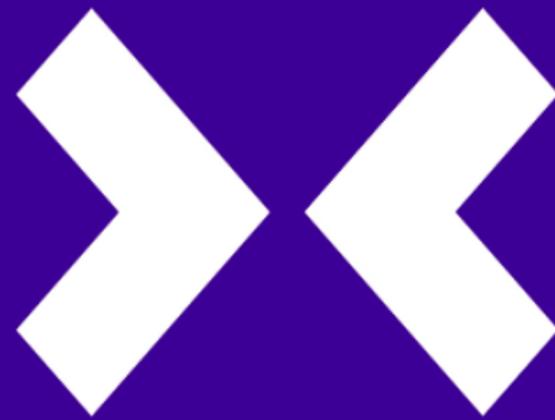


# APEX HIGHLAND

OCTOBER 2020 –  
MARCH 2021

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING



apex

highland

### IN THIS ISSUE:

*Citizens advice bureau*

*Inverness Justice Centre & DTTO*

*Acupuncture*

*New Routes*

*Challenge Team*

*Shine*

*SMART Recovery*

*SQA*

*STEPS*

*New team members*

*STACC*

*Awards & Achievements*

*Staff developments*

*Statistics*

*Timetable of services*

The past six months have been challenging for everyone, going back into lockdown and learning to work from home again, but the team at APEX Highland have demonstrated dedication and hard work to ensure all our client's needs were met.

## CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

Apex Highland has just completed a joint project with Citizen's Advice Bureau, which has been a great success from the beginning. Together we have worked with 31 clients who accessed this service. This has been a fantastic resource for people due to the ongoing pandemic and it has given our clients opportunities to access advice and have queries dealt with quickly.

### Client quotes

"brilliant service and put my mind at ease straight away!"

"Martin helped me with my PIP and benefits, and it was sorted with weeks which I was over the moon about!"

"It is a great service, they worked hard to get the result I was looking for, now my benefits have been changed and I couldn't be happier!"

Although this service has come to an end we will continue to work with CAB as a partner organisation and are happy to be able to refer clients to their new Support for Change Team. This comprises of experienced advisers who offer the client benefit, housing, debt and energy support and advice plus advice on consumer, family, immigration issues.

They will also assist the client with forms paperwork, applications etc. the advisers are also be able to link with specialist case workers for Welfare Rights, Money Advice Housing and Employment within the bureau, and liaise with these teams and the client.

The client referral criteria are those who have experienced difficulties with Alcohol and Drug and the families of the same.



## INVERNESS JUSTICE CENTRE AND DTTO

In October we started holding smart and acupuncture sessions at the new Justice Centre in Inverness for clients who were on a DTTO (Drug and Treatment Testing Order), following strict COVID, NADA Scotland and Apex Health and Safety guidelines.

We were only able to have 7 people in the room including Chris & Lauren. The morning session was a SMART Recovery Group and the afternoon was an Acupuncture session – complete with PPE and seat coverings.

Due to lockdown these groups were suspended however SMART was available online once a week.

**2 participants attended Acupuncture**  
**6 participants attended Smart**

## ACCUPUNCTURE

Auricular (ear) Acupuncture is a specialized therapy where points on the outer ear are treated, using needles & magnets to help with withdrawal symptoms, stress, anxiety, mood swings, general relaxation, and many others.

We re-started acupuncture sessions in September which was well attended during the months it was available. Following strict NADA and government Guidelines all staff were wearing full PPE, staying two meters apart, and frequent hand sanitizing. There were 2 groups of 4 service users on a Monday & Friday, acupuncture was so popular that we had to add in an extra day towards the last month before lockdown happened again.

We had many comments like 'I can't believe how much difference acupuncture makes' & 'I used to struggle to sleep for ages before acupuncture started up again'.

**81 Acupuncture Attendances**  
**19 Participants**



## NEW ROUTES – EILIDH DEAKIN

I joined Apex Highland as a Personal Development Mentor (PDM) at the beginning of March 2020 which turned into a jam packed three weeks of shadowing and training before the first lockdown.

Initially my role as an Apex PDM centered around DWP referrals, although I soon joined other areas of the Team including the Challenge Team and working alongside another PDM on the delivery and course materials of our Apex SQA Employability course.

At the start of November, Apex gave me the opportunity to facilitate the Apex New Routes Project for the Highlands and Moray. This program is run in partnership with The Wise Group and is in place to help reduce re-offending in men.

My job is to provide support to them while they are in prison, to prepare for release and then after release, to help give them consistency and guidance to reintegrate more easily back into the community. I fully took over this role at the start of December and have really been enjoying it.

My role encompasses being the Prison Mentor, which includes meeting client's in HMP Inverness using the Link Centre as a base, as well as the Community Mentor for Highland & Moray. This means that anyone liberated to the Highland or Moray area, I will work with in the community, including clients coming from other HMP's.

