collected on access to and the relationship with family members.

Maintaining family links where possible is seen as crucial to the resettlement process and every encouragement is given to work with trainees to understand how to mend damaged relationships (Haines 1990).

Gathering financial information helps highlight the need for debt management. Not being financially independent can lead to temptation to generate cash in risky ways (Bath and Edgar 2010). Leaving LandWorks understanding how to manage benefits and income enables trainees to feel confident they are starting again.

There are some issues that need to be resolved with the process particularly because occasionally not all trainees are available for all three interviews (entrance, middle and exit interviews). This might be because some are recalled to prison or are moved to another prison or not permitted to continue with their placement. This will probably continue to be an issue as some things are beyond LandWorks' control. This does not negate the value of the process itself but does mean that some crucial questions may be omitted. For example, during the exit interviews they can be asked '*What have you got out of LandWorks*'. This helps to highlight where there might need to be improvements in the experience for future trainees. On the other hand, trainees who have not been involved in exit interviews with the Resettlement Co-ordinator have responded to similar questions during interviews for the PeN project (see pages 12–16).

Recording this information also helps with ongoing data collection about what happens to graduates after they leave LandWorks (Finishing Time pages 17–22) and how it could change their experience whilst they are with LandWorks to add value to their coping mechanisms once they are released.

The next section reports on interviews undertaken with stakeholders.

Stakeholder perspectives

LandWorks needs to understand the perspectives of its stakeholders in order to help evaluate the effectiveness of the programme, what works well, and what can be improved. The majority of the stakeholder interviews (n=8) took place via Zoom because of the COVID 19 pandemic. The stakeholders include representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), the Job centre, probation and prison services, as well as the LandWorks counsellor. Interviewees were asked about their role at LandWorks, for their impressions of the place and how they saw the future. Four themes emerged from the analysis 1) What is LandWorks; 2) Managing change; 3) Stakeholder experience and, 4) Future plans. The identifiers at the end of each quote relate to a different voice.

Theme 1: What is LandWorks – ‘we listen we care’

Some of the stakeholders, when asked to describe how they would explain the work that is carried out at LandWorks, could not contain their enthusiasm,

“I’d probably get very excited and use lots of adjectives like amazing and wonderful and exciting. SH6

One stakeholder described how the structure of the day, particularly the shared meals, gave trainees the focus they needed (and might never have had) to plan the activities they want to take part in and to develop social skills which would support them to get jobs and deal with pressures once they were released. In prison, prisoners often eat on their own. The atmosphere can be tense and not conducive to chatting. At LandWorks sitting down for meals and using first names meant that,

“...matters can be discussed, difficulties can be challenged and sorted out. You won’t be judged for it and it would be talked through. SH7

The mix of trainees, people who are on ROTL and people serving community sentences, was seen as a particular benefit in preventing what was described as ‘prison talk’ the slightly charged joking that is the nature of any discussion in prison. Trainees on community sentences were often younger and having the opportunity to hear from prisoners about the experience of being in prison could open their eyes to the reality of a custodial sentence. Equally the trainees who were travelling each day from the prison learned to listen to the experiences of those carrying out community sentences. The quality of the conversation changed.

“...having that kind of wider cross-section, rather than just people coming doing ROTL out here. I’ve had a few younger ones coming out here and some of the older guys in prison saying don’t do it. It does work both ways. SH4

This socialisation was seen as key to the progress towards release for trainees. A stakeholder involved in prison rehabilitation said that when prisoners first moved to the prison resettlement unit,

“They are cowed and don’t make eye contact and call me Ma’am. They are anxious about ‘putting a foot wrong’ because then they will be sent back. SH8

LandWorks encourages its trainees to look for their own solutions in an effort to challenge previous behaviour patterns. Stakeholders noted that for many, this may be the first time they have had the opportunity to consider a 'crime free' future. It was suggested that statutory services, such as the police, tended towards problem solving, getting issues resolved quickly. This approach might prevent the trainees from thinking for themselves and considering how they can make changes in their own lives. Most of the stakeholders described an individual trainee's process of change as growing in confidence and building resilience. The ethos encouraged trainees to have a go and take responsibility for the work they were carrying out during their time at LandWorks. New ideas were listened to and discussed, and trainees allowed to try and to fail without fearing retribution.

With some trainees, who might have spent the majority of their lives in prison, it was recognised that there is a need to focus on simple tasks to encourage learning of what might be seen as simple everyday skills.

“... information and advice on what life is like. He's 52 and he spent most of his life in prison. It's frightening. You don't know how to cook. You don't know how to use phones. It's a threatening world out there. SH7

The possibility of independence could be frightening for the trainees especially where they were used to having things done for them. They may have spent years being told where to go and what to do, so challenging them to do things such as form filling for themselves caused discomfort for the trainee and some frustration for the stakeholder. Prison sentences are getting longer and so more people are growing old

behind bars. People aged 60 and over are the fastest growing age group in the prison estate (MoJ 2018).

