They charge clients up to £19,000 and they'll even move in. They're the über-therapists who cater to wealthy addicts hooked on class-A drugs

HOW THE (very) RICH DO REHAB

By Charlotte Edwardes

Supertherapists Matthew Mervyn-Jones (left) and Johan Sorensen, photographed by Tom Jackson

Johan Sorensen is telling me about the time he accompanied a "client" – let's call her Jane – to rehab in North Carolina by private jet. Blitzed on cocaine, she found clothes "too restricting" and stripped to her vest and pants. Then she began riling the pilot, smoking, swearing and throwing pretzels. "She'd brought her dog and two bodyguards,"

recalls Sorensen. "She kept saying, 'What the f***, we're going to Duck?' Towards the end of the flight, she lunged for control of the plane. It took three of us to restrain her."

Safely on the soil of a private airfield, Sorensen got Jane, whose father is on the *Forbes* list, into a car and bundled her off to the clinic. "Sadly, she checked out four days later."

Sorensen, 40, is an addiction therapist to the stratospherically super-rich, working through the chain of recovery from intervention to critical care to rehabilitation, to hand-holding them back into a sober life.

He's a dramatic figure with a curlicue moustache and 20 years in the business. He describes his as "a creative approach" to treating long-term addiction. His name is passed word-of-mouth and his tailored treatments may include travelling doctors, home detoxes, round-the-clock nurses, psychotherapists and "sober companions" anywhere in the world.

According to Sorensen, rehab is especially difficult for two kinds of people. The very poor – and the very rich. "Those who do worst in treatment are either those with a lot of money or none. Those with too much don't need to work. It can mean they're quite directionless. A lot [of my clients] are the high-net-worth children of people who've made fortunes."

These "blue-chip" clients inhabit a world protected by the high walls of wealth, secrecy and security (Sorensen has had a Hollywood actor on his books and a British rock star).

But what's striking is that Sorensen is at the sharp end of a burgeoning industry. Today's rehab landscape is not limited to drink and drugs, but to a host of "behavioural addictions" from sex to shopping, gambling to computer games. Its therapists treat eating disorders, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – and "trauma" has spawned its own sub-category of residential programmes, some of which are little more than medicalised spas.

The fat tail of twinkling clinics sweeping America (there are 114,000 in the country and California has a "Rehab Riviera") has produced rivals in Europe, South Africa and the Middle East, with swimming pools and gyms, gardens and "fabulous" staff. ("What's terrifying," admits Sorensen, "is when you hear clients saying, 'Have you been to the new such-and-such,' as if it's the new Aman hotel.")

The Kusnacht Practice in Zurich

'SOME CLIENTS DON'T WANT TO GO TO A CLINIC, SO WE MAY RENT OUT A CASTLE'

And then there are the upper, upper echelons of treatment – where clients can create their own environment. "If they don't want to go to a clinic, we may rent out a castle in Scotland, or a ranch in Virginia, where they can take their butler and cook, and I'll bring the doctors, nurses and therapist."

This is a similar approach to the Kusnacht Practice in Zurich, where six clients at a time are housed anywhere they like, from glass-fronted chalets to gilded chateaux. It costs £6,600 a day – £200,000 a month – and it's where George Michael reportedly spent three months last summer. The Priory Group seems cheap at £4,000 a week by comparison, while Life Works, which Sorensen co-founded with Don Serratt, is £19,000 for 28 days.

So what happened to the boot-camp rehab of 20 years ago: the crumbling country houses, tough love and confrontational group therapy?

"Some still exist," says Sorensen, "and are really good – for the right client. I went to one myself and it's still running."

Others have been bought up and overhauled by chains such as the Priory. In America, Mitt Romney's private-equity company recently sold its rehab business – the biggest in the country – for $1.18 billion.

The best thing about old-school practice was its adherence to the 12-step programme (which still underpins many expensive rehabs today); the worst was the terrible outcomes (some claim "success" rates are as low as 20 per cent). Either way, many professionals believe rehab is only the beginning of the journey.

