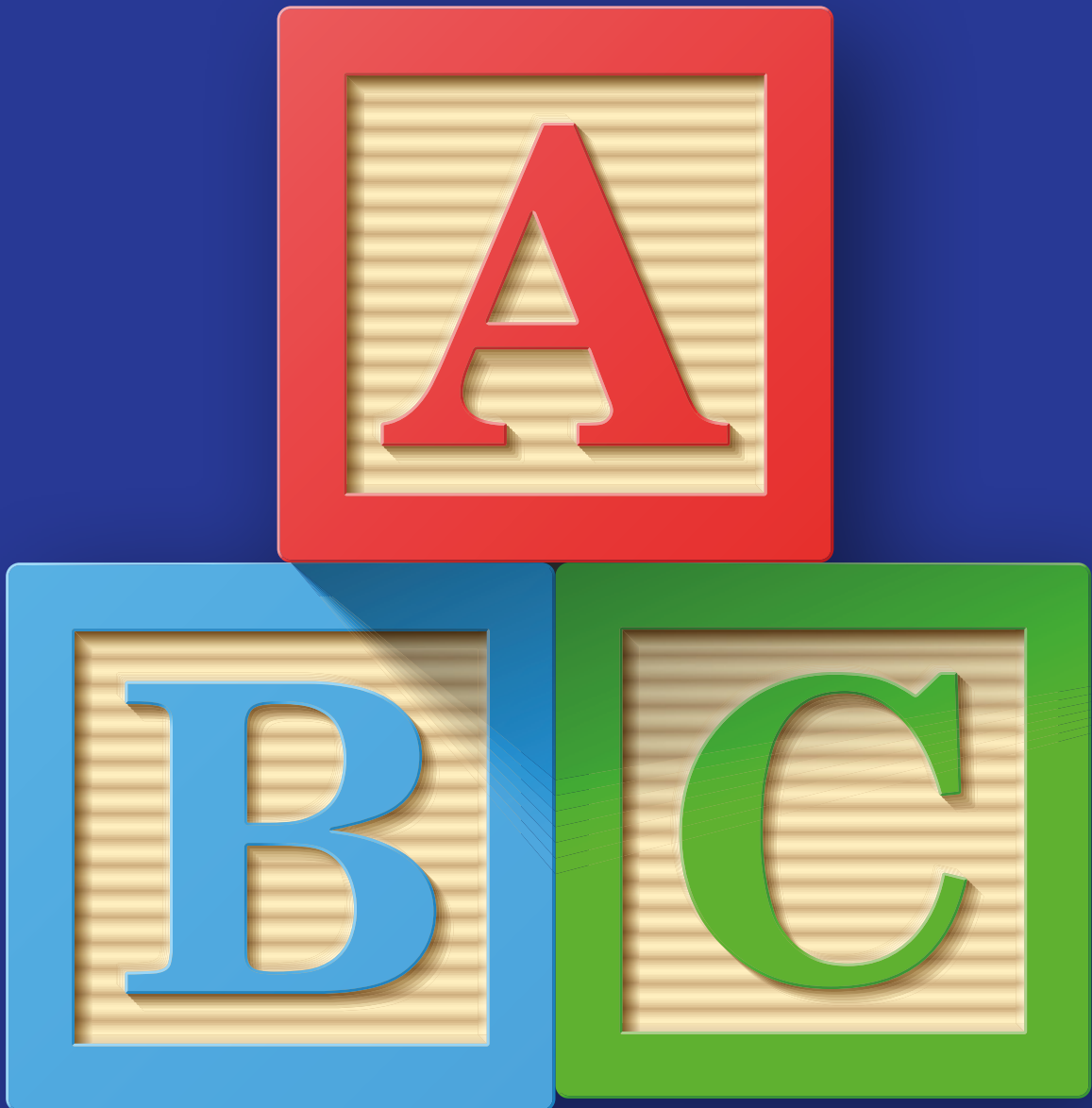


apex

scotland

ANNUAL REPORT 2017



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

Apex Scotland Board

Brian Fearon, Chair
Gordon Samson, Vice Chair
Anne Pinkman (*retired December 2016*)
Bryan Rankin (*retired December 2016*)
Elizabeth Smith
Sheriff Frank Crowe
John Ross
Hamish Lorrain-Smith (*resigned March 2017*)
David Asher
Lady Juliana Butler
Margaret Anderson (*appointed October 2016*)
Jim Hunter (*appointed June 2017*)
Giles Robinson (*appointed June 2017*)
Michael Dickson (*appointed June 2017*)

Patron

The Rt Hon Lord Campbell
of Pittenweem CH CBE QC

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The Rt Hon Lord Campbell of Pittenweem CH CBE QC
Patron

“In its thirty years Apex Scotland has made a remarkable contribution to rehabilitation and fresh thinking. It has earned for itself an enviable reputation and continues to fulfil programmes which are both innovative and constructive. I am confident that it will continue to do so.”



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



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

Apex Scotland is 30!

In 1987, Apex Scotland's beginnings were modest, as a specialist job club in Glasgow for offenders. It was the first of its kind in the UK. The same year Apex's head office opened in Edinburgh with four staff; one of their first jobs was to pilot employment preparation in three prisons. From a small beginning in Glasgow, Apex has established itself as a respected, specialist organisation working across Scotland to reducing re-offending, promote desistance, tackle deprivation and make communities safer; contributing to national policy and criminal justice thinking.

The organisation has grown considerably and has had to respond and readjust to political and social change over the last 30 years, which has not always been easy. However, Apex's ethos of being an organisation that focuses on people – those whom it mentors and those who work within it – has remained constant throughout. We believe that those who are at risk of (re) offending can contribute positively to society and lead fulfilling lives with the education, support and opportunities they need to change their behaviour. Our staff are committed to engaging with the people they work with, helping them to progress through the areas in their lives which, at that time, require more support and guidance towards a positive destination.

As ever, we remain optimistic about the future! Over the next 30 years we will continue to be innovative and creative as we develop desistance and early intervention services for the benefit of our service users and the communities they live in; and we will continue to work with our partners, funders and supporters to make a valuable contribution towards a safer and fairer society.

Apex has enjoyed many successes over the years and we hope you will enjoy a few of the highlights in the beginning pages of this report.

SOME OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS (1987 – 2017)



The first employment, guidance and counselling service for (ex) offenders in Scotland



Leading experts in rehabilitation and disclosure

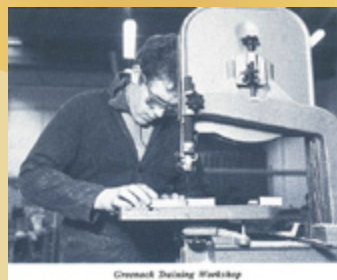
Pioneered the use of letters of disclosure



First employment service programme for prisoners in Scotland



Hosting workshops which were the forerunner to social work community service orders



Contribution to national Government policies



Piloted Supervised Attendance Orders programme in 1992 – groundbreaking at the time.

The first voluntary organisation in Scotland to be recognised by Investors in People in 1993



Founding members of the European Offender Employment Forum



Launched and managed the award winning first Throughcare Centre in HMP Edinburgh





Transnational
European projects,
most notably SPLASH

Creation of award
winning Q10 service - a
six-month programme
for persistent young
offenders aged 14-16.
The only programme of
its kind at the time.

Princess Anne
visits the
Highland team



Founding members of the
Scottish Consortium on
Crime and Criminal Justice

New Future Fund Initiative:
part of Management Advisory
Group and service provider

Established Apex
Scotland's Annual
Lecture



Awarded the largest
national contract for
Progress2Work (P2W)
and Progress2Work
Linkup

Annual Highland Challenge
Team Events



Praised in Westminster by
Michael Moore MP for placing
at least 100 people into work
through P2W service

Primary
contributor in the
set up of most
CJAs



Think Again course
recognised as a model of good
practice by Napier University



Quadrupling staff in D&G
on achieving Get Ready
for Work contract





Creation of Sam Dow and Betty Crawford Memorial Awards

Developed and operated Scotland's Disclosure Helpline



20th Anniversary celebration



Created award winning Apex Inclusion service in schools

U Turn service – volunteering service in D&G actively changing public perception of people with offending backgrounds



Presented with Healthy Working Lives Bronze Award

Jen Reid, Dumfries team, receives award for individually achieving over 100 job outcomes on P2W

Managing the first national virtual visits service in Scotland on behalf of SPS



Voted into the top 25 Best Places to Work Scotland



Apex Inclusion on BBC's The One Show

Developed and launched social enterprise "All Cleaned Up"



Operating foodbanks in D&G

Asdan Centre of Excellence



A Highland Beginning

On 4 July 1994 Alistair McDonald and Tina Brown joined Apex Scotland to set up the new office in Inverness with their other new colleague, Carol Watson; Alistair as Senior Employment Councillor and Tina as Administrator. The “office” was a bedroom in a socially deprived housing estate, provided by another agency, and there was no computer available so Tina brought her electric typewriter from home. Fortunately by December that year the “brilliant” premises in Lotland Street was secured and they continue to call that office ‘home’ today. So just what have they made of the last 24 years?

» *Thinking back to when you first started, what were your first impressions of Apex?*

Tina: My first thought was that I was going to be working with people I went to school with!

Alistair: At that time some staff were doing a full employability service and others were delivering workshops and there seemed to be a divide between the two, although that was beginning to change. There was a definite move towards being more professional. As a new team we all seemed to fit like a glove and started looking at how we could adapt the existing Apex modules to meet the local need.

» *So what has kept you with Apex for 24 years?*

Tina: How we started is how we've continued. We have always supported one another and the Apex team.

Alistair: It's a vocation, not a job. We have a desire to make services work; they do work and we want them to keep working. We also keep looking to improve.

Tina: It's never boring! We are always looking to do something new. When we've done something for a while we have a chat about what we can do next. It keeps it fresh.



Service Development Manager, Alistair McDonald and Centre Co-ordinator, Tina Brown

Alistair: We like a challenge. When we first started we were given two weeks to start a new skill seekers course. We set our minds to it, tied it in with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and in 18 months put 32 people through DoFE which was more than any other organisation at the time.

» *What are the biggest changes you've seen in the organisation and third sector?*

Alistair: When the corporate management team shrank and a whole management tier all but disappeared I thought “Whoa”. We had to get very small for a while but it's good to see that we're being able to build again.

Tina: I think our head office at the moment is the best it's been and being able to build relationships with people centrally has been good.

Alistair: I think the one of the biggest things will be the new ‘Steps’ service. It's been the first national service we've started for a while and it's going to be great to see how that goes.

There has been a big shift in the perception of the third sector. The professional snobbery we faced for a long time has dwindled and in the last 10 years there has been a growing respect for the third sector.

Tina: And the third sector interface in Highland has been extremely positive.

» *So what hasn't changed?*

Both: The pay scale! (laughs)

Alistair: The ethos hasn't changed. Particularly the tremendous attitude towards sessional staff. The majority of the staff team in Highland are ex clients. 50% of the team here were service users and that is phenomenal. We must be doing something right. When a service user is ready and, if they want to, they are encouraged to become a peer mentor and they work with us for months in that capacity. At that time they can take part in the same training as staff, they're given the opportunity to attend staff events like the annual conference and they shadow staff. It's brilliant to see their confidence grow, and then at an appropriate time they can start to take on some sessional work. It's fabulous.

