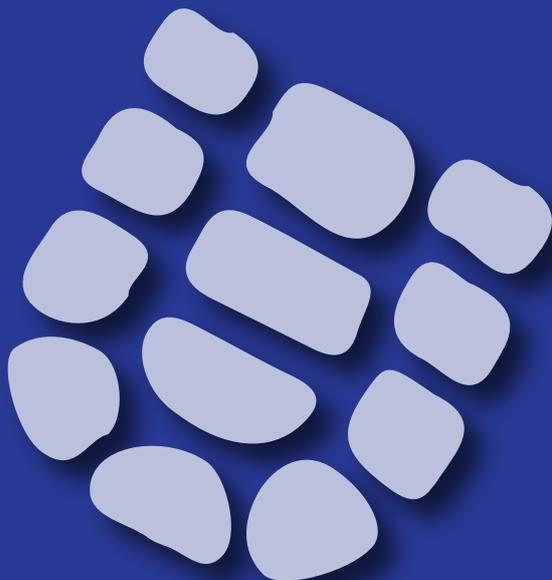


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scotland

ANNUAL REPORT 2018



**MAKING  
A MARK**

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\* Names used in some case studies have been changed throughout this report.

Names of Personal Development Mentors (PDMs) have been removed from client comments.

## Apex Scotland Board

Brian Fearon, Chair  
 Gordon Samson, Vice Chair  
 Elizabeth Smith (*retired December 2017*)  
 Sheriff Frank Crowe  
 John Ross CBE (*retired December 2017*)  
 David Asher  
 Lady Juliana Butler (*retired December 2017*)  
 Margaret Anderson  
 Jim Hunter (*appointed June 2017*)  
 Giles Robinson (*appointed June 2017*)  
 Michael Dickson (*appointed June 2017*)  
 Neil Archibald (*appointed October 2017*)

## Patron

The Rt Hon Lord Campbell  
 of Pittenweem CH CBE QC

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# From A.C.E To A.B.C.

Hello and welcome to our Annual Report which, as always, we hope will offer a reflection of the work of Apex Scotland over the last year, and also some insights on our vision for the future.

2018 is the Year of Young People in Scotland and it would be impossible for us to ignore the obvious, but frequently avoided, connection between the experiences of children and their subsequent life chances in this of all years. Over the last twelve months Apex has campaigned vigorously for recognition of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on offending behaviour. We have been delighted to observe that there has been a groundswell of support and understanding around this concept, and it is now a dominant factor in the national community justice perspective. Under the leadership of Karen Pryde, our Schools Development Manager, we have seen not only renewed interest in our RE:SET model of intervention (formerly Apex Inclusion) but also the development of a trauma informed practice approach across all our services. This has fitted so well with our broader mission thinking of 'ABC: Aim Higher, Behave Differently, Change your Future', and has impacted strongly on how we approach our client group.

The recognition that most offending has its roots in ACEs radically changes how we approach activity within the justice arena from one where 'bad behaviour' is responded to with punishment, to one where behaviour is recognised as a response to trauma and fear. This of course sounds very liberal and fluffy, and there are certainly those who strongly retain belief in 'traditional' approaches as being, if not effective, at least 'just'. The problem with that view is that most of the available evidence suggests that far from improving or preventing further bad behaviour, punishment can often exacerbate it. For this reason the Scottish Government has strongly advocated a move away from imprisonment towards more rehabilitative and positive options in the reduction of crime. This is something which we at Apex strongly endorse and support through the provision of a range of services designed to reduce the likelihood of a person offending at all, and through seeking to inspire within those we assist a personal view which is not a negative one, but which does indeed aim higher.



The recognition that most offending has its roots in ACEs radically changes how we approach activity within the justice arena from one where 'bad behaviour' is responded to with punishment, to one where behaviour is recognised as a response to trauma and fear.

**Alan Staff**  
Chief Executive

“The one to one connections that you get and you build make a big difference and then you put that into your life outside...it starts to change your behaviours in a positive way rather than a negative.”

As we have developed these services, informed both by research and theory and by the life experiences of those we work with, so we have been delighted with the opportunities we have had to grow the organisation. We have seen significant growth through our European Structural Fund supported Steps service for the pre work-ready, and our Labyrinth services for those with a particularly problematic conviction history. In addition we have seen continued development of our social enterprise activities, and look forward to opening our exciting new project in Newtongrange later this year.

These services bridge the gap between rehabilitation, training and actual employment/re-integration. In a year where much has been made of the impact of Brexit on available workforce, we cannot continue to have a third of our national workforce struggling to gain regular employment because of disclosure issues or poor employment history. The Scottish Government is working hard to reduce the disclosure barriers through reform of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. However, the need to provide entry into employment for those with significant barriers remains a priority and one which Apex is strongly committed to.

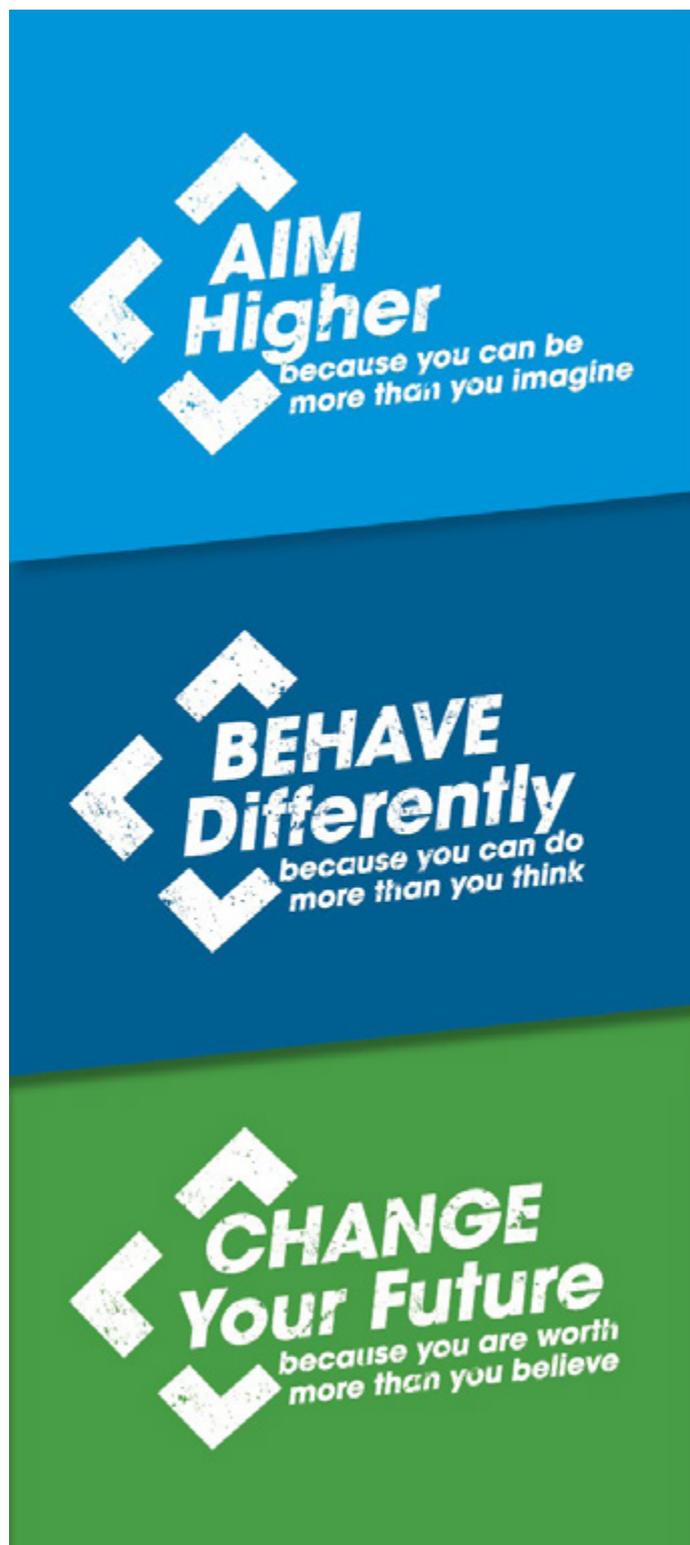
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...it really is inspiring to recognise what a struggle some people have to overcome the hand they have been dealt, and the resilience and bravery that it takes to change or manage this.

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I hope as you read this Report you will get a feel for the passion and commitment our staff bring to all that we do, and I also hope that you will get a sense of the long and often very difficult and painful journey which those we work with have to take in order to actually change their future. At a meeting of the Apex Highland SMART Recovery group recently I got to hear the individual stories of members. I said at the time that I felt privileged to be allowed to share, at least for a few paces, in their walk to recovery. This is not some trite sentiment; it really is inspiring to recognise what a struggle some people have to overcome the hand they have been dealt, and the resilience and bravery that it takes to change or manage this. That, of course, is why we all do this job.

**Alan Staff**  
Chief Executive



EUROPE & SCOTLAND  
European Social Fund  
Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future

# Finance

The primary purpose of Apex Scotland continues to be the provision of meaningful, progressive support to our service users in order to enable them to lead more fulfilling lives and to be more effective contributors to society. Other parts of this Annual Report will evidence the worth, and effect, of the work that we carry out but this article provides detailed analysis of the manner in which we have performed financially in an effort to give comfort to our funders as to the effective and appropriate use of those funds.

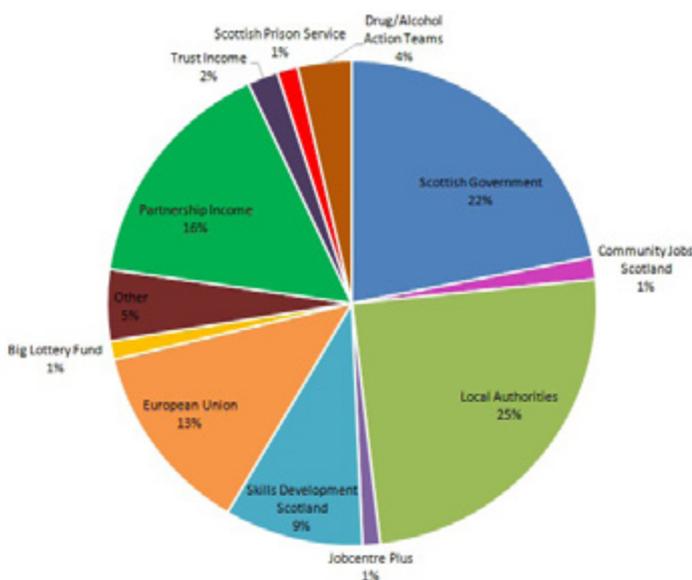
We have continued, as all agencies have, to suffer from the ongoing spending squeeze which has occurred at a time when there is an increase in demand for our services. Undoubtedly over the recent years we have suffered from the financial impact of the cuts in funding whilst attempting to provide effective, high quality, services to our service users and retaining the necessary infrastructure to support that. During those years we have restructured and also explored alternative means of financing our work. Whilst we have not completed all of that work, and never will, we have made significant efforts to diversify our income base and to add value to the services we provide. Some of these efforts have not transferred into an improved financial performance in 2017-18 alone, but we remain confident of a stronger financial performance in 2018-19 due to the nature of funding of a significant service which commenced in 2017-18 and the need for that service to settle before real progress could be made. We are of the view that we can move forward with confidence and a belief in our ability to continue providing services to those in need.

Given the comments immediately above, our accounts for 2017-18 show a deficit of £116,484. This is achieved against income generated of £2,268,259 and expenditure incurred of £2,384,743. Whilst disappointing, these results must be read in the context of our funding. In previous years the vast majority of our funding was either expenditure reimbursement or set figure. The world in which we operate is changing and, increasingly, we are being faced with service opportunities, and the associated payments, being linked to performance. Whilst this can be challenging we recognise the need for public sector funders to ensure that the work they are paying for is making an evidence based difference. We are confident in our ability to survive and thrive in this changing environment but there is, without doubt, a transition period both in terms of financing the organisation and in the service culture of staff members.

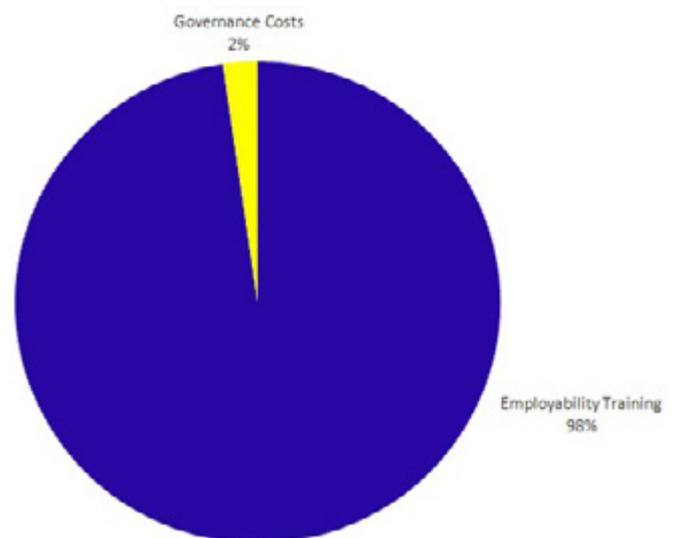
This emerging method of funding places greater pressure on cashflow due to funding being received well in arrears from the date of delivery and the developing requirements of funders in relation to acceptable evidence of success. This transition in 2017-18 has contributed to the financial figures posted but we remain confident of gaining greater financial stability through 2018-19. Importantly, the new service, supported by the performance related funding, has allowed us to support a significant number of additional service users during 2017-18 which would not otherwise have been possible.

