



UNIVERSITY OF  
LIVERPOOL

**Sophie Bruce**

**The University of Liverpool**

**200923755**

**A RESEARCH REPORT INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT THAT  
APEX TRUST HAS ON SOCIETY BY EXAMINING THE SOCIAL  
COSTS AND BENEFITS TO THE CLIENT USERS AND WIDER  
SOCIETY.**



## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	2
Executive Summary .....	3
Introduction.....	4
Literature Review.....	6
Methodology.....	9
Ethical Considerations.....	11
Findings.....	14
Discussion/Conclusions.....	25
Appendix.....	29

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like thank Kim Hughes, the Project Manager of Apex Trust, for being extremely welcoming during my time with the charity and supporting me with my project. I would also like to thank Carol, Lynne, Hannah and Elvira for also making me feel welcome and being supportive during my time with Apex Trust.

I would also like to thank all the participants who agreed to take part in my research project and gave up their time so the project was made possible. Also, I would like to thank all the other volunteers and service users of Apex Trust, they were all enormously friendly and welcoming.

In addition, I would like to thank Claudette Graham and Interchange, without whom the project would not be made possible.

Lastly, I would like to thank my supervisor Louise Hardwick, who has helped me through every step of the project.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been conducted on behalf of Apex Trust, who offers aftercare and support for ex-offenders in the Merseyside area. Apex Trust is a charity who works closely with ex-offenders to help them integrate back into society by helping them gain education, training or employment. They have two major programmes; the ACT 4 Women project and the Clear Choices project. The ACT 4 Women project is a programme that is specifically designed to help women ex-offenders, whereas the Clear Choices programme is designed to help male prolific and priority offenders. As well as these programmes designed specifically for the needs of their client users, they also offer a unique service in which some of their volunteers have also been through the criminal justice system. Their volunteers are then able to offer a first-hand experience, supporting current client users.

This report aims to investigate the Social Return of Investment (SROI) of the services offered by Apex Trust by looking at the social cost and benefit the service has for its client users as well as wider society. This will be considered through compiling three case studies looking at client users who are at different stages of their offending behaviour. The case studies will include prolific and priority offender, a volunteer peer mentor and a client who is currently under the supervision of probation. By using in-depth interviews, it will examine how Apex Trust has made an impact on their own lives and how they also think the service offered has made a wider impact on society. The questions asked will also highlight the value of the volunteer peer mentors and what this adds to the services offered by Apex.

The response from the service users and the volunteer peer mentors was extremely positive, with them highlighting how Apex Trust has been an important influence in their recovery. They all noted how Apex Trust provides the necessary aftercare which is otherwise lacking in society. Furthermore, they highlight how the service has improved their mental wellbeing and enhanced their employability prospects, and ultimately had a huge social impact on individuals as well as society as a whole.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Interchange

Interchange is a registered charity (charity number: 1038129) which connects local voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) from Merseyside, with higher education institutions. Students at the University of Liverpool work with these local VCOs with the aim of completing a research based project for their final mark, as well as a project that will be of use for the VCO.

## 1.2 The Client Organisation

Apex Trust is a charity in Merseyside which offers support for ex-offenders. They have a series of programmes which are designed to aid ex-offenders in breaking down the barriers they face when moving from a dependency on crime and welfare to becoming a self-reliant member of community. Apex Trust was founded in 1965 by Neville Vincent, a retired barrister. Originally, Apex Trust identified a need for a service for white-collar offenders and sex offenders. By the late 1980s, Apex Trust expanded its services by setting up twenty new MSC programmes for the unemployed. Apex Trust is based on the belief that 'If an ex-prisoner can be found a job, which, first provides him a reasonable standard of living for himself and his family, and second, fulfils his own idea of himself and this engages his self-respect, the responsibility of his eventual return to prison will be diminished'(Apex Trust, 2013). Since the beginning, Apex Trust has strived to create programmes which aim to reduce offending behaviour and address the concerns of potential employers.

Apex Trust takes a woman centred approach, working with female ex-offenders who are located in Merseyside, starting in 2007. Their aim is to help women into education, training and employment. Their current project, ACT 4 Women, has had 69 referrals to the project from July 2015 to July 2016. Out of those original 69 referrals, 51 have successfully gone through the initial assessment and engaged with the project. ACT 4 Women is a unique project which specifically helps female

ex-offenders in gaining employment. By working closely with female offenders, they believe that it will benefit local communities due to women's role within the family (Apex Trust, 2013), ultimately improving social isolation, parenting and opportunities for children. Apex Trust gains its referrals from Merseyside's National Probation Service, Job Centres, Career Connect, Women's Isis Centre, Tomorrow's Women's Wirral, Local Integrated Offender Manager Cohort, Add Action and many more organisations located in Merseyside. Their support is on a one to one basis assisting their clients on disclosure of convictions, creating a C.V and assisting the service users into the appropriate opportunities which can increase their motivation, confidence and self-esteem.

