# Two top British police jobs face single applicants amid leadership talent shortage



Two high-ranking positions within British policing, both offering salaries over £200,000, have drawn a concerningly low number of applicants, attracting only one contender each for the roles of deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and chief constable of Merseyside Police.

The Metropolitan Police's deputy commissioner position, which carries a salary exceeding £250,000, has attracted Matt Jukes, an assistant commissioner who currently oversees counter-terrorism efforts. Jukes is expected to secure the role permanently, although the formal application process is still pending. He will initially serve as interim deputy commissioner, succeeding Lynne Owens, who is stepping down. Jukes was deemed a strong candidate regardless of competition, and his appointment is seen as paving the way for potential future promotion to commissioner once Mark Rowley’s term, set to expire in September 2027, concludes.

In Liverpool, Rob Carden, currently the chief of Cumbria, will take the reins as the new chief constable of Merseyside Police. Carden was the sole applicant for this role as well, and while his candidacy raised eyebrows, senior sources suggest he would have been a formidable contender even in a competitive field. He is expected to receive official approval for the position from the area’s police and crime commissioner, Emily Spurrell, in the coming week.

Spurrell acknowledged the limited pool of applicants for the chief constable role, attributing this to the complexity and public visibility inherent in such high-responsibility positions within policing. "It is important to note that senior policing appointments of this nature often attract a limited number of applicants due to the role’s complexity, public visibility and the high level of responsibility involved in policing a high-performing force," she stated.

The lack of applicants has drawn criticism from various senior figures in both policing and government, with a prevailing sentiment that there is a significant shortage of talent at the upper echelons of law enforcement. Andy Marsh, head of the College of Policing, highlighted the deterioration of talent among chief officers, noting that at one point, as much as a third of these positions were filled by temporary holders. He expressed concern over the low applicant numbers for chief officer roles but remained hopeful that recent reforms would improve the situation.

A senior policing source echoed these sentiments, describing a "dearth of talent" attributed in part to the system involving police and crime commissioners (PCCs), who oversee forces and often lack substantial policing experience. This source stated, "There’s no checks and balances on who they choose."

In response, a government official remarked on ongoing efforts to enhance leadership training and standards, underscoring the necessity of developing a robust talent pool at the top of policing.

The interim appointment of Jukes as deputy commissioner will open a new vacancy for the role of head of counter-terrorism, to be temporarily filled by Vicki Evans. Uniquely, Evans has not previously served in the Metropolitan Police, coming from the Cambridgeshire force, and earlier the Dyfed-Powys force in Wales. This marks a shift in the long-standing tradition of appointing the counter-terrorism head from within the Met itself.

Additionally, Richard Smith, a current officer within the Met, will step into the role of acting senior national coordinator for counter-terrorism, a position vital for declaring acts of violence such as recent incidents—including a crossbow attack in Leeds— as acts of terrorism.

The shared backgrounds of Jukes and the current Met commissioner, Rowley, paint a picture of continuity in leadership. Both have previously led their respective forces—Jukes in South Wales, Rowley in Surrey—before taking on significant roles in counter-terrorism. They are both also originally from the West Midlands and have been viewed as modernisers within their ranks.

The trend of single applicants for high-ranking positions in British policing reflects broader challenges within the sector, raising questions about the future of leadership and the calibre of candidates in law enforcement.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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