Our trading subsidiary, All Cleaned Up, posted a loss in financial year 2017-18. Whilst this is disappointing we remain confident that this initiative, which creates real jobs for

## Income



## Expenditure



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# Partnerships

our service users, will be able to build upon the efforts made to strengthen that organisation. At the end of 2017-18 we took corrective action which altered the staffing complement as well as carrying out reviews of each contract and associated pricing. Efforts have been made to enter into strategic partnerships with larger scale cleaning contractors which, if successful, would bring about greater stability and certainty for the future of the organisation. All Cleaned Up remains an important part of the overall Apex strategy.

We have also continued the process of creating a further social enterprise, Track2Train, which we expect to come on stream in mid to late 2018-19. Much work has been undertaken already in preparation for this new venture. No matters relating to the financing of that second social enterprise are included in this year's accounts but we would expect that new enterprise to be included in our 2018-19 accounts. This new enterprise also has the ability and intent to create real jobs for our service users as well as creating an income stream for the charity.

Despite the deficit incurred in 2017-18 we continue to move forward with confidence and determination to strengthen our services and infrastructure to support ongoing development of the organisation, ultimately for the benefit of our service users. We expect to face ongoing funding challenges which means that the ability to reduce our reliance on public sector funding becomes all the more critical. As part of this we will continue to ensure appropriate, efficient and effective use of our resources in an effort to provide high quality support to our service users and to our funders. At the same time this will be done in a manner which enables us to inform public policy in relation to our service user group. This will continue to be achieved through the utilisation of our management information tool, ASSET, and supported by effective governance at all levels across the organisation. This approach, undoubtedly, contributed to our success in gaining European funding in 2017-18 which has enabled us to support a significantly increased number of service users and places us in a position to bid for successor funding for 2019-2020 and beyond. Whilst this brings its own challenges, it underlines the faith that funders have in Apex and that service users place in us.

In recent years Apex has developed and nurtured a number of local and national partnerships. These partnerships are critical to the success of Apex and to the support we offer our clients. Partnership working can take many shapes and forms, but they all have a common goal and that is to provide added value to all our services and to the services of our partners.

For partnership work to be successful we need transparency and honesty, flexibility and a commitment to sharing amongst all involved. We are very happy that the partners we work with, which include a range of funders, public and statutory bodies and third sector organisations, all have these critical elements. We are proud to work alongside all of these organisations and look forward to continuing with them. We will also continue to seek out new opportunities for partnership working in the future where there is demonstrable benefit to all involved, most importantly the people we assist.

To all our partners we would like to express our gratitude for your support and commitment.

## Some of Apex's key partners in 2017/2018 were:

- » Scottish Government
- » Local Authorities Criminal Justice Social Work and Education Departments
- » European Social Fund
- » Scottish Prison Service
- » Community Justice Scotland
- » Community Planning Partnerships
- » Community Safety Partnerships
- » Alcohol and Drug Partnerships
- » The Big Lottery
- » RE:SET High Schools in Fife and Edinburgh and those who have contributed to the RE:SET service
- » Shine (led by Sacro) – national PSP partners
- » New Routes (led by Wise Group) – national PSP partners
- » DWP
- » SCVO
- » CJVSF
- » ACOSVO
- » Skills Development Scotland
- » Police Scotland
- » Venture Trust
- » PEN Scotland
- » Fair Start Providers
- » Strathclyde, Glasgow, Stirling and Robert Gordon Universities
- » Diageo
- » Care Farming Scotland
- » Trussell Trust and those who support the foodbanks in Dumfries, Wigtownshire and Levenmouth
- » NHS and Health Partners
- » The Prince's Trust
- » The Holywood Trust
- » Turning Point Scotland
- » YPeople
- » Families Outside
- » RAFT consortium
- » Resource3
- » National Museum of Scotland
- » Scottish Natural Heritage
- » Morrison Construction Partnership Project
- » Robertson Construction
- » Track2Train funders
- » ADD+
- » SQA
- » ASDAN
- » Erasmus
- » Recovery Network
- » STAF
- » CCPS
- » SCDI



them we will always struggle to help someone integrate more positively into society, a fact which can often be overlooked by policy makers or commissioners looking for easy outcomes.

Apex has for a long time specialised in working with those who are not actually ready to be processed through an employability scheme, but so often the assumption is that such schemes will suit everyone. This is not the case! We cannot ignore those who are psychologically unable at this time to function well within a traditional work or training environment, and any fair and just society has to recognise that the differentiation between the working and the unemployed is nothing like as simple as it often gets portrayed.

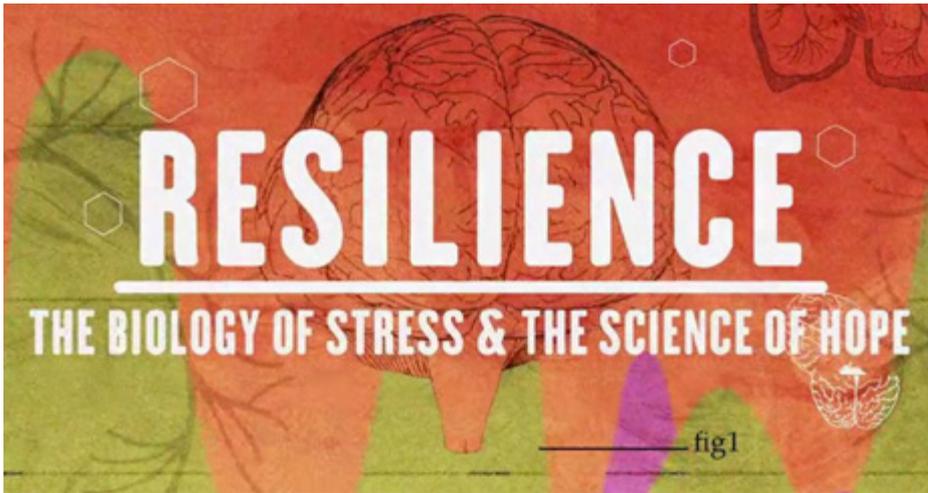
In our experience, trauma manifests itself in some obvious ways, and we set our services up specifically to enable these barriers to be addressed. Childhood adversity frequently results in failure to engage in school which is why we set up our RE:SET service to work directly to help mitigate the negative consequences of this. Need for identity and belonging often leads to inappropriate relationships, either personal or as part of a group, which may result in pressure to offend or adopt negative attitudes to society. That is why we work on relationships and seek to put in place strong positive role models, including peer mentors, across all service areas. Growing up in a traumatic environment often results in a passive or over aggressive pattern of interaction with others which is why we work with building a person's asset base and sense of self-worth through reliable and trustworthy mentoring and positive reinforcement so that they begin to embrace more productive responses.

These, and numerous other ways of working with our users, equate to a 'trauma informed' ethos which we are building across the organisation. It is a process which started with our A Positive Future thinking and has found greater emphasis in the Aim Higher, Behave Differently and Change your Future mantra. To support this we are emphasising training for staff, promoting awareness not only of the nature of trauma impacted behaviour, but also of the techniques required to work with those affected by it. We also promote understanding of the concept to service users and encourage them to take as much control of their lives as is possible.

This approach has been understood for some time within the recovery movement for mental health and substance misuse, but has been slow to become recognised within Justice, possibly due to a reluctance to accept that offending is anything more than being naughty. As Scotland continues to take promising steps toward a fairer and more just system of social control, maybe at last we are genuinely looking to get 'tough on the causes of crime' rather than simply responding to it.

**Apex's 'A Positive Future' wheel**





**“The child may not remember, but the body remembers.”**

'Resilience' is a documentary film which reveals that toxic stress can trigger hormones that wreak havoc on the brains and bodies of children, putting them at greater risk of disease, homelessness, prison and premature death. This science of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) explains that such trauma is now understood to be one of the leading causes of medical conditions such as heart disease and cancer, to substance abuse and depression. The film goes on to show that since implementing trauma informed policies and practices, communities have seen drastic reductions in rates of negative action such as dropping out of high school to teen pregnancy, youth suicide and domestic violence.

As part of Apex's commitment to being trauma informed and as part of our national commitment to support changes in social policy, services and cultures within organisations, communities and families, we have become licence holders of the 'Resilience' film and have been hosting screenings across the central belt. The events include question and answer sessions with local child, health and education experts such as Eugene Adams (Team Leader, Primary Mental Health Worker, CAMHS, Tam Baillie (previous Children's Commissioner and Upstart Board Member) and Chelsea Cameron (Young Scot of the Year and Young Hero Award Winner 2017). Since our events have taken place, Apex has been contacted by several organisations wishing to hold screenings for their staff, local communities and service users. Please get in touch if you would like more information about this.

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney, will be speaking on ACEs and their link to Justice for our Annual Lecture in 2018.

## What They Really Think

Last year, as part of our commitment to ensuring that all employees and service users of Apex can contribute to making it a better place to work in, we undertook to give everyone the opportunity to input their views and give feedback to management on their own personal experience working for and with Apex. To facilitate that we undertook a staff survey and client consultation process, the findings of which were presented at our staff conference last November. There were a number of valuable and emotive comments made by service users during the consultation and the inclusion of these in the presentation at the staff conference was a highlight for many people.



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## Service User Consultation

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**“You are taken seriously, you are heard, you are not judged.”**

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Apex clients were given the opportunity to feed back either through informal focus groups led by the Quality Manager, one to one engagement, and also through telephone conversation and email.

The feedback gained from our service users was overwhelmingly positive in relation to a wide range of aspects of Apex support. There was clear feedback relating to the value of Apex staff, primarily Personal Development Mentors, and that this relationship is fundamental to the success of sustained engagement by the service user. Also commented on was the wider Apex environment which is perceived to be welcoming and non-discriminatory and where people are treated with respect. In the units where Apex staff and peer mentors had first been Apex clients themselves, existing service users found this to be of real value.

It is no exaggeration to say that units delivering weekly activities that are alternative, creative or community based and integrated into the support package were deemed to be a lifeline. Activities such as the soup kitchen, foodbank, Rock Café, woodwork or music groups, acupuncture sessions and horse sanctuary volunteering all had high value placed upon them, with service users expressing real concern and distress at the concept of them not being available. There was a trend to feedback of this nature for service users in recovery and dealing with addictions. Service users also linked participation in these activities to them not currently offending.

For these service users, the weekly activities provide them with structure, consistency and also a distraction, something to occupy their mind and fill their time. One service user described how attendance creates a new 'habit' but a positive one, rather than negative. Because involvement in these activities is integrated with the opportunity to volunteer, service users also inevitably learn new skills which reaps further benefits for them. Service users feel like they have a purpose as they become part of a team with individual responsibilities, no matter what they are involved in. Many of these service users were not considering work as a viable option in the near future, but they were focused on maintaining a more positive lifestyle.

Whilst carrying out the consultation, the words “not judged” came up over and over again voluntarily by service users when thinking about their experience of using Apex services. We know that many service users have low self-esteem, confidence issues and low self-worth with experience of being judged, so have an expectation for this to happen.

The feedback from service users relating to how engagement with Apex services has positively impacted their mental health is very powerful. This ranged from service users feeling that their self-confidence has improved and gaining a sense of self-worth, through to those who express that Apex has supported them from the brink of suicide.

Our staff are often asked why they work in the third sector, why they work with people who have such challenges, why don't they find something “easier” or better paid? We hope that some of the unedited comments from the consultation that you will see peppered through this Report from Apex service users will help readers understand why our staff are so committed and driven to finding solutions, supporting and empowering those we work with. Our thanks goes to all our service users across the country who took part in our consultation for their time, honesty and sharing their thoughts with us.

**“It helps you rebuild your life.”**

**“Here, you can actually open up and be completely honest and feel that the people listening to you, are seeing you as the person rather than just a number, and whatever your problems are they always seem to come up with options or things that you can try and do.”**

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## Staff Survey

From the staff survey the corporate managers were delighted to see that there was not only a very high percentage of satisfaction with the organisation and what we do, but also a thoughtful approach to suggestions about what could be done to make things better.

What was pleasing from the results was that the majority of staff agree that their job with Apex gives them personal accomplishment, being indicative of job satisfaction. Equally, one of the statements that staff most agreed with in the survey at a response rate of 79% was, “I am satisfied with my involvement in decisions that affect my work and I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things”. It was encouraging for the corporate managers to note that staff value autonomy in their role and that this is something they achieve, and that staff also feel their views are valued, which is important both to management and the success of service delivery.

There were twelve key themes identified such as IT, communication, career opportunities and our strategic plan, which the corporate managers responded to in detail.

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# Steps



The Autumn of 2017 saw the launch of Apex's new Steps service. ESF funded through the National Third Sector Fund, Steps has enabled us to enhance and extend our current services in all parts of the country, encompassing all the expertise that Apex staff have to provide a level of care and support bespoke to each individual service user. Steps also created the opportunity for a major expansion of our delivery across Scotland, now in 14 local authority areas, including the recruitment of a number of new frontline staff and additional support staff, as well as the opportunity to reconfigure our national structure and our CRM system to provide effective support to the new service. The creation of brand new teams in Edinburgh and Glasgow who have excelled in their commitment, enthusiasm and motivation to be successful and engage with local partners has been another exciting development, with delivery recently extending into the Lanarkshires and Ayrshire too.

The primary purpose of the Steps service is to address some of the barriers that are identified through our 'A Positive Future' assessment and move individuals along the employability pipeline. When we first meet them, Steps service users have a number of different challenges that affect their ability to gain employment and are usually at stage 1, or in some instances stage 2, of the employability pipeline.

