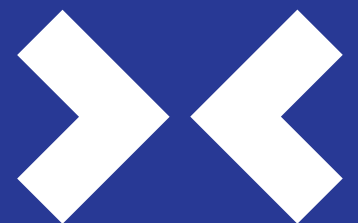




# Making Justice Work for Everyone



apex

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scotland

Annual Report 2022

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## Apex Scotland Board 2021/2022

### Ann Landels, **Chair**

David Asher *(retired December 2021)*

Stephen Bermingham *(joined June 2021)*

Pamela Dobson

Diana Fraser *(joined June 2021)*

Karen Kelly *(retired March 2022)*

Peter Kennedy

### Kathrine Mackie, **Vice Chair**

Gordon Mackenzie *(joined June 2021)*

Malcolm Melville *(joined January 2022)*

Claire Middlebrook *(joined January 2022)*

Karen Pryde

Giles Robinson *(retired June 2021)*

Vahaab Sajid *(retired December 2021)*

Adam Wilson, **Vice Chair** *(joined January 2022)*

### Patron

The Rt Hon Lord Campbell  
of Pittenweem CH CBE QC

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# Getting Back to the ‘New Normal’

I don't know about you but, for me, when I look back at the last year, much of it seems to merge into that ill-defined time 'the pandemic'. I ended last year's introduction to the Annual Report celebrating the resilience of the organisation and its ability to be flexible and adapt quickly to change. These strengths have still continued to be to the fore.

We have moved from still coping with lockdowns and a life that seemed to be lived on Zoom and Teams in 2021 to a more open and almost normal life as restrictions became fewer and the benefits of vaccination became apparent, but there is no sense in which Covid-19 has gone and the organisation is still having to cope with these different ways of working which continues to present both our teams and our clients with challenges.

Like many organisations, Apex is reviewing how we will work in the future and this, of course, includes the Board. We continue to meet online which, although having the benefit of allowing our members to participate more easily no matter where in Scotland they live, does mean we lose the benefits that in-person contacts and meetings bring. The plan is to return to some in-person meetings by the end of 2022. This will give us an opportunity to meet the new members of the Board who have joined during the pandemic. In 2021 Stephen Bermingham, Diana Fraser and Gordon Mackenzie were appointed as Trustees and were joined early in 2022 by Malcolm Melville, Claire Middlebrook and Adam Wilson. Unfortunately Vahaab Sajid had to leave the Board at the end of 2021 due to changes in his work commitments. David Asher had completed his sixth year with the Board when he retired in December 2021, and Karen Kelly, who was one of our Vice Chairs and Chair of the Finance and Audit Sub Group, came to the end of her term of office early in 2022. These changes mean that all current Board members, with the exception of myself, have been appointed during the pandemic.



**Ann Landels, Chair of Apex Scotland Board**

However, the continued uncertainties about Covid have meant that Board members haven't been able to get out and meet the teams and see in person the changes that Apex is making to people across Scotland. Although we have tried to substitute this with virtual contacts, it is not the same experience. I am a firm believer in the Board being visible to the whole organisation, not just the senior team, and I hope this is something we can rectify soon.

At the time of writing we are all facing a number of new challenges, a very challenging economic situation and, alongside that, an equally challenging funding situation. We don't know what the long term effects of these will be on

Apex, both for our clients and our hard working teams. But what I do know is that Apex will continue to meet these challenges and adapt and respond as necessary. It is clear that the services and support that Apex staff offer is going to become even more important in the coming months. The Board will continue to support them in this. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all Apex staff for their continued commitment to offering everyone that comes into contact with them a positive future and for seizing the opportunities that 'making justice work for everyone' offers.

**Ann Landels  
Chair.**

**“You saved my life so many times  
and you didn't even know it.”**

**RE:SET pupil**



# Are We Nearly There Yet?

Welcome to the 2022 Apex Scotland Annual Report. Can you believe we are 35 years old this year? As always, I hope that you will enjoy this Report and find much in here which will not only inform but also inspire. Apex continues to be at the forefront of our sector's contribution to both the justice and employability strategies developed by the Scottish Government and serves a vital role in linking the two, thereby reducing the likelihood of people falling between the gaps in existing systems. As you will see, there are many who have benefitted directly from this commitment not to allow anyone to be left behind; the value of helping people to turn their lives around, for them to find that it is possible to change their future to something positive, is significant also to the community around them.

Apex can be a little tricky to pigeonhole, spanning several policy areas, but the more we have developed our service models the more it is clear that we start the journey mainly with people coming from a criminal justice background and look to move them from that identity into an employability facing service. In this Report you will learn more about how that looks.

I am not sure if I have made it up or if it's an existing meme, but uncertainty is a nightmare for planners and a dream for innovators. It would certainly be no exaggeration to suggest that we are currently living through one of the most uncertain periods in at least a generation, and notions such as business models, strategic plans and so on seem like quaint fantasies in the light of our ever-changing horizons. At the same time, however, there has been so much activity around how justice should work in Scotland, all playing out amidst the delays and backlogs in delivery. You could easily look at this chaotic picture and wonder how on earth we can ever get back to actually making some of those laudable aspirations found in recent Government thinking a working reality?



**Alan Staff, Chief Executive**

For Apex it has certainly been another year of struggling to keep up with a constantly changing political and funding environment while still keeping our standards high and our workforce motivated. I think it takes a very special sort of person to take on hard, and often thankless, work without much in the way of job security, or of ever having parity with the sort of wages available in public and private sectors. This is especially the case in this period of rising cost pressures on families, and yet we see not only committed staff willing to do what is asked of them but regularly going that extra mile for their clients and colleagues. At this time when there is much to suggest that our sector is perhaps not seen

.....  
The title of our Report this year, *Making Justice Work for Everyone*, points to the reality that justice in all its forms is not an issue for a few specialists but for everyone, and that a truly progressive justice plan seeks not to disengage some sections of the community or ignore the pain of others but to try to actually change things for the better.  
.....

“I want to say a massive thanks to all the staff at Apex. They have helped me out feeling I can get back into work and helping me by giving me a phone that works to help search for jobs. Also very friendly staff and meetings are face-to-face. Would highly recommend them to to anyone looking for help getting back into work. Thanks guys.”

Glasgow client

as a priority in the wake of public sector strikes and demands, it is worth reflecting on the benefits, both seen and unseen, of a value-driven organisation both for our society and for the economy. The contribution to Scottish society is massive, and I sincerely hope that the platitudes about valuing the third sector are matched by a vision which does not take us for granted and which makes effective use of the significant resource we represent.

