Improving research use in the third sector:

Learning from work with Apex Scotland (Project report)

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Apex Scotland is a third sector organisation working throughout Scotland to improve the lives of people who have offended or are at risk of offending. They are involved in a range of interventions: from developing employment skills, running a school inclusion unit, and providing drug and alcohol treatment and support (www.apexscotland.org.uk).

This report details the findings of a project to improve research use in the third sector undertaken between July 2011 - July 2012, funded by the ESRC and Apex Scotland (RES-173-27-0231).

The project was funded through the ESRC's third-sector placement fellowship scheme and involved the principal investigator, Claire Lightowler, working with Apex Scotland for one day a week over the course of the year.

Key findings

- The project helped to raise awareness of research evidence and the associated benefits it can offer.
- For individual staff members, the project helped raise awareness of specific pieces of evidence and helped individuals work through potential implications and ways of using relevant evidence to inform their work.
- There was a real interest and appetite for using research across the organisation. In particular, in general, Apex staff enjoyed being asked to consult research and many did so when asked to do so.
- Research champions have emerged and have self-identified throughout the project period. These are generally not the initial champions recruited before the project began, who were largely nominated by managers.
- The project provided support for those interested in championing research evidence, and energised those with this interest.
- Research is still seen as an additional task, often not seen to be part of people's responsibilities, not for everyone and not a priority. Therefore, people do not perceive they have time to reflect on research.
- It was difficult to ensure research activities were jointly owned, let alone led by, Apex staff (with the placement holder tending to fulfil this role).
- On reflection, more could have been done to link the need for better evidence use with wider developments across Apex around organisational development, improvement and change, which may have helped to secure commitment for specific activities.
- There is real potential for the work undertaken during this placement to help Apex further develop and grow as a learning organisation, though to fully capitalise on the work to date would require an organisational commitment to take this forward.

Reflections for other third sector organisations

Whilst this report has generated a range of lessons and suggestions for Apex Scotland to explore, wider lessons and ideas have emerged that other third sector organisations interested in improving their use of research, may find useful.

- **Champions:** There can be value in identifying, encouraging and supporting research champions, who have energy and commitment to improve research use. These champions can be either members of the third sector organisation or from external organisations, and can play a leading role in demonstrating the value of research across the wider organisation. If there is an obvious champion within their organisation they may be willing to take on the role of a nominated lead for improving research use, and potentially coordinate and support a range of research related activities. If there are several champions with an interest in supporting improvements in research use there may be value in setting up a working group to explore research findings and their potential implications for the organisation, and to inform and coordinate activities to improve research use.

- **Research tasks**: There may be an unknown appetite for reflecting on research findings in your organisation which has never been uncovered because people have never specifically been asked to consult research. Therefore, a potentially quick and easy way to encourage greater research

use amongst individuals in your organisation may be to ask your staff to consult a piece of research, and perhaps discuss it at a future team meeting or write down and share their reflections on what the research may mean for them.

- **Research is for you!:** People working in third sector organisations, particularly those in service delivery roles, often don't think research is something for them to engage with, either thinking its not part of their job, it's just a task for senior members of staff or its for policy focused staff. There also appears to be something about the term 'research' which is a barrier for people, perhaps particularly front-line practitioners. Therefore, there can be value in paying particular attention to demystifying what research is, and specifically encouraging and supporting research use amongst different types of staff at all levels in the organisation.

- **Organisational commitment:** There are a range of methods third sector organisations could employ to demonstrate their commitment to being evidence-informed, such as:
  - o Create a report setting out the evidence base for your organisational aims, outcomes and activities.
  - o Add keeping up to date with research evidence as a specific requirement in job descriptions, criteria for promotion and encourage this to be identified as a developmental area in appraisals.
  - o Ensure the induction process makes it clear if consulting research is considered to be part of staff roles, and if so provide training or other forms of support.
  - o Invest in building internal research capacity through funding posts (or applying for funding) to support the use of research and evaluation, or look to commission research and evaluation of direct relevance to your organisation. There is potential here to explore ideas with university and college staff who may be looking for projects for their students.
  - o Make reference to the evidence base a requirement in business case, project planning and related documentation.
  - o Provide dedicated time for staff to consult research or conduct small scale research projects.

- **Away Days and team meetings:** Use existing meetings as spaces to consider further research reflection, perhaps encouraging discussion of particular pieces of research in team meetings or using away days to allow deeper reflection away from the day to day work pressures.

- **Engage with researchers:** There can be value and mutual benefits in increasing engagement with researchers who are interested in similar issues to your organisation. Academics in particular are currently under pressure to demonstrate the impact of their work outside universities, so may be interested and willing to engage (which does not always need to involve payment). There are different ways to strengthen relationships, some potential ideas could include, encouraging researchers to become board members, developing joint projects with researchers (perhaps jointly applying for funding), offering student placements, undertaking job shadowing, and

delivering lectures to students about your work in exchange for academic input into a workshop for your organisation.

Reflections for academics

Academics and other researchers who are interested in improving the use of their research across the third sector may find some of the ideas and reflections below of interest.

- **Time is short (for everyone!):** So resources which are short and clearly explain the implications of research for policy and practice are really valuable to those outside academia. Obviously time is also short for you, so there are simple and effective ways of sharing your research, such as recording a 5 minute talking head or podcast to explore the potential implications of your research findings for the third sector. Once you've produced one, this becomes a much quicker way to communicate than writing briefing papers or other resources.

- **Raise awareness of your research:** There is often a lack of awareness of and/or an ability to access research resources in the third sector. Although it can feel a little like self-promotion colleagues in the third sector often value being notified when you produce research which may be of interest to them (through email, twitter, word of mouth etc).

- **Step into third sector shoes**: It can be difficult for researchers to maintain awareness about the problems facing the third sector and to clearly understand what their research could mean for those working in policy and delivery roles. To strengthen this understanding, there can be value in building relationships with third sector colleagues, whether through sitting on third sector boards, undertaking formal or informal work shadowing, secondments and placements, engaging in joint projects (research or knowledge exchange), applying for funding with a third sector partner, or asking third sector colleagues to read your work and comment on its relevance to them.

- **Valuing other forms of knowledge**: Those working in third sector organisations in policy and practice roles have knowledge and experience of different forms. There is value in academics reflecting on this and using engagement opportunities to learn as well as to share their knowledge. Traditional dissemination models, such as lectures, do not lend themselves to this form of exchange and sharing, so there may be value in thinking creatively when planning events.

- **Direct contact is important:** Building one to one relationships is key to supporting the use of research in the third sector. Therefore, there can be real value in investing time to meet with third sector colleagues face-to-face.

- **Improving research and increasing impact:** It can be the case that investing time in supporting third sector colleagues to understand and use your research does not just improve the impact of your work but this also has the potential to inform the production of better research; for instance, through providing challenge and feedback about your findings.

Next steps for Apex Scotland

The evidence presented in this report suggests that during the project period many people in Apex benefitted from the increased attention given to research and evidence use. However, as was expressed by some survey respondents it is important for this activity to be built upon and further developed to achieve real change beyond those who were directly involved in activities during the project. A number of suggestions emerged for Apex to consider:

1. **Formation of "Research and Apex" group**: The placement holder has offered to host quarterly meetings for a "Research and Apex" group. This group would discuss research findings and support the use of research across Apex, including exploring how to take forward the other suggestions identified below. Five people have indicated interest in being on this group, and the plan is to set up an initial meeting for these interested parties in January 2012. We also plan to continue to track Apex's experience of improving their research use, and to share this learning with others through posting regular updates on the project webpage: http://www.iriss.org.uk/project/improving-research-use-third-sector.

2. **Nominated lead:** There may be value in designating a nominated lead for embedding research across the organisation. Nominating someone relatively senior in the organisation would ensure clear leadership around research use, whereas, there may be alternative benefits if the nominated lead were someone on the front-line to really demonstrate how research is for everyone throughout the organisation. To enable the nominee to fulfil this role it may be worth considering how to ensure they are given time and space to do it (whether by reducing existing responsibilities or securing additional support).