Although Apex Trust is largely concerned with female ex-offenders, they still offer support for male clients. Their Clear Choices project is designed for male prolific and priority offenders (PPO) to help them into securing employment through improving their motivation, skills, learning and resilience. The project is targeted to engage with 20 male PPO's from the St Helens region over a twelve month period. There are currently ten clients engaged with Apex Trust but the numbers vary.

### **1.3 The Project**

The project comprises of researching three service users who are at different stages of offending behaviour. This includes a volunteer peer mentor, a client who is currently in the criminal justice system and a prolific and priority offender. The social return on investment (SROI) model is used to understand the social impacts of the charity and to identify the value to society that is created by Apex Trusts service and who benefits from this service. The project will also be investigating the value of the volunteers, and the benefits of having volunteers who have also been involved in the criminal justice system. By interviewing service users with different backgrounds and circumstances, at different stages of their offending behaviour, the student-researcher will then able to gather evidence to produce case studies and evaluate them, capturing first hand social value and cost to society.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 The Corston Report

Baroness Corston's report, 'Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System' (Home Office, 2007), stressed the need for a prison service which needs to be sensitive to gender, and the different needs of female offenders. For example, female offending is more complex as they are primary carers of dependent children creating dramatic effects on the offender's family. It is estimated that more than 17,240 children were separated from their mother in 2010 by imprisonment (Wilk-Wiffen, 2011). This becomes a societal issue regarding women offenders as only 9% of children whose mothers are in prison are cared for by their fathers in their mother's absence (Corston, 2007). Therefore, it would be in the interest of the public for female offenders to carry out other community measures as opposed to prison as imprisoning mothers carries a cost to children and the state of more than £17 million over a ten year period (New Economics Foundation, 2008). Throughout the report, Baroness Corston continues to comment on the way that the current prison system isn't designed to meet the specific vulnerabilities of female offenders, and how the male centred system has dramatic consequences for women in prison. Since the publication of the Corston report, there have been remarkable changes in the way that women are treated in prison, following the recommendations made. Corston ultimately argued that the only way to reduce female offending is to introduce an approach which considers the needs of women using a multi-agency and women-centred approach, to address the domestic, personal and socio-economic circumstances of female offenders.

### 2.2 Domestic Circumstances

Women offenders often face particular domestic circumstances and are likely to be victims of domestic violence, with 46% of women in prison being identified as having suffered from a history of domestic violence (Corston, 2007). Furthermore, 53% of women in prison reported having experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse

as a child, compared to 27% of men (Ministry of Justice, 2012). This highlights female offender's vulnerability and their need for a women centred approach as they have complex needs, and many female offenders are, and continue to be victims of crimes themselves (Hanson, 2007:3).

## **2.3 Personal Circumstances**

As noted in the Corston report, female offenders are characterised as suffering from mental illness, low self-esteem, eating disorders and substance misuse. It has been reported that just under half of women prisoners were assessed as suffering from anxiety and depression. This is in comparison with just 19% of women in the general UK population (Ministry of Justice, 2013). This statistic emphasizes the need for a more holistic approach as it highlights that women offenders are considered to be vulnerable and disadvantaged.

## **2.4 Socio-economic Circumstances**

Female offenders often face economic hardships such as poverty, isolation and unemployment which often leads them into a life of crime. The Corston report highlights that there is a need for community based services for offenders to aid them in gaining employment and the skills necessary, in order to help them out of poverty and isolation.

## **2.5 Corston's Recommendations**

The Corston report made a number of recommendations to improve the Criminal Justice System for women. With her main recommendations being: Community penalties needs to be the norm for women offenders, rather than prison. Spending on women's prisons should instead be used for community based programmes for women who have offended or at risk of offending. Also, there should be support in place for women who are in the criminal justice system who have been a victim of domestic violence (Corcoran, 2011:26). Corston also made the recommendation that every agency involved in the criminal justice system should strive to increase gender equality and improve the experiences of female offenders.



## **2.6 The Home Office: ‘Prolific and Priority Offender Programme’:**

In September 2004, the Home Office created plans for a Prolific and Priority Offender (PPO) strategy aimed at reducing crime and re-offending for individuals who commit the most crime in society. The central aim of the PPO strategy is to reduce crime and re-offending by developing a joined approach, whereby local agencies manage a small group of offenders who commit the most crime (Home Office, 2004). The Home Office estimates that PPO's account for around 50% of all crime, with them continuing to be the main causes of acquisitive crimes such as domestic burglary and vehicle crime and these are often linked to high levels of substance misuse by them (Plymouth Gov, 2009:2). An evaluation in 2007 of the PPO programme showed significant successes of the local schemes in tackling the offending behaviour of the most difficult and damaging offenders (Home Office, 2009: 3). After the programme was evaluated, it showed that there was a 62% reduction in recorded convictions among the first offenders selected as PPO's in September and October 2004, over a 17-month period (Home Office, 2009:6). As PPO's are a group of persistent offenders, specific measures need to be taken in order to combat these issue. Offenders who were identified in the 2009 PPO cohort were 97% male (Home Office, 2010: 9). This highlights the need for gender specific requirements to aid the rehabilitation for those male PPO's, as the cycle of their offending behaviour needs to be broken.

