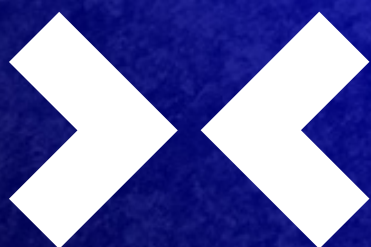




The Evidence for Change



apex

scotland

ANNUAL REPORT **2014**

Contents

The Evidence for Change	3
Facing up to public sector funding cuts	5
Our Performance	6
The Annual Lecture	7
European Networks	7
Veterans Service	8
Pastures New	8
Virtual Visits in the North East	9
The Work Programme	10
Derek's Story	10
Apex Mentors Shine	11
Steven's Story	12
Community Support Moving In	13
Apex Boat Challenge	14
Caleb's Story	14
Apex in Clover	15
Charlie's Story	16
Clients CoPE with ASDAN	16
D&G Teams Make a Successful U-Turn	17
Volunteering	18
Inclusion Plus Science = Success	20
Callum Achieves Apex Award	21
Community Jobs Scotland	22
Staff Awards	25
Chair's Report	26

Apex Scotland Board

Brian Fearon, Chair
Mike McCarron (*resigned December 2013*)
Brian Cole
Anne Pinkman
Bryan Rankin
Beth Smith
Eric Murch
Gordon Samson
Sheriff Frank Crowe

Patrons

Rt Hon Sir Menzies Campbell CBE QC
William Moodie
Viscount Weir

Front cover photo:

Apex's Think Again clients
outside Scottish Parliament.
Photo by Allan Shedlock

The Evidence for Change

“What is it Apex actually does”? This is a phrase I have heard so often, not only from those who know nothing about us but even from people we have provided services for for years. We blithely assume that everyone knows what we do, after all we have been around for 27 years! The world, however, moves on rapidly and things change so much that it is now very reasonable to ask not only what you do, but why, and – most importantly – how do you know it is any use?

Possibly one of the most overworked clichés in our sector at present is the notion of a ‘cluttered landscape’ and certainly it has to be said that these days everyone seems to do everything. A feature of recent years has been a move by many organisations away from employability services; which of course have essentially been given to the private sector, towards providing services which still can be commissioned at local level. Thus we find every agency now claiming to work with the hardest to reach, offenders and those with the greatest barriers to employment. Suddenly the few organisations like Apex Scotland which have a history of specialist provision of quality services to this client group find ourselves submerged in a sea of competitors all claiming to do the same thing. I often think that the so-called ‘cluttered landscape’ is a smoke-screen for non-strategic commissioning and lack of strategic direction, and that putting social care provision out to tender as if it was window cleaning is inevitably going to lead to a market-based struggle for survival and, ultimately, the domination of provision by one or two large corporations. I think Scotland can, and must, have a better plan for its third sector than this, and that creating a race-to-the-bottom market environment is hardly going to improve things for our clients.

With this in mind, it has been vital over the last couple of years that we develop our thinking in Apex towards clarity of what we provide and why, and our ability to evidence the value of what we do in terms which those who perhaps have a less sophisticated view of the world of criminal and community justice will at least acknowledge, if not fully understand. While obviously still a work in progress and likely to always be so, we have been able to articulate our vision:

Apex Scotland's purpose is... To be a leading not-for-profit organisation working with people of all ages and backgrounds who are the most disadvantaged and disengaged from society, and who are at risk of (re)offending, in a way which promotes desistance and enables them to re-engage and work towards a positive future.

This is summed up as “Opportunity, Choice, Change” which we feel is the essence of what Apex is all about, that is to say life change assistance for anyone who is at risk of offending or who has already started and who wishes to stop. In order to achieve this we have structured our service range into three clear areas of need: (i) pre-offending and preventative activity including schools work, (ii) early intervention activity around those beginning to get drawn into an offending lifestyle and (iii) specialist interventions for those with specific barriers who are already in the justice system. Each of these areas will need a specific set of evidence measures as each has a subtly different



We blithely assume that everyone knows what we do, after all we have been around for 27 years! The world however moves on rapidly and things change so much that it is now a very reasonable question to ask, not only what do you do but why and, most importantly, how do you know it is any use?”

ALAN STAFF
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

objective, and we are working with a range of groups including the Scottish Government's Justice Analytics department and the academic sector to refine the collection and analysis of data to enable us to show not just what we do but the value of what we do. I hope that in reading through this report you will get some idea of the quality and diversity of our services and the journey that our clients have to go through.

It has once again been a difficult year for us as an organisation struggling to make a way through the turbulence created by mainly political decisions on funding and priorities, but I have a strong belief in the vision and the benefit and quality of our staff and services. Some of what we are trying to do is innovative and we are trying to get policy makers to look at prevention rather than repeatedly ploughing money into high end reactive services. We are convinced of the 'rightness' of this approach but have no illusions about how difficult it is to change established thinking and practice. Nevertheless we are optimistic that the latest blueprints for a redesign of community justice may offer the gateway to new thinking and Apex are pleased to be contributing to this process.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work that our outgoing Chairman Mike McCarron did and the support he was, both to Apex at a difficult time for us, and personally to me when I arrived. Mike used his vast experience and knowledge of the sector to good effect and we wish him well in his new ventures following his completion of his term on our Board. I am pleased that Brian Fearon has taken up the role as Chairman and know that he will continue to lead the organisation positively and with vision.

I would also like to say a brief word about Cathie Gibson, one of our most loved and well known workers who tragically died suddenly this year. Cathie exemplified the fighting spirit of Apex staff combining a sense of innovation and professionalism with an absolute commitment to the people she worked with. Positive futures do not happen because this or that programme is wonderful or because the organisation wants it to be so, they happen because our staff are committed to their clients, always go the extra mile and in many cases refuse to ever believe that change for the good is just a good decision away. Cathie never gave up on a client, no matter how frustrating or negative they might have seemed. I hope that as an organisation we can be characterised by that attitude and that this is what will show most clearly in the evidence we produce.

“Positive futures do not happen because this or that programme is wonderful or because the organisation wants it to be so, they happen because our staff are committed to their clients”

2800 clients – a 12% increase on last year

Facing up to public sector funding cuts

Apex Scotland, similar to many other organisations in the third sector, has been impacted upon by year on year public sector funding cuts for our areas of work. This has undoubtedly reduced our ability to support as many people across Scotland as we would have liked, but we have tried to protect as many of our services as possible through utilisation of some of our reserves, built up over previous years.

At the same time we have restructured the organisation, introduced and developed our award winning social enterprise trading subsidiary, All Cleaned Up, and given increased focus to specific areas of work where we believe we will have the greatest impact.

