

Strategic Framework

2025-2028



Apex Scotland exists to help people with a conviction or those at risk of offending, rebuild their lives and create a future beyond their past.

Foreword

At Apex Scotland we believe in second chances. We treat people with dignity, respect recognising and appreciating each of their individual circumstances, needs, concerns, fears, aspirations and dreams.

Those we care for and support, our participants (those who use our service), need to live their lives to their fullest. We help them do so in the ways, places and communities that matter to them.

Ensuring people (including ourselves) are enabled to be emotionally healthy and well



Empowering people with knowledge and support



Equipping people with the tools, skills and confidence they need to live well



Bridging gaps for those who need to cross divides in our communities



Engaging in and providing continual learning



Supporting others in their employment journey



This strategic framework outlines Apex Scotland's aspirations, strategic priorities and our focus for the next three years.

Hawys Kilday, Chief Executive Officer

Our Approach

Our support is delivered by a team of skilled, experienced, passionate and committed colleagues, each of whom puts participants at the heart of their decision making.

Whilst we tailor-make support to suit local circumstances, all the services we deliver throughout Scotland have a golden thread that binds them together; the core of which is our belief in developing deep and trusting relationships with our participants together with embracing a trauma responsive approach to our work.

We recognise the challenges and complexity involved in building and developing deep and trusting relationships with participants. The people we help are some of the most vulnerable in our society and sadly too often misunderstood. They've faced stigma, adversity, poverty and experienced trauma all of which will have influenced their choices. Many will not have received positive support in their lives and will have missed out on learning and employment opportunities.

We understand everyone we help will join us at different stages, each with their own set of circumstances. No participants journey will be the same; success will look different for everyone. In recognition of this, we've developed Apex Scotland's participant journey made up of six stages, each focussing on a different skill set.

The overarching outcomes reflected and running through our participants journey are:



Widening the window of tolerance



Building trust



Establishing autonomy



Improving wellbeing

We know the impact of these outcomes is significant. Participants can utilise acquired skills to support the development of trusting relationships together with applying learning in pursuit of positive destinations including volunteering and employment opportunities. We don't underestimate the difference our support has on the lives of families, loved ones of participants and the communities in which they live.



Our Priorities

Our Strategic Priorities for the next three years are structured around six key pillars that will drive our work

1. Ensuring wellbeing

Moving forward in life is much easier from a place of good health

We provide support for mental & physical wellbeing by identifying positive ways to spend time, including engaging in regular exercise, starting new group activities outdoors and healthy cooking on a budget. Other areas where people need support are overcoming addictions, repairing relationships with family and friends to tackle isolation and accessing accommodation to prevent homelessness.

2. Empowering people

Lasting change comes through a sense of empowerment

By encouraging an open mindset to try new things, having engaged conversations, mentoring and learning new life skills, individuals can slowly but surely build their confidence and self-belief. Our role is to enable them to take the first steps towards volunteering or employment.

3. Equipping people

It's unfair to expect everyone to be work-ready after their conviction or serving a custodial sentence

Removing the barriers to getting help through advocacy, goal setting and developing core skills often needs to be done first. For people who want to find employment or volunteer, we can signpost and support them with accredited/ non-accredited training, navigating the disclosure & recruitment process and identifying their transferable skills.

4. Bridging gaps

Not knowing the right places to get support prevents people from moving forward

We provide a vital link to practical information such as setting up a bank account, dealing with debt and managing a budget. It's not just about finances, though - arranging training on practical employability skills, literacy & numeracy and dealing with interviews make a massive difference. Helping people to pursue their interests away from the world of work can encourage goal-setting and increase ambition and motivation as their confidence grows.



5. Continual learning

We're here for the entire journey, whatever it takes

Apex Scotland provides tailored courses and support for ongoing education and training. For example, this could cover CV writing, finding relevant courses, work placements and taster sessions. Our committed team members also guide people through the relevance of their convictions when applying for specific roles and matching potential jobs and career paths to their interests and skills.