"Most people can stay clean and sober in treatment," says Sorensen. "The key is what happens in real life."

Old Etonian and former heroin addict Cosmo Duff Gordon, 47, is a top counsellor. For five years he's been running residential treatments at his Start2Stop clinic in a mews in South Kensington, London.

"I took an outpatient model from Cape Town and developed it," he says. South Africa was where Duff Gordon was treated for ➡

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A specialist clinic in Zurich costs £6,600 a day – £200,000 a month

injecting speedballs (cocaine and heroin combined in a syringe).

While we talk, he tokes repeatedly on his vape pen. Start2Stop offers two options: the first is a 19-bed residential "proposition" for those immediately out of "acute care" rehab (£4,500 a month). "Our stereotype addict is someone completely out of control," he explains. "But that's less than 15 per cent of people with an addiction problem."

He also runs a 100-day outpatient programme (which costs £7,500) for those "65 per cent of people who meet the criteria for addiction and are what we call 'binge pattern'". These are, he says, lawyers, bankers – people who "function in work".

Another 20-25 per cent are "top-up types" – "Who are physically addicted and may have a bit of coke or vodka first thing, get to work and have a secret stash, a hip flask or whatever, which they'll have a couple of nips from, or lines, then a couple of gin and tonics at lunchtime, a few more nips from the hip flask in the afternoon, and a whole load more booze or coke in the evening. And these people can hold it together for decades."

Duff Gordon has a high proportion of clients from public school (he advertises in the Old Etonian Association's journal) and is all too familiar with the link between privilege and addiction.

"The curse of inheritance" has long gone hand in hand with addiction. The Duke of Marlborough had a public battle with addiction – leading to scraps with the police, speeding fines and charges for breaking into a chemist to access drugs. John Hervey, the Marquess of Bristol, spent £7 million on drugs and died aged 44. Afterwards, it was said that the family seat of Ickworth had to be replumbed to remove syringes from the pipes.

There was Olivia Channon, Guinness heiress, who died of a heroin overdose at 22 in the Oxford rooms of Gottfried von Bismarck, who later died in his Chelsea flat after injecting cocaine on the hour, every hour.

More recently there was Hans Kristian Rausing, son of the billionaire Tetra Pak tycoon, whose wife, Eva, was found dead in their Belgravia home. The couple met in rehab.

Sorensen has his own stories: having doors broken down in a prestigious London square, where a client was removed from a "blood-splattered" flat where he'd been "injecting even when he had no veins left. He was rushed to A&E and a crew cleaned up the flat."

Then there was the time he had to sweet-talk reception at a five-star hotel to get urgent access to a client on the verge of overdosing. And the intervention for the scion of a Middle Eastern dynasty who, seeing his family gathered in one room, hitched up his thobe and fled. A chase through St James's Park ensued – "I was wearing a suit and slippery shoes" – until Sorensen caught up with him. The young man agreed to treatment as long as he didn't have to see his family. "We got in a cab and went."

There's the rich kid who bought his way into celebrity circles by becoming the "money and the drugs".

Sorensen is the James Bond of recovery. He's staged interventions, chartered planes, crossed mountains in blizzards – transported addicts in varying states of collapse to Arizona, Switzerland and Saudi Arabia.

He also organises couples counselling and children's programmes ("The only really good one is in Palm Springs"). Then there's wider family to deal with, as well as "lawyers, accountants, trustees. Some [families] look at altering trusts and wills because you're often talking about huge amounts of money."

CHRISTOPHER LANE

'CELEBRITIES NEED RECOVERY COACHES WHO ARE NOT STAR-STRUCK'

Topes Calland, whose job description spans "supertutor" to "sober mentor" for the messed-up kids of the rich, has had a knife in his back and, in one case, a kid tried to set him on fire.

Calland, 30, is remarkably sanguine about this as we sit drinking fizzy water in Soho. He's a flamboyant character, with flowing clothes and rook's nest hair.