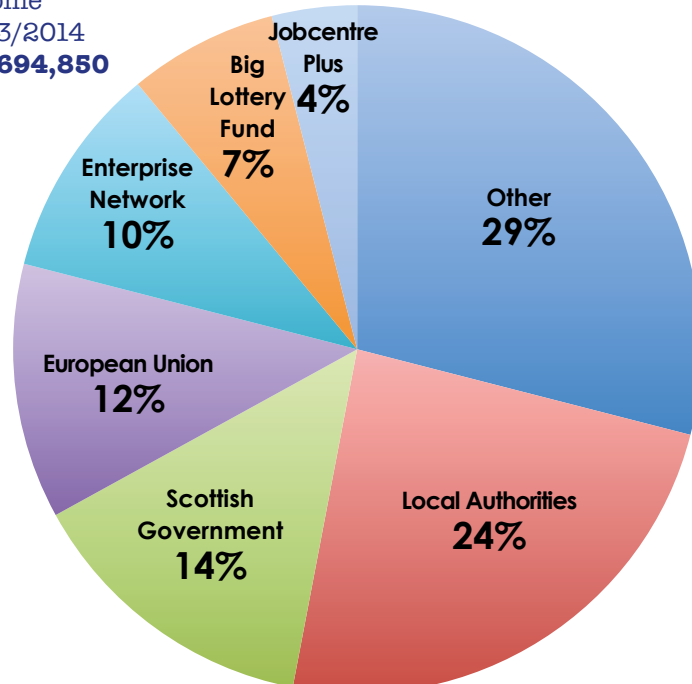
Income in 2013-14 for the charity stood at £2,694,850, an increase of £165,683 from the previous year, where income stood at £2,529,167. Given the comments above, this is testament to the efforts, professionalism and dedication of our staff around the country in convincing funders of the value of our services.

Expenditure for the year, for the charity, is shown as £2,993,310, an increase of £349,103 from the previous year when expenditure stood at £2,644,207. It should be noted, however, that £234,113 of that increase is due to the decision to make provision for potential non-repayment of the loan we have made to our social enterprise trading subsidiary, All Cleaned Up. This does not indicate any intention to write off that loan, which we expect to be repaid from future profits, but reflects generally accepted accounting principles. Underlying charitable expenditure is therefore £2,759,197, an increase of £114,990 when compared to the previous year.

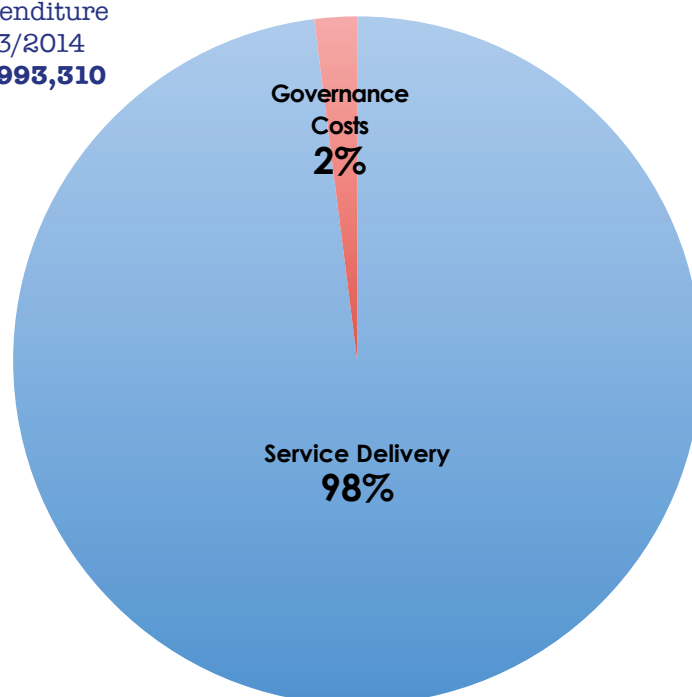
As such, we are confident that we are making headway in terms of securing a viable financial future for the organisation, both for the short term as well as the longer term. We will continue to ensure a robust approach to costs as well as increasing opportunities for us to deliver effective and much needed services to our client group in a financially viable manner through our focused and targeted approach.

Consolidated accounting figures representing the performance of both the charity and our subsidiary can be found at Companies House.

Income
2013/2014
£2,694,850



Expenditure
2013/2014
£2,993,310



Our Performance

In most Annual Reports there are shiny pie charts that show the hard statistical facts and figures, the number of clients who have been given a service, hard outcomes, soft outcomes, outputs.... and any other stats that can be squeezed in. We could do the same; we could tell you that in 2013/2014 we worked with almost 2800 clients which is an increase of almost 12% on the previous year's figure. We could also inform you of other facts such as, clients participating in over 10,000 hours of volunteering, or 238 clients entering employment, many for the first time in years. Also in the last year 202 of Apex's clients undertook voluntary work in the community to increase their employment prospects and to give something back to the community.

Our foodbank in Stranraer gave out food packs to 143 individuals and provided much needed housing starter packs to 52 clients as well as providing clothing to 6 people to attend funerals or interviews. Quite rightly, we are proud of the 116 young people who gained an ASDAN qualification through their work with us, most of whom achieved an accredited qualification for the first time ever. 818 people attended and took part in 456 virtual visits to loved ones in prisons throughout Scotland, including 149 children who were able to keep a link with a parent in prison, many of whom had a story read to them by their mother or father.

We could produce an impressive looking chart just with the other qualifications our clients gained; for example, over 200 individuals gained a first aid qualification through Apex. In addition we supported over 50 people to gain the John Muir Trust award and well over 100 people are now in possession of the valuable CSCS card because of the training we provided. We would need an enormous pie chart if we were to show the so called "soft" outcomes such as the number of clients we assisted in writing a letter of disclosure to employers, or the number of CVs we helped to produce, or the number of appointments our personal development mentors attended to female offenders and prolific male offenders.

50

John Muir awards attained

So What...?

Whilst the above facts and figures are a testament to the hard work and professionalism of our staff and give an indication of the potential of the people we work with to be productive and contributing members of society, the "so what?" question is still there. Statistics tell an important story, but only half of the story. They cannot accurately convey what it means for a young person who has been written off at school to suddenly be in possession of an SCQF qualification that they have worked hard to achieve. Facts and figures will not show the confidence that our clients get from passing a qualification which means they are a step closer to gaining employment. No amount of hard data will paint the picture of the Apex mentor who spends all day with a woman recently released from prison and finally, at 6pm at night, helps her find somewhere to stay; or the woman who, with the help of her Apex mentor, cries on hearing that she has a date to see her children for the first time in 18 months. These are our clients. That is what we do.

To answer the "so what?" question you need to read some of the case studies contained within this annual report. This is real life, and brings to life the facts and figures. We know that evidencing what we do, the outcomes and outputs is important, but they have to be read in conjunction with the stories behind them to answer the "so what?" question. This is why our staff work as hard as they do: they recognise the potential for change in all our clients. They are determined to help every single one of these 2800 clients achieve a positive future.

We hope you enjoy reading these stories of overcoming barriers and obstacles and that this helps you to understand why we do what we do.





European Networks

In last year's Annual Report we spoke about the emerging links with a sister service in Lithuania - Tevo Namai - and the opportunities which existed to share information between our two countries and we were delighted to continue these contacts over the past year.

Some of our units responded to the need for warm clothing and undertook their own collection which Tevo Namai then distributed to prisoners and prison leavers who had no access to winter clothing. In all we collected over fifty bags of clothing which were shipped to Kaunas and distributed among four prisons. Those receiving this gift of solidarity were very appreciative.

In May 2014 a group of representatives from the Lithuanian prison service, Tevo Namai and Kaunas University visited us and saw first hand some Scottish prisons and also the work of Apex units. They were very impressed with what they witnessed and produced a very complimentary report for their organisations and Government.

Following on from this, Apex is working in partnership with organisations in Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria and Spain to undertake a European funded knowledge exchange programme focusing on record keeping and the use of evidence. Apex is very proud to have been part of the planning for this project and look forward to whatever opportunities this may offer in future.

The Annual Lecture

The Apex Scotland Annual Lecture has established a strong reputation for attracting speakers who are able to bring current issues and debates into the criminal justice arena and in 2013 we were delighted that Sir Stephen House, Chief Constable of Police Scotland spoke on the subject of *Collaborative Working in a Time of Shrinking Budgets*.

