

Martyn's Law and what it means for events venues and university campuses

28 July 2024  Stephanie McGarry

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, also known as Martyn's Law is a draft piece of legislation that was proposed in the UK following the tragic terrorist attack at the Manchester Arena in 2017.

The law is named after Martyn Hett, one of the victims of the attack, and seeks to improve public safety by requiring venues and public spaces to have a clear plan for dealing with potential terrorist threats.

While the law has not yet been passed, Sir Kier Starmer has pledged to introduce it under the Labour government.

Preparing for terrorist attacks

There have been 14 terror attacks in the UK since the start of 2017 and experts have assessed that individuals are more likely to take action that can reduce harm and save lives, if they have considered what they would do, and how, prior to a terrorist attack occurring.

Many businesses and premises owners across the country are now taking steps to ensure that they are prepared for any potential terrorist incidents.

Requirements for venues

One of the key provisions of Martyn's Law is the requirement for venues to conduct a thorough risk assessment and develop a comprehensive security plan. This includes identifying potential threats and vulnerabilities, as well as developing strategies for preventing and responding to incidents.

For the first time the law will mandate who is responsible for considering the risk from terrorism and how they would respond to a terrorist attack at certain premises and events. The Bill places the requirement on the person who has control of the premises; this is usually the operator or occupier. It also places a requirement for co-operation on those with aspects of control of the premises.

To be in scope of the new law, premises and events must be:

- Accessible to the public.
- Have a capacity of 100 or more individuals.
- And must be used for entertainment and leisure, retail, food and drink.

There will be enhanced requirements for high-capacity premises and events with a capacity of 800 individuals or more.

What does Martyn's Law mean for universities?

In the higher education sector, this means that universities and colleges must take a close look at their campuses and identify any areas that may be at risk. This could include areas with large crowds, such as lecture halls or sports stadiums, as well as areas with high foot traffic, such as student hubs or dining facilities. Graduation ceremonies and libraries will also likely fall into the scope of the new law.

There are concerns about the introduction of Martyn's Law, with some commenting that additional security measures will alter the feel and atmosphere of university campuses whilst also placing additional financial burdens on organisations, particularly those that are already

struggling financially. But many argue that simple steps will save lives and that it is reasonable that many locations should take appropriate, reasonably practicable measures to protect their staff and the public from the terrible impacts and effects of terrorism.

We're told that dedicated guidance and support will be provided to ensure that those in scope are provided with information to understand and meet the new legal requirements so expect to see more on this in the coming months.

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