



The Edinburgh International Symposium on Volunteering in Policing

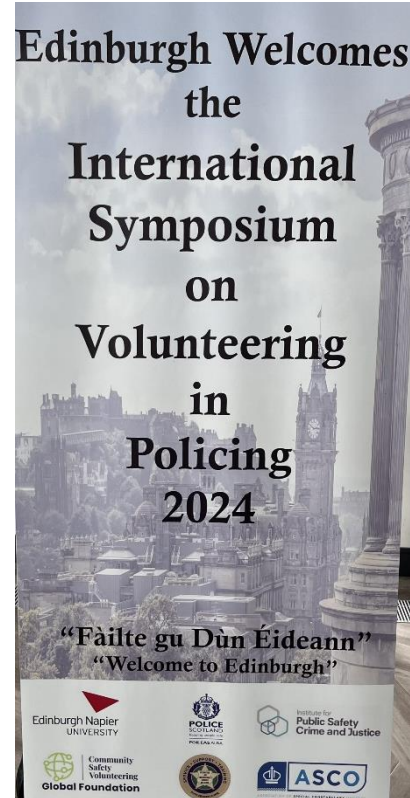
The Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (IPSCJ) at the University of Northampton convened at The Edinburgh International Symposium on volunteering in Policing on the 15th and 16th of May 2024 at Edinburgh Napier University. The conference was supported by a range of partners including Police Scotland, the Scottish Institute for Policing Research, the Association of Special Constabulary Officers, the Volunteer Law Enforcement Officer Alliance, and the Global Foundation for Community Safety Volunteering. The event brought together multiple global leaders in academia and policing to share knowledge and experience, building upon the 2022 International Symposium hosted by CGI.

The conference was formally opened and chaired by Professor Matthew Callender, Professor of Interdisciplinary Social Studies at the University of Northampton, and Director of the IPSCJ. This was followed by a welcome from Professor Gary Hutchinson, Dean of Applied Sciences at Edinburgh Napier University. Plenary speakers, Police Scotland's Deputy Chief Constable Jane Connors, Dr Rick Muir the Director of the Police Foundation, and Dr Iain Britton, a Visiting Fellow of the IPSCJ and Founding Director of the Global Foundation for Community Safety Volunteering.

Professor Matthew Callender commented *"This conference had a fantastic range of partners who brought together world leading experts in academia, policy and practice. The conference built upon a similar IPSCJ-led event in 2022 but in many ways took a significant step forward in reach and engagement. The conference overall represented how volunteering in law enforcement is a major agenda across the world and this conference acts a platform to build connections, share important evidence and*



research, ultimately with the aim of harnessing the value and contributions from citizens to protect the public from harm and create a safer future for all".





Fostering International Collaboration

The conference brought together leading academics, practitioners and policymakers to share knowledge, foster international collaboration and consider the key issues facing volunteering in policing around the world. The symposium included inputs from Canada, Dubai, England and Wales, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Scotland, and the United States of America.

Each delegation provided a summary of their national context, the volunteering opportunities available to their citizens as well as the facilitators/barriers impacting specific programmes of volunteering. What was striking was the overall scale of volunteering in policing globally, with the sheer scale of numbers of people who volunteer their time in policing to support local communities and protect people from harm created a sense of volunteering in policing being a sleeping giant within the policing family.

Talks on Police volunteer programmes around the world were then conducted by Commissaire General Stephane Folcher, Head of the Reserves, Police Nationale and General de Division Jean-Pierre Gesnot, Chief for reserves, Gendarmerie Nationale, France. Leena Pukk, Lead Auxiliary Police, Estonian Police and Border Guard, Agapi Brokalaki, National Coordination, Police Volunteers, Netherlands Politie, Corporal Cheah Phaik Kin, PVR, Malaysia and Orlaith Kelly and Edmund O'Reilly, Garda Reserve, Ireland.



Professor Ross Wolf commented *“This conference was an opportunity for us to share a lot of the research that we have done, but also to learn about where there are gaps and to start focusing in on those gaps with new and collaborative research”*.

Driving Innovation within Policing

A key theme in the conference was innovating beyond traditional volunteering models and spaces with many of the international contributors showcasing the unique and specialised roles volunteers undertake.



For instance, we heard from Agapi Brokalaki and Laura Martens from the Politie in the Netherlands about how Specialized Police Volunteers support a range of roles including Intelligence, Forensic Investigation, Financial Economic Investigation, Digital Expertise, Criminal



Investigation Psychology, Environmental Crimes, and Sexual Offences. In Malaysia, Dr Cheah Lance Corporal in the Royal Malaysia Police Volunteer Reserve explained how volunteers undertake a range of complex roles, requiring dedicated and resilient people.

