

apex

scotland

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

THE CHANGING SHAPE OF SUCCESS

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

Reflecting on the Past for a Successful Future

In December 2019 I step down having served two terms as Apex Scotland's Chair, so I hope I can be allowed a reflection of some of the recent challenges and future needs of the organisation. In fact my involvement with Apex goes back further than my involvement with the Board. In the late 1980s, on behalf of the old Central region social work department, I supported Apex coming to our region to develop services.

Here's a cheerful thought: if 7 May 2009 seems a long time ago to you, you are young! To me it seems just a couple of years ago, but that is the date I first started with Apex. I undertook to work for three months as Interim Chief Executive in May 2009, and in fact I have never really left! At the beginning of July 2019 I sent congratulations to two Apex colleagues who have celebrated 25 years with the organisation; I have only had nine years on the Board. I was warned when I joined the charity that Apex has a habit of getting into your heart and soul; people are never eager to leave.

During my year in the interim role Apex had 160 staff over 12 offices from Inverness to Stranraer. I remember visiting staff in those offices - Dumfries, Paisley, Wishaw, Glasgow, Fife, Aberdeen, Dundee, Alloa, Stirling and Galashiels. In my first years as Chair I took Board meetings to Inverness, Stranraer, Dumfries, Aberdeen and Alloa. We are a national organisation and it is good to get out and about!

I 'opened' a bothy in Abriachan Forest, north of Inverness, built by Apex service users who volunteered in their spare time to develop their dry stone dyking skills; I was taught to ski jump on a Wii by a chap who "lived" in Glenochil, 2 miles from my



Brian Fearon

home; and I stood, bemused, on a table in our workshop in Leith as a group of women offenders developed their photography skills! Great memories...but the spirit of openness, friendship, support, non judgemental attitudes and genuine commitment is the essence of Apex, that's what makes it special.

I was also advised on commencement not to turn Apex into a social work department or a local authority, no "Apexshire"! But in the last 10 years, in truth, Apex has had to be many things to cope with the imposed changes that has complicated our search for funding. When local authorities used Apex to help deliver parts of their criminal justice plans and services they knew what they got and they paid the going rate for it. Post austerity in Scotland, we had to compete with larger, more generally focused organisations who were good at winning contracts but relied on specialists like Apex to deliver them - a crazy situation which I was surprised the Scottish Government chose to ignore. Recently, payment by results has made the path even harder. Now it is perfectly reasonable to ask an organisation like Apex to evidence its success in delivering what it is contracted for, but constant shifting of priorities, parameters and processes creates chaos, reduces the effectiveness of service delivery and ultimately fails both those in receipt of the service and those who commissioned it. Some greater stability in funding arrangements are essential if the third sector is to achieve its potential.

Our experience in Apex, particularly since the late December 2018 meltdown over ITA funding, is a case study in point of what can go wrong. In December, and again in May, we were advised of the suspension in ITA funding as well as the delay in ESF funding. As a result Apex issued 19 redundancy notices.

Although the position was resolved at the last minute and redundancies revoked, some staff, anticipating what was coming, left the organisation, departures that temporarily impacted the service we provided. Why was the sector not listened to six months earlier when the whole situation began to unravel? Supportive words are welcome but action counts for more and both the staff facing the redundancy threat, and the service users who sought to register for training opportunities in an effort to find work, deserved better.

Throughout the third sector we have tried to embrace change, acknowledging things have to move on but the thought keeps being prompted: what is the third sector's relationship with the public sector, especially the Scottish Government? We receive warm words of support and some grant funding but questions need addressing. What are the services Government wants charities to provide? Should we be spending so much of our resources in trying to secure funding rather than being a confirmed partner in the service delivery of Scottish Government priorities? So much energy goes into survival, charities are not profit making, we want to achieve the same goals as Government, so should our energies not be going into delivering services, rather than trying to survive?

There is a real benefit in having some services delivered at arm's-length from Government and at least partly by volunteers, thereby bringing alternative parts of the community into areas they would not necessarily be involved in. It is worth noting that where the Government has trusted the third sector to take on and manage significant funding without going through layers of bureaucracy the outcomes have been very good. As a major provider of services through both the Shine and the New Routes public social partnerships Apex has enjoyed productive working partnerships with our associate organisations including Sacro, The Wise Group, Families Outside, Turning Point and indeed a host of others.

The longer I have been involved with the third sector the less I am clear that Government has a settled view on

what it wants from charities; it has not worked hard enough in clarifying its own expectations and the sector's potential. I do believe Government likes the third sector, it just hasn't worked out how we fit in. There is a disconnect between policy aspirations of the Government and service delivery that needs urgently addressed. There is a lot of goodwill towards the third sector within all aspects of the Scottish Government but clearly some serious action is required. The strength of charities is not that they seek to be better, cheaper, more flexible, less bureaucratic than the public sector (though in some places they are all these things) but that we are different, and that difference brings in a wider perspective, enables a broader part of Scottish life to be involved and delivers services in a slightly different manner. We can only hope that we can move to a place where organisations with a proven track record like Apex can be included in strategic co-production and co-design rather than being treated as a last resort option which can be cast aside without thought to the consequences.

I don't want to end my last Apex report on a sour note. We welcome our partnerships with the public sector, it has served them and us very well; this year it has gone spectacularly wrong. What there must be is a firm commitment on all sides to get it right over the next twelve months. Annual funding does not belong in any strategic planning model; even bi-annual funding is limited.

I have to say I have enjoyed my ten years 'volunteering' with Apex and I hope many others will come over from the public sector (and the private sector) when they can because the level of 'job satisfaction' is really energising and satisfying.

Finally I'd like to thank Alan Staff, the corporate management team (current and previous), all the many Apex staff the length and breadth of Scotland, and all current and previous Board members for their friendship and support over the years.

Brian Fearon

Chair of Apex Scotland Board

Defining Success

Success, it's a strange word really. On the one hand it promises a tangible measure of achievement which indicates the degree to which you have achieved your goals, but on the other it can be an entirely arbitrary view of self-worth or status. The classic essence of the mid-life crisis is an introspective assessment of how "successful" you have been, but this of course is coloured by your own expectations, perceptions of how others see you and subjective feelings of satisfaction or of having won something.

When I was young (sic) we used to play something called Risk, a board game which dealt in world domination, and the winner was generally the one who had acquired the most territory and achieved power over others. However, the nuances of this game took into account things like what alliances you had forged, what the territories you had were actually worth and what exactly you were going to do with things once you had them. Curiously I find myself still observing these things today but in real life, and the most constant impression I get is that how success is viewed changes constantly as ideologies, financial pressures and opportunism mould the environment in which we try and operate. Indeed we constantly have to ask ourselves 'what does success look like this month'? A far cry from the world which most of us grew up in where the setting of goals and vision for a charity were reasonably straightforward.

This last year has been one in which we have had to constantly reappraise our view, not only of what we are seeking to achieve, but of the operating ground rules within which we seek to produce this. Our first principle is, and always has been, to put the people we serve first and to see success as an improvement in their life chances. At the same time



Alan Staff

we are required to comply with regulations, audits and financial complexities which appear to be based less upon what happens to our service users and more on whether we can run a successful financial business.

We have, to some extent, embraced this trend in our development of social enterprise initially with All Cleaned Up, which I am pleased to see continues to achieve social impact, despite having to operate in a cut-throat commercial world, and this year we have opened The Sidings as part of the Track2Train vision which again fulfills a charitable purpose but has to operate in a commercial setting. What does success look like for these entities? Undoubtedly they have to generate profit in order for them to be able to offer any social benefit which I suppose completely changes the perspective of what success is, from the social to the economic. Where does this take the third sector I wonder? What is the dividing line between the commercial sector and a social firm or enterprise, and if that line is tenuous then has there actually been a fundamental shift in welfarism towards a more market based quasi-commercial economy?

It is worth looking at other areas of our work, and in particular local government contracts. These have traditionally made up the bulk of our income over the last thirty years but under the pressure of austerity following the financial crash we have seen erstwhile good partners forced to take activity in-house rather than working with our sector to achieve best value and best outcomes. There is no denial that such decisions are entirely based on a combination of the need to balance expenditure and the need to maintain their own workforces. The shift from serving the community towards maintaining as much of your own position as possible whilst at the same time managing a constant reduction in income is not so different to our own world, albeit we tend to be the sector

which is cut in favour of maintaining the public system. As I write this we have just seen another example in the suspension of Throughcare Officers by the Scottish Prison Service necessitated by the need to maintain their core business, which will result directly in a reduced service for our client group but is very unlikely to be offset by any increase in third sector provision. This despite the fact that there will be an expectation that the sector will somehow pick up the additional work.

Many of the income streams which we rely upon to operate, most notably related to the European Social Fund and Individual Training Accounts are, as we have seen to our cost this year, subject to sudden changes and suspensions. To work successfully in such an unpredictable environment is very difficult and leads you to wonder where exactly is the strategy for achieving the well-meaning ambitions of government around reducing offending and re-offending? What is success in this context: is it doing what we have always done so well, which is to make a positive impact on the lives of those who trust us to work with them to improve their lives, or is it to survive in a turbulent world and be the last one standing?

During my nine years here at Apex I have seen this trend of market driven economic gamesmanship being played out against a backdrop of high-sounding ambition by policy makers, and increasingly I am aware of an ever greater acceptance of the business model as the vehicle for

public service provision. This dog eat dog culture and race to the bottom mentality moves our attention from service to survival with all the waste that this entails. However, when I went out to visit our teams who were under threat of redundancy simply because those responsible for allocating funding had failed to release the money in time, I was reminded, not to say humbled, by the approach of our wonderful staff. Very few were asking why on earth their great commitment to Apex and our work was being rewarded by such shabby treatment. Overwhelmingly the response from them was 'what will happen to the people I am working with?' I am so thankful that we were able at the very last minute to retain many of these staff and that we can continue to operate the outstanding services they deliver despite the awful pressure that the political and financial climate puts them under.

