

FYDO Dog

Canine support for victims of crime

2022

 **Victim Support** Europe



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INTRODUCTION

In January 2021, a consortium led by [Victim Support Europe](#) (VSE) was brought together to create a multi-national pilot project with the aim of providing support for vulnerable victims of crime in Belgium, France and Italy. Building on the existing efforts of pioneers in the US, and elsewhere in Europe, the project aimed to look into the ways dogs - trained by certified organisations and handled by victim support professionals - can be employed to mitigate the trauma experienced by victims of crime. Thus, the [FYDO project](#), an acronym for FacilitY Dog, came into being.

To accomplish its goals VSE, the leader in policy development and advocacy on behalf of victims of crime in Europe, created a partnership to develop a service which would be compatible with the diversity of European victim support systems. The partnership consisted of: four **certified assistance dog organisations** ([Dog4Life](#) from Italy, [Hachiko](#) and [Canisha](#) from Belgium, [Handi'Chiens](#) from France) who developed a standardised, evidence-based, dog training programme; a **front-line victim support organisation** [VIADUQ - France Victims 67](#) which already uses a FYDO dog and is a leader in the front-line development of FYDO support; and a **research institution** - the [University College of Cork](#), Ireland which conducted scientific research, collected data, and helped the partnership draw conclusions from its pioneering work. The US-based [Courthouse Dogs Foundation](#), the pioneers of working with facility dogs to support victims, offered its decades-long experience in advocating for dogs to be more widely deployed in victim support and joined the partnership as consultants. The consortium's mission was to improve experiences of European victims of crime by providing them with the support of a FYDO dog.

The use of a FYDO dog to enhance services for crime victims requires serious reflection and long-term commitment and should not be carried out on a whim. This manual is intended to assist victim support providers, to provide information **on how a FYDO dog can benefit and improve the support they deliver to vulnerable victims**; it is one of several publications developed by the FYDO project.

Victim Support Europe and the FYDO Network are happy to help any victim support service wishing to implement its own FYDO programme.

Victim Support Europe

<https://victim-support.eu>

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1. UNDERSTAND FYDO DOG SUPPORT

The European Commission estimates that up to 15% of the European Union's population falls victim to serious crime every year. The EU Victims' Rights Directive requires EU Member States to ensure victims can access their basic rights. These rights respond to a victim's five basic needs: the need for respect and recognition, access to support and access to justice, protection from secondary victimisation, intimidation and retaliation; and compensation and restoration¹.

Falling victim to crime is a traumatic experience; not only is the crime itself distressing, the aftermath can be just as overwhelming. Victims may feel powerless and uncertain of what they should do next. They may experience trauma, physical harm, shock, or emotional upheaval. Their reactions will vary from person to person, and may last for days, weeks, months or even years².

While victims may feel distressed, shocked, or abandoned, they are still expected to carry out tasks related to the crime: from submitting an official report to the police, contacting insurance companies or their employers, to undergoing medical examinations. Victims may be further impacted depending on the way associated professionals interact with them during these activities; this may cause secondary victimisation³.

A robust response to crime, which fully mitigates any effects of the crime and personal or societal victimisation, requires a well-organised support system. A national Framework for Comprehensive Victim Support can ensure a stable, comprehensive solution that progressively addresses the multiple needs of diverse

