

Drug Rehabilitation Learning Report with San Patrignano, Italy in 2015

Background:

S.A.L.V.E. International provides opportunities for children and young people (aged 6 – 25 years old) who live on the streets of Jinja, Uganda. Our aim is to build a brighter future for these young people. One of the biggest barriers faced by young people to transition off the streets of Jinja is substance addiction. The most commonly used substance is Mafuta (aeroplane fuel) which is usually poured onto a rag, placed in a plastic bottle and inhaled through the mouth. After extensive local research and consultation, S.A.L.V.E. International determined that a specialist drug rehabilitation programme is needed to meet the specific needs of the young people.

Before starting a new drug rehabilitation programme in 2016, S.A.L.V.E. is going to conduct a series of research and development visits across the world, to learn from others who are already involved in drug rehabilitation work, and to gain a deeper understanding of the scale of street-connected child drug use across Uganda as a whole. This research is funded by Comic Relief. This is a report from one of these visits, to San Patrignano in Italy. It is shared publically to help others who might be doing similar research and learning. The results of this report will be considered by a local panel of stakeholders in Jinja to decide which learning should be incorporated into S.A.L.V.E.'s plans for the future.

Summary of recommendations:

Health:

- Start with a full health check for every young person entering your programme (whether they appear to be sick or not). Test for a wide range of conditions, including dental check-up. Being physically healthy is a key part of the healing process.
- Recruit a nurse to be part of the detoxification process as they will have specialist knowledge which will help the young person and the wider staff team.
- Consider ways of separating young people who have recently begun to detox and those who have already finished. Young people going through the first stages of detox are more likely to choose to leave than those who have been in the programme more than a month and they could influence others to leave with them.



Support:

- Monitor new arrivals closely so you will be able to predict if someone is planning to run away and leave the programme. If you do have concerns, try to separate them from other participants so they don't encourage them to leave too.
- A peer mentoring programme is essential to help the young people share their experiences and feel positive about helping others. This may take time to develop whilst you take the first group through the programme. In San Patrignano one guest shared, *"I didn't start feeling better until I began mentoring someone else"*.



Education:

- Vocational skills training is an important aspect of the programme. By developing these skills, participants will be able to reduce dependency on the organisation and family members, and develop a stronger sense of gratification and self-value.
- For younger participants, academic schooling should also be incorporated into the programme. You should look at offering a variety of vocational training options – this gives participants the option to choose what most interests them. It is important to offer training onsite as participants that leave the site early may be tempted to return to drugs.



Aspiration:

- When an individual stops taking drugs, they will often look for alternative types of gratification. Initially, this comes from physically feeling better. But it is important to make sure that the participants are rewarded through other activities such as education and sport. Another tactic is by giving responsibilities – initially these should be small responsibilities, which can then be increased over time.
- The programme should also place emphasis on building the self-esteem of each individual. By focusing on the positives of 'what could be' rather than dwelling on the problems of the past, an individual will realise their potential to achieve.



Time:

- There should be a clear daily structure for the young people to follow. People who have depended on drugs and those who have been homeless have lived chaotic lives. Structure means restoring order to their lives. This will help them to reintegrate back into society. It also means that the individuals are kept busy, reducing the risk of them thinking about drugs and considering leaving the programme.
- The programme at San Patrignano runs for four years per person. Think about how long, as a general model, will work in your context, based on the stages of learning and rehabilitation you want to guide the young people through. Ideally, each person should have a skill set which they can use when they leave to help them to build their future.
- The programme needs to be person centred. Time frames vary from person to person and there should be no set rules that apply to every individual. It should be up to the staff, mentors and the medical team to determine what stage the person is at and when they are ready to move on to the next part.



Referrals:

- Once the centre is fully established and functioning, a referral system should be set up around the country. For example other centres can do the initial assessment of the young person and then refer them to your organisation for the full rehabilitation programme. These could be developed over time by building partnerships.



Background of San Patrignano:

San Patrignano, the world's largest residential treatment community, was founded in 1978 by Vincenzo Muccioli. He had no connection to anyone with drug or alcohol addiction, nor any medical background. He wanted to help others after seeing the need of many young homeless people in the local town. Initially he invited a young person on the street to come and stay with him and took care of them, helping them to stop taking drugs. The wider San Patrignano community and philosophy grew from there. Vincenzo Muccioli said, *"Among the problems that affect the drug addict, drug use is the least relevant. The core of the problem is not the drugs, nor the abstinence crisis: it is the human being with his fears and the black holes that threaten to suck him in."*



San Patrignano was founded on humanist views to have a value based culture, and welcome people of all religious faiths.