Improving self-esteem was mentioned as one of the building blocks to moving on. So many of the trainees seemed to have fundamental issues with how they saw themselves. Some had multiple experiences of children's homes and change, and others had multiple experiences of prison. Over time they appeared to lose some sense of self and the stakeholders all talked about how self-esteem had to be rebuilt slowly over time if rehabilitation was to be successful.

“... the biggest thing I've learnt over the years, bringing people out here, it gives them self-esteem... It gives them self-esteem and it gives them a sense of purpose. SH4

Repairing a life takes time and a holistic approach is required. Initial first steps are therefore relationship building and listening, acceptance and trust.

“So, the initial kind of approach is to create that sort of safe base and sense of acceptance for people. I think for some people, they've never really experienced that in their lives, ... SH5

The overall feeling about LandWorks can be described as a safe place, a family where people can learn to change.



Theme 2: Managing change

The stakeholders recognised that the trainees experience of LandWorks was often dependent on the trainee's capacity to go to greater depths and affect change at a deep level because they were often restricted because of 'all the other kind of fires' they were trying to put out in life.

“When people are worrying about work or where they're going to live, actually, their capacity to reflect and look within is reduced. So, it depends where people are at.

SH5

Motivation to change appears to be crucial but the first steps may be subtle. The following comments were echoed by several stakeholders.

“Sometimes those changes are really visible... and sometimes it's more of an internal repositioning, but wanting something to be different in a sort of helpful way. SH5

This journey to change was seen as harder for some than for others and there was a recognition that LandWorks had to work with a trainee at their own pace and be guided by their behaviour and willingness to participate. Nevertheless, the stakeholders were committed to the LandWorks approach. They affect and are affected by their time there.



Theme 3: Stakeholder experience

For the stakeholders directly involved at the LandWorks site, team work and being willing to work across boundaries supported the 'family atmosphere' on site and maintained the sense of trust. There was reciprocity in the sharing of thanks and appreciation for the skills the stakeholders offered

“ I don't think I've ever worked anywhere where people are so complimentary to me. They come up and say you're such a good person for that... It's got a really good culture of people being very supportive with each other. I've been very impressed by the place.

SH2

Carrying out activities on site allowed those involved time to listen and this really was the focus of building trainee self-esteem and confidence. This worked reciprocally because whilst a trainee was working, for example with someone they would previously see in a position of authority, they could get to know them well enough not to see all authority figures as working against them.

“ If they need help... the whole point of that is whilst you're doing that, you're sort of listening to that person and you can talk about... if they've got some issues, you're there to listen and you can help whilst you're doing those other activities... We're not the bogeyman. SH1

The need for rehabilitation and resettlement of offenders towards the end of a prison sentence was seen as imperative. Some stakeholders talked about how 'appalled' they were that the £46 given to someone leaving prison would in no way support them as they settled back into their community. The struggles trainees experienced were described as recognisably demoralising and the efforts needed to sort out simple things from prison such as the needs of everyday living could sometimes seem insurmountable.

In conclusion there was a concern raised by one of the external stakeholders about how much the statutory agencies depended on LandWorks and how little they contributed financially.

“ I feel we have taken advantage of LandWorks. We've sent people out here to do their unpaid work hours and we haven't dipped our hands into our pockets. I've said to my manager, we need to stump up for these guys and they've done nothing really. So, it's all been a bit one-way traffic. SH4

Stakeholders experiences reflected the value of the LandWorks approach. They were enthusiastic and focussed on the trainee experience. In the next section the experience of the trainees will be discussed.

PeN: The Trainee Experience

The Photographic electronic Narrative (PeN) project was funded through an Independent Social Research Foundation (ISRF) mid-career fellowship. Since 2016 the project leader has worked with the trainees in developing an anonymous blog. The posts are shared across a wide variety of social media and in doing so give a public voice to the trainees so they can share their experiences as they progress towards desistance. The blogs are mostly but not exclusively based on interviews with the trainees, there are one or two blog posts from trainee police officers discussing their trainee police officer placements at LandWorks and the 'prison run' driver. The previous report provided the results of a thematic analysis of the broader picture of moving from prison to LandWorks. This report focuses on the experience of the trainee's journey, before during and after prison and how their time at LandWorks contributed to the tailored interventions as part of rehabilitation and resettlement.

The transcripts were studied for similar themes across each blog and synthesised to create four themes 1) The experience of prison; 2) The experience of LandWorks; 3) Relationships with family; and, 4) Insight and reflection. The quotes used have confidential identifiers P for PeN and then the first letter of the name of the speaker (names have been changed to protect their identity). If the speaker is on a community sentence, then a C is added for clarification.

Theme 1: Experience of prison: 'you're trapped in an environment full of angry people'.

The journey to prison

Many of the trainees had not had easy lives. Some had grown up in series of childrens' homes and some had been groomed by older family

members, or by acquaintances, to carry out minor criminal behaviours. A report by the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) pointed out that

“ Many prisoners have experienced a lifetime of social exclusion. Compared with the general population, prisoners are thirteen times as likely to have been in care as a child, thirteen times as likely to be unemployed, ten times as likely to have been a regular truant, two and a half times as likely to have had a family member convicted of a criminal offence, six times as likely to have been a young father, and fifteen times as likely to be HIV positive.