It is attitudes like they display which keeps us working in the sector and as we, this year, celebrate two of our staff having twenty-five years' service, so we recognise that maybe success is not just how big or how powerful you can get, but can be measured by the long trail of lives changed and communities strengthened. Financial security which results in the loss of our ethos and impact for those we serve is not, I think, any sort of success that I would want to ascribe to.

Alan Staff
Chief Executive

Our Performance

Working with around 5,000 clients across Scotland over the course of the year, including over 3,700 new contacts, it has been another incredibly busy and productive year for Apex. Our newly revamped ASSET v2 has been providing an array of helpful statistics under the careful management of CRM administrator, Doug Yule.

Edinburgh City had the most new clients during this time, followed by Glasgow City, Highland and Dumfries & Galloway. Between them, our Glasgow and Edinburgh teams dealt with over 40% of our total referrals with our Glasgow team mentoring almost 1,000 new clients during the year which is quite an achievement.

By far our biggest client group is males between the ages of 25-64, with 85% of our new referrals being male and 67% of them falling within this age bracket. Our ASSET database shows 53 people, of the 3700 new contacts, had disclosed a history of sexual offences.

Those we work with report an average of at least two different barriers; unsurprisingly perhaps these are a criminal record (59%) and long-term unemployment (32%). What is perhaps more concerning is that the third highest recorded barrier is mental health issues at 24%. As you would expect, other principal barriers are addiction issues and substance misuse, homelessness and long-term physical illness, although many other barriers are also recorded.

In 2018-19, overall, our RE:SET mentors based in schools worked with 457 young people, with more than 200 new referrals received, and saving 420 days which would otherwise have been lost to exclusion.

Our ESF-funded Steps service remains our principal service, being responsible for the majority of new contacts and generating over 4,000 outcomes including employment, qualifications and training. Statistically, our national Shine and New Routes services, the Moving In service in Stranraer and ASCEND in Highland follow close behind.

Training provision also attracts many individuals to Apex, with around 19% of new contacts taking part in a training course. 540 qualifications were attained in the last year. 36 service users obtained their John Muir Award (with some achieving more than one).

In Aberdeen we facilitated 2,635 virtual visits, including 481 children taking part.

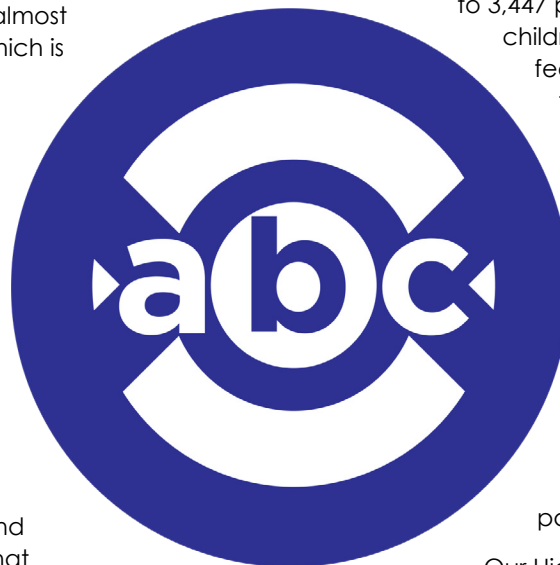
It is a sad fact that our foodbanks in Dumfries and Galloway had to provide emergency food parcels to 3,447 people – 2,720 adults and 727 children. In Stranraer our soup kitchen feeds on average 10-15 people twice per week utilising some of the donated food with willing volunteers preparing healthy, nutritious and, of course, tasty meals. We have provided 59 starter packs for individuals who have secured their first tenancy. Amazingly, having opened our charity shop in Stranraer, which works in tandem with these other services, we have raised almost £5,000 which will be used to purchase further goods for starter packs.

Our Highland team's polytunnels project was able to supply their home-grown soup and casserole vegetable packs to 80 service users in supported accommodation and to those on low/no benefits, primarily under 25 years old.

Over 4,000 volunteer hours were invested by staff and service users into our animal sanctuary and garden projects through our Highland unit, 1,394 of which were community payback orders.

There were over 1,648 attendances at SMART sessions for those in recovery. Service users also benefited from 1,400 attendances at auricular acupuncture sessions.

What follows in this report is a look at how some of these achievements have been reached and, more importantly, the impact that is made when you look behind the numbers.



Social Enterprise

The Sidings on track for success

It was with great delight that the doors of our newest venture in Newtongrange, The Sidings, managed by our social enterprise, Track2Train, opened in May 2019. On its opening night the café/bistro was filled with an array of tempting aromas wafting from the kitchen and a number of appreciative invited guests who were full of praise for the comfortable surroundings and delicious plates of food that they had, as well as the attentive team who made sure that everyone's needs were catered for. It was a successful and enjoyable evening with the momentum carrying into the following weekend when The Sidings opened to the public, who have been just as positive.

The bistro has a relaxed industrial vibe that is warm and welcoming. The interior reflects the local history of the area with a striking mural designed by Andy Steel of Scottish Graffiti Murals. The menu, created by Head Chef Ashleigh Greenhill, uses local produce and combines favourite dishes with daily specials, and Burger Thursday is becoming a local favourite! The beautifully presented meals, with plenty of vegan options, from brunch through to dinner, together with staff's focus on their customers, whether someone pops in for a quick cuppa or relaxes over a full three courses, has led to excellent comments on social media and review sites. The enthusiasm from the staff shines through as you can tell from their comments on page 10.

Anyone who has any experience with social enterprises will understand that they can often have a tumultuous beginning. Situated in what was the village's dilapidated railway building, it has taken a heroic effort from a

Track2Train

number of individuals to ensure that The Sidings exists and continues to flourish. Dodie Piddock, Apex's Sustainable Development Co-ordinator, ensured that the idea went from paper to construction, liaising with contractors and suppliers and putting the groundwork in place to give the business a good foundation to start from. Gerard McEneaney and Philip Dunion have done a power of work since then in terms of finance and operations, keeping the project under control, liaising with funders and supporters, ensuring the Track2Train Board are up to speed with developments and finding solutions to the daily challenges that any start-up will be familiar with!



Operations Manager, Steve McDonald with Administrator, Samantha More



The striking mural

Steve McDonald was recruited as Operations Manager in August 2018, bringing a wealth of experience and knowledge to bring the business to fruition. Since his appointment Steve has worked tirelessly to ensure that the team, the quality of the food and service meet a standard which will create an excellent experience for every customer, and has begun to establish The Sidings as a valuable addition to the Newtongrange community.

One of the reasons that Apex Scotland exists is to provide positive experiences for individuals with barriers to work and to help them find opportunities to progress. At a time when many employers can be nervous of recruiting someone with a criminal conviction, regardless of the detail, the creation of Track2Train, and All Cleaned Up before it, was to provide our client group with a positive working environment where individuals could learn new skills, work as part of a team and gain the confidence to work with other employers whilst still benefiting from Apex's mentoring expertise. Already a number of trainees have been given the opportunity to work alongside our staff and learn all about the hospitality sector at The Sidings. Once the bistro has really taken root, we will gradually introduce more trainees who will benefit from this opportunity and we intend to continue to do this on a rolling basis.



Everything is fully accessible

What the customers think

- “We visited The Sidings for the first time this morning and loved the place! Not only was our breakfast lovely but the staff were all most attentive and friendly. Great to see a social enterprise like this in the local area and would much rather travel the extra 5 minutes up the road to grab some food and drink here in the future. I hope they continue in what already appears a successful venture.”
- “We just popped in for a cuppa and scone and it was delicious, the staff could not do any more for us and the main menu looks fab! We will definitely be returning for dinner and trying out your cocktails, they sound awesome - thanks again.”
- “Been twice now for breakfast and can’t fault it. Staff are lovely and price is fair. Food fresh and coffee to die for.”
- “Fantastic place! Amazing Food! Amazing Service! Prices are good too. Defo (sic) be back.”
- “Just been here for lunch and had a great experience. The food was well presented and very tasty. The service was excellent and the banter with Scott made the whole experience very enjoyable. I would certainly recommend this place and definitely go back.”
- “Have made several visits since this venue opened in May 19 and tried the range from breakfast, lunch and dinner. It has now become a favourite haunt.”
- “Delicious Sunday roast. No skimping on the meat either. Left content and having had good time and chat with staff. Very friendly. Highly recommend.”
- “The home made cakes are delicious!”
- “Just been over for the first time. Delicious breakfast and lovely staff. Highly recommended. Will definitely be back.”
- “Beautiful, well priced food & excellent service.”
- “The sticky toffee pudding is genuinely the best we have ever tasted.”
- “Each time we come in everyone is so friendly and accommodating. Whenever there is no options left in the fridge they will happily go into the kitchen and make something vegan to take away fresh.”



Flexible meeting space

To complement the café, we have created facilities on the first floor for organisations to use for meetings, training, etc, so that they can enjoy the advantage of the catering facilities on site. The team has had great feedback on this aspect of the business. Andrew Ralton from Midlothian Council said: "Just a short note to say thanks for the superb hospitality at the recent meetings of the Industrial Communities Alliance at The Sidings. Every one of The Sidings staff were extremely helpful in ensuring that both events ran very smoothly. Please would you convey my sincere thanks and appreciation to all of the staff for the superb quality of the food, and the high level of service, which was very friendly and welcoming and presented The Sidings and Midlothian in a very positive light. I look forward to visiting The Sidings again soon, and personally would not hesitate to recommend The Sidings as a venue to anyone."