The title of our Report this year, Making Justice Work for Everyone, points to the reality that justice in all its forms is not an issue for a few specialists but for everyone, and that a truly progressive justice plan seeks not to disengage some sections of the community or ignore the pain of others but to try to actually change things for the better.

For as long as I have been involved in working with marginalised and stigmatised communities (and that's a very long time) the constant barrier to achieving better is that what it seeks to replace may not be terribly keen on being 'modernised'! As we increasingly recognise that crime, its causes, and its impact both emerge from trauma and generate trauma, so the mantra of trauma informed practice becomes stronger. The problem is that this recognition raises the understanding that parts of the system which are supposed to manage or control crime may actually be contributing to the very thing it is set up to reduce.

A core belief of Apex is that the highest purpose of a progressive justice system is to keep people away from it where possible and, if not, to make sure it does not make the impact worse. Much has been done to remove the obstacles to positive progress for those involved in the justice system, but much remains to be done, in particular around bridging the gap between being ready for work and actually getting and sustaining long term employment. Everything we see and know from our 35 years' experience shows that once someone begins to find meaningful ways to occupy themselves, earn money, make positive relationships, and restore their dignity, the need to commit offences drops away. That is why I am really hoping that those who are making policies or planning on use of available resources see the urgent need to work together, get rid of the silos and recognise what can be if we are prepared to create what we dream about rather than what we have always had.

**Alan Staff**  
**Chief Executive.**

“Being a new client for Apex and having convictions I was very wary of working with a different company after negative experiences with other organisations. My advisor Naomi quickly put me at ease with her knowledge and understanding which showed me she was someone with a professional attitude to the job. Since then her help and advice as well as clear explanations is superb. I feel valued and understood by Apex and only wish other companies dealing with criminals were as professional.”

Edinburgh client

In the year April 2021 – March 2022

We worked with almost **3,000** people



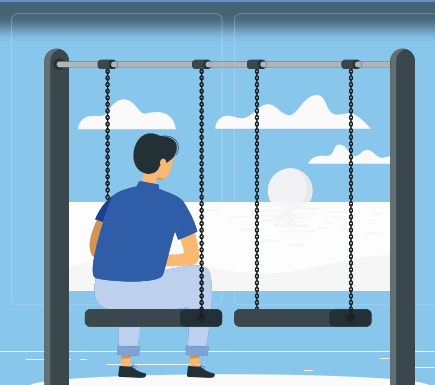
**24%** were under 25

At least **65%** had a criminal conviction



**15%** had convictions of a sexual nature

**23%** reported having mental health issues





**3,718** CPO hours completed

**1,082** qualifications attained



Our foodbanks fed **2,918** people, **718** of whom were children

At least **46** clients achieved a job outcome



**262** pupils participated in an Apex RE:SET service within school



# What We Do

Apex Scotland was founded 35 years ago to address the employment and training needs of ex-offenders in the community and those at pre-release stage of a custodial sentence.

Working with those who have offended remains our primary area of expertise, but since that initial strategy was instigated, our services have developed into a more comprehensive range of activity which demonstrates a commitment to mentor, support and encourage people who need to change their behaviour, are at risk of offending and are furthest away from the job market, as well as our teams being active in their local communities.

Apex teams currently operate from Highland, Grampian, Tayside, Fife, Forth Valley, Glasgow, Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh, Dumfries, Stranraer and Ayrshire, and reach clients all over Scotland.

Our approach is tailored to each individual we work with. Using our A Positive Future assessment tool, and with the support of their Personal Development Mentor, our service users are helped to create an action plan based on our ABC model (Aim higher, Behave Differently, Change your future) which addresses their priorities and effects positive change. We remember that every person has different needs, which may change week to week, but we also know that each person is capable of more than they first believe; our goal is to ensure that our clients see that for themselves too.

In 2021/2022 we worked with almost 3,000 individuals over our key services including:

Steps	Vocational Training	Shine
Smart Recovery	Volunteering	New Routes
Challenge Team	AYE	RE:SET
Rehab & Disclosure	Foodbank	Community Payback Orders
RAFT	Moving In	Pre-employability Clacks

Those who engage in our services often have multiple barriers such as an offending background, including sexual offences; substance abuse; leaving prison; homelessness; leaving care; school exclusion; young people on social work orders; mental health concerns and poverty. The diversity of our services is designed to reflect our purpose, in particular to promote desistance (using early intervention where possible), encourage engagement and give our service users the tools they need to work towards a positive future.

With a strong ethos of ensuring everyone we work with takes their own journey, we adhere to a core set of values that inform all our activities: Equality, Diversity, Integrity, Quality, Innovation and Dignity. You can read more about our values and services on our website.

Apex staff are supportive and pragmatic, creative and engaging with a real desire to help people realise their potential. They walk each step of the journey with their clients and celebrate each achievement because they appreciate the effort each step can take. Our people are the heart of our organisation.





# Memorial Awards

Each year we present two different awards to our staff. It is always incredibly difficult to choose teams or individuals as winners, but we are incredibly proud of what these teams, and all our staff, continued to achieve throughout 2021-22 in challenging circumstances.

The Sam Dow memorial award is given to the team or service that is excelling at what it is contracted to do, or going the extra mile based on the contract parameters. This year the Sam Dow shield was awarded to the Edinburgh team for their tenacity, resilience and adaptability in setting up their new online CPO delivery which has been incredibly successful.

The Betty Crawford memorial award is for innovation and creativity that achieves results for our clients, the unit or the organisation as a whole. This year the Betty Crawford cup was awarded to the Glasgow team who continue to create new partnerships and opportunities for clients in a way that will make it easy for people to engage, for their impressive job outcomes and Andy Kimmett's leadership.

The Highland team was highly commended for its continued innovation in service delivery.

Congratulations to you all.

“You’ve helped me understand far more than two weeks on the (other) course did.”

Stirling client



Andy and Reta of the Glasgow Team with Alan Staff



The Highland Team



The Edinburgh Team

# Leading The Way

The benefits of employment are well known – contribution, satisfaction, self worth, etc. For many of our clients, we also know that having a job means that they are much less likely to reoffend, if they have already done so. However, this requires adequate preparation, support, training and increasing confidence through learning new skills and gaining qualifications.

Our experience in mentoring across all stages of the employability pipeline, together with our ability to partner with employers and in collaboration with our own social enterprise, All Cleaned Up, we are providing our service users with all the requirements that employers want that will lead to sustained employment. Here are just two examples of how we are supporting people who were furthest away from the job market into employment.