3. **Induction process and job descriptions:** There was some evidence throughout the placement period that many Apex staff did not consider consulting research or evidence to be part of their job. There may be something to reflect on here in terms of introducing an evidence component in job descriptions, appraisal and promotion criteria, and/or the induction process. Through these mechanisms, should Apex wish to, it may be possible to strengthen an expectation that staff in particular posts should keep up to date with evidence. However, if this were to be seriously considered, thought would need to be given to how this expectation would be supported.

4. **Direct engagement with evidence producers:** The value of direct relationships with research producers was highlighted during the placement, and is supported by wider literature.[1] Therefore, perhaps opportunities to strengthen direct engagement with those involved in producing research could be encouraged. One suggestion about how to facilitate this is through encouraging greater academic representation on the Apex board, which could help raise awareness of the evidence base and lead to other opportunities (research projects, placements, etc). The high value placed on events and relationships also suggests the potential value for Apex in supporting and

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[1] Nutley, S., Morton, S., Jung, T. and Boaz, A. (2010) 'Evidence and policy in six countries: diverse approaches and common challenges' in Evidence and Policy, (Vol.6, No.2, pp.135-6), p.135-6

encouraging staff to attend research related events and networks, emphasising the importance of this for future organisational as well as personal development. Although time out of the office, and cost for some events, will be a factor, as a simple step and initial first step there may be value in more systematically raising awareness by circulating details of events organised or promoted through organisations such as SASO, SCCJR, SCCCJ and CJ Scotland, and for senior managers at Apex to be seen to be promoting and raising awareness of such opportunities.

5. **Documentation to improve evidence use:** During the placement two documents were drafted to explore and demonstrate potential ways of supporting the use of evidence. These were a business case document which included a requirement for evidence, and an initial plan for a document to map out the evidence base for Apex as an organisation. To improve their use of evidence as an organisation there may be value in Apex reflecting on whether they want to support the further development of these documents and ultimately look to support their use across the organisation.

6. **Future research activities and workshops:** One rather pleasing, but surprising finding was that when Apex colleagues were asked to consult a piece of research a large number of them did so. This highlights that if people across Apex were to take on the role of championing research, simply circulating relevant research material and occasionally asking people to consult and/or discuss it, it is likely that a large proportion of Apex staff would do so. There would also be potential for continuing to arrange research, evidence or evaluation inputs into future staff development days, perhaps contacting relevant academics to explore whether they would be willing to do an input as well as continuing the relationship established with IRISS.

Apex have indicated their commitment to implement all the suggestions, for Apex's response to the project see: http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/apexs-response-improving-research-use-project. It is the intention that the Apex research group will coordinate future activity to progress these suggestions, which IRISS will initially support.

Project Process

The problem we addressed

Third sector organisations are increasingly under pressure to use evidence to demonstrate the contribution they make, justify continued funding, inform spending cuts, improve performance and maximise efficiencies. At the same time academics are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their 'impact' on the economy, society, public policy, culture and quality of life (HEFCE, 2009). Therefore, both third sector organisations and academics producing research of relevance for the sector have an interest in improving use of research in the third sector. However, there are a range of barriers to optimal research use, including:

- research findings (especially in the social sciences) are often equivocal with uncertain conclusions (Coleman, 1991)

- the speed of the policy process contrasting with the sluggish pace of the research process means that research becomes less relevant than anticipated (Weiss & Weiss, 1981)

- outside academia research can be a low priority; non-academics lack time to consult research, it can be difficult to find or access research (Ritter, 2009: 71)

- there are perceptions of research not being relevant, and other sources of information can be more highly valued (Nutley, 2003).

For academics aiming to support research use outside academia barriers include: lack of resources (time and money); lack of skills to engage with non-academics and lack of professional credit for activities focused on non-academics (Nutley, 2003).

This project sought to address some of these barriers and improve research use within one third-sector organisation (Apex Scotland), and to share the learning with others (particularly with third sector organisations). The aims of the project were to improve:

1. The use of research and the associated research culture within Apex Scotland (a third sector organisation)

2. The usefulness of research produced across the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR) for third sector organisations

3. Our understanding about attitudes towards research and how research is 'used' in third sector organisations

4. Our understanding about the specific impacts of interventions designed to improve research use (in non-academic organisations in general and specifically in third sector organisations)

The remainder of the report outlines what research use was like prior to the placement, what we did during the placement, what we learned from specific research activities, the challenges faced during the placement period and presents

reflections and indications of impact following from the placement. The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

1. Research use audit prior to intervention
2. What we did during the placement
3. Learning from the placement activities
4. The Challenges
5. Reflections and indicative impact

Findings from the survey distributed at the end of the placement, along with the survey itself are available in the appendices to the report.

1. Research use audit prior to intervention

Prior to any activities to improve research use in Apex Scotland, work was undertaken to better understand current research use across the organisation. This was undertaken for two reasons, firstly, to produce a baseline understanding of research use at Apex Scotland prior to any activity, so we would have a better understanding about the impact of the placement. Secondly, to inform the shape the nature of the placement activities designed to improve research use.

This exploration of research use involved surveying all Apex staff and exploring issues with a sample of staff who had been selected to be 'research champions' by their managers. A report discussing the survey results in greater detail was produced and shared with all staff, the report can be found here: http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/pre-project-research-use-apex-scotland. Here some of the key findings are presented to present a picture of research use before the intervention.

In July 2011 51 Apex employees completed the survey, a third of the Apex workforce (see Chart 1 below). The results revealed that prior to the placement just under a quarter of respondents, 23%, 'seldom' or 'never' used research to inform their work. However, 44% of respondents were regularly consulting research, on average consulting research at least once a week. This indicates that whilst a high percentage of staff were rarely using research, there was a strong contingent that were at least consulting research.

Chart 1: To what extent is work across Apex informed by research evidence

Always (6%)

Almost Always (10%)

Often (25%)

Sometimes (35%)

Seldom (21%)

Never (2%)
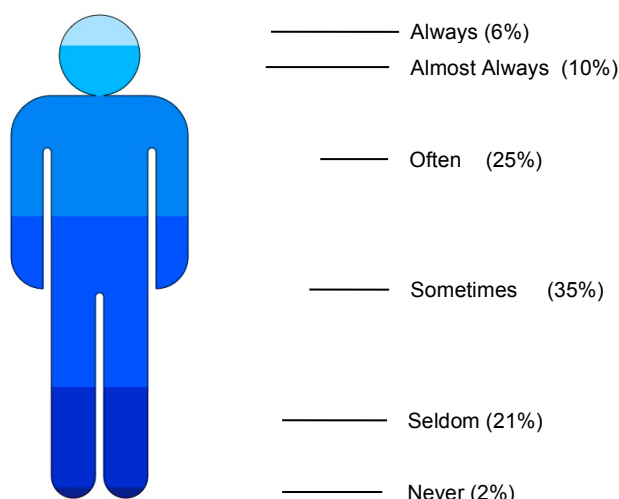
Apex employees were most likely to access research in order to identify ways of improving services (84%), preparing presentations (84%) and designing programmes or services (73%). Interestingly, an average of 60% of staff perceived that their research skills were excellent, or good in terms of locating, assessing, analysing, interpreting, adapting and applying research. Respondents were most likely to identify their research skills were poor around assessing research quality (but this only related to 6 out of 46 people). During a discussion about the survey results at a meeting with senior managers from Apex Scotland we wondered whether this was indicative of a lack of knowledge about the skill set available, rather than a genuine reflection of strong research skills.

When asked about their perceptions of Apex Scotland as an organisation, almost three quarters of staff (74%) believed Apex always or almost always collected and analysed information about the outcomes achieved by the people they support. However, less than half of respondents (44%) believed that Apex always, or almost always consulted research when developing policies and guidelines.

Interestingly a high proportion of respondents, 91%, believed that research should 'always'/ 'almost always' be used in applications for funding, to help evaluate 'our' work and as a source of motivation and ideas. There was a disconnect between how respondents believed research should be used and their experience of how it is used; for instance, 91% of respondents believed that research should always/almost always be used in applications for funding, but 60% of respondents believed it always/almost always was.