As we see the Scottish landscape changing dramatically through the reforms which have affected all sectors, so we have also experienced the range of responses to this, from radical thinking to protective or centralist approaches. As head of an organisation which has seen perhaps the most radical recent changes as well as being faced with some of the greatest financial challenges, Sir Stephen offered his vision and response to the growing awareness that we all need to use the available resources more effectively and that means better planning and collaboration across all areas.

In what was a very well attended evening, Sir Stephen talked frankly about the challenges he faces and about his vision for the new service with especial reference to acknowledging the different roles of the various sectors. He spoke about the need for the police to do what they do well and to ensure that social workers and the voluntary sector do what they do best, thus preventing duplication and blurring of roles and promoting successful partnerships which make the best use of resources. He cited a number of partnership projects which Apex Scotland and Police Scotland have in common such as the Glasgow diversion programme with Community Safety Glasgow. Sir Stephen used these as examples of successful partnerships and expressed the view that successful partnerships save lives.

Equally, however, he expressed the view that ineffective partnerships should be scrutinised and that Scotland could not afford to waste time or money on things which did not produce results. His comments that problem solving policing was not something he believed in clearly struck a nerve in the audience and was picked up in the question time after the lecture. In a clear message to his audience Sir Stephen expressed his view that the police are good at enforcing and good at preventing but less good at dealing with the underlying problem – a message clearly aimed at giving the voluntary sector a significant joint role in addressing criminal behaviour.

Overall this was a timely, relevant and well received event. A transcription of the lecture and a recording of event can be viewed on our website.

143
food packs issued

Veterans Service

With financial support from the Scottish Veterans Fund, Apex Scotland and Poppy Scotland are working together to provide expert advice and guidance to former members of Her Majesty's armed forces who are finding that a criminal conviction is a barrier to them accessing employment. Poppy Scotland has a long and proud tradition of supporting those who have served in the armed forces and by utilising the experience and expertise of Apex Scotland, veterans are better equipped to seek employment once they have left the services.

There is considerable evidence positively associating employment and a reduction in offending. A job provides structure to the daily lives of offenders but it also changes the social circles they move in. It provides a route out of poverty and deprivation and it promotes inclusion and opportunity. A job is one of the key components in developing citizenship and self-esteem and many employers who offer feedback to Apex are impressed with the loyalty and work rate of ex-offenders. An individual who finds and sustains a job is three times less likely to offend than if they are unemployed.



Apex's Scotland-wide service assists ex-service personnel who have a criminal conviction to compete more readily in the employment market and to try and reduce any risks associated with ex-offenders gaining employment. Personal Development Mentors meet with these veterans either in prison or in the community providing advice and guidance particularly on current employment legislation, disclosing convictions and conviction relevance.

Apex Scotland is delighted to be associated with supporting this client group and are grateful to both the Scottish Veterans Fund and to Poppy Scotland for their on-going support and guidance.

Over 150 successful Individual Learning Accounts opened

Pastures New



Apex is now supporting Care Farming Scotland with infrastructure assistance and we are working with care farmers to develop opportunities for our client group to gain work experience and develop rural skills.

Care Farming Scotland and Apex Scotland share a similar vision: every person whose physical health and mental wellbeing can benefit from time spent working on the land should be given the opportunity to do so, in a supported and mutually beneficial way. Both organisations believe that care farming promotes mental and physical health, improves social integration and increases employment prospects.

The Care Farming project is a partnership between land manager, service provider and client, and participants can work on traditional farms or in forestry, horticulture and other land management activities. Care farming combines care of the land with care of people and there is evidence that it can deliver great personal, social and economic benefits for everyone involved.

Personal Development Mentors from Apex Scotland work closely with Care Farming Scotland staff to identify suitable care farmers who will provide a supported work placement opportunity. Whilst we recognise that not all of our clients will secure a job in the farming industry, the time spent working on a care farm boosts confidence, increases social skills and provides a routine and structure which are all important transferrable employability skills.

Over 50 individuals supported with their literacy

Virtual Visits in the North East

With Aberdeen and Peterhead prisons closing their gates for the last time in 2013-2014, prisoners in the north east of Scotland were relocated to HMPs Barlinnie and Perth until the opening of the new HMP&YOI Grampian in March 2014.

Recognising that during this time, families would find it very difficult to visit loved ones so far away, the Scottish Prison Service approached Apex Scotland in Aberdeen to set up a Virtual Visits hub. This initiative was to form part of the National Video Conferencing Project within the Scottish Government making Justice Work Programme. Using a high specification video link, relatives can maintain that much-needed contact and retain strong family links, which is seen as a key factor in reducing reoffending.

The video conferencing facilities at Apex in Aberdeen have been linked up with HMP&YOI Grampian, HMP Barlinnie, HMP Perth and YOI Polmont.

Colin McConnell, SPS Chief Executive stated, "Maintaining family contact is a key area in the rehabilitation of those in our care and the facility at Apex in Aberdeen has enhanced the support we provide. This initiative is an excellent example of agencies working together for the benefit of the community."

Visitors have come from all over the north east, including Shetland, with one visitor from Belgium able to arrange a virtual visit to a friend in HMP Perth during a week's holiday in Aberdeen. There has been lots of positive feedback around the easy access to the service and friendliness of the Apex staff. Visitors have commented about how convenient it is to visit at weekends and evenings for working families or friends. A lot of visitors prefer the less formal setting and the lack of stress involved in visiting an Apex office rather than a prison.

456 virtual visits hosted



Virtual visits in Aberdeen keep families connected

One point that was made by a family member recently, was that she felt it was easier to leave a virtual visit; she felt it much harder saying goodbye to her grandson in person within a prison.

Offenders have been equally positive with comments such as "a great scheme" and "brilliant idea" often made. There is appreciation that families don't have to drive for hours to be able to see their loved ones but having contact with children is one of the main benefits for the whole family with service users saying: "It's been good to keep in touch with my kids even if it was by video" and "Saw my new born on a video two days after she was born it was ace!"

In the first 6 months of the Virtual Visits service, Apex Grampian has had nearly 700 visitors, of which more than 120 have been children. Scottish charity Families Outside said, "We are delighted to see Apex Scotland, the Scottish Prison Service and HMP Grampian leading the way with these and [we have] encouraged and supported a number of family members to take part. For young people in particular these provide a new and innovative way for them to keep in touch with parents in prison."

Stuart Campbell, Head of Operations in HMP Perth said in a recent report: "The team at Apex Grampian have been excellent in their approach to this project and deserve huge thanks for what they have achieved. They have embraced the concept of virtual visits and have gone the extra mile to ensure that customers that used the service were properly looked after and also ensured that every visit was properly managed and every visitor warmly greeted."

The Work Programme

Apex Scotland has been working with the two Work Programme prime contractors, and some of their sub-contractors, to provide a service for their clients with a criminal record where this has been identified as a barrier to employment. The service is delivered in locations throughout Scotland and each course lasts for three days. During the course, clients are given expert advice on what they should be disclosing, what convictions are spent and advice on conviction relevance. This is where the offences are matched against the aspirations of the job-seeker and advice given on whether or not the offences would debar them from working in a particular sector. Some sectors may not have legislation which bars individuals seeking employment but our experience shows that employers will apply common sense when making decisions. For example, we know that any client who has a conviction for fraud will find it very difficult to gain a position in a call centre.

Participants are also given advice and guidance on how to disclose, both at application stage and if called for interview. Apex Scotland was the pioneer of the letter of disclosure process and continues to set the standard in terms of good practice regarding disclosure of criminal records.