6. Employment support

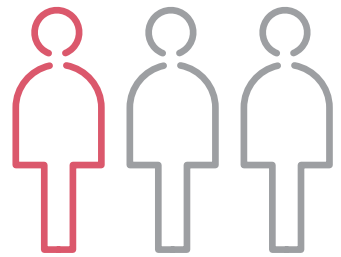
We're determined to reduce the workplace stigma around people with convictions

Our services span several important aspects of employment, from guaranteed sector interviews and developing sustainable skills to finding the right route for each person, whether it's volunteering, employment or starting their own business. People with experience of the justice system often need in-work support too, and we're here for them every step of the way.

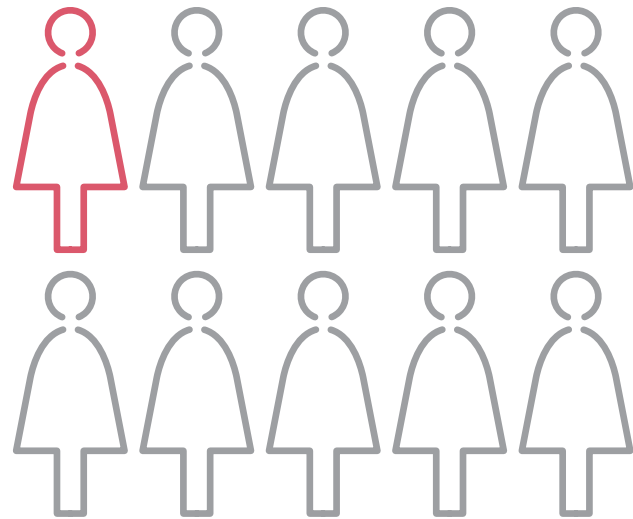


Why Our Work Matters

The number of individuals in Scotland who've touched the justice system is staggering. Whilst we are proud of all we have achieved to date, these statistics provide an incentive to do more and increase the support we can offer to more people, helping them on their journey.

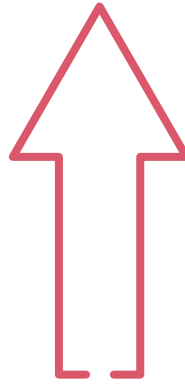


**ONE IN THREE MEN
HAVE A CONVICTION**



**ONE IN TEN WOMEN
HAVE A CONVICTION**

45%
COMMUNITY SENTENCES
ROSE BY 45% BETWEEN
2020/21 AND 2021/22



26.9%
RECONVICTION RATES STOOD
AT 26.9% IN 2020/21

17% OF CONVICTIONS
RESULT IN A
CUSTODIAL
SENTENCE

WE HAVE THE
HIGHEST
PRISON POPULATION
IN WESTERN EUROPE.

Our Focus

We will achieve our strategic priorities by focusing on our people and being a place people want to work, by ensuring accessibility for all who seek our support, by expanding and enhancing our services, and by striving for continuous improvement. We will integrate technology into our approach, empower employers to view those we support as valued candidates, and raise awareness of our work to influence public opinion and policy. Ultimately, we aim to be the leading charity of choice in our sector.

A Place People Want To Work

Our most important resource are our colleagues. At Apex Scotland we're all about developing people. This applies to those we help as they look to put their past behind them, and our team members. Without their commitment, dedication, skills, experience and expertise Apex Scotland would not be able to offer the specialist help and support to our participants.

We aim to attract the brightest talent, providing conditions, benefits and opportunities that allow colleagues to grow and develop with us. We encourage everyone to share their ideas and actively contribute to shaping our services to ensure successful outcomes for everyone involved.

Access For All Who Reach Out

We serve individuals who are often marginalised or overlooked, helping them reintegrate into society by providing the support and resources they need to overcome barriers. We aim to break the cycle of reoffending and enable lasting change.

However, access to the 24 directly commissioned services we provide across eight geographical areas is often determined by specific sets of criteria, limiting the support we can provide. We know many more people would benefit from personalised, non-judgemental, trauma-responsive help delivered at the point of need.

We're determined and committed to address the current postcode lottery that exists for many. In 2025 we will launch our first service that can sit alongside locally commissioned services, The Apex Scotland Foundation Programme. This will initially be launched in Edinburgh City before being rolled out nationwide.