Each person meets with their own Personal Development Mentor (PDM) who will work with the individual to help them address their challenges through an action plan that they agree together, while building on the individual's strengths and skills. PDMs support each person to achieve specific milestones on the way to their own identified outcome.

Keeping to our commitment to partnership working, we have been engaging with a number of other organisations such as DWP and Fair Start providers in order to ensure that those individuals who are hardest to reach and furthest away from the job market are given a fair opportunity to progress and reach a positive outcome.

The achievements these individuals make through engaging with the Steps service are not the end of the story. Our intention is to invest in them, to encourage and empower them, using our 'A Positive Future' method, our expertise and the tools at hand, so that they leave us with an increased confidence in their worth, their ability and their potential to succeed. You can read about the evidence of this in what follows.



“Somebody concentrating on you instead of just looking at a screen.”

## Daniel's Story

"Daniel was one of my very first Steps clients when I joined Apex in February. He had a number of criminal convictions, all committed while under the influence of substances. By the time I met him he had stopped using illicit substances but was still drinking to excess on occasion and was worried that he may pick up another charge after having been free of convictions for two years.

We first worked on Daniel's CV and created a disclosure letter. He had had some work experience in a recycling centre and thrived with a regular routine but felt he was slipping back since he no longer had the placement. We discussed this and I encouraged him to continue addressing his drinking and we spoke frankly about it at each appointment. As the weeks have gone on Daniel has managed to reduce his drinking and continues to have a more responsible attitude to it.

We discussed his convictions and talked about how to use his disclosure letter and how to disclose verbally if he preferred. Having to disclose had caused him considerable anxiety but by the time we visited Community Voluntary Service (CVS) he was able to talk about this more openly and appropriately.

By April Daniel's confidence had increased and we had visited CVS to consider volunteering opportunities and Daniel decided to sign up. He was keen to find something outdoors and had shown an interest in work on and around the canals.

Daniel's work coach and I communicated regularly and in early May, she contacted me to tell me about a talk she had attended from the Canal College with Scottish Waterways Trust – she thought of Daniel straight away and I agreed it sounded ideal for him.

Daniel is now half way through his course – he attends two days each week and so far has been involved in bat-box building, an archaeological dig and wild food foraging among other things! He has now applied to, and now been interviewed for, a post with Reunion Canals. Daniel has come a long way and is hopeful that his hard work and new attitude will stand him in good stead."

**Ann Mathieson**

Steps PDM, Forth Valley



Daniel with his volunteering colleagues

## Qualifications

**Martin Stanley works on the Steps service in Dumfries and primarily assists clients find and access training and qualifications that will help them into employment, particularly CSCS training which Martin delivers. Here he briefly explains some examples of clients he has worked with.**

**George\*** was an older client with literacy and numeracy issues who could have difficulty communicating. He successfully completed his CSCS training with us and achieved his CSCS green labourer's card. He also went on to achieve an ICTU certificate with us. Having completed with the Steps service he is now transferring to our Moving On service which will help him progress further.

**Gordon\*** found it difficult to fully engage with us when we first met him so it has been more beneficial for him to have progressed over a number of interventions in bite sized chunks so that he has still achieved, even over a long period of time. He has completed his CSCS course and attained his green labourer's card as well as completing his Emergency First Aid at Work SCQF level 6. In May we received an email from Gordon letting us know he has secured employment doing grounds maintenance with a woodland activity centre, saying "...thank you for the support for the last two years. It has really helped."

**Harry\*** struggled with literacy and so we took our time going through intensive one to one training to boost his knowledge and confidence before he sat his CSCS tests, which he found a challenge due to the time restriction. At this time Harry's family also received support from the Dumfries foodbank that we run. Harry went on to successfully achieve his CSCS green labourer's card. To enable him to access the work he wanted within the buildings industry we worked on preparing his CV and researched available work within the area for him to apply. Harry is now employed by a local builder as a groundsman.

**Steven\*** has two young children and was keen to secure good employment to be able to provide properly for them. He had experience in the care industry but had set his sights on the building trade. As with some other individuals, Steven found it more beneficial to engage on a one to one basis to be able to train more intensively, discuss a plan of action, and build his confidence as well as gain the knowledge he needed to pass the required tests. He has since achieved his CSCS green labourer's card and is now employed by a local building company.



## Gavin's Story

**When I began working with Kirsty on the Steps service, I was living in supported homeless accommodation. I was unable to work in the same fields as I have worked most of my adult life – firstly, banking due to my conviction, and also hospitality due to a complete breakdown of confidence and anxiety issues. While being declared unfit to work by GP and DWP I was still looking for support on how to look for and apply for work with a conviction and for help boosting my confidence.**

The first thing we looked at was updating my CV which was a couple of years out of date and working on a disclosure letter to declare my conviction when requested. As well as this, I was given advice on how and when to present the letter and when it would be appropriate or not. As I would no longer be seeking work in the industries I have experience, it was recommended I look at different training opportunities to open up new avenues for the future. I was offered the chance to participate in CSCS green labourer card training to allow me to work in construction in the future. The training was well delivered allowing me to pass the test without any difficulty and I now have a CSCS card valid for the next 5 years. I managed to work with a family member one day per week for a month to give me some experience of working on a building site which wouldn't have been possible without the card.

**“Since starting to work with Apex, I have been supported by two PDMs and offered a lot of support and advice about getting back to work and moving forward with my life.**

Leading from this and with my court ordered unpaid work coming to an end, I was advised to look at volunteering opportunities to help with my confidence and give me experience of disclosing my conviction. We looked at several opportunities, screening what wouldn't be appropriate or permitted due to restrictions and found an opportunity to be a volunteer gardener. With Apex's help and advice, I was able to attend an interview, disclose my conviction and be offered a position. The volunteering has been going well and will be ongoing until I am ready to start paid work again. Through my volunteering position I have been given the chance to gain a recognised level 5 SQA qualification in Community Involvement which will be ongoing over the summer and be completed after 8 weeks.

I will be continuing to work with Apex while my mental health improves, and when my housing situation becomes more settled I will be looking for help and advice in applying for work to really help me move on in life and begin to rebuild.

Throughout my experience working with Apex I have found both Kirsty and Chirsty very helpful and enthusiastic at helping me to get back into my feet and I look forward to continuing to move forward with their help.”

**Gavin\***  
Steps client, Paisley

## Shaun's Story

**Shaun\* was referred to the Steps service after being released from an eight year prison sentence. When he arrived he expressed his views that he was not hopeful of finding work and couldn't see himself progressing as he was used to a cycle of being in and out of prison his whole life. He had no previous work experience and didn't talk much. The only thing he said he would like to do was cleaning, if possible.**

We started from there and completed an action plan so that there were goals to aim for; even setting up an email account and registering with a local GP were positive steps forward. Although he had little experience, we created Shaun a CV of skills and looked at possible volunteering placements. We agreed that obtaining a CSCS card would be a good move to open up possibilities of employment on building sites, perhaps in a cleaning capacity. He undertook the training and passed his tests, gaining his CSCS labouring card.

After learning of Shaun's situation, the manager at All Cleaned Up offered to give him a voluntary position at the company, working alongside the cleaning teams on various jobs. Shaun accepted this readily and his confidence grew each week. After four weeks, proving his hard work and effort, Shaun was offered permanent employment with All Cleaned Up and has now been working there for over six months. His confidence has continued to grow. Now he is happy to have a conversation with his colleagues and make cups of tea! Shaun said, “without Apex I would not be where I am today and I never thought I could achieve this much so quickly.”

**Zoe Grove**  
Steps PDM, Edinburgh



Stuart is a peer mentor at the Highland outdoor projects

## Stuart's Story

Stuart came to the Steps service after being referred by DWP. His referral was borne out of a need to have an understanding of his previous convictions and the rehabilitation and disclosure around them. He was also low in confidence as he had lost a job because of his offending past.

When we first met him Stuart was feeling lost with no direction; feeling that his offending past was stopping him moving forward. Our work with Stuart began with an action plan focusing on barrier removal. The action plan included offending-specific work such as looking at rehabilitation and disclosure, but we also encouraged volunteering at one of our outdoor projects which was perfect motivation for Stuart as he loves the outdoors and is a keen gardener.

We applied for his police check and worked out whether or not his convictions were spent. This was a valuable experience as all the convictions were spent and this in itself was motivating to hear. We also wrote a disclosure letter that allowed Stuart to be prepared in the event he needed to disclose to employers. This work allowed Stuart to become fully prepared for the job market. The next part of the action plan was to build his confidence.

Stuart achieved an Emergency First Aid at Work qualification, a John Muir award for his attendance at the outdoor project and attended the SAPHiR course, an employability course dealing with the current job market.

Stuart also regularly attended our auricular acupuncture groups and loved receiving this treatment.

It was while attending these peer groups and courses that we saw a real talent within Stuart as he had a great presence within the groups and was great at motivating, with a great work ethic. We offered him the opportunity to train as an acupuncturist and a peer mentor. Stuart was delighted with this chance and is now a fully qualified Nada 5 point acupuncturist and is on our rota providing the service to our service users.

Stuart is also a peer mentor at our outdoor projects and is a real asset to our team.

Stuart now sees himself as a valuable employee and will shortly be joining Apex as a sessional worker. He said, "Apex pushed me out of my comfort zone in a positive way, as I needed that to move forward in my life. They helped me to believe in myself again."

**Mandie Smith**

Steps PDM, Highland

## William's Story

William\* was referred to us in January with low confidence having been out of work for two years and considerable worries about how he would be able to move forward with work given a recent health diagnosis. We met together once a week and, although he had over 30 years of experience, he was not open to change and found it difficult to see how he could progress. We took things relatively slowly, working through an action plan, creating an updated CV and geared up to applying for work. In time, as we made progress through the action plan, his confidence started to return. He applied for a volunteer placement with a national retailer but was unsuccessful. This knocked William's confidence considerably and it took a lot of encouragement to persuade him to try again.

It didn't take too long before he was feeling motivated, however, and he applied for a volunteer position at Cancer Research which he was appointed to, being described by the manager there as "wonderful". A couple of months on, I believed William was ready to take another positive step and put him forward for a Waitrose placement. He did so well there that they asked him to leave his CV with them for the next vacancy, alongside a lovely thank you card from all the staff!

William says of his Steps experience, "I enjoy coming in to see the girls, they are friendly and the help is always there. Since working with them I have gained more confidence in retail, and my placement at Waitrose was really interesting. It even gave me the confidence to apply for a job at my local Scotmid, and I got offered an interview last week!"

**Corey McIntyre**  
PDM, Edinburgh



## Supporting Prisoners on Release

**On 14 May 2018, the Steps service was represented at an employer event in HMP Edinburgh which brought together a range of employers, support agencies and adult prisoners who were due for release. Executed in the style of a jobs fair, the event was opened by the Governor of HMP Edinburgh who welcomed everyone.**

Staff from Apex Steps and All Cleaned Up shared a spot during the four hour event where they met and spoke to a large number of men. All those they spoke to were very enthusiastic about working with Steps and at least eighteen people took details of the service to contact on their release. What was clearly demonstrated to the men was that there are a number of employers that are willing to consider people with convictions as a potential employee. Equally there are a number of agencies and specialist services such as Steps willing and able to support them back in to employment.

### Zara's Story

Zara\* was referred to the Steps service from Y-People in November 2017. She presented as a chaotic individual with little motivation and support to making positive choices towards her future. She found it difficult building relationships with new people and isolated herself from social groups. As we have worked together to overcome her barriers, Zara's progress has taken her from strength to strength. Together we identified a career path that she wants to follow and Zara has taken the necessary steps towards this. She has completed a 'Get Into Hair and Beauty' course where she interacted with like-minded individuals, something she would have struggled with before engaging with Steps, and gained skills that are relevant in the industry she is interested in.

Following this, we looked at different funding options and successfully secured £500 to contribute towards Zara completing a beginner's acrylic nail course that will result in an accredited qualification which will make any job applications stronger. Her next intention is to enroll onto an ITA-funded make-up application course and she has already started this process. This new-found confidence is giving her a fresh determination to succeed and, together with the knowledge and skills she is learning, it won't be long before she achieves her goal of securing employment in a salon.

**Eilidh Hope**

*Steps PDM, Glasgow*

### Billy's Story

Billy\* (18) had been going through the criminal justice system when he started working with Steps. He had outstanding charges for vandalism and assault, and saw his life going down the wrong path. He was eager to turn his life around and move forward in a more positive way and together we discussed ways that he would be able to do that.

The first step was to help Billy find where to start to progress into his field of interest. He took on every bit of support and advice given, attended all appointments and kept in good contact with me, asking questions along the way. We looked at specific training and Billy decided to apply for the course that Apex delivers to help people achieve their CSCS card. We ensured that he was well prepared for the subsequent test and he was successful in achieving his card. He then applied for a Street Scene job working with his local council. He was successful and since then has been working full-time.

When meeting him after he had finished the service, Billy spoke of Steps as being really helpful in supporting him along his journey in moving forward.

**Laura Mathieson**

*Steps PDM, Glasgow*

### Paul's Story

Paul\* was referred to Apex in December 2017 where his confidence was low and he was doubtful that someone over 54 could find employment. After being in his previous job for 27 years, Paul was nervous about what his next steps would be and came to Apex for advice. During his time with the Steps service, we first focused on confidence building which, after a few months, saw him take part in Emergency First Aid at Work training which is one of the certificated courses that Apex delivers.