1 Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32012L0029>

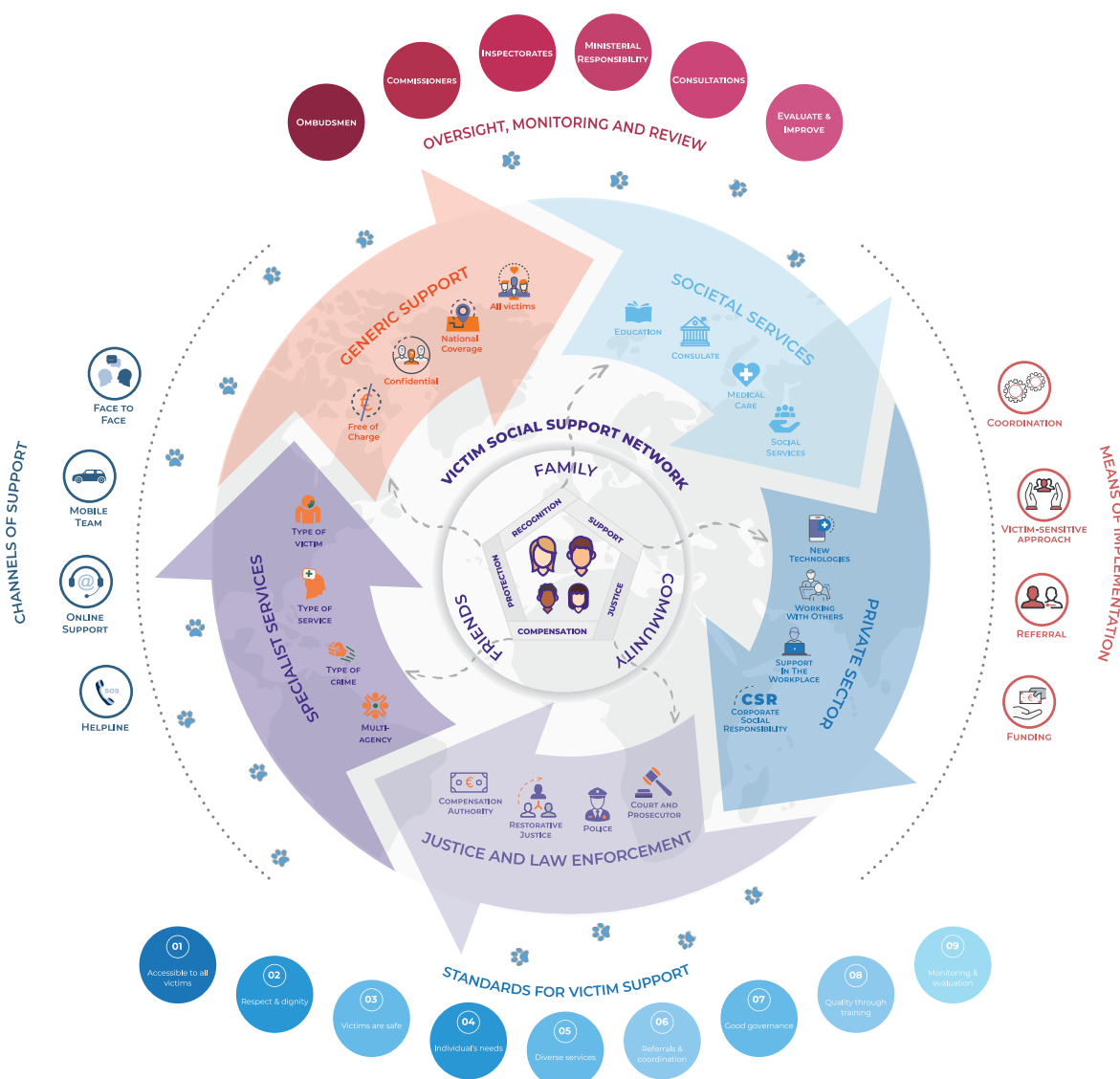
2 National Framework for Comprehensive Victim Support, Victim Support Europe, 2022, https://victim-support.eu/wp-content/files_mf/1669047428NationalFrameworkforComprehensiveVictimSupport.pdf

3 EIGE defines secondary victimisation as following: "Secondary victimisation occurs when the victim suffers further harm not as a direct result of the criminal act but due to the manner in which institutions and other individuals deal with the victim. Secondary victimisation may be caused, for instance, by repeated exposure of the victim to the perpetrator, repeated interrogation about the same facts, the use of inappropriate language or insensitive comments made by all those who come into contact with victims", <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1358>

victim populations. Such framework can help Member States better implement victims' rights and provide an improved understanding of how to address their needs, thus ensuring that all victims are recognised, treated with dignity and respect, and have access to appropriate services.

Research and experience have shown that the presence of a specially trained Facility Dog (a FYDO dog) at different stages of the victim's journey can reduce the victim's stress levels, making them feel safer, and making it easier not only to share their story but to participate in the justice process. Thus, FYDO dogs can play an important role in the victim's search for support and access to justice.

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMPREHENSIVE VICTIM SUPPORT



1.1 OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH DOGS

For more than 20,000 years, dogs have played a special role in human lives⁴. Over this time, humans have learned to communicate with dogs and read their behaviour: individuals first relied on dogs to alert them to danger, and, conversely, understood - through their posture - when they were safe. The image of sprawling dog is now, for many people, synonymous with trust, peace, and home; in return, dogs benefit from living with people who care for them emotionally and physically. A strong symbiotic bond, formed over millennia of interaction, now exists between humans and their dogs.

Participation in criminal proceedings is known to affect more severely those who are already suffering from trauma or who are particularly vulnerable. Victims of crime may be required to undergo stressful medical examinations, police interviews, or courtroom testimonials. In such situations, the presence of a calm dog can help create a safer and more comfortable environment for the victim⁵. Therefore, it is within this conceptual framework that VSE and its partners have explored the use of facility dogs to assist victims in their journey to justice and recovery.

Extensive research has found that the presence of a facility dog benefits victims of crime by⁶:

- Reducing blood pressure, stress levels, anxiety and heart rates⁷.
- Acting as an effective ice breaker.
- Acting as a tool for individuals, who struggle to communicate, particularly children or those with disabilities.
- Providing comfort and 'lack of judgement' for victims who might feel ashamed or self-conscious when sharing their experiences.
- Providing a cathartic source of touch, dogs offer a source of physical comfort when it is not appropriate for humans to do so.
- Helping recovery and reducing the incidence of PTSD, mitigating trauma, through the development of happier memories⁸.

