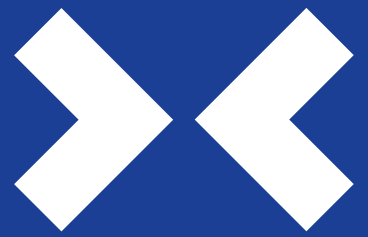


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apex

scotland

Dreams, values  
and confidence

AMBITIONS AND  
MOTIVATIONS

MONEY

Benefits  
or debts

HEALTH

Addictions  
past or  
present

COMMUNITY

ousing and influence

Rel

Health and Wellbeing

ANNUAL REPORT  
2011

AIMING HIGHER

# AIMING HIGHER: welcome



**B**oth a statement of intent and a description of our recent modernisation programme, the title of this year's annual report encapsulates our response to the current social and financial crisis affecting

all of us. An alternative approach would be to entrench and ride out the storm.

But we believe that the new one-size-fits-all thinking excludes those whose needs are greatest. Recent changes have made those furthest from the labour market even more alienated, increasing the likelihood of offending and imprisonment. So, for the sake of our service users, there has never been a more important time for us to hold our nerve.

*"...the new one-size-fits-all thinking excludes those whose needs are greatest."*

In many ways, the year has been difficult and sad. The new Westminster Government has introduced fundamental reforms to the welfare system, including scrapping several Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funding streams in favour of the, as yet untested, Work Programme. This move, coupled with the Scottish Government's drive to replace community sentence options with Community Payback Orders and cash-strapped local authorities choosing to deliver previously outsourced services "in house", has inevitably cut services which we were previously funded to deliver.

We do not know what the future holds. The much vaunted Social Impact Bonds or similar social enterprise models may well appeal to politicians. So we will continue to explore these options, despite serious concerns arising

According to a recent Ministry of Justice report<sup>[1]</sup>, "around half of all crime is committed by people who have already been convicted of a criminal offence". It goes on to say that, "Improving the skills of offenders, focused on the requirements of real jobs, is critical to reducing re-offending, alongside addressing other factors that drive crime such as substance misuse, mental health issues, poor accommodation, family issues and poverty."

For over 20 years, Apex Scotland has taken this approach, helping ex-offenders and young people and adults at risk find and stay in work by taking account of all the issues in their lives. All over Scotland, our experienced and specialist staff work with service users, employers and others through community sentences, prisons, national training programmes and schools.

We use our positive future employability wheel to see the complete picture and the interlinked elements of people's lives. It allows us to set realistic but challenging targets and measure progression. By focusing on the aspects which need greatest attention, we can help people meaningfully into employment, training and education. Not only does this benefit individuals, it helps society by creating safer communities and improving economic prosperity.

This report gives a flavour of our work with service users, employers and others, and some of the highlights, from the year to 31 March 2011. It illustrates how, through a variety of high quality and innovative approaches, we work with people at whatever stage they are in their lives, to remove barriers and support their journey to self-reliance.

<sup>[1]</sup>BIS: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Ministry of Justice MAKING PRISONS WORK: SKILLS FOR REHABILITATION Review of Offender Learning, May 2011

from our desire to represent the interests of our clients rather than compete in an aggressive market for an ever-decreasing pool of funding.

In spite of these setbacks, we continued to modernise and fulfil our influencing role. It was very pleasing to see that our Annual Lecture, given by Baroness Stern on the subject of women offenders, led to an increased focus on the specific needs of women before, during and after imprisonment. We successfully launched our AIM HIGHER business information system and client interface which was welcomed unanimously by service users, staff, funders and referrers who especially like the direct referral and monitoring systems. We also refreshed our website and intranet to significantly improve external and internal communications.

## Aiming higher

"People had spoken to me about Apex before but I didn't think they were for me. I'd got into a bit of trouble and I was a bit scared about where I was going to end up but I thought I could handle it. When I got sent to the jail, I knew it was time to sort myself out and I met someone from Apex who told me to come and see them when I got out. I'm really glad I did because they helped me get a place at college and I'm about to start a work placement."

