

# APEX HIGHLAND NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2021 – SEPTEMBER 2021



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## NEW TO THE TEAM



*CHLOE*

My name is Chloe, I'm 24 and I joined Apex Highland as a Personal Development Mentor (PDM) at the end of August 2021. I moved up from Dundee after graduating in BA (Hons) Criminology at Abertay University in June 2021, studying different aspects such as Law, Forensics, the Criminal Justice System and Penal Institutions. I was also in a volunteering role with Victim Support Scotland for four years.

At my time at Victim Support, I was placed into Dundee and Forfar Sheriff Court, allowing me to support and guide victims and witnesses of crime during their court processes.

Within my role at Apex, I am currently still in training, learning about each different aspect of my position. I have been lucky enough to shadow a number of my colleagues, allowing myself to engage different opportunities such as SMART meetings, explore the outdoor projects, and complete training in basic CSCS, SQA Employability Award, and Mental Health and Well-being. Currently, I am training to become a SMART facilitator, undergoing online training in order to participate fully in face-to-face and online zoom meetings.

During my first few weeks, I have been lucky enough to participate in additional training such as first aid, and I have become a fully qualified auricular acupuncturist. These qualifications will benefit me in the future, and I am looking forward to holding an acupuncture session with clients in the near future. These courses have been a great addition to my current training, and I look forward to improving my skills and knowledge around the topics.

Since joining Apex Highland, I have been very thankful towards each of my colleagues who have welcomed me as a new member of staff. Moving to a new city, I expected to be nervous and anxious about starting my new position, however my colleagues have made it easy for me to settle in with their kindness and helpfulness. I am grateful for everything I have learned so far and am eager to continue learning and developing my knowledge and skill in my position.

**Melanie**



Started with us mid-September; she joined via the Kickstart scheme and has since been working with our outdoor challenge team and has enjoyed taking on new responsibilities within her role and getting to know our clients and volunteers.

**David**



returned to work with the Apex team after a year of travelling, he came back to join us mid-September and has also since been working with the Outdoor Challenge team

## ACCUPUNCTURE



In the last month, five staff members have trained and qualified in auricular acupuncture with Steve Pinnington from NADA Scotland at the highland unit over a five day period and all staff successfully passed. Our Acupuncture group sessions will return in Jan 2022 (Covid Permitting) there is limited 1-1 sessions available until then

Molly "I am really pleased to have my qualification in acupuncture and really excited to practice face to face sessions. "

Carlie "I really enjoyed the course and look forward to seeing the benefits in our clients."

## CSCS



We have had 124 participants pass their SQA H&S L and obtain their CSCS Labourers Card. CSCS Training is available on a pre-booking basis 2 days per week. Additional support is available if required. This is payable through ITA funding which we can help clients access

## SQA



This course has 4 units which enables individual to learn what their skills and qualities are, learning how to create a CV, fill a job application, search for a job, interview techniques, mock interview, how to deal with conflict, inappropriate behaviour and their rights at work.

There have been 30 participants who have passed this course in the last six months. One individual took the course online and finished the course in three sessions

This course can be delivered on-line, 1-1 and in a group session.

## OUTDOOR CHALLENGE TEAM

Since returning from lockdown we have picked up our gardening responsibilities with both the Highland Council and NHS Highland maintaining lawns, dementia garden and natural woodland. We were delighted to receive additional Covid monies from CJSW Inverness and used this additional funding to create a workshop area within our premises to allow us to work on worthwhile projects in inclement weather and provide clients with meaningful projects that contribute to the local community and those that live within.

We are indebted to James Maybee and his team for their ongoing support and to the Highland Council Common Fund also.

Since lockdown over 760 hours of Unpaid Work has been undertaken and volunteers have completed 320 hours on various projects.

It is encouraging to write that several clients who initially came to complete their hours have returned to us as volunteers and we continue to support them.