4 Dog domestication and the dual dispersal of people and dogs into the Americas, A. Perri, T. Feuerborn, L. Frantz, K. Witt, 2021, available online: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2010083118>

5 Effects of contact with a dog on prefrontal brain activity: A controlled trial, R. Marti, M. Petignat, V. Marcar, J. Hattendorf, M. Wolf, M. Hund-Georgiadis, K. Hediger, 2022, available online: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36197880/#:~:text=Moreover%2C%20interaction%20with%20a%20dog,interacting%20with%20a%20nonliving%20stimulus>

6 Courthouse Dogs Foundation Fact Sheet, The Courthouse Dogs Foundation, 2022, available online: <http://courhousedogs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Courthouse-Dogs-Foundation-Fact-Sheet-October-2022.pdf>

7 Molecular Biomarkers of Adult Human and Dog Stress during Canine-Assisted Interventions, J. Ganderberger, E. Flynn, E. Moratto, A. Wendt, K. Norris, 2022, available online: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8909518/>; Dogs in the criminal justice system: consideration of facility and therapy dogs, E. Spruin and K. Mozova, 2018, available online: <http://www.uco.es/ucopress/ojs/index.php/pet/article/view/10084>

8 Animal-Assisted Intervention for Trauma: a systematic literature review, M O'Haire, N. Guerin, A. Kirkham, 2015, available online: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4528099/>



Orphée, trained by Handi'Chiens, working with France Victimes 67 - Viaduc in Strasbourg France

1.2 WHAT IS A FYDO DOG

A FYDO dog is one that is trained to work, together with qualified handlers, with a victim of crime in challenging circumstances. Therefore, a FYDO dog facilitates the work of professionals – such as victim support staff, psychologists, social workers, therapists, law enforcement personnel and prosecutors – and their communication with victims. The dog encourages an anxious or traumatised person to talk about the distressing encounter they either experienced or witnessed.

Since a FYDO dog will be required to work with traumatised victims of crime and to accompany its human protégé to a variety of locations, it is important that any dog employed for such work is highly reliable and has gone passed a certified training programme. Therefore, FYDO dogs should be sourced from ethical breeders and have been trained by organisations which are members of Assistance Dogs International (ADI)⁹.

An accredited ADI member organisation typically trains a dog to perform specific tasks, in different environments, with a variety of people who can benefit from their presence. According to current ADI methodology, between the ages of 2 to 18 months, assistance dogs are placed with a volunteer foster family, which has been selected for their skills and family, professional and domestic environment, to provide 'pre-education' training. The dogs then undergo specialist instruction from professional assistance dog trainers; this is when a dog matures into its adult personality, allowing its trainers to determine its skills and the work to which the dog will be best suited, and enjoy.

At around 24 months of age, the facility dog is ready to be teamed with its handler. The new team then receive extensive training from the assistance dog organisation to ensure that they will establish a successful long-term partnership. From this point, the assistance dog organisation maintains oversight of the team's work relationship.

1.3 WHERE CAN A FYDO DOG BE EMPLOYED?

FYDO dogs can be used in varying locations, depending on the national context, the victim's needs, and the interests of stakeholders working with victims. They will be places where victims of crime can receive support following a crime, and where a FYDO dog can help the victims communicate and disclose information, where the victims feel safe and less impacted by stress. For example, a FYDO dog can

⁹ Assistance Dog International (ADI) is a worldwide coalition of not-for-profit programs that train and place Assistance Dogs. For more information, visit <https://assistedogsinternational.org/>

work with victim support associations, specialist victim support units within police stations, prosecutors' offices, sexual assault centers, Barnahus¹⁰, etc. In any of these locations, FYDO dogs may support victims during police and prosecution interviews¹¹, at court hearings¹², during hospital examinations, during a victim's visit¹³ to or stay in specialised victim support services¹⁴.

FYDO dogs may only be required to work in a single location (e.g. a Barnahus or within the confines of a judicial building or area), or may be required to accompany victims to multiple destinations. The latter deployment is the case for FYDO dogs which work for a victim support service, which provides support to a victim during a police hearing, or a trial, for example. The FYDO handler and dog will then meet with the victim beforehand, to establish a bond of trust between the dog and the victim. During this preparatory phase, the victim will walk, play, and interact with the dog. Build a trusting relationship is very important, the dogs are not simply tools, they need time to get to know the person they will be expected to comfort.

FYDO dogs may be trained to work with generic victim support services (helping victims of all crimes), as well as with specialist services assisting specific victim groups (at shelters for victims of intimate partner or gender-based violence, Barnahus, etc). Dogs may offer reassurance to groups of victims as well as on a one-to-one basis; the level of support and its delivery may differ depending on the situation, support may be required long-term or as a one-off event. FYDO dogs can also be trained to offer comfort when large numbers of people have been impacted by a common event; they may be required to work at victim reception centers, in airports or train stations, public places, tent cities, etc.



VIADUQ – France Victimes 67 team, Strasbourg

¹⁰ The Barnahus model refers to multidisciplinary and interagency interventions organised in a child-friendly setting. For more information, visit: <https://www.barnahus.eu/en/>

¹¹ Onze nieuwe collega, de emotionele zorghond Fluf, 21 October 2021, <https://www.politie.be/5415/nieuws/onz-nieuwe-collega-de-emotionele-zorghond-fluf>

¹² Accident de Millas : deux labradors vont assister les victimes lors du procès, 12 September 2022, <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/faits-divers-justice/drame-de-millas-deux-labradors-vont-assister-les-victimes-lors-du-proces-1663002409>

¹³ Orphée, une chienne dressée pour apaiser les victimes, 19 October 2021, <https://www.dna.fr/faits-divers-justice/2021/10/19/orphee-dressee-pour-apaier-les-victimes>

¹⁴ Dog4Life, <https://www.dog4life.it/gli-altri-progetti/facility-dog/>

1.4 WHO BENEFITS FROM SUPPORT BY A FYDO DOG?

Whilst almost any victim may benefit from the presence of a FYDO dog, this service is usually made available for those most in need of this type of support. While support by a FYDO dog may be suggested for victims suffering from the impact of any crime, experience shows that FYDO dogs work effectively with victims with disabilities and victims of sexual and intimate partner violence¹⁵. Dogs may be used to provide support to child victims, depending on the child's age and personal development, as well as adults.

