



SanPatrignano.

**The role of social enterprise in recovery from
drug and alcohol addiction: a report on a visit to
the San Patrignano community, Rimini, Italy**

Report prepared for the Peter Gibson Memorial Fund

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While I was in the process of thinking about and planning the visit, it also occurred to me that it would be helpful to have 'another pair of eyes' and a colleague to witness and reflect on the experience. So I would also like to thank Val Tallon, from the Scottish Government who accompanied me on the visit and expanded our capacity to talk to people at San Patrignano, and to a private, anonymous individual who provided the funding for Val's airfare. I would also like to thank Tony Gross who self-funded his airfare so he could join us out of his own interest. I used some of the funds from the PGMF creatively to rent an apartment to reduce the accommodation and cost of meals, to enable them to join me on the trip.

Finally, I would like to thank Monica Barzanti at San Patrignano, who helped me to arrange the visit and answered all of our questions with equal amounts of passion, patience, generosity and hospitality; and to Mike and Andy, residents at San Patrignano who were wonderful and inspiring guides round the community.



Mike, Tony & Andy

Personal forward to the report

When I embarked on this project, I intended to visit the San Patrignano community, near Rimini in Italy to bring some fresh thinking back to Scotland about the role of social enterprise in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. I had been working for two years in the Scottish Government's Drug Policy Unit, to help drive forward the Scottish Government's new drug policy, *The Road to Recovery*¹. The aim of this policy is to put recovery at the heart of Scotland's efforts to bring people who have been affected by drug addiction back from the margins of society to be productive citizens, reintegrated into the mainstream of society, so they can live more fulfilling lives, and reduce the impact of addiction on their families and communities. What I discovered in these two years is a system that is entrenched in a culture of substitute prescriptions, such as methadone. Whereas methadone and other substitute medicines can play a useful role in helping people to start on their recovery journey, many people who enter the treatment system fail to progress in their recovery because a risk-averse culture and treatment system firmly wedded to the medical model fails to help people to 'move on' from substitute prescription. And worse than that, methadone is now implicated in almost half (47%) of the 584 drug-related deaths in Scotland². In what other field of medicine would the medicine prescribed to help people, contribute to their deaths? Something has to change.

My intentions were to explore the role that social enterprise can play in people's recovery journey and promote the findings to inspire people in positions of influence that a different vision of the treatment and recovery system is possible.

What I found in San Patrignano will alter the course of my life. I encountered a 'big vision' for a different way of approaching recovery: a vision where social enterprise is a vehicle to give meaning and purpose to people's lives, rather than just a means of funding service delivery. San Patrignano is unreplicable in its entirety, due to its history, its scale, its location, and the Italian culture in which it is situated. Nevertheless, I have become committed to take the first steps in setting up a structure that is inspired by the vision at San Patrignano, to set up and develop a recovery community in Scotland based on the principles of San Patrignano, but adapted to the Scottish climate and culture: this structure will be a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) called *Independence from Drugs and Alcohol Scotland* (IF). I have gathered around me a group of excellent and committed people and have registered IF as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation

¹ Scottish Government (2008) *The Road to Recovery*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government

² *Drug related deaths in Scotland in 2011*. National Statistics publication for Scotland, 17th August 2012

and to play my role in helping it to grow. Where this journey will take me I cannot be sure. But it is a journey I was not planning to make when my airplane landed in Italy.

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About the Peter Gibson Memorial Fund (PGMF)

Peter Gibson was Director of the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC) from 1977-90, when he played a vital role in building the SCC's foundations and reputation. His leadership secured significant achievements for Scottish consumers, around such issues as money advice, small claims against faulty goods, freedom of information, access to services in rural areas, competition in domestic air travel, tenant participation, and choice in schooling.

Brought up in the Ayrshire village of Dunlop, Peter was educated at Glasgow Academy, St Andrews University and the University of California. In 1971 he worked as a regional organizer with Shelter, becoming director of Shelter Scotland in 1974. At the age of 29, he went on to direct the Scottish Consumer Council from 1977 to 1990, when he left to build his own successful consultancy business with his wife Amanda Britain. He died, aged 58, of cancer in December 2005.