"He was the nicest kid, but just completely bonkers," he says. "And he was going through puberty. And he's superbright, but channels it into being really manipulative. And he had substance-abuse issues."

Calland fell into the role by accident when, shortly after graduating from Oxford, he was having lunch with a friend who runs a tutoring agency. "And he got a call from the assistant of this family who said, 'We're having a nightmare with the 15-year-old son. He's been expelled from 9 schools and had 20 people working with him.

"'His father wants a well-spoken Oxbridge chap. We're never going to find someone who fits the bill.' And my friend looked at me and said, 'I think I might know the person who could do this job.'"

Calland, then 22, spent an initial two weeks with his new charge before his father "signed over guardianship to me and we just travelled around the world for a year and a half. It was like a modern-day Grand Tour – except more Koh Phangan, less Venice.

"Essentially, I was getting paid to do a gap year with a reprobate teenager."

Calland is one of few I spoke to not in recovery – and points out that he doesn't have a "clinical background" – but many of his charges have issues with drugs. "It ranges from legal highs – synthetic cannabis or 'bath salts' – but mostly it's cocaine, a lot of cannabis. For American kids there's a lot of prescription drugs as well: benzos, Xanax."

He turns to others in the industry – such as Duff Gordon and Sorensen – when he needs advice.

Sorensen's background also helps explain his vocation: on one side his family are alcoholic seafarers (his Norwegian father died of alcohol-induced Parkinson's aged 65). Conversely, his English side are famous drug and alcohol counsellors (his mother, Barbara Sorensen, and aunt, Rosemary Clough, have been doyennes of the business since the Seventies). He tells a wry vignette of stumbling home drunk aged 16 and falling asleep on the sofa surrounded by a library of books on Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous. "It was a nightmare." ➡

There are 114,000 clinics in America. California has a 'Rehab Riviera'

How did his family feel when he developed a drink problem of his own? "Philosophically neutral, I suppose," he says, laughing. "They knew that it was a genetic disease, that I couldn't control it. They said, 'We're not going to enable you, so, if you want to continue, you'll be cut off and, when you want help, just give us a call and we'll help.'"

It's now 20 years since Sorensen started working in "recovery" – training first at Promise in London, which he went on to run, as well as Farm Place, and then Life Works (which, like Farm Place, was bought by the Priory Group).

He's set up and consulted abroad, including at the Nour Al-Shorouk centres in Lebanon ("Prescription opiates are rife") and Saudi Arabia ("Mostly heroin and alcohol – which is more expensive than cocaine"). And since 2008, he's case-managed between 150 and 200 private clients. He is opening a new rehab in New York, home town of his art-dealer wife, Liz Kabler, granddaughter of philanthropist Walter Annenberg.

Today, Sorensen is with Matthew Mervyn-Jones, 46, who fits sober coaching around his job as a television producer. Mervyn-Jones, like Sorensen, is well connected (his sister-in-law is Cressida Bonas, one-time girlfriend of Prince Harry). He's an alumnus of 12-step fellowships and steeped in the language.

They talk about "using" (taking substances), "triggers" (someone or something that makes a recovering addict want to "use"), "enablers" (people who make it easier for you to use), and "long-term recovery".

He tells me of a Scottish aristocrat he's currently helping get sober, a man who "can fly anywhere he chooses, whenever he chooses". When he relapses, Mervyn-Jones will sometimes spend 24 hours on call.

I'm reminded of *Brideshead Revisited*, of Sebastian Flyte's sober companion, Mr Samgrass, and of their Grand Tour of the Levant – a trip funded by Flyte's mother for the sole purpose of keeping him away from alcohol.

And in some ways, Evelyn Waugh's account of the Twenties approach to dealing with aristocratic "black sheep" was prescient. "Sober companions" (also called sober escorts or recovery coaches, mentors or buddies) are on the rise both here and in the United States – men and women paid to monitor sometimes 24/7, particularly hard-to-crack cases, to ease them into sober/clean living.

