

## **APEX SCOTLAND**

Apex Scotland has been working with people in the criminal justice system in Scotland for almost thirty years. In this time we have observed the impact of changes in the healthcare provision available to our client group and welcome the improvements which have accrued from engaging local NHS provision into prison establishments.

Sadly the one area where we have noted least improvement is in the availability and quality of mental health care, an issue which significantly affects the majority of those we find ourselves working with. Research in Polmont YOI indicates that over 90% of young men admitted had significant loss and separation related trauma resulting in post traumatic stress disorders, over 90% had been excluded from school and experienced social exclusion and depression and very high numbers were judged to have other diagnosable mental health illness or disorders.

Most of our clients report little or no professional help other than assessment, and very few moved smoothly from prison into local mental health care provision. At best there seems to be a significant waiting time between release and being able to get a local appointment, complicated by a reluctance to further engage with the 'authorities' or to manage their chaotic lifestyles to comply with appointments.

The key gaps in provision for our clients are reported as: poor or non-existent access to CAMH services; judgemental attitudes and selective denial of service based on perceptions of behaviour or compliance likelihood; patchy provision of alternatives to custody across the country leading to use of prison as 'the best place for them to access treatment'; lack of provision for young people at risk of exclusion in schools and lack of integrated health transition pathways into, through and out of prisons. The ambition of the recent changes was to improve these integrated pathways but for mental health matters there still seems to be either a lack of resource or an unwillingness to engage with those deemed 'more bad than mad' (sic).

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*(Alan is a former RMN, Nurse Tutor and Director of Mental Health Modernisation)*