Staff have carried out the work described in this report with great commitment despite the difficult financial environment. My thanks to all of them. Our work style is based on local approaches which meet local needs. Despite the trend to seek commercially-oriented solutions to unemployment, we maintain that, only if we attend to individual needs, can we engage, inspire, improve and sustain the prospects of those excluded from generic provision. We can put

most of the public resource into getting the maximum numbers into employment. But, for those who need more support and preventative rather than reactive attention, we need to aim higher.

Apex is ranked as one of the top 25 places to work in Scotland. I have found it an inspiring working environment. I hope that you are also inspired as you read further.



Alan Staff  
Chief Executive

# AIMING HIGHER: engage

Our services need to hold the attention of our service users. Our new interactive **positive future** assessment tool does just that, with service users actively participating to identify where our support is most needed. Working in tandem with our **AIM HIGHER** management information database, this allows service users to record their progress and provides:

- Job matching by linking vacancies to individual service users
- Individual action plans and portfolios
- Direct referral for partners
- Interactive illustration of progress

The **positive future** wheel has proven to be extremely effective as an accurate and interactive assessment tool.

The high degree of involvement means that positive outcomes are more likely and feedback from service users has been very encouraging:

"I always enjoyed working on computers at school so I didn't have any problem getting used to the Apex one. It's easy to use and I like the way the colours change on the wheel when I enter in my information."

"The wheel's good for seeing how you're getting on. I like using it."

## Working holistically

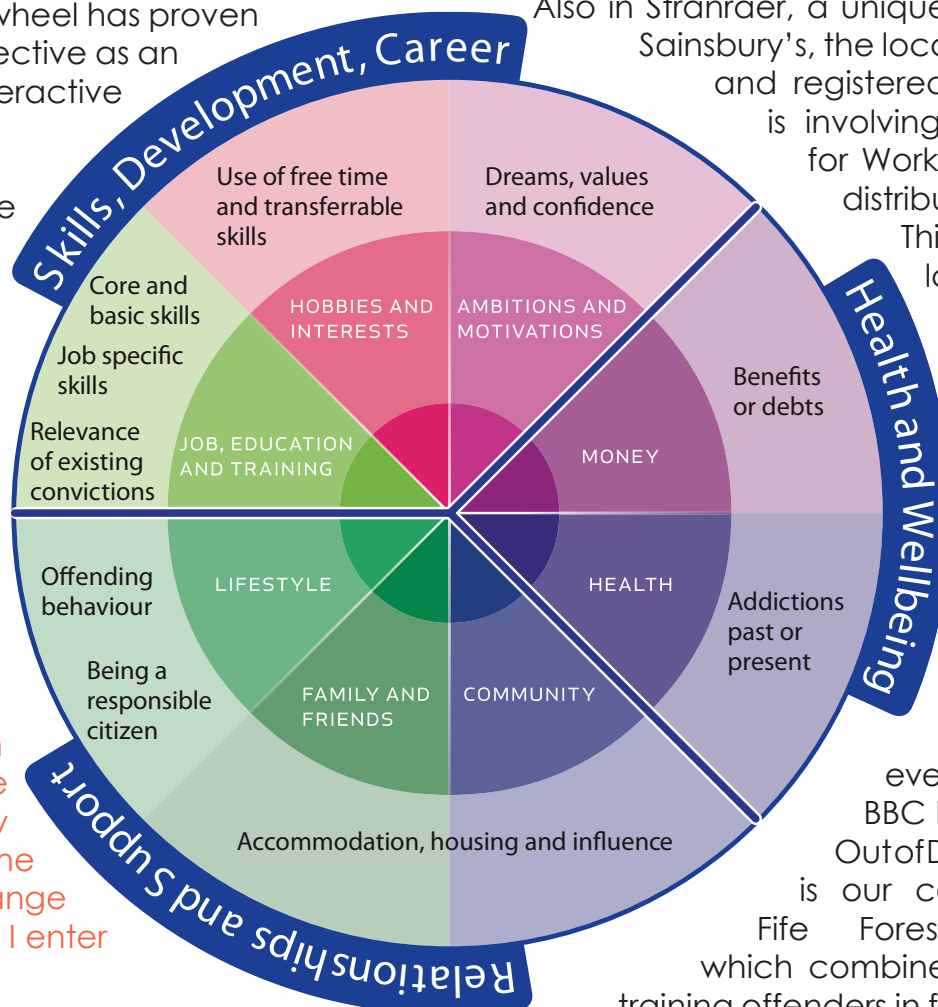
Taking a holistic approach is key to our success. For example, our Stranraer team introduced Lunchbytes aimed at service users in emergency homeless accommodation to assist them to make the transition to their own tenancy. On this learning programme, participants work together to make lunch for the group and have completed first aid and food hygiene training. They organised an appeal, including designing flyers and a newsletter, for small household items and then sorted, boxed and distributed these to people moving into new tenancies.