Much like Waugh's era, the trend in sober companions has flourished only among the sliver of society who can afford it. In return for hand-holding clients through social functions, holidays, travelling with them on private jets with, say, their nutritionist or nanny, or PA or bodyguard, coaches will be paid anywhere between £350 and £1,000 a day.

Sorensen matches his coaches to his clients. For example, he says, "If you have a celebrity and they need to go to the Oscars, you need to make sure their recovery coach has experience of that environment and won't be star-struck, or collecting autographs," as has happened.

"Another client is a musician, who is massively triggered on tour, so we have a sober buddy who is a musician in recovery. The band and record label contract him to go on tour with the client. He's not fazed, and when he turns up at the *Kerrang!* Awards, he already knows half the people in the room. I have a stable of people who fit different worlds."

Calland advises parents to send troubled teens to "wilderness programmes" in Utah,

'A GLAMOROUS 91-YEAR-OLD LADY WANTED TO DETOX BEFORE SHE DIED'

such as Aspiro and Second Nature (they cost around £300 a day plus a "gear" charge of £1,700). He jokes that it's a version of the "classic 'come back when the street lights come on' attitude to parenting, and that promoted a lot of self-sufficiency".

It's primitive: they hike, camp, cook their own food over fires; there's no phone reception, no television, and no chance of returning home until you conform. The average length of stay is 60 days.

"At first they're like, 'What is going on? I did not sign up for this,' and then they're like, 'Jesus, this is quite fun,' because they've never been allowed to be kind of an idiot, kick around, get dirty, sleep under the stars, and all of that. No one cares about the Giuseppe Zanotti trainers; everyone looks like a dork, is dirty, sweaty and stinks like you. It's liberating.

"It opens their eyes to what life could be and what could happen if they get praise for the right reasons, and take responsibility."

Once they're in his care, Calland tries to incentivise his kids, find them an interest, "as long as you can ignite some sort of fire within them, even if it's very nascent. You need to give them something to lose. I guess it's a sort of prehab," he says with a laugh.

Free "12-step fellowships" such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA), whose meetings are often held in church halls, are also flourishing – "mushrooming in popularity", according to an attendee – and proliferating, along with their newer sister fellowships such as SLAA (Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous) and CoDA (Co-Dependents Anonymous).

As well as being "not everyone's cup of tea", AA and NA, despite their best efforts, are not always "anonymous".

While stars such as Michael Jackson, Eric Clapton and Elton John may have felt perfectly comfortable in groups in London, there's a layer of excessive paranoia bound up with incredible wealth that makes "doing the rooms" an impossibility.

For example, one family currently being advised by Sorensen want trauma therapy but, crucially, "total anonymity" as well.

Normally, he'd send clients with trauma issues to Onsite, a "residential workshop-based treatment centre" with a 40-client capacity in Cumberland Furnace, Tennessee. "But I've said there's never a guarantee that another client won't leak information, despite a facility's best efforts. So they want to buy all the beds for two weeks and then fly the family in on their jet to guarantee exclusivity."

Both Sorensen and Duff Gordon do *pro bono* work. Recently, Sorensen helped a mother in Florida who was on crystal meth. "We did the whole thing, primary and secondary, and her child went on the programme, too. There's a lot of us who are more than happy to do that."

Actually, some of the best treatment in the country is on the NHS, he says, "but I can't get clients in there for love or money. You have to be an injecting, homeless heroin addict to be referred in. I've literally had a client say that they will start injecting heroin in order to be referred to one particular centre to deal with his cocaine and alcohol addiction."

Sorensen says it's never too late to do treatment. His oldest client was a 91-year-old French lady – "who'd led an unbelievably glamorous life" – who wanted to detox and then get into recovery. "She wanted to do some intensive therapy to make sense of her life. She was incredibly elegant, with amazing stories. I asked her why she had decided to embark on this. She replied, 'I have done everything I have ever dreamt of except this. I want to die sober.' And she did, eight years later." ■