All survey respondents considered that Apex helped employees to use research by providing internet use, and 79% further identified that Apex supported use of research through enabling attendance at seminars and training. Key barriers to research use and access identified by respondents were lack of time (46%), lack of authority to make changes based on research findings (29%) and lack of funding to attend learning events (27%). However, a high proportion of staff believed there were no barriers to accessing (29%) or applying research (38%). Again in thinking about the results we wondered whether this signified a lack of ambition or knowledge

about the range of research available. This is further signified by the fact that when they were asked whether there were any issues or topics they would like to know more about to help them do their job just over half of respondents (52%) said no.

The key mechanisms staff anticipated would be very helpful in terms of improving their use of research were, evidence summaries on specific topics (59%), short summaries about recent research (56%), and links to key websites (46%).

These findings were presented, discussed and explored at an Apex senior management meeting, an Apex board meeting, a workshop about research and evidence for Apex staff (discussed later in this report), and through bi-lateral meetings with Apex colleagues. The findings arising from these forums have also been shared with all staff.

2. What we did during the placement

Throughout the year, the placement holder spent a day a week working from Apex Scotland offices, most frequently from Head Office based in Edinburgh. In addition to the research use audit prior to placement activity, described above, she was involved in a range of activities, including:

1. **Value of research:** Ran a workshop about the value of research and evidence for managers across Apex Scotland.
2. **Data profile report:** Worked in partnership with one unit manager to produce a report about their geographical area of responsibility, Forth Valley. This was to be of direct use to those working in this geographical location and to demonstrate that freely available data is available to those working in other areas.
3. **Research reading exercise:** Circulated of a small selection of research outputs, chosen specifically for their likelihood of interest and usefulness, and then asking people to complete a survey based on their response to the exercise.
4. **Service list:** With one service manager developed a list of services in their local area, helping them to think through where to look for, what to search for and then how best to record findings.
5. **Evaluation:** Ran a workshop about evaluation for senior managers.
6. **Project planning documentation:** Produced sample project planning documentation, which explicitly includes a requirement for evidence.
7. **Evidence summaries:** Arranged for Apex Scotland staff to peer review an evidence summary about criminal justice.
8. **Evidence based report:** Mapped out the content of a short report to clearly articulate Apex Scotland's vision, activities and the evidence on which this was based.
9. **Ad hoc support:** Provided support and advice about research and evaluation, and as part of this set up meetings with other contacts who could further assist with the development of plans and ideas.
10. **Post-placement survey:** Surveyed staff about research use following the placement and identified potential next steps for Apex Scotland.

The placement fellow was supported in her work by a nominated representative at Apex Scotland, Aidan McCorry, Director of Corporate Services and Planning. In addition eight Apex champions were nominated by their managers to play a leading role in the development of placement activities.

Beyond the placement period, the placement fellow's employer, IRISS (Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services) has agreed to allow the time to finalise the report about the lessons learnt, produce the case study and the journal article.

Outputs
The outputs of the project include:
1. Two reports: one about current research use prior to the placement and, this report, about the learning from the placement
2. Case study about the project
3. Lessons learnt summary
4. Powerpoint slides from the workshops

These reports, case study and powerpoint slides can be found at:
http://www.iriss.org.uk/project/improving-research-use-third-sector

3. Learning from the placement activities

This section presents further details about the activities undertaken with Apex to improve their research use. It focuses on key activities: the reading exercise, the production of evidence reports with Forth Valley, workshops about research and evaluation and the production of documentation to assist the integration of evidence across the organisation. As discussed below some activities were more successful than others and there are elements which could have been improved as learning points.

a) Reading exercise
In April 2012 all Apex Scotland employees were emailed with suggested research outputs chosen specifically for their likely interest and use, whilst ensuring a range of different types of outputs. They were asked to take some time to read, watch or listen to one research output over the course of the following four weeks. In addition, the 'research champions' were contacted and asked to organise a discussion of these reading materials as part of one of their existing meetings, such as during one of their team meetings.

A short survey was circulated in May 2012 to explore whether people had completed the reading exercise and explore their response to it. The survey was completed by just under a quarter of Apex employees, 23 people.

It is highly likely that those completing the survey were more likely to have participated in the reading exercise, but 65% of respondents indicated they had read, watched or listened to research over the past four weeks. This is slightly higher than the baseline survey results where 60% of respondents who indicated that they consulted research at least once a month, though it is likely that any difference is due to the profile of those completing the survey, rather than a shift in behaviour.

Of those who did not consult research (6 people) the most common explanation was a lack of time (4 people) followed by the fact that the exercise was not a priority (2 people). One respondent indicated that they were new to Apex so had never consulted research before. This implies that there might be something to think about during the induction process, in terms of providing support and highlighting the expectation of ensuring work is informed by evidence.

What research was consulted
People were asked to list what they had consulted during the previous month, with the number in brackets indicating the number of people who mentioned they had consulted each output (see Chart 2 below):

- Commission on women offenders, http://bit.ly/I2GPNm (5 people)
- How and why people stop offending: Discovering desistance evidence summary, http://bit.ly/HRI2Z5 (5 people)
- Discovering desistance blog, http://bit.ly/oehtx7 (3 people)
- What works to reduce reoffending: A summary of the evidence, http://bit.ly/I5tVy (3 people)
- Engaging young people who offend, http://bit.ly/NeLACG (3 people)
- Support from the start: Supporting children and families report, http://bit.ly/HXneNl (2 people)
- Change or Control? (audio recording), http://bit.ly/Q32VTI (1 person)
- Changing Patterns of Working, Learning and Career Development in Europe - Skills Development Scotland report, http://bit.ly/Ps6SDv (1 person)
- Research into the disappearance of Madeleine McCann (1 person)
- Scottish Government statistics on drug and alcohol and homelessness (1 person)
- Single outcome agreement for Lanarkshire and Dumfries & Galloway (1 person)
- Support from the start (podcasts and video) (1 person)
- Systematic review of non-custodial employment programmes: http://bit.ly/J2510z (1 person)

Chart 2: Type of research output consulted during the reading exercise
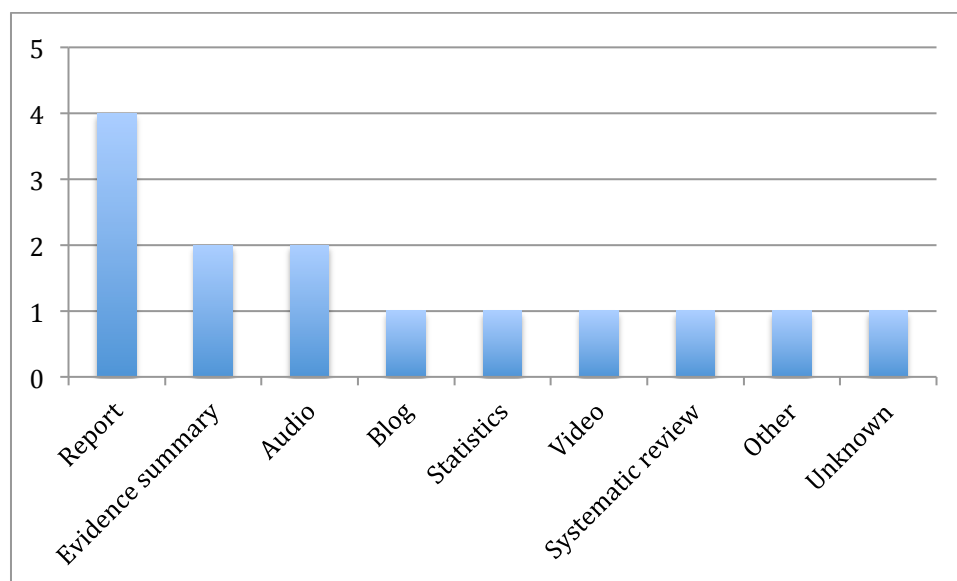
The above chart needs to be treated with some caution because outputs are not always easily classifiable as one type or another. In particular, some of the reports could also be classed as evidence summaries and the systematic review could be classed as a report, or an evidence summary. Taking these factors into consideration the exercise does reveal a preference for reports and evidence summaries.

