

STEPS

2017 - 2022

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This booklet was compiled by Silvana Watson and Steven Hamilton - The Steps Compliance Team.

A special thanks to all the Steps Personal Development Mentors for their hard work over the years.

About The Project

This European Social Fund service assisted those who have multiple barriers to employment or who were long term unemployed. Our objective was for each individual to complete their action plan and move into employment, training, or more advanced qualifications.

An Apex Personal Development Mentor worked with each person and agreed an action plan, reviewed at regular intervals, created together to address any barriers while building on the individual's strengths and skills. We supported each person to achieve specific milestones to ensure they progressed towards full time employment, education, training or accessing other employment support.

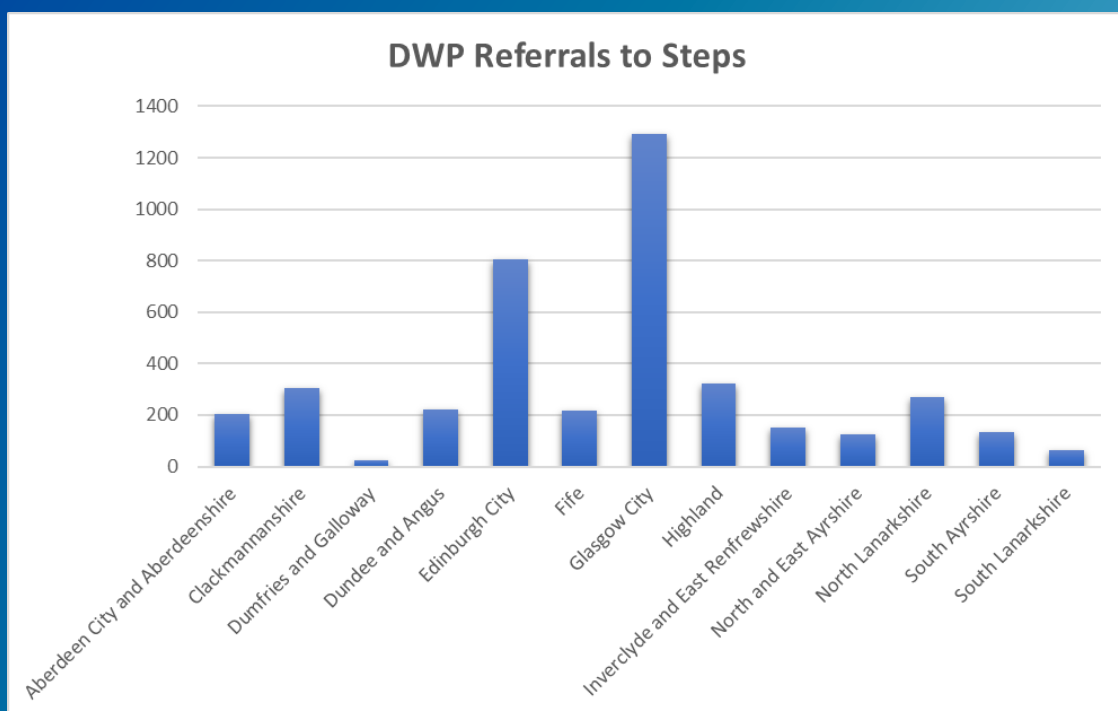
Referral Sources

Referrals to our Steps project came from various national sources.

These included but were not limited to:

- Justice Services
- NHS
- Police Scotland
- Dumfriesshire and Wigtonshire Foodbanks
- Scottish Prison Service
- Fairstart
- Skills Development Scotland

Our most prominent referrer to the project was the Job Centre Plus, accounting for nearly 4000 referrals.



The table above shows a breakdown of the referrals from each local authority.

Barriers to Employment

Our aim of the project was to increase the skills and labour market opportunities for our service users, by assisting to address the multiple barriers they faced.

The main barriers faced by our service users included;

- Criminal Convictions
- Long Term Unemployed
- Mental Health Issues
- Substance Misuse
- Living in a Rural Area
- From an Employment Deprived Area
- Low Skilled
- Living in a Jobless Household
- Facing Material Deprivation
- No or Limited Work Experience

The table below shows a percentage representation of some of the most frequent barriers faced by our clients.