Peter was an iconoclast, a radical and a rationalist. His iconoclasm saw him challenging in the 1970s the dominance of Scottish council housing and providing the impetus for the growth of the housing association movement. As chair of the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux he also saw through radical reforms to bring about higher quality standards of advice for citizens. His rationalism underpinned the work of the Scottish Consumer Council, whose commitment to evidence-based policy making gave the SCC a powerful punch in Scottish public policy. His legacy was the formation in 2008 of Consumer Focus Scotland, a new consumer champion for Scotland.

The PGMF was set up in his memory by a small group close colleagues and friends, who as trustees wished to carry forward his ideas and interests. It supports activities that contribute to improving the quality of life of Scottish consumers. Their Travelling Scholarship supports individuals to go abroad to research consumer issues, returning to use what they have learned and experienced to the benefit of Scottish consumers.

About the San Patrignano community

Established over 30 years ago, the community at San Patrignano grew from one man's efforts to provide a place of safety to a woman who was trying to get off drugs. As news spread in the drug-using community that there was a safe haven where people could recover from addiction, others began to arrive at the property, where they lived in caravans. Today, San Patrignano is home to 1,500 people living and working in a thriving recovery community (20% of these are female). There are also two other smaller sister communities: in Bottichella (120 residents) in the hills above Rimini; and in Trento (110 residents) in the foothills of the Dolomites.

San Patrignano does not think of itself as a drug rehabilitation centre, or a community for people with drug problems. Rather, it sees itself as a community against social marginalisation:

Among the problems that affect the drug addict, drug use is the least relevant. The core of the problem is not drugs, nor the abstinence crisis: it is the human being with his fears and the black holes that threaten to suck him in. That is why I do not like to say nor hear that ours is a community for drug addicts. Ours is a community for living, where you can restart in life after years spent as a social outcast. Ours, if we really need a definition, is a community against social marginalisation.

Vincenzo Muccioli, Founder of the San Patrignano Community

This is a radical departure from how the agencies and services in Scotland view themselves – as drug treatment and support agencies or rehabilitation centres.

The next radical departure is that everything in the community is of the highest quality: from the design and construction of the buildings, the food that is served to the residents, the products they make, and the services they provide. This commitment to quality is not incidental. It is integral to restoring residents' self-worth and pride in their endeavours. It sets the standards and conditions to mitigate a lifetime of low expectations and social marginalisation. It builds a foundation for high expectations for the present and the future.

Another distinctive element of life in the community is that there is none of the usual group or individual drug treatment therapies. Communal living, trust and responsibility, respect, training and education work together in a holistic approach to living a drug-free life. There are no professional drug treatment and support workers (although psychological support is available to address underlying issues as and when appropriate). When someone enters the community, they are allocated to a 'responsible person' who is a year ahead of them in their recovery journey, to guide them through the process of adjusting to a new way of life. They live, work, and eat alongside each other, providing peer support.

Communication with the outside world is restricted to letter writing. There are no mobile phones or emails (except for those engaging in distance learning education programmes, where email communication is required). Neither is there any money in the community – all of the daily needs are provided by the community; clothing packages from friends and family are permitted twice a year.

There is a family house, where mothers and their young children can reside together alongside other mothers and children. There is a primary school on the main site.

San Patrignano welcomes all young men and women who have serious drug abuse problems, regardless of ideology, social background, or religion, and completely free of charge, accepting no payment or funding from their families or the government. It is entirely independent and funded through the efforts of its own social enterprise and donations from trusts and foundations and corporate donations. In 2010, the total budget of the San Patrignano community was €29 million (£23.6 million), with 75% of the funds generated through the sales of its goods and services.