## Collaborating with others

Also in Stranraer, a unique partnership with Sainsbury's, the local furniture project and registered social landlords is involving the Get Ready for Work clients in a food distribution programme.

This has led to one landlord doing cookery with his young tenants while another comments that "Apex is doing a tremendous job and many extra things" for clients.

Another example, which even featured on the BBC Radio Scotland OutofDoors programme, is our collaboration with Fife Forestry Commission which combines the benefits of training offenders in forestry work whilst encouraging an interest in physical activity and environmental awareness.





## Using our experience to achieve positive outcomes

These projects typify our approach - flexibility and innovation based on a strong core and a long history of positive outcomes. Our staff are keen to ensure their service users are given every opportunity to achieve their full potential and this is exemplified, to the delight of our Renfrewshire team, by one service user who was shortlisted by Barnardo's for a "Young Builder of the Year Award". His achievement was the result of concentrated support from Apex on employability issues and, eventually, a professional qualification in construction skills. The local firm he secured a placement with was so impressed that they offered him a Modern Apprenticeship and have described him as "a credit to the company". He now has a positive future ahead of him.

### Aiming higher

"I was really nervous about going to Apex because I didn't think I was ready to get a job and I was still looking for a place to stay. I'm glad I did though because my worker was really good and started to sort out my flat straight away. They helped me with my qualifications as well and I'm planning to go to college to do graphic design. I'm grateful to Apex for showing me what I can do. "





# AIMING HIGHER: inspire



**R**eturning to learning can be difficult, particularly after a poor experience at school or little encouragement to try out new things. So we try to inspire service users to think differently about themselves and their capabilities. Whether it's learning to cook, building a bothy or walking the West Highland Way, we see impressive results in increased motivation and self-confidence.

## Rewards from renovation

For example, young people on our Get Ready for Work programme in Dumfries, with the help of local artist and Apex volunteer Frank Hayes, brightened up a boarded-up shop front with stunning results. They decided to create a piece of art based on Aboriginal designs and techniques. The results were fantastic, gaining very positive feedback from the local community which was a great reward for the creativity and commitment of all those involved.

## Walking with a purpose

Staff from our Forth Valley team joined forces with some of their young clients to complete a 14-mile sponsored walk along the Forth and Clyde Canal to raise funds to allow participants from the Apex Youth Elite (AYE) programme to attend an outdoor residential training course. The course is designed to promote team-work, self-esteem and physical activity and challenges the young people to have greater belief in themselves.

## Achieving GOALS

Seven young people in Edinburgh successfully completed the Get On After School (GOALS) programme delivered in partnership by Apex and the City of Edinburgh Council. GOALS is an employability and personal development course that gives participants the opportunity

to gain certificates in community sports leadership and head start first aid. At the end of the course, four of the young people started college, one entered full-time employment and two are volunteering in sport and social care.

