

#47 (JACKIE SEBIRE)

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Jerry Ratcliffe:

The Reducing Crime Podcast is all about conversations with influential thinkers in the police service and leading crime and policing researchers.

Jackie Sebire retired this month as Assistant Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police in the UK. We discuss Dr. Sebire's work as a director on the UK College of Policing's Senior Command Course, her time as Staff Officer to Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick, and important new findings she just published around independent domestic violence advisors.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Welcome to Reducing Crime. I'm Jerry Ratcliffe.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

This month, Jackie Sebire completed 30 years in British policing, walking out of the door as Assistant Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police, a force of over 1300 officers. She spent most of her career rising through the detective ranks of the Metropolitan Police in London before moving to the executive role in Bedfordshire, a national prominence in a multitude of areas. For example, she is the Chair of the Academic Expert Reference Group for the College of Policing and has previously served as the Serious Violence Coordinator for the National Police Chief's Council. She has an undergraduate degree from the University of Cambridge, two master's degrees and - rare amongst senior police officers anywhere - a PhD from the University of Lester with a dissertation that examined intimate partner homicide. Dr. Sebire supervises master's thesis at the University of Cambridge and is on the directorial staff of the British College of Policing's Senior Command Course.

With her co-authors John Ross and Heather Strang, she recently published the results of a natural experiment examining the value of independent domestic violence advisors in a specialized domestic violence court. We talk about the study and why the results are important in this episode. First though, we chat about resilience and the weight of senior command, Met Police Commissioner Cressida Dick and the importance of evidence-based policing and hotspots policing. And at one point, the episode does take a decidedly feline turn, which gives me the opportunity to try my worst pun to date and it quite rightly crashes and burns. I really should have deleted it. If you never listen again, I won't blame you.

REDUCING CRIME PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Jackie Sebire:

Do I get intro music or is that going to be a secret?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You get the same intro music everybody else gets and they complain about. I'm coming up to four years on the podcast and I think I might change it. It's the one thing everybody seems to bitch about is the intro music to this podcast.

Jackie Sebire:

It's marvelous.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Congratulations on coming up on 30 years in policing.

Jackie Sebire:

Thanks very much. Everyone says it's gone really quickly, but you know what? It's taken some time, but it's a good time to start reflecting on all sorts of things.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I bet there were times in the job when it really dragged though, didn't it?

Jackie Sebire:

It's like anyone in the job or almost like any job. There are some really hard times when you're wondering, what am I doing? Lots of my other friends were doing amazing things and traveling around the world and you're sitting being spat at, or sworn at, or dealing with the worst depravities people can do to one another. You think maybe this wasn't the best career choice.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There you heard it first, folks. Why to join policing from Jackie Sebire.

Jackie Sebire:

you know what, actually? It's been amazing and you look back and you think I've put some bad people away. I've helped some people and you know what? Doesn't get much better than that, does it?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What have been some of the highlights so far?

Jackie Sebire:

I suppose I've been really, really lucky in my career because I have been a homicide senior investigating officer, which is all I ever wanted to do because I wanted to be Prime Suspect's Jane Tennison.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Even some of us on the boy's side of things kind of wanted to be her too.

Jackie Sebire:

And I was for a long time, and so that was probably my career highlight. Now having 30 years, there's probably two. After the London riots in 2011, I was on night duty and the next day they said, "Jackie, you're in charge of every crime scene in London," which was quite extraordinary. I was standing in the middle of Enfield high street. Every single window in that high street had been broken, but Waterstone's, the bookshop, was pristine.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's a bitter indictment of British education that nobody wants to nick any books, isn't it?

Jackie Sebire:

You said that Jerry, not me. Then probably the other bizarre thing is Amy Winehouse's cat.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I mean, I know the story, but you have to explain. You think about all the things that can get you jammed up in policing, but I suspect with the way that British people just love their animals, this is probably one of those times you probably came closest to losing your career. Right?

