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Counter Terrorism Security Advice for Events

Dear Colleague,

Terrorist attacks in the UK such as the devastation at Manchester Arena, Westminster Bridge, London Bridge, Finsbury Park, Forbury Gardens in Reading, the synagogue in Manchester in October 2025, and recent attacks on the Jewish community have demonstrated that we face a real and continuing threat from terrorism.

Partly informed by attacks on the Jewish community, on the 30th April the national threat level was raised to SEVERE (an attack is highly likely in the next six months).

Publicly Accessible Locations (PAL's), whether by their generic nature or created due to a planned event, remain an attractive target to a hostile actor. The police and security services have foiled dozens of credible terror plots including several related to the growing threat from far-right extremists.

You will no doubt be aware of The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act, most commonly known as Martyn's Law. This resulted from the tragedy at Manchester Arena.

It received Royal Assent in April 2025, and there is now an implementation period of at least 24 months from that date before it comes into force. As a reminder, there is no legal requirement to comply with the Act until it comes into force. However, those in scope may wish to begin considering the requirements and familiarising themselves with the guidance in advance. Please be aware neither the Home Office nor the SIA endorse any third-party products offered by the private sector in respect of compliance with this legislation.

Please find the statutory guidance on GOV.UK - [The Terrorism \(Protection of Premises\) Act 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

This guide is not intended to cause undue alarm, rather to give practical advice and signposting to help you plan for, and deliver, a safe event. *Remaining vigilant without causing undue alarm is a key message.*

Various websites, such as **PROTECT UK** (found [here](#)), provide a wide range of free, sensible, achievable and proportionate Counter Terrorism options and contingencies.

Other useful links:

- [Keeping everyone safe at events | ProtectUK](#)
- [Spotting behaviours that don't seem right](#)
- [Run Hide Tell – What to do in a terrorist attack](#)
- [Suspicious items](#)

Guidance:

- [The Guide to making events safe for all and unattractive to terrorists](#)
- [Making your site and event safe - guidance for leaders and security managers](#)
- [Recognising Terrorist Threats](#)
- [Run Hide Tell – What to do in a terrorist attack](#)

MAY 2026

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- [Guide to evacuation & lockdown](#)
- [What to do about suspicious items](#)
- [Dealing with bomb threats](#)
- [Hazardous materials](#)
- [Mitigating 'Fire As a Weapon'](#)
- [Explosive Detection Dogs – What dogs to choose](#)
- [Physical and personnel security for major events](#)

What is hostile reconnaissance?

Terrorists often undertake some form of reconnaissance before carrying out an attack. They may do this in vehicles or on foot, alone or in small groups, using cameras or other recording devices, or by making written notes.

It is important for all event staff, regardless of their role, to remain vigilant, trust their instincts and report any possible hostile reconnaissance to the police. The police will never mind a “false alarm”. Where possible and safe to do so, record a description of the person(s) or vehicles or obtain an image (photographic or CCTV).

Signs to look for:

PEOPLE

- People taking pictures, filming overtly or covertly, making notes or sketches of the security measures around events. They may be paying particular attention to entrance/exits points.
- People in possession of global positioning systems (GPS), maps, plans etc. of the event, venue or local area.
- Simple observation such as staring or quickly looking away.
- Standing or loitering in the same area on numerous occasions with no apparent reasonable explanation. Undertaking activity which appears inconsistent with the nature of location/building.
- Walking perimeter routes, frequently re-tracing same route.
- Asking questions –e.g. “are there any famous people attending?”, or enquiring where staff ‘hang out’ or which local amenities staff frequent.

VEHICLES

- Parked outside venue, event perimeter with one or more people remaining in the vehicle, for longer than would be considered usual.



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- Driving around perimeter, up and down same roads or erratic driving.
- Does the vehicle appear overweight, as if it is carrying a significant load?
- Same vehicle returning but with different occupants, often parking in same location.