Our programme will allow us to help anyone in Scotland who looks to us for support at any stage in their personal journey. Whether it be working on confidence and self-esteem, enhancing their window of tolerance, increasing their feelings of trust, supporting them with developing autonomy, participating in training or seeking guidance and support for them to enter, secure and maintain employment or volunteering opportunities.

We realise this is ambitious. We're encouraged and spurred on by our success in securing funding for The Apex Scotland Foundation Programme to start in Edinburgh. We're passionate about achieving success, but more importantly committed to helping many more people who deserve our support, together with making genuine, tangible differences to individual lives, families and communities across Scotland.



Maintain And Grow Our Offering

We're privileged to deliver a range of services across a wide geographical spread. The range of services we offer is striking and we've demonstrated the capacity to flex and adapt to local needs and circumstances. Yet all our services embed our ethos and values. The quality of support reflects our golden thread, our commitment to being trauma responsive together with our aspiration to continuously improve and hone our practice.

We continue to value and wish to increase the relationships we have with Local Authorities, Scottish Government and other commissioning bodies. We're committed to continuing to deliver high quality help and support to some of the most vulnerable in our society through contracted work both independently and in partnership with other charities.



Striving For Continuous Improvement

We place particular importance on continuous improvement. We've invested heavily in honing our practice over recent years. We're committed to ensure the methods our colleagues use to support participants are evidence-based, creative, innovative and inventive. We've been privileged through our three-year Partners in Change project (funded through the Robertson Trust), a collaboration with The University of Dundee, The Resilience Learning Partnership and Jan Montgomery Psychotherapy to spend significant time focussing on the development of practice, together with introducing changes resulting in all aspects of Apex Scotland being trauma responsive.

We'll prioritise the development of practice as we move forward, introducing a schedules of work that our practitioners will use when engaging with participants. Each schedule of work will be developed and build on the learning and experience gleaned from Partners in Change. In addition to ensuring our practice is delivered to the highest standards, this approach will introduce consistency of practice across all our services and programmes.

We recognise many of our participants often find it uncomfortable and difficult to open up and engage at the start of their journey with us, their previous experience with figures of authority may have not felt positive. As a result in addition to ensuring our practitioners are empathetic, experienced and approachable we have and will continue to develop a range of resources our colleagues can use that are aimed to stimulate discussion and engagement. All our resources will be designed creatively involving colleagues across the charity. Each resource will be tested and sense checked by a cohort of participants.

Embedding Technology In Our Approach

We understand and appreciate individuals require support in a variety of guises. Whilst we appreciate the benefits of face-to-face support with participants, there are significant numbers of people unable to access this, including those who live in remote areas. Additionally, we know many would benefit from accessing digital information, advice and support.

As an organisation that prides itself on being inclusive, we will strive to develop information and resources that can be accessed remotely. We've prioritised digital transformation and will focus on designing and introducing a series of user friendly tools and resources that can be accessed free of charge from our new website.

We plan to develop a trauma responsive service that individuals can access remotely. Our new website will allow us to provide a suite of information, resources and advice online. In addition, we aim to introduce a chatbox service supporting individuals to gain relevant practical help provided by one of our experienced and skilled practitioners.

Our digital offering will also provide access to up-to-date information and guidance to professionals working with those who have experienced the justice system supporting them in their day-to-day activities together with increasing awareness of support available to facilitate signposting to a relevant Apex Scotland service.

The health, safety and well-being of our colleagues remains a key priority within Apex Scotland. We've already introduced technology to maximise the safety and protection of participants working within communities. We'll continue to explore innovative ways of continuing to support colleagues.

To maximise our ability to manage contracted services, report and monitor our reach and impact we will focus and prioritise data collection together with information collation. We understand the benefits of introducing technology designed to make recording of interactions with participants as easy, stress free and efficient as possible; we will endeavour to make this a priority while keeping the security of this data at the forefront.



Empower Employers

One of our key priorities will be to increase the work we do to support employers to develop the confidence to offer those with experience of the justice system employment opportunities. There is a wealth of untapped talent available to employers. We can help them enjoy the benefits of offering this group a chance to work with them and for them.

Many potential employers will be aware of the services we provide aimed at supporting those who have experience of the justice system in securing and maintaining employment. However fewer know that we can also help employers implement measures that will enable them to employ confidently.