Jackie Sebire:

Well, I was the senior investigator on-call for West London and it was a Saturday and my sergeant comes in the room saying, "Oh, Amy Winehouse is dead." I thought, oh. I thought that was just the news. "No, ma'am. Amy Winehouse is dead. We've got to go and investigate." It's an incredibly beautiful house in Camden. Got our forensic suits on and she sadly had a little kitten. Myself and my colleague, Mark, were trying to not contaminate the scene with this kitten that decided it didn't want to go in the bathroom. It certainly didn't want to go in the box. Mark and I running around the house trying to capture her cat before some fan tried to steal it or we lost it, which was probably a little bit more worrying. But again, one of the most surreal policing experiences I've had.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You wanted to make it go in the cat box and it went meow, meow, meow. I'm sorry. I was just ripping off Amy Winehouse's most popular song.

Jackie Sebire:

I was trying to ignore that because it really didn't sound like that, Jerry. I'd stick to your day job if I were you.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm going to have to rerecord this and make it sound better.

Jackie Sebire:

Maybe put a backing track on it, Jerry.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's already too late. Everybody's switching this podcast off already. [laughter]

What made me think about the cat wrangling scene - and it was going to be the cat wrangling scene from now - on is that you are not only in a high-profile position as the assistant chief constable for Bedfordshire Police. You are also the director of the strategic command course at the College of Policing. Are you running a cat wrangling course? Is there an hour dedicated to that's the role of an SIO?

Jackie Sebire:

I've been really fortunate to be one of the syndicate directors, so they're four of us under the directorship of Neil Basu, who is an incredible police officer. We haven't put cat wrangling on the course, but what we have actually been really keen on teaching the new crop of senior officers that are coming through is all about resilience and preparing for the unexpected. It's interesting. I did my strategic command course maybe five, six years ago now. It was very operational, crisis management, commander control, all of that sort of stuff. Actually, we are now quite rightly teaching the senior officers about wellbeing, welfare, vulnerability, as well as all the other stuff that you need. Evidence-based policing is really, really important, so I think that it's a really nice mixture of that balance between wellbeing, resilience and all the practical stuff you need because they need it. Policing is so tough now.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Is that an indictment of how policing has changed in the last few years, or is that something that we should always have been doing, but we're only just recognizing the need for more of that resilience work in police leadership?

Jackie Sebire:

It's something we should have always been doing. Sometimes I felt like I've been a bit of a lone voice in terms of sort of evidence-base, resilience, welfare. I mean, I've got 30 years and so I can say that now, but when I look back, I worked on a child protection team dealing with the most terrible abusive things.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, the worst.

Jackie Sebire:

The worst of the worst, and actually having to deal with the children as well as the suspects and you didn't even get screened or have any welfare support, so thank goodness now we have all of those things for public protection and that rolling out to a much wider degree as we understand the impact on policing. It is much better, but there is something around leaders actually just not paying lip service to it now. There's that balance between we know what needs to be done and lots of us talk about welfare, but it's actually then how do you make sure that actually resonates with your team?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I mean, I joined the job in the mid 1980s and yes, I'm that old. I don't know what it was like from a leadership perspective then, but it just felt like it was a simpler job. Now on the strategic command course, you've just got so many areas that you have to really cover. How difficult is it to be a senior officer in policing in the middle of the 21st Century?

Jackie Sebire:

It's really tough and it needs the right leadership now. I think that's, what's going to get policing through because it's not just in the UK, isn't it? It's all over the world. Policing is at this really critical crisis point around its legitimacy.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It really is.

