



# APEX SCOTLAND ANNUAL REPORT 2009

BUILDING ON SUCCESS



“It has been estimated that a fifth of the working population has a criminal record. Employment is the single most important factor in reducing re-offending and failure to get paid employment is a major reason for re-offending. But estimates suggest it is at least eight times harder for a person with a criminal record to obtain employment.”

Employing people with a criminal record, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2009

Independent studies show that employment can significantly reduce re-offending. For more than 22 years, Apex Scotland has worked with (ex) offenders and young people at risk to give them the skills employers want and to help them keep jobs.

We offer a wide range of services from 26 different locations. We employ around 155 specialist staff who work directly with service users, employers and other agencies. This includes delivering national training programmes such as Progress2Work and Get Ready for Work as well as criminal justice services including Supervised Attendance Orders and Structured Deferred Sentences.

### Speaking personally...

“I lost trust in people at a very young age after being hurt by the one person who should have been protecting me. The way I taught myself to deal with these feelings was by being angry and lashing out and, at 12, I was put in care. Before I knew it, I was in a secure unit due to my aggressive behaviour, alcohol and drug use and the general

lack of stability in my life. I done everything I could to block things out my mind. I drank a lot, which made me more angry and landed me in prison several times. I had a drug habit for a year and a half. It was like being in a coma. I didn't care about anyone, anything or myself. I've had people over the years who have all tried to help me and failed.

This is because I haven't wanted to help myself, and now that I do, Apex is there to give me a helping hand. The 'Think Again' course is great; it puts structure back into my days and gets me using my brain again. Best of all it builds up my confidence and gives me the reassurance I need to go on and be the successful person I know I can be.”

The powerful front cover image was created by a service user on our Think Again programme in Edinburgh.

# Introducing Apex Scotland

This has been a year of change for Apex Scotland but strong foundations mean that we have continued to build on our success. This report gives a flavour of what we have achieved over the past year and our plans for the next.

Change can be stressful but it can also galvanise an organisation. So, despite the departure of Chief Executive Bernadette Monaghan and Board Member Esther Roberton, it has been 'business as usual' with impressive results. This is down to our very capable staff whom I thank for their hard work and commitment. But it is also testament to the efforts of service users in taking up the opportunities available.

The Apex Board has offered ongoing support to staff and service users, not just through their committee work but in participating in our Staff Conference and travelling the length and breadth of Scotland to visit our Units. We asked some members to stay beyond their 'retirement' date to help us through the changes and our special thanks go to Sam Muir, Charlie Husband, David Coulter and Chair, Pat McMullan, who helped steer Apex through a period of transition.

Whatever the challenges of the past twelve months, the unstable financial environment means that the next few years will be difficult for all of us. We intend to continue our important work in tackling employability, and training and coaching (ex) offenders, young people at risk and others who find their best opportunity to pursue life chances begins at Apex.



While our ethos remains constant, we plan to test new approaches through projects such as tackling environmental issues in the Highlands and developing our Disclosure Helpline.

Finally, a huge thank you to all partners and funders whose support has helped us improve the lives of those who are most excluded from our communities. Your support makes a significant difference to individuals and their families and it also keeps our communities that bit safer.

**Brian Fearon**, Interim Chief Executive

# What we've done so far

By tackling issues such as disclosing criminal convictions, managing debt and overcoming alcohol and drug dependency, we help service users move further from offending and closer to finding and keeping work.

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This is challenging. The world of work has changed considerably and, with the sharp increase in the unemployment rate, placing those furthest from the labour market has become more difficult. Our 22 years of experience and wide geographical coverage are strong foundations.

## Routes out of Prison Partnership (ROOPp)

Following a successful joint bid to the Big Lottery, along with the Wise Group, Families Outside and the Scottish Prison Service, we were able to enhance the RooPp as it was expanded across Glasgow, Lanarkshire, North Strathclyde and south west Scotland. Prison and community-based Life Coaches work with short-term prisoners linking them into services before and after release. Employment Consultants then support them towards work.