## Build It

Build It is a four week course run by Apex's Glasgow team for anyone who is unemployed and wants to consider a career in construction, covering various aspects of getting ready for employment and the very practical element of health and safety. As well as helping individuals achieve their CSCS card, participants learn how to pursue a career in construction, and are given IT support to complete applications, practise interview skills, etc.

We are partnering with Kier Construction who, once they found out what we were aiming to achieve, were keen to take a more active role in the course. Kier Construction now supplements our training by providing a safety talk and facilitating discussion with a Health and Safety expert. They also arrange visits for our clients to an active construction site, including a site safety induction, to manage expectations of what to expect on your first day in a new job. The company also offers a presentation on different careers in the construction industry.

Kier Construction has been open to potential employees having a criminal conviction because Apex teaches people how to disclose these appropriately; Apex staff can also calculate conviction and rehab periods and assist clients to write a disclosure letter if required.

The creation of the course has been a team effort, delivered by Apex staff and volunteers with assistance from Open Gates. The industry expertise and input from Kier has been invaluable and has been appreciated by participants. We are looking forward to building on these relationships into the coming year.



Build It participants



Ciaran and the group on site

## The Build It Experience

Ciaran\* was referred to Apex through Open Gates. Having recently completed his second prison sentence, Ciaran had reached the point where he did not want to return to crime and was looking for some volunteer or work placement opportunities as he had no work experience at all.

When we met with Ciaran and provided options to support him, he was keen to take part in our Built It course. Ciaran was a model participant, working hard and taking everything on board. He passed his health and safety construction qualification with flying colors and began to study diligently for his CITB assessment. He commented that the visit to the construction site with Kier Construction helped to allay his fear of entering a workplace as a new start. During that site tour and induction Ciaran made a great impression; he asked intelligent questions and built a rapport with the site manager during a construction career talk.

A short while later we were approached by Kier Construction as the site we had visited required labourers. By this point Ciaran had passed his CITB assessment and achieved his CSCS card so we recommended him for interview – his first ever. Everyone was thrilled when Ciaran was offered the job. We later found out that the person on site who recommended approaching Apex for candidates was the person Ciaran had made a connection with and he was delighted when Ciaran turned up for the interview.

Ciaran is now achieving his goal of working to support his partner and daughter and has a positive future ahead of him.



# Clean 2 Change

In a similar format to Build It, Clean 2 Change works with individuals with convictions to address any barriers to work and provide service users with the tools needed to have the best chance of going on to secure employment. Delivered by Apex's social enterprise, All Cleaned Up, the aim is to promote a culture of inclusiveness and create a positive destination while providing valuable training, personal development and employment opportunities for individuals with convictions.

The Clean 2 Change programme runs over three days a week for eight weeks and gives individuals real life experience of working within the commercial cleaning sector. The first week focuses on integrating participants into a team and confidence building. Thereafter, the programme is dedicated to work experience, placement opportunities and employability support. All individuals are supported to achieve their UKCPAS Industrial Cleaning Qualifications and a relevant qualification in Health and Safety. Completion of the SQA Employability Award is also built into the support with practical exercises such as writing a letter of disclosure, preparing for interviews and making informed choices about employment options providing a focus on entering sustainable employment.

Successful placements have a high chance of securing full or part-time employment within All Cleaned Up itself upon completion of the programme, and there is an additional option of a 13-week aftercare package to continue to support individuals towards employment.

“Just like to say a big thank you for everything you have done for me. You have done amazing work with me.”

Forth Valley client

“I want to come to this group cause I can be myself.”

RE:SET pupil



Trainees are given work placements with All Cleaned Up

# Labyrinth

Individuals with convictions of a sexual nature are a significantly 'left behind' group when considering employability provision across Scotland.

There is a substantial degree of risk attached to supporting these individuals into appropriate opportunities. To keep everyone safe, it requires an expert provider such as Apex to be able to identify these risks in the first place and then know how to respond to them.

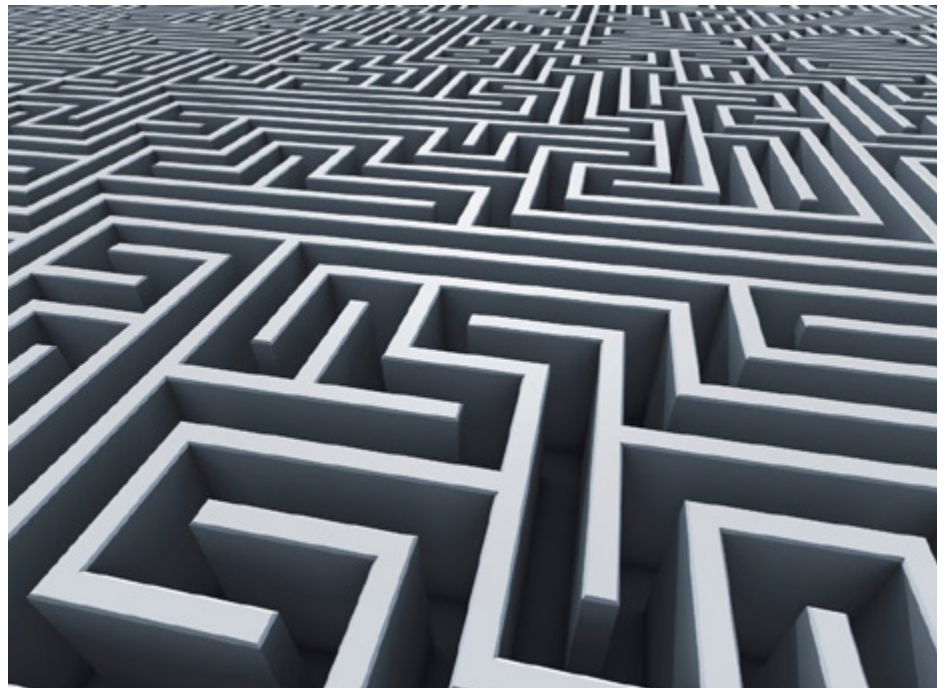
Apex's Labyrinth service ensures that participants move closer to work, equipped with a holistic toolkit of skills, competencies and positive attitudes to prepare them for it. Participants increase in self-confidence and motivation to progress as they gain a better awareness and understanding of their personal barriers and receive support to tackle them.