The exercise also revealed that respondents were likely to underestimate their research related activity. For instance, one respondent commented that the output they had consulted 'wasn't pure research, rather it was the output of statistics gathered by the Children's Reporters Administration evidencing usage and need for the Hearings system'.

Several of the consulted outputs were produced, or commissioned by the Scottish Government (Commission on Women Offenders, 'What works to reduce re-offending: evidence summary', statistics on drug, alcohol and homelessness). It is also interesting to note that two of the most frequently consulted outputs were ones where the PI had been involved in producing them ('How and why people stop offending: evidence summary' and discovering desistance blog), perhaps highlighting the importance of the personal relationship in encouraging research access.

Reflections on research material
Respondents were asked about their reflections on the research (see Chart 3). The majority of those who undertook the exercise and completed the survey enjoyed consulting the research (93%, 13 people), and 55% of Apex staff respondents who completed a survey at the end of the placement period indicated this activity was helpful. or very helpful. People particularly commented on the new knowledge and insights provided through participating in this activity. A high proportion of these respondents thought the research helped them reflect on their work/Apex, 73% (10 people). For the majority of respondents the research had also helped them think differently about their work/Apex (79%), as well as giving them some good ideas (71%), thus highlighting the potential value of research for innovation. Additionally

half of these respondents (7 people) planned to take action as a direct consequence of consulting the research. We cannot be certain that they did then take such action, so this figure needs to be treated with a degree of caution, but its worth saying that the response to this question really only refers to the direct application of research. It is likely this question does not to capture the full range of the research impact, given that we know much research impact relates to informing how people think, how issues are conceptualised, or understood, rather than leading to direct action – issues the other questions attempted to uncover.[2] Therefore, in the longer term, the 79% of respondents who commented that the research made them think differently could potentially be a more significant indicator of research impact.

Chart 3: Thinking about the research you read, watched or listened to. Overall do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
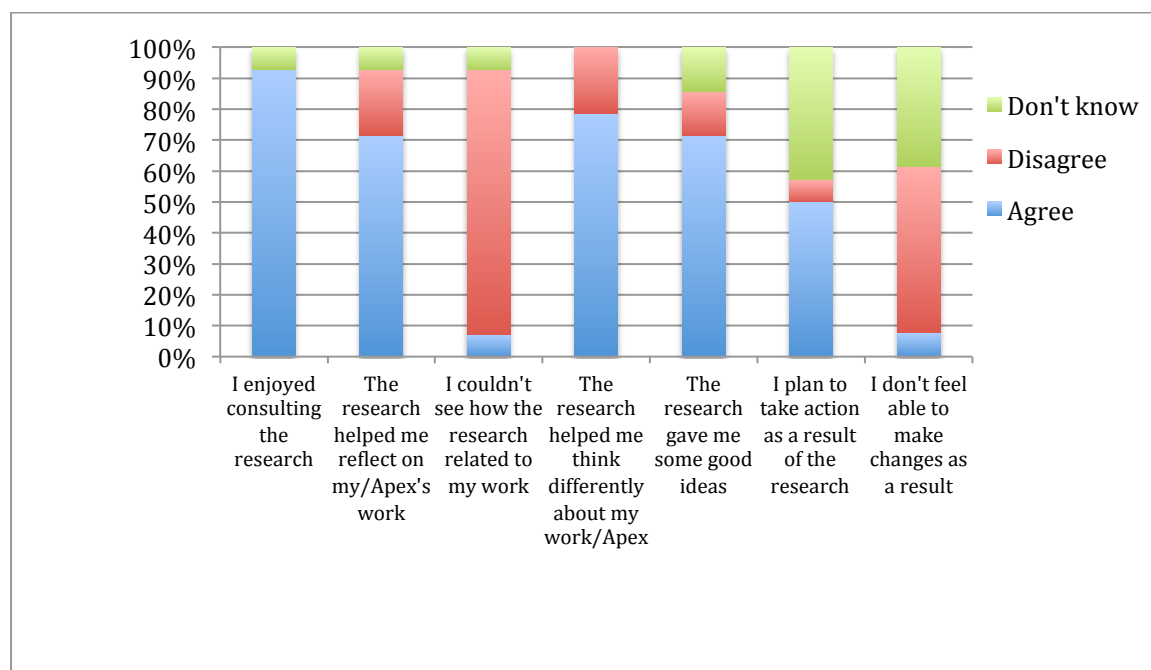
The research exercise also encouraged a range of reflections about how the research related to Apex and several people took quite specific learning to inform programmes, or funding applications.

 "Very interesting and relevant to a lot of work Apex does"

"Apex very much follow desistance-based practice in the way we work …I found Sampson and Laub's notion of a bond between an individual and society particularly interesting"

"Found all the paper extremely interesting especially the Women Offenders Commission. Currently looking at providing a group work programme for this client group and (now) have lots of ideas for putting a programme together".

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[2] Weiss, C.H (1979) 'The Many Meanings of Research Utilization' in *Public Administration Review* (September/October 1979), p.428

"The information I have read gives me an understanding of what the priorities are for the government and how this is filtering down to the local authority. This allows me to think about the development of future services"

"Some of the information is also good to quote in funding applications and in service reports"

Respondents also commented on the difficulties of finding time and space to undertake this activity. Some of this relates to the length, or inappropriateness of research outputs, but it also highlighted issues about how people conceptualised their roles. For instance, one respondent commented that a report *"was too long to get into whilst trying to work, so points may have been missed"*. It is interesting to note the assumption here that consulting research as something different from "work", or their day job. This perhaps highlights that more could be done to raise the expectation that gaining an understanding the evidence base is part of an individuals work role.

Impact

In the survey completed following the conclusion of the placement, Apex colleagues were asked to identify which activities they found helpful. The survey was completed by about a quarter of the workforce (22 people) with 54% of respondents indicated that they found the exercise helpful, or very helpful, 14% who did not find the exercise helpful, and 32% who were not aware of the exercise, or responded that the question was not applicable. When respondents were asked *"What if anything do you think Claire Lightowler's placement with Apex Scotland has achieved or changed?"* a couple of respondents unprompted specifically mentioned this activity, valuing the opportunity to consult research, *"Let me read some literature that I may not have done so before"*, and also informing potential service developments, *"I found receiving evidence based reports via email very interesting and informative, i.e. made us all think about putting something together for women offenders as a women only group"*.

Learning points

- People are generally interested in research and saw the value once undertaking the exercise, but many considered this to be beyond their job, an additional thing which they struggled to prioritise and find time for.
- It also appears people can think research is "not for them", but rather it is part of senior roles or for those with an academic qualifications, so is not necessarily seen as important for everyone across the organisation.
- There are initial indications that, for some people, the consulting research exercise will have direct impacts on service development plans and funding applications. There is also an indication that this activity helped people think differently about their work, which has the potential to have a much greater impact in the longer term.

b) Reports with Forth Valley

Throughout the placement the fellow worked with one of the 'research champions', based at Forth Valley, to produce two reports.

1. Report on existing service provision (related to Apex's outcomes) for Forth Valley

2. Report on the socio-economic profile of Forth Valley (with a particular focus on re-offending statistics).

In producing the first report the intention was to provide something of direct relevance for the 'research champion', but which involved further developing their own information literacy skills. The second report was produced with the aim of raising awareness of existing evidence for the 'research champion' (and Apex Scotland more widely) and to then help to explore with them how this could be used to shape their work. Although the report focused on Forth Valley, because it utilised data which was readily accessible for other geographical areas, it was also designed to help those working across other geographical areas also think through the value and implications. The placement holder and the Apex Scotland colleague worked together for one full day and then focused on separate tasks. However, given work commitments at Apex Scotland the placement holder did the bulk of the work in finding and writing up the evidence. Therefore, the impact of this exercise was perhaps lessened in terms of developing new skills and better understanding the evidence available. There is potentially something to reflect on here in terms of ensuring ownership of the exercise, with the placement holder perhaps too readily stepping in to support the development of this new resource. It might also have been useful to have a wider group of people involved in the production of the evidence based products, in order to share the workload and learning, while also allowing for the possibility of people withdrawing from the exercise without compromising its successful conclusion.