There are many reasons given by the trainees for their increasingly risky behaviour. Risky behaviour could be thrilling or a response to pressure from adults. When compared to 'real life' a life that is fraught with problems, the rush of doing something illegal can be addictive in itself.

“ That's how it all started. When I got bored, I had nothing to do, so the only way I could pass the time was getting into trouble. PR

Not all the trainees had backgrounds in addiction or local authority care. Some described having just having 'made a mistake'. The mistake led to either a prison sentence or a community order.

Experiences of Prison/community orders

Finding themselves in prison for the first time could be a frightening experience and the system itself was initially confusing,

“ At first it was quite terrifying. One of the first nights, the chap I was sharing with, he'd had someone come in and basically beat him up. There was blood everywhere. I was mopping up blood on one of my first nights, so it wasn't probably one of the best... PT

A report by the European Prison Observatory described UK Prisons as overcrowded, insanitary and in some cases unsafe (Sylvestri A, 2013). This trainee concurs,

“ It was a bad old place. When it rained, it would go in your cell. It came all in the roof. Pigeons flying and shitting everywhere, eating the food off your trays. It was a dump. PG

Over time though as the trainees got used to the environment they began to learn how to cope and for some they decided to just get on with it and get through to the end.

“ So, my mind-set, number one, is survival. To survive you do not lend, do not borrow, do not get in debt, don't get lairy, be careful of who you make friends with, don't get too familiar with officers. PB

The emotional effect of being in prison was described as lonely and frightening and unpredictable so finding an occupation seemed to be one way of coping, a job in the kitchens or the library passed the time. It has been found that improving educational and skills levels has a positive impact on employability, a key factor in reducing re-offending (DfEE 2001). There were many opportunities for training. Some courses offered fitness training, for example a local football team would run sessions on general fitness. Other courses might entail discussion about mental health and wellbeing. Many of the trainees took multiple courses and achieved qualifications which might be useful once their sentences were complete.

Eventually their time passes and as they move towards release there was some reflection on the experience of being in prison. For some their relationship with other inmates came as a surprise. They had made efforts to 'keep their heads down' and not engage but as they moved towards release one said 'I've met the odd people that I've got on alright with'. At LandWorks they met up with people who had been on the same wing and that recognition was a form of friendship.

At the time of release many trainees talked about the harrowing situation of finding themselves in the 'real world' with a criminal record. This was true even if trainees had not been in prison but had their lives disrupted by a community sentence and the inevitable societal labelling that went alongside that experience. Not having work because of a criminal record and trying to sort accommodation and manage the authorities could become too much to deal with. There were mixed stories and rumours amongst the other inmates about what was on offer at LandWorks but for those who took up the offer the experience was positive and helpful.

“ I used to say, “what you doing?”, “what’s the matter?”, “nah, what’s that all about?”, “nah, it’s money for old rope”, “it’s cheap labour”, all that type of thing. The typical ignorant way in which some people do sometimes look at situations....

But he goes on to say:

“ ...But it is, without a shadow of doubt, one of the better decisions I’ve made since I’ve been in prison. It is, without a doubt. It’s given me an understanding and an appreciation of getting back or going back into the normal world.

PB

Theme 2: Experience of LandWorks: ‘This place is gold dust’

The contrast between prison and LandWorks was almost too hard to believe and initially some found the staff so trusting the trainees were suspicious. The atmosphere was a relief. The different treatment almost astonishing. Of particular note was being treated with humanity.

“ I’ve got a lot out of being here, a huge amount. It’s nice just being treated as a human-being again and not some kind of annoyance. Being treated with some humanity, respect and decency, it’s a big thing. PF

However, the trainees did describe the level of hard work expected which some found as a shock and others relished. In addition to the hard work the trainees were expected to be courteous and develop trust and care for each other just as they were trusted and cared for. But the relief of doing a job and if you made a mistake not being reprimanded was tangible. In return trainees began to teach and support others which in turn raised their confidence to speak up. Many of the trainees described the learning of skills as hugely beneficial to their recovery. They were aware that working together provided an opportunity to talk about their lives and discuss possible futures. Although one trainee described the approach as ‘a bit friends of the earth’ he was happy to cooperate because he felt valued.

The activities, despite often being new to the trainees, were seen as very enjoyable and each trainee added their knowledge to the process or learned from scratch. Food was seen as very important. The food in prison was described in very negative terms so learning to cook and eating at LandWorks was identified with enthusiasm as being beneficial.

“ That’s the blessing coming here. You get a lovely midday meal. You don’t need to eat it when you go back of an evening. PM

The building and carpentry activities were new to many of the trainees whilst some had had jobs on building sites or gardening and felt they could offer some expertise. They talked about the surprise of being listened to and their advice taken. Learning new skills meant they could take their new learning home and give back a little to their family.