Support is so necessary when many of my clients have become institutionalized and things such as setting up a benefits claim can be hugely daunting for them. Many require assistance with a range of things such housing, addictive behaviors, mental health, finances, building family relationships back as well as employability. This help can mean the difference between moving forward with their life in a productive way or returning to offending.

Although the second lock down has made things more complicated with assisting clients within prison and in community also, it has been a hugely rewarding role. Having the rest of the Apex Team behind me for support and to be able to ask advice has also been invaluable to me in settling into my new role.

**Since taking over the New Routes programme in November  
19 men have been assisted before liberation and continue to  
receive help in the community.**

**10 men are currently working towards liberation.**



## **APEX NEW ROUTES - CASE STUDY**

Luke is an older client whom in recent years has struggled heavily with addictive behaviours. This was a central factor in leading to him being in prison. When I met him, he did not have long left of his sentence and although glad, was also very anxious about going out into the world with all the changes and new restrictions which covid-19 has caused. To add to this, he also suffers health problems which made him vulnerable and put him at greater risk should he contract it.

He required help with housing, finances, mental and physical health, and addictive behaviours. Through working alongside partner organisations who were also working with Luke, we were able to secure a temporary furnished flat upon his release. I had a food parcel dropped off to him to ensure he has food to get started, I also ensured he had received a liberation pack including a mobile phone with which he was able phone and organise his benefits as well as register with the doctors.

Having this phone is of great benefit as it has meant myself as well as the other key workers can keep in contact with him and ensure he is ok. It also means he was able to take part in the New Routes Re-connect counselling service for 8 weeks which was a benefit to his Mental Health.

Luke managed very well to start with but, the second lockdown brought a lot of isolation for him and he relapsed with his addictive behaviour and has struggled greatly since then. Another organisation was able to source a laptop with free data which we set up to allow for video calling. This not only enables him to attend recovery meetings online, but also have more contact and support with friends and family which he really needs. I was also able to setup and show him how to get the radio on it which he was incredibly happy about as he feels like he has been staring at the walls with no idea what has been going on in the world.

Luke has a long way to go for recovery, but he is so grateful to have the help of Apex New Routes and other organisations to help him feel like he is not alone in the world.



# CHALLENGE TEAM

In October we had gathered momentum and referrals from CJS came in thick and fast

As this was anticipated and as the weather had turned greatly reducing our outdoor activities, we created a number of socially distanced workstations within the garage/workshop area.



Large pieces of Douglas Fir which had been drying out within the garage was stripped back, cut to size, sanded and the beginnings of bespoke garden benches and coffee tables took shape.

Additionally, all equipment was serviced, oil changes and maintenance took place in preparation for spring and the joys of being outside, which is enjoyed by our clients.

The clients (like staff) were pleased to be back, to be usefully creating and making different things which also included a dog kennel and bird houses. In December we had achieved 240 CJS hours and had (and still have a plan) to increase this greatly when the time comes.



Regular contact has been maintained with CJS and our clients and we look forward to the time when we can work together as a team.



## SHINE

We continue to support our Shine ladies throughout the last year, even under the very difficult circumstances of Covid. This is especially welcome due to the increasing number of women in the area going through the criminal justice system and receiving prison sentences. Links with services especially CJSW, NHS, Housing and DWP have proved invaluable in creating smoother transitions from prison to the community for the women.

Shine mentors keep in touch with the women via “email-a-prisoner.” This helps build a relationship from the start to help with engagement in the community. We have a good partnership with criminal justice and have the option of community referrals for women struggling with orders in the community. We believe our Shine Service is now more imperative than ever due to the situation they are facing when they get released back into the community.

### *Shine - CASE STUDY*

Julie had issues around addiction, offending, mental, physical health, and she was a prolific shoplifter. She had been a previous client with Apex and Shine but rarely engaged after her liberations.

Our first meeting was her liberation day she explained she had 3 DTTO appointments a week along with other appointments which we agreed to support her in attending. We had a clear out of our own wardrobes and donated our clothes to Julie as she had little to wear - this small act completely blew Julie away; she was over the moon and could not thank us enough.

Julie put herself forward for the Apex Outdoor project where she enjoyed meeting up with likeminded people, loved tidying the gardens and litter clearing the beaches. She found it challenging, rewarding and was good for her physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Contact was made every day and at every opportunity we applied for craft packs, books, clothes, food from other services and delivered them to her to keep her occupied and to make sure she felt supported. Julie was encouraged to try to use her bus pass for shorter journeys for appointments nearer her home, this helped her own independence and build on her confidence.