Following this, Paul took another major step forward in his development when he said he felt ready to start volunteering. We looked at some options and he decided to apply to Cancer Research where he now volunteers a couple of times a week. In his last month with Apex, Paul went from strength to strength and joined a local IT course to continue to develop his computer skills. He also went on to apply for a job, securing employment at Poundland and is, rightly, incredibly proud of this achievement.

**Jess Cadd**

*Steps PDM, Edinburgh*

# Our Steps Staff

Here is what some of our newest members of the Steps teams across the country have to say about the service.



Forth Valley

"It's been great working alongside other fantastic agencies in the city and seeing the service develop in Edinburgh. I'm excited to see what's in store for Steps in the future."

**Jess Cadd, PDM, Edinburgh**



Tayside

"My first year with Apex has given me so much experience in this field. I didn't realise how much I would learn so quickly. I have enjoyed setting up a new service and enjoying it more now I am settling into the job."

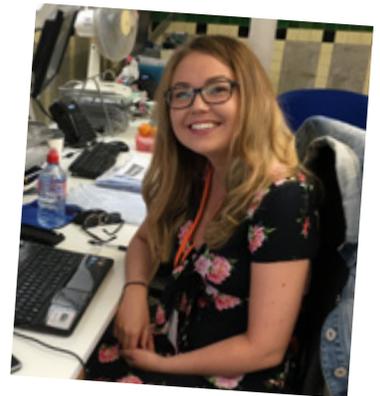
**Zoe Grove, PDM, Edinburgh**



Stranraer

"I am enjoying delivering the service. I have been finding more and more interesting and diverse ways of helping clients reach milestones and this has linked me with other organisations to work with, refer to and who can refer to us. Depending on what clients are looking for, they can move forward quite quickly or at a slower pace, if they require more input - it really is designed to be individually tailored to their needs."

**Ann Mathieson, PDM, Forth Valley**



Paisley

"My first year at Apex has exceeded expectations. Regardless of the challenges this type of work brings, it has been the most enjoyable and rewarding employment I have had to date. The job becomes a bit easier when you know that colleagues all across the organisation are willing and often encourage you to contact them if you need help with rehabilitation periods, going over disclosure letters, or simply seeking advice about the best direction to take with some clients."

**Jessica Gillespie, PDM, Edinburgh**



Edinburgh



Highland

"Through the training and experience that has been made available to me I have been able to develop and enhance my service delivery abilities. Encouraging others to make positive life choices is a particularly rewarding aspect of the role and building and developing relationships with individuals who rely on this support is both meaningful and enjoyable."

**Eilidh Hope, PDM, Glasgow**



Glasgow

"It can be really rewarding to see clients progressing positively with their lives with the support we've given."

**Laura Mathieson, PDM, Glasgow**



Dumfries

"Being a PDM is challenging yet even more rewarding, every day is different and teaches you something new. From supporting clients with disclosure letters, to learning from other agencies, and working as part of a close-knit team – and I can't wait to see what else the service has in store!"

**Corey McIntyre, PDM, Edinburgh**



Borders

# Labyrinth



**A Labyrinth is described as a path with many different routes, entry points and exit points not all of which are obvious or straightforward. Apex's Labyrinth course allows our service users to navigate a pathway towards employment that is right for them, ensuring they receive the right advice, guidance and support to exit at a positive destination.**

The course, funded by DWP, differs from Steps in that it is designed for those with a fairly stable lifestyle, so that participants are capable of, and committed to, programme engagement and beginning work is a realistic prospect within the programme timeframe. In fact, those who have participated in Apex's Steps service would benefit from onward progression onto a Labyrinth course.

Labyrinth is an employability service and aims to directly address the employability issues related to a client's conviction, and also the wider barriers they face to accessing employment. Personal Development Mentors (PDMs) work with each Labyrinth group to build confidence and motivation, enhance problem solving, improve team working and decision making skills and promote the ability to self-manage and to become self-reliant.

Each course is different, determined by the needs of the group, but it is always very interactive with PDMs using a variety of methods to maintain interest and ensure that participants gain valuable knowledge and skills to take them forward into the workplace. In one Paisley group, this included encouraging some of the participants to lead sessions for their peers which instilled in them a new-found confidence.

Core elements of the course involve the practical skills in finding work and how, when you have worked hard to overcome barriers that have kept you from employment, you can convince a potential employer that you are the right person for the job.

In 2017/18 we successfully delivered these courses in Tayside and Renfrewshire, moving many of the participants on to successful outcomes including employment. Feedback from these courses has been excellent and is a testament to our staff that deliver them. Jean Ballantyne, Customer Service Manager from the Paisley Jobcentre said, "Participants spoke really highly about what they were involved in and the support they were getting, and at least four of them said that this was something long overdue and was really helping them. There was a good positive atmosphere among the group and they clearly respected the leaders."

Here is what some of the clients had to say:

*"Brian, Paul B, Paul R and Del were informative, helpful and friendly."*

*"Very helpful. This course has made me look at things a lot clearer and able to understand things with confidence."*

*"I've found the course to be very useful indeed. To be honest when I first heard of it I thought that the only thing I'd get out of it would be the disclosure aspect. Not so. Both Brian and Paul provided numerous information on things like interview technique and such that help to fill in the blanks. I enjoyed the way the course was structured. Paul was excellent at keeping things relaxed while still covering the course schedule. Brian's wealth of experience was firmly evident and helped clear much of the murkiness surrounding disclosure. All in all, I would highly recommend the course and I am very thankful to all those involved with its running."*

*"Very good course. Although done similar before when in prison, I still got a lot from it and refreshed my mind. Tutors were excellent."*

*"The course was helpful and informative. The daily flow from Paul made it easy to join in. I have a better understanding of how to communicate my situation when applying for jobs."*

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## A Trainer's Perspective

**Paul Reilly worked as a Personal Development Mentor and trainer for the Labyrinth course in Paisley. Here he explains one of the first courses he delivered.**

"There were twelve participants who started the course – the only one who didn't fully complete found a job instead!

Confidence was the biggest barrier for everyone there; confidence in themselves, primarily, to be able to re-engage with civic life, which was true both for those recently released from custody and also for those who hadn't committed an offence for a considerable period of time.

These clients carried their criminal record as a burden because they were acutely aware that others – jobcentre staff, the police, potential employers – would know of their convictions and they believed they would be judged on this to their detriment. The idea that a criminal record would be a considerable obstacle to securing work was a preoccupation for all.

Another concern for the participants was behavioural change and how they would cope with this: could they avoid former friends/contacts who had had a negative influence on them, perhaps substance mis-use was the issue or even indolence or lack of focus. When they arrived on day one of the course, they did not believe that they were particularly well-equipped to make positive changes. I believe they were by the end of the course.

I think the key elements to success for this particular course were bonding within the group, engagement with and by each person, and treating individuals as valuable, and valued, human beings. Being able to give sound advice and reassurance on barriers to each person about their own particular circumstances was very important to the clients. I was told on a number of occasions that they often feel they are treated as a number, an "ex-con", someone who wouldn't get on. We worked on their perception, and we related to each person specifically as someone with rich and valuable experience they could share and use to help others, reminding them that they do have a future regardless of their past. We created an environment in which the group felt comfortable with sharing information, anecdotes and experiences with each other which was hugely beneficial. We got to know one another, their mindsets and circumstances, and encouraged them to aim higher, be aspirational and to move forward. All of this was pivotal to clients wanting to come back time and again three days a week over six weeks. It was not easy for them. But we created an environment where they were understood, not judged, given advice and guidance they could take away and use in their daily lives which was, I believe, the reason they came back and benefitted each day.

Simple things like punctuality, mobile phones being switched to silent, courtesy shown to each other, not speaking over someone else – all the things one usually has to ensure for a successful training event – were things I did not have to address once. Not once. They naturally happened. I think that was because clients were shown courtesy, respect and value by myself, Paul, Brian and Del. When you create an atmosphere, or a vibe, like that, people respond and warm to it; they engage and ultimately benefit.

Finally, quite simply, it was one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional life."

**Paul Reilly**  
*PDM, Labyrinth*

"When you are up at Apex you're not judged, you walk in that front door and you're an equal."

**PDM, Jacqueline MacFarlane, runs Labyrinth courses in Dundee and the following are examples of the success that has happened there.**

Susan\* (53) joined the Labyrinth course last November. Her self esteem and self worth was incredibly low, brought about by being unable to escape the consequences of serving a custodial sentence. She could hardly look people in the eye and her personal appearance was poor. She felt it very difficult to mix with new people and talk about herself. Throughout the course we took time to work on different elements to help her confidence and motivation which built very slowly and she moved on at her own pace. Small changes in her appearance and posture took place as her confidence grew. In order to continue this positive path we secured Susan a voluntary reception position at The Circle in Dundee and, although she was petrified, she was happy to challenge herself. We then applied for a place on a customer service course and she achieved her qualification. Since that time the change in Susan has been unbelievable and has thanked me, saying Labyrinth has changed her life.

Amy\* (31) attended the Labyrinth course in April. She had never worked since leaving school, having chosen to be at home raising four children. From early on I saw real potential in her – she was well presented, outspoken and confident. In Amy's spare time she was passionate about mechanical and electrical equipment, tinkering about with cars, using tools and carrying out basic DIY, and we used this as an advantage to look for work. Within two weeks of the completing the course she had successfully secured a full-time position at Tokheim as an assembly operative.

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# Young People

## The Year of Young People

In the Year of Young People in Scotland, it has been our privilege to work with around 1000 young people in the last year. Ensuring that individuals under the age of 25 have a positive and active role to play in our society is a great responsibility and one that we take seriously. It is the reason why we are so fiercely passionate about the difference that our RE:SET service makes in our schools and to ensure those leaving care are given as much support as possible to make a successful transition into their new situations. We are proud to be a leading employer of Community Jobs Scotland placements and take great delight in ensuring each young person entrusted to us is given experience, training, skills and opportunities to thrive and progress during their time with us. Fortunately our commitment to young people, and indeed to all our service users and staff, is constant, no matter what year it is.



Mariachiara and Debora on tour

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## European Placements

This year we were offered the opportunity to take part in the Erasmus Programme, a scheme which creates work experience and learning placements for students from within the European Union. We hosted two students from Italy, Mariachiara (19) and Debora (17), who worked full-time over five weeks in a variety of Apex locations on a number of different tasks, giving them a unique opportunity to experience the scope of Apex delivery across the country.

During their time with us they were introduced to the Scottish Parliament and attended the National Youth Justice conference; they worked with our young people on the RE:SET service and assisted our teams in Alloa and Glasgow; they carried out a number of different admin tasks for our teams within our head office, including devising a new information leaflet. They spent time with our Sustainable Development Officer who made them wear hard hats at the site of our new social enterprise build, and finished off their time with us by visiting our team in Inverness who put them to work at their outdoor projects, but sent them off gently by generously giving them a tour of the Highland sights including a hunt for Nessie!

Mariachiara said of her visit: "During my five weeks in Scotland working with Apex staff I came to understand how the Third Sector works here and how Apex works with other organisations. This organisation helps people who have problems. For every age there is a personal project that tries to support these people. At the beginning I didn't understand what Apex really does. I had only seen the website and I was a little bit scared because I didn't know the sector. Day by day I really learned a lot of new things about the organisation and Scotland. I am happy to say that the experience in Apex was better than I thought it might be because I thought that I would always be in the office; instead it was exciting and interesting because I saw the different parts of the job and I was always around the country!"

We are delighted the students enjoyed their time with us. We understand that the good impression they left with has prompted an experienced individual to apply to work with us through Erasmus for a longer period of time.

"If you want to better yourself,  
this is the place to come."

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## Community Jobs Scotland

Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) creates a wide range of jobs with Third Sector employer organisations for young people aged 16 to 29 years, who are more disadvantaged in the labour market. Apex has been a leading employer of CJS placements since the initiative's inception, with many young people going on to become permanent employees within the organisation. One of them is Megan MacKenzie who works with the Highland team.

"When I first applied for the CJS position at Apex through the job centre I was nervous as that had been my first interview in two years due to my two chronic medical conditions which prevented me from working as I suffered from memory loss and receiving numerous lumbar punctures at the hospital every two weeks.

I had initially heard about Apex through my work coach at the job centre and once I read up on the organisation I knew it was the sector I wanted to work in. I have always wanted to work with people in addictions and Apex seemed like the perfect fit.

When my interview date arrived I was extremely nervous as it had been so long and thought that my potential employers may have been unwilling to employ me due to my medical conditions, but Alistair and Tina couldn't have been more understanding and accommodating. I was thrilled to hear that I had been offered the position of the 18 month CJS placement as it felt like a fresh start of being able to get back on my feet.

I initially started off as part time where I handled reception and phones at first, and gradually began to progress onto the group attendances and appointment letters where I learnt about our ASSET database. Shortly after I was placed onto the Emergency First Aid at Work course, and in April 2017 I was given the opportunity to take part in auricular acupuncture training and SMART Facilitators course where I qualified as an acupuncturist and facilitator, which I was happy about! Once I had qualified I began shadowing the acupuncturists and facilitators, eventually being placed on the rota for both which was brilliant because I got to meet our service users on a regular basis and build a relationship with them.



**Megan is an auricular acupuncturist practitioner**

In August 2017 I began to learn all about the Steps programme and my duties for this include the Steps database and uploading the client files to ASSET. CSCS training administration was passed over to me in December 2017 where I learned more about ITA and claims; I now currently am responsible for the ITA claims, CSCS database and reports.