*Woodworking - allows you to create unique and interesting things out of wood, but it also offers a number of therapeutic benefits. Many therapists suggest woodworking to clients who are suffering from depression, anxiety and even post-traumatic stress disorder.*

*Gardening - Social and therapeutic horticulture which has been shown to Reduce depression, anxiety and stress-related symptoms. Increase the ability to concentrate and engage. Reduce reliance on medication, self-harming behaviour.*

sessions can be a full day, morning or afternoon.



## *Case Study Steps Service Highland*

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James started engaging with us before the outbreak through a referral from Criminal Justice Social Work.

He was referred to work with us with multiple barriers; convictions, low skills, mental health and long term unemployed. He wanted to achieve his CSCS card as well as completing his CPO hours. James was struggling to pass his CITB test and needed extra revision support as well as wanting to do voluntary. We also discussed the SQA Employability Award which he was happy to get onto his CV.

When James started working with us, he had an initial interview over the phone due to restrictions. After the offices opened he was very keen to get down to the unit and start working his hours in the Outdoor group. Soon he was able to see his children again and spend time with them over the weekend. This also provided a routine for James and boosted his confidence in his abilities with work. We set up times for James to do some revision for CSCS doing Mock tests; he also wants more support to make sure he passes as he had failed previously.



James has improved greatly; he is now confident and has a stable but flexible routine. He has completed his hours and now attends the outdoor and woodwork projects voluntarily. He is working within a team and learning new skills. He also passed his SQA Employability which has now given him the confidence to start applying for jobs using the techniques and knowledge that was taught to him.



# SMART

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### *SMART CASE STUDY*

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PL has had issues around addiction, offending and her mental and physical health since her early teens. I met PL 3 years ago when she was referred by NHS Drug and Alcohol team. She was heavily involved in substance use and was also dabbling in alcohol and a heavy smoker.

She attended our face to face Smart sessions on a weekly basis but although she enjoyed the meetings and interaction she still continued to use substances of her choice on a daily basis.

We got her involved with our Women's Outdoor Team and went out weekly to the horse sanctuary, Beach Cleaning and Woodlands tidy up sessions. She really enjoyed the outdoor work and meeting new people, she enjoyed being part of the team and looked forward to her days out.

PL continued to attend Smart recovery and was looking to do a course to become a Smart Facilitator. Unfortunately this fell through as she continued to use daily, this affected her financially and also her relationship with her children, grandchildren and other members. Her mental health suffered and she could not leave the house due to her anxiety, and was also frightened to meet associates. She had massive rent arrears and everything around her was falling apart.

Unfortunately, PL disengaged with Apex and Smart.

Our next meeting with PL was at a zoom Smart meeting which she joined in from Beechwood Rehabilitation Centre in Inverness, she was in completing the 2 week Course. She explained that she had "hit rock bottom" and her life had become unmanageable. She was using this two week programme as the start of her recovery journey and also for the rest. She was physically and mentally drained.

She completed the two week course and wanted to continue to work with Apex when she returned home and continue Smart Recovery Meetings.

PL has now had her initial interview with me and has been attending Smart face to face meetings. She is looking healthier, feeling better and is confident and positive going forward. She has asked her CPN to give her regular random Drug Tests to "keep her on her toes".

Going forward with Apex she is booked into to do her SQA Employability Course and further down the line has been given the opportunity for voluntary work at An Bothum café, either in the kitchen or waitressing. She is trying to stay focused and continue her journey of recovery. Getting back to work is a goal, which we will support her in achieving.

## *PARTNERSHIP*

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Partnership working is more about individual organisations meeting together and exchanging views. It is about operating in a way which includes the views and interests of partners in order to move the partnership towards the objectives. This is currently what we are achieving with 2 Businesses we are working with at the moment.

NC500 – Business owner Debbie Morran established her dream business 3 years ago. She set up NC500 Cleaning Services, initially just herself and one member of staff. This very rapidly grew to 3, 4, 5, and 6 and is now sitting at a staff level of around 40 employees. Debbie approached Apex as she felt that the clients we work with deserved the chance to gain employment regardless of their history and problems, whether it is criminal convictions or addiction issues. Her words “everyone deserves a second chance”. And that’s where our partnership began; clients that we had worked with and who were work ready were introduced to Debbie and instead of going through the dreaded interview process and completing a CV, all Debbie asked for was there name address and bank details. This made our venerable clients feel at ease and immediate respect and trust from her.