## **2.7 Developments from the ‘Prolific and Priority Offender Programme’:**

Since the Programme began in 2004, there are now local PPO schemes covering every Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) area in England (Home Office, 2009:6), with Apex Trust being a key agency in offering support for, currently, ten male PPO's. By engaging with the male PPO's, Apex Trust provide crucial support to help resettle and rehabilitate the PPO's, ultimately preventing the cycle of

offending behaviour.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### **3.1 Research Aim**

The aim of the research is to assess the impact that Apex Trust has on society using Social Return on Investment (SROI). This involves investigating the social costs and benefits on wider society by helping ex-offenders gain education, training or employment and whether Apex Trust has helped them move forward in their life.

### **3.2 Methodological Strengths**

The qualitative nature of semi-structured interviews which were used for data collection, allows the interview to follow relevant topical trajectories in the conversation. Which may differ from the previously thought out interview structure. Thus allowing themes to emerge (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). This arguably makes the data more valid as it allows the service users to express what they believe to be the most valuable experience Apex Trust has offered them. They are then in a position to offer an opinion in how this has benefitted wider society. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview therefore allows the interview to address certain aspects of the research question, yet leaves space for the participants to offer new meanings to the topic of study (Galletta, 2013:1). Furthermore, as a semi-structured interview often adopts a conversational tone, it means that the respondents may be more open as a rapport may be built as a result. By eliminating power dynamics in the interview, the researcher will be perceived less as an authoritative figure, creating more open answers.

### **3.3 Methodological Weaknesses**

Although there are clear advantages of using semi-structured as a method for data collection, particularly within this research project, there are also some limitations that need to be considered. For example, it is a very time consuming method,

including the time conducting the interviews and the time spent transcribing the interviews. Furthermore, due to the interviews having the potential to digress from the topic of conversation, irrelevant information is likely to be produced. This can create more of a time consuming aspect to research. Which also means that only a small number of interviews were able to take place. As this was only a small scale research project, there was only time to complete in-depth interviews with three service users. Although the interviews with these respondents produced extremely rich data, it isn't representative of all of the service users of Apex Trust. The reason being that the data produced was on the lives and experiences of only these three individuals.

### **3.4 Sampling**

As time was a focal barrier in this sociological research, it meant that there were particular methodological considerations. Considering this factor, participants were chosen on who was available and willing to participate in the research. After discussing the requirements with the project manager the number of participants needed for the research was determined. After which the appropriate people were contacted, and then the volunteers from each group came forward. The project manager was able to pre-select participants based on whether they match the criteria of the research, and also find participants who posed the least amount of risk to both themselves and the researcher.

## 4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As part of the University of Liverpool procedure, it was ensured that the correct ethical guidelines were followed during the research with Apex Trust. During the research, the student-researcher was required to follow the British Sociological Association (BSA) guidelines concerning ethics. This is to protect both the researcher and the research participants. The project was agreed with the university, incorporating a project strategy and learning agreement that was modified throughout the course of the research to create the most ethical research possible. The particular focus being the research participants as they are deemed a vulnerable group. According to (Nyamathi, 1998:65 cited in Liamputtong, 2007: 3), vulnerable groups are categorized as those who are ‘impoverished, disenfranchised, and/or subject to discrimination, intolerance, subordination, and stigma’. Therefore, it can be argued that as ex-offenders often face discrimination when looking for employment or training, they are a vulnerable group according to Nyamathi. Taking this into consideration, ethics was an important aspect in the research as there was a possibility that they may disclose information about their lives which could be upsetting and traumatic. Harm can be described as ‘inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts’ (Diener and Crandall, 1978). Due to this, it is of utmost importance to avoid harm to respondents at all costs.

### 4.1 Informed Consent

Prior to any data collection, all potential participants were given a participation information leaflet explaining to them what the research entailed. This included what would be required of the participants, how the information would be used by both the researcher and Apex Trust and any potential risks to the participants. This is to ensure that the participants are fully aware of what the research is about as well as their rights within it. This included an explanation of their right to withdraw up until data collection and their right to anonymity. The participant information leaflet also

reiterated the fact that they are under no obligation to participate if they don't wish to.

## **4.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

As the student-researcher was examining a vulnerable group who may produce data surrounding sensitive topics, they may have a great interest in remaining anonymous. Furthermore, as the research was also investigating the quality of the services offered by Apex Trust, it remains important to keep all respondents confidential. This in turn makes the respondents feel comfortable about offering information about the organisation. This is important in the research as it minimises the risk of their identity and views being disclosed, eradicating potential risks to the participants which may occur if their identity wasn't kept confidential (Jamison, 2007).

Furthermore, Apex Trust have their own organisational practices concerning the service user's confidentiality. In their statement of service they explain that confidentiality of a client will only be exposed to a third party with the consent of the client. However, they do state that confidentiality may be breached if certain information is disclosed. This includes issues such as whether the risk to an individual (particularly a child) is a real one, and also if the degree of harm is considered to be serious, and a breach of confidence may avoid harm. Therefore, as a researcher working within Apex Trust's code of practice, it meant that if any information was disclosed to the researcher regarding an admittance of current offending behaviour, or continued use of drugs and alcohol, the researcher would be under obligation to inform the team manager. However, having said this, all information regarding the obligations to inform an appropriate personnel if such issues were disclosed were stated in the participant information leaflet.

