

# POLICE

## Police Magazine Update

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### Chief constables need experience on the ground

The job of a chief constable requires a 'grounding' as a constable and should not be open to candidates from other professions to parachute in on 'work experience', according to panellists at the Superintendents' Association Conference.

Lively debate on the merits and drawbacks of direct entry into the ranks of the police prompted Sir Hugh Orde, president of ACPO, to state, 'I do not want people on work experience; it's simply too dangerous a job'.

A panel which included police minister Nick Herbert, Paul McKeever, chair of the Federation, and Shami Chakrabarti, director of Liberty, spoke to delegates yesterday on what this would mean for the service.

Mr Herbert called for 'cultural' change in the police service to fast-track recruits from diverse backgrounds so it is more reflective of their communities. In an article in *The Times* last month, *Why outside candidates may help us defeat crime, Sept 12*, he stated that Tom Winsor, carrying out a review of police pay and conditions, is looking into direct entry into the police service at different ranks.

However, Paul McKeever, chair of the Federation, said that chief constables should serve as constables to get their 'grounding' before moving into the higher ranks.

He told the conference, held in Warwickshire, that starting as a constable gave chiefs a 'real understanding' of policing and it is important to have been through the system at an early stage.

Sir Hugh Orde quipped: "I know of investment bankers looking for a job who screwed up the country and I do not want them [as chief constables]."

Ms Chakrabarti added: "You cannot have a two-tier police service and officers in other ranks based on a militaristic model. It should be an officer of the law – you cannot have someone who thinks they are ordering squaddies around to do baton charges."

Mr Herbert stated in the article that of 220 chief officers in the senior ranks, only 38 are women and only three from ethnic minorities.

However, Mr McKeever questioned the commitment to such equality when government financial support for organisations such as the Gay Police Association and National Black Police Association has almost 'evaporated'.