In March 2018 I qualified as an Acupuncture Assessor which I couldn't have been happier about as it has been something that I had wanted to achieve for a while.

If someone had said to me 18 months ago that I would be where I am today I wouldn't have believed them. I am now the Acupuncture Co-ordinator for our unit which has helped me build confidence and experience. I am responsible for various duties such as the acupuncture rotas each month, making sure the clinics run smoothly each week and the ordering the supplies for acupuncture.

Looking back on my journey over the past 18 months, I have done and achieved so much more than I thought possible.

Eventually the long term goal would be becoming a Personal Development Mentor, and if there were any opportunities to do so I would love to be considered for the role as the Highland Unit is a great team, who are a great support to me and each other."

**"To be honest, I don't know where I would have been...caus I got the help when I really, really needed it, 'caus I was ready to go further down. I knew myself, I was giving up, just didn't want to be here."**

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## RAFT

RAFT (Reaching Aberdeen Families Together) is a new service and a unique one to Aberdeen, bringing together five separate organisations – Apex Scotland, Barnardo's, Aberdeen Foyer, Alcohol and Drugs Action and HomeStart – to create a consortium. This service is one of only two Third Sector children and families services in Aberdeen. Bringing all of us together ensures that every family we work with can benefit from support from any part of us. This unique service brings a new way of working but in a way that benefits our communities and strengthens our practice. Partnership working is vital for people to receive support on every level needed. This service recognises that people do not just deal with one issue but have many things going on in their lives and we have created a service that is able to take on most of the issues families or individuals could be facing. We started this service last September and we are currently planning our first birthday in a form of a party! Families and young people will be invited to share in the fun, excitement and celebration of each one of their successes. This is also an opportunity to invite social work and other professionals to learn more about the work we do and the incredible journey our families have been on.

Apex's focus in RAFT is working with the young people that have offended in the community; engaging with us prevents the charge going any further. This is a great opportunity for us to work with the individual and allow them to chance to explore the situation and how to move away from it in a positive direction. Our personal development mentor working on the service, Rebecca Farquhar, has received great feedback from the young people especially one that had struggled to open up to others before but now works really closely with her.

This exciting new service is leading the pathway for partnership working and supporting families as a whole. The partnership believes that where a child is suffering it is likely that the family is suffering, therefore the whole family benefits from support. The following examples demonstrate Apex's input.

"I was first introduced to Jason\* through RAFT. Jason had a seizure in the middle of the street after consuming cocaine and had a small wrap of heroin in his possession. It was this offence which brought him to the attention of the police. The first meeting I had with him was quite fraught as his whole family arrived because they thought I was 'social work'. After allowing the family to air their concerns I explained what the service involved. I spoke to them about getting Jason into work, suggested helping him to get a CSCS card and access to various online training. I also spoke with Jason on his own about getting some help with his anxiety, loneliness and ability to understand consequences. Over the coming weeks we applied for ITA funding, helped him complete his CSCS training and worked on various modules including ones on moral choices and attitude towards offending behaviour. Before I closed his case Jason hadn't had a seizure for months and his offending behaviour had decreased. He was job searching and seemed to have a better grasp of how he would like his life to be moving forward."

**Charlotte Stroud**  
PDM, Aberdeen

**"The RAFT service has helped me understand the impact of my offending on other people like my family members and the wider society. It has also given me knowledge about the consequences when I commit an offence. It's also helped me make good morale choices and decisions like never to offend again."**

**Kevin\***  
RAFT service user

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## Making It Happen

In December 2017, nine of the young people engaged in the AYE service expressed an interest in gaining their CSCS card. This card would allow them to gain entry to construction sites and open up opportunities for them to find work in this environment. However, Apex does not have a regular training venue in Fife. Many of the young people suffered from mental health issues, such as; low self-esteem, anxiety and a fear of rejection. Travelling was also an issue for many of young people as financial and daily living costs meant that they could not travel outwith Fife.

Undeterred, Susan Brisbane and Linda Dunion, who had been working with the young people, began the process of planning and implementing a CSCS course to be delivered in Fife. With considerable effort, they secured a free venue and arranged transport for all nine young people on the date of the training to remove any barriers to attending. All nine young people passed their Level 1 Health and Safety in a Construction Environment which was a fantastic achievement. As a result each young person felt accomplished and determined to study for the next part of their CSCS test.

The next stage was to secure a local CSCS testing centre, the usual venues closest to them being in Edinburgh or Dundee. After some negotiation Susan and Linda managed to secure agreement from the Midfield Centre, part of Fife Council, to allow our group of young people to sit their test there. After explaining the young people's circumstances they were more than happy to accommodate all nine participants.

Communicating with the service users before their test date was important and many of them did not have computer access, so Susan and Linda supported them to practice mock tests within local libraries. Fife Council was also a great support by offering all young people practice tests on the day of their test.

Each of the young people Linda and Susan supported have expressed great gratitude and felt they may not have been able to achieve their CSCS card had multiple barriers not been removed. These young people had not received any qualifications before that point and the support from the AYE service has given them an opportunity to achieve a personal goal which has been a great success in their progress, giving them belief that they can accomplish more.

## A.Y.E.

Susan Brisbane is a PDM in the AYE service (Accessing Youth Employment) in Fife working with 'looked after' young people aged 16-25 years old, supporting them into further education, training and employment. The PDMs work with the service users developing their social and emotional skills as well as their employability skills in order to achieve their future dreams and goals. Here, Susan describes her time with one of these young people.

"Rachel is 19 years old who has been looked after and accommodated since the age of five. She currently lives in supported lodgings with a carer in Dunfermline and her mild speech and language difficulties mean she has found it difficult to progress. I first met Rachel in October 2017 when she was isolating herself within her home environment. She said she had no friends and this was impacting her mental health. Rachel's social worker asked me if I could work alongside her to determine some goals for Rachel.

As I was getting to know her, Rachel told me she would like to be a hairdresser. She didn't have a CV and had never been employed before, relying on PIP and maintenance money from her social worker to survive. As a starting point, we created a CV. Rachel and I then went to her local hairdressers to hand it in, however Rachel's shyness overcame her and she couldn't bring herself to go in to the shop. I went in on Rachel's behalf and asked if there would be an opportunity for her to work within the salon (paid or unpaid) for some experience. The salon informed me that they would love to give Rachel a chance as she was a loyal customer already and they would also pay her for this. Rachel was ecstatic with this news and she was told that she could come in one day per week to gain some experience. Since then Rachel has thrived within this environment and learnt many new skills as a result (such as the professional hair washing technique). Rachel also suffers from social anxiety and working within this environment has improved her communication with others. I remain a link for Rachel within this position and I continue to speak with her manager to make sure she is getting on okay.

Rachel had decided that she would like to go to college but knew she would struggle because of her mild learning difficulties. To combat this we spent some time researching low level courses she could do which would allow her to achieve and continue to progress. I supported Rachel to apply for a course called "Step In", a practical and fun short course, providing a range of taster activities which helps students to discover and develop their talents in a supportive, stress-free, and relaxed environment to bolster their skills and confidence. I gave her a lift to her interview and when we arrived Rachel asked if I would go in with her to support her. Happily, Rachel was offered a place on this course and began in January 2018. She has recently completed this course and I continue to offer her ongoing support. I have noticed a significant change in Rachel since I began working with her. She has gained confidence, her self-esteem has significantly improved and she has made new and lasting relationships with others. We had a bit of a chat about how she feels she has progressed."



**Rachel is gaining confidence**

### **When you first came to Apex how were you feeling?**

I felt nervous and scared. I've had a lot of people coming in and out of my life and I didn't want to feel let down again. I had no friends and I didn't leave the house much. I spent a lot of time by myself and it was hard for me to change that.

### **What sort of things has working with me and Apex helped you with?**

Loads of things! I now have a job the same as what my mum did! I'm learning new skills in a hairdressers and this has helped me to come out of my shell. Before I had this job I didn't communicate very well with people but this job has helped me because I've actually got to speak to people. I've made friends too, at work and in college. You helped me get this job by going in and asking if they would take me on and I never would have had the guts to do it myself. I just finished my 'Step In' course at college and I also have a boyfriend! You supported me to get a place at college too and came in with me when I had my interview. Now I've finished the course and I need help again deciding what else I want to do!

### **How have things changed for you since you first started with Apex?**

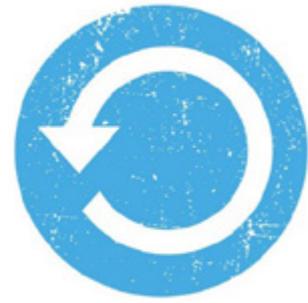
Well, before I went to college I had nobody. I never left the house. I isolated myself and I had poor mental health. I went on other programmes like FEAT and they helped me with mental health but it didn't get me a job. I did some volunteering but it wasn't the same. I know I can do things, I just needed a chance. I've met people and learnt how to fit in something I never thought would happen for me. My life has changed so much in the last eight months. I want to keep moving forward now and not to look back.

### **What possibilities do you see for yourself in the future?**

I still see myself being a hairdresser but I know I've got a long way to go before that happens. I still need you to help me with stuff. I don't know if I want to stay at college... I was going to do Prince's Trust but I decided not to. I'd like to work full-time but I'm not sure I would be ready for that just now so I still need support.

# RE-SET

## REVISING YOUTH MINDSET



RE:SET is Apex's school service. Inclusion remains at the heart of our work; offering all young people the opportunity to achieve their potential, working in particular with those at risk of exclusion. For more than a decade we have been engaging young people through physical, emotional and social challenges; taking them into a personal 'stretch' zone where powerful learning occurs helping to evaluate their learning, and how to put those lessons to work in their classes, home lives and communities. More information on the RE:SET service is available on our website. In the past year there were 360 referrals to our RE:SET service.

The RE:SET model is popular with those wanting to learn more about our successful approach with pupils with challenging behaviour. During the year we hosted Kerri McLay, a 4th year student from Strathclyde University studying Education and Social Services who worked with us on placement in RE:SET for ten weeks. Also, 3rd year social work student, Chloe Allan, from the University of Edinburgh attended a ten day observational placement within Levenmouth Academy.

RE:SET is currently delivered full-time in Dunfermline High School, Levenmouth Academy and St Augustine's High School, with sessional delivery in Viewforth High School. Here is a flavour of what the RE:SET PDMs and pupils have been up to over the past year.



Mindbuzz!

## Viewforth Input

The RE:SET service delivered courses to pupils from Viewforth High School, Fife, between May and November 2017. RE:SET delivered our in-house Focus on Your Future programme to a cohort of 24 young people in S1-S3 as a precursor to the Mindbuzz and accredited PX2 Programmes. Both courses lasted 12 weeks and are learned investments young people carry with them beyond school and into adulthood, reflecting the vision of RE:SET. Mindbuzz is activity based and helps young people understand how they think and why, and then gives them a series of tools to start changing their mindsets in a positive way, raising their aspirations and setting and achieving challenging goals. PX2 is designed to build understanding of how your mind works, with a simple, structured process allowing young people to understand how they got their habits and attitudes, the beliefs that may stand in the way of releasing their inner potential to live their lives to the full.

Four out of our eight PX2 students achieved SCQF Level 5 in Developing Effective Thinking Skills. The eight young people who completed Mindbuzz will graduate to the PX2 Programme in 2018/19 and we will continue supporting those who completed the PX2 course in S4. The RE:SET team is extremely proud of all course participants and looks forward to working with new and returning students in the new session.



Pupils working together

## Supporting the Curriculum on Law & Order

In November 2017, the RE:SET service delivered workshops at the Law and Order pupil conference in Balwearie High School, where pupils from both Levenmouth Academy and Dunfermline High School attended along with other five schools. Workshops were facilitated by Apex's RE:SET team, SACRO, Police Scotland and the Procurator Fiscal before presentations were delivered by Fife Council Criminal Justice and Turning Point. The day finished with a question and answer session with a panel of all invited parties, as well as representatives from Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service. It was a well organised event which produced valuable learning outcomes for the young people with the pupils being excellent representatives of their respective schools.

## Achieve Programme

Six S4 pupils in Dunfermline High School took part in the Prince's Trust Achieve programme. This programme is designed to help young people who are experiencing challenges with attendance, motivation and risk of exclusion, all leading to the possibility of under achieving at school. This programme gave them the opportunity to try new activities and build confidence whilst gaining a recognised Prince's Trust qualification. Some of the areas the young people worked on were life skills, preparation for work and personal and social development. All five young people taking part completed the programme at the same time as sitting their national exams which was an additional challenge for them, and chose to go in to school during study leave to compete the units they had missed. The photo shows PDM, Nicola Mitchell with Maddi, one of the participants on the Achieve programme.



Nicola and Maddi

“They didn’t treat you like, not so much a child, because we were children but like... they spoke to you like a normal person...they didn’t treat you like you were stupid.”

## Helping Deliver Hot Meals in Fife

To help celebrate National Meals on Wheels Week in Fife, five young pupils who attend RE:SET volunteered to accompany the Meals on Wheels drivers as they delivered hot meals around Fife. Pupils were shocked when they heard that some of the people they visited had not seen or spoken to another person that day and provoked a good discussion on social responsibility as well as the importance of connection, communication and having fun!

“It was awesome. I really enjoyed going out in the van to make the deliveries and meeting some of the older people; and I saw lots of laughs and smiles, it was a great experience!”



Pupils on their Meals on Wheels run

“I used to come into RE:SET because I was angry all the time now I only come in to chill for 5 minutes.”