Am Bothan – Norma Macleod had in her vision to change a petrol station café for truckers into a community/recovery café. It was always her intention one day to help people who were less fortunate than herself. Norma’s vision turned into reality just over a year ago and “Am Bothan” was opened. A beautifully decorated modern café became a hub for not only truckers but parents with children and all walks of life. Norma is currently working with Apex to help vulnerable people either in addiction or with criminal convictions gets back into work. No interview will take place just a simple 3 day trial is all that is required. If successful then employment will be offered.



# SHINE

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*Through another very difficult year to date, we are continually supporting our Shine ladies throughout this time, even under the very difficult circumstances. Links with services especially CJSW, NHS, Housing and DWP have proved invaluable in creating smoother transitions from prison to the community for our women.. 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**

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JR has issues around addiction, offending, mental and physical health, JR was a previous client of Shine, but had only used Shine as a form of transport on her liberation date to get back home. Once back in the community she never engaged despite her previous mentor's numerous efforts.

Contact was made through email a prisoner, finding out what she required help with on her release. I explained a liberation pack, including a mobile phone would be issued to her with my number.

She requested help with her addiction and was looking for help with her recovery plan and preparation. She explained that her addiction had been proven to be the "root of all her problems" and she understood that if she was still actively using then it was inevitable, she would end back up in HMP Grampian again.

Assistance on her release with her GP, Mental Health Team and Housing. her housing situation was not good and there was a possibility of eviction due to rent arrears. She was looking for help in setting up a meeting with Housing and come to an arrangement over a payment plan. I set up all her appointments for when she got released and she had attended all her appointments. JR explained that since been in Grampian she had put on a lot of weight and did not have any clothes that fitted her.

I made contact with the Scottish Welfare Funding and secured a cheque for new clothing and new furniture as she had very little in her house. She was more than grateful for this. I delivered a food parcel to her once a week and she was feeling more positive than she had ever done, so much so she took her daughter and mother on a camping trip to Perth.

## NEW ROUTES

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My role encompasses being the Prison Mentor, which includes meeting clients in HMP Inverness using the Link Centre as a base to be able to have face to face meetings with clients. I am also the Community Mentor covering Highland, Moray, Shetland and Orkney and so anyone being liberated to these areas I will also work with. For this I take referrals from New Routes Mentors in prisons all over Scotland.

Many require assistance with a range of things such housing, addictive behaviours, mental health, finances, building family relationships back as well as employability. The importance of support tailored to the client's needs is huge as many have become institutionalised meaning tasks such as completing forms for housing or setting up a benefits claim can be very overwhelming for them.

This help can mean the difference between moving forward with their life in a productive way for themselves and their community and returning to an offending lifestyle.

We have 19 clients in the Community and 26 clients Custody throughout Scotland. 22 Liberated since April.

### *CASE STUDY FOR NEW ROUTES HIGHLAND*

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Thomas signed up to the New Routes Programme with a couple of months left on his sentence. He engaged well and attended all meetings with me in the Link Centre stating he had a tenancy already but knew it was going to be in a bad state due to it being broken into while he was in prison. He wanted help with substance misuse and finances. He was released in the middle of May and initially engaged on the day of release, where we arranged Universal Credits.

Thomas found he had no food, his house was a mess as it was too much for him to do on his own but also his gas was still capped from when he was in prison meaning he had no hot water at all. He stated he had also had a bit of a relapse the first few weeks after release but was now focused on getting his life back on track.