In addition, participants were made aware that their names would not be used in any published data or the final client report, with the use of pseudo names in the final report. To respect the participant's confidentiality, only the researcher had any access to the raw data and was saved to the researcher's secure Liverpool M:Drive

and deleted as soon as analysed.

### **4.3 Extra Risks of Harm Associated with Involvement in the Project**

Due to the nature of the research, certain topics may have cropped up which could be deemed as sensitive, imposing the threat of risk to the participant. To avoid this risk of emotional harm as much as possible, the research methods were designed to eradicate the possibility of exploring topics that may cause upset to the participant. The use of semi-structured interviews meant that only questions regarding the social return of investment of the services offered by Apex Trust would be asked and not questions about their previous offending behaviour.

## 5. FINDINGS

As part of the research, three ex-offenders were interviewed who are at different stages of the criminal justice system, and are involved in the charity Apex Trust. These include a PPO, a service user who is currently under the supervision of probation and a volunteer peer mentor. By researching service users who are at different stages of their offending, it gives an insight into the value of the service that Apex Trust offers for a range of clients. This includes the social impact, in terms of cost and benefit, to the service users, the volunteers and also wider society. The findings from the three interviews will be laid out in a case study style, with the common themes of the three interviews being drawn on in a separate section of the report.

### **5.1 Case Study 1: Prolific and Priority Offender**

**Profile:** David is a PPO who has been involved in the criminal justice system for 27 years. He has been involved in criminality from a young age, with his first experience of the criminal justice system being Borstal at sixteen. David has had a difficult relationship with drug misuse in the past, with an overall of 140 convictions which are mainly a result of addiction. David claims that prison was an easy option for him, stating that he *'found it quite easy, there was no responsibility for me, nothing to worry about'* and also how prison was a *'health farm'*, and saving his life at times. David highlights how in the past prison wasn't a deterrent for him as he wasn't concerned with the prospect of going to prison as it acted as a form of stability in his life. He highlights how there was nothing in motion to break his cycle of offending. However, throughout the interview he highlights the need for services similar to Apex Trust, and how the charity has been a fundamental part in breaking the pattern of his offending behaviour.

#### **5.1.1 Lack of Aftercare before Apex Trust:**

One key point that David highlighted in the interview was the lack of aftercare in the past which has led to his continuous cycle of offending:

*'No help, you come out, you're given your discharge grant and get on with it. You know, there was no aftercare, even when I've done big sentences'*

*'There was no asking do you want to go on to ETE (education, training and employment), I didn't know what was available, this was the protocol, let's just get on with it and get it done, and inevitably I used to breach my license anyway and end up finishing sentences off.'*

For offenders like David there has been a previous lack of aftercare, and the time spent under probation isn't enough to help them adjust back to a law-abiding life. It is believed that a strong discharge plan implemented prior to the release and continued once the offender is released is necessary in order to combat reoffending (Mellow and Christian, 2008: 339). However, David states that for him and by his past experiences there were little interventions or help in order to help him reintegrate back into the community.

*'I needed more than nine months, I've been in it for more than 27 years, I need more than nine months to cure me and then that's where Apex kick in and help me.'*

Apex Trust works closely with ex-offenders to help them gain either education, training or employment, offering continuous support which isn't limited by time. It can be seen from the previous quote that Apex Trust offers the support necessary when compulsory probation has ended. Apex's services can be seen as invaluable here as they are a third party which offer help and support for those ex-offenders who feel they need more time and help to adjust back into society.

Furthermore, David believes that there is a need for more services similar to Apex Trust to provide support once probation and community services have finished:

*'I know for a fact that as soon as they're over there's no one to help them people get over that, they get support up until then but like I said it*



*takes some people longer than twelve months to get sorted, so that's where I do believe that services like this [Apex] are needed, definitely.'*

*'If you're a bad offender you'll get more help right, but if you're a low to medium offender you get cut off after nine months, twelve months and then that's it then. Low to medium is the progression that I made, low to medium to high. If there's no integration in the middle to help those people then they're going to progress to the high offending.'*

This stresses the need for Apex and similar services because without these services it can be an easy progression for minor offenders to progress to serious offending as they are left in the community with little further support. This ultimately has a huge impact on the government and wider society as it reduces people entering a cycle of offending behaviour.

### **5.1.2 Apex Trust improves Employability Prospects:**

In addition to providing further aftercare for ex-offenders, Apex Trust helps them with their future employability prospects as part of their support. Apex trust has a strong focus on helping ex-offenders gain Education, Training or Employment (ETE), with this being a valuable service in their rehabilitation process.