## Keep on Track

Keep on Track, supported by the European Social Fund, is a Dundee-based partnership of 13 organisations aiming to get 4,500 residents into work over the next two years. Apex works with those who have completed a Supervised Attendance Order or Community Service Order so they can build on the employability skills and experience already gained.

## Fiscal Work Orders

Fiscal Work Orders were launched in four areas during the year and Apex is part of the successful pilot in West Dunbartonshire. Community-based reparative work is given as an alternative sentence to those who might have been fined by the court (but who would have been unable to pay). Apex service users take on useful community activities which encourage personal and social responsibility.

## Working Money

We launched a new training manual to an enthusiastic audience from colleges, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Prison Service, local authorities and other criminal justice agencies. Funded by the Scottish Government and the Financial Services Authority, the manual is designed to help people control their finances and offer advice on how to plan for the future.





**Disclosure helpline**

We answered 3,096 enquiries to the helpline, a 22 per cent increase over the previous year, providing invaluable advice and guidance both to employers and those with criminal convictions.

**Working with young people**

During the past five years, we have worked with over 10,000 young people furthest from the labour market. Despite their poor school attendance and behavioural and attitudinal problems, one in four have subsequently found work or are well on their way to it. Drawing on our experience of running national programmes such as Get Ready for Work and Skillseekers, we have piloted a new service to increase the employment prospects of under-16s in Dunfermline High School, with a view to expanding across the country.

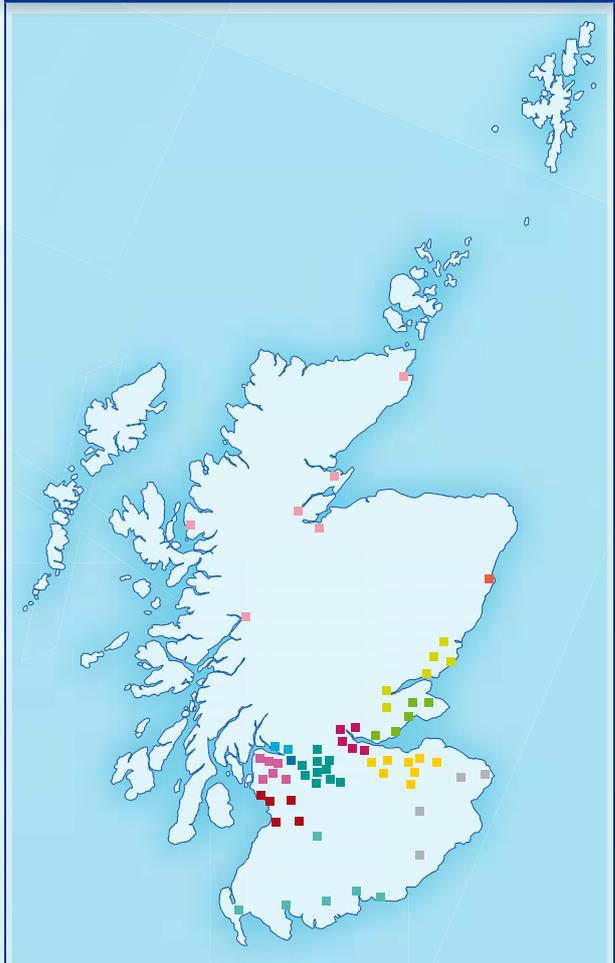
**Working with business**

Collaborating with Scottish Business in the Community in Inverness resulted in excellent placement opportunities at the local Marks and Spencer. Kenny MacAskill, Cabinet Secretary for Justice, was on hand to present successful placement participants with their certificates.



Kenny MacAskill MSP and service user

**Where we are**



- Ayrshire
- Borders
- Dumfries and Galloway
- Dunbartonshire
- Edinburgh and the Lothians
- Fife
- Forth Valley
- Glasgow
- Grampian
- Highland
- Lanarkshire
- Paisley and Inverclyde
- Tayside

# How we've done

Our success is measured by the achievements of our service users. We are encouraged by what they've done and also by what they tell us.