Through initial intensive support, participants learn skills to be more independent and self-reliant. Throughout the course, they achieve fundamental employability skills which enable them to identify, pursue and sustain employment opportunities for the long term, and part of this is learning the impact their criminal record will have on their employment prospects. Contrary to what you might think, this usually empowers participants as it dispels misperceptions about the types of jobs that they can access or that they would normally deselect themselves from, thereby opening realistic labour market opportunities. Knowledge of the correct process and legal position of what is required to be disclosed to an employer, and the management of conviction related restrictions, also prepares participants to act appropriately, and this is something that we give expert guidance on.

Throughout the course, a Personal Development Mentor collaborates with each individual to devise an action plan for the identification and removal of barriers to employment and progression towards, or into, a job: a simple sentence which belies the complexity of the work.

The action plan can consist of practical support and advocacy, basic skills competency, training and support to achieve qualifications, and referral to specialist agencies to tackle very specific barriers where appropriate. We have also secured work placement opportunities with several employers, following our competent and thorough risk assessments, allowing our clients to develop new skills and build their confidence which can really improve their chances of employment going forward.

Our Labyrinth programme is currently being delivered across a number local authority areas with other areas looking to develop this service in the near future. Referrals to the service come from Justice Social Work, Economic Development Teams as well as from DWP Colleagues.



.....  
“Programmes like labyrinth give a second chance for RSOs that most organisations don't offer. Due to the pressure these clients will have had from the media, the loss of their family and isolation within the community, they often lose all confidence and hope for returning to a normal life. The opportunities offered within the Labyrinth project such as the work placement and help getting them qualifications is doing a lot to prevent my clients from losing hope and giving them a drive to get back into employment.”

**Renfrewshire Social Worker**  
.....



# Shine and New Routes

Since their creation in 2013, Apex has been an active partner in the public social partnerships, Shine and New Routes. Shine and New Routes offer one to one support and mentoring to women, and men under 25 respectively, with support first offered up to six months before their release from prison which continues as individuals reintegrate into their communities. The support is intensive with our mentors often having to rely on their flexibility and ingenuity to meet some very specific needs for people who are often in crisis or have chaotic lifestyles. This is particularly true when meeting people 'at the gate' and our staff often go above and beyond their job role to ensure their clients are safe and settled on their first day of release.

As the pandemic continued to provide challenges throughout 2021, our Personal Development Mentors continued to provide a frontline service to those being released, providing specially curated liberation packs to meet immediate needs, keen to return to face to face delivery as soon as they were allowed.



“Joanne and Apex Scotland helped me every step of the way and its due to their help and professionalism I was able after a long time unemployed to get a job. I would highly recommend Apex Scotland to anyone with barriers and needing support to getting into employment. I found it all excellent and only wish I had found out sooner about the work they do.”

Glasgow client

## Richie's Story

(as told by his Personal Development Mentor)

Richie\* signed up to New Routes in September 2021, having been sentenced to one year in prison. At our first appointment I learned that Richie had multiple barriers including diagnosed mental health problems, previous trauma, addictions, financial worries and a family breakdown, all of which he was keen to get help with.

Whilst he was still in prison, we dealt with the practical aspects of his liberation such as ascertaining what benefits and payments he would receive on his release and helping him to take control of that. We also explored support from the mental health nurses and the drug and alcohol team, and the additional assistance that Apex could offer on his liberation such as participation in SMART recovery meetings, help towards employment and volunteering opportunities. Referrals to Re-

connect Counselling and Families Outside were also important as he very much wanted to improve relationships with his family, and be a positive role model for his brother and daughter.

Although nervous about joining any group activities, since his liberation Richie has communicated well, engaging with Apex, Re-connect and Families Outside. During his time with us, he has developed an understanding of his behaviours and is working on improving anything that will put him at risk of further criminal behaviour. He has been in contact with his daughter and is keen to improve his relationship with her. Added to that, he has completed a portion of his community service and is attending SMART recovery and additional meetings with myself and his Criminal Justice Social Worker. He is definitely moving in a positive direction.

# An Important First Step

We know that when someone meets Apex for the first time, they are likely to be carrying a number of opinions from their experience of the justice system to date, whatever that has been. The spirit of No One Left Behind is to ensure that all people receive an approach from the professionals they work with which is tailored to their individual needs. Fortunately this is something that Apex staff excel in.

We have long employed the attitude that we walk the journey with our service users, however 35 years of experience has proven that what Apex does is complex and one size does not fit all. How can you help to move someone towards employment when the person does not want to engage with a service because of low confidence, no routine, lack of trust, etc? We are committed to ensuring these individuals are not left behind, but we need financial support to allow us to do that.

This year it has been exciting to have received support from funders who have realised that the starting point with some people is further back than the traditional employability pipeline suggests, ie. pre-stage 1. This is giving us the opportunity to meet people from the community who need our help, even if they are not yet ready to commit to any particular programme or service. Over time, meeting informally through provision such as Time 2 Chat in Stranraer, can stabilise a person's engagement with the organisation and intentionally sustain a relationship with our staff so that, when the time comes to join us as a service user, a person's commitment is genuine and successful outcomes are likely.

Likewise, recognising that these opinions matter, that they can improve the situations for those who come after them, is important. Hearing from those who have personal experience is crucial to help us understand what is being missed. Again, we are fortunate that funders are acknowledging how valuable this is and services in Dumfries and Galloway and East Dunbartonshire will be benefitting from it as a result.

## Peer Based Support

New Opportunities is a new service funded by Community Justice Partnership Dumfries and Galloway with the intention of improving the shape and future of justice services in the area.

One crucial aspect of delivery is that it is led by a Personal Development Mentor (PDM) who has lived experience of the justice system. The objective is to form different groups across the locality, facilitated by peer mentors, who can give their views to those who deliver different aspects of justice in the area. Currently, our PDM has established a creative group in Stranraer and attends recovery communities groups in Newton Stewart and Castle Douglas. She is looking to help justice social work to prepare for an open day and working with service users to decide on a possible name for the Community Payback Building.

Throughout this process there will also be feedback about other Community Justice Partners which will be fed back to them if appropriate.

In a similar way, our new Peer Navigator service in East Dunbartonshire will be supporting individuals during the difficult transition period from custody to the community and who are required to engage with organisations such as justice social

“Can I email your boss to give them a good feedback/rating or something, you've been very helpful and helped me out a lot.”

Forth Valley client

work and alcohol and drug recovery services. A requirement when recruiting for the PDM working on this service was lived experience.

Peer based support is something that we have always championed, encouraging a number of our service users over the years to become peer mentors for clients, leading from a place of experience. As we continue on our journey of being a trauma informed organisation, we recognise how those with lived experience in different aspects of life can add particular value to areas of our delivery and we are excited about seeing this progress over the coming year.