Apex Scotland has developed encouraging relationships with several employers who make positive efforts to recruit those with a conviction. We have worked alongside them to increase their understanding of disclosure processes together with assisting them to consider reasonable adjustments and steps they can take to ensure the experience is positive for both the employer and employee.

By providing employment, training and work experience opportunities, organisations play a key role in reducing the stigma associated with past convictions.

Businesses that recruit and employ this way earn loyalty from offering people a second chance. For many people with convictions, the opportunity to re-enter the workforce is a chance to turn their lives around

A conviction is no legal barrier to offering someone a job. Apex Scotland specialise in bridging the gap between employers and the untapped potential of those with convictions. We aim to increase our employment partners to join a growing community of forward-thinking employers that values diversity and recognises talent over background.

We plan to expand and increase this area of our work, particularly as we develop and introduce our foundation programme. We've recruited a member of staff with a particular brief to liaise and strengthen our links with potential employers.



Become The Go To Charity In Our Sector

Ultimately, we're determined Apex Scotland becomes the go to charity in our field of work as we continue to reinforce our commitment of putting those we care for at the heart of all our decision making.

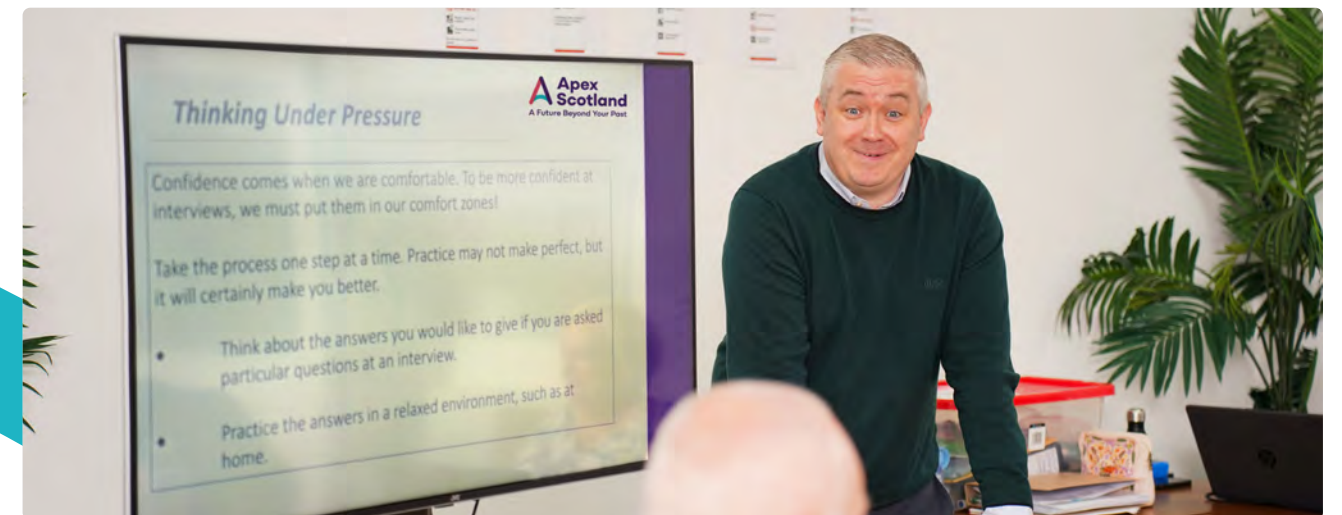


Increase Awareness, Influence Opinion And Policy

We're committed to raising awareness of the issues that impact the lives of those we aim to serve. We understand the complexities that are at play, the influence that poverty, addiction and mental health has on those who have, or are at risk of, experiencing the justice system. We are determined to provide them with a voice, to increase understanding and influence decision makers, to improve the lives and chances of some of the most vulnerable in our society.

We'll continue to engage and participate in several forums aimed at amplifying the voices of those with lived experience, shaping policy together with influencing the design and delivery of services and support.

We'll positively promote best practice, providing comment and increase Apex Scotland's visibility both within our own sector, the media and within wider society. We're determined to change the narrative, breakdown barriers and introduce real systemic change.





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