We look forward to welcoming many more organisations to utilise these facilities in the future which will soon include an IT training hub.

Thanks must go to our funders and supporters – Borders Railway, Scottish Rural Development Programme, Scottish Government, Railway Heritage Trust, Midlothian Council, Network Rail, Scotrail – all of whom are as keen as us to see the building used for the good of the community and to provide opportunities to those who need them most. Add+ Architects, Hardies, and John Smart and Son have all been invaluable in their assistance.

One of the beauties of partnerships is recognising that working together can create a lasting legacy for everyone involved. We are hopeful that this is what the next phase of development will bring. We have partnered with The Redwoods Caring Foundation who have given us use of their lovely walled garden not far from The Sidings and are allowing us to develop it in order to grow our own produce for use in café. We will also create a sensory garden for

Redwoods residents. These projects will again provide supported opportunities for those who have struggled to overcome their barriers to work as well as strengthen our links with the local community.

Similarly we are grateful to inmates of HMP Barlinnie who designed and created the inner stairs metal work within The Sidings, the outside balustrades for the bridges and two bespoke shutters for the outside doors. Those in HMP Low Moss designed and made some of the furniture in the meeting rooms.

Social enterprises take effort. They demand grit and tenacity, resilience and patience. They are unlikely to see any kind of financial gain for at least five years – which is no small consideration when their survival is bound to the profits they make, and even then there are multiple factors conspiring against their success. And yet...

Apex Scotland is committed to supporting people to aim higher, behave differently and change their future – termed our 'ABC' approach. We believe that the businesses we have created in All Cleaned Up and The Sidings will create the means for our client group to find meaningful employment and ultimately engage and reintegrate into their communities where previous circumstances have hindered them from doing so. We recognise that this will take perseverance and will not happen overnight, but our purpose is to help those with barriers and who are furthest from the job market to progress and succeed and we believe our social enterprises will play a significant role in facilitating this for many people.

A final word goes to Steve McDonald, The Sidings' Operations Manager: "I have enjoyed helping create this hospitality space which functions for the community and for people with barriers to employment. By giving people the chance to train and grow, it gives them the opportunity not only to be employable going forward but helps integrate them into the community and in turn helps the community accept them as people looking for a better life. I can't see anything but good things going forward."



Comfortable café/bistro



What the staff think

The Sidings team

- “I love this project as I am part of the local community. It ticks every box for me. I have been in hospitality for over a decade and it has never had an ethos that makes me feel happy. The Sidings has made hospitality happy again for me.”

Lisa Millar

- “This isn’t just a bistro, it feels good to give back to the community I grew up in. I get it and love it.”

Steven Millar

- “I like that it’s a social enterprise and represents something good. It’s great to be paid for doing something I love.”

Scott McDonald

- “Being new to the hospitality sector has been an adventure. Every day brings new experiences. I love being part of the social enterprise as it rewards me more than any other job I have had.”

Sam More

- “Even though training staff with no experience in a kitchen environment can be stressful, I get through that [by remembering trainees] can get employed on a permanent basis at the end of it.”

Ashleigh Greenhill

All Cleaned Up

2018-19 has been a really challenging and exciting year for All Cleaned Up (ACU), with much groundwork being undertaken to ensure a successful and sustainable future. Within this ACU has successfully secured investment from Big Issue Invest through the Power Up Scotland programme, allowing the business to improve its current infrastructure, increasing its geographic reach and the ability to successfully manage larger contracts.

One such contract was the successful award of cleaning services for GeoAmey when it took over the Scottish Prison Service's prisoner transportation contract in January 2019. ACU is now responsible for office and depot cleaning of eight GeoAmey sites across Scotland including its flagship head office in Bellshill.

ACU has used these new locations as a platform to build from, establishing new contracts and relationships and now has a portfolio of 24 clients across 16 locations, employing 42 staff.

We are proud that 67% of our staff come from some of the most marginalised and disenfranchised groups in



society, with 51% of our workforce having a conviction and 37% having come directly from our own employability programmes.

After four years of successfully delivering employability programmes in Edinburgh for individuals with convictions, ACU was awarded three further years of funding in March 2019, allowing us to continue supporting our clients towards employment through our Clean2Change programme.

ACU is continuing to grow in 2019, further improving capacity by investing in new vehicles and equipment to meet the increasing demands of new and existing clients.



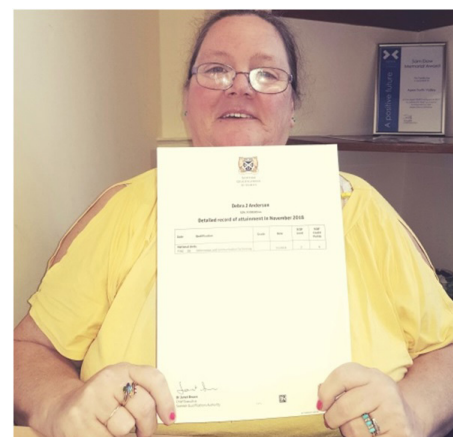
ACU Team Leader, Kenny Ruthven with one of the new vans

Training

We have always strived to ensure that we provide the best support and education for our client group to help each individual progress through their own journey. Over the years we have built on the knowledge and expertise of our staff to bring together our own training portfolio which we now offer not just to service users but to the general public and other organisations. In the past year we have delivered to other charities and on behalf of other training providers, the Ministry of Defence, recycling centres, care homes and prisons, to name a few. Over 700 trainees have participated in over 130 different courses across the country, with most gaining a recognised qualification to add to their CV or increasing their knowledge on policy and legislation.

Of course, Apex has always been known for its expertise in current legislation concerning rehabilitation and disclosure. With this in mind, we continue to ensure our staff are trained to a high standard and provide training to external organisations on this topic. Our senior staff are part of Government and Disclosure Scotland groups to help shape the future of employment legislation.

Apex Scotland is an approved training centre for SQA and Highfield, an ASDAN centre of excellence and an ITA approved training provider, offering a range of courses which are accessible to everyone and of particular benefit to our client group. Helping candidates gain their CSCS labourer's card is especially popular and this year we will be introducing the Scottish Personal Licence Holder qualification to our repertoire.



Cyber-tastic!

The digital literacy qualification being delivered by our team in Forth Valley has proven to be both popular and very successful with nearly 20 individuals gaining the award in the past year.

Some time ago we recognised that for some service users the world of computers and the internet is a daunting prospect that they shy away from. In the twenty first century there is a definite necessity for everyone to have a basic knowledge of digital skills, with an assumption by jobcentres, employers and colleges that all interaction can now be done this way, including correspondence, submitting forms and job seeking.

With that in mind, in 2016 we created a new SQA accredited qualification in digital literacy at SCQF level 2 called Information and Communication Technology. First introduced by our Grampian team, we found that our straightforward language and easy to follow manual was welcomed by those who had reservations about sitting in front of a computer.

This year, Ann Mathieson and Carmen Nogales from our team in Alloa, have patiently spent time delivering this qualification to service users on a one to one basis, taking into account different skills and experience. The feedback has been tremendous with our clients now feeling confident about being able to utilise a computer for different types of communication and having a greater understanding of how to use it to their advantage, particularly when looking for a job. We congratulate them all!

Some of our successful learners with their qualifications

All in a Day's Work



Helen Chamier-Tripp

Has success changed for Apex?

Helen Chamier-Tripp is a Service Development Manager for the Edinburgh, Forth Valley and Fife areas. We asked her how she believes Apex has had to change and adapt over the years to continue to achieve success.

“Working with Apex for a number of years in different geographical locations has given me a real insight into how services have changed over the years. Really, when I think about it, in some cases the definition of success has changed hugely and some cases, things have not changed at all.

“When I first started with Apex in 2001 our work centred around criminal justice service users and almost exclusively on how they would deal with a criminal record when finding work. Now we find a high percentage of our clients have many more barriers that we need to deal with first, even before we tackle the criminal record. This means that, both for service users and staff, small wins such as regular attendance for someone who was struggling to get out of bed in the morning can be a huge success, perhaps more so than finding a job for someone who was keen to work. More and more service users have issues around mental health, substance use, family breakdown, homelessness; the list could go on and on.... Apex has adapted well to address some of these issues, creating new services, training staff and expanding its range of expertise. However, the expectations of both services users and other organisations that Apex staff will deal with all manner of complex situations has increased considerably and this has been one of the biggest changes I've seen over the years.

“Now we find a high percentage of our clients have many more barriers that we need to deal with first, even before we tackle the criminal record.”

“One positive aspect of this has been the opportunity to form new partnerships and work with other organisations so that, rather than agencies working in solitude, or in some cases in competition, we come together to bring added value to the people who need a comprehensive and holistic approach. We have created a number of successful partnerships which have been of great benefit to service users and I hope this continues.

“Where the funding for our local service delivery comes from has also changed dramatically in recent times. We can no longer rely on local government funding so we have had to seek out different funding sources, which brings its own demands, and this continues to be challenging in an ever-changing financial environment. Pressures on budgets and annuity of funding is difficult and we are mindful that we can only continue to have great success in delivering our services if we are given the means to pay for them.

“What hasn't changed over the years is the dedication of Apex staff and partners, and of course this is where our success really comes from.”