FYDO support is offered to victims following an individual needs assessment. In this regard, if an organisation intends to work with FYDO dogs to support its service users, it is important to ensure that its normal assessment practices are able to determine how such support will best impact the victim (for more details see section 3.2).

Victim support professionals, themselves, are at risk of suffering from vicarious trauma¹⁶. In addition to their work with victims, FYDO dogs can also provide comfort to the staff who work with them, thus making their work environment more pleasant and less stressful.

1.5 FEEDBACK FROM VICTIMS SUPPORTED BY A FYDO DOG

"Maybe she (the dog) feels our pain, so she just gets closer to us and it feels good. Above all I have the impression that when she puts herself against me, quite simply, it is that she wants to reassure me, I think that she understands my pain a little, she sees and feels it. But when she's a little bit further away, I think she wants to let me in my space, I think she felt that way." Victim of domestic violence

"The dog transforms a sterile place like a refuge into a HOME, a family." Victim of domestic violence

15 The Use of Facility Dogs to Bridge the Justice Gap for Survivors of Sexual Offending, E. Spruin, K. Mozov, T. Dempster and R. Freeman, 5 June 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342041937_The_Use_of_Facility_Dogs_to_Bridge_the_Justice_Gap_for_Survivors_of_Sexual_Offending

16 The Office for Victims of Crime defines vicarious trauma as "an occupational challenge for people working and volunteering in the fields of victim services, law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire services, and other allied professions, due to their continuous exposure to victims of trauma and violence.". For more information, visit: <https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/what-is-vicarious-trauma>

"I feel pretty good ... I felt at peace ... I feel confident and the dog is there ... he allowed me to remain serene." Victim of sexual abuse

"The dog helped me to express myself more clearly ... his presence allowed me not to be intimidated, I hardly ever looked for my words, the words came by themselves in fact ... I noticed that I cry less when she is present." Victim of domestic violence

"Fluf (the dog) came to visit and I loved getting to know him. He's nice and good. I used to have dogs too and it was nice to cuddle and pet a dog because that was a long time ago." Victim of burglary

"By explaining to me well what to use the dog for during these sessions, and this greatly contributed to the desire to go to the session with the psychologist for my daughter ... it calms the situation and the anxiety. I feel comfortable in her presence and I see that it brings joy to my daughter even if she has to remember the painful facts that she would have felt in her life." Mother of sexual abuse victim

"Sometimes she (the dog) lies down against my legs, sometimes we give a kibble to put her back in the game. Sometimes she gets on her back while opening her jaw, it looks like she's laughing, it's really funny, it's such beautiful moments to live, I've never encountered such moments before and I've seen that I've earned her trust and I thought to myself that she understands and gets me in her own way." Victim of domestic violence

2. CREATING A FYDO PROGRAM

As with most new ideas, the most difficult part is to know where and how to start. The following section provides details on what needs to be in place before a FYDO dog is used to support victims.

2.1 INITIATE THE PROCESS AND GET BUY IN FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Setting up FYDO services for victims of crime requires effort, resources, and a long-term commitment. To ensure stability, not only the managerial hierarchy of the organisation but also the staff must be in agreement to host their new furry colleague. While not every staff member may be required to give their explicit consent to have a dog in the workplace, time should be spent on discussing this novel idea, as it may be perceived by some staff as being inappropriate to their environment.

It is also essential to educate supervisors, fellow staff members, board members, law enforcement officers, judges, court administrators, and office security staff about the benefits of using a FYDO dog in their work space. While handlers will mainly work with victims and FYDO dogs, it is reasonable to expect that other professionals will also be included in the process and meet the dog - e.g. police officers, investigators, judges, medical professionals, therapists etc.

Even if all staff members are in agreement, does the organisation have the necessary administrative and governance procedures to establish such a service? Will managers or directors have to provide additional clearance or approval before it can be established? Can the need for this programme be demonstrated, what justification is there for using a FYDO dog to support victims? How will this impact the existing provision of support for victims of crime, and how will it impact the workplace?

Assurance that a FYDO service can be implemented in single-location organisation is relatively simple, as this will usually require a) organisational approval to implement the service and b) consent by the victim to work with a FYDO dog. However, for organisations that intend to use a FYDO dog to support victims throughout their

journey to justice, this may require the collaboration of a number of institutions and a more general stakeholder buy-in.

Convincing stakeholders can be a complex task and can require both changes in attitudes and perceptions and formal changes of an organisation's regulations. For example, experience has shown that judges and prosecutors are not always open to allowing dogs into the courtroom. However, even when they are open to the idea, internal regulations may prevent the dog's presence (e.g. some institutions may give access to a service animal but not a facility dog¹⁷).