San Patrignano offers a program of rehabilitation, skills training and full social reintegration completely free of charge. Since 1979, over 25,000 service users have been through the programme. On average 80% are male and 20% female, ranging from 13 – 55 years old. There are currently 1,300 people in the programme with around 30 new admissions each month. It is a 4 year programme. On the basis of sociological and toxicological research by the Universities of Bologna, Urbino and Pavia in 2005, with a sample of around 250 former residents, who were followed through the programme and for 2-4 years after the programme, the percentage of participants who fully recover to live without using drugs after completing their programme at San Patrignano was found to be around 70%.

"San Patrignano is a house, a family for young people who have lost their way. It is a community of life that welcomes all who are afflicted by dependencies and exclusion so that they recover their own way through a path of recovery that is primarily a path of love".

In order to enable people to recover in their own way, they believe you need to offer a wide range of possibilities and interventions. Treatment is a combination of educative and rehabilitative elements. It is person centred and focuses on the special needs of each individual. Whilst there is a general structure to the programme, each person's journey is different as it is adapted to their individual needs.

International Workshop:

Due to high numbers of requests for learning visits, San Patrignano developed a learning workshop where interested peers can come and learn about the San Patrignano model principles and values. With a mixture of lectures and experiential learning labs, this is a great opportunity to see the programme from the perspective of both the staff and the people undergoing rehabilitation. A S.A.L.V.E. staff member attended a workshop from 3rd to 10th July 2015. There were a total of 16 people taking part in the workshop from 6 different countries including Australia, Indonesia, Canada, Brazil, Turkey and the UK. An important part of the workshop is to encourage networking of staff across other rehabilitation programmes across the world thus offering the opportunity for peer support beyond the end of the workshop.

Design and adaptation of the programme:

The programme has evolved naturally over time and grown into what it is today. The most recent adaptation was the conversion of one of their smaller centres into a pre-admission centre. It is here that new residents spend their first month. During this time, a follower (a mentor who has been in the programme more than a year) is brought from San Patrignano and follows/mentors them. This is the first step in learning about the community lifestyle, and is considered less intimidating, as there are only around 50-100 residents at any one time. Here they take on activities and routine that will prepare them for community life. The expectations are that if the person can remain here for their first month, they are likely to remain for the full length of the programme. Approximately 1/3 of new participants will leave the pre-admission centre in the first month and do not move on to San Patrignano.

San Patrignano Programme Structure:

The admissions process:

The only criteria that is required for entry into the therapeutic programme is that the person is genuinely motivated to make a change in their life and overcome their addiction. They refer to the people in their programme as members of the community.

New members are most often referred by voluntary San Patrignano Associations. These are based all over Italy, in other European countries including UK and Croatia, as well as in the USA. New members can also be referred by local health service units and courts. Some prisoners can also choose to complete their prison sentence at San Patrignano if this is deemed beneficial by the court. When someone enters the programme, they have a final interview with the admissions office to confirm their motivations for joining the programme. The participant must choose to join the programme if they believe it will meet their needs.

Health care and check-ups:

During their first weeks in the programme, residents undergo a complete medical evaluation. This includes a medical and toxicology history, medical, dermatologic and gynaecologic visits where they are checked for STD'S, scabies and other diseases. They have full blood screenings for HIV, Hepatitis B and C and Syphilis. They also have chest X-rays to check for TB and ECG and respiratory functional tests. Dental check-ups are carried out immediately due to the damaging effects that drugs can have on teeth.



There is a fully functioning health centre at San Patrignano including 4 doctors, and three of the current staff are former addicts.

Psychiatric assistance is provided where required for minor psychiatric symptoms – these can have led to the residents taking drugs or have been caused by the effects of taking drugs. Psychiatric conditions include anxiety disorders, mood disorders, and eating disorders.

Psychological therapy is used, not to treat the drug addiction, but to treat the problems that existed before addiction, and may have contributed towards the individual starting to take drugs. Approximately 30% of the individuals in the programme access psychological assistance. San Patrignano is very focussed on treating the person rather than the drug addiction. You need to talk about the problems that led to taking the drugs, not the drugs themselves.

The majority of new members go through the detoxification process before entering the programme, usually in a hospital. For those who do enter before detoxing, substitutive drug treatment is not normally used, except for certain cases in the short term, for example if the addict is pregnant, very young or sick. This is due to the belief that drug addiction is a non-chronic disease, despite being a reoccurring one. Treatment of the symptoms of withdrawal can be given by using clonidine, anxiolytics and pain killers, but this is given to reduce pain, rather than to offer an alternative to the substance they were using. They believe in a drug free methodology, rather than a harm reduction approach.