Jackie Sebire:

If we don't get the right leaders in place, it's only going to get worse. I mean, I look back. Like you said, I didn't join that much later than you, Jerry, and didn't work much further down the road from where you worked, but my boss was on the golf course. I didn't have a female leader or supervisor till about 15 years in. There were some good ones, but less so I would say, but now there's some brilliant leaders out there, but they have to get it. You have to understand community impact. You have to understand officer welfare and you have to be able to do the job. That goes without saying, but you've also got to navigate politics and I think politics is so different now from it was when you and I first started, the impact of politics. We've seen that with the commissioner and what's happened very recently.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You really have some insights into that because when she was an assistant commissioner, you were the staff officer to Cressida Dick who has just recently stepped down as commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. That must have given you incredible insights, having the chance to work with Cressida Dick, not just into the job, but also into her as a leader.

Jackie Sebire:

I was so privileged. In 2014, I was her staff officer. Basically, that's a role that you're Jack of all trades. You do everything to support your principal, basically.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You're the Jackie of all trades.

Jackie Sebire:

Well, I was the Jackie of all trades and she had the portfolio in the Metropolitan Police at the time for specialist crime and operations, so things like the Madeleine McCann case, terrorist instance going on, lots of really tricky, complex stuff. I mean, I'd known her all my career. I'd looked up to her all my career, but to work that closely with her. She is an incredible person. What I would say about her, she just had this utter stillness. She wasn't one of these loud charismatic police leaders that I'm sure you've encountered in your career and life.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Far too many of them.

Jackie Sebire:

They announce themselves when they come in the room and everyone flocks to them. Cressida has just got this quiet solemnity about her. She's utterly in control and she's utterly credible. Some of that is innate. I don't think you can teach that, but there is nothing that can flap her. She's completely capable, but she's really compassionate as well. When she left a couple of weeks ago, there was tears and clapping outside as she walked outside the yard, but it was the politics at the end of the day. It's such a tricky tricky.... It's got nothing to do with her capability as a leader at all.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The job used to pride itself on being apolitical and now possibly one of the best commissioners that I've known in my lifetime has been forced to step down as a result of what appears to be politics.

Jackie Sebire:

The chief officers have this phrase of operational independence, that they have to be operationally independent from the home office, from the police and crime commissioners who are elected oversight body, but it cannot be apolitical anymore because you are drawn into this maelstrom of left wing, right wing politics, local community politics. You have to, as a leader, know how to negotiate and also to be fair, know when you don't want to get involved anymore and when you do want to step down.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I wonder why the balance is between what you were just saying just now is that she just has that innate ability, it possibly can't be taught, but how much of those skills can be taught because otherwise there's really no point having a strategic command course if we can't teach a whole group of those skills?

Jackie Sebire:

It's all about experience. I think one of my concerns is that lots of people have the ability to lead, but they don't necessarily have the experience to draw back on to understand when is the right time, what are the right tactics to use? When you need to be quiet, and when you need to push and what battles you need to fight, and you only get that through a lot of experience.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You spoke about evidence-based policing a little bit earlier, and you're one of the rare senior police officers that I've known who has a PhD. You got your PhD in psychology from the University of Leicester in 2014, if I believe.

Jackie Sebire:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How much did that help, or did it hinder suddenly being open to the world of the value of evidence and driving things forward? Because you've just been speaking about experience, but you also have a knowledge, skill set, which is quite rare.

Jackie Sebire:

When I joined the job, I was an undergraduate at Cambridge, so I had a Cambridge degree and I was too ashamed to mention it because being clever was nothing that you wanted the relief at the time to know about.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I remember somebody saying to me, "In policing, clever is a term used as an insult."

Jackie Sebire:

It absolutely was and people would find out and they'd say, "Well, what are you doing here then? What in earth are you doing in this job?" I kept it very quiet, but I missed that study. I missed evidence-based studying. That's why I wanted to be a detective. I did my masters and PhD whilst I was in the job and that was on the crest of evidence-based policing and Larry Sherman, who I met in a lift in the yard and that was one of the luckiest days of my life.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

For the American listeners, that's an elevator.