TESTING RESPONSE TIMES AND STAFF ACTIONS

- Vehicles, packages, luggage left unattended and observing the response.
- Unusual or unexpected deliveries, outside normal hours.
- Attempting access to location on foot or in vehicle.
- False activation of alarms (security/fire) to assess evacuation routines and/or emergency services response.
- Creating insecurities in perimeter fencing and observing response or repairs.

Remember, hostile reconnaissance may involve the use of disguises or face coverings, claiming to be a regular user of the location (e.g. a contractor, delivery person), or pretending to have a car breakdown to give them an excuse to remain static near the event.

Other tactics include following members of staff away from venue to observe routines, learn identities and activities.

The above principles also apply post-event, when locations are being dismantled or returned to normal operating routines. If the event /location will be used again for similar purposes, observing the breakdown may inform a future attack.

Measures to combat hostile reconnaissance

- The key is the proactive promotion of security awareness to, and vigilance of, all involved in an event, including crew, staff, volunteers, security team, contractors, event exhibitors and vendors.
- Create a culture of confidence in challenging unknown visitors before, during and after the event.
- Ensure staff and vehicle passes are carried/displayed on entering the site or restricted areas. Keep these secure and out of sight when away from the event.
- Report any suspicious activity immediately.



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- Complete regular training, such as the online **Action Counters Terrorism e-learning** (see end of this document for links)

Bomb Threats

The vast majority of bomb threats are hoaxes designed to cause alarm and disruption. As well as the rare instances of valid bomb threats, terrorists may also make hoax bomb threat calls to intimidate the public, businesses and communities, to draw attention to their cause and to mislead police. While many bomb threats involve a person-to-person phone call, an increasing number are sent electronically using email or social media applications.

It is important that potential recipients - either victims or third-parties used to pass the message on - have plans that include how the information is recorded, acted upon and passed to police.

Further Government information regarding bomb threats, including a 'checklist' for the individual receiving a call, can be found on the **PROTECT UK** website. **Suspicious packages**

If you find what you believe to be a suspicious package at your event, follow the 4 Cs;

Confirm the package is suspicious using HOT (see poster below)

UNATTENDED ITEMS: LOST... or **SUSPICIOUS?**



H

Hidden?

- Has it been concealed or hidden from view?
- Bombs are unlikely to be left in locations such as this – where any unattended item will be noticed quickly.



O

Obviously suspicious?

- Does it have wires, circuit boards, batteries, tape or putty-like substances?
- Do you think the item poses an immediate threat to life?



T

Typical?

- Is the item typical of what you would expect to find in this location?
- Most lost property is found in locations where people congregate.

If after applying the HOT protocols you still believe the item to be suspicious, call 999.

NaCTSO
National Counter Terrorism Security Office



Copies of the above poster can be printed using the link [here](#).

Consider who should be contacted at your event. (Radios/mobile phones should only be used behind hard cover and at least 15m away from the package).

Clear the area of visitors and staff in a calm but assertive manner.

Cordon off the area to ensure no one is able to return to the area.



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Safe cordon distances are shown below, these may need to be greater if your event is in open air / space.

Minimum safe cordon distances from suspicious item/vehicle:-

	100 Metres
	200 Metres
	400 Metres



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Vehicle as a weapon (VAAW)

A vehicle can be used with hostile intent to breach a perimeter, ram and damage infrastructure, or as a weapon to injure and kill people.

This is referred to as a 'vehicle as a weapon' attack. The use of a vehicle as a weapon is easy to accomplish, requires little sophistication and has been used on many occasions by terrorists in both the UK and mainland Europe. Even a small, basic vehicle can cause significant loss of life and serious injury.

Attacks using vehicles as a weapon requires little or no training so are within the capability of most individuals. Online terrorist media continues to inspire and incite individuals to use a vehicle as a weapon as an attack.