» *Apex Highland is well known locally and well respected. What are your hopes for it for the future?*

Alistair: We have secured funding for our ASCEND service for the next two years which is brilliant and no small feat! Now it's about maintenance and keeping our links in criminal justice involved in what we are doing. We are also entering a competition to see if we can develop our polytunnels into a full market garden by 2022! Next year we are going to be starting something new with the River Trust where our mentors work with volunteers on local rivers helping them to gain qualifications.

» *What do you find most rewarding about your role?*

Both: Definitely the clients and seeing the outcomes that they have. It's the same for staff too.

Tina: When you see people that you've worked with continue to come back, just to help, because of what they achieved when they were here, that's brilliant. We have one guy who's a gamekeeper now, he's in his 30's, but he started with us when he was 15. Now when he has a spare couple of days he'll pop in to see if there's anything needing done.

Alistair: There's a few like that. When we recognised that 82% of offenders had addiction issues we decided that we needed to help tackle that. Mental health is also a huge issue. We approached the NHS, built in a partnership there.

Tina: Our partnership with the NHS in Highland is a huge deal and we were invited by them to lead groups on their premises. We are the only non NHS organisation to have access to their clients in this way. We also make sure that we celebrate success.

Alistair: Absolutely. And it's not just the big outcomes, although it's fantastic when that happens. We recognise that for some people sometimes the smallest thing is a massive deal for them and seeing them overcome that, seeing that small step forward, that's what gives me the buzz now. We know what we do is working when a group of people are turning up every week for their session without needing an appointment letter.

» *We have a number of new staff starting this year to deliver our new 'Steps' service. What advice would you give them?*

Alistair: Listen. Learn. Share the journey: don't be scared to be an advocate for the client. Sometimes you might need to start off by helping them with what seems to be a simple thing but it makes a massive difference if they know you're on their side.

Tina: Yes, it's all about building trust. You only get out what you put in. That is true for staff as well as service users; your heart has to be in it. Self-motivation is key – there will be days when you don't want to do the job, but you have to slap a smile on your face and motivate yourself so you can motivate others. There will be people depending on you.

Alistair: For these new staff it will be tough, definitely. Steps is going to have some hard targets, but we are good at keeping the client at the centre, and that's what they need to remember. In our team we make it a rule that every single member of staff works on the outdoor project for a period of time because that's where trust begins. When you work alongside somebody the relationship changes.

» *Walking the journey with the client is definitely an Apex strength. What other strengths do you think Apex has?*

Alistair: The corporate managers let the maniacs like us get on with the job! (laughs)

Tina: That's true! Yes, not being micro-managed is definitely appreciated.

Alistair: There are checks and balances in place of course and we adhere to that, but we are allowed to make decisions. The corporate managers are good at managing what needs managed and then trusting the team to get on with it. This means we are continually allowed to develop and move forward. We get a lot of inspiration from our service users.

» *What do you think the next 30 years holds for Apex?*

Alistair: Well, the way things are going, I would think massive partnerships are likely. There are too many organisations trying to do the same thing. People used to be clear about who did what but now everyone tries to do everything. That said, rehab and disclosure is still Apex's thing. No-one has ever come near performing as well as Apex in that area.

» *So, if you hadn't seen the job ad for Apex 24 years ago, what do you think you'd be doing now?*

Tina: Hmm. Probably still in some professional office, a solicitors or estate agents or surveyors....?

Alistair: Possibly something social work related, in childcare or supporting adults with difficulties, something like that.

» *What are your favourite memories of your time so far?*

Alistair: Oh there's a few! Well, there's Princess Anne. We had the royal visit in '97 as part of the 10 year celebrations. She joined in two workshops that we were running that day, a youth one and an adult group. When we were talking about rehab she told her bodyguard and lady in waiting to leave the room and she would attend the group privately. Some of these were serious offenders...

Tina: ...and we had the most tattooed man in the Highlands!

Alistair: She was so natural with the guys. She told them of a personal experience she had with crime and they were totally engaged with her. She over-stayed by nearly two hours. It was really great. We presented her with one of our Apex/DofE t-shirts and she joked she'd wear it to muck out the horses!

Then there was the first time we attempted to walk The Great Glen as our challenge. We took Mary Scanlon MSP with us. She got lost and we spent an hour blowing whistles trying to find her! The All Families challenge was great which ended up with the civic reception which was so kind and so appreciated. There was the team trip to Holland and the European programme trips.

Tina: I remember it cost a fortune to send the trans-national partnership document. We were using internet dial up and had to leave the thing going overnight to send it to Belgium! The outdoor challenges have definitely been the highlights. Who would have thought that painting a car park in torrential rain with clouds of midges would be fun, but the group and the banter were great. And then there was the time Ged did the most spectacular fall over a bog...! Yes, the most memorable have been the shared experiences as a team – the ones where there was no going back!

History Repeating Itself



Jacquie Knox, Assistant Accountant, with the abacus service users made for her in 1993

"I have now been working in the finance department of Apex for just over a year. But what many may not realise is that this is my second stint with the charity!"

"At the start of 1990, when I had just finished my accountancy training and was looking for a job, I was introduced to Charlie Angus, then the Finance Manager at The Apex Trust. The charity had only been in existence for a few years and was still finding its feet but was growing fast and Charlie needed an assistant. I was recruited and then spent a happy three years working alongside Charlie and the other managers Martin, Margaret and Maureen as well as Jeane Freeman, the founding CEO.

"The Apex of the early 1990's shared the same objectives but was quite different in many aspects. For a start the head office was in the basement at Great Stuart Street (we've since gone up a floor or two!) and my office was in the lower basement tucked away at the back.

"In those days the regional units were all in the central belt (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Kirkcaldy and Dundee) and focused on job training with the choice being either carpentry or secretarial courses. In fact as a leaving present I was given a lovely abacus handmade in the Leith unit (which I still have).

"Beside these units, the other focus was on the prison visits where training and advice was given to inmates coming to the end of their sentences. Apex also fostered links with larger employers (such as BT and M&S) who at that time were open to job placements for those with a criminal record.

"It is clear that in the intervening years Apex has grown and developed in the services it is offering and in the breadth of its collaborations with other agencies. Even back in the 1990s there was a feeling that improving the chances of employment was only part of the solution and chronic problems around health, education and family circumstances needed to be looked at also. Apex now has a more holistic approach to the issues affecting criminality.

"The one thing that hasn't changed is the passion and professionalism of those working at Apex and I am very glad to be back – a bit older and hopefully wiser!"

A Manager's Journey

"I started working with Apex in September 2003 on a service whose funding ran out in April....ten years later I finally said goodbye! I loved it from the start. Although I had no previous experience working in this area I thrived on the work, learning things every day not only from my team but the people using Apex services. I'll always be grateful for the opportunities I got to progress through the organisation from Employment Development Advisor to Deputy Unit Manager, Unit Manager and finally Service Development Manager. One of my favourite things about my journey was still having contact with the service users but being allowed to challenge myself, whether that was writing bids, developing new partnerships or developing myself through the training opportunities I got. I always felt supported, not just by my teams in the units but by management and of course the service users. I couldn't have asked to work for and with a more professional organisation, with a real passion for what they do. Thank you Apex, without you taking a chance on me I wouldn't be where I am now."

Vikki Binnie MSc

Community Justice Partnership
Manager,
Dumfries and Galloway

Thank you to our partners, supporters and colleagues across the Justice sector for their kind words on our 30th anniversary.

"I'd like to offer my best wishes to Apex Scotland, and to their staff, who over the last 30 years have been working each day to help people who are at risk of offending change their lives for the better. Across their services for adults, young people and schools, they have given a great many people the chance they need to address their own problems, overcome the disadvantages they face and take steps towards a new life. I was delighted to be invited to deliver the annual Apex Lecture in 2015, and to speak about the impact these services can have.

Apex Scotland provide a valuable contribution to making Scotland not just a safer but also a fairer place for us all to live. Happy Anniversary."

Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Justice

"Your colleagues have a real passion for their work with a strong desire to build partnerships which will support their users in moving forwards to improve their circumstances. I look forward to working together on this joint aim, and wish you congratulations and many more years of success."

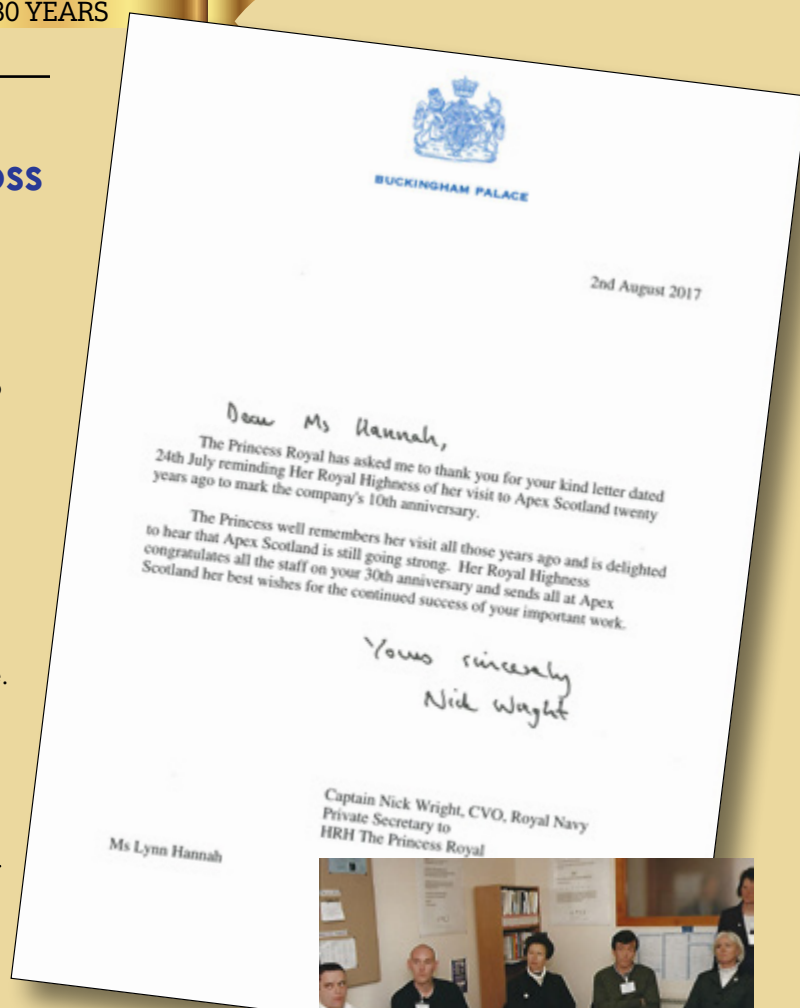
**Louise Cook, Partnership Development Manager,
Department for Work and Pensions**

"Apex Scotland has played an essential role over the past 30 years in working with people across Scotland at risk of offending. They both highlight and respond to the deep rooted factors of deprivation and disadvantaged that make people more vulnerable to crime and offending. I especially value the commitment that Apex Scotland has to working in partnership with other organisations and agencies within the justice system and beyond, and its focus on the issues of inclusion and equality. The Apex Scotland Annual Lecture is always a genuine highlight, attracting speakers of the highest calibre, to challenge and move forward our thinking on justice issues."

Neil Rennick, Director of Justice, Scottish Government

"I would like to offer my congratulations to Apex Scotland as they celebrate 30 years of service addressing the employment and training needs of Scotland and its local communities. At my recent visit to the Apex Scotland office in Dumfries I was encouraged to see and hear about the work they are doing in the local community to help individuals with barriers to work take the first steps to gain meaningful employment. I wish you continued success for the future."