David spoke about how Apex Trust teaches him how to improve his C.V and disclose any convictions in an appropriate way, in turn increasing his employability prospects:

*'They make the crap look good ... They actually make my qualifications that took me years to get, they just look standard compared to my 27 years in madness, and it's a good selling point for the work I'm going into. It's like a first-hand experience and that I've come out on the other side.'*

This emphasizes how Apex Trust offers support to ex-offenders in how to use their experiences as a positive for the work they wish to go into. By giving their clients the right resources and knowledge in order to enhance their C.V, it means that they will be more likely to enter ETE offering them more stability in their lives and integrating them back into society, reducing their offending behaviour. David is now currently

volunteering with User Voice, with promising outcomes for the future.

### **5.1.3 Apex Trust as a Positive Environment:**

As Apex Trust is an organisation who work alongside clients who are in similar situations to one another it offers a positive environment. David highlighted the welcoming atmosphere of Apex Trust:

*'I do consider them friends. It's just the fact that I can drop in at any time I want'*

By offering a place where David feels comfortable, it means that he feels he always has somewhere to turn. This is an important feature of Apex Trust as they are a stabilising influence in David's life, offering him support when he needs it the most:

*'I came in here last year and I was nine stone wet through, and I won't lie to you now, I even attempted suicide, my life was that low ...then I just thought of Apex Trust ... I thought "I wonder if I could just go back there and see them and see what they can do for me", and then straight away they were on it and they knew exactly from my past how to help me and push me.'*

*'These [Apex] planted the seeds for me to get where I am now, so I'm like a flower that comes back for a watering.'*

David emphasises the fact that Apex Trust was the place that he turned to when his life was at the lowest point. This highlights the emotional support that Apex Trust offers for ex-offenders, and the positive social impact that this has on individuals and society. By providing David with the support and confidence that he needs, he can then contribute to society in a positive way.

One key achievement of Apex Trust is with their PPO programme, shown in the interview with David. In the interview, David made it obvious that he previously felt that other organisations have failed him in supporting his rehabilitation process.

However, since being part of Apex Trust he has improved, mainly he says through the support of Apex Trust.

## **5.2 Case Study 2: Volunteer Peer Mentor**

**Profile:** Jane is currently a volunteer peer mentor for Apex Trust and has been a volunteer with the organisation since November 2015. She was interested in this line of volunteering after completing a foundation degree in criminal justice in 2010. Jane's initial career goal was to apply for the police service. However as she started to understand the criminal justice system, she became interested in working alongside offenders and helping in the rehabilitation process in order to build stronger communities. She first got introduced to Apex Trust through St Helens volunteer centre. With Apex Trust, Jane has completed a Peer Mentoring Programme which gave her a good understanding of the procedures in the workplace including safeguarding, diversity and confidentiality procedures. The training course gave Jane the ability to promote Apex Trust and to help recruit women onto the peer mentoring course who also had a criminal record. She also helps women gain employment or helps them access educational programmes. Jane believes that the rewards of the ACT 4 Women project at Apex Trust is more rewarding for both the women themselves as well as wider society.

### **5.2.1 Advantages of using Volunteer Peer Mentors:**

A main point that was raised by Jane in the interview was the advantages of using volunteer peer mentors who have been through the criminal justice system, as opposed to volunteers who have no direct experiences themselves. This unique element of Apex Trust's services creates a number of positive impacts in Jane's opinion:

***'You can just sympathise with them, as people understand how much it affects you when you end up with a criminal record. Every situation is different, it's not just in black and white.'***

***‘People without a criminal record don’t really understand how it makes you feel, like not worthy of that job because of the criminal record and like it does affect you massively ... I know how it all works, I know the feeling before you’re going to court, the during and afterwards.’***

Jane highlights the value of the volunteer peer mentors. As they have been through the system themselves they’re able to offer support to new service users in a unique way. As they understand the whole process they are arguably more welcoming and understanding, meaning that new service users will feel more comfortable attending workshops that are held at Apex Trust.

Not only is the volunteer peer mentor service beneficial for the new service users, but it is expressed that the service is also beneficial for the volunteers themselves. It was clear that the programme allowed the volunteers to share their own experiences as well as gain invaluable knowledge about ETE, Jane commented on the positive experiences that the volunteer peer mentoring had on her own life:

***‘Before I came here my C.V was bland but now I have all different training courses and I’ve got the volunteer peer mentor, and it’s a qualification now. You can put it down on your C.V.’***

***‘Even the volunteer peer mentor course is really good in itself because it builds on your confidence and enhances your C.V and you progress from there.’***

By giving ex-offenders the chance to volunteer, it gives them valuable experience which can be used as a way to enhance their C.V, increasing their employability prospects. It allows them to be part of an organisation which they feel proud to be part of. In addition, Apex Trust understands the needs of all its volunteers, and is arguably more accommodating than other voluntary positions:

***‘If you’ve got problems that will you stop you volunteering you can talk to them they’ll help you sort it out.’***

*‘The volunteering fits in with you.’*

Not only does the service appeal for more new client users, but also continues to help and support the peer mentors, being a volunteering opportunity for them. This has benefits for society as it creates volunteering opportunities for ex-offenders whilst also supporting service users in gaining ETE.

