

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Canterbury Christ Church University		
Unit of Assessment: 4 - Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience		
Title of case study: ICS4.01 Utilising the human-canine relationship to support vulnerable people in the criminal justice system		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2017-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
1. Dr Elizabeth Spruin	Director of Justice Support Dogs International (JSDI), Senior Lecturer in Psychology	2013 – present
2. Dr Katarina Mozova	Deputy Director of JSDI, Senior Lecturer in Policing	2015 – present
3. Dr Tammy Dempster	JSDI Research Assistant	2016 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017-20		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact Justice Support Dogs International (JSDI), an interdisciplinary research lab based at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), has had a significant impact on the UK governments' priorities of improving support to vulnerable victims and witnesses in the criminal justice service. This impact has led to: 1) national and international changes to the policies and practices used to support victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system, 2) advancements in the educational and training standards of facility dogs in the police interview process, both nationally and internationally, and 3) the transformation of the criminal justice process into a safer and more comfortable environment for vulnerable victims and witnesses.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research JSDI is an interdisciplinary research lab operating as a collaboration between the university's Psychology and Policing teams. Researchers at JSDI have been investigating practical ways to better support vulnerable victims and witnesses. Using specially trained dogs (known as facility dogs), we have evidenced an innovative and effective way in which victims and witnesses can be better supported. By offering non-judgmental companionship to victims and witnesses, these facility dogs provide a unique, personal form of support not available through any other current initiatives within the UK and Europe. The use of facility dogs in the legal process has been common practice in North America for many years. However, JSDI were the first to explore these practices outside North America (references a, b, c, e) and the first to provide empirical evidence supporting their use within the UK and abroad. Using a combination of case studies, interviews, surveys, clinical rating scales, and observations, we provided the first evaluation of the use of facility dogs within a court setting (a, b) and were the first to examine their suitability within UK courts (c). The research further led to the first global publication on the importance of standards when using dogs in the criminal justice system (d).</p> <p><u>Courts.</u> Initially, through a series of interviews, observations, and clinical rating scales, our research demonstrated how these dogs can help to significantly reduce victim and witness stress and anxiety when attending court, reducing fear within the court environment, along with an increase in relaxation (a). Following on from this, with the Ministry of Justice calling for more specialized support for victims of sexual crimes, we focused on using these dogs to support</p>		

victims of serious crimes when attending court in England. Working with survivors of sexual offending and their families, we conducted a multiple case study; the first ever study to evaluate such an intervention (b). The results demonstrated that facility dogs provide a personal level of support, enabling victims to feel less anxious and more comfortable in the court environment, and allowing them to re-anchor their thoughts in a positive way. The results further highlighted the significant positive impact these dogs have on family members supporting the victim, helping to reduce their stress and enabling them to cope better with the process.

Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) Interviews. To demonstrate the wider impact these dogs could have across the criminal justice system, we also worked with Kent Police. Using a combination of observations, interviews, and surveys, our next set of case studies explored the role these dogs could have in supporting vulnerable victims during the ABE interview process (e). The Government's *Victims Strategy* highlighted the lack of support for vulnerable victims across the UK and the need for research to consider the voice of the victim when providing support services. Our research therefore included the voices of all those involved (e.g., victims, family, interviewing officers) and showed the positive impact that facility dogs had on providing victims with a more comfortable environment, helping them feel calmer and more focused and enabling them to communicate more openly during ABE interviews (e). Following that, our next study used interviews and online surveys to explore the impact that facility dogs are having across North America. This study was again the first of its kind, globally, to evaluate the support that facility dogs provide in the criminal justice system. It showed that using facility dogs enhances the credibility of victims and witnesses, and better enables interviewers to build rapport with young victims and witnesses (f).

To date, our research has involved discussions with 91 legal professionals from across the UK (a, b, e), Canada (f), and America (f), along with 135 victims and witnesses in the UK who have utilised a facility dog in the criminal justice process (a, b, e), and around 50 family members who supported those individuals (b, e).

3. References to the research

The following outputs have been published in high quality, peer reviewed, international journals and assessed as 2* and above in the institutional REF process.