Full Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) refers mainly to permanent features found in locations to protect critical infrastructure or events with high risk (e.g. gates and bollards at Downing Street). Counter Terrorism Security Advisers (CTSAs) can give advice to organisations and local authorities regarding these permanent mitigation structures.

However, temporary measures can be considered for one-off/annual events. Examples include concrete or water-filled barriers or placing a vehicle of significant size/weight across a junction. The use of any temporary measure should be subject to a risk assessment to determine whether it is safe, will not cause damage to existing street surfaces and does not impede emergency access or evacuation routes. For example, a large heavy goods vehicle may act as a visible deterrent and provide some level of protection, but a driver would always need to be immediately available to safely relocate the vehicle in an emergency.

Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS) or 'drones'

In recent years, we have seen a significant increase in the number of UASs flown in our skies by both recreational users and commercial operators. Whilst the vast majority of users or 'pilots' undertake such activity lawfully, there is potential for these readily- available devices to be used for-

Nuisance and/or reckless purposes

Facilitating protest

Reconnaissance

Physical attack

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has produced a 'Drone Code' providing simple guidance for safe use and can be found by clicking [here](#).

As a general rule, unless the pilot has permission from the CAA, they should not be flying a camera-equipped unmanned aircraft within 150m of a 'congested area' (e.g. town or city) or at a public event. It would be prudent for event staff to have drone awareness and procedures for reporting sightings. Further guidance can be obtained from Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary's Operations Planning department (mail address at end of this document).

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Run Hide Tell – Stay Safe: Firearms and Weapons Attack

Firearms and weapons attacks are rare in the UK. The 'Stay Safe' principles give some simple actions to consider at an incident and the information that armed officers may need in the event of a weapons or firearm attack:

RUN

- escape if you can
- consider the safest options
- Is there a safe route? Run- if not possible, then hide
- Can you get there without exposing yourself to greater danger?
- insist others leave with you
- leave belongings behind

HIDE

- if you cannot run, hide
- find cover from gunfire
- If you can see the attacker, they may be able to see you. Cover from view does not mean you are safe- bullets go through glass, brick, wood and metal
- find cover from gunfire e.g. substantial brickwork/heavy reinforced walls
- be aware of your exits
- try not to get trapped
- be quiet, silence your phone
- lock/barricade yourself in
- move away from the door

TELL

- Call 999 – What do the police need to know? If you cannot speak or make a noise, listen to the instructions given to you by the call taker:
- Location – Where are the suspects?
- Direction – Where did you last see the suspects?
- Descriptions – Describe the attacker, numbers, features, clothing, weapons etc.
- Further information – Casualties, type of injury, building information, entrances, exits, hostages etc.
- stop other people entering the building if it is safe to do



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As an event organiser, you may feel that the above considerations are not proportionate to the nature of your event and that your existing security provisions are adequate. This may be an appropriate judgement at this time. However, consider if your event was to take place during a period when the national threat level moved to CRITICAL. What would your revised CT and emergency response plan now look like? These heightened threat periods historically come with little or no advance warning, hence the preparation time for altering plans and/or providing additional security measures is minimal.

Further information regarding CT security advice and national CT campaigns can be found on the below websites:-

Action Counters Terrorism (eLearning) – **now available to all members of the public**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/act-awareness-elearning>

UK CT Policing

<https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk>

Civil Aviation Authority (UAV information)

<https://www.caa.co.uk/drones/rules-and-categories-of-drone-flying>

Working with Counter Terrorism Security Advisors (CTSA):

<https://www.protectuk.police.uk/advice-and-guidance/risk/working-counter-terrorism-security-advisors-ctsas>

Publicly Accessible Locations Guidance <https://www.protectuk.police.uk/advice-and-guidance/risk/publicly-accessible-locations-guidance>

Marauding Terrorist Attack Guidance: <https://www.protectuk.police.uk/advice-and-guidance/response/marauding-terrorist-attacks-mta>

Contact Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary for any further advice and support via:

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