Jackie Sebire:

Yes. Sorry. Everything always happens in a lift of the yard. You always meet the best people in the lift at the yard because I knew who they were. I took advantage of that lift going down to mention I had a PhD and it would be great because I knew what they were trying to do with evidence-based policing, and they were generous and kind enough to bring me into the Cambridge program and supervise and teach on that master's program, which has produced this community that are absolutely desperate to embed evidence-based policing in the UK and across the world, that network that you are so part of, Jerry.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You've been teaching on the senior command course, so you're going to be running into people who are not versed in evidence-based policing, but I assume and hope that you are conveying some of that to them because I think it's really important. What is the key sell for evidence-based policing to senior officers?

Jackie Sebire:

It works. Those two words, it works. Let's take hotspot policing, which I know you know really well.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I have a couple of inklings at what it might be, but go on. Go ahead and tell us.

Jackie Sebire:

You might have had something to do with it, Jerry. I've seen OSCAR ONE many times, but the whole point of convincing people about evidence-based policing is it works. This will allow you to do your job properly in an evidence-based to reduce crime and keep the public safe because that's what we're there to do, and employing evidence based tactics will allow you to do that. That's the only sell you need. Say with hotspots, you feel like you're hitting your head against a brick wall because what more evidence, for goodness sake, do people need that hotspots works if you do it properly?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Hotspots policing has been evaluated dozens of times, numerous bodies, the National Academy of Sciences, the What Works Center for Crime Reduction and the College of Policing all around the world have all said that hotspots policing is one of the most effective ways to reduce crime that's out there. I think there's something fundamentally wrong with our education for senior officers if that research is still a surprise in 2022.

Jackie Sebire:

Well, Jerry, it's not just the senior officers, it's our home office, so those government bodies that fund policing as well. I was the national lead for serious violence and working with the home office now, we've ran 18 RCTs, so randomized control trials, again, showing that it works. There is now this huge body of evidence. In Bedfordshire, we've been running an RCT now for nearly a year showing it works. I really hope that the generation that comes behind me will actually use this evidence now rather than think, oh, we need another RCT or we need to test it again. We don't. It works. Let's just do it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You come from a PhD background, but also 30 years of experience. It feels like people are still drawing too much on experience, or they're gut feeling and not tapping into the research base. From your perspective, the knowledge that you have, it must be a little frustrating.

Jackie Sebire:

I might have sworn a couple of times every now and again, or shut the door.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Just once or twice.

Jackie Sebire:

Just once or twice. But for me, what my mission has been is sharing that evidence, trying to identify people, junior officers in my force or people that I know and I've tried to encourage and mentor them. On the strategic command course, again, we've shared the podcast with them. A lot of people weren't aware of this, if they're not from that background.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The Reducing Crime podcast?

Jackie Sebire:

The Reducing Crime podcast was recommended reading on the strategic crime course.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, those poor buggers. Oh, I feel so sorry for them.

Jackie Sebire:

Not to blow smoke, Jerry, but it's important people are exposed to this and then they can make their own opinions if they don't know or even know what evidence-based policing is. I think people are scared of it if they haven't come from an academic background. They think they're not going to understand these tables and RCTs.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Or they worry that they need a bachelor's degree in statistics to understand it all.

Jackie Sebire:

It's making that language accessible, I think has been my mission and just encouraging as many people as I can. Does this interest you? Let's do some research on it. It might not work. Actually, sometimes it's really good if it doesn't work because then we've tried and we know let's not try that again.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You've been doing a lot of work in terms of developing people in leadership side, the strategic command course in other areas. Is this one of the areas where we're failing? Is evidence-based policing one of the areas we really need to focus on in leadership development?

Jackie Sebire:

Yes, it is, but to answer your first question, that was I think have we failed? My fear about evidence based-policing, it's becoming a bit of a cabal and a quite a small network that if we are not careful, it becomes quite exclusionary. You see the same faces, don't you, time and time again in this evidence-based policing world. Like I say, if we are not careful, we won't encourage others in and we become a little bit too elitist.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It also takes time to create and generate people who buy into it and get it can become sort of evangelical about it to some degree. I think that's the challenge, isn't it? Because you can't pick up evidence-based policing on a one day course.