Due to Julie’s prescription ‘controlled substance’ she had to travel to the next village 10 miles away and pick them up 3 times a week and her anxiety became unbearable as she was in contact with people on the bus and waiting hours for buses to arrive due to limited service. She was also spending time outside the chemists where on each occasion been offered substances from people she knew. We worked out a plan along with her CPN to arrange to get her prescription delivered to her home address.



Julie attended all her appointments over the months that we worked with her and was feeling very positive and had suggested that she would like help in the future after her time with Shine came to an end. We explained that we would transfer her over to Apex STEPS program and continue supporting her throughout her recovery and appointments.

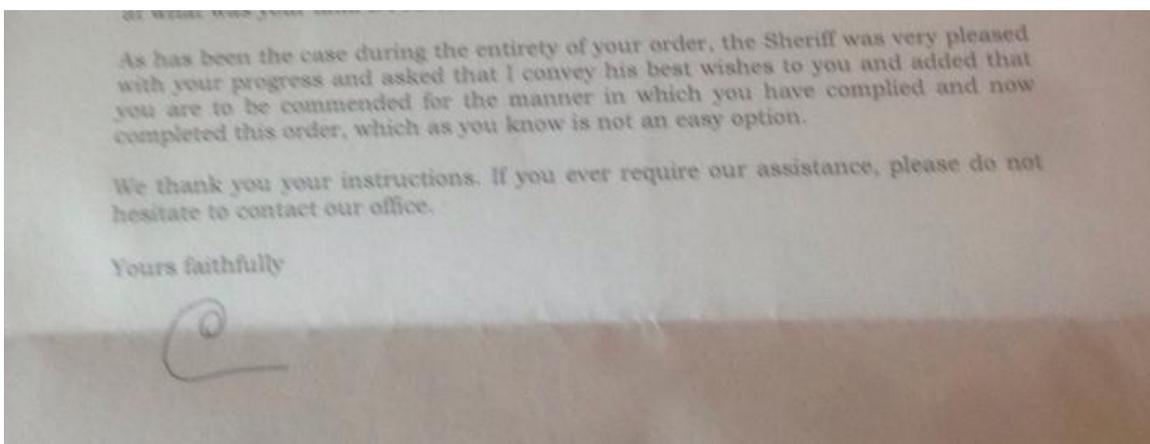
Julie attended SMART recovery groups at the Inverness Justice Centre and was a brilliant peer support to others in the group. She started raising money by walking each day for MFR Cash for Kids and has already raised a considerable amount.

Her hard work and perseverance paid off and she has successfully completed her "DTTO order" with flying colours and received a letter today with comments from the Sheriff which also praises her on her achievement.

Loyalty, friendship, respect, and trust was found by both her and her mentor over the last 18 months and we will continue to work with Julie as long as she needs.

Julie messaged her mentor to say - *"Had to share with few people you being one could never have done it without you xx never thought I'd EVER get s letter like this of s judge has blew me away and a blubbing proud wreck lol thanks for everything xx"*

*" I think I will frame it though never in my wildest dreams did I think a judge would say that and this whole journey started with you picking me up at Grampian 18 month ago xx 🥰 is like to say you'll never know how much it means to me what you guys have all done for me but I think you'd know xx tell everyone hi 🙌 send my love and thanks have a great day xx"*



# SMART RECOVERY – Carlie Borthwick (Facilitator)

- Many of us suffer from addictive behaviours throughout life, but for some, these behaviours can be problematic.
- Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART) is one of the services Apex Highland have continued to be able to offer throughout lockdown, to help clients overcome their addictive behaviours.
- Smart is a science-based Project which helps people maintain recovery from any type of addictive behaviour, although many of our clients have issues with drug or alcohol use. Smart uses techniques from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) and Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET), amongst others.
- SMART is a 4-point Project, Building and maintaining motivation, coping with urges, managing thoughts, feelings and behaviours and living a balanced life. Smart is often “peer-led”, and others find lived experience beneficial in their recovery.
- SMART provides clients with a set of "tools" which they can use in their recovery, but also as part of their daily routine to help keep them motivated and to live a balanced life.
- We moved our meetings online at the start of the current pandemic and have maintained 2 x 2-hour meetings per week. Our facilitators have also held meetings on local and public holidays, as well as Christmas Eve and Hogmanay, so that clients still had routine and support over the festive period, which is obviously a difficult time for anyone with addiction issues.
- Jackie suggested setting up an informal WhatsApp group for clients to support each other out with normal working hours. This has been well received by all clients.
- Although SMART was originally developed for clients to attend for approximately 12 weeks, we have many returning clients, as they feel this is a vital part of their recovery plan.
- Our new Administrator Molly has been nominated to complete her facilitator training. Her contribution to meetings whilst she has shadowed facilitators, has been appreciated and valued by all smart attendees.