**Jamie Hepburn MSP,
Minister for Employability and Training**



**The Princess Royal
with Apex Highland
service users in 1997**



"On behalf of all at Sacro, our staff, trustees, past and present, it is my privilege to congratulate everyone involved with Apex Scotland who have consistently over the 30 years now being celebrated, worked closely with us to serve and support the people who need the services we provide. Apex Scotland's contribution to delivering a safer, fairer Scotland is a reason to celebrate this important milestone and, in the true sense of partnership, I look forward to the future with a real sense of continued optimism for the work Apex does."

Tom Halpin, CEO, Sacro

"Too many of us in the third sector struggle to survive but Apex Scotland has managed to do so much more in its 30 years. You have given a leg-up to thousands of people and continue to be an active, engaged and much admired partner. Congratulations! I wish you every success in the future."

Martin Sime, Chief Executive, SCVO

"For 30 years, Apex Scotland has led the way in providing high-quality services and informed comment on the rehabilitation of offenders. Your contribution has been considerable and all who have been involved should be proud of your achievements. Congratulations and Happy Birthday!"

Lord Jack McConnell (First Minister of Scotland 2001-2007)

Aim Higher, Behave Differently, Change Your Future

Hello, welcome to our Annual Report. I think you will find much to interest you this year as we take some significant new steps and reflect on a very challenging but positive year. From the start I need to recognise the outstanding contribution made to the success by our excellent and committed workforce. Throughout this report I hope you will see many examples of not just the professionalism of our staff but their creativity and dedication to improving the life chances of our service users. As always I extend my thanks to them all.

I have always loved that masterly deconstruction of the dilemma that is inherent in crime and offending by Steven Sondheim in West Side Story. 'Gee Officer Krupke' sung by the Jets, offers a humorous but insightful picture of the way in which responsibility for criminal behaviour gets passed around between agencies. With chilling accuracy it also shows how those who commit breaches of social rules adapt to the labels they are given in order to justify or to excuse those behaviours.

For many years now we at Apex Scotland have struggled to define our identity and to clarify exactly what our 'product' or 'brand' really is. The problem we face is that, as with Officer Krupke, every time the political or social landscape shifts we are forced to shift with it. Coupled with that is the impact of contract specification leading to the provider organisation being shaped by the terms of their most significant contracts, even though these contracts may only be of a couple of years' duration. This shifting scenario leads to confusion about the identity of the organisation and potentially the loss of its corporate sense, dividing down to numerous small entities each held together by little more than a common name. Is Apex about employment, employability, prevention, training, social behaviour management, rehabilitation, crime reduction or what?

We have gradually reached an understanding that whatever we are being required to do by the terms of our contracts, we can only realistically and honestly consider ourselves to have a very limited level of control over what an individual chooses to do with their lives. However much we might like to believe that it is our excellence and endeavour which produces good outcomes, we know in reality that changes in behaviour and improvement in life chances are down to the choices made by those who use our services. If we view offending as a condition or problem which can be fixed we will see the client group adapt to whichever model is provided and absorb vast amounts of money and time in the latest scheme without real change in our society. This perpetuates the justice industry but is unlikely to really change anything! If however, we understand that our role is not to fix things but to encourage those who are wanting to make the changes they see as being desirable, then we see people owning those changes and moving forward with greater personal strength.

In view of this we deconstructed what we are all about and reduced it to three simple statements:- Aim Higher, Behave Differently and Change Your Future. In our experience the greatest single barrier to moving away from offending patterns of behaviour is a lack of belief that anything else is possible or desirable. If there is no expectation of personal success then the individual operates in a very narrow field of ambition. There is great truth in the phrase 'If you aim at nothing you will always hit it'.



In our experience the greatest single barrier to moving away from offending patterns of behaviour is a lack of belief that anything else is possible or desirable. If there is no expectation of personal success then the individual operates in a very narrow field of ambition. There is great truth in the phrase 'If you aim at nothing you will always hit it'.

Alan Staff
Chief Executive

If we can help someone to have higher aspirations then we can also help to begin to identify what the barriers are to achieving them, and what behaviours they need to change in order to remove them. The final part of the statement recognises that one of the biggest enemies of desistance is a sense of having no control over your life and circumstances. Traditionally justice-based services tended to remove control from people and impose restrictions which often create dependency or abdication of personal responsibility. By tackling barriers and then providing education, training, mentoring and work opportunities we can help people to regain a sense of control over their future and believe in the possibility of changing it for the better.

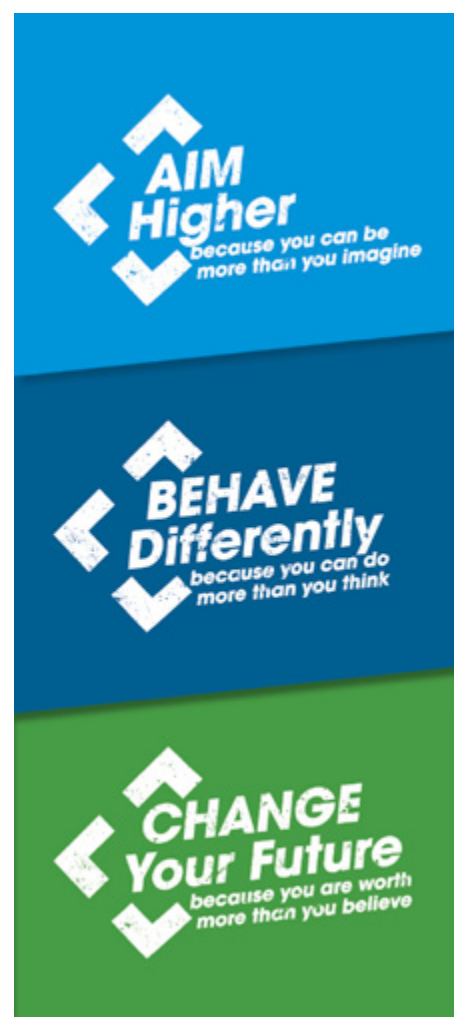
This ABC mantra which is, as you will see, the theme for this year's Report, also leads itself to a philosophy of practice in which all Apex services begin working with a person around their assets and aspirations, using these to identify barriers and behaviours which need to change and then constructing action plans based on progress towards taking back control and achieving ambitions. Progress may be modest or it may be dramatic, but at all times it is owned and worked for by the individual who takes personal responsibility for their actions and their progress. Over time we know that progress made on this basis will be lasting and will benefit both individual and their society/community. This model will underpin every service which we at Apex Scotland provide, and you will see this reflected in our marketing and in our behaviour going forward.

We know in reality that changes in behaviour and improvement in life chances are down to the choices made by those who use our services.

If I can briefly reflect on the past year, it has been one of some success for Apex Scotland as we have seen the impact of our long term strategy resulting in improving finances and growing opportunity for service delivery. In particular I am pleased to report progress on our strategic priority to move away from reliance on unstable and unreliable Local Authority contracts towards a more mixed economy which, while being more challenging, builds in a certain resilience to our long term future. Over the last year our training services have developed and grown strongly both in number and variety, offering skills and employment based qualifications to many including into a large number of prisons. The piloting of our new ASSET database has concluded successfully and the organisation is now fully utilising this welcome resource to record all service information. Capturing the details to evidence the true value of what we do has been challenge over the years and we are delighted at this development in our data management system. Also we are very excited by the prospect of our second social enterprise Track2Train.

Apex continues to evolve and respond to a changing justice world, but we go into this next year not only with a new sense of purpose and identity but also with some optimism that we have an organisation which fits the national agenda and which understands its purpose and its value. Maybe as an organisation we also are learning the benefits of Aiming Higher, Behaving Differently and Changing our Future?

Alan Staff
Chief Executive



engageinspireimprovesustain

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 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 here you will see 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.

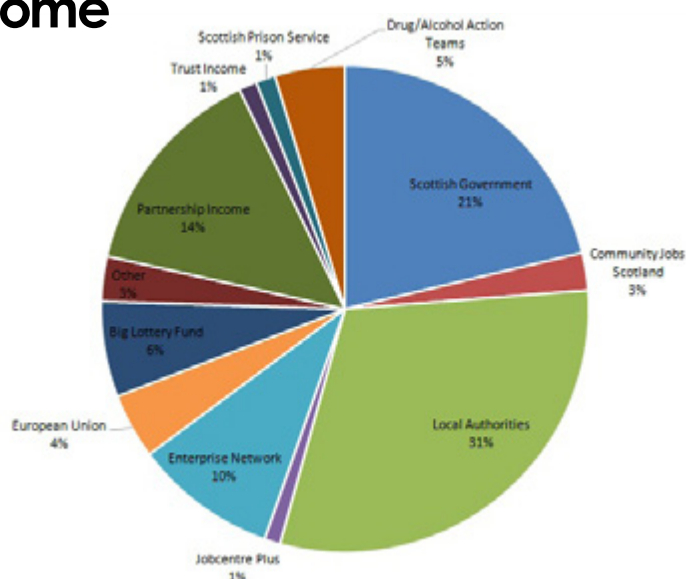
We have continued, as all agencies have, to suffer from the ongoing spending squeeze which has occurred at a time when there is an increase in demand for our services. Undoubtedly over recent years we have suffered from the financial impact of the cuts in funding whilst attempting to provide effective, 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 undoubtedly steadied the financial position giving greater comfort that we can move forward with confidence and a belief in our ability to continue providing services to those in need.

A clear indication of progress made is that our year end accounts show a surplus of £150,808 for the financial year 2016-17. This is achieved against income generated of £2,402,111 and expenditure incurred of £2,251,303. This performance, allied with the difference we have made to around 3,000 people's lives, is testament to the commitment and professionalism of our staff.

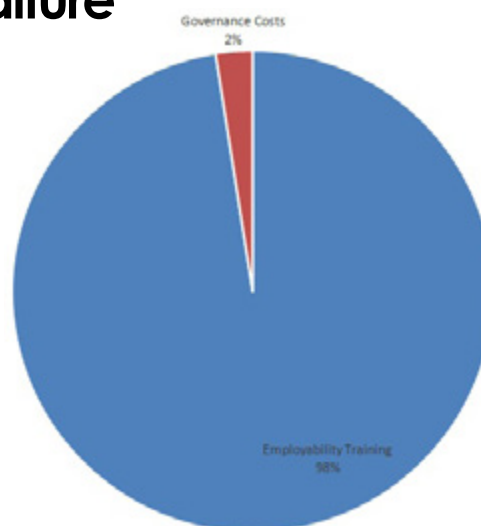
Our trading subsidiary, All Cleaned Up, posted a loss of £21,816 in financial year 2016-17. Whilst this is disappointing we remain confident that this initiative, which creates real jobs for our service users, will be able to build upon the efforts made to strengthen that organisation. It has focused on increased accreditation and quality improvements, to ensure a brighter future for the service users who benefit but also Apex as part of our longer term strategy to reduce our reliance on public sector funding.

We have also commenced the process of creating a further social enterprise which we expect to come on stream in early 2018-19. Much work has been undertaken already in preparation for this new venture.

Income



Expenditure



The surplus made in 2016-17 has enabled us to move forward with confidence and an increased ability to reinvest in 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 ASSET management information tool and supported by effective governance at all levels across the organisation. This approach has, undoubtedly, contributed to our success in gaining European Funding in 2017-18 which will enable us to support a significantly increased number of service users. Whilst this brings its own challenges, it underlines the faith that funders have in Apex and that service users place in us.