Whilst the intended outcome for this course is that participants have the knowledge and skills to be able to disclose, one of the additional benefits is that clients report that they are much more confident when applying for jobs as the following case study shows:

*John's employment advisor suggested he attend Apex's specialist three-day course at its Glasgow office. John commented, "I wasn't sure about working in a group at first but knew I had to access all the help I was offered. Meeting the other people on the course was actually a really positive experience, it was very motivating and I started to believe I could get a job."

Apex helped John to understand the legalities of his situation, draft a disclosure letter to show to employers and practice interview techniques.

"I felt like I'd won the lottery when I got the job! I've worked hard to build up my confidence and skills and hopefully now I'm back on track. I can't say enough good things about Apex, everyone was so genuine, and I wouldn't be rebuilding my life without their support."

* name has been changed

Derek's Story

Derek was referred to Apex's Forth Valley team in January 2014 after serving a life sentence. Personal Development Mentor, Louise, explains:

"The initial focus was to help Derek re-integrate back into society and cope with changes in technology – he had no knowledge of how to use computers or even mobile phones. Whilst in custody, Derek had had a lot of time to think about what he wanted his life to be like upon release which included his own home, a job and a partner to share these things with. The reality was somewhat different and he was constantly frustrated at the lack of opportunities available to him.

We started by concentrating on the softer outcomes – things to help him cope with day to day life. In addition to this we discussed basic computing support and how to register for things like Universal Jobmatch. Derek also registered with his local library to attend computing classes.

Derek decided to voluntarily attend Apex's Works4YOU programme, which was set up specifically for clients subject to Community Payback Orders to give them the opportunity to use 30% of their hours towards education. Although Derek wasn't subject to a CPO order, he thought it would be a constructive way to spend his time and learn new things. The group was held at the premises of our partner ACE Cornton and, through his time there, he discovered other activities going on in the area, so quickly became involved in the walking group, craft class and community garden.

Derek was introduced to Bandeath Dog Shelter which the Forth Valley team has links with and he became a regular volunteer there, cycling 30 miles each week in wind and rain so that he could take the dogs out for much needed exercise.

Even with everything he was involved in, Derek was still frustrated at not being employed and sometimes struggled to keep motivated. He found himself thinking that he had a "job" whilst in prison and didn't have any money worries whilst inside ...

Throughout this time we concentrated on the general "employability" subjects such as job search, interview techniques and producing a CV and letter of disclosure. Derek attended a local jobs fair and made sure he visited every stallholder to try and "put himself in the shop window" so to speak – he certainly isn't a shrinking violet!

Whilst working together, I helped Derek complete application forms, and particularly one for a local factory – a major employer in the area. His initial application was unsuccessful, but then the recruitment agency that handled applications got in touch and asked Derek to attend an information day; he was offered a temporary position with the agency. His colleagues are so impressed with his work and attitude that have put in a 'good word' in the hope that, should a permanent position become available, Derek's name is at the front of the queue.

Derek now has his own rented accommodation, he is more confident in use of modern technology and is working – success!"

Apex Scotland is proud to be a member of each of the two new Public Social Partnerships (PSPs) which were formed in 2013 with a focus on reducing reoffending.

The New Routes PSP was created to design and deliver a national mentoring service for prolific male offenders. This partnership is made up of third sector partners, including Apex, as well as the public sector, the National Prisoner Healthcare Network and DWP.

A major feature of the New Routes partnership is the use of peer mentors. Peer mentors will be a few steps ahead of the individuals they work with and able to demonstrate stability and desistance, however they will be able to draw on their own life experiences in offering support. Mentors will be complemented by personal development courses, employability courses and family support to ensure the individual has the best possible opportunities to remain outside of prison.

The Shine PSP was created to deliver a National Women's Mentoring Service. The PSP was formed by eight third sector organisations, including Apex, and is supported by the Scottish Prison Service, the Association of Directors of Social Work and the eight Community Justice Authorities.

Shine is designed to work with women who are on remand in prison or are being released from short term sentences of less than four years. It will also work with women in the community who are on Community Payback Orders and at significant risk of imprisonment. The Shine Women's Mentoring service provides women with a mentor who will support them on a one to one basis with many of the issues they might face in the community.

One of Apex's Shine mentors, Katrina Paton, recently met Sarah* (26) after she was referred to the service from HMP Grampian in April 2014. This is Sarah's story.

Sarah had been in and out of prison for most of her adult life; the majority of her offences were minor and all were whilst she was under the influence of alcohol. She was brought up in a town in the Highlands of Scotland; it is an area of deprivation and has a higher than average occurrence of individuals with substance misuse issues. As well as issues with alcohol abuse, Sarah had been taking valium to cope with her anxiety, depression and withdrawal from alcohol addiction.

During her early adolescence, Sarah was in the care of the local authority and attended a residential school. She suffered mental and physical abuse throughout her childhood. At 20 years old, Sarah had a baby. As Sarah's relationship with her baby's father began to break down her substance abuse increased and she lost custody of her little boy; Sarah's mental health and substance misuse spiralled out of control. She moved away from her home town hoping that she could put her life back together but she continued to associate with the wrong people and her issues got worse – she began committing crime to get by and to feed her habits.

Her Shine mentor, Katrina, met with her in prison and together they created an action plan. Sarah still had a tenancy but had to leave after she was assaulted by an ex-boyfriend and was accommodated by Women's Aid. Katrina helped her submit a claim for ESA and housing benefit. As Sarah wanted to access programmes run by Apex Scotland, with the help of Katrina, she submitted a referral to request supported accommodation within easy distance.

Sarah began accessing Apex's programmes and the staff there encouraged her to volunteer for Criminal Justice Throughcare. A few weeks after her liberation, Sarah was successful in finding herself a part-time job

in a restaurant but realised she didn't have any suitable clothes for work. At this point she was still waiting for her benefit claim to be processed; her liberation grant had been small and she had already claimed a crisis grant. Shine helped her to purchase a suitable outfit.

Katrina encouraged Sarah to address the underlying causes of her substance misuse issues by seeking referral through her GP for a CPN referral to a drug and alcohol treatment service.

Sarah had an outstanding offence for shoplifting, which, due to her history, would usually have incurred another custodial sentence and she was required to appear before the Court only one month following her liberation. Katrina wrote a letter to the Sheriff explaining how much progress Sarah had made and the numerous challenges she had faced. Katrina supported Sarah when she appeared in Court and the Sheriff deferred the sentence on the basis that the Shine mentor would supply the Court with a progress report in six months' time.

Confidence and perseverance are issues Sarah battles with on a daily basis. With the encouragement of Katrina and the other Apex staff, Sarah has achieved far more than any other time at liberty. To ensure the momentum continues, Katrina referred her to the Venture Trust's Next Steps five day personal development programme for additional support.

With new hope for the future, Sarah applied to go to college in August to do beauty therapy; Katrina went along with her to the open evening at the college to meet some of her lecturers. She is now looking forward to starting the course and making her son proud.

** name has been changed*

Steven's Story

Apex Tayside received a referral from social work in November 2013 for Steven who had been given a Community Payback Order. Steven had served time in prison and had been the victim of a savage attack which had left him with severe confidence issues. He was also on a methadone programme after battling a 12 year addiction with heroin. He was anxious, nervous and unsure whether or not he could actually cope with coming to Apex.