### Developing models of good practice

The Apex Inclusion Unit based at Dunfermline High School went from strength to strength this year. Not only did it maintain its rate of a 72% reduction in exclusions, it was recognised as a model of good and innovative practice by Learning Teaching Scotland which suggested the initiative was addressing many of the targets identified in the Government's Getting It Right For Every Child, Curriculum for Excellence and Included, Engaged and Involved strategies. Community Education and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations also nominated the initiative for awards.

"If we were excluded we would sit at home, lie in our beds, play the computer, watch TV, hang about the street and cause trouble and not do school work. If we are in the Inclusion Unit, we get a chance to look at our behaviour, talk about our problems and still do school work so we're not behind when we go back to class."



### Contributing to communities

The Apex approach benefits individuals and communities. Apex Highland attracted funding from the local Common Good Fund for ex-offenders on a volunteering programme of footpath improvement, fence maintenance, scrub clearance and litter picking on the Inverness escarpment. Volunteering for such work is good for CVs as it demonstrates to employers people's willingness to put the past behind them and contribute to their community.

Provost Jimmy Gray said:

"This is a very worthwhile project and part of a wider drive to improve the amenity of our city. The escarpment is a prominent landmark and the removal of overgrown vegetation, leaves and litter will greatly improve the amenity of this area. Our hope is that the experience will greatly benefit the volunteers and demonstrate to employers that they are ready for full-time employment."

### Aiming higher

"I would recommend Apex to anyone. They made me feel I could achieve something when I was there and I hadn't felt like that in a long time. It was a friendly place to be and the staff were great. It wasn't easy and there were a few times when I wanted to pack it in but they stuck by me and got me a placement with a joiner. It's the first job I've ever had and I'm loving it!"



# AIMING HIGHER: improve

Whether it's getting into the habit of turning-up on time or securing a place at college, our **positive future** approach encourages service users to make more of their lives. The spirit of improvement is central to Apex as an organisation as well as a service.

## Apex wins a Scotland's best workplace award

These are difficult times and while we are not always able to reward our staff financially in the way we would like or that they deserve, we make every effort to ensure they are properly supported, have the right training and work in an environment which promotes learning and skills. So, we were delighted when an independent assessment of staff ranked us as being one of the top 25 places to work in Scotland.

## Impressing in partnership

As this report shows, Apex continues to work closely with other organisations, locally and nationally. For example, staff from our Glasgow team attracted particular praise from a number of partners during the course of the year. Following the submission of a report reflecting the work done, a senior manager from Glasgow Community and Safety Services commented, **"This is a first class report which clearly demonstrates the brilliant work Apex is doing"**. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) also passed on positive feedback following interviews with two young people who our staff supported into work placements. One of the young people said that Apex had, **"changed my life"** and the SDS manager said, **"Good work guys. Another job well done"**.

## Learning and working together

Internally, we focused this year's staff conference on the theme 'working together in new ways', learning about the new AIM HIGHER framework. All Board members attended along with staff, contributing significantly to the event.

## We recognise the talent and effort of all staff

This year, the **Sam Dow Award** went to the Apex Detox initiative. Funding from the Department for Work and Pensions Health, Work and Wellbeing Challenge Fund, provided training for two members of staff in each location to give auricular acupuncture to colleagues and service users. The technique involves using fine needles in certain points of the ear to relieve stress, insomnia and anxiety, bringing extraordinary benefits.

Congratulations also to the Apex Stranraer team which won this year's **Betty Crawford Award** for its successful U Turn project which works with difficult to engage young people. It is the only organisation in the area to work with young people in the evenings and provides group work sessions focusing on employability, literacy and numeracy, healthy lifestyle, alcohol and drug awareness and cooking skills as well as more creative work and gym sessions. This is a very successful partnership involving Working Links, Youth Justice Diversion from Prosecution and Criminal Justice Social Work.