### **5.2.2 Value of Services:**

The uniqueness of the service being directed at female offenders was raised and Jane commented on how Apex Trust has a slot in the Women’s Wirral which is a women’s only centre. As Apex Trust direct their services towards female ex-offenders it becomes a safe place for women who lack confidence and who may feel uncomfortable in male dominated environments. The gendered approach is an aspect which is particularly appealing to some women ex-offenders.

Furthermore, Jane comments on the way that Apex Trust tailors its services in order to suit the needs of their clients and the goals that they are aiming for:

*‘Apex is there not just to be there but to focus on their needs, how they can meet them and overcome them to get to the places that they want to go.’*

*‘They still have the same criteria for each person to support and encourage and enable and empower them to meet their end goal.’*

By creating an action plan for each client it makes the process after prison and probation less daunting. Jane commented on how Apex Trust tailors its services to suit the needs of each of the clients.

### **5.2.3 On-going Support:**

One important feature that was a reoccurring theme throughout the interview was the on-going support that Apex Trust provides for all their clients and their volunteers. Without Apex Trust, service users often find themselves isolated and with

no direction in their life. Jane particularly comments on the way that the service they offer is a 'stepping stone' into the future:

***'It's the foundation to you taking the next step ... without Apex Trust there's no stepping stone into the future. It's always you've done this and then you're left to go back out into the community, you don't know where to turn at all.'***

The continued support is a valued aspect, with Apex Trust striving to stay in touch with all their service users. As a result of this, it was said that the continued support also improved the confidence of many of their clients:

***'At the beginning you can tell that they have no confidence, that they don't know where to go, but every woman that I went on the course with are at the right place they want to be.'***

It is therefore obvious that Apex trust offers an important service which is lacking in other organisations. Jane commented on the fact that she had never come across an organisation that offers similar service to Apex Trust, highlighting the need Apex Trust and other similar organisations

Throughout the interview with Jane, she was extremely supportive of the services offered by Apex Trust, both for the volunteers and the service users. She commented on the positive social impacts that their services have had on individuals and wider society.

## **5.3 Case Study 3: Client Currently under Probation**

**Profile:** Melissa is currently under the supervision of probation after she pleaded guilty to the offence she committed. Melissa is also presently a service user of Apex Trust. She first came to Apex Trust after being referred by her offender manager from probation in August 2015. Melissa had seen probation as a positive experience for herself, and she highlights that without probation she wouldn't have been made aware of Apex Trust and the services they offer. Melissa has been actively engaged in the ACT 4 Women project and has also applied to become a volunteer peer mentor. She successfully completed her training for the role in November 2015. She highlights how her schedule is filled with volunteering opportunities with Apex Trust and how this has had a positive influence on her life.

### **5.3.1 Increase in Mental Wellbeing:**

Melissa comments on how her involvement in the charity has allowed to her to make progression in her life as it deters her from continuing down the path of alcohol and drug consumption as well as increasing her confidence and overall mental state as part of the process:

*'My days are quite filled up at the minute with volunteering with Apex, which is not only helping me stay away from the drink and drugs, its helping me to meet new people and build my confidence as well.'*

*'My confidence is definitely one that has grown.'*

By helping to improve the client's confidence and general wellbeing, it arguably has social benefits for wider society. The general motivation of the clients improves, meaning that they will be more likely to hold down employment, education or training. This reduces the likelihood of re-offending as factors such as employment can be seen as a way to maintain distance from crime and it is accepted that

legitimate work can have a positive effect on reducing offending behaviour (King, 2013).

Melissa also comments on how since joining Apex Trust she is more motivated to start and complete projects and activities:

*‘My attitude is positive at the moment and my mental state is so much better so I feel more focused, so I’m kind of starting things now and finishing them rather than just quitting half way through.’*

### **5.3.2 Benefits for Wider Social Relations:**

As well as Apex Trust having direct positive consequences for the service users themselves, there are also positive impacts on wider social relationships, such as the family and friends of the service users. Melissa comments on the positive impacts that Apex Trust has had on her own family:

*‘They are definitely less stressed and are happier since I’ve had the probation and been part of Apex Trust.’*

*‘You know my family are forever telling me how proud they are of me and how I’ve turned my life around in a year.’*

By improving the lives of both the client and their family, the strength in relations within the community has grown with the help of Apex Trust. This highlights the wider social effects that Apex trust has. This is beneficial for society as it improves the mental wellbeing of all those who are directly involved. Resulting in the lessening of wider implications associated with previous offending behaviour.