“ It’s been brilliant to be able to do a dry-stone wall. Even though it was hard work,... To be given the opportunity to do it, that’s quite nice. PT

Learning pottery had given a new hobby to several trainees and to one of those interviewed a career post prison. Many were surprised how much they enjoyed the process and had made presents for family.

“ I made a tile for my mum and my sister for their birthdays. I made some chopping-boards. I made one for my mum and I made one for my friend. PJ

Over time the trainees felt their lives changing and they began to have hopes for the future. They recognised the skills they had learned at LandWorks would be valuable in the future but also, they had learnt the ability to talk and to share ideas. However, the challenges continued. Moving on from LandWorks meant re-engaging with family again and for some that was not going to be easy.

Once they left they become LandWorks graduates and were encouraged to keep in touch. They had support as they moved home. Some of them brought their family to visit so they could show them what they had been making or doing during their time on placement.

Theme 3: Relationship with family: ‘Knowing where my place is in the family home is hard’

Returning home could be difficult. During their time away family relationships might have shifted as partners took on the full care of families. Trainees had to find their place again. They talked about the difficulties of maintaining relationships whilst they were in prison. Some of them had been rejected by their families or some family members and some of the trainees had not allowed family visits because they felt they would find visits upsetting for all concerned. They often preferred the occasional phone call because as one trainee described ‘they felt more in control’

Managing relationships with children could also be hard. The children were not sure when and if they would see their father again,

“ My kids are all saying “dad, we don’t want a phone call saying you died out here, not in jail”. I’m in touch with some of them, but at the moment I’ve got no time for them because I’ve got to sort myself out. PG

As trainees were moved through the prison system and on to the resettlement wing, they could have more access to their families and coming to LandWorks meant that their days changed, and they had something to tell their families which really helped to keep the conversation going.

“ when I’m able to say what I’ve been doing and then I say I’m alright, it seems to be completely... it’s quite a big thing for me to be able to reassure them in one sense. PM

Coming out of prison was about damage limitation to families. Trainees had to be determined not to commit further crimes or continue behaviours that had ended in a community sentence. They learned to recognise the toll their behaviour had on their loved ones. Looking to the future and making plans evolved over time as new practical and emotional skills were learnt at LandWorks. Many trainees talked about the need to change themselves. They recognised the only person that could achieve change was themselves and returning to prison or going to prison following a community sentence, might be inevitable if they did not take on the challenge. Dealing with how society responded to people who have criminal records was an ever-present threat to their sense of self and they knew going forward they would have to deal with this as they sought employment and found accommodation.

Theme 4. Insight and resilience: 'It was the kick up the arse that I needed'

Trainees enjoyed the LandWorks work because although it was hard it was productive, and the atmosphere was non-judgmental. Trainees felt they had served their time and just wanted the chance to get on with their lives.

“ I wouldn't want to do it again though. No. I'm done. I never thought it would happen and I still don't 100% see how it ended up that I am here, but ultimately, I am. The reason why is irrelevant now. It's three years old, let's move on. It's done. PB

There were inevitable anxieties about returning to a place they were known and dealing with the attitudes of friends and acquaintances. Ultimately though the general feeling was one of gratitude to LandWorks for getting them to a place they felt they could move forward and the experience of meeting people from whom they felt valued and trusted had, in some cases been life-changing.

“ I appreciate everything you've done for me. It was the kick up the arse that I needed. Just seeing life in a different perspective. I never had no-one... like yourself and Chris explain stuff to me. The things that I thought were right were wrong, and the things that were wrong were right. Until I came out here, I never realised that... That's what has done it really, just everything. PR

In the next section graduates were interviewed following their departure from LandWorks to find out how they were managing resettlement.

'Finishing Time': 'I don't want to go back to prison'

This section presents the experiences of people who have graduated from LandWorks and their reflections on how a criminalised identity has impacted on their lives beyond LandWorks and release into the community after punishment. They also describe the role of LandWorks, and their hopes for the future. The 10 transcripts were thematically analysed and compared for similarities and differences. As a result, 4 themes were developed 1) Coming out; 2) Moving on; 3) The future; and, 4) LandWorks. Each quote is used to illustrate a particular point in the trainee's journey and represented with a code FT (Finishing Time), the initial of the speaker and the number of the transcript. All names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Coming to terms with a criminal conviction incorporates dealing with biographical disruption, which is a significant change in what was anticipated in an individual's life trajectory. A placement at LandWorks enables the development of new skills, self-esteem and confidence, which can help to mitigate this. For many coming to the end of their placement time at LandWorks increases anxiety on what they will face on release. Many trainees themselves have previously thought negatively about those with criminal convictions and find it hard to come to terms with finding themselves in that category. LandWorks has provided a space to be without judgement – how will the wider society react to them on release?

Theme 1: Coming out 'I'm neither up nor down'

Graduating from LandWorks was managed differently by everyone. The ability to manage appeared to stem from issues such as access to permanent accommodation, a job, some sense of a future, family support and their pre-existing personality. For some the experience was positive because of the home support but

for others the constant fear and anxiety about the fact that they might 'end up back inside' was accompanied by a sense of dread.