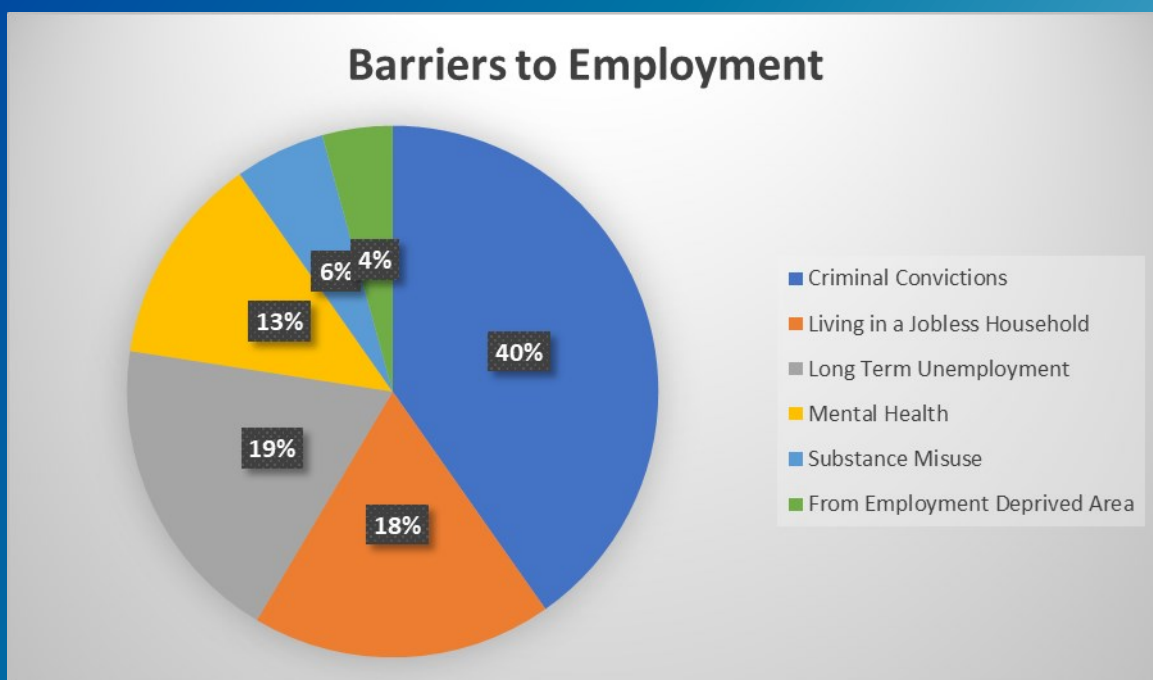


Table data based on 4912 registered participants.

Activities Achieved

4912 Registrations and Action Plans

3356 Barrier Removal

1044 Accredited Training

639 Qualifications

Some of the other activities carried out included;

- Letters of Disclosure
- CV's
- Job Search Workshops
- Interview Techniques
- Work Placements
- Self Employment Workshops
- Signposting
- SMART Recovery
- Acupuncture
- Alcohol Awareness
- Cooking on a Budget
- Budgeting/Debt Awareness
- Access to IT equipment
- Health and Wellbeing Support

Qualifications and Training

34 achieved ASDAN
certificates.

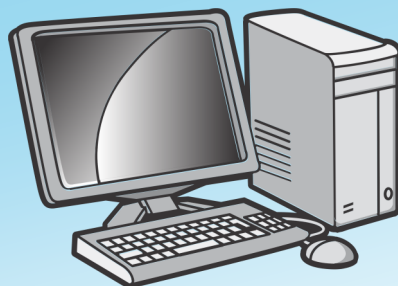


JOHN
MUIR
AWARD

wild places:
DISCOVER
EXPLORE
CONSERVE
SHARE

350 achieved John
Muir Award

600 achieved CSCS



217 achieved ICT
Qualification

108 achieved SQA
Employability
Award



H's Story

H self-referred looking for assistance from our foodbank initially. After a conversation he stated that his housing situation wasn't good, and he needed advice on where he should go or who to contact to change his accommodation. He was living in an unsecured cellar room with no windows and little heating in an unregistered landlord's house. He stated that they would not give him proof of his tenancy, which meant he could not receive the correct amount of benefits to live on, but they were more than happy to take £350 per month off him. H is a very capable person and with some guidance and support I was able to get him registered with social housing and referred to Citizens Advice for assistance with his benefits although their hands were tied due to the landlord issue. The main goal now was for him to find employment fast. H wasn't confident using IT equipment but after a few sessions setting up new email and job search accounts plus creating a new digital CV he was able to pro-actively search for employment. I was even able to give him a new Chromebook that we had available to provide to service users in need of IT equipment. After a few weeks H got an interview with a local food chain and was successful in getting a trainee chef position with an immediate start. Since then, he has been able to move out of the cellar room and into a private let and is sustaining his new employment

G's Story

G was referred to me in May 2022. He was not local, having moved to the area the year before. He had been convicted of a sexual offence and decided to move, as he was from a rural community and felt like it would remain with him for the rest of his life there.