Consolidated Accounts detailing the performance of both the charity and our trading subsidiary can be found at Companies House.

Solid Partnerships

The best partnerships produce a synergy that provides a secure and solid structure through which a service user can receive the best focused and relevant support. Apex is a strong partner which consistently meets, or exceeds, targets. We have formed a number of successful collaborations, working in partnership with a range of funders, public and statutory bodies and third sector organisations to ensure that we can give individuals the best chance of reaching their own positive future. These partnerships help us to meet our own strategic objectives, allowing more effective or efficient use of resources as well as contribute to the national outcomes of the Scottish Government concerning a safer Scotland, employment opportunities, and support and nurturing of young people.



Our thanks go to our following key partners this year:

- » Scottish Government
- » Local Authorities Criminal Justice Social Work and Education Departments
- » European Social Fund
- » Scottish Prison Service
- » Community Justice Authorities
- » Community Planning Partnerships
- » Community Safety Partnerships
- » Alcohol and Drug Partnerships
- » The Robertson Trust
- » The Big Lottery
- » Apex Inclusion High Schools in Fife
- » Shine (led by Sacro) – national PSP partners
- » New Routes (led by Wise Group) – national PSP partners
- » DWP
- » SCVO
- » Skills Development Scotland
- » Police Scotland
- » Work Programme Partners
- » Strathclyde University and Robert Gordon's University
- » The Celtic Foundation
- » Poppy Scotland
- » Diageo
- » Trussell Trust and C-Fine
- » NHS and Health Partners
- » The Prince's Trust
- » CrossReach
- » The Holywood Trust
- » Turning Point Scotland
- » YPeople
- » Resource3
- » National Museum of Scotland

258 people into employment

Annual Lecture 2016

Apex Scotland's Annual Lecture is now a key fixture in the Justice calendar and in September we were delighted to welcome Fraser Kelly, Chief Executive of Social Enterprise Scotland to deliver his lecture in the Signet Library. Our choice to invite Fraser was to ask whether the economic models which have underpinned welfarism are still viable, or whether an enterprise model generating its own income might be more practical for the future? This is particularly pertinent to Apex at a time when we are developing a number of enterprise options in addition to All Cleaned Up, our first venture into this arena.

Fraser offered a tour de force of Scottish local government economics and political dogma, pointing to the way in which thinking is changing and to the successes of social enterprises both at an economic and personal level. The pace and energy which was shown in the subsequent question and answer session is testament to the high levels of knowledge and interest in the subject among the audience, and their willingness to engage in considering whether social enterprises can be a significant contributor to the Scottish social fabric.

A recording and transcription of the lecture can be viewed on our website.



Fraser Kelly

Sam Dow Memorial Award

The Sam Dow memorial award is presented annually to the Apex staff team which has shown outstanding and innovative performance.

This is always a difficult choice as the commitment by Apex staff to our service users and the organisation is substantial, with many people going the extra mile on a daily basis. The Sam Dow award was presented to a small ad hoc team where the individuals worked together to ensure that the methods of delivery and administration for our training service was cohesive, using their experience to create guidelines, write procedures and offer ongoing help and support across the country to those delivering and administering training.



Chantelle, Lynn and Derek with their award

An Enthusiastic Workforce

Apex is always aware that its greatest asset is its staff. We always seek to employ people who have the drive and enthusiasm to engage with our client group so that, even if their experience is limited when they join us, their skills, positive attitude and eagerness to learn, make them welcome colleagues, as well as an excellent example to our service users. Kirsty McGowan joined the team as a Personal Development Mentor this year, delivering a new employability service in Paisley. Here she describes how she has found her first few months with Apex.

"Apex has helped me as a PDM in so many different ways! I graduated last year and was really unsure how I wanted to use my degree to help others. I applied to work for Apex as I thought their vision and values were very similar to my own so I thought it would be really rewarding work. As our referrals for the service come from social work, I'm based in the Paisley criminal justice social work team and I absolutely love it. I would never have realised how amazing and interesting this field of work is without the opportunities that Apex has given me.

In terms of Apex's Renfrewshire service, I'm really proud of how quickly we've established ourselves and how receptive and keen the clients here are! The service is fairly new but in just the first four months our Labyrinth service helped eight people into employment, ranging from lorry drivers to retail sales assistants. The service users I work with on a daily basis are so engaged and keen to get into work or volunteering. Even helping people achieve soft outcomes such as seeing increased confidence and self esteem is amazing to be a part of. I love my job!"



Kirsty at work

The service is fairly new but in just the first four months our Labyrinth service helped eight people into employment.

Here is what one of Kirsty's clients had to say: "'Apex was recommended to me by the criminal justice worker who was involved in my case and also I found them myself online when looking for support. My case worker,

Kirsty, has been very supportive and positive about the future and I have never felt judged at any time. With Kirsty's help and support I would like to get my life back on track by gaining employment again. We have a clear and structured action plan for the future and I am very grateful that Apex exists as it has helped me to gain confidence in myself again through the support the service offers."

Accessing Youth Employability (AYE)

Our AYE service is for 16-21 year old care leavers in Fife. Personal Development Mentors work one-to-one with young people, assessing and supporting them through all manner of employability skills with a view to progressing them into to employment, training or further education. The young people are encouraged to take the initiative to improve their own job prospects.

Stuart* is a looked after child in supporting housing and was referred to Apex's AYE Project in September 2016 from Fife Social Work. He appeared confident and articulate but needed some support to formulate his plans for the future. Our PDM accompanied Stuart to Skills Development Scotland where he decided to apply for an Employability

Stage 2 programme. We assisted him with his application and he was accepted soon after. Unfortunately because he had signed on to job seekers allowance shortly before the course began, he was told he was no longer eligible to attend and so it was back to the drawing board.

Together our PDM and Stuart created a new CV for him and searched for employment opportunities that interested him. In January 2017 he successfully interviewed for a job in Edinburgh but realised shortly after that he wanted to continue his full time education so enrolled on a pre-employment retail course. Our PDM continues to support Stuart and he plans to move on to stage 2 of this programme in due course.

Roger's Story

Roger* had been out of work for over 10 years due to prison and drug related issues. He did not think that anyone would employ him due to the gap in his employment and did not see the point in trying. He expressed interest in going to college but did not think he would be suitable or that he would be accepted on any course. Our Personal Development Mentor (PDM) encouraged Roger to pursue his goals and started by helping him to write a CV. Happy with the encouragement, Roger began to look for a college course.

He decided he wanted to apply to do an HNC Social Science course and asked for help to do this. Together the PDM and Roger went through the application process. When it came to the personal statement Roger already had a rough idea what he wanted to say but was not sure how to word it so they worked on writing this together. Once Roger was satisfied with the completed application, he submitted it on the same day. This was such an achievement for him who didn't think he would be able to fill in a college application, let alone have it completed in one day.

Whilst the college application was being reviewed the PDM and Roger focused their attention on looking for employment. Roger was assisted in registering with a job search website and they took time to apply for various jobs together. This assistance was particularly useful as Roger said he would have given up on some applications due to the length and the type of questions that were asked.

A few weeks later Roger failed to attend one of his appointments. The PDM was slightly concerned as it was out of character - he had been good at communicating and attending. When the PDM got in touch she discovered that he had attended an interview for a job that they had applied for together; he found out two days later he was successful!

One more appointment was made so that Roger could have a final catch up with his PDM and get help with his references. At that time he expressed his gratitude and appreciation to Apex in taking the time to help him apply for jobs and college. He stated that he definitely wouldn't have managed to secure an interview for this job without some guidance from Apex; the woman who interviewed him said his personal statement stood out above everyone else's and caught her attention.

Michael's Story

Apex staff are trained to treat every service user as an individual and some setbacks can be tougher than others. This story told by one Personal Development Mentor illustrates how we need to guide our services users to perhaps alter their thinking if what they want in the future is to be achievable. Setbacks do not mean failure. In some cases, individuals may have set their own bar too low, attempting to pursue only what they know. That is when we need to encourage them to aim higher.

"Michael*, who had previously served 17 years in prison, came across motivated and positive in his initial appointment. He had done barbering whilst in prison and had decided that he wanted to pursue this as a career on his release. Together we applied for numerous jobs in barbering and contacted various barbers within the city centre asking if they would accept Michael for work experience. However, each attempt was rejected and Michael started to become deflated in his search for employment. We applied to college for a hairdressing course where Michael was granted an interview and he was confident of being accepted; unfortunately he was unsuccessful at interview and this had a serious impact.

He continued to attend each appointment with an upbeat attitude and social work decided to reduce his appointments to fortnightly. We were informed a few days later that Michael had attempted suicide. Thankfully the attempt was unsuccessful but he told me later that part of the reason was the rejections from employers.

Michael has now come back to work with Apex and we have adjusted our action plan. Michael is more reserved, quieter, but a bit more realistic about the future and has accepted that it may not be a straightforward path into barbering. He accepts that he should apply for other things in the meantime to improve his CV and strengthen his skillset. Every appointment is planned to keep things manageable and we are gently working toward the idea of work or college. Michael has applied for a NC Social Science Course, something he had never thought of before, and he has an interview in August which has boosted his confidence. He is looking forward to the future again."

1155 qualifications attained **574** CSCS cards gained

Lisa's Story

Louise McEwan is a long-serving Personal Development Mentor based in Alloa and has recently begun working in the Criminal Justice Social Work office there in an effort to improve links with our Council partner. Louise said, "Being situated with social work colleagues has been absolutely fantastic. It has made such a difference to how we work, with social workers asking if I can just pop along to see a client if they come in – social work staff have all commented on the improved arrangement. Attendance by service users is much better because everything is handled in the one place."

Here Louise tells of an individual she is working with on the Works4You service, which directly tackles barriers faced by service users with a criminal record to improve their job readiness and bring them closer to the labour market.

"Lisa* was originally referred to the Works4You service in April 2016 but it took another seven months until she felt ready to engage and attend appointments.

When I first met Lisa she was struggling with her mental health, exacerbated by the fact that she was in the middle of a legal battle with her ex partner to get joint access to their two young children. As a result she was suffering from anxiety and had panic attacks when out in public. Lisa's GP had referred her to a support group but she was still finding it difficult as she felt she couldn't contribute, which in turn made her more anxious. Although she was initially referred to Apex for employability support and advice in completing job application forms, it was clear that Lisa had other areas she needed to address first. So in her first month or so of appointments, we didn't focus on applying for jobs; we chatted....about absolutely anything. This helped us build a trusting working relationship and, consequently, she was able to relay our conversations to her support group so she felt she was contributing more to discussions.

In time, Lisa decided she was ready to do something more meaningful. She felt employment was still a step too far so we looked at options like volunteering or short term training courses. Lisa always wanted to be a nurse but was realistic in knowing that her criminal record, in particular the type of convictions she had, would make it very difficult for her to be able to become a registered nurse. We looked at other avenues in care and she agreed this was something she would be keen to explore. A course being run by DWP called "Introduction to Care" was ILA funded. Lisa was

interested in this but concerned that she wouldn't be able to sustain the required four full days of attendance. She was nervous about who else would be there and whether she would be able to cope. Nonetheless she applied and was delighted to receive a place. She managed to attend every day and completed the course. I cannot stress enough how much of an achievement this was for an individual who at first couldn't bring herself to leave the house to attend appointments!

I cannot stress enough how much of an achievement this was for an individual who at first couldn't bring herself to leave the house to attend appointments!