“ When I first come out, I was anxious, really anxious, because I thought to meself, I don't know nothing other than what I've been doing all my life. I've had to change everything. The way of thinking. I've had bad thoughts. FTG10

The number of pressures involved in re-starting their lives was a constant concern. For those who had been in prison for some time managing the system they had to conform to could be almost too difficult. Being out also required the graduates to keep in touch with the authorities and their probation officer which reminded them again that they were still not free of their sentences. They described being constantly vigilant to police cars and other patrol officers feeling they might have done something wrong. Returning to 'normal' life also carried memories of the crime for which they had been convicted. For example, for one graduate who had a conviction for a driving offence finding the confidence to get back behind the wheel was a challenge.

“ I am slightly worried about it. I don't know why because it's not like I haven't driven things. I've just got this horrible feeling that if I was to knock anybody or have any sort of crash. FTB2

Finding something to do seemed to help with the changes necessary. For many not having anything to do meant they had time to think and become anxious or depressed. Routine

in prison had caused some to stop thinking for themselves. Once back in the community and managing their relationships with probation, the job centre and the local council could feel full of potential pitfalls. There were many anecdotes about dealing with outside agencies and the assumption by some of the people working in those agencies that graduates understood what was required to find work and then to be able to execute those strategies successfully.

“ I get to the Job Centre and I try to explain to the Job Centre that I’ve never used a mobile phone before and the lady will go “why is that?” and I say “I’ve been in prison”, blah, blah, blah, “well, don’t they do any courses to get you in the community?” and I said “no, they don’t” and the lady said “well, why haven’t you done a computer course so you can log-on online” and I said “well, what’s logging-on and what’s online?” – “we want six applications of work from you every fortnight. FTA9

This constant struggle to do the ‘right thing’ at the ‘right time’ could be emotionally exhausting. All the graduates talked about the pressure and stress felt whilst searching for work. They needed to find work because they needed to pay rent. They needed an address to find a job. They needed both to feel secure going forward.

Finding your feet

An interesting finding from the transcript analysis was how prevalent the trait was of wanting to spend time alone. Some directly related this to having been alone for long periods in prison. They also described certain behaviours, learned

in prison, that now struck them as odd.

“ I was doing silly little things. I was washing my own plate up every time I’d eaten, which was a bit odd. That was about the only strangest thing that I did really. As soon as I finished eating, I’d take my plate and just wash it, nobody else’s. FTB2

Several graduates related their pleasure at spending time on their own in contrast to the pressures of socialising with family. Many families wanted to show there was a welcome home and wanted the graduates to become part of the family again. This kindness was sometimes seen as unbearable, so spending time alone helped their emotional state. This coupled with the fact that being criminalised impacted negatively on their self-esteem. Some showed this by describing themselves in derogatory ways, ‘scum’ or ‘useless’.

Others talked about how the perceptions of others in assuming negative images of prisoner personalities could be hard to challenge and showed a lack of understanding about the causes of crime. They talked about ‘...everyone thinks these criminals are the same’. Yet some graduates were aware that the people who criticised them might also have done something they might be arrested for they just had been lucky not to have been caught.

As the initial issues relating to being released into the community were worked through the graduates described how they began to put their lives back together. This was not always a smooth progression, it could be a roller-coaster of highs followed by disappointment but over time they began to find new ways of managing themselves and their relationship with the system.

Theme 2: Moving on 'I think I just wanted to slot back in without too much fuss'

Employment

Between 2018 and 2019 only 17% of people leaving prison were employed (MoJ 2020). Finding employment was often the first milestone to financial stability. However, having a criminal record meant employers were not always willing to employ the graduates. The graduates themselves had a problem that if they told potential employers they had a conviction they might not employ them but if they withheld the information and employers found out retrospectively, they might ask them to leave.

“That’s the difficult part, getting a job. It’s all good people can say ‘yes’, but as soon as they say “do you have any convictions?”, you then have to disclose, it’s out of your hands completely, which is why it was good with the last job because they didn’t ask anything, so I didn’t have to disclose anything. FTC6

The perpetual search for a permanent occupation which might offer a future could take its toll emotionally and yet they continued to try. More often they had to take part time work on short contracts which left them struggling once again to find food and pay the rent. Another route to work for some of the graduates was to find voluntary work. This fulfilled two roles the first being their expressed need to ‘give something back’ and the second was to keep being part of a workforce. Staying employed whether paid or unpaid meant feeling they had a role. It improved self-esteem and voluntary work offered the possibility of leading on to a paid job.

“I was doing volunteering. I think I started a couple of months before getting engaged. It was doing woodwork with people that had ended up homeless or drug-addicts... I just felt as if I wanted to help people and give back a bit of what had been given to me. FTB2

Accommodation

Alongside finding a job the need to find suitable accommodation was essential so that they had somewhere to prepare themselves for work each day, to eat and to sleep. Between 2018-2019 11,435 people left prison homeless (MoJ 2019). For the lucky ones they came out of prison and went straight back to their families. Others had family and friends preparing them a place to stay on release. For those who were less lucky the range of options were limited, and some threaten successful resettlement. For example, one trainee talked about his fear of ending up in a hostel where he might meet his old friends from his drug taking days.