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## What service users say

We survey service users every year to find out what they think of Apex. This year's survey revealed that 89 per cent of respondents think that we offer professional services, have knowledgeable staff and deliver high quality training.

"Getting this job was the single greatest achievement of my life and I would like to thank Apex for making this happen."

"The staff treated me very well and, with their help, I've got a place at college."

"I'm pleased I went to Apex because they've turned my life around."

## What referrers and funders say

Our latest survey shows that 90 per cent of referrers/funders who responded are satisfied or very satisfied with our services and think that we continue to improve.

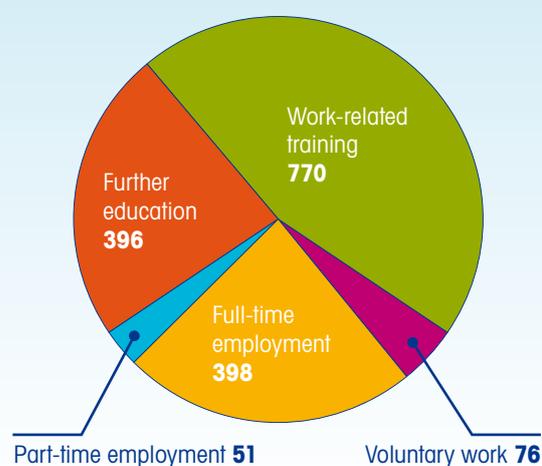
"The staff treat each person as an individual and develop an excellent working relationship with them. I know I am getting commitment and quality."

"Apex is reliable and provides an excellent service to service users needing a lot of help."

"The non-judgemental view the staff take towards service users is particularly noted."

## Positive results

During 2008/09, Apex dealt with 6,203 referrals resulting in 3,793 people starting with us. Almost half (45 per cent, 1,691) achieved a positive result.



## Developing the skills employers want

### • Heartstart UK

In February, the British Heart Foundation accepted us as a Heartstart provider. We intend to train 120 service users a year in basic resuscitation techniques, giving them invaluable skills which they can offer employers and the community.

### • Winning team

Young people on our Aberdeen Get Ready for Work programme scooped first prize in a competition run by Prosafe Offshore magazine for a list of quiz questions to be featured in the magazine. Our young people submitted the winning entry as part of a literacy skills exercise, based on their favourite films. The £1,000 prize went towards buying new training materials.





- **Connecting young and old**

Young people at our Dumfries Unit visited elderly people at a local day centre. Over the weeks, they talked and got to know one another, taking photos which they made into an album for the centre. They loved the visits – young and old. The young people's communication skills and self-confidence improved dramatically and it changed the way they thought about older people.

- **Think Again**

The talented participants of our 'Think Again' programme with Edinburgh Napier University put on a stunning display of artwork, photography and creative writing in the Leith Festival improving their planning and team work skills along the way. Think Again offers disadvantaged people a way into further and higher education.

- **Apex 20 Highland challenge**

Over 30 service users walked and cycled a staggering 169 miles in five days from Milngavie to Fort William and then onwards to Inverness. While in Kinlochleven, they tidied and re-painted the community car park. In all, they raised £2,500 for the Oncology Department at Raigmore Hospital in Inverness as well as developing their problem solving and goal setting skills.



- **Alness community project**

This four-day sponsored walk raised over £500 for the Alness Heritage Centre and, for extra measure, we revamped the centre's garden area. This project focused on team work and dealing with authority.

- **Building skills**

In partnership with the Abriachan Forest Trust, we are rebuilding a bothy shelter using drystone building techniques. One of our service users, who has drystone building experience and is doing an HNC in construction management, is managing the project.