Jackie Sebire:

No, I agree and it needs to be seeded throughout. From the minute you join through all your various ranks leadership, various different roles, it needs to be part of the bread and butter of policing.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You would actually include it straight in from the police academy from the moment trainees-

Jackie Sebire:

Day one.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Day one.

Jackie Sebire:

Day one. Hopefully, we've got the new PEQFs, or the new police educational qualification framework as it's natively called.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. That really rolls off the tongue, doesn't it?

Jackie Sebire:

It's fantastic. All new officers joining have to get a degree and evidence-based policing is part of that. From day one, I'm hoping that generation will come through because I've been a crusader for it for all my career. It's always been about how can we prove things? How do we research? How do we investigate? I'm hopeful for the future because it's now becoming part of policing's vocabulary, which is absolutely fantastic and a great legacy to leave.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Would you make it part of promotions as well?

Jackie Sebire:

Absolutely. What have you done to evidence? How have you progressed your area of expertise?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, wow. You're thinking even going beyond just how much do you know about different areas and the evidence and actually make it a requirement that people actually stepped up and done some kind of a project, engaged in some kind of research to push the knowledge about policing forward.

Jackie Sebire:

Completely. If I have my way, that's what we would do. I mean, I don't expect people to be producing peer reviewed papers to become a sergeant, but what I would like them to think about is I was doing some problem solving in this particular neighborhood, or I was trying to deal with this prolific offender and these were the things I was thinking about. These were the tactics and the tools and why I employed them and how I evaluated them. That's evidence-based policing, isn't it?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. I think this is really interesting because there has to be a change in police education. I look at some of the courses that are available from things like the International Association of Chiefs of police, and it's still very much focused on tactics and SWAT teams and this kind of stuff. It's not just a critique of them, but many of the organizations have not

done a great job of starting to educate future leaders about the more cerebral side of policing. If they're not going to get on board with this, they're in for a, I think, painful shock at some point in the near future because increasingly with more open access to data and more of that translational criminology, converting the complicated statistics into something that's easily consumable, reporters, journalists, politicians, critics, they're all picking up on this kind of stuff. If we are not on board in terms of police leadership with understanding the evidence around policing, other people are going to start using is a stick to beat us with or beat police with.

Jackie Sebire:

You're absolutely right. I think the one group you missed out there, Jerry, is the community. They want to know, well, why are you doing this? To have any legitimacy and to be able to discharge our duties properly, we have to be able to evidence what we're doing, and why we're doing it and why we think it will work if you want any hope of getting the community on board with what you're doing.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You spoke about hotspots policing. How would you describe the state of hotspots policing research from your perspective as a police leader?

Jackie Sebire:

I think from my perspective, exciting, which is very strange to think when you're talking about randomized controls trials, but because we've been working with the home office and they have funded us, 18 forces have been running randomized control trials. What we did in Bedfordshire, I wanted to know did firearms officers police differently in hotspot areas to community officers?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What I love about this is that we've known for many years that sending police to the crime hotspots is an effective tactic, but we've not been great about who should go and what they should do when they get there. What I think is nice about this new hotspots policing research is that through the home office, you and other forces are starting to reveal some of these messages about who goes and what they should do when they get there. Should it be more community-oriented? Should it be more proactive policing? Who's going and what are we asking them to do? Which is the next iteration of hotspots policing research, isn't it?