### **5.3.3 A Need for Similar Services to Apex Trust:**

Melissa stressed the need for similar services to Apex Trust in the Liverpool community. She indicates that there is a lack of services like Apex Trust which help ex-offenders adjust into the community once probation has ended:

*‘When I was in a really bad state I did try and google and I was searching*



*into places for any kind of help. For me, I only got introduced into Apex through probation ... I wouldn't have known anyone else or anywhere else to go.'*

It is indicated that the charity is a relatively low-profile service which is difficult to come by without the referral of other institutions such as probation. This suggests a need for more advertising in order for the service to reach those who are in need of the support they offer. It was suggested by Melissa that there should be an expansion of Apex Trust and that more people should be made aware of their services:

*'I think Apex could expand that little bit more and get around so people are aware of it that would definitely benefit the city.'*

*'They need more advertising, more women should have access to Apex.'*

The points raised highlight how the service users believe that the charity has had such a positive impact on their lives that it needs to reach those who are closed off from the service. Furthermore, Melissa comments on the way that Apex Trust acted as a stepping stone from probation to help her adjust back into the wider community:

*'Don't get me wrong, the treatment centre did me good and kept me off the drink and drugs for a while but once I left the treatment centre I was kind of stuck and that, where do I go from here ... But I just think that without Apex I don't really know what I would be doing with my days or what I would be doing with my life.'*

Melissa highlights how Apex Trust is helping her to adjust back into the community and gives her purpose to her time, meaning she will be less likely to reoffend.

It is made obvious in the interview the positive impacts that Apex Trust as a service has had on Melissa's life. Since being part of the organisation she has expressed how her confidence has increased a great deal and also the friendships she has made as direct result of Apex Trust. She expresses how she would be lost without Apex Trust as they act as a stepping stone between probation and the wider community. She says how she wouldn't know what she would be doing with her time

without the help and support of Apex Trust. Overall, her interview outlined the positive aspects of Apex Trust and how there is a need for more services similar to Apex to offer the support that she regards as valuable to her rehabilitation process.

## **6. DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Key Understandings**

#### **LACK OF AFTERCARE PRIOR TO APEX TRUST**

All of the participants commented on the way that Apex Trust provides essential aftercare which is otherwise lacking in the community. They comment on the way that Apex Trust provides support for them where other services have ended. Regarding the social return on investment, Apex Trust is beneficial for the community as they help ex-offenders adjust back into community living when probation has ended. By integrating ex-offenders back into society and to help eradicate the social exclusion they face, Apex Trust has an impact on the social and financial cost to society. Social exclusion of prisoners and their families inflicts a range of additional costs to society including the cost of homelessness, drug treatment, family poverty, taking children into care, and the benefit and lost tax cost of unemployment (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002:127). As Apex Trust's aftercare programmes aim to help the service users into ETE, they help erase problems of social exclusion. It has been estimated that by preventing an offender from re-offending in any one year produced a saving of around £31,000 over and above any costs to the criminal justice system (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002:128). As the Corston Report recommended that the spending on women's prisons should instead be used for community based programmes for women who have offended or at risk of offending, it is clear that Apex Trust has been heavily involved in this recommendation. Apex Trust help women within the community to integrate back into social life, providing the necessary support and aftercare that women offenders specifically need. Furthermore, due to their ACT 4 Women programme that is aimed at women, they are following Corston's recommendation that there needs to be a female-centred approach in the aftercare provided for female ex-offenders who face

a multiple of complex issues. Furthermore, regarding the Prolific and Priority Offender Strategy that was implemented in 2004, Apex Trust have been a key component in this scheme helping PPO's in Merseyside. As the PPO government scheme showed there to be a 62% reduction in convictions, Apex Trust is clearly a major part in this success. The PPO participant highlighted that Apex Trust was a key in deterring his offending behaviour. He also highlights that the aftercare provided was more valued than other organisations that he has been part of in the past.

## **IMPROVEMENT OF GENERAL MENTAL-WELLBEING**

Furthermore, all of the participants involved in the research commented on the improvements of their own and other's confidence and overall mental wellbeing since becoming involved in Apex Trust. This highlights the social impact on the service users themselves and wider society. It was found that drug, alcohol and mental health problems may, unless dealt with, be made worse in prison and the criminal justice system. Often any progress made in custody is lost due to poor aftercare on release (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002:129). All three interviewees commented on how Apex Trust has been fundamental in improving their mental state, by increasing their confidence and combatting depression. Regarding the female clients that were interviewed, Apex Trust have followed the key points made in the Corston Report to design community care that is focused on female offenders. Corston draws attention to how women are more likely to be suffering with mental health issues, low self-esteem, eating disorders and substance misuse. Also, just under half of women prisoners suffer from anxiety and depression. Due to the women-centred approach that Apex adopts, they cater to the needs of women offenders and are aware of their complex needs. Both the female service user and the female volunteer peer mentor interviewed highlight how since becoming a part of Apex Trust, their confidence has increased as well as their self-esteem. They also comment on the way that they have made many friends as part of the process.

In addition, Apex Trust are also fulfilling the aims set out by the Government to combat the cycle of offending by PPO's. By giving support to the PPO client interviewed, they have given him increased confidence and self-esteem. By

providing support to the client, he highlighted that Apex had given him an avenue to turn to when he is feeling at his lowest. By increasing the client's general mental wellbeing, it reduces the likelihood of him reoffending and abusing substances.