# Time 2 Chat

This new service in Stranraer is funded through the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund and is open to anyone over the age of 16. Access to this service is unique because, other than the lower age limit, there is no other criteria which the person has to meet and there is no need to “sign up” to anything. It is simply a safe space where people can speak to someone who can provide a listening ear, provide a personal connection, and informally assess what can be done to further assist if the individual would like it.

Recently a lady who was really struggling with her mental health needed support to speak to her GP and get the help she needed from the local CATS (crisis assessment and treatment service) team. Because we could offer to help her take that step, she is now on different medication, receiving support from mental health professionals and getting assistance to move on to disability benefit from Universal Credit.

Support can also be offered over the phone for those who cannot, or do not yet want to, meet face to face. It is also a useful stepping stone for those clients who have reached the end of their time on another funded service but who would still benefit from regular contact if they do not have ongoing support from family or another organisation.

As part of the grant, our Stranraer staff received funds to decorate a room within their premises to ensure there was a welcoming and safe space for those who needed it. This was a huge boost for the whole team who have created a fresh, relaxed environment for everyone to enjoy. At the open day which was held to launch the service, there were many local agencies which came in support of the venture - social work, registered social landlords, DWP, Woman’s Aid and addiction services. All agreed it is a much needed provision which, for those accessing it, will be of more benefit than a traditional befriending service.

**The new Time 2 Chat room**





# More Than a Bag of Groceries

Our foodbank teams in Dumfries and Stranraer are trained Apex staff who understand that their role is more than ensuring people are not hungry. Often when a person steps through our door, the need they have is greater than a bag of groceries.

Our staff can offer support and assistance in a number of ways, including referral to other Apex services or other agencies, to ensure each person leaves knowing that there is help available.



The foodbank teams offer additional support

## Mary's Story

"In my previous relationship I suffered domestic abuse. The financial hardship started when I would find myself left with very little money and no explanation about where the money had gone. Now I am away from the relationship I have discovered this money was taken and used by my ex partner for drug use which I was unaware of. When the abuse started escalating I needed to move to keep my children and myself safe but this has had a huge financial impact on us all. I was hit by the benefits cap which takes off £802 per month - a huge amount. I have six children and from my universal credit, I pay my (more expensive) rent, gas and electricity, food, clothing, broadband, council tax, mobile phone, etc, leaving me in extreme financial hardship.

I approached Apex in Dumfries to get help with food parcels due to the financial pressure that I was under. I was so embarrassed and ashamed reaching out to get help. Crystal from the Apex Dumfries team was absolutely amazing

and didn't judge me once. She listened to me and wanted to help us. When the food parcel arrived I was absolutely overwhelmed at the kindness that was being shown to me and my children. I would have struggled without that help as the financial pressure was even greater. I was getting myself extremely stressed out about how I was going to provide the children with Christmas dinner and presents. Crystal assured me Apex would help out and they really did.

Crystal also offered to apply for help through Cash for Kids for my family. When I heard I was awarded the money it was such a relief I felt a stress being lifted from me because I knew I was able to provide my children with gifts and a proper Christmas dinner. I am so glad I got over the embarrassment and reached out to Apex and Crystal as she made our Christmas happen last year. She made me realise that my situation is not through my doing which was nice to hear as I had always blamed myself.

I am still under financial pressure and I don't see that changing in the near future. But I know I can pick up the phone and speak to Apex to get help again and for that I am so grateful."

"Just to let you know I spoke with (client) this afternoon and he was singing your praises and he is looking forward to his course. Thanks again for all your help."

Glasgow Jobcentre  
coach



# RAFT

Our RAFT service in Aberdeen works in partnership with other organisations including social work and Police Scotland. It is an intense mentoring service for young people involved in offending or concerning behaviour and who all have specific needs.

The input required can be demanding. The work involves often accompanying young people to the Council so they have an appropriate safe place to stay, helping them to open bank accounts, attending job fares, collecting food parcels, helping young people move house, attending meetings, advocating in sessions with other agencies, helping with transitions, GP appointments, shopping, and much more. Our Personal Development Mentor (PDM), Rebecca, also attends events with clients where they can meet other young people and take part in activities. The impact this has on the young people is vital as it builds their confidence, opens more opportunities, and strengthens their life skills as well as helping to re-evaluate behaviours and priorities.

Rebecca shared an example of one young person who was referred to the service after being involved in shoplifting, assaults, CSE concerns, missing person's reports and no school attendance. With Rebecca's input, the young person returned to school with no more offending and a massive improvement in her relationship with her mum. A year later, the same person has now secured a modern apprenticeship at a nursery where she was one of 17 applying for the role and disclosed her background on her own. She is doing great and is really enjoying her new job as well as new studies which she is completing as part of the apprenticeship.

Rebecca also told of one client who had been through many services, including social work, and had never engaged. He worked with RAFT and attended 42 sessions. At the end of his time with us he avoided adult court proceedings due to his engagement with us. He stated "It was good working with you." which was a huge acknowledgement from this young person.

Children who do not receive the support they need often end up in the social work system or going through the children's panel being placed on CSOs, and are often removed from school. We have worked with young people who, if they had not had our intervention, would have ended up homeless, continued offending, struggled with addictions, not reached their potential at school, and not been given the opportunity to achieve basic qualifications.

**By offering a whole needs approach, around 150 young people over the last five years have been able to move away from offending into a more positive destination.**

**Here's what some people have said about our PDM, Rebecca, and our RAFT service.**

.....  
"Thanks for having my back."

**Young Person**  
.....

.....  
"I am learning how to deal with things better because of the work we do."

**Young Person**  
.....

.....  
"You really get him; he listens to you and we are so proud of him for the work he does with you."

**Worker at Children's Home**  
.....

.....  
"You have done so much for us, I can't thank you enough. Everything you say you will do is done the next day and I finally feel heard and supported."

**Parent of Young Person**  
.....

"Just to let you know I managed to get everything sorted out and I am enjoying being back to work and I am getting back into a routine already. Thanks again for all your help and support as I found that I was able to do it all at my own pace. So I appreciate the help you gave me and I wouldn't be at the stage I am."

**Edinburgh client**

# Invergordon Mental Health Intervention Programme

Over the past three years Apex Highland has been striving to develop a service in the Ross-shire area to deliver much needed interventions to both digitally and geographically excluded individuals. We had already developed a successful working relationship with Invergordon County Community Hospital, jobcentre and local third sector organisations through the impactful work of our mentors continuing to providing an alternative treatment route for those experiencing mental health issues as a result of drug and/or alcohol use. We discovered through our conversations with these partners that there were a large number of individuals on a waiting list to receive treatment for mental health/drug and alcohol support, so we were delighted to receive funding for a year to provide a service in the area.