If an organisation wished wishes to offer FYDO dog support to victims throughout their journey, it must be able to present its arguments effectively; therefore, it must establish:

- the dog's credentials, experience, and training;
- the relationship between the victim and the dog; and
- how the dog's presence may reduce the victim's anxiety and encourage a full and truthful testimony¹⁸.

To ensure the service functions smoothly and to provide clear roles for the dog, the handler and all other organisations and institutions involved, a memorandum of understanding can be drawn up between the victim support services and other stakeholders (e.g. the court or police station) which allows FYDO dogs to access their building and to accompany victims in the proceedings.

In France, the prosecutor can ask that support services assist a victim during criminal proceedings¹⁹. In this instance, there is a clear mandate – given by the prosecutor office – for a FYDO dog to have access to any space where the victim needs the dog's support. This has proved to be an effective means to ensure that dogs are accepted in courtrooms, police stations, or other spaces.

2.2 RESOLVING ISSUES ON WORKING WITH FYDO DOGS

Using FYDO support across a variety of environments may raise a number of common concerns; the paragraphs below address both the concern and potential resolutions:

17 A service dog is a dog that has been individually trained to perform work or tasks to assist a person with a disability. Facility dogs are highly trained in specific tasks to assist professionals working in healthcare, rehabilitation, criminal justice or education settings. Depending on the national context, it is possible that facility dogs aren't permitted in public where service dogs are allowed. For more information on dog access to public spaces, visit: <https://assisteddogsinternational.org/resources/public-access-laws/>

18 Courtroom Dogs Help Ensure Victims' Voices Are Heard, Jill Mariani, American Bar Association, 12 January 2022, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/government_public/publications/public-lawyer/2022-winter/courtroom-dogs-help-ensure-victims-voices-are-heard/

19 Article 41 criminal procedure code https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000038311420#:~:text=Version%20en%20vigueur%20depuis%20le%2024%20d%C3%A9cembre%202021,-Modifi%C3%A9%20par%20LOI&text=Le%20procureur%20de%20la%20R%C3%A9publique,le%20ressort%20de%20son%20tribunal.

Fear of dogs

Signage must clearly inform both staff and visitors that there is a working dog on the premises; information should be posted in the building's entryway or in the lobby of the office. A poster could promote a photo of the dog, and perhaps its handler, an explanation of the dog's tasks, and an assurance that the dog is the responsibility of the handler. Visitors or colleagues, who are afraid dogs, should be able to express their fears (e.g. to the receptionist or other designated person) and protocols should be in place to manage any concerns (e.g. by informing the handler that the dog should not access certain areas – temporarily or permanently). It is recommended that dogs are trained to keep to certain areas without further authorisation by their handler.

Allergies

Research has shown that dog dander, the primary cause of dog allergies, can be found in many public places as it is carried on the clothes of dog-owners. Research has also shown that there is no such thing as a hypo-allergenic dog²⁰, all dogs shed their dander, but some shed more than others. While allergies to dogs are common, very few people will suffer serious harm if they encounter a dog in a large, open, public space, such as the lobby of a building or a courtroom.

A significant problem may arise, however, if a member of staff – working in an office with a FYDO dog – is allergic. It will then be the dog handler's responsibility to ensure that the dog can operate in its workplace, and to ensure their colleague can avoid an allergic reaction. For example, in one US organisation, an employee with a dog allergy was given use of a private office, while the dog handler ensured that the dog did not access the area close to that office. Likewise, in an Australian organisation, a dog and an allergic employee were instructed to use separate elevators in the building.

Cultural sensitivity

In some cultures, dogs are considered unclean animals which should not be in contact with people indoors. Therefore, thought must be given to the demographics of any client population and whether this could be a significant issue at the dog's place of work. Cultural issues do not necessarily prohibit the use of a FYDO dog, but a victim-sensitive approach should be developed ahead of its introduction to the workplace.

Behavioural concerns

FYDO dogs are professionally trained by certified assistance dog professionals, who ensure that the dogs do not present unacceptable behaviours, such as aggression, boisterousness, etc. FYDO dogs are selected for their calm and empathetic natures, and they are trained to remain well-behaved under all circumstances. Generally, the dog will lie on the floor next to the victim, or will respond quietly to its handler's cues (e.g. by gently putting its head on the victim's lap).

²⁰ Can f 1 levels in hair and homes of different dog breeds: lack of evidence to describe any dog breed as hypoallergenic, D. W Vredegoor, T. Willemse, M. D Chapman, D. J J Heederik, E. J M Krop, 22 June 2012, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22728082/>



Fluf, trained by Canisha&Hachiko, Belgium, working with the Ghent police

2.3 FINDING AN ADI MEMBER NEAR YOU

Once an organisation has made the decision to add a FYDO dog to its staff, the search for a suitable dog, trainer, and handler will begin. Victim Support Europe and the FYDO network will be happy to provide information on which local [Assistance Dog International members](#) are best placed to support such a search; at this time, not all ADI members are aware of the placement process so it is best to reach out to the FYDO network for guidance. FYDO dog training standards have been developed by the project partners; organisations adhering to these standards can ensure dogs receives quality training and that correct placement protocols are followed²¹.