The stress of trying to find work and accommodation was also related to the fear of being ‘found out’. Having found a job and beginning to settle one graduate described the paranoia of wondering if his colleagues might ‘google’ him and find out about his past. Disclosing convictions was therefore problematic. The timing became a concern and the reaction of others could be disturbing. Yet those who did decide to disclose were often pleasantly surprised that their colleagues just had a lot of questions about prison life. They were curious about what it was like and wanted to clarify the myths from the truth.

““ People had loads of questions about prison and what it’s really like. Some of the people that I work with live in Newton Abbot, so they knew the prison. They were just interested about what it was like. They asked if it was bad as they thought it was. I answered “yes”.

FTB2

Family/relationships/friendships

As is clear from the data presented so far it is impossible to provide a uniform approach to resettlement. Every person interviewed carried with them a different set of challenges. These challenges were greater or lesser depending on the structures in place to meet their needs. Those who had complicated family lives before they started their sentences came out to face a potentially deteriorating situation. Even for those who had a stable family before they were convicted the time away might have created divisions in their families. One trainee described how his family had suffered multiple sadnesses during the time he was in prison.

““ My mum had died, her birthday was the 17th. My sister who died, her birthday was Christmas day. My other sister who died, her birthday was Christmas eve. ...my dad’s brother, my uncle, he died... FTG10

But for others coming home meant there might be new members of the family to meet and new roles to take on, an uncle or a grandad. These new roles could bring great pleasure and help with the transition.

““ I still see my daughters quite regularly, at least once a week I see them, so that’s really good. I’m going to be a grandad. My daughter is making me a grandad. I’m quite looking forward to that. FTJ3

Returning to or trying to find a new romantic relationship could be emotionally burdensome. The effect of criminalisation had in some cases changed feelings and created barriers. Learning to care for each other again could take time. Success appeared to be related to getting a job and having some money so the partner’s life could be seen to be improving but there were still tensions to be dealt with.

““ ...because xxx’s (Partner) got no faith in me. She doesn’t really trust anything that I say. I guess I understand that. So, there’s a lack of faith in me, which I resent. She’ll say “I don’t believe anything you say anymore” – “alright, fair enough”. I’m having to lump all this’.

FTQ7

Others though were still hopeful that once they were settled with a job and accommodation, they might find someone to share their lives with.

““ I think what will help me at some stage, when I find a girl that I like, I think that will help, but it’s got to be a sensible girl. I’m not having no lunatic. FTJ4

Once accommodation and a job had been found and new and old relationships developed or discarded the graduates started to think about their futures.



Theme 3: The Future 'You've got to want to change'.

This determination to change and live a 'good life' was regularly expressed by the graduates. Some described how they felt they had changed because of being in prison and how they wanted to present themselves in new ways. One graduate developed a website to promote his work, despite the nagging doubt "mate, who are you kidding?". It took courage and perseverance. They described how they just wanted some normality in their lives, to live as others did. Many of their hopes were for the simple things, basic everyday pleasures, to provide emotional security.

“ I'd live in a caravan in a field with a shed that had electric and I'd just do pottery all day and bollocks to the world. FTQ7

Finally, there were many thoughts of hope in a new future and the need to believe in a new life.

“ I can see the light in my future and the steps in which to reach my goals. FTG10

In each of the interview sections the role of LandWorks in aiding resettlement has been highlighted. Each section – 'Stakeholders' – 'PeN interviews' and 'Finishing Time' have taken a slightly different set of views about how trainees and graduates experience their involvement.

Theme 4: LandWorks: 'I feel free out here. I feel free'.

The graduates talked about leaving LandWorks and how this affected the rest of their journey. They recognised that there was continued support, but several expressed how they felt no longer being a part of the day to day running of the place, the building, pottery, the woodwork and the garden and most especially the shared meals. Another graduate talked about what might be described as the valuable 'soft skills' learned at Landworks being able to meet another's eye in conversation, listening and feeling valued. They talked about the unconditional support and care they received from the LandWorks staff and how this helped them both with their mental health and their belief that there would be life beyond their placement.

“ But if I never had the backing from LandWorks and the encouragement from staff, I would not be writing this now. FTG10

Some found it impossible to think they would not be coming back to spend time at LandWorks every day. This despite the fact they knew they were welcome to return. However, this graduate talked about visiting not being sufficient he wanted to

“ I'd love to still be able to come out here, I'm not going to lie... Even if he just did it as a day a week, two days a week, I could just come out. Even if it's sweeping leaves up, I don't care. It's just something to keep me occupied. I'd happily come back here. It's always been a safe haven. FTC6

These comments raise the issue of the post LandWorks graduate support. What should this involve and how could continual support be funded and staffed? In one sense it is important for people to move on and begin their new lives but LandWorks graduates are vulnerable. LandWorks is not just focussed on reoffending because not all the trainees have been involved in a 'criminal lifestyle' and therefore may be unlikely to reoffend. However, for all the trainees the trauma of criminalisation even if that involved just having a 'brush with the law' or 'having made a mistake' can make some graduates vulnerable to mental health issues without support, which may or may not lead to further prosecution.