Principles

Community: a 'family' atmosphere, friendship, mentoring and guidance through mutual support: live, work and eat together

Responsibility: quality work & education; service to others & the community

Respect: for others and self (health, fitness, education); trust; 'for life' (much of the production involves natural and living things)

Training and education: aimed at reintegration into society and the world of work; production of high-quality, 'top-end' (high value) goods, many of which are award-winning

Abstinence: from drugs (and for some people, alcohol too)

Together, these are the 'treatments' – no traditional individual drug therapy or group work; no payments from individuals, government, health or local authorities

San Patrignano is widely known about in Italy. People need to request to come to stay in the community (self-referral). Local San Patrignano associations across Italy (formed from family and former recovered guests) are the local point of contact that help to guide the admissions process, prepare the applicants to understand the commitments that life in the San Patrignano community requires, as well as liaising with the local health professionals that support a person's detox, so that the transfer from the detox process to San Patrignano can be seamless. (Similarly, the local associations play a role in helping people to reintegrate into their local community when they leave).

Residents are referred to as 'guests' and they stay between three to four years learning a trade or gaining an education (from basic high school education to university degrees). When questioned why it is necessary for guests to stay for this period of time, we were told that it takes three to four years to do a university degree, or undertake a thorough apprenticeship.

Since 1978, San Patrignano has taken in over 18,000 people, offering them a home, healthcare, legal assistance, and the opportunity to study, learn a job, change their lives, and regain their status as full members of society. Studies³ have shown that 70% of the people that leave the community 'with consent', usually after three to four years, remained drug-free at follow-up four years after having left the community; and 49% of those who had left the community 'without consent'. These are impressive statistics.

Social enterprise at San Patrignano

Part of San Patrignano's mission relevant to this exploration is to:

- use professional training as an instrument for the total social rehabilitation of the people welcomed into the community;
- collect economic resources through our activities, as well as through private and public contributions necessary for and consistent with the development of the mission.

San Patrignano is not one organisation. It is an association of a number of distinct legal entities in the form of six social cooperatives, operating under the umbrella of a not-for-profit foundation.

Across the three sites, there are a number of agricultural, manufacturing and service sectors producing 50 different products and services where the residents work. As previously mentioned, all products and services are of extremely high quality and thereby are high-value products rather than 'pity purchases'. Much of what is produced is hand-crafted, produced with love and care, enabling the producers to gain a sense of pride from their labour, as well as having time to chat to their peers while they work rather than being under pressure to turn out high volumes. (There is more pressure to gather the grape harvest at the optimum time and the whole community lends a hand to gathering the harvest.) Each resident undertakes a full-time job (9 a.m. to 12 noon, then 2 to 6 p.m.), where they receive training and learn the discipline of the workplace (unless they are in full-time education, in which case they might work in the gourmet restaurant in the kitchen, waiting tables or front of house).

Products and services include (not an exhaustive list):

- **artisan food production:** bread, biscuits, cakes, wine, olive oil, cheese – many of these products are award winning – some of which are available at fine retailers in Britain, as well as being available in San Patrignano's own shop on the edge of the community and through on-line sales;

³ *Beyond the community: multidisciplinary study of retention in treatment and follow-up on former residents of San Patrignano* (2005), Aldo Poletti, Department of Forensic Medicine and Public Health, University of Pavia.

- **industry:** wooden furniture; hand-printed wallpaper; printing; picture frames; metal works; fur (teddy bears manufactured for Christian Dior), wool & leather goods; soaps & shampoos; candles; bicycles;
- **graphic design**⁴ (advertising, promotional materials, publications) and websites;
- **agriculture & horticulture:** plant nursery, fruit & vegetables, olives and vines;
- **animal husbandry:** 300 cows, 200 sheep, 100 goats for the dairy/cheese-making factory;
- **equestrian:** stud farm, livery stables, international 3-day event, horse riding lessons;
- **canine:** obedience training, kennels, breeding, pet therapy;
- **retail in the nearby outside community:** shop selling produce & other goods; restaurants – a gourmet pizzeria, and a gastronomic restaurant (130 to 220 seats depending on the season);
- **healthcare:** national centre of excellence for Hepatitis C treatment; dental technician products;
- **conferences:** there is a conference hall in the grounds of the main site which, has a capacity of 1,000 delegates, where large companies can hold their conferences and AGMs (the space is used regularly during the evening as a cinema for the residents);
- **internal services:** property & ground maintenance, laundry, kitchen etc.
- **renewable energy:** biogas and electricity

Many of the products that are made at San Patrignano involve working with nature or natural elements. Understanding that even bread and cheese are living things, and care for the dairy herds, the horses and dogs teaches the trainees a respect for life, which is important during the process of recovery (whereas previously as addicts people had no fear of death nor respect for life).