"There was a common thread through most of our teams years ago when similar Apex services were being delivered across the country; defining the Apex brand was relatively straightforward and success in Inverness meant the same as success in Edinburgh or Dumfries. It has been necessary to diversify to meet specific criteria set by local funders, and to cope with the increasing demands of our client group, which means that today Apex teams can be delivering different services in different areas, albeit in line with a common purpose and vision, so our definition of success can vary depending on local requirements. This can be challenging to manage, but our core values and a consistent approach, both in our practice of Aim Higher, Behave Differently, Change Your Future, and our A Positive Future model, is key to Apex's achievements and the successful outcomes of our clients.

"Trite though it may sound, what hasn't changed over the years is the dedication of Apex staff and partners, and of course this is where our success really comes from. Apex has a lower than average rate of staff turnover which in itself is remarkable, particularly in today's climate, and adds to the feeling of security of those accessing our services, or contracting them. Apex delivery staff have a real and tangible impact on service users' lives, not just because of what they do, but the way in which they do it, and we take that for granted sometimes in our everyday work. Management and support staff, too, all contribute greatly to the achievements, big or small, that the organisation and our clients attain. We have heard time and again that some of our service users don't know what they would do or where they would be without our help and we should all remember that if we are having a bad day! What we do is important and that hasn't changed at all."



Apex's 'A Positive Future' model

Why we do what we do

Apex delivers a number of services throughout Scotland, each of which has a local flavour depending on the stipulations of our funders and the need of the client group. The following are just some examples of the variety of services we offer.

Nationally, our ESF-funded Steps service is our primary employability programme assisting those who have multiple barriers to employment and/or are long term unemployed and is particularly in high demand across the central belt. We have seen a particular rise in the amount of referrals for those with a history of sexual offences and we continue to ensure that public safety is our main priority when working with this particular client group. Shine and New Routes services meet those being released from custody, and we mentor young people in schools, leaving care and who are involved in the criminal justice system. As an SQA centre and ASDAN centre of excellence we are able to deliver a number of accredited training courses nationally too.

Our Highland team in Inverness is fortunate to have mother nature's bounty at close proximity and takes full advantage of this by offering all manner of outdoor volunteering opportunities to their clients. They also partner NHS Highland and the drug and alcohol partnership to specialise in working with clients in recovery.

In Grampian our team offers a number of creative opportunities and works intensively with young people involved in the criminal justice system through the RAFT partnership. It also hosts our highly regarded virtual visits service offering an easy and convenient way for those in custody to keep in touch with loved ones.

Our teams in Dumfries and Galloway are prevalent in their communities through running their local foodbanks and offering further support to those who access them. The Dumfriesshire foodbank is one of the busiest in the country. In Stranraer they have developed additional services in response to local need such as a soup kitchen and a Moving In service where service users are given starter packs for new tenancies.

Apex's personal development mentors (PDMs) and administrators are the staff who work with service users every day. PDMs in particular share the client's journey and live the triumphs and disappointments with them. We train our staff with the skills required to cope with the particular needs and challenges associated with our client group, but for their part they bring empathy, focus, tenacity and humour, galvanising a team spirit and leaving no stone unturned to give their clients the best chance of success. The most common phrase attributed to our staff is that they go the extra mile for clients.

In every Annual Report we share service users' stories to give a sense of the positive impact our involvement has on individuals. Every week we hear from our teams of a new achievement by an individual who only a month ago had given up on life in one way or another; real stories like the ones that follow which make our hearts swell and keep us doing what we do. The only difficult thing is deciding which ones to leave out.



aim higher

Because you can
be more than
you imagine



**behave
differently**

Because you can
do more than
you think



**change
your future**

Because you are
worth more than
you believe

Ryan's story

Ryan was referred to Apex in February 2019 by the Persistent Offender Project in Inverness. He was on a 12 month Community Payback Order (CPO) and had recently been released from prison, serving a 6 month sentence.

He started his engagement with Apex by attending auricular acupuncture sessions, run by our staff practitioners, for mindfulness and wellbeing. Such was his enthusiasm and passion for the treatment he began attending three times a week and continues, even now, to be one of our most committed participants. Having this new perspective into drug and alcohol recovery Ryan began to open himself up to new ways of living and decided to participate in SMART (Self-Management and Recovery Training) designed to help individuals with certain problematic situations and difficulties they may face in recovery from active addiction.

Ryan was eager to fill his week with as much positivity as he could so his next step was to begin voluntary work with our outdoor groups. Although Ryan had a CPO, his unpaid work hours were being completed elsewhere. This meant he was attending our outdoor groups purely for the peer support he received, the new skills he was learning and the enjoyment he gained by taking part. He went on to successfully complete two levels of the John Muir Trust award, (i) Discovery and (ii) Explorer and is on course to achieve the third and most prestigious level, (iii) Conserver. He was delighted with this achievement and requested that these be put straight onto his C.V.

An opportunity arose for Ryan to gain on-site work experience with Robertson Construction and to take part in a three day workshop



Ryan with Service Development Manager, Alistair McDonald

beforehand. Ryan powered through the workshop and the first week and a half of his on-site placement, earning the respect of his site manager and a local contractor who went on to offer him employment. Unfortunately his decision to move to supported accommodation in a different area to ensure he could continue a successful recovery meant he had to turn this down.

A group of school pupils from Dingwall Academy interviewed Ryan as part of the Youth Philanthropist Initiative competition. Ryan spoke on camera about the experiences he has had in addiction, but also recovery and the criminal justice system, as well as his experience with homelessness. The pupils were inspired by Ryan and chose to invite him to their final presentation at Dingwall Academy, where he got the chance to watch his interview on the big screen and experience the reactions the audience had towards his story. Although the pupils didn't win the competition, Ryan's contribution helped raise a lot of valuable awareness about addiction, mental health and homelessness and also provided him the chance to reflect on his journey and take pride in how far he has come.

Ryan is poised to complete his CSCS green labourer's card training in the near future which will aid him greatly in future employment as construction is the type of work he would like to do and is familiar with. Once he feels confident and ready to make the move into his own tenancy there will be nothing holding him back to achieve the quality of life he has been striving for.

Anthony's story

Anthony* was referred to Apex's Steps service in Ayrshire. With a conviction for a sexual offence he had not been employed for 7 years. On meeting John, his personal development mentor (PDM), initially he was sceptical about the support and guidance we could provide due to the nature of his offence, assuming he may never get a job again.

Anthony agreed to engage with the Steps service and John worked with him to overcome the barriers that Anthony believed he had with regards to gaining employment. Anthony was interested initially in finding a volunteering position so they discussed possible options that would allow him to do this.

Apex has a social enterprise, All Cleaned Up (ACU), which John knew had a contract in Ayrshire so he contacted them to see if they had any vacancies. He was told ACU had some relief cleaning jobs to cover holidays and sickness. John recommended Anthony thinking it was the perfect opportunity for him as he needed experience to fill the gap in his CV and he was local to where the job is. After interview and discussion about his conviction, ACU agreed to employ Anthony as a relief cleaner.

Anthony has received great feedback in terms of the work he has done so far with the result that he has been offered more hours, which he is enjoying. Anthony's confidence has increased, saying he is grateful to Apex and All Cleaned Up for giving him the opportunity of paid work, and which he believes he wouldn't have had without the help of John and the Steps service.

Charlie's story

Charlie* was referred to the Grampian Steps service by an Aberdeenshire jobcentre in October 2018. Due to his RSO status, he had been unemployed since mid-2016. Charlie engaged really well with his personal development mentor (PDM) throughout the service who helped him to understand his conviction and helped him to write his letter of disclosure. Together they signed up to job search websites, updated Charlie's CV and applied for relevant jobs. Charlie was interested in a change of career so with the help of his PDM he started to look at college opportunities and decided to enrol in a distance learning course which he has now completed.

"I'm afraid I have to cancel our next meeting, and all other meetings ... I start work on Monday!"

"Woo hoo!"

On first meeting attending the Steps service, Charlie's confidence and self esteem was low. He stated he was ashamed of his actions which had led to the conviction. Over time, with the help of his PDM he was able to move forward and grow in confidence. In April his PDM was delighted to receive this message: *"I'm afraid I have to cancel our next meeting, and all other meetings... I start work on Monday! Woo hoo!"* Charlie has been in full time employment since then and couldn't be happier.

Shirley's story

Shirley* is a YPeople resident and was referred to the Apex Steps team in Glasgow by her key worker. At her first meeting with her personal development mentor (PDM) she outlined her history of a challenging childhood, having spent her life in care. She voiced her interest in working with rehoming animals and studying social care.

Shirley had been arrested on a number of occasions which had led to some mental health issues being uncovered. Her PDM spent a lot of time with Shirley helping her to learn what her triggers were and identifying which jobs would therefore be suitable or best avoided.

Shirley decided on a social care course as, having had so much personal experience in the care sector, she now feels she wants to help other young women who have had a traumatic upbringing. Shirley applied to Glasgow Clyde College and shortly after received an email inviting her to an interview for the Level 5 NQ Social Work course. Shirley's PDM spent time practicing interview questions with her and talking through coping strategies for any anxiety she might experience. She also accompanied Shirley to her first interview.

Although she was unsuccessful on that occasion, Shirley had decided that the course was what she really wanted to do and decided to re-apply, this time for the Level 4 NQ Social Work course. She attended another interview and shortly afterwards, to her delight, received confirmation that she was invited to start the course in August 2019.

Becoming a Personal Development Mentor

Aimee Robertson is 18 and joined the Highland team in Inverness on college placement in October 2018. Her effort and contributions led to her being offered a part-time PDM post earlier this year which has recently increased to a full-time position. Here she tells us a little bit about what it means to her.

"I was studying HNC Social Services at Inverness College UHI as I wanted to become a social worker for children and needed a placement as part of my course. I did some research and found out about Apex Scotland which led me to seek an interview with them as I was particularly interested in working with individuals who have difficulties with drugs and alcohol. I felt that joining Apex would be a challenge, having never done anything like it before. On my first day I was nervous, but the team were welcoming and always helped when I was not sure what to do.