Social work thought any help, support and advice regarding employment that Apex could give Steven would be beneficial, although the initial reason for the referral was so that Steven could take part in a new cooking group that Apex Tayside was running

Alison, Steven's personal development mentor, explained to him the different ways in which Apex could help. Steven had said he was feeling a bit overwhelmed as he had been given quite a number of appointments with various agencies and felt he would like to take things slowly. Alison advised Steven this was perfectly okay. Having listened to what Apex could do for him, Steven asked for help in constructing a CV as he had never had one. He also liked the whole concept of the disclosure letter and so this was written too. In the course of his sessions with Apex, Steven talked of his lack of computer knowledge and was advised he could get help with this through the adult learning centre in Dundee. Apex made the referral and Steven is still regularly attending, gaining confidence in this area and regularly updating Alison as to all the new IT skills he is learning.

The cooking course was something Steven had issues with. Although in theory he wanted to attend the classes, he said he was particularly anxious about the final week called "Come Dine With Me", believing this to be similar to what he had seen on television. He said he just didn't feel confident enough to try this. Alison took time to explain that the course was going to be light-hearted and helpful. Steven still had doubts but, with gentle persuasion, agreed to attend the first week. At the end of the first cooking class Steven said how different it was to what he expected; he had really enjoyed himself. He was surprised and how cheap and easy it was to make soup himself and resolved to do it again.

Steven came to every class and when the "Come Dine With Me" week came round, he was feeling confident about preparing his three course meal. Steven invited his mum as his guest and she was delighted to see how far Steven had come.

Steven spoke with Alison during the last session, telling her how much he had enjoyed himself and expressed a new interest in cooking; he also said he would miss the social aspect of the course. Having done so well, Steven was invited to continue with the group and is now happily volunteering for Apex, helping others in the cooking class. He has taken responsibility for the cleanliness of all aspects in the kitchen which he maintains to a high standard – and has no hesitation in letting people know if they are falling short!

Steven now enjoys that the young people on the course look to him for help and advice and he is happy to help.



Steven enjoys cooking and increased confidence

Steven's mum told Alison how proud she is of him and has seen a vast improvement in his attitude and confidence since he started the cooking group. She attends all the "Come Dine With Me" weeks and is very impressed at how good a cook he is turning out to be!

Personal Development Mentor, Alison, commented on the change that she has seen in Steven. She said, "Steven is a completely different person now to the one he was in November. He has a love for cooking and is constantly making dishes to take to his mum, as well as cooking for his old neighbour in the hostel he used to stay in. He is experimenting baking bread and shortbread which he says helps take his mind off drugs". Steven himself has stated how much more confident and happier he feels since attending the cooking group. He has recently been given his own tenancy and is busy decorating his new flat. The future is looking much more positive.

Over 2,000 used
needles deposited safely

Community Support

Moving In

In 2013 Apex Stranraer secured a Big Lottery Support and Connect Fund grant to set up a foodbank and to enhance our existing 'Moving In' service which provides housing starter packs for those in need in Wigtownshire.

Working closely with the Trussell Trust, the largest foodbank provider in the UK, the Wigtownshire Foodbank was opened in December last year. The need for this service was quickly validated and between December and April we were able to feed 300 local people in need and gratefully received almost 2 tonnes of food donations. The Trussell Trust has facilitated a partnership with Tesco where the Stranraer team held its national collection last year. Support from Tesco has been invaluable and the team has been able to set up a permanent collection point at the local store in Stranraer. The service is available to local people facing hardship, from those who have lost their jobs to those leaving prison, or those receiving long-term benefit sanctions. Every individual accessing the foodbank is offered a full range of support from Apex and from our partners. By providing a joined up signposting service we are able to tackle deeper issues and support individuals in the long term to eliminate dependency.



Fundraising in Stranraer

52 Moving In starter packs given



Stranraer volunteers organise foodbank

This year Apex Stranraer has built up a very strong partnership with the local Episcopal Church which donates goods to our Moving In service and sits on the project steering group. The church held a charity concert recently which was attended by 100 people and raised £550 for the service. This year the Moving In service has provided over 80 housing starter packs to people throughout Wigtownshire.

As if that wasn't enough, this year Apex Stranraer was chosen as the local Sainsbury's charity of the year to show its support of the Moving In project. The Stranraer team took part in bag packing and awareness raising days at the store throughout the year and raised over £500 for Moving In.

The success of the service would not be possible without the continued generosity and support of the local community, of which the Apex Stranraer team are an, evidently, valuable part.

Chosen as Sainsbury's charity of the year



Foodbank collection point

Apex Boat Challenge

Projects for Apex clients come in all shapes and sizes. This year, Apex Grampian, based in Aberdeen, was donated a hand-crafted 15 foot, unused fishing boat by a member of the public who heard the team was looking for a unique project to involve their service users in. The boat had sat for many years outdoors and had deteriorated into a completely unseaworthy state.

The Aberdeen team involved service users from a number of their programmes, including their intensive support youth justice project and criminal justice social work projects in making the boat ship shape! A wide range of age groups, both male and female, were involved in the upgrading work required and the task was undertaken by small groups and also individuals during one to one time. Whilst working on the boat some service users were able to reduce hours on their Community Payback Orders as well as gain new practical skills in the process.

The whole boat was stripped back, re-sanded, re-painted and waterproofed; the engine also had to be re-conditioned back into a serviceable state before the vessel was fit to sail again.

The boat has been upgraded to such a high standard that the team can now sell it and will reinvest the money they make into another project that their service users can work on.



Before: the boat on arrival

After: Apex volunteers' efforts pay off



Caleb's Story

Caleb learned drystone dyking



When Caleb started to attend Apex Highland in 2013 his confidence was low. He started to engage in the outdoor activities that the team organise, increasing his skills and his confidence at the same time.

He went on to attend Apex's 6 week CSCS training course, a health and safety requirement for people working on a building site, and passed his test. In addition to this he is now coaching CSCS training, each week giving advice and information on CSCS to other service users to help increase their knowledge before sitting the test. He has also attended a 2 day Peer Mentor training course.

Recently Caleb was thrilled to accept a volunteering position he was offered at Sight For Action Scotland and will now be volunteering there one day a week providing access to technologies for the visually impaired.

In addition, Caleb has completed a 2 day drystone dyking course in Kingussie with another peer mentor which means he can adapt this training into his weekly volunteering at the animal sanctuary with Apex.

The Highland staff say they are delighted to have Caleb as part of the team and he continues to make a positive contribution. They are hoping that Caleb will continue to develop and become an Apex mentor in the future.

Over 100 CSCS cards awarded

Apex in Clover



Apex staff making friends in Cromarty

The Highland team are always looking for new outdoor challenges and in October 2013, they met with Winona and Bill Wall from Horses in Clover, based in Cromarty. Horses in Clover sits in 30 acres of land and is a private animal sanctuary for numerous horses, dogs, chickens, geese and ducks run solely by the professionally retired husband and wife team. Whilst the animals were quite happy, running the place with no external help meant that Winona and Bill were in need of some assistance to give the sanctuary a facelift and some TLC.

And so the challenge begun! From the outset Apex client volunteers and staff have helped Winona and Bill with daily tasks for the animals such as feeding, mucking out and grooming, as well as taking on the large number of general



maintenance jobs which were required around the sanctuary such as cutting back overgrown gorse bushes, repairing of damaged/old fences and drystane dyking; clearing out the burn; lopping overgrown trees; repairing stables and strimming grass. The Apex clients have thoroughly enjoyed the experience. One said "I put 110% into everything (I did) there. It has helped me and the sanctuary".

Horses in Clover is self-funded and the team were set an additional challenge to raise funds in kind for them. The hard work culminated in their recent open day where the Highland team presented Winona and Bill with the 'in kind' donations and monies received, together totaling over £2,500.