**324 smart attendances**

**42 smart participants**

**16 Clients average per session**



## SMART - CASE STUDY

*Around 2015, "it" (my addictive behaviour) got bad. I couldn't really pinpoint one thing. I fell into a depression and felt worthless. My relationship with my dad has not been good since being a young kid, due to his drinking and an abusive home life. I had found myself homeless when I was young. Between all that, and the breakdown of my personal relationship, life was hard! I started using cannabis and alcohol at first, but then cocaine came into it for a while. Later on, Valium and other sedatives were addictions too. I was always open minded about drugs - I did a bit of everything if that chance was there, but alcohol and Valium in the end became my main addictions.*

*I knew I needed to change. I was referred to Apex in September during my 14-week residential Project at Beechwood House, to take part in SMART recovery groups, and was allocated Carlie as my Personal Development Mentor. It wasn't easy. I sadly lost my sister suddenly during this time, and that was a massive trigger to start using again.*

*It looked like I was going to be homeless again after leaving Beechwood. I didn't want to go to Cale House, and I spoke to Carlie about my concerns. Carlie said she thought I should consider it a safety net, because I would be tested daily to ensure I was maintaining my recovery. One thing I did know, was that I couldn't face going back into a B&B, as this was not a therapeutic environment for my recovery.*

*Carlie spoke to housing, and together, we came up with a plan. I was involved in a pilot project (the first person in the Highland Council region), where, if I went to Cale House and if I engaged with Apex and complied with all tasks that were given to me, that I would be housed sooner than I initially expected - we were talking months instead of years. I completed the SQA employability award - and then lockdown happened! I have continued to attend SMART twice a week since leaving Beechwood and have explored other avenues to help with my recovery. I am glad to say I have been in recovery from addiction for over 7 months now and have just received the offer of a permanent tenancy of my own - a brand new build - somewhere to call "home". Naturally, I had an urge to celebrate - so instead, I used a SMART tool and took myself for a walk - one of my new hobbies since giving up my addictive behaviours.*

*Smart is a great group with even greater facilitating. It is so welcoming and friendly and provides helpful tools to go over and cover. They help you in different situations that you may struggle with in recovery. 10/10 - would recommend.*



# SQA – AIMEE ROBERTSON

## My role/services

From September last year I have been developing and creating modules for our Apex SQA Employability Award. This has been a challenge and a huge learning curve that is continuously improving! SQA Employability Award helps individuals such as school leavers, Long - Term unemployed, or those not sure what they want to do in the future, identify and pursue a career.

The award teaches individuals what jobs will suit them, what their strongest and weakest skills and qualities are, working on a CV and how to format this, Interview prep, mock interviews, knowing the differences of behaviour in and out of the workplace, as well as knowing what their responsibilities are and dealing with conflicts within work. Over 20 individuals have successfully completed and passed their SQA Employability Award level 4 this has been delivered within a group setting or online..

## SQA Employability - CASE STUDY

Darren has been engaging on and off with Apex Highland over the years. Darren's most recent referral was during the easing of restrictions and we could have 1-1 appointments with Darren in the office.

Darren was originally referred for Employability support however, he also has addictive behaviours which resulted in criminal convictions. Darren has high anxiety levels and lapsed with his addictive behaviours. He has medication to help with his low moods and anxiety. Therefore, with all this happening in Darren's life he signed up to the Steps Project to receive support.

After completing an action plan at an initial interview we agreed to focus on his mental health. We discussed his addiction but at the time Darren felt that he did not need support with this due to receiving support within other services. He started attending our auricular acupuncture sessions which helped him to relax and detox from his stress and low moods.

Over the course of working together we built up a relationship where we could speak freely about the next steps on his action plan. His confidence increased and he signed up to take part in our CSCS Labourers Card Course and SQA Health & Safety In A Construction Environment course.

Darren outlook on life has improved and with a new confidence he has grown as a person. He has what he wants to do in the future with his career and taken the first steps, which has helped him gain motivation. Since starting Apex Darren did not know what he wanted to do but now Darren has a plan and goals with moving and starting a new job and building relationships with his children.



## **STEPS - CASE STUDY**

A\* was referred to Apex through the Job Centre and was signed up to the Apex Steps project.

He was not in a good place when he was referred and was looking for help with employment, to gain his CSCS card and to also look at his mental health and improving it.

After completing an action plan together, we decided to sign A\* up for CSCS straight away, which he was able to sit within two weeks of being referred to our service, he passed on the first time. With over 10 years' experience working offshore he was delighted at the prospect of getting into construction and starting a new journey.

We worked on interview skills, self-esteem and confidence building sessions which he greatly enjoyed and we both noticed a huge difference in A\* after only a short period of time.