"Since being with Apex I have learned a lot. I have been given many training opportunities such as First Aid, 'Asist', Gambling Awareness, Rehab and Disclosure, and 'Decider' skills. The training has really benefitted my practice giving me more knowledge and awareness of different situations. I have used many of these new skills, implementing them with my clients and even in my own personal life. Through shadowing my colleagues I have learned the best way to communicate with clients as well as the more practical paperwork requirements. Being able to shadow during a client initial interview helped me to utilise similar techniques when I started to do my own initial interviews.

"My job involves working with the Steps service - carrying out initial interviews, completing action plans with clients and CV building, doing job searches and introducing service users to our projects. I now have experience of helping with more challenging situations such as helping people to find accommodation.

"The team at Apex are very welcoming and considerate. They are very inclusive and take everyone's thoughts and feelings into account. When I was doing my college placement, everyone on the team would help me with college work, whatever it was, and they still help me, answering any questions and taking time to talk things through properly. The team has also given me goals to achieve with my work which has been really beneficial. Overall, the team have made my transition into this type of job very comfortable.



Aimee Robertson

"Every client at Apex is different with situations being both positive and challenging. I find it rewarding when I see my clients thrive and meet their goals, especially when they grow in confidence, but it can be challenging if a client doesn't attend their appointment, even though I know that it could be unavoidable. I love working for my clients and being able to help and give advice that is appropriate.

"During my college placement I changed my mind about being a social worker as I loved what I was doing working for Apex – when I was offered a contract I was so happy! All the training and learning opportunities the organisation gives means I am constantly learning. Working with the Highland team has made it even better as I wouldn't be where I am without them, and seeing the clients thrive with confidence makes it worthwhile. I can see myself working for Apex for a long time because I'm enjoying what I do!"

Highland's Centre Co-ordinator, Tina Brown, said, "Aimee started as a shy, quiet but willing to learn young girl. She spent time with each individual member of the team shadowing their roles, and attended all training, conferences and meetings etc. Service users found her easy to talk to and helpful. She is now a confident young woman, who has taken on the role of PDM with gusto, much to the delight of her colleagues (and service users). She has become a valued member of the team and we are sure she will continue to progress."

Shine and New Routes



In 2013 the Reducing Reoffending Change Fund was created to provide women offenders and prolific young male offenders with substantial one-to-one mentoring support. Apex became a partner in two of the six public social partnerships created and since then has been working as part of the **Shine** partnership for women offenders and **New Routes** partnership for young male offenders.

Our Shine and New Routes mentors work vigorously to offer a high level of support to individuals who are soon to leave prison, continuing that support on their return to their communities. As these clients often have chaotic lifestyles, our staff will deal with issues such as homelessness, family breakdown, mental health, money problems, addictions, court appearances, etc.

“...having immediate contact is vital in ensuring women know they are supported, leading to a successful release and successful reintegration into the community.”

Mandie Smith, our Shine PDM in Highland explains the importance of meeting someone from the prison gate.

“On Sarah's* release I accompanied her on the long journey home to find her locks had been superglued, she didn't have the medication she needed, and was becoming more unstable. Having been referred to the Shine service whilst on remand, liaising closely with her social worker and the prison, I understood that Sarah had a number of issues relating to her mental health, court cases and pending eviction. Having little other personal support on hand, if I had not been present to deal with her landlords and organising her medication, it is likely Sarah would have been unable to cope, reacted badly and ended up in a worse position. Since then I have assisted Sarah with appointments with DWP, health centres, psychiatry and solicitors to name a few. We are also currently appealing her eviction which was carried out whilst she was on remand and unable to get representation. This is just one example of why I feel it is important that Shine mentors are present on liberation because having immediate contact is vital in ensuring women know they are supported, leading to a successful release and successful reintegration into the community.”

Liaising with public authorities and specialist organisations on their behalf, assisting with general life skills, accompanying to appointments, finding opportunities for work and training, and being a listening ear is all in day's work for our Shine and New Routes PDMs. Working with those who require so much support, however, is often the most rewarding when they start to realise their potential and reach their own goals.

Chelsea's new enterprise

Apex Forth Valley's Shine service has been working with Chelsea since her release from prison. Chelsea was originally from Dundee and very new to Stirling. Initially she needed a lot of support with housing and benefits but once these issues were addressed her Shine PDM worked with her to create a longer term plan to ensure she had goals to work towards.

Her PDM referred her to Stirling Community Enterprise to take part in a landscaping course she was interested in. Chelsea was the only female on this course and proved to be more than a match for her male counterparts! Chelsea flourished throughout the course and has new enthusiasm for the future.

She has now been accepted for a full time course at Forth Valley College.



Chelsea with her certificates

Gillian's story

Susan Brisbane, Shine PDM in the Scottish Borders, describes how she supports one of her clients.

Gillian* had become well known to statutory services and was seen as a young girl who was out of control but continually refused to accept any support offered to her, offending usually through substance misuse.

When I first met with Gillian I just allowed her to talk. She had been given a Community Payback Order and recognised she needed support but had real issues with trust as she felt she had always been let down in life. She agreed to meet me again and, through discussion, we identified many issues including complex mental health and trauma history, substance misuse, negative peer group, history of impetuous and impulsive behaviours, self harm, poor self esteem, among others. Together we made an action plan to begin to address some of these issues.

After some weeks of meeting, going out for coffee or walks and just chatting, Gillian asked me to make GP appointment for her. I supported her to attend where she was given a prescription for anti-depressants and referred to the community mental health team. I helped her to obtain her new medication and start them the same day. Unfortunately, not too long afterwards Gillian was admitted to hospital and required surgery. I supported her in hospital through this event, eventually taking her home to the care of her dad.

After this we met another couple of times and she opened up about historical abuse and how she felt she was beginning to experience feelings of crisis building within her. She admitted hearing voices but stated she had not been able to tell anyone as she did not want to worry her dad. I ensured she got an emergency appointment with the crisis team, and she was given a new prescription for anti-psychotic medication to help with the voices, with Gillian agreeing to follow up with community appointments. Gillian engaged with follow on support this time and reported improvement.

Gillian's physical and mental health continued to improve. As we continued to review her progress we updated her action plan. By now Gillian was keen to apply for college to continue her hairdressing course. I helped her through the application process and attended the induction day with her when she was accepted. I supported her further to arrange a bursary and helped her create a budgeting plan.

Gillian is due to begin college in August, she is substance free, has moved away from negative influences and deleted social media accounts, finished her CPO and has engaged well with her CPN.

We have agreed that we will continue to meet weekly for the time being, or speak on the phone, but this will likely become less frequent as her college commitments increase. I will continue to support her to address any issues while she needs it but she has already mentioned she can visualise a time that she will feel ready to continue without that support which, in itself, is a massive step forward.

Mandy's story

Jen Reid, our Shine PDM in Dumfries explains Mandy's story.

Having been remanded for breaking bail conditions after being charged with a number of offences, Mandy* was sentenced to 18 months' supervision, 200 hours unpaid work and a fine. Mandy explained that in recent times her offences had been the result of acting impulsively out of desperation to protect her children. She also admitted that she'd consumed large amounts of alcohol and this had been an additional factor affecting her judgment.

Mandy was struggling with a number of issues, including anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorder and episodes of self-harm. She acknowledged that her drinking was problematic but she thought she was able to express her feelings when drunk. Up until recently she had coped pretty well, managing to sustain a full-time job, meet the demands of her husband and care for their two children.

Since release Mandy had split from her husband and moved out of the family home, retaining regular contact with her daughter. Mandy has worked hard to make changes in her life and is complying with her court order effectively. She completed her unpaid work hours in a matter of months, having been given the opportunity to volunteer in the Dumfriesshire Foodbank, where she thrived and regained some self-worth.

We worked closely together, creating an action plan to prioritise the areas Mandy wanted to address. She attended appointments with specialist alcohol services but wasn't comfortable with this option, so has recently begun medication to deal with her cravings. To date, this seems to be the right approach for her and she feels in control, something she said she hasn't felt for many years.

Mandy is on a waiting list to see psychological services to ensure she receives specific support, but she is stable. She has been introduced to mindfulness and is studying a short course on it at the local university campus. As she is someone who likes to keep busy, being in the moment is quite a contrast for her! She is also looking at attending an exercise class.

After about three months of supporting Mandy, we discussed the possibility of her attending a Next Steps course with Venture Trust. Mandy was keen to embrace the opportunity to challenge herself physically, mentally and emotionally on a wilderness expedition. Having met the representative a handful of times she signed up and took part in the adventure!

In another positive turn, Mandy has made a phased return to her work and is settling back in well. It has been a pleasure to mentor Mandy, and I'll continue to support her over the coming months as her journey continues, albeit when she has time to fit me into her busy schedule. Not that I'm complaining!

Business is blooming!

You may remember reading about Jacqui in last year's report. On her release from a short prison sentence, Jacqui was isolated, without income and depressed. Our Shine mentor in Alloa, Fiona Campbell, had worked with Jacqui on her release, discovering a passion for flowers. We last reported that Jacqui had completed her qualification in floristry and was volunteering with a florist.

Since then Jacqui has gone from strength to strength, setting up her own business and shop! This has been a fantastic achievement and the culmination of a great deal of hard work and perseverance.

As part of her continued support, Fiona arranged for Jacqui to access training on how to run a self-employed business through New Enterprise Allowance. After successfully completing this training, Jacqui used her new found skills to set up *Alabaster Bonny Blooms* in Bonnybridge. She was recently handed the keys to her new shop and has newly opened, with rave reviews already!