Jackie Sebire:

That's huge respect to sort of my colleagues at the home office because I think I badgered them basically and said, "Look, can we do this? Can we really do this?" But again, it's this change in politics, isn't it? They really listened and together, we came up with a great program and they've taken that forward in leaps and bounds now. Each force is doing a slightly different RCT. Like I say, the one that we've done recently is looking at the different types of officer police hotspots because obviously the local gangs see the big firearms cars and they know that's the firearms so actually, let's not do what we were going to do today. Because I think the best bit of research is the ones that actually shake the tree a little bit. That's what all good research should do.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Also, one of the other reasons that I wanted to talk to you was I'm a little fascinated, and I say a little, I actually mean a lot fascinated by some work that you've recently published with colleagues, John Ross and of course from Cambridge, the wonderful Heather Strang, which looked at the work of independent domestic violence advisors. This is just fascinating. It's something that I think I'm going to be using as an example of why we need to do evidence-based policing because who would not want to have additional support for domestic violence victims in court? It sounds like a given, a fantastic thing that we should absolutely do, shouldn't it? I mean, that must have been your impression when you first started discussing it.

Jackie Sebire:

We have specialist domestic abuse courts where the lawyers and the magistrates have got enhanced training to understand the issues associated with domestic abuse. Part of that court process means every victim that goes to a specialist court gets the opportunity to have a specialist support officer, completely independent of the police investigation and what they do. They will help them with their safety planning, if they need to go to a refuge, benefits, welfare, all of that extra stuff.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

These are not people just pulled in off the street. These advisors have received training and they have knowledge of the system and all that good stuff.

Jackie Sebire:

Oh, absolutely. They're independently managed through either the courts or charities and they are in the main trained psychologists, social workers, so they've got a strong background and they are an incredible resource.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

They're not Mickey Mouse. I mean, if you just came to me and said, "We could either just run domestic violence victims through the court system and good luck, or we can give them this whole support network," who could not want that, right?

Jackie Sebire:

Who would not want to fund that and pay for that and think that was a good idea?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Exactly. You had a chance to study. How did you design the study?

Jackie Sebire:

This was all part of John Ross's master's thesis. What was really helpful was the particular court that we used only sat Mondays and Tuesdays. We have a specialist domestic violence court, which we used for this study and on the Mondays and Tuesdays when the domestic abuse cases were heard, the victims were offered the opportunity to have the support of one of these incredible IDVAs.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

IDVA being your shorthand for...

Jackie Sebire:

Independent domestic abuse advisor.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Independent domestic violence advisor.

Jackie Sebire:

Violence advisor. Sorry, we're told to call it domestic abuse now. The names haven't caught up yet. The IDVAs would be there on Mondays and Tuesdays, but sometimes there were cases that had to be scheduled for court purposes on a Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, and the IDVAs weren't available to provide support on those days. We had a natural control, and so we were able to look at was there a difference in outcomes whether the IDVA was able to support the victim or not?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Going into it, if I remember reading correctly, there was fundamentally no difference in the cases. It just depend on whether they turned up on a Monday or Tuesday or the rest of the week, so the domestic violence cases were fundamentally the same.

Jackie Sebire:

Absolutely. We were super careful because we were concerned that this potentially could be an issue with the research. We looked at age, demography, type of offense, all of those sort of things and they were completely consistent across the two groups.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What did you find?

Jackie Sebire:

Well, it was just extraordinary. Like I said, I just remember Heather and I going, "Are you sure you got this right? Should we just run that again?" I know John had run them about a million times first before he spoke to us. The key things were the opportunity to have an IDVA, you were less likely to get a conviction at trial. You were more likely to be a repeat victim and if you were a repeat victim, it was more likely that you were going to suffer more serious crime, so completely counterintuitive to what you would've expected.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I mean, those are pretty brutal results. Being a domestic violence victim is horrific enough to begin with, but to then be provided what seems to be the sort of thing that people should expect and want some assistance is actually more detrimental to the eventual case and your outcomes. I mean, that's a brutal finding.

Jackie Sebire:

What this research has really done is shone a light and we really need to understand the evidence base behind IDVAs. We really need to understand what's happening here because this has shone a light on is this happening as it should do? Clearly, it doesn't seem to be.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Do you have any hypothesis as to why you've got those kind of findings?