Mentoring:

When a new person enters the programme, they are assigned a follower. Their follower is someone who is in their second or third year of the programme and acts as a mentor to them. The follower shadows the new entrant for around 1 year. They share a room, work together and eat together. If the person being mentored wants to go to the gym, the follower must go with them. The follower does not normally leave their side during this time. This programme is designed to give the support the new entrant needs and help reduce the risk of them leaving the programme or feeling isolated. It also helps new members to see how far others have come during their time in the programme.

In addition, the 'follower' benefits in a range of ways too. Being a mentor helps them to realise that they can do something to help others, thereby increasing their self-esteem and gratification. Several programme participants shared that they didn't really feel the programme was working for them until they became followers. It meant that they had someone else to think about, that the focus was taken off of their own problems and moved them onto thinking about someone else's wellbeing.

Structure and Routine:

Structure and routine are an integral part of the programme. Daily routine is set from morning till night. An example of a day: get up at 6.30am, get dressed and clean your room; breakfast at 7.30am before beginning work at 8am; work for the full day with a 2 hour break for lunch; in the evening go to a gym class before showering and getting ready for dinner; after dinner, you are allowed 2 evenings where you can go to bed early and the other evenings must be taken up with activities such as watching films or group counselling sessions.



As part of the routine all residents are expected to clean and maintain the house and the garden environment, so that they can contribute to the community and be able to care for their home in the future. They are expected to share their room, to share meals and to share ideas.

The theory behind this is that people who have been on drugs have had little or no structure in their lives. San Patrignano believes that giving the members this structure is very important in their road to recovery. Being busy will give less time to focus negatively on their problems, about drugs and about leaving the programme.

Work:



Each person is assigned to a vocational training sector when they arrive. After 20 to 24 months they can choose in which field they want to focus their vocational training on for their future reintegration into society. Sometimes they choose different areas from the ones they were initially assigned to, or to initiate a study programme. In this case they may need to change the group in which they are integrated into to help them follow their aspirations for their future career. There are more than 40 different sectors at San Patrignano, and some of them generate income for the organisation. Sectors include carpentry, wine making, blacksmithing, dog kennels, horse stables, cheese making, catalogue design, decorations and wallpaper making.

Work is a vital part of the programme. It encourages interaction and collaboration with others, trains residents in the value of time keeping and respect, gives personal gratification, and offers young people the tools to pursue professional skills, vital to the social reintegration process. Work gives independence and freedom from friends, family or government financial support. It also contributes to the economic support for the community - income from the activities contributes to the running costs of the organisation. Furthermore, it gives time to talk with peers and this is where much of the peer to peer counseling and guidance is done.

Sport:

Sport is another important aspect to the programme. It has a great effect on the physical and mental wellbeing of an individual and helps increase their self-esteem. Group sports offer a valuable opportunity to interact and play with others. Football is one of the more popular sports that is played and many of the sectors have their own teams, where they play matches against other sectors. Spinning classes are also offered in the evenings. Each sector also has set times during the week where they can go swimming if they wish. They also have Basketball, volleyball and running teams and involve a number of residents in external tournaments (in the local area) and marathons in many cities in Italy as well as abroad (London and New York).

Education and professional training:

All the residents' education focuses on dignity, self-esteem and interpersonal skills as well as core values. Schooling and professional training is also offered. Minors in particular are encouraged to catch up on their education at the education centre but anyone in the programme can access these services. Since 1989, over 1000 students have gained qualifications from the San Patrignano study centre, with 479 middle school diplomas being completed, 168 vocational training qualifications, 312 high school diplomas and 23 University degrees. These are attained at the study centre on site.

Family contact and support for the family:

Most new members are referred from San Patrignano Associations local to their family homes. These associations continue to offer support to the families of San Patrignano residents. Families are encouraged to attend regular group support meetings alongside other family members at the associations, and have access to individual counselling services as required.

Family relationships are re-built up over time. In the first year of the programme, the only contact permitted between families and San Patrignano members is via letters. After the first year, families are allowed to visit and have phone calls. Then in the 3rd year, the young people in the rehabilitation programme are granted home visits. Initially they are able to return home for one week and then slightly longer for each further visit.