Jacqui's confidence has sky rocketed and she is looking forward to the future.



Jacqui (left) and colleague in her shop

John's new start through New Routes

John* joined the Dundee New Routes service in March 2018, six months before his release from prison. Our New Routes PDM worked with John throughout that time and for six months after his release. He benefitted greatly from the consistent support and advice and engaged regularly.

John had particular concerns about housing, employment and finances. On his liberation, his PDM supported him as he applied for benefits and created his universal credit account, ensuring he could secure financial stability. The next step was to apply for his own tenancy, which he secured and has now completely settled into, making it his own home.

Finding employment was more challenging but John's PDM supported and encouraged him through applying for several jobs, creating his CV, doing interview practice, writing his disclosure letter and helping him to devise answers if any questions arose about his conviction. All his patience and hard work paid off and John went on to be offered full time employment in a local factory which he still enjoys.

John is now much more settled and has had no further issues since working with New Routes, and feels as though he can leave his convictions behind him. He is enjoying life in his own home with a new job and feels as though his life is now on track.

Added Value Partnerships

The services that Apex staff deliver are robust and of high quality. Part of this is understanding that partnership working can bring added value to the full experience of our service users, ensuring that we can provide a bespoke and personal service tailored to each individual. Partners can be our funders, or statutory bodies and other third sector organisations who are invested in ensuring those we work with find the assistance and support they need to move forwards in their own journey. In particular this year, we have been working closely with these partners:

- Our teams in Dumfries and Galloway are grateful for the excellent partnership with Holywood Trust who have funded Dumfriesshire Foodbank and Wigtownshire Moving In service for many years, assisting our anti-poverty project and giving advice, as well as being active in Dumfriesshire Foodbank steering group.
- In the same area we have a fantastic relationship with Tesco which delivers stock to the Foodbank free of charge, stores excess food for us and runs extra fundraising events throughout the year.
- Our Glasgow team has been offered premises within Calton Community Fire Station and as a result has collaborated with the fire service to educate our clients about fire prevention.
- Joint working with Project Scotland will allow our clients to participate in volunteering activities designed to increase their confidence, skills and employment prospects.
- YPeople assist Apex in the delivery of our Steps programme in Edinburgh and Glasgow and allow us to use their premises in Edinburgh to meet young people in their own accommodation, breaking down the barriers of having to travel for the most vulnerable young people.



Centre Co-ordinator Fiona Dalgleish (right) with Tesco donation

- Rock Trust helps our Edinburgh team with housing concerns some of our younger referrals present with.
- Our team in Alloa is working with Resonate Arts House to create a video designed by and starring Apex clients and staff to highlight issues our client group face in Clackmannanshire.
- Resilience Learning Partnership is working with us to identify service users who will use their own experiences to develop trauma informed training packages to deliver to professionals in education, criminal justice, health and social care sectors.
- Canal College, based at the Falkirk Wheel, is supporting Apex clients on a 14 week training programme. In the same area we are also working in partnership with Forestry Commission, Archaeology Scotland and Scottish Canals, using the outdoors to participate in a variety of projects to improve clients' health and give them work experience.
- Alloa staff work closely with New Enterprise Allowance to identify any of our service users who want to start their own business – NEA staff are based in our Alloa office.
- Our Shine service works in close partnership with Venture Trust, CAB, Stirling Community Enterprise and Women's Aid, all of whom assist with their expertise for our clients leaving prison.
- Our Highland team, in partnership with the Pressure Drop Project, as part of the Hidden Gem Sport Programmes Rebuilding Lives, delivers a pilot boxing programme each week. Along with non contact boxing, topics such as homelessness, coercion and controlling behaviours, addictions, etc are offered to participants to encourage thought, debate and exploring solutions.
- Our partnership with NHS Highland continues at New Craigs hospital where our volunteers tend the gardens, learning new skills and improving their wellbeing as well as benefitting the community.

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

Some of Apex's key partners in 2018-19 were:

- Aberdeen Standard through Power Up Scotland
- ACOSVO
- Alcohol and Drug Recovery Partnerships
- Archaeology Scotland
- ASDAN
- Calton Community Fire Station
- Canal College
- CCPS
- CJVSF
- Community Justice Scotland
- Community Planning Partnerships
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Diageo
- DWP
- European Social Fund
- Fair Start Providers
- Families Outside
- Fife Voluntary Action
- Forestry Commission
- Grace's Chocolates
- Horses in Clover
- Local Authorities Criminal Justice Social Work and Education Departments
- Morrison Construction Partnership Project
- Multi agency re-integration team within HMP Dumfries
- Napier University
- Navigator
- New Routes (led by Wise Group) – national PSP partners
- NHS and Health Partners
- Police Scotland
- Project Scotland
- RAFT consortium
- RE:SET High Schools in Fife and Edinburgh and those who have contributed to the RE:SET service
- Recovery Network
- Robertson Construction
- Scottish Canals
- Scottish Government
- Scottish Prison Service
- SCVO
- Shine (led by Sacro) – national PSP partners
- Skills Development Scotland
- SQA
- STAF
- Street Soccer
- Street Soccer
- Supported Employment Service
- Tesco
- The Big Lottery
- The Holyrood Trust
- The Prince's Trust
- Track2Train funders and supporters
- Trussell Trust and those who support the foodbanks in Dumfries, Wigtownshire and Levenmouth
- Turning Point Scotland
- Venture Trust
- YPeople



Apex volunteers at New Craigs hospital

Steps starts soccer practice

The Steps team in Edinburgh has developed a working partnership with Street Soccer and Shelter to deliver a package of support for prisoners in HMP Castle Huntly, HMP Edinburgh, HMP Barlinnie and HMP Cornton Vale. Through this initial partnership we have now included our Apex teams in Glasgow and Dundee.

This project will aim to create a new seamless pathway for 150 people due for release from prison and continue the connection through community drop in sessions upon release. Apex Steps staff are delivering information sessions on our Steps service and meeting those who will benefit from continued engagement upon their release.

Staff are encouraged to take part in the football sessions during prison visits and service users can continue to play football at Street Soccer venues in the community. Service users will gain a football coaching certificate while in prison and can continue studies in the community if they wish. We have found this to be a great way of engaging with our client group with the added bonus of improving both client and staff fitness!



Street Soccer in prisons

Eddie's new start

This year we partnered with civil engineering firm Story Scotland to offer our clients real work opportunities with the prospect of permanent employment.

Story approached us because they wanted to help those with particular barriers into employment and to spend time training those who had a genuine want to succeed, no matter their background.



Eddie (right) with colleague

Story appreciated the investment that Apex makes in mentoring individuals and the support we provide to ensure that our clients develop the skills that employers are looking for, such as time keeping, team working and reliability. We identified individuals we had been working with who we believed fit the criteria that Story needed and introduced them to the company with a view to them being offered a two week placement. If the placement was successful there followed a guaranteed interview.

Eddie was engaged with the Steps service in Glasgow and working with Apex personal development mentor, Laura Mathieson. On learning of this opportunity, Laura contacted Story to tell them about Eddie. After spending two weeks working on the Kilmarnock AFA scheme for Network Rail, Eddie was offered an initial three month trial with the business. After impressing his colleagues and mentors, Eddie was given a permanent position as a general operative working full time at the SPT Depot.

Eddie said: "This has been a real boost, a fresh start for me. I'm determined to turn my life around after being out of work for so long. There's been so little opportunity for me so when this came along I jumped at it. I wanted to do a good job for the business and to prove to that I could work hard and that's exactly what I did – and now I couldn't be happier to have secured a permanent position. Story is a great place to work and the people have been so welcoming to me. Apex was a great stepping stone for me and gave me a shot to prove what I could really do – without this I might not be where I am today."

We are keen to work alongside other partners so that others like Eddie can be offered similar opportunities.

Collaboration benefits the sector

One of the most significant points at which partners meet and collaborate is through the Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum which is a membership body bringing together most of the third sector players in the justice world.

Our Chief Executive, Alan Staff, was recently elected as Deputy Chair for this forum and, as such, is able to represent the sector in key negotiations and discussions with the Scottish Government and the statutory partners.

Alan said "The forum is the one place where we can put down our competitive hats and work together for the benefit of the whole sector and its clients, this collective voice and best practice promotion is essential in improving both policy and practice across the justice agenda."



Robertson Construction

Robertson Construction has teamed up with Apex Highland to provide placements for service users to experience working life in the construction industry. Apex first delivers the necessary health and safety training and helps our clients to obtain their CSCS green labourer's card. Robertson Construction then provides further training relating to candidates' CVs, interviews and career options and offers a two week placement thereafter working on site. Our service users have a full site induction and work as part of a team, getting to experience what goes on in the day to day management of a working site.

This has been an excellent opportunity for a lot of our clients providing invaluable experience that future employers will recognise. We are delighted that one of our service users, Allyson Wilson has now been employed by Robertson's.

Allyson (second left) on site with Jade O'Hara (far left) and David Campbell (far right) from Robertsons and Apex service users Matthew (middle) and George.

Our RE:SET (REvising youth mindSET) service was established in 2007 when Dunfermline High School in Fife invited us to bring our expertise to create our first Inclusion Unit within the school intended to reduce exclusions and complement the work of the school's Behavioural Support Department. The first year that Inclusion Unit was operational, there was a reduction of 52% in exclusions at Dunfermline High School against a Scottish reduction rate of 11%. The following year exclusions at Dunfermline High School dropped a further 20%. Since then the service has developed to create a full library of modules and exercises utilised within a variety of programmes which are tailored to inspire, challenge, encourage and support young people who are experiencing difficulty in mainstream schooling.