Winona and Bill expressed their gratitude to the team in saying "Please convey our fervent and heartfelt thanks to each and every one of your colleagues and all the volunteers for transforming not just the sanctuary but also our quality of life. Thank you for the huge and critical donations, all the feed and bedding and most of all for the hard work, dedication and focus you have all contributed."



2975
CPO hours cleared

Charlie's Story

Charlie was referred to Apex Borders through the Employability Fund. Through discussions with her Personal Development Mentor, Tracy, Charlie revealed that she had attended Stable Life, a charity that helps young people who have suffered emotional and behavioural issues to learn life skills, using ponies as a form of therapy.

Because she already had experience of working with Stable Life, Tracy encouraged Charlie to continue with this to help her complete her Employability programme. Having experienced challenges in her own life because of a chaotic family background, the team at Stable Life soon recognised that Charlie had real empathy with other youngsters

who had been referred to the equine centre. The managers at the centre were impressed with her work, her discretion and the way she related to the young people and so offered her the chance to complete a peer



Charlie volunteers at Stable Life

volunteering programme with Stable Life. This has allowed Charlie to continue to volunteer and use her life experiences to help others who suffer from emotional and social issues. Tracy is continuing to support Charlie with this.

Both Tracy and the managers at Stable Life have noted a marked improvement in Charlie's self-esteem and confidence since she started volunteering. Charlie is now hoping to complete a Rangers course and the life skills that she has developed by volunteering, such as taking responsibility and working with others, will stand her in good stead for this and whatever she chooses to do in the future.

Clients CoPE with ASDAN

We are delighted to be working with ASDAN to deliver the ASDAN Employability Award and the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) to our clients.

ASDAN education provides a range of courses covering preparation for life and work, enrichment subjects, and citizenship. Every course is designed to develop a client's personal and employability skills through an engaging and challenging curriculum of activities, leading to a certificate of accreditation or achievement.

The Apex ASDAN employability qualification has been set at 14 SCQF points and is a nationally recognised qualification in Scotland. The award covers a variety of core and non core modules covering everything from applying for jobs and personal presentation to communication with others in the work place and careers aspirations.

CoPE provides a framework for the development, assessment and accreditation of generic and wider key skills and wider activities, through a nationally recognised qualification at Level 3. The qualification offers imaginative ways of accrediting our young people's activities. It promotes, and allows Apex staff to record, a wide range of personal qualities, abilities and achievements of young people, as well as introducing them to new activities and challenges. Our young people can choose from the following modules:

- Active Citizenship
- Work Related Activities
- Career Planning
- Global Awareness
- Enrichment Activities
- Extended Project

116 ASDAN
certificates achieved

In the past year our staff have worked alongside 106 young people to achieve ASDAN awards. The young people have shown a great attitude and willingness to learn and have enjoyed the challenges. For many this is their first qualification and has given them confidence to seek employment or further education. We would like to say a huge well done to all our young people and we hope you are as proud of your achievements as we are of you.



Natasha McCusker receives her Asdan certificate

D&G Teams Make a Successful U-Turn

The U-Turn service is a Big Lottery and Hollywood Trust funded programme which engages clients in volunteering projects that benefit the local communities in Dumfries and Galloway. In 2013 Apex secured further funding from the Big Lottery to expand the existing service. U-Turn supports clients to develop themselves by learning new skills, building confidence and self-esteem and obtaining qualifications which will enable these individuals to secure future employment, training and volunteering opportunities.

In Dumfries this year, those involved with the U-Turn service were extremely productive, completing five new fishing shelters and installing access steps along the riverbanks of the Annan and Kinnel. The high quality of their work was commented on by the Director of Annan Fisheries Board, Area Manager of Scottish Natural Heritage, and Scottish Government Representatives on a recent site visit.

Volunteers also begun work at the Wildlife Hospital, renovating a bat enclosure and aviary, as well as starting construction on a swan and duck enclosure.



U-turn client volunteers contribute to the community

The volunteers completed over 400 combined hours of volunteering and received their Saltire Volunteer Awards at the beginning of the year.

Peer mentoring has a strong role to play in Apex services, providing emotional and practical support to the rest of the group. Earlier this year 4 volunteers in Stranraer undertook peer mentoring training and they are now taking on leadership roles within the service which has increased their confidence and self-esteem and is encouraging them to take responsibility in their own lives.

The Stranraer team and the U-Turn service are now working with Scottish charity, Quarriers, to build a sensory garden for children with disabilities. This partnership means that Apex volunteers are now working alongside children with disabilities, helping them to engage and integrate with a more diverse section of the community.

In addition, U-Turn service users have been getting their hands dirty doing extensive work on the Mull of Galloway Trail including repairing paths, clearing litter, building and installing new stiles and putting in new way markers. They even found time to serve tea and coffee at Apex Stranraer's busy open day recently and sold some of their own art work in the process.



3 miles of footpath for the Mull of Galloway forest trail opened

Volunteering

It is well known that volunteering has many positive benefits, not only for the volunteer but also for local communities. In recent years, we at Apex Scotland have placed a greater focus on our clients engaging in volunteering projects in local communities. We have seen confidence and pride grow within clients as they see the fruits of their hard work come to fruition. They also learn valuable employability and life skills whilst volunteering such as reliability, communication, planning, problem solving and team working. These are qualities and skills that employers value and volunteering can help to provide evidence of these skills. At Apex we encourage our clients to take pictures for their portfolio to show prospective employers that instead of sitting around the house whilst unemployed, they are working on projects that bring benefits to local communities and learning new skills.

Over the previous year, all our units have been involved, in some shape or form, in volunteering. We have completed over 10,000 hours on volunteering projects, some of which you can see the evidence of here. As well as volunteering on Apex-led projects, we have also placed well over 200 clients into voluntary placements with other voluntary agencies such as British Heart Foundation, a local radio station, shelter and at a local garden maintenance charity.

The next stage of volunteering development is to increase the number of peer mentors within Apex. We have a proven track record of this in our Highland unit and we plan to use this knowledge and experience to roll out peer mentoring training to all our units.

If you are a community group that would benefit from the Apex volunteer workforce, please contact your local Apex unit and one of our staff will be delighted to discuss any ideas or plans you have.

202
volunteer placements
found



Apex volunteers have been involved in a number of projects across Scotland



over
10,000
volunteer hours
completed



Inclusion Plus

Science = Success

246 young
people supported
through Apex
Inclusion and
Inclusion Plus

Building on the success of the Apex Inclusion service, 2013 saw the creation of Inclusion Plus, a pilot service where Apex Scotland, Skillforce and Includem are the specialist organisations working in partnership with Dundee City Council to deliver support to young people aged 11-16 who have been excluded, or are at risk of exclusion due to poor behaviour, in four schools across the city. Funded by the Robertson Trust and The Big Lottery, Inclusion Plus aims to mitigate the adverse impact of exclusion and, by supporting young people to remain in mainstream education, reduce the incidence of social exclusion and involvement in criminal behaviour later in life. Inclusion Plus offers a range of interventions and supports both in and outside of school, including one to one work, group work, peer mentoring, entrepreneurial activities, outdoor activities and volunteering.

It is the wraparound element of Inclusion Plus that sets it apart from activities elsewhere. Between its launch in October 2013 until the end of March 2014, 397 young people engaged with Inclusion Plus in a variety of activities and projects.

One of the most recent, and most exciting was our involvement in a project run by the National Museum of Scotland.