While each ADI member has its own application and selection procedures, some elements will be the same; the organisation wishing to find a dog will be expected to submit:

- A formal application
- A telephone or in-person interview with the dog trainer
- A list of dog's expected duties/tasks, a profile of the potential handler(s), details of the dog's work environment and living arrangements, etc.
- To a detailed inspection of the dog's work and home premises, which may have to be adapted as per recommendations from the trainer; arrangements for the dog's safety and wellbeing, its comfort and work-life balance, etc. For example, most ADI organisations do not allow the dog to be left alone (without human company) for more than four hours. If dog is ill, for example, the handler will be expected to either stay at home or ensure that someone else remains with the dog.

²¹ Standards are described in the *FYDO dog training and placement Manual*, which is available by contacting Victim Support Europe at: info@victimsupporteurope.eu

Once the ADI member agrees to place a FYDO dog with the applicant, the organisation will be placed on a waiting list, depending on the availability of trained dogs or dogs in training. The selection of an appropriate dog will be based on the criteria laid down in the application process, the dog will be specifically trained to support victims.

However, even after training is completed, placement of the dog will only take place after the successful conclusion of a trial acclimatisation period. It can happen that the dog and its handler's family simply do not match, in which case, the ADI member will suspend the programme; the matching and acclimatisation process may take several weeks.

2.4 THE FYDO BUDGET

A FYDO programme will require an appropriate budget and funding streams; to properly plan its implementation, three main costings should be taken into account:

The dog

FYDO dogs are highly skilled and training can be quite expensive. Each ADI member may have different training schemes, so training should be discussed in depth with the ADI organisation **before** committing to its scheme. Training programmes may require follow-up meetings for the dog and handler team over several years, or even until the dog is retired.

The workplace

Bringing a dog into the workplace will require consideration of how the dog will not only interact with its human colleagues (and their potential fears or allergies) but also how to service the dog's needs to have access to outside space. Is there a garden (nearby), will fencing be required, is the handler's home suitably secured, etc. Such one-off costs will depend on the organisation's specific circumstances and the trainer's recommendations.

Running costs

The daily costs for a facility dog are the same as for any well-cared-for pet. They will include veterinary care, food, and other paraphernalia associated with a dog's well-being and work requirements (toys, beds, leads, collars, vests, etc.).

Some assistance dog organisations offer a liability insurance policy with their placement scheme. If insurance is not arrangement with the training organisation, consideration must be given to taking out a liability insurance policy.

Staff costs must also be factored in. While most organisations select handlers, who are often qualified victim support specialists, from their existing employees, this may impact staffing levels as the handlers must spend part of their day caring for the dog. Ultimately, handlers may see major changes to their work practices, which may become more FYDO orientated than their previous duties. Such changes may impact the support organisation's business costs – which will largely depend on its

work practices and staffing costs - and should not be overlooked when plans for the service are being made.

2.5 FYDO HANDLERS

Any FYDO dog should have at least two - a primary and a secondary - handlers. Ideally, the handlers should be professional staff from either the support service or the entity hosting the dog.

Employing a FYDO dog is a long-term commitment; the dogs have a working life-span of up to ten years, which, ideally, will allow routines to be established. When a dog has been placed with an organisation, thought should be given as to how staff changes might impact the dog (if the handler leaves the organisation) or how to replace the dog once it reaches retirement age. These decisions must be made in collaboration with the primary handler, the victim support service employing the dog, and the ADI member which organised the placement.

Employing a staff member (rather than a volunteer) to work with the dog will mitigate problems related to knowledge of legal systems, case confidentiality, and the dog's availability during working hours. As with other colleagues, FYDO dogs come work every day; however, its actual working hours should be determined by the main handler, in accordance with the activities it is expected to carry out.

The FYDO dog's main handler, and their family, will be expected to give the dog a life-long loving home. A FYDO dog goes home after work and relaxes in a family environment with games, cuddles and long walks. However, as the main handler will be expected to have some 'alone' time, organisations should have at least one trained secondary handler who will work with the dog and the victims on these occasions.

All handlers will receive training from the ADI member which supplies the dog. They will be trained to recognise signs of stress in their FYDO companion and will know when to give it a rest from work. Training will include learning to give commands, learning to recognize the dog's body language and stress signals, and learning to give - and how the dog reacts to - calming signals.

The handler must be able to demonstrate:

- that, when at work, the dog remains calm and displays appropriate social behaviours while interacting with a variety of people in different environments
- knowledge of acceptable training techniques including non-verbal cues, stress signals, and canine behaviour
- the ability to care for the dog's well-being at all times
- knowledge of canine care and health
- the ability to solve problems, maintain - and create new - training programmes as required

- knowledge of working with dogs in FYDO related interventions
- knowledge of local animal access laws and appropriate public behaviour, as applicable
- The ADI member remains responsible for the dog's well-being during its work placement and into retirement and staff will always be available for advice and additional training as needed. The dog's welfare will be monitored by regular, annual, visits.

The dog should not be given a job and work with at least two handlers, it should be provided with a family! As the dog cannot be expected to stay in the office at night and over the weekends, the furry colleague must have a home to go to after hours, it must have time off and be taken on holidays.

Organisations that intend to work with dogs must, therefore, find a suitable colleague, who is willing to share their life with the dog, to give the dog home, to ensure play-time and to provide an ordinary 'doggy life' outside working hours.