## **ENHANCES EMPLOYABILITY PROSPECTS**

Another key theme that was highlighted by the participants was how Apex Trust aided their rehabilitation by helping them enhance their employability prospects. The participants emphasized how Apex Trust has guided them in improving their C.Vs, as well as helping them to apply for necessary access courses, and documentation. They highlighted the way that Apex Trust provided the necessary guidance for them to progress in their lives. This is important regarding the issues that female offenders face, raised by Baroness Corston. Prior to entering the criminal justice system, Corston highlighted the poor socio-economic position of female offenders, with them facing poverty, isolation and unemployment. By providing female ex-offenders with necessary resources to progress with employment, Apex Trust have successfully aided their service users out of a cycle of offending. This is also true of PPO clients, by giving the necessary resources to help their clients gain employment, it deters offending behaviour. As all of the participants emphasized the importance of Apex Trust helping them to enhance their employability prospects, it shows how they value this service offered by the charity. The results are often dramatic with many of the service users going on to enter either education, training or employment.

## **CONCLUSION**

After conducting the research for Apex Trust and being involved with the charity for nine months, it is clear the charity offers invaluable services for ex-offenders across the Merseyside area. By having several programmes designed for the needs of different clients, Apex Trust offers support and aftercare for a range of ex-offenders. Their ACT 4 Women programme is highly valued by their female service users, as it offers guidance and support for women who have specific needs, which are ignored in the male dominated criminal justice system. The unique volunteer peer mentoring offers opportunities which may not otherwise be available. Knowledge gained through the interviews showed that the volunteer peer mentoring not only benefitted

the new clients as they had support from individuals who had also been through the system, but also how this service increased the confidence and well-being of the volunteers. Furthermore, Apex Trust's Clear Choices programme designed to support PPO's in St Helens, has clearly made a huge difference in the lives of these individuals. By offering the necessary aftercare, Apex Trust has been a major influence in preventing the continuous cycle of offending behaviour. However, it was brought up in the interview with the PPO client that there is a need in the community for more services which are designed to support male offenders. Although the Corston report didn't focus on the problems that male offenders face in the criminal justice system, it was brought to my attention that there are a lack of services in the community to support male offenders. Namely the problems they face as a result of entering the criminal justice system.

## 7. APPENDIX

### 7.1 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Apex Trust (2013) 'Apex Trust' <http://www.apextrust.com/> [Accessed 13/03/2016]

Cohen, D and Crabtree, B (2006) 'Qualitative Research Guidelines Project' July 2006. <http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html> [Accessed 23/02/2016]

Corcoran, M (2011) 'After Corston, the rehabilitation revolution?' Criminal Justice Matters, 85:1, 26-27

Corston, J (2007) 'Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System' London: Home Office

Diener, R, and Crandall, (1978) Ethics in Social and Behavioural Research. University of Chicago Press. United States of America.

Galletta, A (2013) 'Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication' New York University Press: New York and London.

Hanson, D (2007) 'The Government's Response to the Report by Baroness Corston of a Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System' London: Ministry of Justice

Home Office (2004) 'Prolific and Other Priority Offender Strategy-supplementary Home Office guidance: Rehabilitate and Resettle Framework' Ministry of Justice

Home Office (2009) 'Prolific and Other Priority Offender Programme: Five Years On: Maximising the Impact' Ministry of Justice.

Home Office (2010) 'Prolific and Other Priority Offenders: results from the 2009

*cohort for England and Wales*' Gov.uk [Accessed 14/04/16]

Jamison, W (2007) *'Confidentiality in Social Science Research'* WPI  
Interdisciplinary & Global Studies Division

<https://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Projects/confidentiality.html> [Accessed  
22/10/2015]

King, S (2013) *'Perceptions of work as a route away from crime'* Safer  
Communities Vol. 12 Issue. 3 PP 122-132 Emerald Group Publishing Limited

Liamputtong, P (2007) *'Researching the Vulnerable'* Sage Publications: London

Mellow, J and Christian, J (2008) *'Transitioning Offenders to the Community:A  
Content Analysis of Reentry Guides'* Journal of Offender Rehabilitation Vol. 47  
PP. 339-355 The Haworth Press

Ministry of Justice (2012) *'Prisoners' Childhood and Family Backgrounds'*  
London: Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Justice (2013) *'Gender Differences in Substance Misuse and Mental  
Health amongst Prisoners'* London: Ministry of Justice

New Economics Foundation (2008) *'Unlocking Value: How we all benefit from  
investing in alternative to prison for women offenders'* London: New Economics  
Foundation

Plymouth Gov (2009) *'Prolific and other Priority Offenders'*

[http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/prolific\\_and\\_priority\\_offenders\\_2.pdf](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/prolific_and_priority_offenders_2.pdf) [Accessed  
14/04/16]

Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *'Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners'* Office of  
the Deputy Prime Minister: England

Wilk-Wiffen, S (2011) *'Voice of a Child'* London: Howard League for Penal  
Reform







- 4) Has becoming part of Apex Trust helped you change the direction of your life?
- 5) And finally, did anybody else contribute to the change in your offending behaviour other than Apex Trust? Either personal or other organisations?  
-Who was it who helped you change more?