One of the other keys to San Patrignano's success is its links to the business community. When the community wishes to diversify into a new product area, they use their business connections to find an expert in the field to work with them to set up the new production.

For example, when the cheese factory was opened, a cheese master nearing the end of his career, spent time in the community setting up the production and passing on the skills of his trade. After he left the community, he remains at the end of the phone to help the sector leaders to problem solve. San Patrignano now produces 32 kinds of cheese, many of which have won world cheese awards; and now they have their own cheese master who is passing on the skills to others working in the cheese factory.

⁴ San Patrignano's graphic design agency has designed the logo for IF (pro bono).



A more recent example is when the community had the idea of making a range of furniture from used wine barrels (called *the third life of wood*). They managed to get 30 of the top Italian designers to design an entire range of furniture from the used wine barrels. This has been exhibited at a major furniture design show in Italy, which generated interest and sales in the product, and more recently has been touring the United States of America.

Another crucial factor to San Patrignano's success is that they pay a great deal of effort in marketing their products. About half of the community's paid staff works in the marketing department, stimulating demand and sales for their products. This is an area where many social enterprises fall down because they have no demand or distribution networks for their produce. San Patrignano does this well.

The value of work

Apart from generating the income which enables San Patrignano to offer free places to guests and be independent of state funding, work in the social cooperatives provides a number of important therapeutic benefits. These include:

- learning skills or a trade – some of these will lead to employment once residents are ready to leave the community. Many former San Patrignano residents have set up their own businesses once back in their home communities; others are employed in businesses where they are using their skills. In both cases, former graduates from San Patrignano help to support those leaving the community to find work in their businesses or places of employment;
- learning the discipline of work – many of those that find their way to San Patrignano have never held a 'proper' job in their lives. Even if graduates from the community do not find work in the field of work they have been trained in, they have gained many transferable skills. These include the discipline of work, the satisfaction of having earned an honest wage, and satisfaction from the fruits of their labours;
- something to put on their CV – a demonstrable track record of having worked.

Implications for social enterprise and recovery in Scotland

One of the most frequent reasons for relapse for people recovering from drug and alcohol addiction is that they find it difficult to meaningfully occupy their time. Their addiction careers have often preoccupied much of their time in finding money to fuel their addictions (often through crime), scoring drugs and then using them. They have often had little or no employment history or any interests or hobbies beyond taking care of their need to further their addiction. Without meaningful activity to fill their time, they often drift back to what they know and the cycle of addiction begins again.

Work-based activity through the development of social enterprises can be considered to be a **therapeutic intervention** rather than punishment. It can give people in recovery meaning and purpose and they benefit through the value of work – giving them focus and occupying their time, developing their skills through training and education, developing routines, and giving them pride in the honest achievement of their labour. It also teaches people the value of money. Often people who have been involved as dealers and users have no real idea of the value of money, as they have not had to earn it legally or honestly – and so spending it wastefully is not a problem. When a person realises the hard work that it takes to earn an honest living, they are likely to have more respect for using money.

One of the key learnings from the visit to San Patrignano is that it is important that the fruit of people's work – the products and the services – needs to be of very **high quality to instil a sense of value and pride in the outputs of their labour**. This has implications for the selection of the types of products and services that new social enterprises working with people in recovery. They need to produce quality products that people need and want to buy, that can be sold at a value that contributes to the enterprises' economic success. This does not mean selling products at astronomic prices, as the most costly resource in most western countries' manufacture is labour, which is donated free by people in recovery as part of their programme involvement. This should not be considered as exploitation but as part of people's development, recovery and service.