- a. Spruin, E., Mozova, K., Franz, A., Mitchell, S., Fernandez, A., Dempster, T., & Holt, N. (2019). The use of therapy dogs to support court users in the waiting room. International Criminal Justice Review. ISSN 1057-5677.
- b. Spruin, E., Mozova, K., Dempster, T., & Mitchell, S. (2019). Exploring the impact of specially trained dogs on the court experiences of survivors of sexual offending in England and Wales: An exploratory case study. European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research. ISSN 0928-1371.
- c. Spruin, E., & Mozava, K. (September, 2017) Using specially trained dogs in the Criminal Justice System. BPS Forensic Update, issue 125, 39 – 42.
- d. Spruin, E., & Mozova, K. (2018). Dogs in the criminal justice system: Consideration of facility and therapy dogs. Pet Behaviour Science, 5, 1-12. ISSN 2445-2874
- e. Spruin, E., Mozova, K., Dempster, T., & Freeman, R. (2020). The use of facility dogs to bridge the justice gap for survivors of sexual offending. Social Sciences, 96, 1 -24. DOI (10.3390/socsci9060096).
- f. Spruin, E., Dempster, T., & Mozova, K. (2020). Facility dogs as a tool for building rapport and credibility with child witnesses. International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice, 62. DOI (10.1108/JCRPP-03-2020-0030).

Key funding/competitive grants supporting this work

	Grant holder	Grant title	Sponsor	Period	Value
1	Dr Elizabeth Spruin (PI)	Certified ADI Facility Dog The grant was in the form of a specially trained, A.D.I. (Assistance Dog International) certified, Justice Facility Dog (the first one awarded to anyone outside of America) and included the cost of 18 months of specialist training for the dog and his handlers.	Duo Dogs (Assistance Dog International Charity)	2017- Present	£30,000
2	Dr Elizabeth Spruin (PI)	Facility Dog Placements for Dr Elizabeth Spruin to demonstrate the benefits of using a justice facility dog within the ABE interview process.	Derbyshire, Nottingham and Kent Police	2019- 2021	£1700

4. Details of the impact

Changed policy and practice

Courts. The research began in September 2017 within the Kent courts, providing a therapy dog service as a form of support to vulnerable victims and witnesses who were attending court (research references a, b, c). In March 2018, the impact of this research led to changes in court practice with the commissioning of therapy dog services being adopted within courts across Kent (source 1). The impact that these changes had on Kent court users was also highlighted by HM Courts and Tribunals Service in their May 2018 national newsletter, referring to our research as making an ‘incredible’ difference to the services provided by the courts (1). This subsequently resulted in 10 more courts and court services across England adopting the use of specially trained dogs to support vulnerable victims and witnesses. In May 2018, the Office for the Victims’ Commissioner of England and Wales further requested that our research be highlighted as a ‘good practice’ provision, stating that they ‘were looking for innovative and effective ways to support victims of crime’ and ‘immediately’ thought of our research (5). Similarly, Intermediaries for Justice, a national charity dedicated to helping vulnerable people in the criminal justice system, has since shared and promoted our research on their site, as a form of good practice (6). The impact our research had nationally further led to international organisations (e.g., France Victims 67 – Strasbourg, France) adopting the use of specially trained dogs to support vulnerable victims and witnesses. For example, the New South Wales Department of Justice in Australia used our research to develop their own facility dog programme within Victim Services (2).

Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interviews. In July 2018, our work supporting vulnerable victims and witnesses during the ABE interview process (research references e, f), and the guidance we produced indicating the required level of training standards for these dogs (d), led to the Senior Presiding Judge (SPJ) for England and Wales, to commission the use of facility dogs within ABE interviews (3). This led to the formal recognition of the use of a facility dog for a vulnerable victim or witness, under Section 30 of the *Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) in Criminal Proceedings* guidelines (4). Before this, dogs had not been permitted to be present in ABE interviews and the judiciary had also had no protocol with regards to the procedure for allowing dogs into criminal proceedings. As a result of our work with Kent Police, two other UK police forces (Nottingham and Derbyshire Police) changed their practices and introduced facility dogs in the ABE interview process (3, 7). In December 2019, the Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner granted funding for the commission of a facility dog service for vulnerable victims and witnesses.

Influencing education and training

Our research has also contributed to the training of approximately 90 ABE interviewers (i.e., police officers and social workers), and 150 police officers and detectives across three forces (Kent, Derbyshire and Nottingham). This led to changes in practice across these police forces, and commissioning the services of JSDI to assist in complex cases which require an ABE interview (7).