LandWorks is about preparing people to fulfil their potential, to be active members of society, to have good relationships with their families and with themselves, to feel they are worth something after being criminalised. The impact of prosecution was described by some trainees as making them feel that they were 'scum'. There is a need post LandWorks to help maintain self-esteem and support trainees if they falter. The LandWorks ethos uses a holistic approach to making lives better for its graduates, and this needs to continue because resettlement is a process and requires ongoing intervention even if that is only a phone call offering listening or support.

Outreach and Supporters activities

LandWorks Supporters Survey (LSS)

Since 2016 LandWorks supporters have been sent an annual LandWorks Supporters Survey (LSS). It is an important part of the evaluation as LandWorks sees their supporters as an integral part of their success. Demographic data are collected and this year (2019–20) the survey showed that the majority of the supporters were female and over half were over 65 years of age. The majority felt that they were keen to help in some way and kept up to date about what might be possible through the Director's fortnightly blog (www.landworks.org.uk/category/news/chris-parsons-blog).

Those supporters that were involved as volunteers, in a more-hands on role, talked about how they enjoyed '*Passing on skills to trainees, listening and challenging*'. It was clear the knowledge exchange was valuable, that this reciprocity was key to their enjoyment.

The Director's fortnightly blog was the main way supporters kept themselves informed, which alongside the PeN project blogs they felt, improved their attitudes towards offenders and their resettlement. Treating trainees with respect and '*robust compassion*' derived from hearing the trainees' backstories. Those with previous experience in health, social care or policing had gained from new knowledge and understanding of how the systems had changed since they left.

Moreover, more and more supporters have felt their involvement with LandWorks has improved their attitudes towards offenders and their resettlement. Open comments from the LSS include the following:

A better understanding:

- "Realise how difficult it still is to integrate easily with society I thought it would be

much easier in this day and age. Appreciate the effort they have to make" (LSS 2017)

- "Better understanding of the huge challenges, they face when released and why poor resettlement is a huge factor in reoffending rates" (LSS 2018)
- "I'm more aware of what effect prison has on people, and how counterproductive our justice system can be. As a result, I think I have become more understanding towards offenders who are struggling to turn their lives around." (LSS 2019)
- "It has made me more aware of the problems offenders face when they come out and of the problems with the current prison system, and it has made me more compassionate towards them" (LSS 2020)

A humanising effect:

- "LandWorks are inspiring not just in its training but the humanising effect" (LSS 2017)
- "Telling people's personal stories makes you realise we are all human and we all have the same drivers. Some of us have just had a harder time and that may have resulted in them going down a more negative path." (LSS 2018)
- "It's closed the gap between 'them' and 'us'. I mean I can see we're more similar than I first thought" (LSS 2019)
- "Puts a human face on 'crime,' a positive action for reintroduction, a supportive open-minded community" (LSS 2019)
- "When a group of 'offenders' become individual humans with problems, it is easier to empathise and wish to see a better future for them." (LSS 2019)

The PeN project (see pages 12–17) also featured in the LSS with the majority of the supporters accessing the PeN project blog posts via their email. The blogs from the trainees helps to provide information about what happens at LandWorks, as well as highlighting the lived

experience of those on placement as they work towards resettlement. Feedback on the PeN project from LSS includes the following:

2017–2018:

- “Very successful in giving a voice to those usually without one. A window onto the lives of LandWorks trainees that is honest and genuine and sometimes revelatory.”
- “I think nothing can replace comments made by the guys themselves, it gives them a voice and puts them at the centre of things which is where they should be.”
- “it feels honest and real.”
- “Photography is such a powerful medium, and the blogs are honest and revealing
- reflections from the men themselves”

2018–2019:

- “It’s been one of the best things at LandWorks, helping to give the guys a voice than can be heard by a much wider audience than just Project team and Supporters. More than this though, it’s offered a way for the guys to see their own positive changes written down.”

2019–2020:

- “PeN has helped boost confidence of people on placement at LandWorks by providing positive feedback from complete strangers – very powerful and significant in helping people see themselves more positively, which in turn leads to a more positive attitude and impact on wider society. I hope it continues to receive funding.”

One of the PeN project blog posts from Rich, published on the PeN project website in February 2020 as <https://penprojectlandworks.org/2020/02/26/rich-saysyou-dont-need-to-lie-to-get-far-in-life-tell-the-truth-you-get-further/>, was also published in the *Inside Time*, *The National Newspaper for Newspaper for*

Prisoners and Detainees, <https://insidetime.org/what-landworks-does-for-me/> (Inside Time 31st March 2020).

Moreover, Erwin James the editor of Inside Time has commented that:

““ The PeN project is a must view and read for anyone who wants not only to understand the thinking and experiences of those we imprison and their journeys of change - but also to be reminded of the potential reward to society when we give them encouragement, nurturing, hope and above all, the skills and confidence to live meaningful, contributing lives once they have served their sentences.