Producing goods for sale needs to go hand in hand with the **ability to market and sell** these products. One of San Patrignano's secrets to their success is the focus, effort, and investment that they put into marketing their products. Almost half of the professional staff that the community employs are involved in marketing. The recent development in on-line sales has also been helpful in increasing sales.

It is quite rare for social care professionals to be able business people. This is a factor that causes social enterprises to operate at a sub-optimal level. It is critical that social enterprises for people in recovery **find creative ways of embedding business expertise** and entrepreneurial expertise in their work. This needs to be creative, for example through mentorship by local business people, or partnerships with the local Chamber of Commerce. It is vital that support from the business community in terms of skills that can be levered in to support these developments.

Social enterprise activity will also generate some income for the agencies they work in, although realistically, few social enterprises generate sufficient funds to cover their costs.

But through focus on high quality, products and services that are unique or fill a gap in the market, and ensuring that these **products and services are sold at a good price**, the gap between income and expenditure can be lowered.

The Scottish Government and trust and foundations would benefit from this insight, and be encouraged to support the development of social enterprise activities in Third Sector organisations working with people in recovery.

The Carnegie UK Foundation's recent paper on The Enabling State⁵ and the discussions arising from this work about the changes in the way that the state thinks about relationships between communities and individuals and builds the capacity for building mutual support and self-help may be a useful vehicle to influence government's thinking in more actively encouraging and supporting the development of social enterprise in the area of recovery from addiction.

Next steps for IF

We are working to begin the development of a recovery community inspired by San Patrignano but adapted to Scottish climate and culture. In May 2013, we successfully registered as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO SC044032).

We have begun to have dialogue with the Scottish business community and with the Scottish Chamber of Commerce to see what skills we can draw upon to set up and develop this initiative. We have also started to have conversations with philanthropic businessmen and women to help us secure a site where the recovery community might be established.

Our initial strategy is to find someone who is willing to purchase land for the community, and retain ownership of the asset for a seven year period while the community becomes established, with an agreement that once we reach certain agreed developmental milestones, that the donor will gift the land to the charity that will become responsible for the community.

Once we have identified and secured a site for the community, we will then begin the process of developing a business plan for the social enterprise activities that will suit the location of the community. This will include applying for developmental funding from the Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise, the European Union as well as other philanthropists and trusts and foundations.

San Patrignano are willing to help us in any way they can to establish this community. The entire IF Board met travelled to visit the community in June 2013 to be inspired by their vision and what they have achieved. We have agreed to work in partnership on a number of mutually beneficial activities. These include admitting a small number of motivated individuals in early recovery to continue their recovery journey and undertake the first half of their programme at San Patrignano until our own community is ready to admit its first

⁵ Sir John Elvidge (2012) *The Enabling State: a discussion paper*. The Carnegie UK Trust

guests; to provide some of their residents with a good command of English who are coming to the end of their time at San Patrignano to act as 'responsibles' for our first intake; and to work together on a number of mutually beneficial commercial and cultural projects. They have already provided us with free graphic design for the IF logo.



IF is currently developing its website and will have its official launch in Edinburgh at the Scottish Gallery Cafe in late September 2013.

Meanwhile, we have been visiting other communities (Betel in Hexham) and met with the founder of Auchlochan (in Lanarkshire) to gain further insight into the process of setting up different types of community.

We have linked up with Jamie Oliver's Fifteen Foundation who have helped to start the San Patrignano UK Association, to send people from Britain to Italy and to help them resettle upon return. We have agreed in principle to support each others' development with practical support.

The road will be long and require much effort. But with our skilled board of directors (that includes Sir John Elvidge and Professor Neil McKegany) and our commitment to an ambitious vision, little by little, we will get there... just like San Patrignano... which started off with a couple of caravans in a field 30 years ago.

Other images from San Patrignano



The dining hall



The printing workshop



Making knitwear



Exercising horses



Rabbit fur teddy bears manufactured for Christian Dior