This new found confidence meant that Lisa was eagerly looking at other opportunities. I suggested college and again Lisa was a bit sceptical but at the same time was excited at the prospect. More than anything she wanted to show her children that she was achieving something positive with her life. We looked through the prospectus and Lisa decided she wanted to apply for an NC Child, Health & Social Care course. We completed the online application and within a few days she was asked to attend an interview. As interview day drew closer, Lisa's anxiety returned so we focused on how far she had already come and prepared for the day. Interview day arrived and I arranged to pick Lisa up and drive her so that she had some support. I waited for her while she was interviewed and when she came out she was absolutely beaming – they had offered her a place there and then! The joy on her face is something I will never forget. She couldn't wait to get home and pass on the fantastic news to her family.

To date, Lisa is waiting to start her course at the end of August. Meantime, we have applied for a bursary and are working on her disclosure letter and CV as she is already thinking about her next steps after her course has finished.

Lisa has now finished her court order, so has no legal obligation to keep attending Apex. However, at her last appointment she asked if she could keep coming to see me. I reminded her that she doesn't have to – she has already **aimed higher, behaved differently and changed her future** and I couldn't be prouder!"

928 people used virtual visits to prisons across Scotland

Recovery Walk



The walkers with their flags

Having attended the previous event in 2015, Apex Highland, in partnership with Highland Drug and Alcohol Partnership and Crossreach, filled a coach load of service users, friends, family and staff to attend Scotland's 6th Recovery Walk in Falkirk last September.

The Recovery Walk began with a Remembrance Ceremony where 704 red roses, representing drug related deaths in Scotland the previous year, were put in the Union Canal at the Helix Park in the shadow of the Kelpies. Assembling at the starting point, the group shared flags, from Crossreach, HMP Inverness, Highland Recovery Collective and a beautiful new flag produced by the service users committee.

The walk of three miles was attended by 2,000 people, with whistles drums, flags and hooters creating a celebratory atmosphere through the streets of Falkirk. A picnic and party followed at the Recovery Village in Callendar Park where the group met friends old and new. The free refreshments were supplied by the Salvation Army while recovery bands kept everyone entertained with live music and some brave people shared their own amazing stories of recovery. The day ended on an emotional high as Kuladharini from Scottish Recovery Consortium gave a rousing speech and led The Serenity Prayer.

Darren and Tanya receive canal project certificates from James Maybee, Principal Officer, CJSW Highland (left), with Apex Scotland Operations Manager, Gerard McEneaney

Wild and Watery Places

Over 12 weeks during the summer Apex Highland, along with mentors from the Scottish Waterways Trust, delivered a programme of activities surrounding the Caledonian Canal and Merkinch local nature reserve. Our service users volunteered and took part in a number of experiences learning about the working of the canal, risk management and how to navigate boats along it. The volunteers helped to paint bollards at the canal and learned how to operate the locks.

An additional day was spent with a photographer who taught wildlife photography and another spent looking at invasive species management and getting rid of Michaelmas daisy patches. Two hundred and seventy five hours were spent working on this project and six of the group were presented with John Muir Awards.

Making a positive contribution to the environment and wider community is key to the success of recovery work. It encourages care and responsibility for wild places and integrates this with wider learning opportunities and the health benefits of being outdoors and working as part of a team.



Fresh for Harvesting

From August 2016, in partnership with Highland Council and ESF, Apex's ASCEND service now delivers specialist courses on a new outreach basis including work with the Scottish Prison Service in Inverness and throughcare services with Highland Council. The development of longer term outdoor projects includes Apex Highland's new polytunnels project. The site for the two polytunnels is Peddieston Farm on the Black Isle where the team's other outdoor project is based. Peddieston Farm houses Horses in Clover, an animal sanctuary, where for the last four years we have helped with the maintenance and repair of the buildings and looking after the animals who live there.

Visitors to the outdoor projects are always extremely impressed by the commitment, enthusiasm and grit of those who volunteer there.

The volunteer service users have been involved in the new project from the outset, preparing the ground and constructing the polytunnels. Work continued through the winter, creating raised beds and ensuring all the preparation for sowing, potting and planting was completed before spring, including fencing the area to make sure that there could be no unwanted visitors from the horse sanctuary! Winter salads, pak choi, lambs lettuce, perpetual spinach and onions were first on the menu with seasonal vegetables and fruit planned for the rest of year. Harvests are shared with the service users involved, promoting a healthy five fruit and vegetables a day and educating them about the positive impact on our environment. The Highland team also plans to hold cooking lessons to turn the produce into delicious organic soups and imaginative healthy salads.

Visitors to the outdoor projects are always extremely impressed by the commitment, enthusiasm and grit of those who volunteer there. Being involved in outdoor community challenges improves our service users' core skills such as improved timekeeping, reliability, team working, confidence and communication. Several of our service users, peer mentors and staff have achieved John Muir Awards through our outdoor initiatives.



Preparations for polytunnels underway

A fruitful harvest



Over 10,000 hours of volunteering

U-Turn – Serving the Community

The U-Turn service in Dumfries and Galloway is a very popular service both with service users and the local community. It focuses on volunteering and group work, offering people the opportunity to increase their self-confidence and gain work experience and skills. The team have been incredibly busy this year with a number of different local projects including:

- » Maintaining the Mull of Galloway Trail
- » Maintaining public flower beds around Stranraer
- » Building a wooden play house for Park Nursery
- » Building a seating area for Raphead Nursery
- » Clearing and building covers for Dunskey Golf Club flower beds
- » Constructing a mud kitchen for Scheuchan Nursery
- » Cleaning the gardens at Thorneycroft Nursing Home
- » Building a new fence and gate for an elderly couple
- » Maintaining the Santa Float

Having opened a new premises in Stranraer, Alzheimer Scotland invited the U-Turn team to construct an outside seating dining area with flower planters for sensory garden and to provide general maintenance. Subsequently, the team attended awareness workshops at Alzheimer Scotland which the volunteers said they enjoyed and found informative, saying it would help them to engage with people affected by dementia. Each participant received a Dementia Friend certificate.

Two other popular U-Turn projects are the walking group in Newton Stewart and the photography/walking group in Stranraer. Both of these groups are jointly run by Apex and Alcohol and Drug Support South West Scotland, a partnership that works well for our combined client groups to improve both their physical and wellbeing. One of the highlights of the photography group was the production of their 2017 calendar. Photographs from the calendar were displayed in Castle Douglas and were well received by the general public.



U-Turn photography group

U-Turn service users volunteering in the community

Furniture renovation is also enjoyed by our services users and we run sessions in collaboration with The Furniture Project in Stranraer. The Furniture Project provides the Apex team with unwanted pieces of furniture which are then renovated to a high standard and given a new lease of life by our service users. The renovated pieces can then be donated or sold for charity; some pieces have been kept and used by the individuals themselves.

Knowing that most people have an artistic streak and enjoy a good tune, a weekly guitar/ukelele group was organised this year and took place in Stranraer Fire Station, which we were given permission to use free of charge. The group was well attended and each person learned some basic chords and songs, enjoying the opportunity to play along with one another. Our thanks to Georg, a friend of Apex, who kindly donated his guitars for individuals to use.



Furniture renovation

The Vox Sessions

We were delighted when Highland Drug & Alcohol Partnership invited us to nominate two service users to participate in a two day song writing workshop with Vox Liminis on the theme of recovery at HMP Inverness. Vox Liminis gives opportunities to those involved with or affected by the criminal justice system to be creative and connect with those around them through the arts.

Service users Chris and Gavin jumped at the chance. Working alongside members of the prison's SMART Recovery group, two members of staff and the trio of musicians/song writers from Vox Liminis produced over ten striking and moving songs.

Vox Liminis later returned to the prison to perform to an invited audience including participants and

residents. The evening began with a song written by Chris, entitled "I Am Ruthless", based on his personal relationship with drugs and alcohol and the devastating impact it had upon his life. This was followed by songs written by prison SMART group members. "Black Rainbows", written by Gavin and also performed on the night, is a song full of emotion but ending in hope. The entire evening was superb filled with amazing creativity and everyone who attended left uplifted. Both Chris and Gavin were later presented with outstanding achievement certificates.

Top:
Chris with Gerard McEneaney

Right:
Sharon Morrison, CJSW;
Gavin; Shona Urquhart, NHS



Sam's Story

"In our initial appointment Sam* came across as extremely difficult to engage with as he had socially excluded himself from society since his conviction. Sam said that he wanted to apply for college but was not sure if that was an option due to his convictions or even what he wanted to study. Discussions revealed that Sam had previously been involved with the Wildlife Trust and enjoyed the work that was required there.

Sam decided that he really wanted to apply for an NC Horticulture course we had found but was not sure where to start. After some encouragement Sam was able to write a full paragraph about the certain responsibilities and jobs he had whilst working at the Wildlife Trust and linked it to the requirements needed for the course.

After we had submitted Sam's application he told me he was extremely apprehensive about his conviction and being at college. I spoke with the Student Services Team Leader that worked alongside MAPPA who subsequently arranged a meeting with Sam to speak about his concerns and see if he might be able to advise him in any way. In our next appointment Sam explained that meeting with the Team Leader was extremely beneficial.

Sam was accepted for a group assessment at the college which made him incredibly anxious so we were sure to do plenty of preparation beforehand. Afterwards he informed me that it went very well and he had actually spoken to another potential student who wanted to do the course. A few weeks later Sam was given an unconditional offer to attend the course.

Given this increase in confidence, I suggested the idea of finding some voluntary work over the summer so that he did not return to socially excluding himself before college started. I tried various options before organising a meeting with Ken, the manager of Dundee Foodbank, where we discussed the possibility of having someone with a criminal conviction volunteering for their organisation. Ken was very happy to have Sam as a volunteer and we both agreed the warehouse would be ideal place for him to start.

Sam's social workers have recently approached me and given great feedback about the changes in him since starting engagement with Apex. He now interacts in the group well, he is positive and upbeat and has even been attending the gym regularly. He has also been telling everyone in his group to attend Apex!"

A Positive Future

The A Positive Future wheel is Apex's dynamic and comprehensive assessment tool which helps our service users identify the areas in their lives that need addressed. Our Personal Development Mentors work with together with service users to create an action plan to tackle these issues at a pace that is challenging but realistic. They are encouraged to set goals and are provided with the tools and support to achieve these goals. Using the wheel at regular intervals clearly shows individuals the progress that they have made, illustrates that they are behaving differently, and encourages them to continue further on their journey to change their future.



Café N'Spire

Café N'Spire, funded by Dumfries and Galloway Alcohol and Drug Partnership, was initially started to support people with addictions who were in recovery. However, in Stranraer this proved a difficult group to get involved. Staff there had to think differently about how to engage our client group and decided to change the definition to attract those suffering from social isolation, homelessness and unemployment. This proved a more popular approach as the café was available to a much broader range of people, while still keeping the aim of inspiring change.

Whilst attending the café, service users are assisted in devising their own eight week programme of activities. This not only encourages service user participation but also gives them the chance to share talents and skills with the rest of the group. Having a say in how the café operates has also proved to be a huge confidence booster for many of the service users as they feel listened to and can share their opinions.

The café is held in a local church and the minister and church members who regularly attend the café offer pastoral support to the service users if required. Some of the service users have actually begun attending church as a result. This is another opportunity for service users to change their future if they wish to do so.

The café has provided the opportunity for many service users to get involved in things they may never have considered before such as art, quizzes, music and karaoke! Some have also learned new skills such as cooking. One of the most important and noticeable changes, however, can be seen by a change in their attitude and behaviour which will help these individuals as they move forward.