Unfortunately, the second lockdown began, and employment opportunities and services were at a halt for the time being. We continued with our weekly appointments over the phone including preparing a up to date CV. He is now eager to get into employment and start working again.

He has remained upbeat and positive through the second lockdown which has been tough for many however, he has kept himself busy with housework, gardening and seeing his children, as and when he can.

We have signed A\* up to Employment and Agency websites and are hopeful that when restrictions are lifted, he will be successful in finding employment.

## **CSCS & SQA HEALTH & SAFETY**

Our CSCS & SQA Health and Safety have been impacted with the restrictions. However, we are ready to start delivering again as soon as we can, as we can only have a limited number in the group we have added an additional day.

During October and December 2020 there were 52 attended for CSCS training. 20 still to do the Pearson test due to their tests being suspended due to Covid-19



## NEW MEMBER OF THE TEAM – MOLLY BREACH

I joined Apex at the beginning of January in the role of Administrator, on my first day in the office a national lockdown was announced, and I was given a laptop – to work from home.

Luckily, I was welcomed with a lot of support and kindness from my colleagues and made to feel part of the team. My induction and shadowing were carried out online through numerous video calls and meetings which helped massively to integrate me into my position.

Since joining Apex I have attended multiple training courses and shadowed members of my team to get a better understanding of what they do and how Apex works. I have completed my SMART facilitator training and am now working on a new online training course with the team on addiction which will be available to both clients and staff.

I've enjoyed this job so much since day one and I can't wait to get back into the office and engage more with clients, visitors and meet our partner agencies.

I was so pleased when I got the job at Apex as I've never worked in this sort of environment before and I loved the organisation's goals and achievements, so I really wanted to be a part of that.



## STACC – STAFF AND CLIENTS CONNECTED

STACC has many courses available to clients with various topics from money management to mental health and well-being, and new courses are being added regularly.



SQA Employability  
Award



Short  
Courses



CSCS Health  
and Safety



Physical Health  
and Well-being



Money  
Management



Mental Health  
and Well-being

These courses can be accessed by a referral to Apex

# STACC

Staff & Clients connected  
Online Training

## AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In January 2021, Apex Highland won the Community Justice Partnership Excellence category at the Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI) Awards after being nominated by Highland Council - James Maybee.

In his nomination, James Maybee said that Apex Highland's *"Can do spirit and solution focused approach is nothing short of inspirational"* and that *"everyone who walks through their door is treated as an equal, with respect and all have an opportunity to fulfil their potential"*.

The reward was presented at the online ceremony and it was thoroughly appreciated by the Apex Highland Team