Reintegration:

When residents have completed the 4 year programme, they are prepared by counsellors for the reintegration process. They are given support to find a job and suitable accommodation, and are linked to an association who can provide the support they need as they make the transition back into the community.

They are not always advised to return home to their families, particularly if their family situation might have led to their drug addictions in the first place. For some people, 4 years is not enough time in the programme and they have the option of choosing to remain in the programme for a further 2 years and working for the organisation. This is particularly beneficial to those who don't have strong family networks to return to. A small number of the residents choose to stay in the community either as volunteers or as staff members. For those who leave, support is always available if they need it, for example through their local association.

Target group:

There is no specific target group for the programme. The programme allows anyone addicted to drugs or alcohol to take part as well as those with gambling addictions, eating disorders (when combined with addiction) and those who have lost their way in life and are at risk of turning to drugs.

At the time of writing (July 2015), 10% of members are minors (under 18) and 20% are over 30. The rest of the individuals in the programme, 70%, are between 18 and 30. Participants have ranged in age from 15 to 55 years old.

Minors:

Key areas of focus when working with minors (under 18's) include rebuilding their relationships with the families and education. All minors attend catch up educational classes at the centre and are encouraged to return to school. Regular literacy lessons are also offered. Minors are encouraged to complete their secondary and even higher education. They can take their primary exams at the catch up centre on site, and can often pass two school years in one due to the intensive tutoring they are given.

Resistance from the community:

San Patrignano faces some concern from the local community for the work that they do. In order to try and reduce this, they organize events that can benefit and be attended by the local community. These include, horse shows and food and wine tasting events. They also teach the people in the programme how to cook and then invite the local community to come and taste the food, including local business owners. The hope is that local businesses might then buy goods from the centre, or even offer people jobs after they complete the rehab programme.

San Patrignano also organise marathons and other sporting events for the local community where they can interact with the programme participants. San Patrignano believes that “you need to offer the opportunity for people to get to know you and what you do. You must invite them into your home”.

Funding:

San Patrignano is completely free for participants, thus maintaining the equality of the programme. If some residents paid for their place, whilst others were funded by the organisation or the government, additional benefits may be expected, leading to resentment. Everything needed by participants is included: clothes, toiletries, food etc. Participants do not keep money on them and there are no shops at the centre.

At the time of writing (July 2015), 45% of the programme funding is generated through the organisations own enterprises. The remaining 55% of funding comes from donations, from fundraising and from the organisation’s board members.

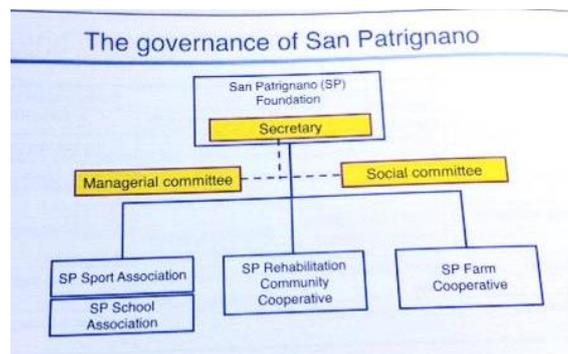
The vocational training projects do not all have an objective to make a profit. They are deemed successful as long as they break even, and can show the learning value to the participants. Peoples’ learning comes before profits.

Self Sufficiency:

The organisation has a strong focus on self-sufficiency. As well as the income which is generated through the programme sectors, they grow and make the majority of their own food. This includes growing fruit and vegetables, rearing animals for milk, eggs and meat and making their own pasta, cheese and wine. They also produce their own soap and shampoo reducing costs on buying these items externally. Some of the members are trained in plumbing and electrics so they can fix any onsite problems.

Management and Staffing:

More than 50% of the educators and professionals are volunteers, many of whom have been through the programme themselves and chosen to stay on to help others. There is no one person in charge. Instead there is collective management, made up mostly of people who were previously in the programme. The programme is run by a board and decisions are made collectively through this board.



Success rates:

The San Patrignano Programme is a 4 year programme. The value of this length of programme is seen in the success rate, which is around 70% for those who remain for the full 4 years. This includes drug users who have used for more than 10 years and thus are normally classified as incurable. Data showed that women were less likely to relapse than men after completing the programme and also that former residents were more likely to relapse if they returned to their city of origin. Success for San Patrignano is defined as being able to abstain from substance use and to be able to do so consistently over time.

This report was written by Amy Calcutt from S.A.L.V.E. International with help from the team and residents at San Patrignano in July 2015. This visit was funded as part of a Comic Relief research and development grant.

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