Café N'Spire service users trying out their music skills!

Auricular Acupuncture

Apex has long advocated the method of auricular acupuncture as an effective way of dealing with anxiety which affects many of our service users. We have practitioners across the organisation but the practice is prevalent in Apex Highland which offers acupuncture on a weekly basis as part of its holistic approach to recovery.

In September 2016, Steve Pinnington from NADA Scotland spent one week training 1 new Apex full time member of staff, 3 sessional staff, 1 Criminal Justice Social Worker, 2 CPN's and a SMART Facilitator from Caithness in Universal 5 Point Protocol. This training



meant that the Highland team can now offer an additional acupuncture session each week, giving service users more choice and additional treatment.

Peer mentors Joanna, Willie and Tanya were delighted at this opportunity to deliver a service which they benefit so much from themselves and are now supporting treatments on Wednesday and Fridays as delivery practitioners.

Peter's Story

Personal Development Mentor, Jen Reid, had been working with Peter for three months, initially meeting once a week. Peter was subject to a Community Payback Order requiring him to complete 150 hours unpaid work within six months. He suffered from a number of health complaints both physically and mentally. Having been diagnosed with depression and anxiety, he was prescribed Citalopram along with a host of other medications for high blood pressure, tendonitis, hypertension and IBS. Aside from these, he smoked cannabis daily to help with his pain management. He was more than aware that this exacerbated his mental health issues but found it helped with his chronic pain. He was stuck in a cycle, unaware of alternative ways to get through each day and overwhelmed by his CPO. Jen discussed with Peter the benefits of auricular acupuncture, particularly useful in relieving the symptoms associated with stress and anxiety. He was sceptical but open to introducing change into his life. Here Peter takes up his story.

"I attended my first acupuncture session with Jen at Apex, although I was still very cautious, frightened and worried as I suffer with anxiety and depression. So this was a very new thing to me.

The first acupuncture session was difficult for me to relax at first, but as I listened to the CD and done the 5 finger Qi Gong exercises, I began to really chill, I'm sure I actually fell asleep. After the session ended, all of the extra stress and pain had almost completely gone and I was so calm, I couldn't believe how happy I was feeling. This was only with 1 pin. I'm now on 5 pins. The rest of that day went by so slow, quiet and bright.

I've never felt so good. Since regular sessions with Jen for acupuncture I have felt better about myself, wanting to get up earlier, not too early!!

I also have an improved libido, a better appetite, have stopped taking my Citalopram (prescribed) as I felt I no longer needed them. I want to eat healthier, and even eat fruit now. My sleeping appears to be far better and I feel like I have actually slept rather than feeling like I am out of my face or hung-over (due to painkiller which I have stopped taking as often).

I've been able to find a small part time job 3 days a week. I want to do my housework again, the pain was stopping



Peter with Apex PDM, Jen Reid

me before, or that's the excuse I used. I keep myself cleaner and my lifestyle is much improved. I want to stop smoking and I'm almost there. I've now even finished my CPO, which is great as I thought I would never manage it due to my own excuses about the pain stopping me. I feel way better about myself, I want to socialise more, go visit people or see things."

Jen explains that Peter has made some remarkable changes in his life. He managed to comply with his CPO as a result of his improved mental wellbeing and completed his Order in half the allocated time. He has engaged with his peers and found an element of structure to his week, which he has embraced. The wider benefits have impacted on his relationships with his partner and family, who have noticed a marked difference in Peter. He has really managed to turn his life around, illustrated by feeling comfortable enough to write his own story for this report.

Almost 3000 service users with sustained engagement

Bike Thief to Motorcross Champ!

Apex's Grampian's Intensive Support Service (ISS) is a partnership through Aberdeen's Youth Justice Development programme providing a 'whole system approach' to address persistent and/or serious offending and/or anti-social behaviour in young people. Support offered includes mentoring, one to one learning, desistance work and recreational activities. The Intensive Support Service is used as an alternative to secure care and custody.

One of our PDM's in Aberdeen explains.

"When we first started working with Aaron* in August 2016 he had a number of ongoing issues. Most of these stemmed from substance abuse and led onto problems with respecting authority and dealing with his aggression. Aaron was no longer residing with his parents, he was not in full time education and was displaying ongoing offending behaviour. Before he was directly referred to Apex ISS he had run away from his place of care multiple times, appeared to be under the influence in the home and assaulted two police officers.

After spending time with Aaron, he showed great interest in gaining the qualifications needed to realise his dream of becoming a mechanic. Encouraging this aspiration, we worked on his CV, spent afternoons visiting garages and speaking to mechanics to get the information we needed and to try to secure some work experience. On the afternoons where we did these activities Aaron was always very animated and motivated.

Although his behaviour was always commendable when he was with working with Apex, Aaron was struggling at his residential home. This came to a head at the beginning of this year when a children's panel was called and Aaron was threatened with a move to the care of a secure



Aaron shows his biking skills

school. Apex was consulted during this panel and we strongly advised Aaron not be removed; this was the ultimate decision.

Apex continued to work with Aaron and engage him in activities that he found interesting while also challenging his behaviour to help him improve his responses so that he could return to mainstream education. We continued to meet up regularly in the evenings and secured funding to allow Aaron to do some BMX lessons which he was keen to do.

Through his BMX lessons it was clear the Aaron had skills in biking and this has subsequently progressed into motorcross racing. As a result he now has the potential to compete in two Scottish under 16 championship competitions. It was encouraging to see a positive use of his skills as he had previous historical offences for motorbike theft!

During our time with Aaron, he was also gradually phased back into mainstream, full time education. Aaron has successfully turned his life around and is behaving differently. It is such a joy to see him enjoying his hobbies, interacting with children his own age and engaging in full time education. At the beginning it was difficult to predict whether Aaron would reach this point, but it is great to see him now and we are confident that he will continue in this positive direction to reach his full potential."

47% of Employability Fund young people progressed to Stage 3 of pipeline

School Services



Apex school services, known currently as Apex Inclusion, is underpinned by science and research to employ best practice and approaches for engaging young people to overcome barriers to achieve their potential. Quite often this can be through the untangling of complex primary and secondary trauma or 'adverse childhood experiences' (ACEs) that can be displayed through a number of behaviours resulting in exclusion from school, disengagement from education, mental health problems and offending. The work of Apex's school services does not excuse connected behaviours, but addresses them through its Alternative to Exclusion and Focus On Your Future services. Our services seek to mitigate the negative impact of ACEs and finds innovative approaches to help young people move forward and achieve their potential.

In 2017 Apex Scotland will be launching an exciting development to our school services: RE:SET - Revising Youth Mindset. After 10 years of the award winning Apex Inclusion service, we are refreshing the Apex Inclusion brand and logo to a name and design that better describes Apex's Vision, Purpose and Aims. Inclusion remains at the heart of our work; offering ALL young people the opportunity to RE:SET and make positive changes in their lives.

The schools services are always involved in a number of activities over the year. In 2016/17 this included court and prison visits; pupils experiencing the day as an Apex PDM; partner engagement and involvement in groups and forums; UNCRC sessions; exam anxiety drop ins; Bee Buddies multi-sensory experience sessions; hosting LGBT Plus group; introducing NHS kit bags; introducing the Prince's Trust Achieve programme....to name just a few.



Encouraging participation and discussion



Restart a Heart Training

Learning To Start A Heart

Eight young people who attend the Inclusion service in Dunfermline High School took part in the 'Restart a Heart' day in October 2016, which is an initiative set up by the British Heart Foundation to train as many young people as possible with the knowledge of how to save a life. The training was carried out by Apex Scotland's Health and Safety, and Training Officer, Derek Milligan. Certificates were presented to all young people who participated. Derek went on to deliver Heartstart training to second students in Levenmouth Academy who all joined in well and received their Heartstart certificates on completion.

Fundraising

Apex Inclusion has organised a number of fundraising events over the last 12 months to promote social responsibility in young people, evidencing the Curriculum For Excellence at its best. These include:

Taking inspiration from Heartstart, Apex Inclusion pupils took part in a skipping fundraiser to help raise awareness for the British Heart Foundation. The aim was to skip over three miles between Leven and Lower Largo. The group of girls who took the challenge all suffer stress and anxiety and only have contact with mainstream education through the Apex Inclusion service. However, they were very excited about the project and were keen to get sponsors, raising over £200. Apex Inclusion received 20% of the total money raised, which went towards resources for the service in Levenmouth Academy. Each participant received a personal thank you certificate from the foundation as evidence of their efforts and commitment towards the great cause.

Since 2007 Apex Inclusion has supported more than
5000 young people over 4 local authority areas



Inclusion pupils, Andrew and Bryan, present their cheque to Levenmouth foodbank



Susan working with an anger management focus group

Foodbank Volunteers

The Levenmouth Foodbank Community Support Project runs Café Connect every Tuesday in conjunction with the Trussell Trust foodbank. Apex Inclusion has been involved with this café for almost two years. As part of our Focus on Your Future programme, two Inclusion pupils, Andrew Nixon S2 and Bryan Mackay S3 attend the weekly café where they support fellow volunteers and engage with locals. The weekly breakfast club costs around £30 per week to run. The students decided to hold a raffle to raise money in order to fund an Apex-led event at the foodbank. The boys were delighted to present staff at the Café Connect with a cheque for £70. Not only did the boys exceed their target of £30, they gained an insight into a volunteering environment where their contributions can make a real difference.

Pupil Transitioning Developments

Apex Inclusion has been much more involved with the P7-S1 transition period over the past year. We have worked not only with young people but also introduced parents/carers to the Apex service and its staff to ensure they have a holistic view of professionals supporting their children. This has been an excellent piece of work which is set to develop over the next 12 months with Apex staff visiting pupils in their primary school.

Complementing our own initiative, this year, Apex was chosen by the Princes Trust to pilot a new 10 week programme – Skills for School – aimed at developing the interpersonal and self-management skills of children aged 11-12 years arriving from primary school to help them successfully engage in secondary school. Skills for School is punctuated with self-assessment, in which young people evaluate how they believe the course content is helping them to develop key skills that they can take into the classroom and indeed for their own personal growth. On successful completion of the pilot scheme, participating pupils gained the Entry 3 unit in Planning for Personal Development. Six pupils completed the pilot programme.

Susan Brisbane

From September to December 2016, Susan Brisbane joined us in Dunfermline High School as a student on placement from the University of Strathclyde. During her time with the Inclusion team she created an anger management resource in consultation with young people through a series of focus groups. This new tool has been well received by the pupils. Susan said she thoroughly enjoyed her placement with Apex and hopes to join the organisation once she has graduated.

Inclusion Success

"Shannon* has benefitted hugely from her time spent in Apex Inclusion. She had 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 Inclusion before Christmas. Shannon agreed and the week was very successful. Shannon attended nearly a full week for the first time in over a year and completed a number of tasks assigned by her teachers. After consultation we decided to extend her time there and Shannon 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 Shannon, taking her to teachers and arranging work. This built up Shannon's confidence and fostered a determination to succeed. Shannon began to work with staff.

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

Fraser Donnelly,
PT Guidance, Dunfermline High School

Schools services prevented over 1000 hours being lost to exclusion

Training



Training is necessary to improve performance and enhance skills. For our service users, completing an Apex training course is perhaps the first opportunity they have had to achieve a certificate – an occasion worth celebrating. This can be a first stepping stone towards employment. For our staff it is necessary not only to ensure that our service delivery stays at the highest level, but to ensure that our colleagues have the opportunity to make their own progress, perhaps helping them to change their own course in life.

