



Dr. Iain Britton (left) is welcomed to the Volunteer Law Enforcement Officer Alliance (VLEOA) conference in 2022 in Kent, England

Improving the impact and experience of volunteer police

The Volunteer Law Enforcement Officer Alliance (VLEOA) is proud to support the work of Dr. Iain Britton. It was recently announced that Dr. Britton has been selected for a UK Churchill Fellowship, with a focus on building international evidence across volunteer police programs, to improve the impact and the experience of volunteer police.

The Churchill Fellowship is a UK charity which promotes the global exchange of ideas, innovation, and understanding, through the work of a small number of individual UK citizens appointed as Fellows each year. The Churchill Fellowship program was founded by public donation in 1965 as the living legacy of Sir Winston Churchill (for more information on the fellowship, see: <https://www.churchillfellowship.org/>).

Iain will undertake an international trip in the autumn, visiting significant and innovative law enforcement volunteer programs in several countries. This will build on the many years' work he has already undertaken, particularly in the UK, focused on developing evidence-based approaches to volunteer law enforcement.

Aims of the international Fellowship

Iain's Fellowship aims to help build the evidence-base for both improving the experience and further building the impact of volunteer police.

Volunteer policing has a massive potential contribution to bring to many of the big challenges of modern policing. Tens of thousands volunteer as police officers across many countries, serving millions of hours on the policing front-line. There is much that is truly exceptional across this amazing group of volunteers, and many individual volunteering programs across numerous countries that are well led, effective, and innovative. However, volunteer policing has often lacked a clear strategic direction, it has suffered from poor data, from limited or inconsistent leadership focus and resourcing, and from poor organization. Consequently, volunteer police often end up peripheral to discussions of police reform and the future of law enforcement, where there should be a vision seeing volunteers as a core opportunity and solution. There is often little sharing of best practice even within individual countries, never-mind internationally.

The purpose of the Fellowship is to learn from leading examples of volunteer programs and to bring that learning back within the UK, to help to improve and to grow the roles of volunteer Special Constables, developing more effective, sustainable, inclusive, and engaging volunteering.



The focus of the international visits will be on five key areas:

- 1) Supporting longer-term volunteer police careers (longer-serving volunteers deliver high 'whole career' value. Hence improving their attraction, onboarding, engagement, and retention delivers a strong return in volunteer police program benefits).
- 2) Increasing female participation and improving the experiences of female volunteer police.
- 3) Strengthening leadership models for volunteer policing, both strategically and operationally.
- 4) Improving cultural and operational integration for volunteer police within policing organizations.
- 5) Understanding how to grow volunteer police programs sustainably and well.

Plans for the study trip

The expedition will involve visits to several significant and leading examples of volunteer policing, each visit consisting of meetings and interviews to learn in depth about how the programs operate:

- Identifying examples of innovation and 'what works' in the individual volunteer police settings and programs. (Capturing key learning from them in a series of small case studies, with particular focus on how volunteer police effectively integrate and operate, aligning to policing priorities, and how they are most effectively organized and led).
- Engaging with and interviewing female volunteer police and understanding their experiences.
- Engaging with and interviewing strategic and executive leaders in the law enforcement organizations, to understand their thinking and ambitions for volunteer police.
- Engaging and interviewing those who directly lead volunteer police programs and who supervise and support volunteer officers.
- Exploring patterns of career length for volunteer officers in the different settings and locations and engaging with and interviewing longer-serving volunteers.



Dr. Iain Britton works across the UK, and increasingly internationally, as a researcher and consultant in the field of volunteers in policing. He is Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice, University of Northampton (UK), Visiting Associate Professor at the University of Central Florida (USA), and Senior Research Associate at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Malaysia).

Iain works with policing organizations who are ambitious and innovative in their approaches to volunteers in policing. His work focuses on helping police organizations to enhance and measure the 'value' of their volunteer policing, to clarify their strategic purpose and direction for volunteer programs, and on improving volunteer management, developing inclusive volunteering, and improving volunteer experience. Iain has worked extensively in the UK for the past ten years in this field, at a national level on a wide range of projects, and also locally in most police forces. He has also been involved in international research projects in Malaysia, Japan, the USA, and Canada.



Volunteer Law Enforcement Alliance (VLEOA)



Churchill Fellowship 2023