Dr Phaik Kin Cheah commented *“We have learnt experiences from the many countries and people that have come here, we have had a lot of conversations. And I think all of us are trying to learn how we do it in each other’s countries, and how we can do it better by learning it from each other “*.



A key area of growth in terms of specialization was embedding volunteers within Cyber units, which is extremely valuable considering the growth of online crime. Chief Inspector Leanne Alleyne from the NPCC Cybercrime Programme outlined the use of cyber digital specials and volunteers to help law enforcement with knowledge and expertise gained in the private, charitable and academia sectors. Dr Juliane Weber a Public Prosecutor in Germany described the work from the Central Cybercrime Department (Zentral und Ansprechstelle Cybercrime Nordrhein-Westfalen) in the Public Prosecutor’s Office Cologne.

Another point of interest was the involvement of young people as volunteers within policing uniformed youth groups. Inspector Hellen Nellany, the National VPC Safeguarding and Standards Manager, discussed the UK Volunteer Police Cadet programme, its aims, safeguarding framework and future. Inspector Norman Towler and Sergeant Aaron Chadha discussed the value of and work done by Police Scotland Youth Volunteers’s in Scotland. Inspector Towler commented *“In Scotland we have youth volunteers who inspire me on a daily basis, some from really challenging and vulnerable backgrounds and we make role models from youths. If you make role models you make leaders of the future and that’s prevention at its heart”*. Additionally, Professor Matthew Callender presented a talk on researching young people in the Police, bringing together the many research activities that the IPSCJ has conducted on the involvement of young people as volunteers in policing.

Understanding Volunteer Experience(s) and Valuing Volunteers

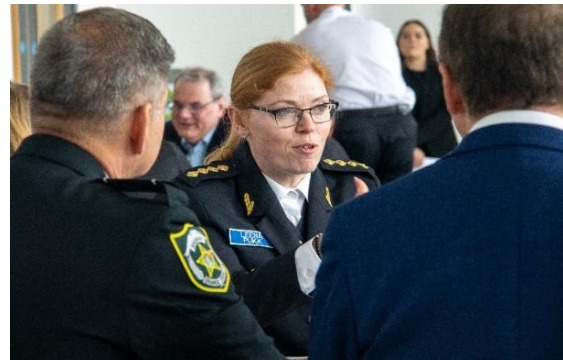


The importance of understanding volunteer experiences was critical to all programmes and involving more people in specialised roles within policing was a consistent theme throughout many of the presentations. For instance, we heard from Commander Folcher from La Police Nationale about how a key objective of their volunteering was to



strengthen the relationship and bond between the police and civil society. To this end, the organisation was seeking to expand the volume of and roles available to volunteers.

Dr Melissa Pepper discussed enhancing road safety with community Speed-watch volunteers, a key finding from her research was the positive impact on volunteers of being recognised and feeling valued. In Estonia, the Leading Law Enforcement Officer, Leena Pukk shared how their Assistant Police Officers wear the same uniform as paid Police Officers, working closely alongside or independently to protect the public from harm.



What's next?

At the conclusion of the symposium, the emphasis was centred on the future and how to best collaborate. There were two national networks formed, The Global Academic Network for Citizens in Policing and a Leaders and Coordinators network. There was an intense feeling of optimism for the future, with the conference having provided a platform for change and a space for shared plans to be formed.

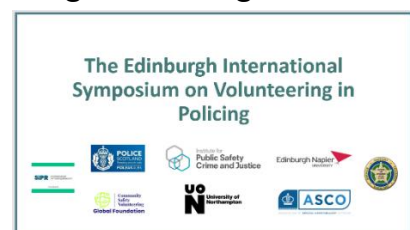
Dr Iain Britton commented, *“We need to build the momentum from this, the passion and expertise in the room has been tangible over the two days. We need to build that into a network of leaders and coordinators internationally, who are doing this day in and day out, to connect them together. We need to take the next steps to draw the academic partners and practitioners together and work out how we cooperatively build the evidence base around all of this. Finally, we need to develop the global picture of volunteer policing which isn't out there anywhere at the moment.”*



The Edinburgh International Symposium on Volunteering in Policing-Video

From this conference, we were able to create a video on the importance of the evidence base surrounding this area in addition to the key take aways that the attendants gained from the various presentations.

<https://youtu.be/1kUROQzIAX0>



For any questions, please contact ipsci@northampton.ac.uk