Apex's expertise and quality of delivery saw our training service grow considerably this year, not only to our service users and peer mentors but to members of the public and other organisations looking for specific qualifications and certification. Seventy four courses have been delivered to over 400 external participants.



As many of our courses are eligible for ILA (soon to be ITA) funding, individuals on benefits or low incomes have access to a quality training service, learning valuable skills and achieving vocational awards that will increase their chances of employment. This includes delivery of specific industry-recognised qualifications to those serving sentences in seven prisons across Scotland. In the past year 405 courses were delivered to 1387 trainees resulting in 1155 accredited qualifications and/or certificates. One of our most popular courses is for the construction industry CSCS card. This year 574 trainees achieved their CSCS card with Apex's help. Having already expanded our resources to meet demand, over the coming year we will be revising our training provision further, with a view to offering more courses of particular benefit to our client group.

Apex's expertise and quality of delivery saw our training service grow considerably this year.



Our staff, with their enthusiasm, diligence and expertise is what keeps Apex at the forefront in terms of engaging with our client group and working with them to overcome barriers that would otherwise inhibit achievement and progression. We are committed to ensure that our workforce regularly refresh and update their knowledge and skills so that they, too, can progress and to ensure the quality of our delivery. This year staff and peer mentors have completed courses such as Rehab & Disclosure, Sex Offender Management, Financial Capability (Trainer), Poverty Sensitive, Risk Assessment, Mental Health First Aid, One Digital, Personal Protection, Suicide Intervention Prevention, Behaviour Formation and Change and Developing a Partnership Based Approach....to name but a few.



74 training courses delivered to over 400 external participants

Service users and staff with their training certificates

Community Jobs Scotland

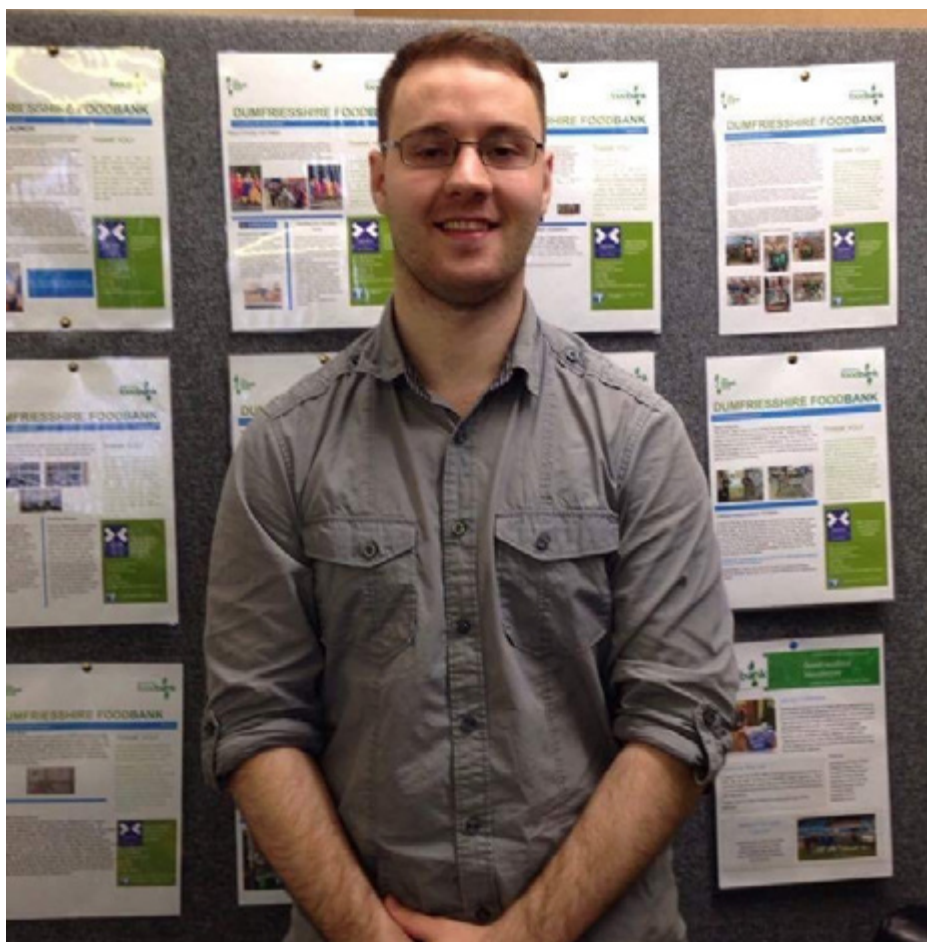
Since our first involvement from its launch in 2011, Apex Scotland has employed 64 young people through the Community Jobs Scotland initiative (previously known as Future Jobs Fund). Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) creates work opportunities for young unemployed people within third sector organisations throughout Scotland and is targeted at more vulnerable young people, in particular those who are more disadvantaged in the labour market such as care leavers, or those with disabilities or convictions.

The majority of Apex's CJS employees have completed their contract and have moved on to positive destinations including employment, further education, and voluntary work. We have been very pleased to have been able to retain some individuals as permanent employees, sessional workers or volunteers.

Over the years the feedback from the young people has been very positive, with the vast majority stating that they have enjoyed the experience, benefitting from being part of a team and the support they have received from colleagues. Some also comment on their increased confidence and skills which they will take with them, sometimes into areas of the voluntary sector which they had not considered, or known about, before their employment with Apex Scotland.

Over the last year we have employed 19 CJS young people as well as 2 interns through the SCVO Disability Equality Internship Programme which has been a great success.

Doug Yule has become a permanent member of staff following his internship. He said, "I have found Apex Scotland to be a very welcoming company to work for. My boss, Ged McEneaney, has always been there for me which has helped. The people at Inclusion Scotland, including Michelle Fisher, have also



CJS employee, Christopher Stewart

been encouraging. I have thoroughly enjoyed the work and my initial project to design a new interface for management to access custom reports on our database appears to have been successful."

Christopher Stewart, a CJS employee, has been working in our Dumfries office since September 2016, his original 6 month contract extended to a full year. Here's what he had to say: "I have enjoyed working in the Apex Dumfries office, I have gained lots of experience in different areas. I have been predominately working in the Dumfriesshire foodbank, but I regularly help out with reception, answering the phone and buzzers. My self confidence has increased greatly and I have gained valuable experience working with service users. Because of this engagement with service users, I would like to continue working in this sector and would ideally like to become a PDM. I have enjoyed my time so much that if there was any vacancies now or in the future I would love to be considered."

2204 people supported
by our foodbanks in D&G

Students Love Us!

For the past five years Apex Grampian has successfully worked in partnership with Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen to provide student placement opportunities for its social work degree cohort.

This year we welcomed Folasade Ashaye (or Fola to her friends) as our most recent successful placement. The three-month opportunity with Apex has always been over-subscribed with it remaining one of the most sought after placements, giving students the chance to gain valuable work experience within the criminal justice sector. Students work alongside our personal development mentors to develop their skills and then are encouraged to work with services users in a very practical way, either in a one to one or group basis. There are also opportunities to make ble connections within statutory criminal justice services.

Fola helped deliver a variety of sessions and very quickly was able to build good working relationships, giving her valuable experience. She said: "Thank you for the amazing past 3 months at Apex. I am grateful! It's been a great experience for me and I will remember you all very fondly. Hoping to see you soon again."

Fola has just finished her first year, post graduate social work degree and her placement with Apex was an integral part of her successful completion. Fola has been a huge asset to the Grampian team and passed her placement with flying colours. She hopes to work within the criminal justice sector as a criminal justice social worker and we wish her all the very best!

104 people into further education



Fola with Apex service users



**Connie McMullan,
Personal Development Mentor**

A PDM's View

Connie McMullan joined our Works4You service in Tayside in January 2017. She has been struck by the way Apex helps those with offending backgrounds to change their future, but also how that has opened up new opportunities for her to get involved. She explains:

"One client was recently accepted to attend St. Andrews University and, with a great deal of practical help and guidance from Apex, was offered a full time waitressing job over the summer until university begins. She stated that without the help of Apex she wouldn't have known where to start as she had spent good few years in prison. She had no idea how to disclose her conviction and what type of work she would be able to get with her offence.

In Tayside, by July this year we had managed to secure 11 clients full-time and part-time work, 1 into college education, 2 into voluntary work and 2 into training courses.

As for me, since starting at Apex I have been given the opportunity to work in the One-stop Women's Learning Centre (OWLS) in Perth, a place for women who have committed first time offences or low risk offences, a place to go to rehabilitate and do their Community Payback Orders rather than being sent to custody. Apex joins other agencies in offering assistance with housing, benefits, employment, education and so on, as well as running a number of beneficial workshops. The centre has been successful in reducing the imprisonment rates of women in Perth and has been recognised for this. This has definitely opened my eyes to a whole different side of the criminal justice system, as I did not realise the amount of assistance that is available, and I am proud to be a part of this through Apex.

In my time with Apex so far I have taken part in networking with Dundee Foodbank and Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust and attended a volunteers' management meeting in Perth. Through this connection we have secured the unpaid work groups different activities and projects which will assist other voluntary organisations at the same time as building the confidence, team work and skill set of the groups.

I believe that the Tayside Works4You service has a great team, where everyone works well together and extremely hard to get clients the outcomes they desire and deserve. Without Apex's involvement I believe there would be a higher chance of these individuals reoffending."

Secret Jobs Brings Success

All Cleaned Up (Scotland) Ltd (ACU) is Apex Scotland's social enterprise which aims to create real jobs for the people that Apex supports who are often deemed disadvantaged in the employment market.

ACU runs the Secret Jobs programme, an eight-week employability and vocational training programme for individuals with barriers to employment, particularly those with a history in offending.

Alison Forsyth was referred to ACU's Secret Jobs programme by Wester Hailes Jobcentre and in a short time has gone on to become an integral part of the team and an invaluable asset in the running of ACU.

Project Development Officer, Ally Scott, explains. "Alison was at a crossroads when we met her; unemployed, suffering from low self-esteem and struggling to see a positive future for herself. Due to the nature of her conviction, Alison felt that the doors to her previous careers were now closed and that cleaning was one of her only options in finding sustainable employment. However, it was quickly apparent that with her work history, wide knowledge base and transferable skillset, that she would be an asset in the business in a variety of functions.

From her first day, Alison proved willing to commit fully to using her time at ACU to maximum effect, so much so that it felt she'd been a member of the team for years! As her confidence and self-esteem grew, so did her impact on the business, to the point where we realised the value in employing her as the office manager.



Alison Forsyth at work in ACU

Now, seven months into the post, Alison is fully immersed in every aspect of the business, from accounts and finance, HR, operations, mentoring the trainees and even cleaning when required! Alison is a great example of someone who was willing to grasp an opportunity, even though it was different from her previous experiences and to use ACU as a vehicle to a brighter future."

I Changed My Future

William McVeigh was introduced to Apex Stranraer in 2003 having been referred to the team by the probation service specifically for literacy and numeracy assistance. At the time it was clear that this was just the tip of the iceberg. At that point William's life was very chaotic. He was unemployed and offending regularly. Staying in a damp caravan on his own, he struggled with alcohol and drug issues and had no family support. Life was incredibly difficult with William's lack of self-esteem and motivation meaning he had little hope for the future.