Pupils with their Purple Friday stall

## Purple Friday

RE:SET is a supporter of LGBT+ at Dunfermline High School and hosts the LGBT+ club, totalling around 30 members, which takes place every Tuesday at lunchtime. The young people organised Purple Friday as part of LGBT+ history month and attended an equalities day. Purple Friday (purple signifies spirit on the LGBT+ rainbow flag) was a great success in raising awareness with plenty of support from other pupils. The group made purple ribbon badges and cakes with rainbow flags and displayed these at a stall in the refectory at break. The group created an information station and the pupils involved were thrilled to not only raise awareness but also £57 of donations which has been contributed to the DHS charities committee.



Creative problem solving

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## MSP Visit

During the year Jenny Gilruth MSP took time from her busy schedule to join in with a group of fourth year pupils at Levenmouth Academy taking part in All About Me. Jenny visited after being invited to witness the early intervention work being delivered by RE:SET in Levenmouth Academy. Jenny took part in lively discussion centred around equality and diversity in relation to offending and the role of social media and its impact. Jenny congratulated young people on their efforts to raise awareness of food poverty and support fundraising for the local Foodbank, happily selecting our Christmas raffle winner, with proceeds going towards the Foodbank Café. Jenny extended a visit for young people to visit the Scottish Parliament, which we hope to take up in 2018/19.



Jamie, Calvin and Jack with PDM, Lynne Clement (left) and Jenny Gilruth

“I went through a really hard stage.  
I might never have been here if that RE:SET wasn't there.”

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## Levenmouth Foodbank

We were delighted to share with staff and pupils a letter received by the Head Teacher of Levenmouth High School, which the following excerpt is taken from:

“We write on behalf of Levenmouth Foodbank and Community Support Project in recognition of the wonderful work done by the staff and pupils of Levenmouth Academy (Apex Scotland) support unit. Over the recent year we have been so blessed by their continued commitment and dedication to the ethos of the Foodbank and the Project. The young people who come along on a Tuesday morning to our Cafe Connect integrate well with our adult visitors, engaging and interacting in a mature and responsible manner. We have been further delighted to receive the weekly donations of food they consistently bring along and impressed by the kindness and generosity of the Academy staff and pupils. A particular mention to Andrew Nixon, Calvin Sturrock, Jack Dougal and Jamie McLaughlin whose efforts raised £100 towards the Project's funds. This enabled us to provide gifts for our Boxing Day meal guests and to assist with the ongoing cost of provisions within the Cafe. It has been a refreshing privilege to get to know these young lads who add a spark to our Tuesday mornings. We are quite disappointed when, for whatever reason, they can't pop in.”

## Group Work

The groups run by the RE:SET PDMs are an integral part of the service, using a wide-ranging choice of specially designed modules to help pupils determine and discover coping skills, appropriate behaviour responses, increased confidence, etc. Some of these groups are:

**Alternative to Exclusion (A2E):** A2E is a formal process adopted by the school which gives pupils the opportunity to work with RE:SET staff on their behaviour whilst continuing to access the curriculum. A2E is not a 'soft' option as young people often find it more difficult to come into school and address what's happened. This year our school services prevented 417 days being lost to exclusion. Where exclusion has been the only option, the RE:SET facility is also used as a means of reintegration to the school with a focus on reparation and self-regulation for smooth transition back to classes.

**All About Me:** The aim of this course is to enable identification of areas of self-improvement and provide information, support and strategies to achieve this self-awareness and self-development. It incorporates a range of interactive learning methods to encourage pupils who may be at risk of disengaging to participate.

"I wasn't sure what to expect but I have learnt a lot about myself and what I want to get better at doing."

"It has helped me through difficult times and has given me the space I need."

**Positive Me:** Attendance at this group is in high demand by pupils. The aim is to raise awareness of the issues affecting girls and to build confidence and self-esteem and to provide an opportunity for young girls to offer peer support for one another around challenging experiences of adolescence.

**S1 Nurture Group:** This is for pupils who find the transition from P7 to S1 difficult and are given individually tailored timetables which included sessions in RE:SET. A small number of these pupils now register in RE:SET and this allows them time to discuss their timetable for that day and speak about any issues they may face.

"I prefer being in RE:SET. Coming first period and having breakfast gives me a good start to the day."

"I like registering in RE:SET as there are too many people in the classes and I get unsettled."

**Anger Management/Mindfulness:** This eight week course is consistently in high demand. Our PDMs use a variety of techniques to enable young people to explore their emotions, consider actions and consequences of behaviour of them and others, and develop coping strategies.

"Just attending keeps me calmer; I think twice!; I have learned how to identify my anger signs."

## A Parent's View

"Scott\* would never have made it to 4th year and got qualifications without the Inclusion Unit (RE:SET). He was always getting excluded and didn't get on with his teachers, so people didn't think he'd do anything good. He was put on a flexible timetable and worked with Apex staff who helped him in and out of school. He got Nationals 3 and 4 and got a place at college. He can be hard work, but he's made huge changes that you might not see on a certificate. Things are better at home too."



Setting goals helps achievement

## A Guidance Teacher's Perspective

"Sophie\* has benefitted hugely from her time spent in Apex RE:SET. She has struggled to attend school for some time due to issues with anxiety. She had missed a considerable amount of schooling over third and fourth year; she did not want to engage. After a bespoke timetable fell through, she was scheduled to spend a week in RE:SET before Christmas. Sophie agreed and the week was very successful as she attended nearly a full week for the first time in over a year. Sophie completed a number of tasks assigned by her teachers. After consultation we decided to extend her time there. Sophie continued to attend well and work hard. This is largely due to a change in attitude in her inspired by the Apex staff member, Nicola, who spent a considerable amount of time with Sophie, taking her to teachers and arranging work. This built up Sophie's confidence and fostered a determination to succeed. Sophie began to work with staff.

Sophie spent three months working hard and attending regularly in RE:SET. As a result, she has secured a selection of National 4 passes - something we would never have thought possible. Sophie worked with Nicola on college applications and has attended interviews. This allowed her to focus on a positive destination after school. Sophie has become a real success story after complete disengagement towards school, thanks to the existence of the Apex RE:SET service and the time and effort of Nicola at the helm."

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# Diverse Services

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## A Different Class

Part of our Employment and Guidance service in Aberdeen is for those completing a statutory licence, such as a community payback order, with referrals coming through criminal justice social work. Whilst some of this is focused on the more traditional aspects of employability, to encourage ongoing engagement and to ensure that everyone gets the most out of their time with us, our PDMs look at including options to be involved in different activities which will improve confidence and life skills, or just for fun and bit of social interaction. PDM, Charlotte Stroud, explains.

"Every week I hold different classes depending on the needs of the individual. I have also changed classes a number of times to fit with what everyone requires! Every Wednesday I hold a Confidence to Cook class which helps teach my clients how to cook healthily and on a budget and I always try to keep it fun. Aside from the added bonus of getting something to eat at the end of the session, they also enjoy this class because it keeps their hands busy and, often, they are learning a new skill.

My Thursday class has changed a few times over the course of the past 18 months. Originally we started with a book club. Unfortunately this was not successful as my clients were not always the most confident readers. However, after persevering for a good few weeks I changed the class to documentaries. We watched everything from educational documentaries to programmes showing how people had desisted in offending behaviour. However, we found that many clients enjoy being more physically active. Enter kokedama!

I decided to try something which was therapeutic, relaxing and gave the client something to take home at the end of the session. Kokedama is the ancient Japanese art of creating an ornamental moss ball and gave service users not only a decorative home plant but encouraged patience, relaxation and an open space to talk. While some people enjoyed the time, all was not happy in the kokedama class, and with dwindling Thursday numbers I knew I had to pull something fantastic out the bag! These past months the whole of Scotland has been experiencing a heat wave with people spending more time in their garden so I decided to make garden lanterns. So far I have only held two classes but it is pulling in numbers like the opening night of Titanic!

Friday's class is a full day creative session. Clients can decide between various art therapies such as clay, painting, drawing or colouring in. Most of the service users enjoy this even after their groans of "but I canna draw" fall on deaf ears. I think it is more than what they expect it to be and often they can be working on a piece for a couple of weeks. This time is always enjoyable and gives the clients a great chance to speak, relax, and find a new skill to take pleasure in."

"I'd be lost without Apex...it has benefitted me something awful...I actually need it just now."

"She was meant to be there for the one thing but it's as if she has been there for everything."



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## Many Voices

**Funded by Creative Scotland, 'Many Voices' was Scottish PEN's project, bringing together Scottish and international writers to collaborate with marginalised groups and communities across Scotland, exploring through writing and discussion the themes most important to them.**

The project consisted of writing workshops where the aim was to give people the chance to make their voices heard, expressing their experiences on a platform they are often denied because of the barriers they face. Scottish PEN contacted Apex with a view to working particularly with female offenders.

Our Grampian team worked in collaboration with Scottish PEN to engage a Scottish writer who was willing to work with female prisoners in HMP Grampian. We worked with a small group to allow a greater opportunity for freedom of thought and to encourage openness. The focus was on empowerment with the women given the opportunity to voice how they felt about different issues. The writer, Sarah, encouraged the women to try writing in different styles for different topics, starting off the first week by suggesting that they write a short speech about what makes them feel powerful.

Six organisations took part in the project, each focusing on a different marginalised group. The work from the larger project was shown and celebrated at different literary festivals around Scotland throughout the year to bring the project to a wider audience.

“It’s just good that like, you have got mentors that, like, actually care that much that they go out their way to no’ just help somebody but to do more for them.”

## A Blooming Future!

Shine is a national mentoring service for women offenders. The service is provided as a Public Social Partnership (PSP) across Scotland which is a strategic partnership between public and voluntary sector organisations. The service is available to eligible females both in prison and on licence in the community. Apex is one of the partners which deliver the Shine service, as well as the New Routes service which is the male equivalent.

Here is Jackie’s story, shared by her Personal Development Mentor in Forth Valley, Fiona Campbell.

“Jackie was referred to the Shine service in October 2017 following a short custodial sentence. She had had a successful career in social care however, as a result of her offence, this was no longer an option.

Jackie’s mental health was severely affected by the time she spent in custody and, as a result, cut herself off from friends, family and her local community. She despaired at what to do, given that she was 53 years old.

Her struggles on release from prison were many. She was one of the very few lucky people able to keep her

own tenancy but had rent arrears; she was without any income or money for five weeks while her benefits were assessed and, as a result, had to use the local foodbank.

Given her state of mind, I knew that Jackie would need to be kept busy and occupied to prevent her from continuing to isolate herself. After much discussion, it became clear that Jackie had a passion for flowers; with this came the realisation that Jackie wished to work for herself at her own pace. Together we looked at different courses and options and found an evening course at the local college in floristry. Jackie applied and was duly accepted.

Jackie has excelled in this course - so much so that she produced her own flyer and distributed them to local florists offering to volunteer. One shop decided to take Jackie up on her offer so she now assists the florist with displays for weddings and funerals which she really enjoys. Right now Jackie has almost completed her City and Guilds level one and has been accepted onto the full time City and Guilds level 2 floristry course.

Jackie’s ultimate aim is to become self-employed once she has qualified and Fiona has sourced a local

enterprise advisor to help her with this once the time comes. Jackie has been so successful in turning her life around, she is looking to the future and recognises that there are more skills she will need to help her to become self-employed. She is now volunteering in our Alloa office three days a week to gain some valuable administrative experience and has become a much valued member of our Alloa team!



Jackie collecting flowers from the wholesaler



One of Jackie’s displays

**In Dumfries, PDM Jordan Warwick, explains another success story for the Shine service there.**

Paula\* worked with Apex as part of the Shine service since November 2017 whilst on a community payback order. She had low confidence, and worries about her children who were removed from her care to a foster family dominated most of her sessions. Whilst on the service we supported Paula through several children’s panel hearings and the appeal process, as well helping her find legal aid services to help her get her views across at the panel meetings. She suffers from mental health issues and has accepted that she needs some medical help with this right now which her GP is monitoring, and this is helping her to feel more positive. Whilst on the Shine service, we referred Paula to Venture Trust’s Next Steps programme where she was able to continue to build her confidence. Throughout her time with Shine, Paula has taken steps to ensure she moves forward positively. She is currently volunteering at a local charity shop.

“The people that work here have been in the same boat as we are now and that makes a big difference, you are not talking to this official.”

## SMART Recovery

Based on stakeholder feedback and our own observation, it was apparent there was a definite gap in provision for recovery-focused community groups in Highland. Having successfully run SMART recovery meetings and auricular acupuncture groups, the Highland team offered to fill the gap by providing a SMART meeting followed by an acupuncture group for attendees.

After securing suitable premises at Invergordon County Community Hospital, a ten-week pilot was agreed. This very quickly became a success, and we are thankful for the healthy partnership with the community psychiatric nurses at the drug and alcohol recovery team who supported the initiative with referrals. In January 2018 we moved from a pilot project to a continuing service. Both the SMART recovery meeting and acupuncture group are now firmly established with usually between six and eight individuals attending each week.

The next phase in the development of this initiative is to hand over the lead to peer mentors. Two mentors, both at different stages in their journey, have completed SMART facilitator training. The most recent being in April 2018, where we supported six service users to complete SMART recovery two-day, face to face facilitator training. They will all become involved, at a pace they are comfortable with, in co-facilitating SMART meetings. This ties in very well with the SMART ethos and Apex's ethos which sees recovered people as part of the solution to addiction.