We know that public transport has become a barrier for people accessing services due to sporadic rural timetables and high anxiety. We immediately removed that barrier by arranging pick ups and drop offs for those concerned and included anxiety focused interventions aimed at reducing and managing symptoms.

Apex has been successfully running drug and alcohol recovery services for a number of years and understands the poor mental health that often befalls individuals who have experienced this lifestyle. The Invergordon programme now runs similar interventions that have been successful in Inverness, including an auricular acupuncture course, SMART Recovery groups, a CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) based course and a mental health recovery walking group one day a week in Invergordon. These groups are exclusive to individuals who are experiencing issues related to mental health through use of drugs or alcohol. Training related to CSCS and SQA Employability qualifications are also included with related employability focused activities. In addition, we have also secured an allotment to plant our own herbs and vegetables which will give participants opportunities for team building and volunteering in a relaxed environment.

The groups are run by Personal Development Mentors with lived experience and the people who attend the groups are building positive, lasting and supportive friendships with like minded individuals who all share a common goal to help each other move towards living a better quality of life. The programme is designed to alleviate symptoms of depression, anxiety and trauma but also provides the opportunity to discuss selected topics in a comfortable, safe and structured setting as well as share with other attendees their own experiences of mental health.

The programme has now been running successfully since the beginning of the year with the courses all proving to be very successful and well received by our clients and their referrers.

“I honestly did not think there was anybody who understood my addiction with alcohol. The facilitators have lived experience and totally knew where I was coming from. I felt at ease and relaxed in my first group and it was the first time that I had spoken openly and honestly about my addiction. Great meeting with like-minded people.”



Cooking classes in Invergordon

“We love coming to see Jackie and Michelle on Mondays. We thought there was no support out there but we have been coming down every Monday for the last 10 weeks for a coffee and a bacon roll. They have been so supportive to us when we really didn't have anybody to go to. They have helped us get back out in the community, helped with our benefits, food parcels and clothing. Our go to place every Monday!”

# Partners in Change



In Autumn 2021 Apex Scotland was named as one of six organisations to be awarded an opportunity to be one of Robertson Trust's Partner in Change. The Partners in Change initiative is driven by the Robertson Trust's current 10 year strategic plan, to improve the lives of people and communities with experience of poverty, trauma, or both. It is a strategic priority for Apex to better understand the current popular and familiar language of "being trauma informed" and to ensure we can apply this to our organisation in a genuine and robust way.

Partners in Change is about understanding the drivers for, and the barriers to, allowing effective and necessary change to happen, to enable settings and services that support people who have or are experiencing trauma, to operate in a manner that improves their experiences and mitigates against re-traumatisation of any kind.

As an organisation that develops meaningful, trusting relationships with people who use our services every day, our duty of care to those individuals, and to our staff who deliver the services, is paramount.

Apex does not want to conform to a notion of 'trauma informed practice' or to skirt around its edges, doing the minimum we need to demonstrate some sort of compliance to a funder. We want to work through the complexity that this short statement presents, to truly understand the way in which we can systemise a trauma informed approach on an organisational level.

As a national based, justice employability organisation delivering a high diversity of interventions and services across locations and in social and public sector settings, for a diverse range of commissioners who want different types of outputs for their money, this is complex.

However, it is the complexity of the challenge to do this properly that is important to Apex. We have started our three year research in action project working alongside an independent researcher and an academic research team at University of Dundee. We are also working with our valued partners in Resilience Learning Partnership and an independent psychotherapist with expertise in working with trauma.

Our project will be covering all organisational bases, from leadership and policy review, staff training and wellbeing, deep insights from people who use our services and a thorough review and action plan of the way in which we embed 'lived experience' into the organisation.

A primary project objective is to learn – to enhance the evidence base around what it takes for effective change to happen and to have a meaningful impact. One of Apex's main goals is to go on to share our learning with our partners; strategic, political, operational, business partners, and to involve you all in our journey. After all it is highly unlikely that effective systematic change could be restricted to our organisation alone, if we really want to achieve our goal. Therefore we will look forward to proactively approaching you, our partners, to maximise this learning process which has the potential and capacity to impact the whole sector we operate in. We very much look forward to our challenging journey ahead which requires high levels of organisational self reflection and honesty, to always strive to be better for the people we exist to support.

# Power in Partnership

Each year in our Annual Report we pay tribute to those organisations and individuals who have assisted Apex in some way, either financially or in partnership delivery, which ensure that the individuals we work with are in receipt of the best support and mentoring that can be available to them. With this in mind, we are careful to work with delivery partners who share similar ethos and values to us.

As an organisation, Apex has many strengths, our staff training and our understanding of our main client group being key, but we have learned that there is power in partnership. We take time to discover where we or our partners can add value to delivery to help our clients reach their goals and achieve success. Thank you to those partners who have joined with us over 2021-22 and we look forward to our continued partnership into the coming year.

## Our partners in 2021-2022 were:

- » ACOSVO
- » Alcohol and Drug Recovery Partnerships
- » Alloa First
- » Asda Fight Hunger Fund
- » Beechwood
- » BRAG
- » Cale House
- » Calton Community Fire Station
- » Capital City Partnership
- » CJVSF
- » Citizens Advice Scotland (Highland and Fife)
- » CPO Teams across Scotland
- » Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface
- » Clackmannanshire Works
- » Cloud Cover
- » Community Justice Scotland
- » Community Planning Partnerships
- » Community Safety Partnerships
- » Crossreach
- » Custody Link Project Highland
- » DWP and Jobcentres
- » Edinburgh Napier University
- » European Social Fund
- » Fair Start Providers
- » Families Outside
- » Fedcap
- » Fife Council
- » Fife Voluntary Action
- » Greener Kirkcaldy
- » Highfield
- » Highland Third Sector Interface
- » HMP Dumfries Multi Agency Re-integration Team
- » Ian Marr, The Growth Partnership
- » Kier Construction
- » Jan Montgomery
- » Local Authorities Criminal Justice Social Work and Education Departments
- » National Third Sector Fund consortium for European Structural Investment Funds
- » Navigator
- » New Craigs Hospital
- » New Routes national PSP partners
- » NHS and Health Partners
- » Open Gates
- » Opportunities for All partners
- » Osprey House
- » PASS UK Ltd
- » PeopleKnowHow
- » Police Scotland
- » Project Scotland
- » RAFT consortium
- » Rangers Football Club
- » RE:SET High Schools in Fife, Edinburgh and Clackmannanshire and those who have contributed to the RE:SET service
- » Recovery Network
- » Release Scotland
- » Remploy
- » Renfrewshire LEP
- » Resilience Learning Partnership
- » Resource 3 (Cameron Shearer)
- » Right There
- » Robert Gordon University
- » Robertson Construction
- » Scottish Government
- » Scottish Prison Service
- » Scottish Tech Army
- » SCVO
- » Shine national PSP partners
- » Skills Development Scotland
- » Social Enterprise Scotland
- » Social Investment Scotland
- » SPFL Trust
- » SQA
- » STAF
- » Station House Media Unit
- » Street Soccer
- » Supported Employment Service
- » Tesco
- » The Big Lottery
- » The Holywood Trust
- » The Robertson Trust
- » Trussell Trust and those who support the foodbanks in Dumfries and Stranraer
- » Turning Point Scotland
- » University of Dundee
- » Venture Trust
- » Vital Spark
- » Volunteer Scotland
- » Who Cares? Scotland