Alison Bennewith started William's journey with him and is incredibly proud of the person he has become. William's life now is completely different. He has been employed with the same employer for 7 years, starting as kitchen assistant and progressing through the business so he now has a lot of responsibility including opening/locking shop, stock taking, completing rotas, etc. He manages his own tenancy and when Apex took on the running of the Wigtownshire food bank, he decided to volunteer there. As if that weren't enough, he has undertaken and passed several courses and gained certificates and built bridges with his family. It has been a very long time since William's offending behaviour. He now drinks socially and is saving up to go abroad for the first time.

Alison spoke with William recently and asked him how he feels having changed his life around. He said:

"Without the support of Alison at Apex I think my life would have turned out very different. She believed in me and I now believe in me too. I have confidence and self-respect and feel good about myself. I was given the chance to help



William with Alison

others and put something back into my community. I was always valued and listened to and supported through problems when I needed help. I made new friends and was helped to build bridges with my family. I have helped organise things which I could never do before and it is always appreciated. Apex always has time for me and even though I am not a client now I know I can always pop in and see Alison if I need help with anything at all. If it was not for Apex I do not know where I would be now. I changed my future and Alison gave me the push I needed."

Road to Recovery



Jo leading a client group

Apex exists to work with those with offending backgrounds and those at risk to give them the necessary skills to change their behaviour and lead fulfilling lives. Progress does not come without change, and that change is usually challenging and sometimes painful, particularly for our client group. However, when that spark is ignited to seek a positive future, the need to change becomes a driving force that propels that individual through the dark times and into hope. It is Apex's privilege to support these people and to witness them make the steps they need to reach their goals, and then go beyond them.

Alistair McDonald said in his interview at the beginning of this report that that is what gives him the buzz. Here is the story of one of his team members, Joanna Hoskins, in her own words, which causes such pride.

"I originally engaged with Apex Scotland in October 2015. At the time I was on bail awaiting sentencing for a crime that I committed in July 2015 whilst in a toxic relationship.

"Given support immediately to cope with the trauma of the circumstances, I received counselling, acupuncture to help with my anxiety and insomnia, and was introduced to SMART recovery meetings. Eventually I received a two-year prison sentence in November 2015, however having had support from Apex I felt that I was ready to come to terms with this and used the opportunity to make changes to my life.

I am beginning to really enjoy my recovery and hope I can pass that on.

"I separated from my partner, attended courses in assertiveness, living safely, decision making and choosing healthy relationships. I became a Peer Support Mentor whilst in HMP East Sutton Park for a charity which deals with people with addiction and completed its training programme.

"Upon release I decided to re-locate permanently from England to Scotland. Apex had kept in regular contact with me whilst I was serving my sentence and were responsible for helping this relocation happen. Having benefited from auricular acupuncture myself, I was offered a place on an auricular acupuncture training course based in the Apex unit in October 2016. On securing the qualification, I commenced a paid job as sessional auricular acupuncturist in October 2016 working in the Apex unit twice a week and in HMP Inverness where I worked one day a week.

"I have received further training with Apex including Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART) Facilitator, Rehabilitation and Disclosure of Convictions, Sex Offender Awareness, Naxlone Training and Emergency First Aid in the Workplace. In February 2017 I started as a sessional personal development mentor. My role is to engage with service users on a one to one basis to assist them to overcome barriers to progression whilst maintaining professional boundaries, client confidentiality and equal opportunities. Part of my role is to also co-facilitate SMART recovery weekly groups within the community and in the Apex unit. I am beginning to really enjoy my recovery and hope I can pass that on."

85 SMART Recovery
Groups delivered with
541 attendances

Exceeding Expectations

Personal Development Mentor, Tracy Hall, has worked mainly with young people's services in the Borders during her time with Apex. She commented that one of the great things about working with young people in the Borders is that most keep in touch and want us to hear about their lives as they move forward to positive destinations. One such person is Kai. Tracy explains:

Kai's name was mentioned at many meetings, years prior to him being eligible for the Employability Fund service. I kept being told that he was 'coming Apex's way' as if it were a threat! I'm not sure what I expected when he was referred, however I can honestly say he was one of the best young people I had the pleasure of working with. He had real drive and determination. We were able to focus this into working on self-awareness and employability, looking at how we present in our community and the way this can impact upon our future options and choices.

You always thought about a way we could reach our goals and always made us aim high.

Kai went on to gain an Asdan qualification, applied for collage and gained a place. He secured a part-time job, passed his driving test and is moving on to do an HNC in Business Management this year. I met with him recently to ask him a bit more.

» **Tracy: Can you tell me a bit about yourself, before you came to Apex.**

Kai: I had been in a bit of trouble in school, and in the town I live. I did not get on with teachers at school, I always felt that they spoke down to me and always expected the worst of me. I ended up getting expelled from school and was left with no support.

» **Tracy: How did you find out about Apex?**

Kai: I knew some people that had been before and they always said it was good and that you would help anyone. I asked Douglas (TD1 Youth hub manager) if he would speak to you to see if I could get on the programme. I was offered an interview, which was more like chat, and it felt very welcoming and for the first time was I was being treated as an equal and not being looked down upon.

» **Tracy: What did you hope to achieve during your time at Apex?**

Kai: I wanted to show people that I was able to be sensible and work towards building a career and make my life a success.



Kai's success keeps on coming

» **Tracy: Can you tell me how you were supported during your time at Apex?**

Kai: I was treated as a real person who had a voice. You were happy to give us guidance and support; you gave me a chance to prove myself. You always thought about a way we could reach our goals and always made us aim high.

» **Tracy: Can you tell me what you have been doing since you left Apex?**

Kai: I applied for college while at Apex to do NC in Business Management and I got onto the course, and passed! This was all down to the reliability and confidence I built during my time at Apex. I also have a part time job in a local supermarket to help fund my way through college. I have applied to do the HNC in Business Management and have been offered a place. And I also passed my driving test. Going to Apex helped me a lot. I don't think I would have done this well going anywhere else. I would recommend any young person if they are having issues to look at Apex.

I have no doubt Kai will pass his Business Management course with flying colours and go on to be a success. I have taken great delight in telling of Kai success to those that had worked with him in the past.

Our Winner

Some of our teams work with volunteers, many of whom are existing or former service users. The Highland team this year nominated one of its peer mentors, Willie Doull, for the Third Sector Awards Volunteer of the Year.

Willie was nominated because of the inspiration he is to his fellow volunteers. He completed his auricular acupuncturist training and now delivers these relaxation therapy groups at Apex Scotland twice a week. Willie said of his acupuncture course, "It was the best thing I have done for years. I really enjoy acupuncture and the opportunity to train with an expert was phenomenal. This time last year I would never thought that I would be able to do such a thing."

Willie's can do attitude is infectious, an example to us all.

In July 2016 Willie was offered a place to do Self-Management and Recovery Facilitator Training within HMP Inverness. The two day training course was the first ever in UK where public and residents trained side by side. Willie was to visit the prison later to participate in their Recovery Walk and host a SMART Meeting. He delivers the very popular and well attended SMART meeting weekly at Osprey House Drug and Alcohol Recovery Unit at Raigmore Hospital. What makes this more inspiring, motivational and extraordinary is he travels from Thurso to Inverness by bus to do so! He also is a registered befriender for the elderly. At the Recovery Walk event in Falkirk Willie volunteered on arrival to act as a steward for the 2,000 participants.

So what motivates him? "I like staying focused, keeping up what works, but none of this would be possible without the loving support of my loyal wife."



Willie receives his finalist's medal from Margaret McShane, Highland Community Justice Partnership Manager

She is the most important thing in my life, she has been there for me for 34 years."

Highland Personal Development Mentor, Scott Colgan, said "Willie has not had an easy life yet you would not be able to tell from his easy going manner and dedication to what keeps him well. Having suffered from mental health issues and using alcohol to escape, there is not one ounce of selfishness nor bitterness in him. Willie's can do attitude is infectious, an example to us all. I think Willie has found new purpose through volunteering at Apex and that he feels he is only giving back what he has received. In truth he has far surpassed that and continues to give help and hope to all of those that have the privilege of being part of his community."

Whilst Willie did not receive the ultimate award, he was shortlisted as a finalist by the Third Sector Interface. The judges commented that they were "impressed with his initiative and commitment. William was a particular stand out candidate within the group."

He's certainly a winner to all of us!

A Final Word

Apex Scotland sees itself as a social justice charity that seeks to change lives, as we have done for the past 30 years. We do this by providing and enhancing skills, and providing advice and support to those who offend or are at risk of offending. The past 12 months have been extremely busy for Apex and a lot of the staff probably feel they have to run very fast to try to stay up with the agenda.

It is a significant time, for criminal justice in Scotland has new structures appearing and we see the winding up of the Community Justice Authorities which requires charities to make new relationships and engage with the ramifications of the changes. As a Board this year we had the benefit of some very close working with Scottish Government and feel that we are engaging positively with it instead of just leaving that to the charity's senior staff. A particularly fruitful governance day in February enabled the Board to look at how Apex's resources impacted on its demand and how we could develop our capacity to evidence the impact of our work.

The drop in prison population and lower reoffending suggests that all the elements of the sector are engaging with the key challenges. We see prevention and collaboration as the Scottish Government's key strategic elements being areas we contribute successfully to. The Government has been trying to protect the sector's budget as much as seems possible in these challenging times. We know the people with complex problems who end up in prisons are more likely to be unemployed, homeless and/or isolated. We are concerned at the mental health issues that those in prisons experience too.

To enable us to perform better we have prioritised the training of our own staff and the development of a data analysis strategy over the next twelve months to ensure we can sustain the improved performance of the organisation which I am delighted to recognise.

We want to see the push for shorter sentences succeed because our experience indicates this is crucial to reducing reoffending. The priorities of addressing female offending and moving resourcing to prevention are a vital way forward.

As a charity we are not alone in feeling, regardless of either or past performance or current delivery, we have little control over our future because of the annual competitive funding process we have to engage in. Understandably local authorities tend to prioritise their own services in times of financial challenge, we do recognise this. We feel, however, little is to be gained by focusing on difficulties and instead we look to how Apex can improve; perform more effectively and deliver more efficiently.



Our new ABC principle, 'Aim Higher, Behave Differently and Change Your Future' has been adopted by the Board. It reflects the essence of Apex Scotland. We have rebranded our developing schools service as RE:SET and our training activity is now a major part of the service we offer. Apex Scotland has returned to provide a service in many of Scotland's prisons; in the past Apex has had an excellent relationship with the SPS and been very much involved in work in prisons and we are pleased to be back on a broader footing.

Elsewhere the development of the exciting Track2Train project continues with a start date likely next year. All Cleaned Up (ACU) continues to face challenges; Board and senior management time has been expended to support our social enterprise this year.

Of course, inevitably, there are changes within the Board of Trustees. Too many organisations can be held back by the failure to regenerate and as a result there is no room for fresh blood and the challenges that comes from new ideas and different experiences. Yet the loss of committed and long serving Board members has created a vacuum that will be hard to fill. Long standing Board members Anne Pinkman and Bryan Rankin have been valued colleagues for over eight years; Hamish Lorrain-Smith is a more recent Board member and again we are sorry to see him leave. We wish all of them well as they depart. We are delighted that Margaret Anderson, Jim Hunter, Giles Robinson, and Michael Dickson have come in with a wealth of experience in criminal justice social work, the finance and pensions sectors.

Finally, I want to thank the hard working and very committed staff employed by Apex Scotland whose energy and skill provides the foundation for our success.

Brian Fearon
Chair

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