SMART facilitator training



The Virtual Visits service

## Virtual Visits

From our office in Aberdeen, Apex Scotland runs the award-winning Virtual Visits service for friends and families of individuals in four prisons around Scotland, namely HMP&YOI Grampian, HMP Polmont, HMP Barlinnie and HMP Perth. The Virtual Visits service enables families and friends to connect with their loved ones in an easier and in a more relaxed environment. The families we work with not only get a chance to have a video call with their loved one but they also receive support just for them. Our team ensures that each person who accesses this service knows that we offer support to them other than the practical activity of the video call.

The spaces dedicated to virtual visits are designed not only to be comfortable for adults to relax in, but to help children engage in the visit. This service was initially only intended to run for one year, but five years later the service is still going strong and that speaks volumes of the positive impact this service has had, both for families and their loved ones in prison. In the six months from January 2018, the service hosted 828 visitors, 134 of them being children.

This service won the Aberdeen Impact Award in 2014 highlighting the importance of such a service and the difference it is making to our community. The service was also selected as a finalist in the Scottish Charity Awards the following year, gaining national recognition. Each member of the Grampian team plays a part in the delivery of this service and pride themselves on how each person is treated with kindness and in a non-judgemental way. We hope to keep offering this service to more families, connecting more people in a safe environment.

“For someone like myself, it has increased my confidence, these opportunities ... being able to accomplish something ... I feel a bit better about myself as I have been out of work for 20 years.”

# Community Involvement

Apex staff know that contributing to the local community improves client confidence and self-worth. When participation happens outdoors, the advantages increase, bringing physical and mental benefits, reducing stress, enhancing feelings of wellbeing as well taking part in valuable team building opportunities which are reportedly enjoyable!

Over the years our teams have been particularly good at ensuring that service users have the opportunity

to participate in volunteering activities that promote physical activity, working as a team and assuming responsibility, particularly building relationships with local groups and improving their local community.

Participation in these activities means service users have been able to achieve a number of accredited awards such as Saltire Awards, John Muir Awards, Scottish Waterways Trust Awards, to name a few. Our volunteer contribution is around 10,000 hours over the year.

## In the North

### Flora: Women's Gardening Challenge Team

This spring has seen two of our volunteers from June 2017 become employed by Apex as seasonal gardeners and peer mentors with our new project. We chose the name "Flora" after Flora MacDonald – a strong resilient Highland woman – as well as the flora/fauna connection.

Working in partnership with NHS Highland, the project has taken over the care and maintenance of areas within New Craigs Hospital on the edge of Inverness.



In March we started work in the dementia garden at New Craigs. Three tonne bags of weeds later we began to see things taking shape! The hard work of our women gardeners' weeding, pruning and digging cleared the decks for new spring flowers to be planted which were taken from our own Peddieston flower polytunnel.

Within the dementia garden there are various structures in place to prompt memories and promote a sense of peace and wellbeing. A battery powered mower does not disturb the patients and memories are more easily invoked by the smell of newly cut grass. The next stage is to maintain an orchard, wild flower meadows, establish trees and shrub gardens. We plan to increase our team throughout the summer to stay on top of all the weeding and strimming required across our areas of the hospital.

The team has been fortunate to welcome two MSPs to view their handiwork – John Finnie and Rhoda Grant.

**The dementia garden at New Craigs Hospital**



The trainees at work

### Dry Stone Walling

Apex Highland and Highland Stonecraft held a two-day workshop commissioned by Easter Ross Criminal Justice Social Work in Alness. Six willing candidates and several members of staff were taught traditional craft skills completing an impressive dyke and freestanding arch from natural stone from a local quarry. Apart from learning a valuable skill, the participants understood the importance of working together and using their own initiative. Brian Beattie, our Outdoor Project Manager, said: "It was great to see the team of guys engaging, working hard in a meaningful way while also giving something back to the community. The skills learned can be used in many different environments."



A job well done

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## Carol's Story

"I began my journey with Apex in June 2017, referred through Osprey House after suffering with mental health difficulties and addiction issues which had led to a diversion from prosecution through the criminal justice system.



"In the beginning I was very shy and withdrawn. Initially I attended volunteering at the horse sanctuary which helped ease me back into being amongst other people. As the weeks progressed I began to feel comfortable enough to attend SMART and acupuncture meetings. This was a powerful step into managing my recovery. Around this time I took over the cleaning/domestic role within the unit, which helped me integrate into the team, who were very supportive of me.

"Over the last year I have embraced all the training opportunities that Apex Highland has offered me. These include First Aid in the Workplace, Health and Safety level 5, Food Hygiene, SAPHiR, and more recently I have become an acupuncturist, joining our sessional acupuncturist team.

"Prior to attending Apex, I was a keen gardener at home. This experience has allowed me to become a sessional gardener for 'Flora', our woman's gardening team".

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## Ruth's Story

"My journey with Apex Highland started one year ago. I was referred by my consultant due to mental health issues and I began as a volunteer at Peddieston horse sanctuary and polytunnel project to prevent me becoming more isolated.



"Initially I was very withdrawn; it was a massive step for me to mix with the other volunteers. However, with lots of positive encouragement, each week became a little less daunting. Over the last year I have received the first accredited training of my life. This has helped me realise that **anyone** can learn to live more positively with mental health conditions.

"I have achieved certificates in Health and Safety level 5, First Aid in the Workplace, Food Hygiene and a John Muir Award. Having these certificates under my belt have allowed me to become a peer mentor and sessional gardener on our Flora project.

"The therapeutic value of this part time work has made a massive difference in my life, helping me build up skills which I can share with new volunteers".

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## Peddieston Farm: Animal Sanctuary and Polytunnels

In 2014 the Highland team formed a relationship with Peddieston Farm on the Black Isle. Weekly volunteering at the animal sanctuary there has now expanded to include Apex Highland's polytunnel project where clients have been involved from the planning and building stages. Establishing itself over the last year, the success of this project, including the quality of its produce, has been widely acknowledged, this year receiving both the Highland Council Quality Award as well as our own Betty Crawford award for innovation.

All activity at Peddieston, both at the animal sanctuary and the polytunnels project, is managed by Apex staff and peer mentors who lead teams of client volunteers. Last year there were over 500 hours of community service served at the project. From January to May 2018 alone, there were 16 participants on Community Orders, totalling 330 hours.

Building on its success, with the polytunnels bursting at the seams with delicious vegetables and vibrant seedlings and flowers, Apex Highland has recently been granted funding from the Small Justice for Change Fund which is allowing them to create an additional allotment area at Peddieston. This provides the ability to plant more seeds and extend the growing season well into the winter period. Always looking for an opportunity, the new area was fenced off and volunteers undertook this as an "Introduction to Fencing Course" with all participants receiving a certificate of training. The team is also working on creating an outdoor classroom where volunteers will have a space to expand their skills and knowledge base.

The team have been delighted to team up with Morrisons Construction Ltd whose staff have volunteered two days per year to commit to a charitable project. This is a fantastic opportunity for our team to access skilled tradesman to undertake voluntary work at the sanctuary as well as learn new skills. Morrisons has also donated televisions and USB Flash Drives with "Tool Box Talks" and Health & Safety Signage which were extremely well received.



Working at the animal sanctuary



Learning fencing skills



Flowers starting to bloom in the polytunnel

# In the South

## Moving In

Students from Dumfries and Galloway College contacted Apex as they were looking for a local charity to support. PDM, Alison Graham, who runs the Moving In service, invited them to visit us at the Wigtownshire Foodbank and soup kitchen. As well as serving the local community, the Moving In service is ably assisted by six regular client volunteers who each work around 10 hours a week. The students found the visit quite enlightening as they were presented with the evidence of how much poverty there is in the local area and what our service does to alleviate that. Impressed by the full level of support we provide at the foodbank, which includes the full Moving In service and our pop up charity shop, the students committed to do some fundraising and a food collection as well as making up Christmas parcels. We received around £70 in cash and donations for the foodbank. The college students supported us again at Easter by donating Easter eggs and more food and they have also made donations of fruit and vegetables for the soup kitchen.

Emma Harper MSP was similarly impressed with the service when visited paid a visit to our Moving In project and soup kitchen. As a result she decided to donate some household goods to the project.

Last year the Wigtownshire Foodbank fed 468 families, many of whom also accessed the soup kitchen.

In another part of the country, Apex clients were involved in helping the Leonard Cheshire 'Can Do' project making fantastic gift bags which were a welcome addition to food parcels being given out by the Dumfriesshire Foodbank.

Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, 2,352 three day emergency food supplies were provided to local people by the Dumfriesshire Foodbank, compared to 1,736 in the previous year. Of this number, 439 went to children.

Some families accessing our foodbanks need more than just a food parcel and we ensure that our staff and volunteers are trained to be able to supply the information on additional support that is available, either through Apex's own services or with our partners.

“I’ll admit, if I didn’t have it (soup kitchen/rock café), I think my addiction would break back in. And if I didn’t have that, I’d probably be out offending.”



D&G College students with Alison Graham



Emma Harper MSP with Stranraer staff



'Can Do' project volunteers with their gift bags

“It’s a Saviour this place.”

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## New Skills

Clients in Stranraer had a unique opportunity to take part in the St. Ayles skiff project, run by Stranraer Rotary and Stranraer Water Sports Association. The project received funding to build a boat house and purchase the skiff kits which the clients helped to build. The first boat, Lady Bay, was finished and launched in June. This has been an excellent project for our service users to be involved in. They have learnt joinery and painting skills and worked alongside other members of the community who they would not have otherwise mixed with.

In addition, one of the young people on our Employability Fund service took part in the project and completed his Powerboat level 2 qualification that was run by Sport Scotland's National Watersport Centre which was a great achievement.



Taking control of the powerboat



Building the skiffs

“About 10 years ago I went to apex at Dumfries to get help getting my chainsaw course done. If it wasn't for \*PDM\* I would most certainly not be where I am today. After lots of hard work I'm now team leader/Forman of a five-man fencing/forestry squad making a very good living and savings in the bank. I own a £10,000 car which is paid and it's all thanks to Apex and \*PDM\*.”

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## Christmas Dinner

The foodbank Christmas dinner in Stranraer is an annual event which is well supported and a huge success, feeding over 50 people. Each person receives a three course meal and gift and the event is filled with music and dancing with some raffles thrown in for good measure. The food comes from local businesses and donors so the cost to the foodbank is minimal. We are grateful to P&O Ferries staff who have supported us at Christmas for the past two years by holding a food collection and donating it to the foodbank. This year there was a great team of volunteers and the local Baptist church hosted for us. It has become a much looked forward to event in the community and helps so many people in poverty experience a proper Christmas meal that many of us take for granted.



Looking forward to Christmas dinner!

“There is a compassion, people really do care.”

## Community Donations

2017 was Apex Scotland's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, as seen in last year's Annual Report, and we decided that our staff conference should also celebrate the fact! As well as team building, sharing good practice and good news, and strategising for the coming year, we made sure there was a good dose of party games to keep the celebration flowing! As part of the day, we put together an exclusive raffle with some specially donated prizes from organisations we work with which went to some grateful recipients!

The significant amount of money raised at the conference by our generous staff was added to by a donation from a previous Patron, Viscount Weir, along with the proceeds of a Christmas jumper day at Head Office. Although Apex is a charity, the place we occupy in our local communities is important to us. We decided, therefore, that the total sum of money would be split equally between our teams and service users could choose to use it for their own team building activity, or donate to a local charity of their choice as they saw fit, perhaps a partner that our service users benefit from.

Here are some of the recipients of the donations.



Summerhill Community Centre, Dumfries



Stranraer team with Daniel (front), from Finding Your Feet



Supplies for Horses in Clover



The Gate, Alloa

# Social Enterprise



**In the past year All Cleaned Up (ACU), Apex's subsidiary and social enterprise company, has navigated a series of challenging circumstances, ranging from financial uncertainty, changes to contract delivery and a shift in the senior management structure. However, despite these challenges, ACU can look forward with a degree of optimism and quiet excitement as the green shoots of recovery begin to reflect the hard work and determination shown by the staff, particularly since the beginning of 2018.**



**ACU at work**

ACU has been required to look inward for the answers to success. From this came a strategic plan to help stabilise and then grow the business. ACU has come through this challenging period stronger, with solid foundations in place and are delivering contracts with confidence and professionalism. This is evidenced by Michael Patterson, Property Manager at Eildon Housing Association who said: "All Cleaned Up (Scotland) have provided Eildon Housing Association with an excellent stair cleaning service since 1 April 2018 to 62 developments throughout the Scottish Borders. They deliver a high quality and reliable service to our customers on a weekly or fortnightly basis."

Having a solid platform to operate from, ACU secured two new contracts in July 2018 for office cleaning, taking their portfolio of on-going contracts to eleven. This includes three housing associations, a large construction firm and Gorgie City Farm.

In addition, ACU has now delivered three large builders cleans for Maxi Construction with ongoing opportunities to tender for more work. In a landscape where large companies are ever increasing their corporate social responsibility and the need to be flexible in the delivery of this, ACU has developed promising partnerships with some national construction companies and we look forward to seeing how these develop.

Establishing a new pricing model, so that the commercial needs of the business are met without compromising the social aims, has allowed ACU to develop these partnerships, ensuring services are realistically and professionally delivered. Balfour Beatty has included ACU in its tender for the construction of the new Alexandria Eye Hospital, where we would deliver commercial cleaning during the construction

phase and provide employability services for local disadvantaged people. It is our hope that this type of partnership approach can be replicated in other geographical locations with other partners.