Fluf and its handler outside

2.6 WORKING WITH A FURRY COLLEAGUE

It is not enough to simply welcome a FYDO dog into the workplace; to ensure that the dog is comfortable during its working hours and that the staff know how to react to the dog may require some changes to be made.

2.6.1 FYDO work environment

A FYDO dog will need to feel comfortable in the workplace. It will need a place to lie down in his primary handler's office, with water and toys readily available. To enable the dog to decompress or relax, it should have a crate or other quiet area for napping; being on its bed or in its crate when the handler is busy elsewhere

allows the dog to feel 'off duty'. While dogs naturally sleep for most of the day, they can adjust their sleep patterns to the activities around them, handlers may find it appropriate to place a sign on their door when the dog is resting - reducing the number of interruptions from other staff members.

To ensure the dog is as comfortable as possible, a second bed and water dish, as well as additional toys should be placed in the room where the dog interacts with victims.



Orphée, trained by Handi'Chiens, France, working with France Victimes 67 - Viaduc, France

If the dog is expected to work in multiple locations, a 'go bag' packed with dog supplies should be provided and ready at all times. The bag's contents will depend on the individual dog and the circumstances of the mission, but should include the following items: portable bed, hand sanitiser, lint brush or roller, water bowl and water, dog food, toys for use with the victim and the dog, waste bags, etc.

2.6.2 Staff interaction

The FYDO dog works to support victims; it is not the office pet. While colleagues are welcome to interact with the dog at certain times, a line must be drawn as to when they can and cannot interact with the dog. Providing some form of 'uniform' - a special harness that the dog wears when they are at an assignment - not only allows colleagues to recognise that the dog cannot be petted, it can benefit the dog which will understand that the harness means they are 'at work'.

Whatever cue is given to the dog to take on its work persona (the harness or other designated uniform, entering its work space, or being given a specific command), the same cue should be recognised by those sharing its premises, and should be clearly communicated to anyone else interacting with the FYDO dog while at work.

The handler will decide when colleagues are able to have fun with the dog when it is not wearing its uniform and is off-duty. Just as the dog helps victims, it can promote well-being amongst staff dealing with victims' issues, including staff in its fun during any down-time benefits both the dog and its colleagues. A 'dog happy hour' will give staff members the opportunity to get to know the FYDO dog. Experienced handlers suggest that having a basket of soft toys and encouraging colleagues to play with the dog at a pre-set time and location, such as in a large conference room or long hallway. Playtime will give the dog something to look forward to and staff members will feel the dog is part of their work-life. The dog's vest should always be taken off when it is allowed to play with its colleagues.

Rules should be established for members of staff who are not the dog's handlers. Ensuring that these rules are followed will ensure the dog is seen as a work colleague instead of an office pet.

- **No titbits during working hours.** This is the hardest rule for staff members to follow, but it is essential to keep the dog on task; the dog will obey all its handler's commands without any food rewards during the workday. As dogs are food motivated and, in the absence of a strict no feed policy, they will focus on looking for any food that may be available in the workplace. However, the dog will be fed a balanced diet appropriate to its needs, any uncontrolled intake of food may result in the dog gaining weight or becoming ill.
- **Let the dog rest.** Dogs will sleep during the day if left to themselves. A working dog will need rest times and naps in its crate or in its home office and during these periods staff members should leave the dog alone and let it enjoy its down time, to better concentrate its energies on supporting victims when it is working.
- **Ignore the dog when it is working.** When the FYDO dog has its uniform on, it should be invisible to all staff members except the handler. Staff members should not speak the dog's name, should not make eye contact with it, and should not pet it: the dog must be able to distinguish work from play time and it will quickly learn that 'uniform on' means it is there to work. 'Uniform off' means it might be time to play with staff members.
- **Only the handler gives commands.** The dog must obey commands or cues the first time it is asked to perform an activity. The handler will have spent time learning to give the commands with consistency and in a way that the dog expects; therefore, if other people utter the commands casually, the dog will rapidly become less responsive to those words. So, the 30 to 50 words that are used as commands **MUST** only be given by the dog's trained handler.

3. WORKING WITH A FYDO DOG

From its first meeting with victims to the interaction with other staff and external partners, there is much to know and understand about working with a FYDO dog.

3.1 INFORMATION ON WORKING WITH THE FYDO DOG

As vulnerable victims may not expect to meet a FYDO dog on the premises, signage and information must be provided to forewarn visitors who may have encountered aggressive pet dogs or who may have had negative interaction with police or drug dogs.

Make it a practice that the FYDO dog remains out of sight of any clients in the building before telling them about the dog, explaining what it does, and asking whether they would like to meet it. This should mitigate any unexpected encounters with the dog that may be culturally inappropriate.



FACILITY DOG AT WORK!

There is a dog working in this space.

**This dog is not dangerous;
it's trained to work with victims.**

**This dog works with a handler,
if you want to interact with the dog, please,
speak to the handler.**

**Only handlers get to play with dogs,
give them orders, and take them out
for their much-needed toilet break.**

**Please don't touch the dog,
and never feed the dog without permission.**

3.2 DETERMINING VICTIMS' NEEDS FOR FYDO DOG SUPPORT

Not all victims will be able to benefit from the service of a FYDO dog. While the dog is able to comfort any victim, an individual needs assessment should be carried out to determine whether the FYDO dog will benefit the victim. The individual assessment will assess whether the person is in a vulnerable situation, whether the crime has affected them badly, whether they have difficulties expressing their feelings or telling their story, whether they are very stressed, etc. Following this needs assessment, the support worker will determine whether working with the FYDO dog is beneficial to the victim.