- **Apex lecture**

At our well received annual Apex Lecture, *Building on McLeish*, Kenny MacAskill, Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Richard Jeffrey, member of the Scottish Prisons Commission, discussed the report of the Scottish Prisons Commission: *Scotland's Choice*.

"...I have long had a very high regard for the work carried out by [Apex] and the contribution it makes to the aspirations of this government in achieving sustainable economic growth. Tonight's event is taking place at a very important stage of developing a modern, coherent penal policy with the benefit of the work carried out by the commission."

Kenny MacAskill, speaking at the 2008 Apex Lecture



# How we ensure continued success

Our staff are the building blocks. By investing in them, we guarantee high standards and excellent services.

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## Staff conference

Our annual Staff Conference, *Strengthening for the Future*, took an engaging look at what is next for Apex. Gary Waddell and Paula Arnold from the Scottish Prison Service discussed effective prisoner interventions and Jennifer Hill, Partnership Development Manager for the consortium supported by the Scottish Government, Robertson Trust, the Scottish Prison Service, the Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum and including Lothian and Borders Community Justice Authority, considered how to create a stronger criminal justice sector through partnership working. Grateful thanks to them, all staff and plenary speaker Bill McKinlay, Governor of HMP Barlinnie.

## Sam Dow Memorial Award 2009

Well done to the Glasgow Supervised Attendance Order team which won this year's award by exceeding targets.

## Betty Crawford Memorial Award 2009

Congratulations to the Fife Youth Services team which won this year's award for their innovative work with young people in the Inclusion Unit of Dunfermline High School.

## Progress2Work success

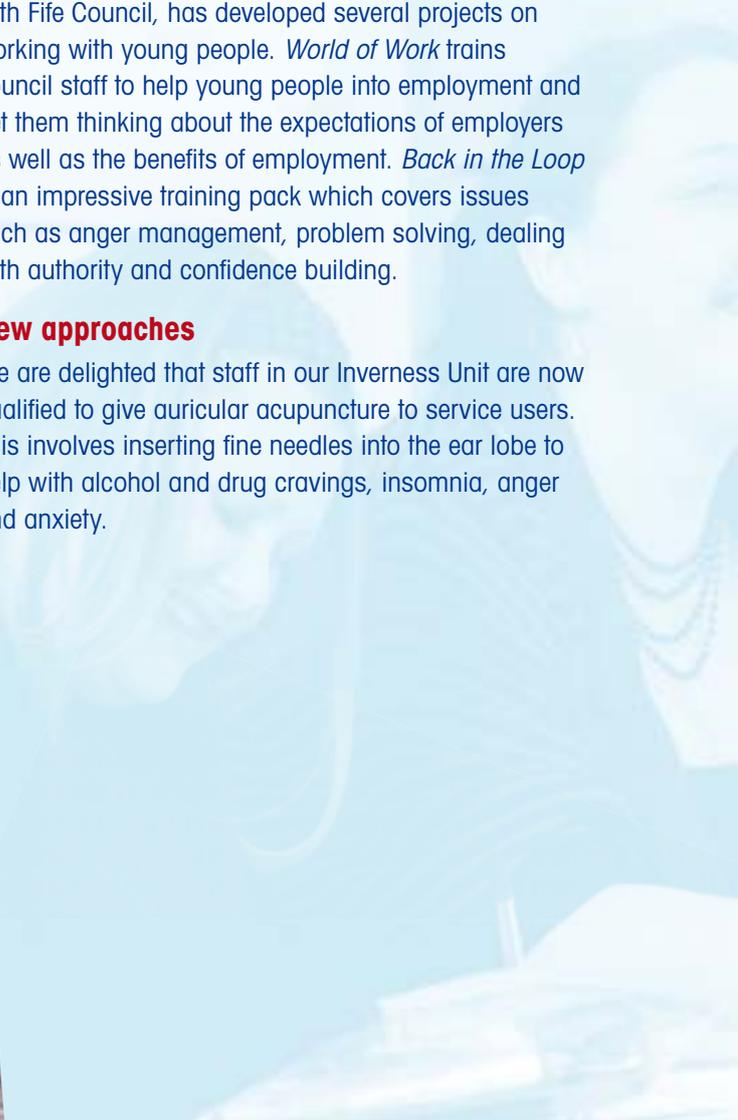
We are delighted for Jeanette Reid, who has delivered the Progress2Work service in Dumfries since 2004, for her well-deserved recognition award to mark her 100th employment outcome.