We are committed to developing as many new commercial opportunities as possible as this creates more opportunities for the individuals we support. Funded by Capital City Partnership to deliver our employability services, we supported 16 individuals into employment during 2017/18 and supported 72 to achieve vocational qualifications. To enhance this offer in 2018/19 we are delivering Apex's CSCS training and BICS licence to practice through the Scottish Prison Service.

Going forward into the coming year we are working with partners, including HMP Edinburgh, Capital City Partnership and Jobcentre Plus to identify the gaps in provision for individuals with convictions who want to achieve a positive destination.

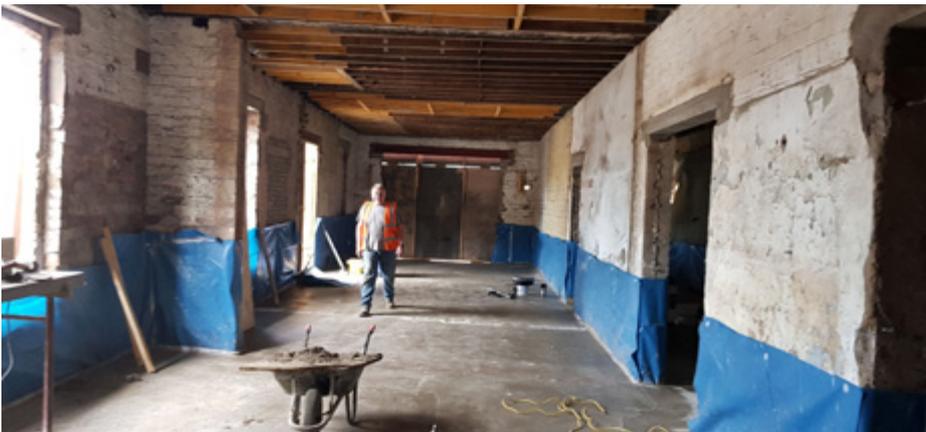
Additionally we are using the success of our employability services to engage support from other prison establishments and their local associated job centres, including HMP Cornton Vale and HMP Glenochil. Local job centres in Alloa and Stirling have raised business cases for ACU to replicate their current employability provision within these areas. This represents one of our strategic goals of delivering employability services in the same geographical areas as our commercial services.

Whilst all of the above demonstrates that ACU is a valued partner and contractor capable of delivering a high quality service, we continue to seek new and rewarding partnerships. Could we help you? If you would like more information please look at our website:

[www.allcleanedupscotland.org.uk](http://www.allcleanedupscotland.org.uk).



The Sidings – work in progress



“If I walk out of here, I actually feel a lot more motivated, more informed, more confident, because somebody’s helping me.”

## Track2Train

**Our first foray into social enterprise began seven years ago with the creation of All Cleaned Up. In 2016 our Sustainable Development Officer, Dodie Piddock, presented an idea to the Apex Board to engage our social enterprise spirit once again, proposing a new venture that, in a similar way to ACU, would not only provide a training base and jobs for our client group, but would serve the local community and revive an unused dilapidated building besides.**

From sowing that seed, Track2Train (T2T) was born. We have recruited a Board of six which liaises closely with the Apex Board and is overseeing T2T's first project, a café/bistro called *The Sidings*, which we plan to open in Newtongrange in the autumn/winter of 2018. In the same building will be a flexible meeting and working space for hire and use by the local community and other enterprises. Funded by Scottish Government, LEADER, SCRF, Network Rail and Railway Heritage Trust, and supported by Scotrail, we are thrilled that these and other companies understand our commitment and passion for investing in this project.

We know that one of the main factors in helping to reduce crime is to give people the chance to learn new skills and gain employment. Apex exists to help people change their negative behaviour, overcome their barriers and provide education, support and opportunities to lead fulfilling lives. The intention of Track2Train is to provide training and employment for the people that Apex works with, or to those with similar backgrounds. T2T's first project will open a door to experiences, primarily in the catering and hospitality industry, that may not have been available to our client group before, giving them a real chance to move forward and improve their lives, benefit their families and help to eradicate the stigma of past mistakes.

We are excited for the future of T2T and the other possibilities that are available, both for *The Sidings* and future projects, which we hope to be able to share with you in next year's Annual Report!

“See before, I’d go, ‘oh they are just going to judge me’, because I felt so bad about myself, I couldn’t think anybody would see different. I just never felt judged by any of yous. \*PDM\* gave me that chance and I didn’t feel I deserved it.”

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# Training and Awards



## Training with Derek Milligan

**Apex has always been at the forefront of training in terms of keeping abreast of the newest legislation where rehabilitation and disclosure is concerned and our staff have expert knowledge in this field. We are often in demand to provide this training to external organisations. Our senior staff are part of Government and Disclosure Scotland groups to help shape the future of employment legislation. We have also ensured that our staff are trained to a high standard so that they are highly proficient in understanding the needs of our client group, whether that be working with those with high risk or sexual convictions, those recovering from addiction, or children at risk of exclusion from school.**

Our organisation statement of Aim Higher, Behave Differently, Change Your Future, is not only to inspire our service users, but is a call to our staff to expand their own knowledge and encourage them to progress. Each year we devise a staff development programme that our staff and volunteers have access to, not only to give them the tools they need in their current role but which will foster growth and give them opportunities to try something new. For our clients, our Personal Development Mentors are committed to helping them succeed according to their own development needs, so training in this regard needs to be more bespoke with an understanding of the

barriers that they face. Some of our service users will have been told they are non-achievers, but it is our belief that everyone can succeed and achieve if they have the right support and guidance at the right time, with people who can help to keep the momentum going, no matter how slight progress may seem. This is why many Apex services do not focus on classroom based activities and attainment.

That said, with a responsibility to support people towards employment, for many people a vocational qualification is what they require. Over the last year or two, therefore, we have increased our in-house training capabilities to be able to deliver these courses to our clients in a way that is easier for them to learn, perhaps allowing them to attend over a few days, a couple of hours at a time, to complete a general one-day course for example. Apex is an approved SQA centre, an ASDAN centre of excellence and an ITA approved training provider and so popular courses such as CSCS labouring cards, PAT testing and Emergency First Aid at Work can be funded at no cost to the trainee, which means we also provide training to the general public who need no additional support. Please contact us if you would like to find out more about the training we provide.

As you will see from the photographs, we enjoy celebrating success!



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## Memorial Awards

The Sam Dow and Betty Crawford memorial awards are Apex awards which are presented to teams or an individual to recognise excellence.

The Sam Dow award is awarded to a service or unit which has gone the extra mile in terms of performance and enhanced employability prospects for service users, particularly in difficult circumstances, or perhaps gained particular external recognition for their good work. In 2017 the Sam Dow award was awarded to the Apex Grampian team for its outstanding development, promotion and delivery of employability courses, particularly our CSCS course and the results this produced. At the time the courses had been running for over three years in HMP Grampian with a high success rate, working with male, female and other category prisoners. This led to the development of a peer mentoring programme for training within the prison. The CSCS training has also been delivered on outreach and within the local Aberdeen unit.



The Grampian team with their award

The Betty Crawford Award centres around innovation and initiative and is awarded to a team which has stepped outside the usual parameters of delivery with new ideas to improve the experience and outcome for the service user and/or the community. In 2017 the Betty Crawford Award was presented to the Apex Highland team for its Polytunnel project, using a creative approach to engage service users in the planning and implementation as well as the ongoing maintenance of planting and harvesting. The physical and mental health benefits as well as the work ethic and environmental impact has been inspiring and, as you will read elsewhere in this report, the project continues to go from strength to strength. We were very proud that the team went on to win the Achieving a Fairer Highland Award from Highland Council the same year.



The Highland team with their award

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## Outstanding Achievement

Service Development Manager for Apex Highland, Alistair McDonald, was awarded an Outstanding Achievement award at the Highland Third Sector Interface Awards. The award was for the recognition of an individual's outstanding and sustained contribution towards society through their Third Sector activity.

Mhairi Wylie, Chief Officer of Highland Third Sector Interface said, "The reason the judges selected Alistair for the award was the passion and authenticity of nomination, the story it told and the meaning it had for the people Alistair has helped. It was clear that Alistair not only worked hard to have an impact through his own work and life practice but inspired others to do the same. He is clearly a force for good and someone who encourages others not only to believe in themselves but to want to actively make a difference to the world around them and most importantly their own life choices and chances."

A well deserved honour indeed! Alistair was presented his award by John MacDonald, Local Senior Officer of Scottish Fire and Rescue Services.



Alistair receives his award from John MacDonald.

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# Out of the Shadows

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“It was once said that the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy, the handicapped.”

*Hubert Humphrey*

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**Hubert Humphrey's words are from the last century and somehow I cannot see many 21<sup>st</sup> century politicians articulating these values publicly even if they subscribe to them. But if we drill down a bit we might explore the shadows to look at homeless people, those with mental health issues, those who are isolated and those who may commit, or have committed, offences, some of whom may be imprisoned. The world of Brexit, foodbanks and a struggling benefits system is upsetting for those of us looking in, but to the recipients the world can seem even more hostile, exclusive, unfair and without empathy.**

The Third Sector positions itself to try and assist, even befriend, those on these margins and at Apex we know that excluded people can negotiate a pathway to employment, accommodation and improved personal relationships through empathy and access to the right kind of support at the right time.

We recognise the Scottish Government's commitment to reduce the prison population and improve accessibility to services by supporting Apex Scotland, although inevitably we believe more could be done throughout the sector with relatively little increase in resources. The Scottish Government's raising of the threshold for imprisonment brings the challenge of effective community sentencing and this in turn brings a requirement for the services that Apex provides.



**Brian Fearon**

The Apex Board recognises the frustration Apex staff feel when working with those in need and the sense that the gap they can almost reach out and touch could be bridged by a more effective funding formula and some more resources. There has been a long standing resilience from Apex staff to challenges that seem to conspire against the charity doing even more; but we buckle up and drive on.

One of the most satisfying areas has been our continued involvement with younger people because we recognise their vulnerability. This is the Year of Young People in Scotland and we are pleased they are at the centre of some of our activities in partnership with a number of schools where key themes look at equality, discrimination and participation. Of course, adverse childhood experiences and their impact on the young people as they stretch for adulthood are crucial. We have developed, over a number of years, resources and interventions for young people at school and post school. It is an exciting and rewarding area and in the past we have achieved UK-wide recognition for the quality of Apex's work in the Education sphere.

No current Annual Report can be drawn together without considering Brexit. Apex has frequently used European funding to develop work with offenders and also, in a small way, developed relationships with European partners. One primary current involvement in partnership with others is delivering the Steps service. We do not want the impending changes to lose these valuable links and experiences which enable services for thousands of individuals, although we recognise there will be some changes.

The introduction of Community Justice Scotland is a new development, and it is essential that its impact is reviewed to see how it is addressing Justice issues and how closely it is able to deliver on its intended targets. The introduction of Universal Credit has also proved problematic for many of our clients and hopefully the glitches can be ironed out swiftly.

It is almost twenty years since I was a member of the Expert Panel on Sex Offenders that sought to improve professional interventions with a relatively

small group of serious offenders that seemed to provide risk mostly to children. Since then, both the number of convictions and the range of offences have grown and victims are quite likely to be adults, young adults and older people. The impact on the custodial estate and those who then have to address the issue back in the community is substantial, ensuring the safety of vulnerable persons and working to try to rehabilitate offenders. This requires imaginative and meticulous intervention, and has had significant impact on Apex in terms of the services we have developed, the requirement for more one to one working and the development of effective risk assessments. Sex offenders are a larger part of community experiences and it is essential that this is confronted rather than avoided. Apex makes no apologies for working in this area and playing our part in keeping communities safe. We are also increasingly working with those affected by domestic violence. This situation, and the fact that

the number of people convicted of sex offences is increasing in our communities emphasises, for Apex, that we must have the right training, staff and services to reduce risk.

*This is the Year of Young People in Scotland and we are pleased they are at the centre of some of our activities in partnership with a number of schools where key themes look at equality, discrimination and participation*

Over the years we have developed a good collaborative working relationship with Scottish Government and have contributed to Justice policy and legislation in an advisory capacity. We are delighted that Deputy First Minister, John Swinney MSP, has confirmed his willingness

to give the Apex Scotland Annual Lecture in the Year of Young People. In our Annual Lecture we seek to promote new thinking and challenging responses across the Justice environment. Last year the Lord Advocate provoked some interesting discussion and I am sure the same will follow this year's Lecture.

2017/18 has seen some changes in the Apex Board with the loss of some long standing Trustees. My thanks to Beth Smith, John Ross and Jay Butler for their support over the years as Apex Scotland Board members. I am pleased to welcome Jim Hunter, Giles Robinson, Michael Dickson and Neil Archibald to the Apex Board and we are benefiting from their different experiences and energy. We look back on a difficult but rewarding year and forward to the challenges to come, knowing that we have the resolve and talent to make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

**Brian Fearon**  
*Chair*

## Annual Lecture



**The Rt Hon James Wolffe QC**

### Prosecution in the Public Interest

Always a well attended event in Edinburgh's Signet Library, the Apex Scotland Annual Lecture has established a strong reputation for attracting speakers who are able to bring current issues and debates into the criminal justice arena. In 2017 The Rt Hon James Wolffe QC, Lord Advocate, gave his insights on the relationship between public protection and progressive policy, given the potential for change in criminal justice including the shift towards the prevention of crime, developing community justice approaches and reducing the prison population. As usual, the lecture promoted a lively debate afterwards. The video and transcript of the lecture are available on the Apex Scotland website.

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