Jackie Sebire:

Well, there is the hypothesis that actually having that support of an IDVA meant that should a victim be a repeat victim, they were more comfortable in coming forward. Whereas, actually potentially it might be if they hadn't had the opportunity to have an IDVA, well, I'm not going to bother again. I'm not going to bother to report. Court was a waste of time. There is that potential that actually, it's more positive because actually they feel more confident in coming forward, but again, like all good research as always, you need to do more research to understand what you found.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But the outcomes didn't support that though.

Jackie Sebire:

The outcomes didn't support that, but what we didn't have is interviews with the victims to see, well, how did they feel about it? That's the next stage. We've presented the research to a number of charities, the domestic violence commissioner, the Home Office, the Met. Hopefully, now, that will be a springboard for some more research to take place.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What was the reaction?

Jackie Sebire:

Within a couple of moments of me doing the hey, look on Twitter. I've published this article, which we all do because we can't help ourselves. Literally within a couple of hours, I've had a "Jackie, can we have a discussion about this?"

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, no. The old dreaded we need to have a talk.

Jackie Sebire:

Yeah, and the direct messages, "we really need to have a talk", which was absolutely fine because the most important thing is good research does promote conversation. I'm really happy to do that, so it was quite a bit quicker than I had imagined on social media. Again, like I said, all research needs to be discussed and hopefully this will open the door to provide some really important future research and funding opportunities for the IDVA service.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It reminds me of the work done by my former colleague, Joan McCord, in the Cambridge Summerville Youth Study, finding that a five year program to provide adolescent boys who are at risk with mentorship and social work support and help with schoolwork and recreational activities actually produced negative outcomes. Their criminal activity was worse. Worse employment if I recall correctly. They certainly had less satisfaction with jobs, et cetera. They just had a lot of negative life outcomes and the results were so counter to the prevailing thinking that she would get hate mail and she would get threatened and have people shouting at her at conferences, which is what we used to do before we could shout at people on Twitter.

Jackie Sebire:

I think, Jerry, this almost brings our two elements of conversation together because just as you were talking, I was thinking this is where leadership comes in because if you are in a position to get this research and make a change to say, well, actually we are going to look IDVAs now. We are going to change how we hotspot police. We are going to deal with risk assessment for domestic abuse completely differently because of this research. If you are in a leadership role and can make that happen, and I fortunately have been on occasions, that's what makes a difference and that's why pracademics are so important.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

In case I have new listeners, explain what a pracademic is.

Jackie Sebire:

I'm sorry. I assumed our little cabal are all aware of this. Pracademics are that mixture between that operational policing, really understanding the tactics and the policing world with research. You get your degree and you know, what a T test is.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Which of course in British policing is the probationer is the first person who has to go make the T, right?

Jackie Sebire:

Nicely done.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There we go. You heard it here first. If you now know what a pracademic is, congratulations, you have joined Jackie Sebire's cabal. Welcome to the club. All right. Good stuff. I mean, I think the whole challenge with this is just trying to get more and more information about what works, what doesn't, and to start to explore this kind of stuff. hat I love about this is I'm always fascinated with research that upsets people's expectations. I think it's great when you're producing research that says, hey, guess what? You all assumed this would work. No, it doesn't seem to. Now let's start playing. It's great fun.

Jackie Sebire:

That's my favorite type of research. That's what my PhD did. Generally that makes me happy because you know you've got a battle on your hands there and that's always a good thing.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Exactly. It's fascinating. Here's all the things that you just assumed without knowing would work and hey, guess what? They don't. That's absolutely brilliant. Now in terms of domestic violence, you've got a book coming out soon with Katie Barrow Grint, who's also been a former guest on the podcast.

Jackie Sebire:

This is the power of Twitter. Katie and I are really dedicated to training and evidence-based policing, as you know, because I do know she was on before me though, Jerry, just noted.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

In her defense, she paid me more than you did.

Jackie Sebire:

Well, I thought you were cheap, Jerry, but-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, I am.