Pupils from Braeview Academy in Dundee, one of the schools involved in the Inclusion Plus Partnership, and also from our flagship Apex Inclusion service in Dunfermline High School in Fife, took part. The 10 young people were required to devise a science show of their own design which they then performed to an audience of 100 members of the public in the main gallery of the National Museum in Edinburgh. The two-part show, entitled Super Science Sleepover and The Adventures of David, was based on the themes of the soon to be redeveloped science and technology galleries at the museum. This was an excellent achievement for the young people who took part and everyone is incredibly proud of the commitment



Apex Inclusion and Inclusion Plus pupils at the National Museum of Scotland



and maturity shown by those involved. They were a credit to Apex and their respective schools.

The pupils achieved an enormous amount through their efforts, not least an increase in confidence, enhanced peer relations, improved staff/pupil relationships and communication skills.

The performances at the museum were so successful that both schools are hoping to deliver further performances at some of their feeder primary schools in the autumn/winter term 2014/15 as well as being included in a promotional DVD.

The Apex Inclusion team were also delighted to be gifted all of the science equipment used during the shows from the Museum2Go project which they hope will benefit a much wider audience and inspire a passion for science and technology in young people.



Inclusion pupils share their learning

Callum Achieves Apex Award

Apex has been providing its Inclusion service for 7 years. Within that time we have seen a number of high school pupils change their behaviour and attitude from defensive and challenging to confident and responsible. For some pupils this improved approach to their future is remarkable and we felt it pertinent to recognise the efforts that these individuals are making by introducing our own Apex Personal Development award. The award is given to a pupil who has attended the Apex Inclusion service in Dunfermline High School over the past year who the Inclusion team and wider school staff believe has made concerted efforts to change their behaviour patterns and attitude, and contribute to the success of their fellow pupils through peer mentoring.

This year's recipient is fourth year pupil, Callum Henson. Callum started attending Dunfermline High School in his second year, having been described as 'out of control' by his previous school who did not know how to cope with him. With the patience, resolve and encouragement of the Apex Inclusion staff and the teachers in the school, Callum started to change and over the past two years he has begun to realise his potential.

He has worked particularly hard over the past year both in his school work, on the school's Challenge Programme, which Apex is part of, and on work placements. He has participated in a number of activities with the Inclusion unit, including litter picks, prison visits, fire safety, peer mentoring, and assisting staff with visits to Inclusion from external agencies. Apex worker, Kelly Owens, said "Callum brought humour and maturity to the unit and was a great role model for everyone who accessed it." Callum is looking forward to starting college after the summer.



Community Jobs Scotland

Community Jobs Scotland is a partnership between the Scottish Government and SCVO that creates work opportunities for young unemployed people within Scottish third sector organisations and Apex has enjoyed participating in the initiative and employing these young people since its inception.

We invest time in training and supporting the development and progression of our CJS employees, some of whom we have invited to stay with us after their 6 to 9 month placement. One training course that consistently receives positive feedback from our CJS employees is the one run by Resource 3 who provide specialist training in all forms of recruitment and help our young people understand recruitment from the employer's perspective. Having taken part in this training increases their confidence when applying for jobs and prepares them more effectively when attending interview.

Here are some of Apex's CJS employees who have been with us this year.



MARK GIRVAN, APEX HIGHLAND

Mark started his six month CJS placement with Apex in March 2014 as Services Assistant for Care Farming Scotland and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards promotion assistant in the Highlands. As well as helping with the administration for CFS, he is developing DoE awards and promoting it to our younger service users to help set them up in their chosen activities and to earn their awards. Mark said, "Since working at Apex I have a more positive outlook and have the motivation to get up and do more."

STEPHANIE MCLEAN, APEX GLASGOW

I started working with the Glasgow team in March 2014 as an administration assistant through Community Jobs Scotland. Working at Apex has definitely made me more confident. Before, I was really shy and sometimes found it hard speaking to people I didn't know, but working in a big open plan office has got me over this and I also find it much easier dealing with people on the phone. I am really enjoying working here, learning lots of new things, and the staff have been really friendly and helpful.



238 people into jobs

PETER OWEN, HEAD OFFICE

Peter joined Apex's head office team in March this year and has been involved in a number of administrative tasks during that time including establishing the practice of enrolling our young people in Duke of Edinburgh awards as well as helping to create the procedure for CSCS client training in Edinburgh. He said, "I was really struggling to find work until I found the CJS programme and Apex Scotland. Since then I've received an unconditional offer for university next year and am looking forward to taking the skills I've developed from working on meaningful projects into my further education and career."



Community Jobs Scotland

JOANN WATT, APEX GRAMPIAN

I have been working with Apex Scotland for nearly five months as an Admin Assistant and I am learning so many things from this opportunity. Self development is very important to me and I believe I have seen a very big improvement when it comes to not only my skills but my confidence too. My confidence has grown over the past few months, especially when it comes to dealing with different people and different situations. I have improved and gained lots of skills such as: communication, team work, negotiation, leadership and organisation and have done nine training courses so far.

My future chosen career is a police officer. In the next couple of months I have a visit to the new HMP & YOI Grampian prison which I am very excited about. Recently I have been working on the Virtual Visits project which gives members of the public a chance to visit their loved ones in prison without travelling out to the prison itself.

I hope to learn and gain new skills in the coming months and I am really proud to have the chance to work in an organisation which puts its heart and soul into helping people.



287 commercial training courses taken place



CHANTELLE NEARY, HEAD OFFICE

Since getting the administration assistant post through Community Jobs Scotland with Apex I have learned and gained so much in a short space of time which I never thought would happen. The main things I have gained since joining Apex, which family and friends pick up on a lot of the time, is so much confidence and independence. I think a big chunk of my confidence and independence has come from the courses and training that Apex has given me the opportunity to go on, from meeting new people, to travelling on a train for the first time ever! I am more than grateful for the range of courses I have had the chance to do such as first aid, minute taking, child protection and a course on how to deal with interviews and CV's.

I can honestly say I love working for Apex. There is always a good working environment, everyone is a good team which I think is really important in a work place; everyone is always so friendly and patient. When I first started working at Apex I was really nervous, however after answering the phones and speaking with staff in our other offices I got to know everyone so quickly and everyone was so nice and helpful which helped a lot.

Throughout my time at Apex, my role as an administration assistant has been exciting and challenging (which I like). Some of the jobs within my role include; doing work for the Apex Inclusion teams at the schools eg. formatting and collating their module folders and helping Elaine, our Human Resources Officer, with various administration tasks such as typing up letters, making up employee files and experience on working with Sage. I am also involved in setting people up for their CSCS training and test, and I am now starting on handling the administration for the Poppy Scotland partnership which involves Apex delivering services to improve employment opportunities for veterans with a criminal record.

I have enjoyed every minute since beginning at Apex Scotland and continue to do so and I would just like to thank everyone for the amazing opportunity and for everyone just being generally helpful and kind. In the future I hope to continue achieving more challenges, gaining experience and meeting lots more new people through Apex which I am extremely excited about.

Over 200 first aid certificates presented

Community Jobs Scotland



JESSICA MARTIN, APEX DUMFRIES

I have learned valuable skills and gained a lot of experience through working with Apex, such as working with members of the public and vulnerable adults, petty cash management, data recording etc. I've also attended staff training on subjects such as Nalaxone and Rehabilitation and Disclosure as well as others. As my experience grew, I was gradually given more responsibility such as dealing with client referrals and helping organise open days, meetings and events for our unit. Although I found my placement through CJS, I have always been treated the same as every other member of staff in the building and was given the same training and opportunities.