Our creative RE:SET staff continue to find new ways to help pupils re-engage with their classes, their families and their communities with convincing results. RE:SET partners with schools on the Getting in Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach and Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) to provide the best possible start and support for our young people, and follows SHANARRI wellbeing indicators.

In 2018-19 we delivered a full time RE:SET service in Dunfermline High School and Levenmouth Academy in Fife and St Augustine's High School in Edinburgh, with more specific intervention in Viewforth High School in Fife.

RE:SET delivers core programmes throughout the school year such as Alternative to Exclusion (A2E). The A2E service is for those pupils who would otherwise be excluded but instead engage with our staff focusing on actions and consequences of their behaviour whilst continuing with their given school work. Support is also offered to pupils who are reintegrating back into school after a period of



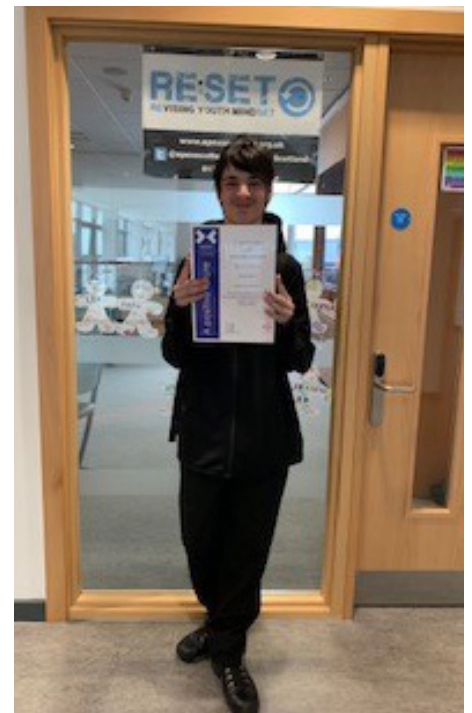
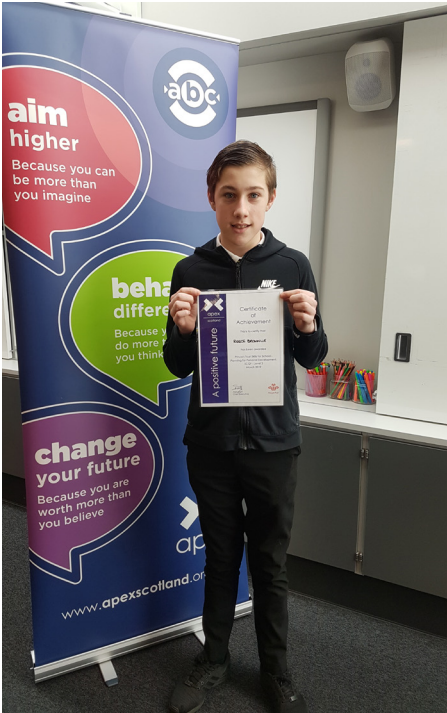
Pupils display their learning

exclusion. In 2018-19 368 referrals were made to the A2E service which saved 420 days which would otherwise have been lost to exclusion.

These classes as well as 'Focus on Your Future', 'Anger Management', 'Positive Me' and 'Nurture' sessions are run in RE:SET each week, all in high demand, and deal with behaviour responses, self esteem and anxiety, which enables young people to learn new skills and build the confidence and motivation needed to make aspired changes and recognise their potential.

Our RE:SET services also offer general drop ins at breaks and lunch times where any school pupil can speak with our staff about something specific, meet their peers or find out more about what we offer.





Skills for schools

Over the last academic year 42 pupils over the three schools were supported to participate in this Prince's Trust programme, which focuses on building confidence and self-esteem, team work and setting achievable goals, and is particularly for those who find the high school environment challenging, such as new first years. The pupils worked through modules on a weekly basis and undertook

different tasks to complete the sections. The programme is designed so that individuals monitored their own progress and concluded by each person creating an action plan to achieve a specific goal, based on the themes they have covered, to overcome a personal obstacle. On successful completion the pupils gained an SCQF level 3 certificate - Planning for Personal Development.

Learning from others

Visitors are often invited to attend RE:SET sessions to give specific insight into topics that affect our young people and can often include former pupils who have experienced difficulties in school but have gone on to contribute positively in their communities. This can be very encouraging to the young people who usually have lots of questions! Recent visits have included an army captain, a prison officer, Bee Buddies and the Clued Up Project.

Stewart Macrae, a probationary teacher, joined one of the sessions in Levenmouth, taking part in a "Challenging Behaviour" task. Stewart was able to share his experiences on school life with the pupils and the young people benefitted from having a teacher's perspective on the impact that disruptive and disengaged pupils can cause. Stewart later said,

"I was extremely impressed with the restorative practice which was being used in the Apex classroom. The environment is very calming and respectful of the pupils. I think this is vital for the pupils to be able to discuss issues and talk about any incidents which have occurred."

"It is really nice having the opportunity to come here as it really helps with my mental health. It helps me to calm down."

Volunteering

Volunteering at Levenmouth Foodbank has been a regular feature for RE:SET pupils from Levenmouth Academy where their positive attitude and willingness to engage with foodbank staff, as well as collecting donations within the school, is held in high regard. In December 2018 the school took on the 'reverse advent calendar challenge' in a bid to boost supplies. Instead of opening an advent calendar and finding a treat, the challenge involved contributing an item of food each day. Staff and pupils joined in with this innovative idea and a total of 140 kilograms of food was donated from Levenmouth Academy which RE:SET pupils then organised alongside foodbank volunteers.

One S2 pupil who started attending the Foodbank Café decided he would like to raise money for the cause. Our member of staff helped him to put together a luxury hamper which he raffled enthusiastically! He raised over £100 which was presented to the foodbank coordinators who were thrilled! The hamper was won by an S1 pupil who was surprised and delighted as she told us that she had never won anything before.

“RE:SET has really helped me during school because it just gives me the break I need a couple of times a week.”



RE:SET mentor Lynne Clement with pupils and the raffled hamper



RE:SET pupils helping to organise foodbank donations

Broomhouse Centre

A group of RE:SET pupils from St Augustine's became regular volunteers at the Broomhouse Centre café one afternoon a week. The young people worked with centre staff where they prepared different foods to a set budget. The experience taught them general kitchen and hygiene skills as well as learning about nutrition and budgeting. The pupils enjoyed the experience and improved their social skills while working well together as a team.

“It has helped me get a better understanding of how I feel and ways I can cope with my anxiety.”



Pupils learning kitchen skills

Annual Lecture

You may recall from last year's Annual Report that Apex Scotland has spent time campaigning for recognition of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on offending behaviour in line with our trauma-informed approach towards each individual we work with.

It came to our attention that the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney MSP, had a particular interest and extensive knowledge of the subject so it seemed auspicious to ask him to deliver our 2018 Lecture on this topic. Mr Swinney's lecture titled, *Building a Fairer Scotland: Does Understanding*

Childhood Adversity Help? was held in the Signet Library to a full house where he talked widely across aspects of Government and social policy to show how an awareness of the effects of trauma on development and behaviour is changing thinking and influencing practice. It was gratifying to note that much of what he cited as best practice and research-based activity has been pioneered by Apex Scotland over the past decade in our school services, and we will continue to apply this approach.

The full recording and transcript of Mr Swinney's lecture can be found on the Apex Scotland website.



Memorial Awards

The Sam Dow and Betty Crawford memorial awards are presented on an annual basis at our staff conference to individuals or teams which have excelled in their performance.

The Sam Dow award is awarded to a service or team which has gone beyond the usual parameters of the contract or job description to enhance employability prospects for service users, particularly in difficult circumstances, or perhaps gained particular recognition for their good work. In 2018 the Sam Dow award was presented to Apex Highland sessional workers for pulling together to maintain the various services when several unforeseen factors threatened to severely impact on delivery. Collectively these individuals rallied and increased their efforts to ensure that all Highland services continued to be delivered to the team's usual high standard.

The Betty Crawford award centres around innovation and initiative and is awarded to a team which has stepped outside the usual parameters of delivery with new ideas to improve the experience and outcome for the service user and/or the community. In 2018 the Betty Crawford award was presented to the Dumfriesshire foodbank, run by the Apex Dumfries team. The foodbank has become a vital part of the Dumfries community and the staff there have worked hard to demonstrate Apex's value and relevance in that area. Regardless of their contracted job role, our colleagues within the Dumfries team ensure that the foodbank runs smoothly and that Apex can provide additional assistance to individuals who access it if necessary.

Our Tayside New Routes service, which arguably works with one of the most difficult client groups, continues to perform excellently. This year it was agreed that a highly commended award would be presented to our staff there for their outstanding commitment to service users.

Our congratulations to all teams for their fantastic efforts.



Highland sessional staff



Dumfries team



Tayside New Routes team

Finance

The primary purpose of Apex Scotland continues to be the provision of meaningful, progressive support to our service users in order to enable them to lead more fulfilling lives to be more effective contributors to society.