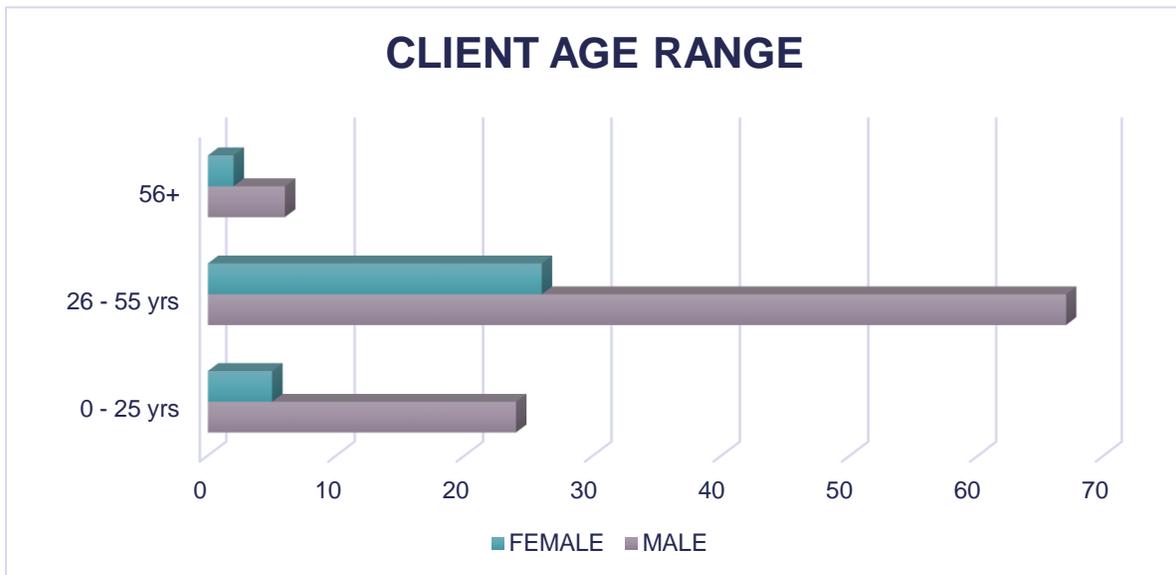
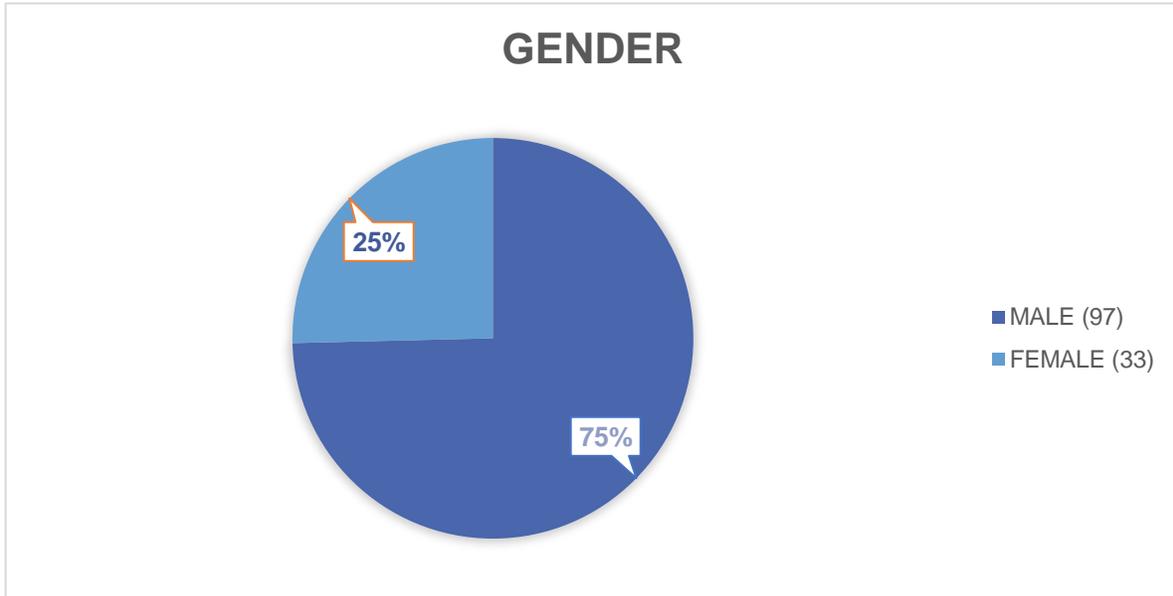
# STAFF DEVELOPMENT

During the past six months the team have taken the opportunity to keep their skills and knowledge up to date by attending online training in the following.

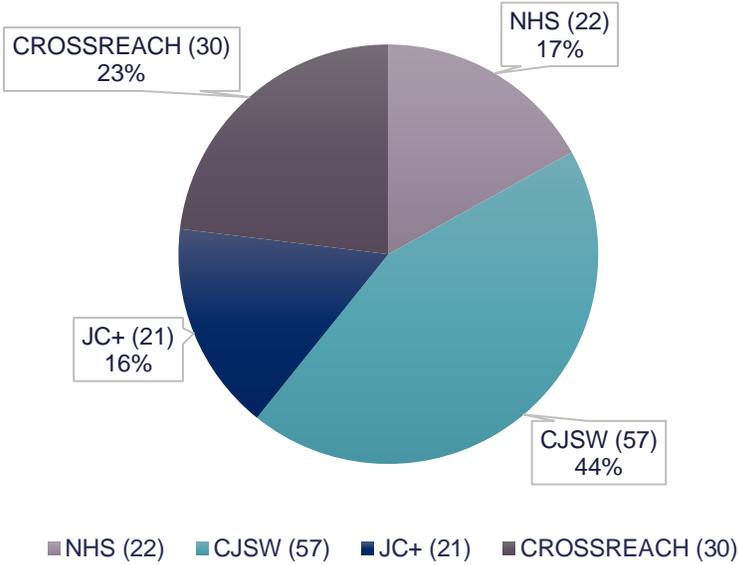
- Basic Excel training
- Cannabis awareness
- Child Protection Training
- Childhood trauma
- Core behavioural and cognitive behaviour skills for relapse prevention and recovery management
- Crisis support training
- DAISy Training
- Disclosure training
- Families outside – understanding the impact on families
- GBV awareness training
- HADP drug awareness training
- Introduction to apex
- Mental Health Awareness
- Paediatric first aid
- Professional practice mentoring award
- Saphir Training
- Trauma, Benzodiazepines and managing emotions training
- Various courses on SDF
- Various courses on STACC