In February 2019, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police invited us to train approximately 50 of their officers on the use of facility dogs in the criminal justice system. This training led to changes in practice across two Child Advocacy Centres in Alberta and their investment in changing the physical environment of police interview rooms, a commitment to developing a clear pathway for introducing facility dogs, as well as to changes in policy (8). In September 2019, we ran a workshop at the 2019 International Courthouse Dogs conference in Seattle, speaking to approximately 200 legal professionals, from five different countries, about the benefits facility dogs have on victims and witnesses (9). This led to an invitation from the American Bar Association (ABA) to be part of a panel entitled 'Facility Dogs Give Voice to Victims of Trauma and Violence Worldwide', at their 2020 annual meeting. Following on from this, in April 2020, the ABA used our research as evidence to support a Facility Dog Resolution, which was passed by the House of Delegates, resulting in the national commission of Facility Dogs in court proceedings across America (10) (See Covid-19 mitigating statement). In October 2019 we were invited by Victim Support Europe to develop a facility dog programme to support victims and witnesses during legal proceedings across five European countries. Our prior and on-going research is now being used to directly inform the development of these programmes (9).

Supporting vulnerable people

The changes in policy and practice outlined above have also had a significant impact on vulnerable victims and witnesses. As one victim's mother said on 16 March 2019 (11), after our facility dog supported her 7-year-old daughter during her ABE interview:

"I just wanted to take the time to thank you and the amazing Oliver [JSDI dog] for your help with [the victim]. I wish you could have seen her the first time she was interviewed. She was absolutely traumatised and to see how Oliver affected her psychologically and how calm he made her was amazing and gave her the confidence to do what she needed to."

The significant reach of our research, and the impact it has had on vulnerable people, has further been recognised and praised by prominent individuals in the UK and also by internationally-renowned charities. On 29 December 2018, the Victims' Commissioner of England and Wales stated her support for our work (11), referring to it as "a great project" and then explaining that:

"It is wonderful that Oliver is able to help victims through the trauma of appearing at court and helping them to give their best evidence. A justice dog, enabling justice to be served for the most vulnerable victims!"

Similarly, on 10 December 2019, Rachel Swann, Derbyshire's Deputy Chief Constable, was asked about the research and the impact it could have on victims and witnesses (11), she said:

"The additional support he [the JSDI facility dog] can give to the victims and witnesses that we work with on a daily basis is amazing to see. When victims talk about their experiences in an interview situation, it can be traumatic and difficult for them to open up. Sometimes, however, this is the only form of evidence available to us and we need to maximise its potential. He is a very clever dog that can really help to put vulnerable people at ease and making this process easier for people really is what we are trying to achieve with having him with us."

On 11 November 2020, the founder of Survivors Memoirs, an international charity dedicated to supporting survivors of childhood sexual abuse, showed their support for our work (11), commenting on how much survivors appreciate the work that we are doing for them. The

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Courthouse Dog Foundation in America have also recognised that our research has directly led to the changes in policy and practice of facility dogs and has helped to establish the use of these dogs internationally (9), stating that our research *'is at the forefront of these changes, leading the way in changing how justice systems treat victims, witnesses, interviewers, and the entirety of the legal profession'*.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Witness Champion of Kent - testimony provided
 2. Policy and Project Officer, Victims Services, NSW Department of Justice – email
 3. Kent Police - Detective Constable and Detective Superintendent - testimony provided
 4. Senior Proceeding Judge, England and Wales – email
 5. Head of Reviews and Analysis, Office for the Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales – email
 6. Intermediaries for Justice (<https://www.intermediaries-for-justice.org/news/meet-oliver-europes-first-justice-dog>)
 7. Derbyshire Police – Detective Constable - testimony provided
 8. Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada. – email invitation
 9. Chair, Board of Directors, Courthouse Dog Foundation – testimony of support
 10. American Bar Association – Facility Dog Resolution (<https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/policy/midyear-2021/101a-midyear-2021.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2w3qKCrY1hkpidvZxf0v2pciK3pXtpsnoIHfwvoR7OrGwjlvjqdQ6mBQ>)
- Testimony Evidence from Victims, Witnesses, Family Members and Legal Professionals.