## Apex lecture prompts new look at women in prison

According to Baroness Vivien Stern CBE, Senior Research Fellow at the International Centre for Prison Studies, King's College London, something is very wrong with a criminal justice system which sees so many women ending up in Scottish prisons.

Speaking at our annual lecture on the topic: An Unmet Commitment: Women and the Criminal Justice System in Scotland, she argued that women in prison experience exceptionally high levels of health and social problems and that, for most women offenders, prison is not an answer but an additional problem. Yet the number of women in prison has grown steadily upwards: an average of 210 in the year 2000 and 417 a



decade later. The lecture examined this anomaly within the context of equality and justice. A new commission, chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini, is to consider how female offenders are dealt with in the criminal justice system.

"I consider it a real honour to deliver this year's Apex Lecture. In part, this is because this is such a distinguished and esteemed audience and one which has heard from many distinguished and esteemed people in previous Apex lectures. But perhaps more importantly, it is also because of the opportunity that it affords me to let other, perhaps less distinguished and less esteemed – but no less important – voices be heard at a key point in Scotland's penal development".

Baroness Stern speaking at the 2010 Apex Lecture



## Aiming higher

"I didn't know anything about progress2work before I started with Apex but I knew I had to do something to get my life back on track because of the drugs. Apex helped me deal with the important stuff first, like sorting out my accommodation and helping me keep track of my spending. I never thought I'd get a job but I did and I'm really grateful to all those at Apex who believed in me."

# AIMING HIGHER: sustain



Our track record in encouraging service users to aspire to getting and sustaining work, training or further education remains impressive.

## Performance

During 2010/11 staff responded to 6,153 referrals resulting in 3,498 people starting on programmes. Of these, 1,245 achieved a positive outcome:



- Jobs 343
- Further education 198
- Work-related training 649
- Voluntary work 55

## Aiming higher

"Because of my criminal record I thought I might never work again. Apex encouraged me to think differently and to look forward instead of back. Without their help, I'd still be at home feeling sorry for myself. Instead, I'm now working full time and feel a million times better about my life."



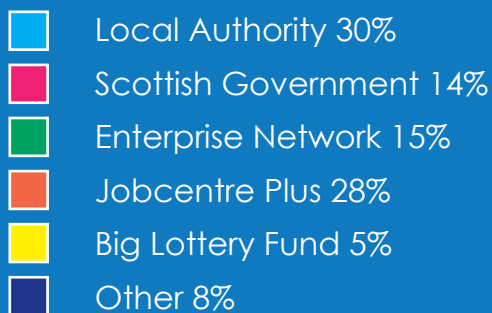
## Finances\*

1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011

### Income

2010/11 Income £4,757,592

2009/10 Income £4,554,334



### Expenditure

2010/11 Expenditure £4,963,963

2009/10 Expenditure £4,771,971

Employability training 99%

Governance costs 1%

We would like to thank all our funders and partners for supporting our work.

\*Auditor: Henderson Loggie. Full audited accounts available from Apex Scotland.

## Looking ahead

Cuts in public spending have forced a thorough review of what we do and how we do it. We have re-structured and re-focused our services accordingly.

Over the year ahead we will use our wealth of experience to compete vigorously as a credible, cost-effective partner best placed to help individuals with an offending background to secure a positive future.

## Apex Scotland Board

Mike McCarron, Chair

(from October 2010)

Pat McMullan, Chair

(retired October 2010)

Sue Brookes

Brian Cole

Sheriff Brian Donald

Brian Fearon

Anne Pinkman

Bryan Rankin

Chief Constable David Strang

## Patrons

Rt Hon Sir Menzies Campbell CBE QC

William Moodie

Viscount Weir





**"I thought I would let you know how things ended up for me. All cases gone, community service done and now working."**

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Apex Scotland is a charitable organisation and is recognised by the Inland Revenue as a Scottish Charity No SC023879 at 9 Great Stuart Street, Edinburgh EH3 7TP