## New projects

A special mention to Cathie Gibson in our Fife Unit who, with Fife Council, has developed several projects on working with young people. *World of Work* trains council staff to help young people into employment and get them thinking about the expectations of employers as well as the benefits of employment. *Back in the Loop* is an impressive training pack which covers issues such as anger management, problem solving, dealing with authority and confidence building.

## New approaches

We are delighted that staff in our Inverness Unit are now qualified to give auricular acupuncture to service users. This involves inserting fine needles into the ear lobe to help with alcohol and drug cravings, insomnia, anger and anxiety.





### **Bardzo dobrze!**

Well done to Christina Morrison who works in our Tayside Unit and who has gained a certificate in speaking Polish so she can converse with the increasing number of migrant workers coming to the service.

### **Positive feedback**

The results of our annual Staff Survey were very positive with some useful comments and good ideas which will guide future plans.

- 100 per cent think Apex training materials are good, very good or excellent
- 99 per cent think Apex is a people friendly organisation
- 98 per cent feel they are treated with fairness and respect
- 98 per cent would recommend Apex as an employer

### **Staff opportunities**

The Staff Sponsorship Scheme operates in addition to our Staff Development Programme and offers staff further and higher educational learning opportunities. This year, 27 staff took part in a certificated *Coaching for Employability* course run jointly at our National Training Centre in Dundee and the Scottish Prison Service College in Polmont.

### **Speaking personally...**

"I was unsure about meeting Apex Scotland at first but then I thought, give it a go, I've got nothing to lose. My life was all over the place and I needed support finding work. I was also unsure what to do about my convictions. Progress2Work gave me all the support and advice I needed. I have been 'clean' now for nearly six months and really enjoying my life. Having a routine is great! My mum has seen such a change in me that she contacted Apex Scotland to thank my personal advisor for all her support. I am so glad I engaged with Apex Scotland and for all the support and encouragement they provided."

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### **Improving standards**

We completed phase one of a three-year programme to implement National Occupational Standards. We have created new job descriptions to better reflect people's work and to align with the standards. Over time, this will lead to improved job specifications, recruitment tools, appraisal documents and overall performance management.

### **IT investment**

We are grateful to the Scottish Government for helping us upgrade our Units with a smartboard, powerpoint projector and electronic notebook. We would also like to thank the Crown Office for donating 30 PCs and five electronic notebooks.



# What we're planning to do next

We intend to continue building on our experience and achievements.