That said, in the survey completed following the conclusion of the placement, Apex colleagues were asked to identify which activities they found helpful. The survey was completed by about a quarter of the workforce (22 people) and 64% of respondents indicated that they found the Forth Valley report very helpful, or helpful (14 people). A total of 43% of respondents also found the Forth Valley service list very helpful, or helpful (9 people), this despite the fact this resource was circulated to a much smaller group of people.

Learning points
- Collectively producing evidence-based resources with Apex colleagues proved to be a challenge, as for them other responsibilities took priority. There is something to reflect on here about recognising the value of producing such resources for the wider organisation and if so then releasing staff from other duties to enable them to fully undertake such activities.
- There may also have been added value in involving a wider range of people in the production of these resources, thus sharing the ownership of the activity and the application of the resources once produced, while also limiting the impact on any one person's workload.

C) Research and evaluation workshops
During the placement period two workshops were facilitated for Apex staff around evidence, research and evaluation. The slides for both sessions can be found at: http://www.iriss.org.uk/project/improving-research-use-third-sector.

Workshop 1. Using Evidence to flourish (December 2011)
This session focused on making the case for evidence, exploring what research and evidence are and the benefits of using both. The session also explored how

other organisations have embedded research, using a case study about another Scottish third sector organisation, Includem, as an example to reflect upon (for case study see http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/case-study-embedding-evidence-includem). The session also included discussion and exploration of the survey findings completed at the start of the placement period. The session was held as part of a development programme for Apex managers, and was attended by around 20 members of staff.

Workshop 2. Evaluation at Apex (June 2012)
This session focused on helping Apex colleagues to think about and reflect upon how to approach evaluation across the organisation. It focused on clarifying and linking aims, activities and outcomes. The session was held as part of a senior management meeting, and was attended by about 10 members of staff.

The survey at the end of the placement period asked all staff to indicate which activities had been helpful. Of those who had attended the workshops 88% indicated they found both sessions helpful, or very helpful. However, there were difficulties arranging an evaluation session, despite evaluation being identified as a priority for the organisation as well as for the placement period (through the pre-placement survey and subsequent discussions at workshop 1 and with senior management). A planned evaluation workshop had to be cancelled due to lack of sign-up, and to get around these issues an evaluation session was arranged as part of a pre-existing senior management meeting. Whilst this worked well and the survey indicates attendees found it useful, it ended up needing to be cut due to other urgent agenda items. This meant, ironically given the workshop focus, exercises designed both to demonstrate evaluation techniques, but also assist in the follow on evaluation of the workshop and the wider placement were unable to be undertaken. This again illustrates how these activities are not necessarily prioritised or seen as part of the job of Apex employees. It also illustrates the difficulties for third sector organisations in prioritising research and evaluation and embracing this as a crucial component of being a reflective and learning organisation, in the context of needing also to respond to pressing and immediate business.

Learning points
- Arranging research and evaluation sessions as part of pre-existing meetings guarantees attendance. However, if they are held as part of decision-making sessions, such as board meetings, or senior management meetings, the time allocated is liable to be cut back if more pressing matters emerge. There may then be value in seeking to arrange for such sessions to be part of more reflective meetings, such as away days or development days which tend to offer greater opportunity and space for broader thinking and reflection.

D) Documentation to assist evidence use
In recognition of the need to integrate the use of evidence across Apex's activities the placement involved starting to develop documents which could be used by the organisation to assist with this. This included creating a business case template, which embraced a specific requirement for evidence to support the proposal. We also began to explore the creation of a document which clearly set out the evidence base for Apex's approach and activities, which we identified could help to clarify and promote Apex's evidence use. During the placement period we mapped out what such a document could look like, though more work would be required to develop

this further. As yet these documents are not at a stage of being ready to be used across the organisation and many Apex staff are unaware of their creation (42% and 52% respectively), but there is the potential for further development of both (see next steps).

4. The Challenges

Before discussing next steps and what we have learnt it is worth highlighting a few significant challenges to supporting research use throughout the period of the placement.

1. Redundancies at Apex Scotland

The organisation saw a significant number of redundancies during the placement period, resulting in the loss of around one-third of its entire workforce. In such a climate it was potentially more difficult to engage people with issues around research and organisational improvement given they faced an uncertain future personally and organisationally. Apex employees were generally keen to engage with research and reflect on the future, and beyond this were generally hugely committed to improving and strengthening Apex, often seeing that better using research could help this agenda. However, the redundancies affected a number of key players in the organisation who had a research related role. In particular a number of those who had been identified as 'research champions' for the project left the organisation during this period. Furthermore, as we began work around improving communication of the outcomes data collected by the organisation, the employee responsible for data collection was also made redundant.

2. Lack of 'research champion' role clarification

As discussed above several of the 'research champions' intended to support the placement were made redundant during the year. In addition, given that the 'research champions' had been nominated to fulfil the role by their managers, this meant that several of those recruited lacked a direct commitment to that role. It was also difficult to keep in touch with the 'champions', and given the range of experiences, roles and locations it was unclear exactly what these individuals should do to champion research. The geographical spread of the 'champions' also ensured that they were never able to meet as a group to really work through what their role should be.

3. PI role change

In between submitting and being awarded the third sector placement, the PI (Claire Lightowler) moved jobs, from the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR) to IRISS (Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services). IRISS and SCCJR were supportive of this opportunity and agreed that the PI could work for SCCJR for one day a week for the year in order to complete the placement. However, this move meant that the PI was no longer embedded within an academic setting (then working from Apex Scotland offices during the one day per week). Whilst there were advantages of this for the placement, enabling the PI to bring in additional expertise from IRISS (around social media and data visualisation) it meant was more difficult to share the learning derived about the implications for academics, with such knowledge sharing occurring only at the end of the placement, in more formal settings, rather than on an on-going and more informal basis. This ensured the opportunity for strengthening the direct relationships between Apex Scotland

staff and academic colleagues at SCCJR was less successful than would have otherwise been the case.

4. Geographical spread and meeting opportunities

The geographical spread of Apex Scotland and the infrequency of whole organisation meetings presented a challenge to support activities with all staff. When events about research were devised as stand-alone events they were subsequently cancelled due to lack of attendance. As a result, where possible research events were organised as part of existing meetings and events (organising sessions in management development days or management meetings). Whilst this ensured attendance was high, these meetings were largely for the senior staff, inevitably meaning that these learning opportunities were not open to all levels of staff. There is potentially also something here to reflect on about whether this had the unfortunate consequence of encouraging a perception that research was for senior staff.

5. Keeping Fridays clear

Finally, it was a significant challenge for the placement holder to keep the placement day clear from distractions. Although based at Apex Scotland offices, it was not uncommon for the Monday-Thursday job to invade on this time. On rare occasions this encroachment was unavoidable, given the need to respond to issues urgently. However, the majority of the time there was simply a need to maintain boundaries, turn off the work mobile and email. However, the placement holder found this to be a considerable personal challenge, and thus had to spend additional days working on Apex placement activity to make up for the distractions on Friday. Although we have no evidence either way, on reflection, we wonder whether undertaking the placement on a Monday may have improved the situation, perhaps helping to ensure the PI would undertake the placement day with a clearer head!

5. Reflections and indicative impact

Overall, it is a little early to say what the long-term impact of the project will be, though Apex have committed to implementing all the suggestions emerging from the project (see their response: http://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/apexs-response-improving-research-use-project). However, a survey was conducted following the placement period to identify indications of impact. The survey was circulated in July 2012 and was completed by 25 people, a quarter of Apex staff at the current time. These survey results have to be treated with some caution because it is likely that those completing the survey were more engaged and involved in the placement activities. It should also be noted that fewer people completed the survey at the end of the placement period than participated in the baseline survey, at the beginning of the placement, which was completed by a third of Apex staff. Further, as noted previously, during the placement period the numbers of staff employed at Apex decreased, so potentially the change in numbers and its impact on the overall profile of the Apex workforce would affect the results.

To what extent is Apex work informed by research evidence?
When asked about the extent to which their work was informed by research evidence there is a noticeable difference from the answers provided in the pre-intervention survey (See Table 1 below). A total of 12% more respondents identified that their work was always, or almost always informed by research evidence (29%), compared

to 16% before the placement interventions. Those identifying that their work is seldom, or never informed by research evidence has decreased by 19% (from 23% pre-placement to 4% post placement). Additionally, following the placement period those consulting research daily rose (by 6%) and those consulting research once a year or less fell (by 10%).