There were requests from participants in the survey to make the information more easily accessible possibly via Facebook. Others were keen to think of ways in which the blog posts could be further developed. Overall, the supporters appear to be happy to remain informed through the Director’s blog and should they want more detail through the PeN blogs. Finding new ways of involving those who want to become more involved is vital in the years to come. The supporters offer a voice in the community outside LandWorks, are advocates for the work and enable negative attitudes to be challenged by those who are better informed.

Outreach

The Director sent out 27 fortnightly blogs to a readership of approximately 1130 and increasing engagement on Facebook and Twitter.

There were ten PeN project blog posts published over the year and the site to date has had 17000 views. 90% of these are from the UK, but it also has an international audience with views from 76 other countries, with the USA, Canada, China, India, France, Germany, The Philippines, Australia, New Zealand and Poland in the top ten of countries accessing the site.

Supporter's Day 2019

The following speakers contributed to the Supporter's Day 2019

- Chris Parsons (Director)
- Hugh Sullivan (then Deputy Governor at Channings Wood)
- One of the trainees.

146 people attending the Supporter's Day which was remarkable given the atrocious weather. Approximately, £1400 was raised on the day.

Prison Visits & Stakeholder Engagement

The Director made five prison visits during 2019 to hold formal talks and discussions and a further three visits for informal 1:1 talks with individual prisoners.

Publications

Parsons, J.M. (2020) Making time for food when 'doing time'; how enhanced status prisoners counter the indignity of prison foodways, Special Issue of *Appetite on Prison Food*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2019.104507>

Parsons, J.M. (2019) Narrative re-scripting: Reconciling and present lives, *Auto/Biography Review* 2018, (editor) Sparkes, A.C. British Sociological Association Auto/Biography Study Group, Russell Press, Nottingham, pp111-128

Conference Papers

Parsons J.M. (2019) Virtual desistance dialogues; an opportunity for building bridges and as resettlement ritual. European Society of Criminology Conference, 19th Annual Conference, ConverGENT roads, bridges and new pathways in criminology, 18th-21st September, Ghent, Belgium

Parsons, J.M. (2019) "Whose timeline is it anyway?" Coproducing the visual in the pursuit of social justice. British Autoethnography Conference 2019, Bristol, July 22nd – 23rd.

Parsons, J.M. (2019) Relating to food, beyond resistance and disruption: prisoners' accounts of everyday foodways from the resettlement wing of a prison in England – A Case Study. 6th BSA Food Studies Group Conference, Monash University, Prato, Italy, 24th – 25th June.

Parsons, J.M. (2019) "I'm neither up nor down"; exploring the coproduction of narratives of transition with those reintegrating into the community after punishment. 4th Annual Ethnographies of Crime and Control Symposium, Glasgow, 13th – 14th June.

Parsons, J.M. (2019) Exploring the benefits of the material and the virtual in the narratives of those working towards release into the community after punishment. Institute of Health & Community (IHC) Auto/Biography Seminar, University of Plymouth, 1st April.

Conclusion

In this report we presented the achievements of LandWorks in the current socio-political climate. The opinions of stakeholders were thematically analysed and discussed emphasising their understanding of a holistic approach to resettlement and the value of LandWorks to their own speciality. A further development in this report were the voices of the graduates who faced a range of challenges as they left LandWorks. What was clear was the ongoing need of these graduates to have access to LandWorks support for an extended period. This ongoing support is seen as crucial as the LandWorks offer develops over the coming year.

For LandWorks to achieve its aims (page 4) a focus on fundraising is essential. LandWorks plans to employ a charity manager to develop their outreach and awareness capacity and be ready to apply for grant funding as it becomes available.

It is apparent from the transcripts of the PeN blogs that the trainees feel a deep and lasting affection for the experience they have had at LandWorks. Their attitudes to life evolve and their ability to deal with emotional stress changes positively. Data collection which gathers these experiences is essential to assess and evaluate the LandWorks offer and enable continual improvement and development.

Supporter involvement is still core to the LandWorks outreach process. As advocates for the LandWorks approach they are ambassadors, changing attitudes and understanding of the reasons for imprisonment. Outreach to existing and potential new supporters will enable further fundraising and societal attitude management. Continuing the Director's blog and his presentations to range of new audiences will continue to be important over the coming year.

Recommendations

1. LandWorks need to develop outreach and promotion materials for stakeholders, notably for prison and probation. These materials should provide sufficient information for stakeholders to be fully informed about the offer at LandWorks so they can make informed decisions about placements.
2. LandWorks currently is working at capacity in terms of staff to undertake outreach work and so planning to fund new members of staff to focus on community outreach should be considered.
3. A charity manager to undertake scoping exercises of potential funding bodies is essential to maintain sufficient funding for current and future projects.
4. The 'Finishing Time' interviews showed that resettlement continues after trainees have graduated and funding for continued support of those graduates will need to be formalised.

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