Thomas states he is also not had another relapse and feels much better in himself and determined to build a better future. He is enjoying spending time with his family and especially his grandkids. He is positive about the future and happy to continue engaging with services as he feels it keeps him more stable and focused.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE CENTRE

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Since 07.07.2021 we have been running 2 smart groups per week, every Wednesday morning and afternoon in the Inverness justice centre from 10am - 11:30 am & 12pm - 1:30pm. We initially started with 3 participants per group but as restriction eased, we expanded the allowed attendance from 3 to a maximum of 8 individuals in the room at any one time.

Criminal Justice social workers have been trained in SMART recovery and are currently shadowing our staff member within the group and gaining the relevant experience to begin facilitation on their own.

On average we have between 2 and 4 per group per week with numbers expected to increase as restrictions begin to ease even further.

## GOOD NEWS STORY

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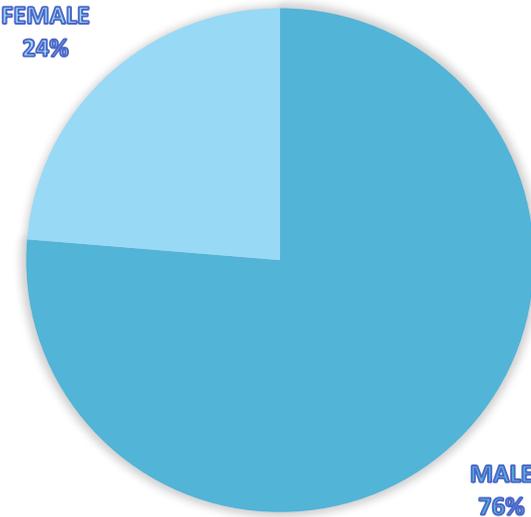
Carlie applied to Connecting Scotland for a device for a client who was digitally excluded.

Stephen received an iPad with 24 months Wi-Fi to help him access online support groups. He has been signed up for online courses via the STACC portal.