G did not have much of an understanding of the disclosure process, so we completed his Subject Access Request and ultimately completed a letter of disclosure. This was a big boost to his confidence, and for the first time G started talking about the possibility of getting a job. Having the letter of disclosure allowed him to see that he could have the opportunity to explain the circumstances of his conviction and detail all the changes he had since made. To keep the motivation going, we worked on a CV for him and built on his employability through identifying his skills and qualities, building more confidence in those abilities and preparing him for the world of work again post-conviction.

In July G started applying for jobs, and almost immediately got an interview which led to a job offer, and he started work later that month.

L's Story

L was referred to Apex Scotland by Jobcentre Plus due to having previous criminal convictions. L was unsure if these convictions were spent. This was a barrier to L's employability journey as she was unsure what jobs she was able to apply for and what she was required to disclose to potential employers. As a result of this barrier L was lacking in confidence in searching for and applying for jobs.

L had limited IT skills, by working together we completed the ICT Qualification and L was able to overcome this.

We helped L by getting her Subject Access Request so she knew what convictions, if any had to be disclosed to an employer. By completing this process, L felt more confident about applying for jobs.

We then created a CV so she could apply for jobs independently and we started to look at potential job opportunities that may be of interest.

By exploring her passions and interests we identified she was interested in the beauty industry. We made her aware that she could apply for ITA funding for courses and assisted her with finding one which was suitable. L attended a course which she passed, this increased her confidence further.

In the run up to Christmas she felt ready to apply for jobs so we helped her sign up for a job agency which resulted in her getting some shifts. She said this would be really beneficial as it meant her family could have a better Christmas.

Overall L is transformed from when she was initially referred. She is confident about her abilities and is ready to progress further in her chosen career

J's Story

J has been engaged with Apex since earlier this year working towards his Construction Skills Certification Scheme card. He completed this in summer and then got in touch again saying he would like more support, specifically with ICT skills. I arranged with J to come in to the office to do his ICT qualification. J is an older guy and hasn't grown up with technology so this was a substantial barrier for him. Together, we went over the basics of computers: Learning how to use a mouse, how to use Microsoft word, how to type with correct grammar, how to copy and paste, how to use Google, etc. I told J he was welcome to come in and use the computers whenever he wanted as his local library was shut and he didn't have access to a computer elsewhere. J then came in to the office for the next 2 weeks where we continued to work on these skills. By the end of J's time on the project, he was so much more confident in using a computer and was really chuffed with himself.

C's Story

C was referred to Apex a number of months ago from Justice Services to complete SQA Employability Award and a letter of disclosure. C had restrictions regarding work. When C came to Apex, he was shy and embarrassed regarding his conviction - he was anxious that he would be at risk of abuse and was worried other clients would judge him because of his conviction.

We worked 1-1 on SQA Employability Award and completed a letter of disclosure. I attended a multi-agency meeting to discuss how we could continue to support C at Apex. We decided that C would benefit from attending our outdoor challenge team to do some volunteering and gain some work experience - initially C only wanted to stay for a couple of hours once a week but is now staying all day two days per week.

C is currently making a small table for his daughters Christmas and is learning how to use an engraving tool to personalise it with his daughters' name.

C feels valued as part of the outdoor challenge team - he has been "buddied up" with J and G and is proud of his achievements to date. C said this is the first time in a long time he has hope and feels that his future is brighter than he could ever have imagined

J's Story

J was a NHS referral. J's barriers include long-term unemployment, mental health issues and substance related conditions. When J had his initial meeting he was experiencing low moods and caring for his mother who suffered from dementia. J was not interested in getting back into any of his hobbies. We discussed the SMART programme and how getting involved with this could help with his substance misuse recovery. J signed up to SMART, with regular attendance J started and maintained the recovery process. J also got a start date with the Outdoor challenge team - 'Going the Distance' to help with his barriers. J was very nervous about getting out but he pushed through and at the end of his first day he told me that he really enjoyed it and found this really helped with his low mood. He couldn't wait for next week. After a while of attending this, J had a set routine and built his confidence. This led to J wanting to get back into work as he felt a lot stronger. We worked on a CV together and talked about his opportunities. J has improved his confidence drastically and now has a stable and flexible routine that suits his recovery as well. J has started new employment which he is enjoying, as now he can expand his routine that also suits his recovery as well as financially.

R's Story

R has been working with two Personal Development Mentors in two different Apex locations, due to moving house during his time on the project. R felt quite isolated and found socialising and travel difficult, because he was in a rural location- this of course was compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic, so it was agreed he would continue to work with both mentors. Mentor 1 initially focussed on life skills, including talks and discussions, walks and cooking on a budget. Mentor 2 worked 1-1 with him for his SQA Health and Safety and CITB test, the latter which he found challenging - but he did eventually pass all and received his CSCS green card.

L's Story

L was referred to me through The Drug and Alcohol Team as she had issues with substance misuse. My first encounter with L was when she walked through the doors of our "Mental Health Intervention Programme" – Drop in centre. She was very emotional and could hardly speak to me. We took time out from the group environment and had a one to one chat.