Jackie Sebire:

Katie's just a joy to work with and, again, a huge, huge potential for the future for leadership for policing, which is just fantastic. She and I have been working together on a domestic abuse textbook to train junior officers. What is domestic abuse? How do you do it? How do you risk assess? How do you treat victims? How do you treat suspects? What was amazing, we put a call out on Twitter for some academics to join us and we found these two incredible ladies from Essex, so Ruth Weir and Jackie Turton who have been working with us and hopefully by the end of the year, our books should be out because we never had any of this. It was just go to domestic when I joined and if you're a girl, you've got to hold the babies. That was basically your training for domestic abuse when I started.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You're absolutely right. I remember going to so many domestics, which was a fuss if you think about it. I was a 19-year-old police officer going to domestic violence cases. You guys have been married longer than I've been alive, but let me help sort out your domestic violence case. I think this is really important. We need more research on it because domestic violence has just been this pernicious problem that society has really struggled to try and figure out even to make any kind of a dent in it. There just isn't any decent evidence on how to improve domestic violence outcomes that I've really seen move through into policy and practice. It's such a challenging problem.

Jackie Sebire:

My whole career, I have to say, has been around research and trying to improve how we deal with domestic abuse. Like I said, when I first started, again, I was 22. What did I know? You're there either holding the baby while the male officer sorted it out.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Which, if you think about it, is probably the worst way around because many of the female officers were absolutely fantastic with victims and just leave the bloke holding the baby. It's not like most of them haven't had some practice in that.

Jackie Sebire:

Yes. I can remember having a big row, probably mid-career, with a senior officer saying, "Why are we spending all this time investigating mobile phone theft when actually, we've got husbands killing their wives pretty much every week where we were." That didn't do a lot for my career, it has to be said, but what has been a joy is seeing how now policing really take vulnerability, domestic abuse so seriously now. It's all part of our strategies, tactics. I haven't seen any year plans that we do that don't include how we deal with domestic abuse.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Do you think we're making headway in it?

Jackie Sebire:

Yes. We are not necessarily making headway in how to stop it, but we are making headway in actually, this is something that does sit on the police radar. It is part of police business. These are serious crimes and these people need to be held to account and we need to keep these victims safe. It's not just a private matter anymore.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's got to be important because the first stage to get to an evidence-based foundation for dealing with it and reducing the impact of it is getting on people's radar, so at least we start gathering high quality data that tell us how we're doing.

Jackie Sebire:

I think the next stage for that is also making it a career choice. People want to work in public protection rather than, "oh, it's a lumber" or "I've been forced to work in public protection". It needs to have that cache about it that actually you are protecting people from some of the most serious crimes that can happen to them, and these are life changing crimes, aren't they?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. It's such a pernicious problem and it impacts people so deeply. I think that's the harm of it even emotionally is far deeper than people give it credit for. It's just so devastating for the victims and everybody around them.

Jackie Sebire:

Absolutely. Especially the children, and now we're understanding the impact it's having on children.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, Jackie, I'm well aware because of the time difference between us, I've pushed you well into the drinking hour. This has been a really fascinating chat covering so much of your career and your history. Everything from rescuing Amy Winehouse's cat to actually really making some dents in our understanding of domestic violence, so spending a bit of time with me, this evening in your case, this afternoon in mine. Thanks ever so much.

Jackie Sebire:

It was an absolute pleasure and it was on my bucket list of things to do before I retired. Given I go in a couple of weeks, you've completed that one and ticked it off my list, Jerry.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Awesome. Happy to help.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That was episode 47 of Reducing Crime recorded online in April 2022. A link to the domestic violence advisor article we discussed is at reducingcrime.com/podcast. There, you can also find transcripts of this and every episode. New episodes are announced on Twitter at [@_reducingcrime](https://twitter.com/_reducingcrime) and instructors can also DM me personally there or at [jerry_ratcliffe](https://twitter.com/jerry_ratcliffe) for a spreadsheet of multiple choice questions for every episode.

New Speaker:

Be safe and best of luck.