# What Our Partners Say

“I have the greatest of respect and admiration for the administrative and development staff within Apex. They have established processes and procedures which not only ensure that participants, who are often isolated and vulnerable individuals, can participate in the programme, and also allows the paperwork for both the participants and the staff claims to be completed and submitted monthly. Apex continued to engage with their participants throughout the covid 19 lockdown period and their staff were able to manage the not inconsiderable bureaucracy required to register and record activities over this period.”

**Barbara Love, SCVO**

“I would like to note that referrals are picked up very quickly and from that point onwards, referrers are given regular updates as to levels of engagement, whatever plan has been agreed and progress made towards achieving goals. Likewise, if a client is not engaging, workers are alerted to this which is helpful in terms of either motivational intervention or disciplinary action as appropriate.

“My experience has been that clients are provided with an individualised action plan which seems realistic and achievable. Apex staff are approachable and helpful to workers and clients. I have referred clients who have been supported into employment through practical measures/opportunities provided by Apex, but also through personal development skills training and confidence building.”

**Justice Social Worker**

“Really good. Regular communication in writing which I can record in case notes easily. Clients seem to know their plans and objectives. Clients seem to know the level of communication they have. This is despite it all being over the phone. I have had a really good response from my referrals.”

**Justice Social Worker**

“Wanted to email you to thank you for the time you spent with JM. For me, it was great to hear all the information you passed on - what fantastic initiatives you and your colleagues are involved in. I trust JM attended her appointment and will look forward to any updates. Once again thanks, it was lovely to meet with you.”

**Justice Social Worker**

“Apex Staff regularly phone the office to give updates on the customers’ progress and we see the same when Apex are in face-to-face. They go round the Work Coaches to feedback on their customers’ progress which they find very useful and are then able to discuss with them on their next jobcentre attendance.”

**DWP Manager**

# Training

Training is one of the best ways to learn new skills, to develop knowledge and build confidence. For our Apex clients it is one of the core elements of support we offer in our employability approach. It feeds into our Aim Higher, Behave Differently, Change Your Future ethos, ensuring that service users have a positive approach to self development and achievement.

Our SQA accredited Employability award and IT literacy opens the qualification door for many of our service users who have never been awarded a certificate, increasing their confidence and encouraging them to try more. With construction work or commercial cleaning being a route that many service users are keen to try, training and support to gain their CSCS green labourer's card and UKCPAS certificates are key milestones en route to employment, as well as practical, on-the-job training that we have introduced in some areas.

“It was so nice to meet you today, thank you so much for your help throughout this process. Please pass on my thanks to your male colleague who held the session today. He has a great mannerism for these sorts of things and couldn't have come across better if he tried.”

**Ben Nicholson, Trainee**

“Derek was very knowledgeable and explained things in detail. Nothing was too much trouble for him and the guys didn't feel awkward or silly when asking him questions. I felt it was quite a relaxed day from both sides.”

**Abbotsford Care**

Apex's expert knowledge of Rehabilitation and Disclosure means that we are often the first choice of other organisations looking to expand their own understanding of the subject and we provide this training in house or at other places of work.

Training is not restricted to our client base or their support networks. Many members of the public, recruitment agencies and other charities find us through word of mouth recommendations in order that people can achieve CSCS cards, PAT testing certificate, Food Safety certificates, etc. We often tailor our training to suit individual organisational needs which means that organisations get exactly what they want.

For our staff, too, training is a key element of feeling confident when working with our client group and our Workforce Development Officer ensures that all new staff have full understanding of the fundamental aspects of our approach and delivery, as well as keeping that knowledge up to date.

As we develop our services and delivery over the coming year, training will continue to play a central role, contributing to a Scottish workforce that is qualified, well equipped and motivated, no matter what industry they work in.



**Training is key for clients and staff**

# Annual Lecture 2021

When we were forced to join everyone else across the globe in 2020 by hosting our Annual Lecture online, we had no idea that we would need to do the same again a year later. When your guest speaker is Sir Harry Burns, however, the audience is ready and waiting no matter if it means being glued to your laptop.

Sir Harry is Professor of Global Public Health at Strathclyde University and President of the British Medical Association, internationally known and respected as a champion of the urgent need to address the links between poverty, trauma and social alienation. In his lecture titled “Towards a More Compassionate Justice System” Sir Harry took us through the evidence base for his views, comparing social groups and especially illustrating the links between childhood deprivation and trauma to subsequent developmental and social integration problems. He made an impassioned plea for those who are

charged with making policies to stop trying to fix people and things in favour of activities which will enrich communities and create wellbeing, and especially to commit to a profound shift from prison-based justice to person-centered restorative/rehabilitative models which are both humane and sustainable in a way that current systems are not.

There were some interesting points raised during the live question and answer session which no doubt caused conversations to continue after the event. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with Sir Harry and, from the energy on social media during the event, it seems our audience did too!

A copy of the lecture, both in video and in print, is available on our website.



**Sir Harry Burns answering questions after his lecture**

“Thanks for all your help with my CV and everything.  
I got the job and start tomorrow!”

**Forth Valley client**

# 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 and to be more effective contributors to society.

Other parts of this Annual Report will evidence the impact of the work that we carry out but we must also provide details of the way in which we have utilised funding awarded to give comfort to our funders as to the effective and appropriate use of those funds.

Covid 19 continued to have an impact on our delivery, but to a much lesser extent than in the previous year. Thanks must be given, once again, to our funders, staff and service users for their understanding of the need for changes in service delivery because of the pandemic.