Table 1: To what extent is your work informed by research evidence?

	Pre intervention	Post intervention	Difference
Always	6%	8%	2%
Almost always	10%	21%	10%
Often	25%	29%	4%
Sometimes	35%	38%	2%
Seldom	21%	4%	-17%
Never	2%	0%	-2%

When do Apex staff use research evidence?
Table 2 below shows that following the placement intervention Apex staff were more likely to use research evidence across the different stages of their work, except to identify ways of improving services which showed a slight decrease of 1%. The biggest increase related to when evaluating services (increasing by 34%). Such a large increase may in part be because this was the topic of a specific intervention (a workshop held for senior managers), however, it could also be due to a realisation that the cuts at Apex may have been less severe if greater evaluation evidence had been to hand.

Table 2: Apex staff referring to research evidence at different stages of their work (%)

	Pre intervention	Post intervention	Difference
When designing programmes or services	73%	88%	15%
When developing policies, procedures or protocols	48%	58%	11%
When talking to service users	54%	63%	8%
When identifying ways of improving services	84%	83%	-1%
In applications for funding	63%	63%	0%
When evaluating services	33%	67%	34%
When consulting with other professionals	72%	75%	3%
When writing reports	70%	78%	8%
When preparing presentations	84%	92%	8%
When commissioning further research or evaluations	18%	42%	23%
When requesting resources	49%	75%	26%

Research skills and evidence sources

In terms of research skills there was very little difference between those rating their skills as excellent, or good before or after the placement, with slight increases in those rating their skills as excellent, or good in relation to applying research findings (up 9%) and assessing research quality (up 7%). There were slight decreases in interpreting research findings (down 8%), adapting research findings to your setting (down 6%), analysing information (down 3%) and locating research evidence (down 3%). In discussions with Apex staff following the initial survey there was some surprise about the high numbers perceiving their research related skills as excellent, or good, with colleagues wondering whether this could largely be explained by a lack of knowledge about what exactly excellent / good research skills involve. However, it is slightly unclear what the significance of these relatively small changes actually represent.

Following the placement period when Apex staff were asked about the sources they now used to access research evidence, those using nearly all source types increased, with the largest increase in people using reports (up 22%), internal publications (up 15%) and seminars/events (up 13%). There was a decrease though in people using briefing papers (down 9%) and podcasts (down 2%) as the preferred means to access research evidence.

Organisational use of research

Interestingly, when it came to reflecting on research usage, as an organisation, there was a large difference between the pre and post intervention response. Those who thought that Apex Scotland always, or almost always used research evidence decreased following the placement, across a range of variables (see Table 3 below). Further, there was a noticeable difference between those who thought research should always, or almost always be used in Apex Scotland before and after the placement.

Before the placement, an average of 87% survey respondents thought research should always, or almost always be used by Apex Scotland across a range of variables (to inform service design, identify good practice, shape policies and guidelines, in applications for funding, and as a source of motivations and ideas). However, following the placement those thinking this decreased to an average of 74% (a decrease of 13%). Although there is little evidence about the potential reasons for this, it is worth considering whether this could indicate a greater understanding about the benefits and the limitations of research evidence, maybe suggesting a greater sophistication in understanding.

Table 3: As an organisation Apex Scotland always or almost always uses research evidence to:

	Pre intervention	Post intervention	Difference
Collate and analyse information about the outcomes achieved for people supported by services	46%	22%	-24%
Collate and analyse service user feedback	38%	20%	-18%
Evaluate the effectiveness of the services you provide	41%	18%	-23%
Consult research when designing services	28%	29%	0

Use research to keep up to date with good practice	35%	21%	-14%
Develop policies and guidelines based on research evidence	31%	23%	-7%
Use research in applications for funding	39%	23%	-16%
Consult research as a source of motivation and ideas	40%	32%	-8%

Support for and barriers to research use

Overall, survey respondents were most likely to identify that Apex Scotland supported staff to use and find evidence following the placement (see Table 4 below), with a 25% increase in those identifying that Apex Scotland encourages evidence-informed practice following the placement period.

Table 4: How does Apex Scotland support you to use and find evidence?

	Pre intervention	Post intervention	Difference
By providing internet access	100%	96%	-4%
By encouraging evidence-informed practice	33%	58%	25%
By promoting attendance at seminars / training	79%	79%	1%
By commissioning research	10%	25%	16%
By participating in research	36%	46%	10%
By having research literature readily available (for example library, journal subscriptions)	21%	21%	-1%
By highlighting key research findings likely to be of interest	48%	58%	11%
By allowing time to consult or discuss research	24%	25%	1%
By encouraging staff to conduct research	26%	38%	11%
It does not support access to research evidence	0%	0%	0%

In terms of barriers, there was little difference in those identifying that there were no barriers to accessing, or applying research before and after the placement. In total 29% of survey respondents thought there were no barriers to accessing before the placement and 26% following the placement, and pre-placement 38% of respondents thought there were no barriers to applying research compared to 36% afterwards. However, there was greater identification of a lack of time to read and assimilate evidence (which 46% of respondents identified before the placement and 65% afterwards), perhaps prompted by the consulting research exercise. There was also an interesting (but unexplainable) decrease in those identifying that lacking authority to make changes as a result of research findings was a barrier to applying research findings, 9% thought so following the placement but 29% said this before the placement.

What, if anything has the placement achieved?
When Apex staff were directly asked about the impact of the placement, three out of ten of those providing specific feedback were not aware of any impact, or questioned whether the placement would have any significant long-term impact. As one respondent noted: *"Unfortunately I don't think it will make any difference at all to how people view or use research, unless Claire has worked directly with individuals"*

Other respondents identified the placement had already led to change at the individual level, particularly through supporting the consultation of research materials, "*(the activities) let me read some literature that I may not have done so before*". Further, a couple of respondents highlighted how the placement had helped them reflect on "*how to use research in our work*", with one respondent explaining that through the placement holder making them aware of, and supporting access to, evidence based reports it "*made us all think about putting something together for women offenders as a women only group*", suggesting the potential for immediate and direct change and improvement. Respondents also highlighted a range of wider impacts across the organisation, particularly commenting on how the placement helped to demonstrate the value and benefits of research. Three respondents specifically mentioned how the placement helped to demonstrate to them the value or need for research across Apex Scotland: *"Claire has highlighted the need for research to be embedded in everything we do as an organisation. Her placement allowed us to bring a focus to research that had not been possible before and to encourage more staff to think beyond their day to day activities"*

Additionally, one respondent highlighted how the placement had invigorated those who understand and appreciate the value of research, through giving "*encouragement and confidence to those who are already 'research champions'*".

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Appendix One: Post-placement survey results

Below are the responses from the closed questions in the post-placement survey. The open text responses are reported within the body of the report.

Gender

		Response Percent	Response Count
Female		70.8%	17
Male		29.2%	7
		answered question	24
		skipped question	1

What is your age?

		Response Percent	Response Count
18 – 24 years		8.0%	2
25 – 34 years		8.0%	2
35 – 44 years		52.0%	13
45 – 54 years		20.0%	5
55 – 64 years		12.0%	3
65+ years		0.0%	0
		answered question	25
		skipped question	0

How long have you worked at Apex Scotland?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 6 months		4.2%	1
6 – 12 months		8.3%	2
1 – 2 years		12.5%	3
2 – 5 years		29.2%	7
5 – 10 years		29.2%	7
More than 10 years		16.7%	4
		answered question	24
		skipped question	1

In which location are you based?

		Percent	Count
Ayrshire		0.0%	0
Borders		4.3%	1
Dumfries		21.7%	5
Stranraer		8.7%	2
Fife		8.7%	2
Forth Valley		4.3%	1
Glasgow		4.3%	1
Grampian		8.7%	2
Head Office		17.4%	4
Highland		17.4%	4
Lanarkshire		0.0%	0
Lothian		0.0%	0
Renfrewshire		4.3%	1
Inverclyde		0.0%	0
Tayside		0.0%	0
	Other (please specify) Show Responses		2
	answered question		23

What is your highest educational qualification?