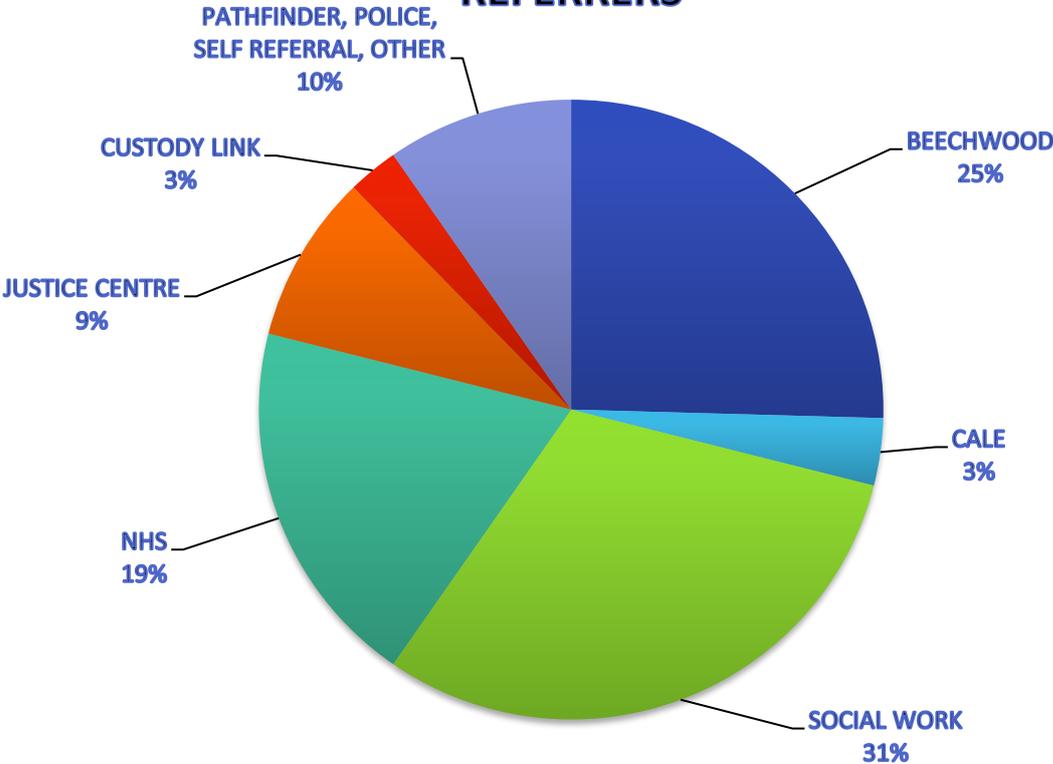


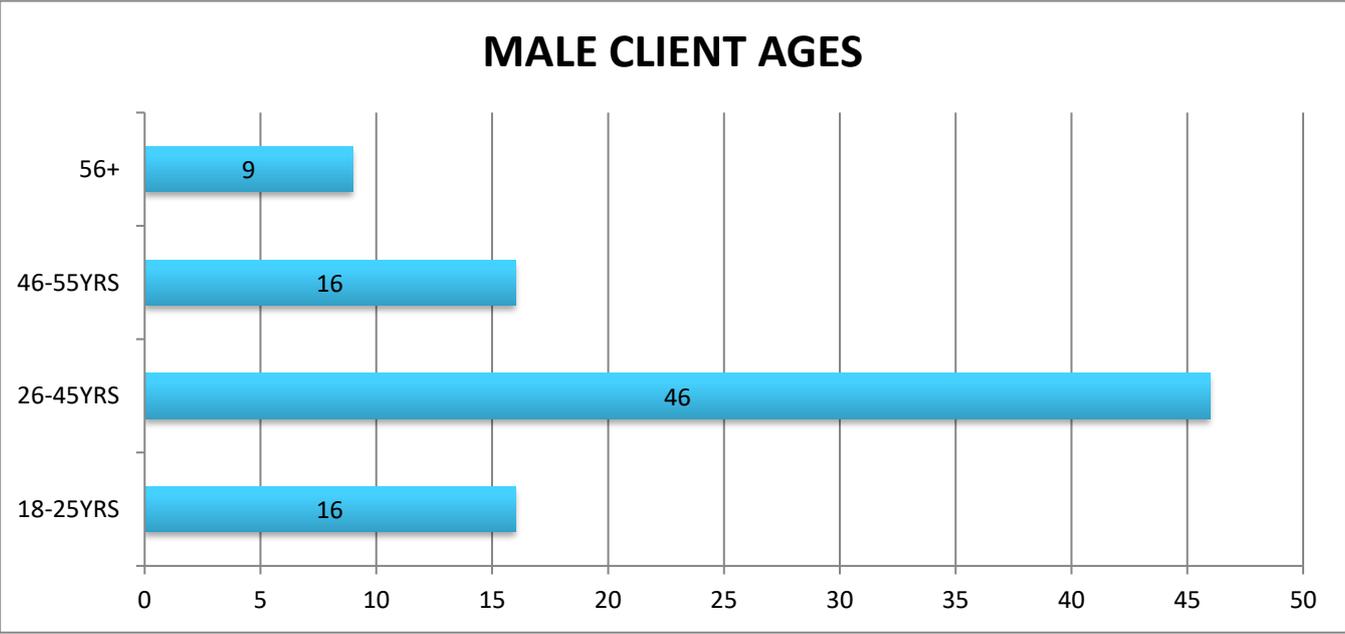