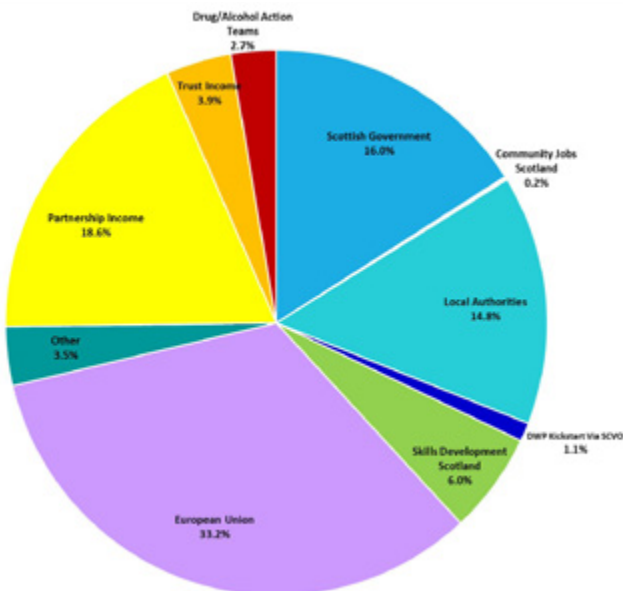
A significant element of our work is funded through the European Social Fund with our Steps service being delivered across many parts of the country. Whilst the funding model for the majority of 2021-22 was less favourable than in previous years, it still made a positive contribution to our overall financial position. The ending of this initiative in December 2022 will bring undoubted challenges for us, and all other recipients of that funding, with concern that the successor Shared Prosperity Fund will not be able to fully replace the work that we have been undertaking.

Delivery of much needed employment focused courses funded through Individual Training Accounts continued to be an important contributor to our finances, as well as to our service users. As a result of the pandemic we have developed a suite of online courses as well as rebuilding our face to face delivery. Thanks, again, must go to our staff for finding safe and workable solutions which enabled us to continue providing a very meaningful series of qualifications to our service users.

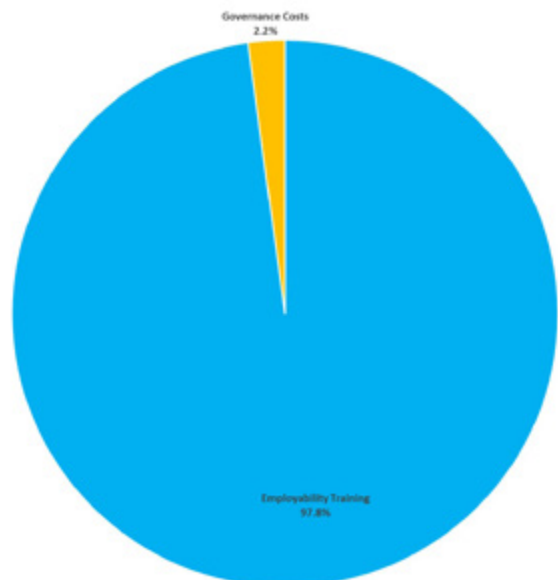
As was the case last year, our financial audit has been carried out on a remote basis. Thanks must be given to our Finance Service Manager, Mhairi Simpson, for her work on this as well as to our auditors, Geoghegan's. Normally our year end accounts would be audited and approved at the summer Board meeting. Whilst the audit has taken place, the formal approval of those accounts is now scheduled to take place in September. As such, the figures contained in this section of the Annual Report are 'draft' as formal approval has yet to be granted. We do not, however, anticipate any changes from those presented.

Given the comments immediately above, our draft SORP accounts for 2021/22 show a surplus of £233,669 for the charity alone. This was achieved against income generated of £3,064,090 (a decrease of 1.32% in comparison to the previous year) and expenditure incurred of £2,830,421 (an increase of 7.64% in comparison to the previous year). The fall in income can be attributed to the loss of covid related funding which

## Income



## Expenditure





had been gained in the previous year. Similarly, the increase in expenditure is due, in the main, to increased expenditure as a result to a return to a more “normal” mode of delivery. It should be noted that SORP accounts are constructed on a different basis from management accounts and may include income received which will be utilised in 2022/23. As mentioned earlier, we recognise that 2022/23 may be significantly different but we have given ourselves a platform whereby we can protect the organisation and/or invest for the future. As in previous years, the vast majority of our funding was either expenditure reimbursement or an agreed sum.

However, the world in which we operate is constantly 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. We are starting to see the impact Covid 19 will have on future years funding for all of the public and third sector and the more recent cost of living crisis, but we have been able to protect a significant element of our income in 2022/23, with the significant exception of the replacement for ESF, which gives us some degree of reassurance whilst not underestimating the challenges which we, and others, will face.

Our trading subsidiary, All Cleaned Up, posted a draft profit of £12,440 in financial year 2021/22. This is clearly encouraging and evidences a continued improvement from previous years, although we recognise much remains to be done in terms of

developing All Cleaned Up. We retain a real belief that this initiative, which creates real jobs for our service users, will continue to build upon the efforts made to strengthen that organisation, despite cashflow challenges which are faced. All Cleaned Up remains an important part of the overall Apex strategy. Thanks must be given to the support from the Big Invest and Social Investment Scotland which has helped us to develop a more robust entity.

The financial reserves we have created over the years give us a degree of leeway to cater for unexpected events and we remain determined to strengthen our services and infrastructure to support ongoing development of the organisation, ultimately for the benefit of our service users. This is being done mainly through a review of our Reserves Policy where we intend to be able to better identify the expected usage of our reserves so that funders are clear as to our needs and our truly free reserves, as well as a greater focus on our financial risk register. We do this 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 and economic 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 intent will be supported by effective governance at all levels across the organisation.

Consolidated accounts detailing the performance of both the charity and our trading subsidiary will be available at Companies House once the signing off process is completed.

**Philip Dunion**  
**Director of Finance and Corporate Development**

“I just wanted to say thanks so much for your time back in April. It was incredibly helpful and I felt able to be honest about myself with prospective employers at interview the following week. I was offered the job! Thanks again.”

**Edinburgh client**

Apex Scotland  
9 Great Stuart Street  
Edinburgh EH3 7TP  
Tel: 0131 220 0130  
Fax: 0131 220 6796  
Email: [admin@apexscotland.org.uk](mailto:admin@apexscotland.org.uk)  
[www.apexscotland.org.uk](http://www.apexscotland.org.uk)