L was a single parent of four children but due to her substance misuse spiralling out of control, sadly her children were placed in the care of their father. L's relationship with their father was very toxic and she was struggling to deal with the fact that he was now their primary carer.

L was open and honest about her past and present lifestyle and knew she needed to change, not only for herself but also for her children. She was crying out for help but did not know where to turn. We supported her as much as we were able to and explained all her options. We decided that going forward she would attend the Drop in Group every Monday and get involved with all the activities. Her confidence was very low and her anxiety very high. L stayed that morning and took part in the cooking group, she relaxed and joined in and said that she felt very comfortable, however only wanted to stay for the morning session as she found it all a bit overwhelming. We arranged to meet the following day to carry out initial paperwork.

During her time on the project L attended every week to the drop in and managed to stay all day. She feels relaxed and more confident, her self esteem has grown and her anxiety levels have dropped. She is a valued member of the group and she feels that her life is finally piecing together. L has attended Acupuncture which she loves and the Smart Recovery Group where she is learning all the tools to help with her addiction. She attends the weekly cooking sessions and although her children are still with their father, she cooks a meal and gets it delivered to them which makes her feel very happy and grateful.

L has grown so much since she walked through the door, and she feels if she continues down this route she may gain custody of her children in the future.

L is very grateful for group and cant thank everyone enough for the continued support and companionship

Group Work



Client Quotes

“Thank you very much for all the help and assistance you have given me over the past few months, I feel I have crossed off a few barriers and gained more insight into my application process with regards to disclosure.

I understand that the Apex Scotland Service remains active for me and that I can contact you for any assistance in the future.”

“Mondays will never be the same again, I look forward to a Monday now, not sure if my old bones would say the same but that's ok, I fight with my voices in my head at the best of times... so don't mind fighting with my bones on a Monday, Mondays can't come round fast enough”

“Thank you so much.. its just amazing, we all love the group so much and I would be lost without it, we are an amazing bunch of humans and that's all down to this group.”

I managed to pick up my card today thanks again you helped me prob more than you think. I will get in touch regarding my CV thanks again. I will keep in mind your offer of doing my marketing material if I should start up on my own – but there seems to be a fair piece of work just now.

"Thanks very much for helping me with get put through my CSCS card and helping me pass all information and links you sent me were so helpful. Thanks again."

"The disclosure letter is absolutely spot on. Thank you so much for all the help. It's really appreciated"

To everyone at Apex, but especially to Denise and Brittany,

I know that it's been a long while since you guys were working with me (pre-pandemic) but I've not forgotten the work you did with me and the support that you have given me.

It has taken a long time, but after 2 and a half years I am finally in full-time employment.

I was invited to do a trial

shift as a kitchen porter at (hence this choice of card), and they offered me a full time position. Having started a month ago it has gone really well, and in fact today I have been promoted to commis chef.

So as things are going well I wanted to take the time to get in touch with everyone who helped me along the way to say a massive -

Thank you!!!

Working Through the Pandemic

Our staff continued to support current and new service users throughout the Covid 19 Pandemic. This was a new way of working for everyone and our mentors worked extremely hard to continue engagement.

K's Story

K started engaging with the Steps service in the spring of 2019 under a CPO. Over that time she had made huge changes to her life. K and I have primarily been using phone and email contact to keep in touch to review her support needs and action plan progress.

K presented with issues around addiction, offending, childcare social work and mental health. Many of our initial meetings were carried out by phone and email as she just could not make it out of the house or to appointments. A plan was put in place for her to work with Apex and a partner agency to increase her confidence and use the many skills she did not realise she had.

K was working very successfully through the Steps programme. Apex mentor had supported her to apply for an Access to Degree course at Stirling University. She had applied to and been working towards becoming a befriender and an application to Community Jobs Scotland for a 16 hour post for her were all underway before the COVID-19 restrictions were put in place. This is having a massive impact on her mental health and ability to cope – mentioning suicidal thoughts and thoughts of returning to jail or being admitted to hospital as a way of escaping what is going on and how to manage it.

K has video call support from mental health crisis team on a daily basis. Over the last week her Apex Mentor has had daily, including weekend, contact with her. Her Mentor has also contacted the partner agency who were hoping to start her employment to ask that they offer support too. During the past week, the mentor has talked her through a crisis loan dilemma, contacted Citizens Advice and relayed the information back to her, sent numerous links and information (including ones that can help her keep her son occupied) and supported her to contact her energy company as she had run out of power. This support will continue to try and help her hold the position she had reached. All the progress and potential opportunities she had focussed on are paused – it is important that she is encouraged to see it that way and not that she is 'back to square one'.