		Response Percent	Response Count
None		4.2%	1
O/Standard Grade, GSCE		8.3%	2
Higher/A Level		8.3%	2
HNC/HND		41.7%	10
Degree or equivalent		16.7%	4
Postgraduate		8.3%	2
Professional		12.5%	3
	Other (please specify) Show Responses		1
	answered question		24
	skipped question		1

To what extent is your work informed by research evidence?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Always		8.3%	2
Almost always		20.8%	5
Often		29.2%	7
Sometimes		37.5%	9
Seldom		4.2%	1
Never		0.0%	0
		answered question	24
		skipped question	1

Rate the extent to which you consult research evidence within your current role?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Daily		16.7%	4
About weekly		29.2%	7
About monthly		20.8%	5
About every two months		16.7%	4
About every six months		16.7%	4
About once a year		0.0%	0
Less often than once a year		0.0%	0
Never		0.0%	0
		answered question	24
		skipped question	1

Rate the extent to which you consult research evidence within your current role

		Response Percent	Response Count
Daily		16.7%	4
About weekly		29.2%	7
About monthly		20.8%	5
About every two months		16.7%	4
About every six months		16.7%	4
About once a year		0.0%	0
Less often than once a year		0.0%	0
Never		0.0%	0
	answered question		24
	skipped question		1

What sources do you use to access research evidence

		Response Percent	Response Count
Journal articles		34.8%	8
Internet searching		91.3%	21
Internal publications		47.8%	11
Websites		82.6%	19
Books		39.1%	9
Reports		78.3%	18
Seminars/Events		60.9%	14
Videos		13.0%	3
Podcasts		4.3%	1
Briefing papers		26.1%	6
Contacting researchers		13.0%	3
Do not access research evidence		0.0%	0
	Other (please specify) Show Responses		1
	answered question		23
	skipped question		2

At what point in your work do you refer to research evidence?

	Yes	No	Not Applicable	Response Count
When designing programmes or services	87.5% (21)	0.0% (0)	12.5% (3)	24
When developing policies, procedures or protocols	58.3% (14)	8.3% (2)	33.3% (8)	24
When talking to service users	62.5% (15)	16.7% (4)	20.8% (5)	24
When identifying ways of improving services	83.3% (20)	8.3% (2)	8.3% (2)	24
In applications for funding	62.5% (15)	8.3% (2)	29.2% (7)	24
When evaluating services	66.7% (16)	16.7% (4)	16.7% (4)	24
When consulting with other professionals	75.0% (18)	16.7% (4)	8.3% (2)	24
When writing reports	78.3% (18)	8.7% (2)	13.0% (3)	23
When preparing presentations	91.7% (22)	4.2% (1)	4.2% (1)	24
When commissioning further research or evaluations	41.7% (10)	8.3% (2)	50.0% (12)	24
When requesting resources	75.0% (18)	8.3% (2)	16.7% (4)	24
			answered question	24
			skipped question	1

How would you rate your ability to:

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Rating Average	Response Count
Locate research evidence	16.7% (4)	50.0% (12)	33.3% (8)	0.0% (0)	2.17	24
Assess research quality	4.2% (1)	54.2% (13)	41.7% (10)	0.0% (0)	2.38	24
Analyse information	4.3% (1)	56.5% (13)	39.1% (9)	0.0% (0)	2.35	23
Interpret research findings	8.3% (2)	45.8% (11)	45.8% (11)	0.0% (0)	2.38	24
Adapt research findings to your setting	8.3% (2)	45.8% (11)	45.8% (11)	0.0% (0)	2.38	24
Apply research findings to your work	4.2% (1)	66.7% (16)	29.2% (7)	0.0% (0)	2.25	24
				answered question		24
				skipped question		1

As an organisation does Apex:

	Always	Almost Always	Often	Seldom	Never	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Collate and analyse information about the outcomes achieved for people supported by services	21.7% (5)	17.4% (4)	56.5% (13)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.43	23
Collate and analyse service user feedback	9.1% (2)	18.2% (4)	54.5% (12)	18.2% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.82	22
Evaluate the effectiveness of the services you provide	18.2% (4)	13.6% (3)	50.0% (11)	13.6% (3)	0.0% (0)	4.5% (1)	2.62	22
Consult research when designing services	30.4% (7)	21.7% (5)	43.5% (10)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.22	23
Use research to keep up to date with good practice	31.8% (7)	13.6% (3)	50.0% (11)	4.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.27	22
Develop policies and guidelines based on research evidence	22.7% (5)	18.2% (4)	45.5% (10)	9.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	4.5% (1)	2.43	22
Use research in applications for funding	43.5% (10)	13.0% (3)	26.1% (6)	4.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	13.0% (3)	1.90	23
Consult research as a source of motivation and ideas	22.7% (5)	27.3% (6)	45.5% (10)	4.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.32	22
						answered question		23
						skipped question		2

To what extent do you think research should be used in Apex Scotland

	Always	Almost Always	Often	Seldom	Never	Rating Average	Response Count
To inform service design	62.5% (15)	12.5% (3)	25.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.63	24
To identify good practice for service delivery	58.3% (14)	12.5% (3)	29.2% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.71	24
To shape policies and guidelines	45.8% (11)	25.0% (6)	29.2% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.83	24
In applications for funding	58.3% (14)	25.0% (6)	16.7% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.58	24
To help evaluate our work	45.8% (11)	37.5% (9)	16.7% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.71	24
When requesting resources	41.7% (10)	25.0% (6)	33.3% (8)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.92	24
As a source of motivation and ideas	37.5% (9)	33.3% (8)	25.0% (6)	4.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.96	24
					answered question		24
					skipped question		1

If at all, how does your organisation support you to find and use research evidence?

	Response Percent	Response Count
By providing internet access	95.8%	23
By encouraging evidence-informed practice	58.3%	14
By promoting attendance at seminars / training	79.2%	19
By commissioning research	25.0%	6
By participating in research	45.8%	11
By having research literature readily available (for example library, journal subscriptions)	20.8%	5
By highlighting key research findings likely to be of interest	58.3%	14
By allowing time to consult or discuss research	25.0%	6
By encouraging staff to conduct research	37.5%	9
It does not support access to research evidence	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		0
answered question		24
skipped question		1

What barriers, if any, limit your ability to ACCESS research evidence within your organisation?

	Response Percent	Response Count
No internet access	0.0%	0
Lack of time to read and assimilate research	65.2%	15
Limited access to the literature	17.4%	4
Lack of research relevant to my needs	13.0%	3
No time to attend learning events	30.4%	7
No funding available to attend learning events	39.1%	9
Lack of knowledge about how to find research	4.3%	1
No barriers exist	26.1%	6
Other (please specify) Show Responses		1
answered question		23
skipped question		2

What barriers, if any, limit your ability to APPLY research evidence to your work?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Lack of authority to make changes to your work/practice based on research findings		9.1%	2
Resistance to change within the organisation		9.1%	2
Lack of confidence in research findings		18.2%	4
Lack of confidence in researchers and academics		4.5%	1
Lack of knowledge or skills about to apply research evidence (for example statistics)		22.7%	5
Presentation of research evidence too complex		18.2%	4
Presentation of research evidence not detailed enough		0.0%	0
Research on desired topic unavailable		0.0%	0
Don't think research evidence is relevant to my current role		9.1%	2
Need immediate solutions and can't wait for research		18.2%	4
Applying research findings involves too much risk and responsibility		4.5%	1
No barriers exist		36.4%	8
	Other (please specify) Show Responses		2
	answered question		22
	skipped question		3

Since 2011 activities have been undertaken in an attempt to improve research use. Can you indicate if you are aware of these, and if so how helpful you have found or anticipate finding these.