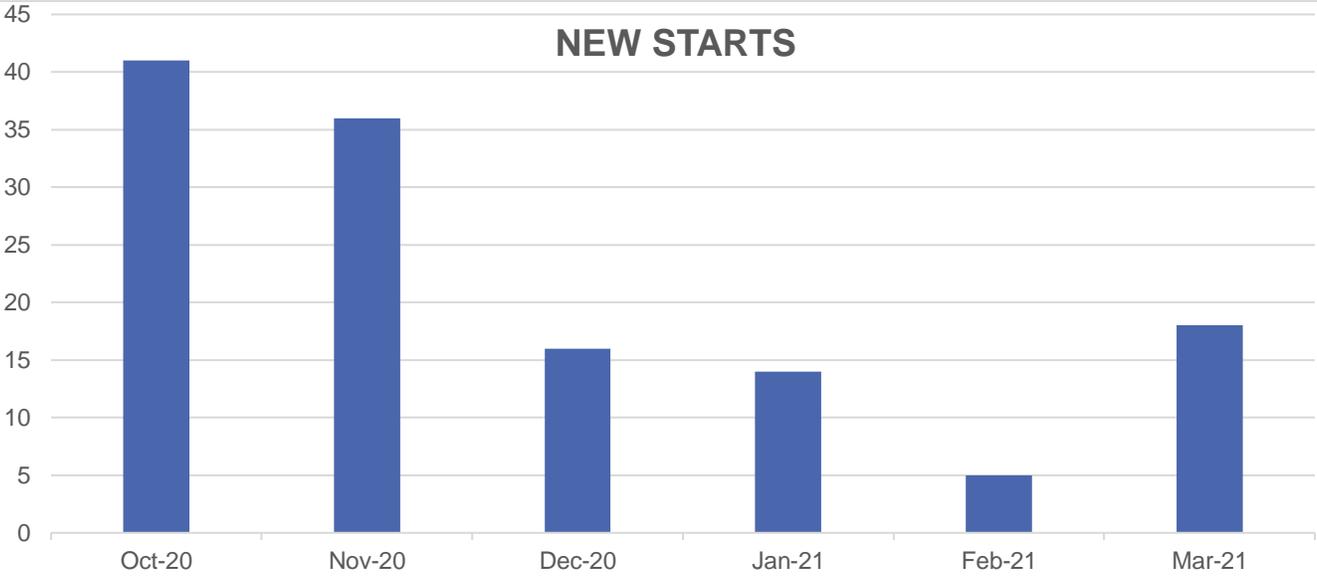
# STATISTICS & CHARTS



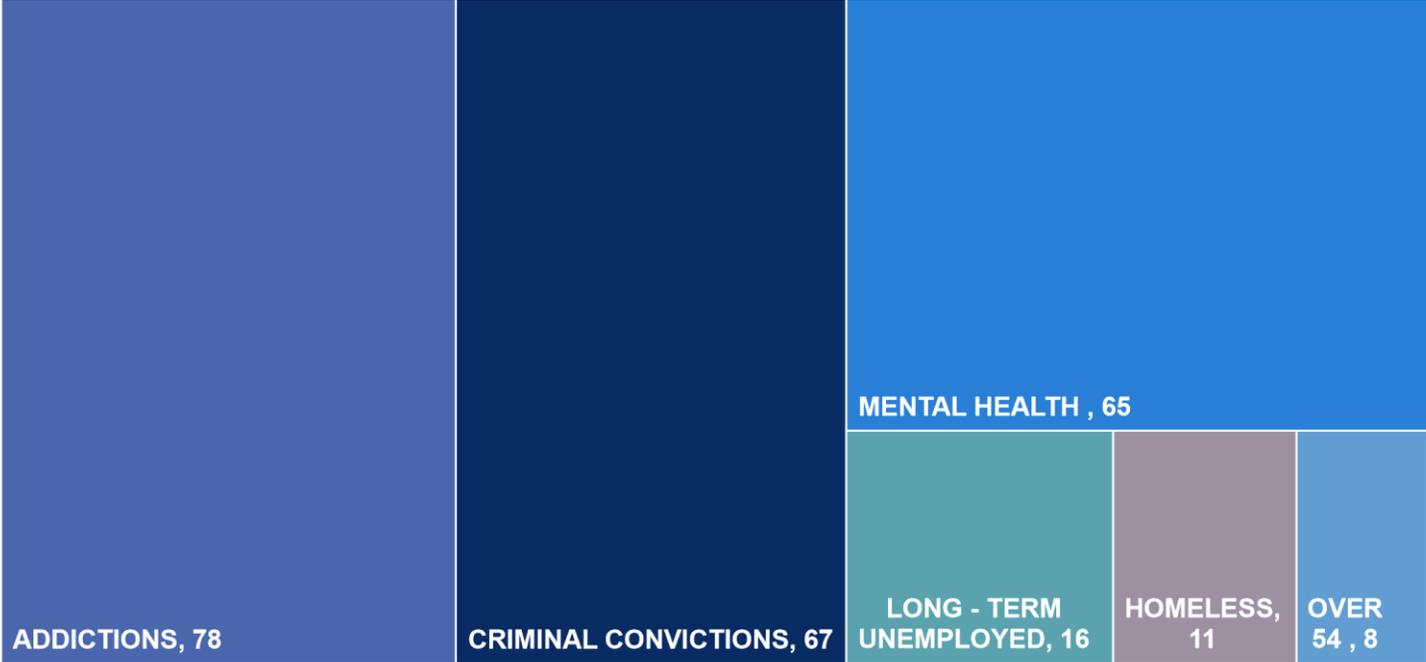
# REFERRER/STAKEHOLDER



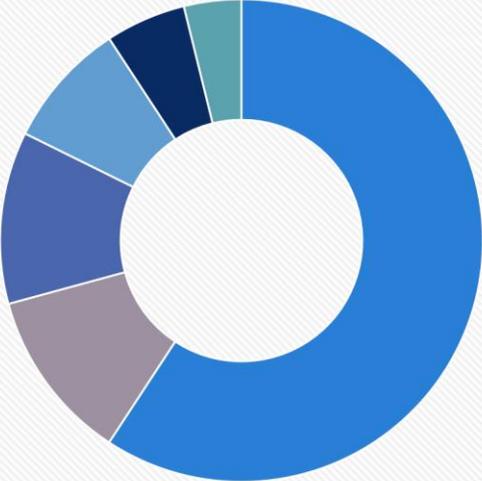
# NEW STARTS



### BARRIERS

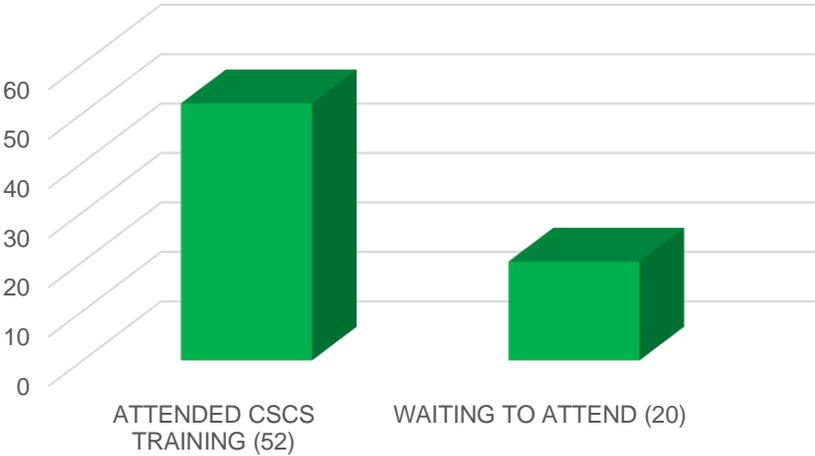


### AREAS



■ ALNESS (15) ■ INVERGORDON (11) ■ INVERNESS (77) ■ ROSS-SHIRE (7) ■ TAIN (5) ■ OTHER (15)

# CSCS TRAINING



# TIMETABLE OF SERVICES

## MONDAY

SMART ONLINE  
11AM – 1PM

1-1 Phone call appointments

SQA EMPLOYABILITY ONLINE

Meditation Online  
10AM – 11AM  
&  
1PM – 2PM

## TUESDAY

CSCS TRAINING

1-1 Phone call appointments

## WEDNESDAY

CSCS TRAINING

1-1 Phone call appointments

SQA EMPLOYABILITY ONLINE

SMART ONLINE (CJS & DTTO only)  
12Pm – 2PM

## THURSDAY

CSCS TRAINING

1-1 Phone call appointments

## FRIDAY

SMART ONLINE  
11AM – 1PM

1-1 Phone call appointments

SQA EMPLOYABILITY ONLINE

Meditation Online  
10AM – 11AM  
&  
1PM – 2PM

## APEX HIGHLAND TIMETABLE



**Meditation**  
Please contact your PDM or  
our  
Acupuncture coordinator  
Lauren –  
[lauren.mcdonald@apexscotland.org.uk](mailto:lauren.mcdonald@apexscotland.org.uk)

**SMART ONLINE**  
Please contact your PDM or  
our  
SMART Co-ordinator  
Carlie **07483092870** or  
[Carlie.borthwick@apexscotland.org.uk](mailto:Carlie.borthwick@apexscotland.org.uk)

**SQA EMPLOYABILITY ONLINE -**  
Please contact your PDM or  
Aimee **07483092872** or  
[aimee.robertson@apexscotland.org.uk](mailto:aimee.robertson@apexscotland.org.uk)

For more info on any of our  
services or general enquiries

PLEASE GET IN CONTACT  
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