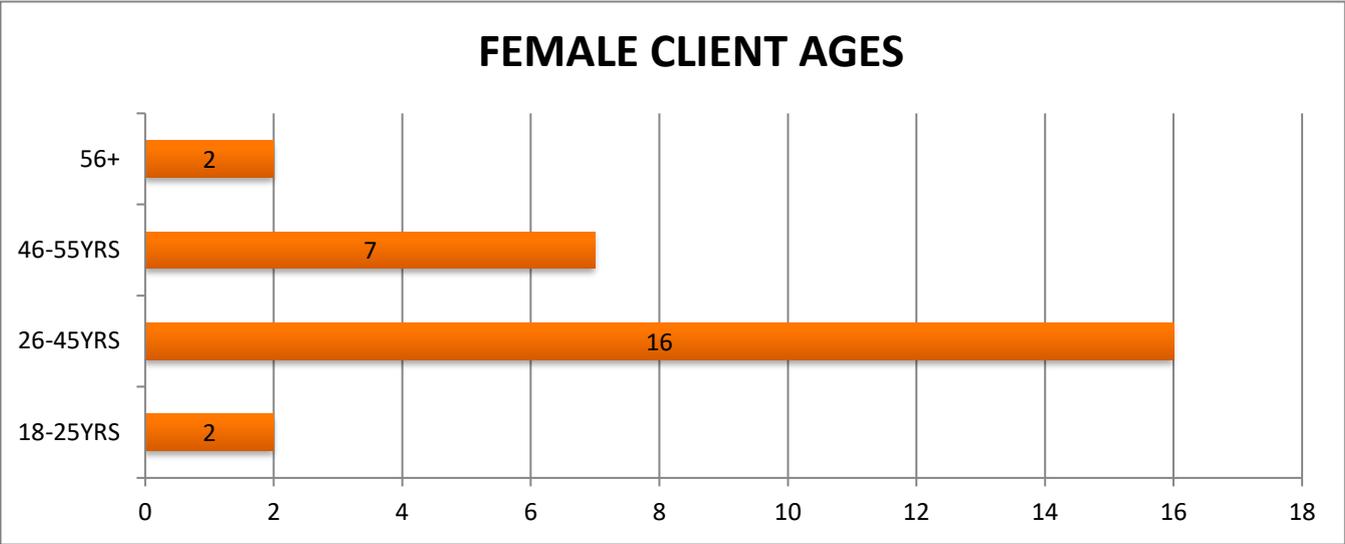
# STATISTICS