	Not aware / Not applicable	Very helpful	Helpful	Not helpful	Response Count
Report about research use in Apex	22.7% (5)	18.2% (4)	50.0% (11)	9.1% (2)	22
Research reading exercise (all asked to read piece of research)	31.8% (7)	13.6% (3)	40.9% (9)	13.6% (3)	22
Report about Forth Valley data (highlights data available about local areas)	22.7% (5)	18.2% (4)	45.5% (10)	13.6% (3)	22
Forth Valley services list	42.9% (9)	23.8% (5)	19.0% (4)	14.3% (3)	21
Value of research workshop (Management development day session)	57.9% (11)	10.5% (2)	26.3% (5)	5.3% (1)	19
Evaluation workshop (for managers)	61.9% (13)	9.5% (2)	23.8% (5)	4.8% (1)	21
Sample project planning documentation (highlighting evidence requirements)	42.1% (8)	15.8% (3)	36.8% (7)	5.3% (1)	19
Draft sample template for the evidence base behind Apex	52.4% (11)	9.5% (2)	33.3% (7)	4.8% (1)	21
Ad hoc support and advice	35.0% (7)	25.0% (5)	35.0% (7)	5.0% (1)	20
				answered question	22
				skipped question	3

Appendix Two: Post-placement survey

Why are we doing this survey?

This survey is to explore whether the use of research across Apex has changed over the past year. You may recall that we conducted a similar survey back in 2011, and this survey is to compare the situation now to then. It also explores what, if anything, you have found valuable about the research support and activities coordinated by Claire Lightowler from IRISS. And it touches on next steps.

It should take a maximum of 10 minutes to complete and responses will be anonymous.

If you want to contact Claire to discuss this survey or related issues, please do so on claire.lightowler@iriss.org.uk 07872 502621.

Thanks a lot for your support.

1. Gender

◯ Female

◯ Male

2. What is your age?

◯ 18 – 24 years

◯ 25 – 34 years

◯ 35 – 44 years

◯ 45 – 54 years

◯ 55 – 64 years

◯ 65+ years

3. Please provide your job title and briefly describe your role in Apex Scotland

4. In which location are you based?

- ○ Ayrshire
- ○ Borders
- ○ Dumfries
- ○ Stranraer
- ○ Fife
- ○ Forth Valley
- ○ Glasgow
- ○ Grampian
- ○ Head Office
- ○ Highland
- ○ Lanarkshire
- ○ Lothian
- ○ Renfrewshire
- ○ Inverclyde
- ○ Tayside

Other (please specify)

5. How long have you worked at Apex Scotland? (Please tick one)

- ○ Less than 6 months
- ○ 6 – 12 months
- ○ 1 – 2 years
- ○ 2 – 5 years
- ○ 5 – 10 years
- ○ More than 10 years

6. What is your highest educational qualification?

( ) None

( ) O/Standard Grade, GSCE

( ) Higher/A Level

( ) HNC/HND

( ) Degree or equivalent

( ) Postgraduate

( ) Professional

Other (please specify)

[   ]

The remainder of this survey asks you about your use of research and your perceptions about how research is used across Apex Scotland. For these purposes research is defined as any systematic investigation to establish facts, further understanding or solve problems.

7. To what extent is your work informed by research evidence? (Please tick one)

( ) Always

( ) Almost always

( ) Often

( ) Sometimes

( ) Seldom

( ) Never

8. Rate the extent to which you consult research evidence within your current role? (Please tick one)

( ) Daily

( ) About weekly

( ) About monthly

( ) About every two months

( ) About every six months

( ) About once a year

( ) Less often than once a year

( ) Never

9. What sources do you use to access research evidence? (Tick as many as apply)

- [ ] Podcasts
- [ ] Internal publications
- [ ] Videos
- [ ] Books
- [ ] Journal articles
- [ ] Seminars/Events
- [ ] Reports
- [ ] Briefing papers
- [ ] Internet searching
- [ ] Contacting researchers
- [ ] Websites
- [ ] Do not access research evidence

Other (please specify)

10. At what point in your work do you refer to research evidence? (Please tick yes, no or not applicable for each item)

	Yes	No	Not Applicable
When designing programmes or services	○	○	○
When developing policies, procedures or protocols	○	○	○
When talking to service users	○	○	○
When identifying ways of improving services	○	○	○
In applications for funding	○	○	○
When evaluating services	○	○	○
When consulting with other professionals	○	○	○
When writing reports	○	○	○
When preparing presentations	○	○	○
When commissioning further research or evaluations	○	○	○
When requesting	○	○	○

11. How would you rate your ability to:

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Locate research evidence	○	○	○	○
Assess research quality	○	○	○	○
Analyse information	○	○	○	○
Interpret research findings	○	○	○	○
Adapt research findings to your setting	○	○	○	○
Apply research findings to your work	○	○	○	○

12. As an organisation, does Apex Scotland:

	Always	Almost Always	Often	Seldom	Never	N/A
Collate and analyse information about the outcomes achieved for people supported by services	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Collate and analyse service user feedback	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Evaluate the effectiveness of the services you provide	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Consult research when designing services	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Use research to keep up to date with good practice	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Develop policies and guidelines based on research evidence	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Use research in applications for funding	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Consult research as a source of motivation and ideas	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

13. To what extent do you think that research should be used in Apex Scotland

	Always	Almost Always	Often	Seldom	Never
To inform service design	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
To identify good practice for service delivery	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
To shape policies and guidelines	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
In applications for funding	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
To help evaluate our work	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
When requesting resources	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
As a source of motivation and ideas	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

14. If at all, how does your organisation support you to find and use research evidence? (Tick as many as apply)

- [ ] By providing internet access
- [ ] By encouraging evidence-informed practice
- [ ] By promoting attendance at seminars / training
- [ ] By commissioning research
- [ ] By participating in research
- [ ] By having research literature readily available (for example library, journal subscriptions)
- [ ] By highlighting key research findings likely to be of interest
- [ ] By allowing time to consult or discuss research
- [ ] By encouraging staff to conduct research
- [ ] It does not support access to research evidence

Other (please specify)

15. What barriers, if any, limit your ability to ACCESS research evidence within your organisation?
(Please tick where applicable)

- [ ] No internet access
- [ ] Lack of time to read and assimilate research
- [ ] Limited access to the literature
- [ ] Lack of research relevant to my needs
- [ ] No time to attend learning events
- [ ] No funding available to attend learning events
- [ ] Lack of knowledge about how to find research
- [ ] No barriers exist

Other (please specify)

16. What barriers, if any, limit your ability to APPLY research evidence to your work? (Tick where applicable)

- [ ] Lack of authority to make changes to your work/practice based on research findings
- [ ] Resistance to change within the organisation
- [ ] Lack of confidence in research findings
- [ ] Lack of confidence in researchers and academics
- [ ] Lack of knowledge or skills about to apply research evidence (for example statistics)
- [ ] Presentation of research evidence too complex
- [ ] Presentation of research evidence not detailed enough
- [ ] Research on desired topic unavailable
- [ ] Don't think research evidence is relevant to my current role
- [ ] Need immediate solutions and can't wait for research
- [ ] Applying research findings involves too much risk and responsibility
- [ ] No barriers exist

Other (please specify)

17. Since 2011 activities have been undertaken in an attempt to improve research use. Can you indicate if you are aware of these, and if so how helpful you have found or anticipate finding these.

	Not aware / Not applicable	Very helpful	Helpful	Not helpful
Report about research use in Apex	◯	◯	◯	◯
Research reading exercise (all asked to read piece of research)	◯	◯	◯	◯
Report about Forth Valley data (highlights data available about local areas)	◯	◯	◯	◯
Forth Valley services list	◯	◯	◯	◯
Value of research workshop (Management development day session)	◯	◯	◯	◯
Evaluation workshop (for managers)	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sample project planning documentation (highlighting evidence requirements)	◯	◯	◯	◯
Draft sample template for the evidence base behind Apex	◯	◯	◯	◯
Ad hoc support and advice	◯	◯	◯	◯

18. What if anything do you think Claire Lightowler's placement with Apex Scotland has achieved or changed?

19. One suggestion for the future is for Claire to coordinate a "Research in Apex" group to meet quarterly. This group could discuss research findings and support the use of research across Apex. If you are interested in being involved in this group please add your email address here (which will be kept separate from your survey responses) or contact Claire directly to discuss.

20. Please feel free to make any other comments about the issues explored in this survey