At the end of my placement I was offered a full time post within Apex continuing my role as administrative assistant. I am so glad that I was given the opportunity to work with Apex Scotland through CJS as I feel it gave me so many opportunities and experience that I wouldn't have been able to gain elsewhere in Dumfries, and helped me secure permanent employment with a brilliant organisation that I am happy to be employed by!

**STEVEN HAMILTON
APEX STRANRAER**

I applied for the Community Job Scotland post at Apex Stranraer in October 2012 and thought it would be an amazing opportunity for me; I had left school with no previous work experience and was struggling to find employment. I was very keen to get the post, as work experience and training was just what I needed. I was nervous when starting, but I soon found that all members of staff were very helpful and were willing to help me with any problem I faced and I soon felt part of the team. During my nine months under CJS, my confidence increased greatly and through numerous training courses I was able to learn many skills that would benefit me in the future. When my nine months came to an end, I was offered a full time position as an admin assistant and I couldn't believe it; I really enjoyed my time at Apex so there was no hesitation in accepting this offer. Since gaining full time employment I have continued to learn new skills and I have also become an essential part of the Needle Exchange service we run in Stranraer. The Community Job Scotland scheme was the perfect opportunity for me, it gave me the chance I needed to get onto the job ladder and I gained full time employment as a result.



**LAUREN MCDONALD,
APEX GRAMPIAN**

Lauren joined the Grampian team in September 2013 as a CJS reception/admin assistant. Although Lauren had previously worked in the care sector, her interest in the Apex position came about due to a desire to work in the prison service. "It would give me good experience of working with offenders that I would battle to get anywhere else at my age," she said.

It wasn't long before Lauren made her mark and after 4 months she was offered the position of receptionist for the Virtual Visits project. Lauren helped to set up the project, gave suggestions for the admin procedures and changed her work patterns to accommodate for five evenings a week. She helped to choose the furnishings and children's toys and liaised with the SPS procurement department. Lauren was integral to the initial success of the project, running it smoothly with almost military precision for several months until handing over the reins when she went on maternity leave. Thanks to her hard work at the initial stages of this project, the success of Virtual Visits continues.

Staff Awards

Our annual staff conference this year took on the theme of **Evidencing Impact**, considering how Apex contributes to reducing reoffending through its approach and how we evidence that effectively. Staff enjoyed a presentation by Catherine Bisset from the Scottish Government on logic modelling and this has been adopted as a tool in each of our services, showing the outcomes that are being achieved because of the work that we do. Thanks must go to Rob Strachan, Chief Officer of Lothian and Borders CJA, who facilitated the day for us.

Two members of staff, Katrina Beattie from the Highland team, and Silvana Watson from the Stranraer team, received a special award this year for outstanding contribution in recognition of the extra mile that they have gone to ensure that our qualifications process is robust and beneficial to our service users.

Seven members of staff received 10 year awards.

One of the most eagerly anticipated moments at Apex's annual staff conference is the announcement of that year's winners of the Sam Dow and Betty Crawford memorial awards for outstanding and innovative performance. This year the Sam Dow award went to the staff who manage our U-Turn service which is run by the teams in Dumfries and Stranraer. The service engages clients in volunteering projects that benefit the local communities in Dumfries and Stranraer as well as providing the clients with practical work experience. The staff members are all experts at motivating even the most unenthusiastic client into undertaking work in all weathers and conditions.



Staff from the U-Turn service in Dumfries and Stranraer received the Sam Dow award.



Katrina Beattie from the Highland team, and Silvana Watson from the Stranraer team, received a special award.

The Betty Crawford award was given to the Fife Throughcare team who work alongside colleagues from Social Work to provide a holistic and joined up service to young care leavers in Fife. These young people are often difficult to engage and Cathie Gibson and Ian Kirk, although very different, have employed various effective methods to motivate and train young people to achieve a positive future. There is little doubt the success of the service is down to the perseverance and dedication of Cathie and Ian who refused to give up on these young people. Ian Kirk received the award on behalf of him and Cathie.

Very sadly, Cathie passed away suddenly soon after the staff conference. As our Chief Executive has commented, she was a shining example of commitment and integrity and she loved working with the young people that came her way. Her friend and colleague, Ian, said of her, "She enjoyed living and lived her life to the full. She always went beyond the call of duty for each and every young person with whom she worked; nothing was too much trouble if Cathie thought that what was asked for would help the young person to move on. She led by example and anything she promised to do for a client was guaranteed to be done. We are all the poorer for her passing, but I am sure her memory will live on in the many people who either worked with her, or were helped to a better life by her efforts on their behalf."



Ian Kirk and Cathie Gibson of the Fife Throughcare team received The Betty Crawford award.

Chair's Report

It seems impossible for any conclusion to an Annual Report of a third sector organisation in this age of austerity not to involve the words, challenging, cut back, reduction in size. As the public sector's finances have come under severe pressure, the impact on voluntary organisations has felt, at times, more of a cascade than a trickle down. It might be, for some, a time of opportunity yet for others – well established and respected charities – well, they have been left with serious concerns about their future and a frustrating sense that with just a little more they could have an even more meaningful impact on the provision of services.

It may not seem the time for the public sector to ask itself what it wants from the third sector although, ironically, it is actually that very question it would serve local authorities and Government to consider as they try to plan ahead. The third sector, like the public sector, cannot shut up shop to await the outcome of political decision making or debate its finer points; services have to be delivered from Apex to some of the most vulnerable and, dare I say it, least attractive of our fellow citizens.

From us there is an expectation of a service that is creative and local, not held back by statutory obligations or political constraints. What do local authorities want from Apex; does Government believe we can do something other state vehicles cannot deliver? Do they want us around at the end of the process or is it last man standing takes all?

Throughout Scotland, Apex has continued to intervene increasingly in valued partnerships with other third sector bodies. All of us feel that we could do so much more and most feel that there is little appreciation of the potential of voluntary bodies. Apex has diversified, cut back and regrouped in a way that has helped the organisation see its potential from a different perspective. We know that those at risk of offending and reoffending can be diverted if there is the will to invest and thus to save. Now it is time for those who share its goals to realise the third sector's real potential.

Yet not all is doom and gloom, far from it. In Apex units and the schools in which we also work, we provide services; north, south, east and west and we hear daily of positive interventions that make Scotland safer and remove some, at least, offenders to a different path. It is about being creative, local, committed and just a little bit different.

I took over as Chair of the Apex Board following Mike McCarron's completion of his term of office and in the last year or so we have seen a number of changes in Board membership. I am grateful for the commitment and enthusiasm shown by outgoing friends who remain staunch supporters and for the new ideas and strengths brought in. We are privileged to have a Board membership which reflects a wide cross section of the public, business and not for profit sector and which represents a body of experience and achievement which will, I am sure, serve Apex Scotland well going forward. As Trustees we are committed to ensuring not only excellent governance but the development and delivery of a vision for Scotland which, at this special time in our history, is a unique and exciting challenge.

Finally, I would like to offer my thanks to all those partners, supporters, volunteers, funders and especially our staff who have helped us achieve some excellent results for our clients this year. I look forward to building on these successes in the new one.



“We know that those at risk of offending and reoffending can be diverted if there is the will to invest and thus to save. Now it is time for those who share its goals to realise the third sector's real potential.”

BRIAN FEARON
APEX CHAIR

Apex Scotland
9 Great Stuart Street
Edinburgh EH3 7TP
Tel: 0131 220 0130
Fax: 0131 220 6796

Email: admin@apexscotland.org.uk

www.apexscotland.org.uk



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