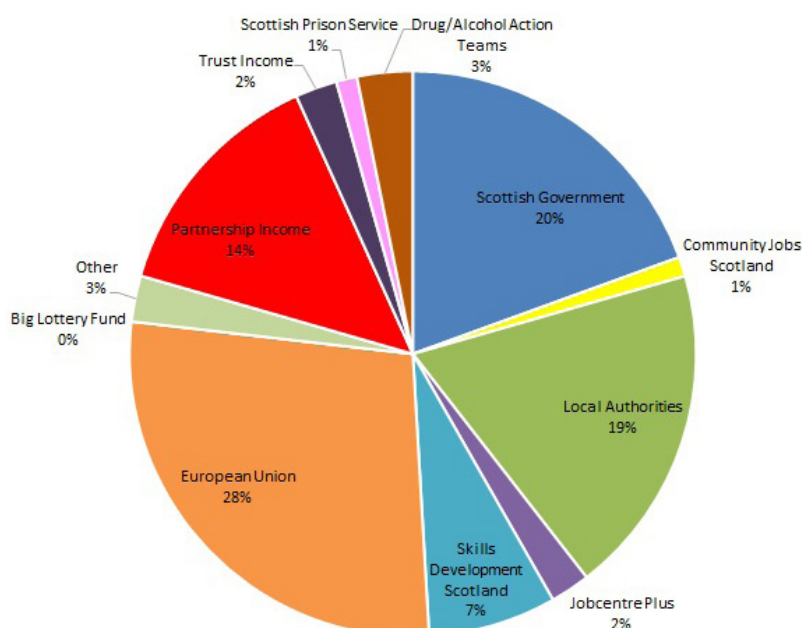
Other parts of this Annual Report will evidence the worth, and effect, of the work that we carry out but this section will provide detailed analysis of the manner in which we have performed financially in an effort to give comfort to our funders as to the effective and appropriate use of those funds.

We have continued, as all agencies have, to face the challenge of the ongoing spending constraints, which have occurred at a time when there is an increase in awareness of support required and demand for our services. Undoubtedly over recent years we have suffered from the financial impact of the cuts in funding whilst attempting to provide effective, high quality, services to our service users and retaining the necessary infrastructure to support that. During those years we have restructured

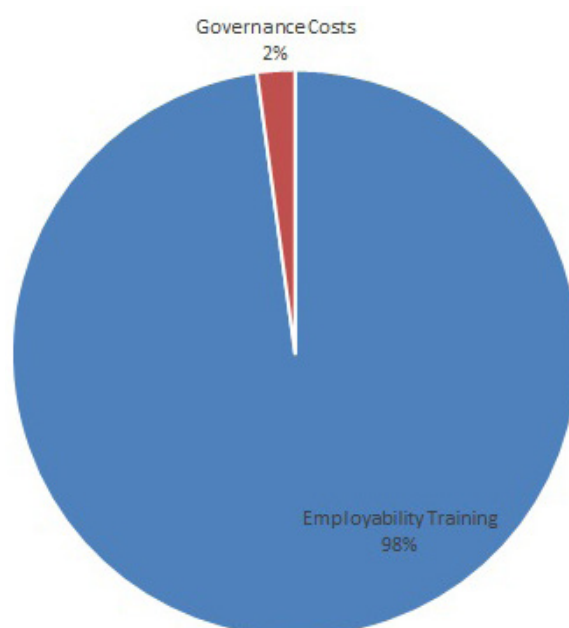
and also explored alternative means of financing our work. Whilst we will continue to explore new ways of working and innovative means of funding our work, we have made significant efforts to diversify our income base and to add value to the services we provide. Most notably this was done through the development of our ESF-funded Steps service which occurred in many parts of the country. Such was the success of that service that we have been refunded for a further 2 years. We are of the view that we can move forward with confidence and a belief in our ability to continue providing services to those in need, whilst recognising the volatility of our environment and the need to constantly monitor performance, value and effectiveness.

Given the comments immediately above, our accounts for 2018-19 show a surplus of £30,487 for the charity alone. This was achieved against income generated of £2,603,444 (an increase of 14.8% in comparison to the previous year) and expenditure incurred of £2,572,957 (an increase of 7.9% in comparison to the previous year). This is

Income



Expenditure



obviously pleasing and is testament to the determination, commitment and loyalty of our staff. In previous years the vast majority of our funding was either expenditure reimbursement or set figure. The world in which we operate is changing and, increasingly, we are being faced with service opportunities, and the associated payments, being linked to performance. Whilst this can be challenging we recognise the need for public sector funders to ensure that the work they are paying for is making an evidence based difference. We are confident in our ability to survive and thrive in this changing environment but there is, without doubt, a transition period both in terms of financing the organisation and in the service culture of staff members. This emerging method of funding places greater pressure on cashflow due to funding being received well in arrears from the date of delivery and the developing requirements of funders in relation to acceptable evidence of success. 2019-20 will see yet another funding model coming into play and ensures we operate in an environment of constant change, where we have little or no control. We remain confident of gaining greater financial stability through 2019-20.

Our trading subsidiary, All Cleaned Up, posted a loss of £65,225 in financial year 2018-19. Whilst this is disappointing we retain a belief that this initiative, which creates real jobs for our service users, will be able to build upon the efforts made to strengthen that organisation. Towards the end of 2018-19 and into early 2019-20 we have seen significant growth in contracts gained and we are confident of returning a profit at the end of the coming financial year. All Cleaned Up remains an important part of the overall Apex strategy. Thanks must be given to the support from the Big Issue Invest and Social Investment Scotland which has helped us to develop a more robust entity.

We also continued the process of creating a further social enterprise, Track2Train, which commenced trading through The Sidings in early 2019-20. Much work continues to be undertaken to ensure that this social enterprise has

a sustainable and viable future. Thanks are due to the Scottish Government, Midlothian Council, Railway Heritage Trust, Network Rail and Scotrail for their support for this new venture. No matters relating to the financing of that second social enterprise are included in these accounts but we would expect that new enterprise to be included in our 2019-20 accounts. This new enterprise also has the ability and intent to create real jobs for our service users as well as creating an income stream for the charity.

With the surplus created in 2018-19 we continue to move forward with confidence and determination to strengthen our services and infrastructure to support ongoing development of the organisation, ultimately for the benefit of our service users. However, we do so with an awareness of the volatility of the funding environment within which we operate and a recognition of the potential impact of the current political climate. We expect to face ongoing funding challenges which means that the ability to reduce our reliance on public sector funding becomes all the more critical. As part of this we will continue to ensure appropriate, efficient and effective use of our resources in an effort to provide high quality support to our service users and to our funders. At the same time this will be done in a manner which enables us to inform public policy in relation to our service user group. This will continue to be achieved through the utilisation of our ASSET management information tool and supported by effective governance at all levels across the organisation. This approach, undoubtedly, contributed to our success in gaining European funding for 2019-20 through to 2021-22 and will enable us to support a significantly increased number of service users.

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

Philip Dunion

Director of Finance and Corporate Development

To Be Frank

Sheriff Frank Crowe joined the Apex Board in 2014. Since February 2018 he has operated the Edinburgh Alcohol Problem Court where male offenders with chronic alcohol problems are offered locally based help, advice and support to reduce or eliminate the consumption of alcohol which has given rise to offending. With a particular interest in community sentencing as a means of reducing reoffending, Frank has been an asset to Apex in advocating the work we do to challenge recidivism and our efforts to create a diversion from prosecution service. Retiring from the Board this year, and from his seat at Edinburgh Sheriff Court, we asked him to share a few pearls...

Apex: **What drew you to work in the Justice system?**

Frank: **My father and grandfather were both police superintendents and my great grandfather was a prison governor. My father gave talks to various groups when a detective and practised his slide show at home which interested me in forensic medicine.**

A **What has kept you there?**

F **I have always enjoyed the work and trying to act in the public interest by being fair yet firm when necessary.**

A **The move towards presumption against short sentencing has been one of the most progressive changes in policy recently but is not welcomed by everybody. What do you feel would encourage Sheriffs to make more community sentences?**

F **The book which I hope to write in my retirement! I have effectively operated such a presumption for the last 2 years and feel it is the way forward. Prison sentences are not transparent and short ones do nothing to rehabilitate or improve prisoners and help them with the transition back to the community.**



Apex Board Member, Sheriff Frank Crowe

- A **What are the criteria you would use in deciding whether someone gets a community or custodial sentence?**
- F **Is there an effective range of orders to assist, supervise and, if need be, monitor the individual back into the community and a pro-social life?**
- A **How would you describe the current justice system to an alien just arrived on earth?**
- F **Poor value for money and a lack of coherence.**
- A **What one thing would you change about the current judiciary system?**
- F **Apart from getting rid of wigs and gowns, getting individuals round a table for sentence with regular reviews and having them participate in their sentence.**
- A **What is the biggest challenge you face as a sheriff?**
- F **The long hours on the bench and the lack of time to prepare. This must be done each night so that your court runs efficiently but every last detail for each case is to hand.**
- A **What is the most satisfying thing about your job?**
- F **Where an offender responds to a community order, gets back in touch with family, secures a tenancy and has plans for work or training and you hope you won't see them back in court.**
- A **Best piece of advice you've been given?**
- F **Always be polite and fair and try to see things from the other person's perspective.**
- A **Do you have any positive examples of Apex's work in practice with someone you have come across in your professional life?**
- F **Yes. I was pleased when one of my drug treatment and testing punters said he felt better and was going for a job interview with All Cleaned Up!**
- A **The most rewarding thing about being an Apex Board member?**
- F **Meeting impressive people from other disciplines who give up their time for the common cause.**

- A **What have you learned about Apex since you started on its Board?**
- F **It's a tough old world out there if you fall off your perch and you want to get back to where you were.**
- A **In an ideal world, what role would you give Apex in the future of Justice?**
- F **To assist social work departments in delivering robust community orders which benefit the communities in which they operate.**
- A **Sum up Apex in three words.**
- F **Help – Support – Motivation**
- A **Do you have a personal motto?**
- F **Play the course as it lies to the best of your ability.**
- A **What is your greatest asset when it comes to work?**
- F **My laptop with all my One Note jottings.**
- A **What earns brownie points in your book?**
- F **People who try their best.**
- A **What are your best things in life?**
- F **Having a great family and a roof over your head.**

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