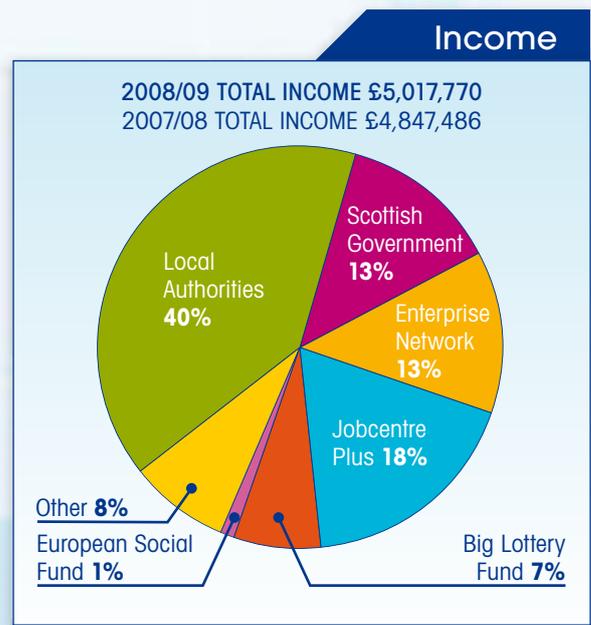
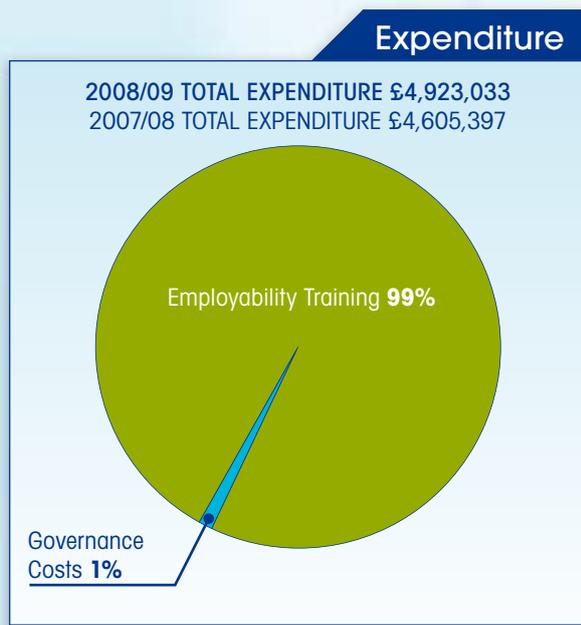
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## Over the next year, our plans include:

- Promoting the benefits of strengthening community sentences by including employability skills training
- Expanding our youth services in schools
- Engaging with the Department for Work and Pensions Future Jobs Fund and Flexible New Deal initiatives
- Strengthening our links with Community Planning Partnerships and Alcohol and Drug Partnerships
- Building on our employer engagement activity to effectively market the skills of our service users
- Incorporating the views of our service users, funders and staff into proposed service developments
- Continuing to ensure business improvement by implementing National Occupational Standards

# How we've managed the money

1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009



## Speaking personally...

"I would highly recommend anyone to attend Apex whether it's someone who simply has problems getting a job or needs some support during tough times. It is one of the best things I have done. It helped me get back on track with my life..."

Things weren't going great for me. I was in and out of trouble with the police, had no job and generally could not be bothered to get out of bed. I agreed to attend a meeting at Apex. I got told I had a place if I wanted to go, so I did.

We did fun things like making cards, painting and were taken out with the Woodland Trust every Wednesday. It got me out the house for the full day in the fresh air, giving me great exercise and getting me

interacting with other people. I loved it.

I ended up applying for college to do catering as I wanted to get back into education and I really enjoyed cooking. Apex gave me great tips for my interview. A few weeks later I found out I had got a place.

Things were going great until I had to appear at court for an offence I had committed a few months beforehand. I started to get very nervous and being moody with everyone. I ended up taking days off Apex and feeling really bad about myself, but I knew I couldn't hide from my problems forever. I ended up telling Apex everything and felt much better. They told me that they would support me all the way through. That day I realised



it's better not to run away from my problems and hide in my bed. Things at court turned out ok; it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. Things were back on track again!

I still attend Apex during the week. I am nearing the end of my time with them and have applied for jobs closer to home.

Thanks to everyone at Apex for all their help and support. I would hate to think what I would be doing right now if it weren't for them."

### Apex Scotland Board

Pat McMullan, Chair  
 Mike McCarron, Vice Chair  
 Sue Brookes  
 David Coulter  
 Sheriff Brian Donald  
 Charlie Husband, OBE  
 Sam Muir  
 Anne Pinkman  
 Bryan Rankin  
 Esther Robertson (retired April 2009)  
 Chief Constable David Strang

### Patrons

Rt Hon Sir Menzies Campbell CBE QC  
 William Moodie  
 Viscount Weir

We would like to thank all our funders and partners for supporting our work to give people the opportunity to improve their lives.



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