Social Influences on Drug Use and Desistance

Who are the key influences for an individual's drug abuse and desistance?

An SPS research study found that different social actors influence a drug abuser at different stages of drug abuse

Stages of Drug Abuse

Social Influences

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INITIATION

Starting drug use

Family

Poor supervision, Lack of positive rolemodels

Drug peers

Teach pro-drug attitudes,
Drug-taking as a way to
bond with friends

MAINTENANCE / RELAPSE

Continuing drug use

Self

Learnt to use drugs to cope with stress and negative emotions

DESISTANCE

Process of stopping drug use

Correctional Staff

Provide care and concern,
Provide practical help in
aftercare

Family

Source of motivation,

Recognise responsibility to family (caring for elderly parents, children)

What changes occur between periods of drug-taking and desistance?



Change in social circle



Change in self-identity and relation to others

- Reduced time spent with drug peers
- Surrounded by prosocial support system
- Recognise responsibility to family
- De-prioritise antisocial peers

What can we do to positively influence individuals towards desistance?

Provide a supportive social circle for change



✓ Build on day-to-day moments to reinforce their application of skills outside of incare programme sessions, or when in the community

Reinforce their prosocial identity



- ✓ Facilitate their cost-benefit-analyses and reflection of actions on loved ones
- ✓ Remind them about their goals for family and work beyond prison and aftercare supervision, towards the future lives they hope to lead