Each service will have its own protocol, and discussion within the team will decide on how the dog may be used and on how best to arrange a meeting with the victim. In a victim support service office, the victim will have a first encounter with an appropriately trained professional, who can assess their needs, and may then, if required, be offered the support of the dog during a later session. In a police station, where victims have less interaction with specialists, the dog may be introduced to the victim soon after an officer has broached the idea with the victim.

Not all victims will or even should benefit from the presence of a FYDO dog, so it should not simply be seen as a tool or an addition to resources, it is a living being. Furthermore, it may not be possible to offer all victims the chance to work with a dog; it might be resting, or busy with someone else and cannot be available for every intervention.

3.3 GREETING

On first introducing the dog and victim, allow them a few minutes to interact. Show the victim some of the dog's 'tricks', such as shaking hands or rolling over; the victim can be 'taught' how to give these commands in a very short period of time. If it is agreed that the dog will be present during the meeting, its leash may be offered to the victim on the walk to the meeting space. Teaching the victim commands and walking the dog can make them feel more in control of their situation.

3.4 THE ENCOUNTER

Creating an environment that promotes visual and physical contact between the dog and the victim will increase the dog's ability to provide an aura of calm. Dogs need to be physically close to people, especially children, to be able to calm them; resting its head on a person's legs or lying on the floor beside the person.



Fluf, trained by Canisha&Hachiko, Belgium, practicing the 'Rest' command

A couch can help the victim and dog sit together, at the same level. It should be long enough to allow a victim move closer or farther away from the dog depending upon their comfort level. Some victims prefer to look at the dog, rather than the interviewer, when describing a stressful event. Others derive more comfort by petting the dog. Some victims hold onto the dog's leash and rub their fingers across its surface or play with it to reduce stress, rather than looking at or touching the dog. Children and persons with disabilities may unexpectedly touch a dog in an intrusive manner or engage in unusual behaviour during the interview. A FYDO dog's training greatly decreases any adverse consequences resulting from such interaction²².

While the handler will always be working with the dog, it may, depending on the context, be left on its own with the victim during an interview with an investigative judge or during a confrontation with the offender, at the police station for example. A trusting relationship between dog and victim must be established beforehand to ensure the dog is comfortable without its handler.

In France, FYDO dogs often support victims and family members during trial hearings²³. Being by their side, sleeping at their feet, putting their head on their laps, FYDO dogs give silent comfort to victims.

²² Facility Dogs at Children's Advocacy Centers and in Legal Proceedings, Best Practices, Courthouse Dog Foundation, 2015, available at: <https://courhousedogs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Facility-Dogs-at-CACs-Best-Practices-Final-2-18-15.pdf>

²³ Antoine BONIN, Les fillettes abusées face au professeur Karcher, DNA, 6 October 2022, <https://www.dna.fr/faits-divers-justice/2022/10/06/les-fillettes-abusees-face-au-professeur-karcher> and 2 Handi'Chiens au procès de Millas, October 2022, <https://handichiens.org/2-handichiens-au-proces-de-millas/>



Orphée, trained by Handi'Chiens, working with France Victimes 67 - Viaduc, France, visiting a courtroom in Strasbourg

3.5 ENDING THE MEETING

Some victims ask if they can take the dog home; the handler should explain that the dog's job is to help people feel better and determine whether another meeting should be arranged. Souvenirs such as FYDO stuffed toys or the dog's business card may be given to victims, these may create a sense of security. Victims may ask to have their photo taken with the dog.

ORPHÉE
GOLDEN RETRIEVER
SABLE FEMELLE
www.viaduc67.org

@VIADUC67

Viaduc France Victimes 67
is a non-profit organization of assistance to victims approved by the Ministry of Justice to accompany, support and protect all minor or major victims of criminal offenses.

With Financial support from the Justice Programme of the European Union

If the dog has had an intense session, it will need to sleep or take a break. Dogs will need time between sessions to give to go to the toilet, relax and recharge their batteries. A FYDO dog is still a dog and needs time rest, play and eat.

After working with over 40 civil parties during an intense trial, Orphée took a few days off to sleep and rest before going back to work to help others.



Orphée, trained by Handi'Chiens, France, playing outside

3.6 GATHERING DATA

It is helpful to keep records of how victims' responded to working with a FYDO dog. An existing case management system or a simple excel document can record interactions between the FYDO dog and victims and other staff members. While each organisation should decide on what data should be collected and how, consideration should be given to collecting data on: age, gender, type of crime, number of interventions with and without the dog, duration and frequency of interventions, victim's disabilities, etc. Data may be used to better understand how the service functions, and whether improvements could be made. Testimonies should be collected from victims, who benefited from working with a FYDO dog, and from the professionals witnessing those benefits; their stories can be inspiring and help demonstrate the impact FYDO dogs can have on improving the experiences of victims and the professionals who work with them.



Interested in starting a FYDO program? Please contact



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