**CLIENT GENDER**

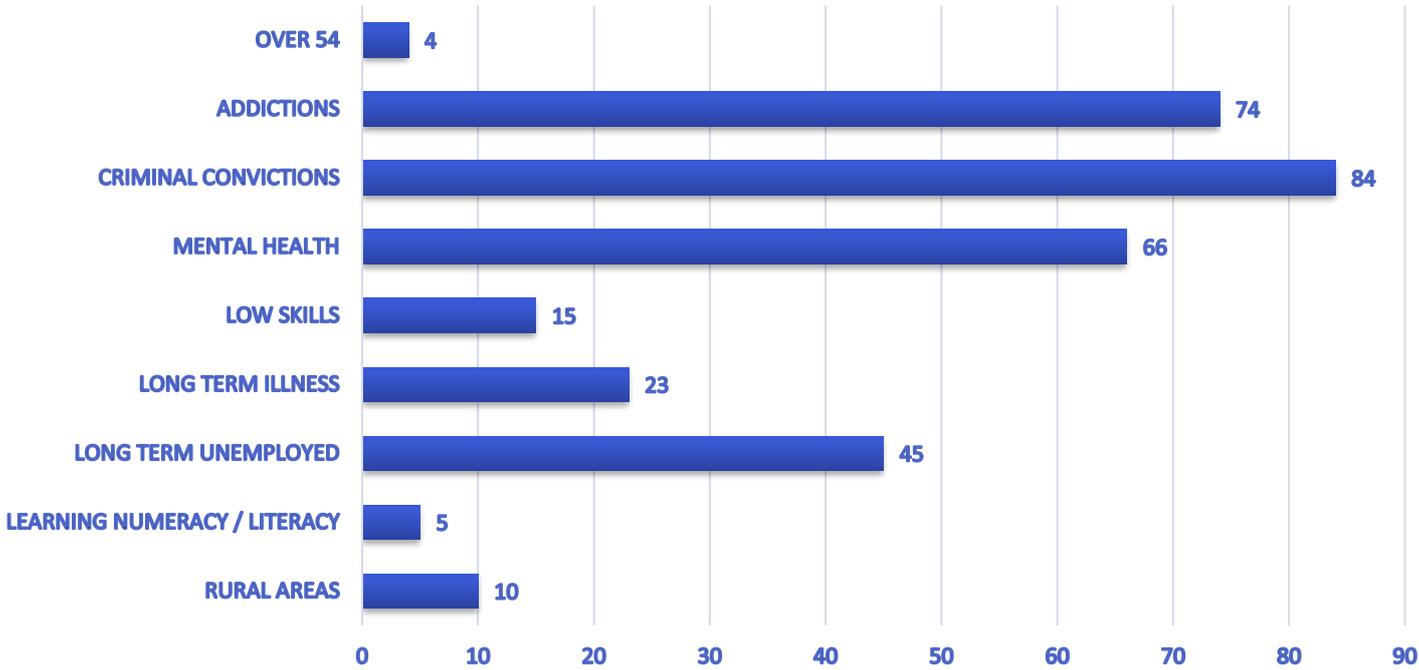


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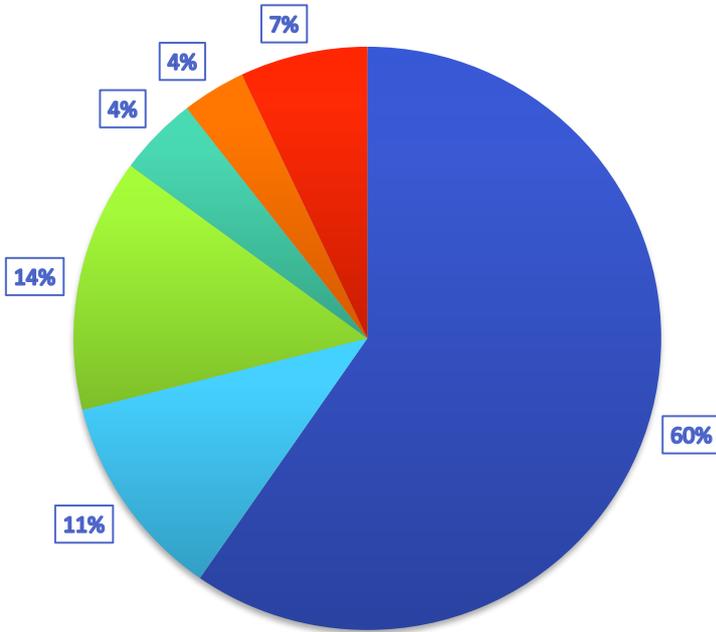




### CLIENT BARRIERS



### AREA



■ INVERNESS ■ ROSS-SHIRE ■ INVERGORDON / TAIN ■ NAIRN / SPEYSIDE ■ WICK / THURSO ■ OTHER



# APEX HIGHLAND WEEKLY TIMETABLE 2021

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OUTDOOR CHALLENGE TEAM</li> <li>• ONLINE SMART MEETING 11:00 – 12:30</li> <li>• SMART MEETING INVERGORDON 14:00 – 15:30</li> <li>• SQA EMPLOYABILITY</li> <li>• OUTREACH</li> <li>• CLIENT 1 – TO 1'S</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OUTDOOR CHALLENGE TEAM</li> <li>• CSCS COURSE 09:30</li> <li>• OUTREACH</li> <li>• CLIENT 1 – TO 1'S</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OUTDOOR CHALLENGE TEAM</li> <li>• CSCS COURSE 09:30</li> <li>• SMART INVERNESS JUSTICE CENTRE (DTTO &amp; CJS) 12:00 – 13:30</li> <li>• OUTREACH</li> <li>• CLIENT 1 – TO 1'S</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OUTDOOR CHALLENGE TEAM</li> <li>• CSCS COURSE 09:30 (BASED ON DEMAND)</li> <li>• SMART ONLINE 11:00 – 12:30</li> <li>• OUTREACH</li> <li>• CLIENT 1 – TO 1'S</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OUTREACH</li> <li>• CLIENT 1 – TO 1'S</li> </ul>