

Martyn's Law: A Comprehensive Analysis

Legislative Framework, Liability Implications, and Implementation Strategies

A Cambridge Sentinel Research Publication

Published by Rittel Consulting Limited

Document Version: 1.0

Publication Date: December 2025

Document ID: CS-ML-RSH-001

Abstract

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, known as Martyn's Law, represents the most significant legislative intervention in counter-terrorism preparedness for publicly accessible locations in the United Kingdom's history. This research paper provides an in-depth analysis of the Act's legal framework, regulatory architecture, liability implications, and implementation challenges. Drawing upon official government guidance, parliamentary scrutiny, and comparative international approaches, this paper examines how Martyn's Law will reshape protective security practices across thousands of premises and events nationwide.

The analysis demonstrates that whilst the Act introduces substantial new obligations for duty holders, its risk-based, proportionate approach reflects lessons learned from existing health and safety and fire safety regimes. The designation of the Security Industry Authority as regulator, combined with a tiered framework distinguishing between Standard and Enhanced duty premises, creates a scalable compliance model that balances public protection with operational practicability. However, significant implementation challenges remain, particularly regarding capacity determination, integration with existing regulatory frameworks, and resource allocation for smaller organisations.

This paper concludes that successful implementation of Martyn's Law will require sustained engagement between government, regulators, industry bodies, and duty holders, supported by clear statutory guidance, accessible training resources, and collaborative information-sharing mechanisms. Organisations that adopt a proactive, strategic approach to compliance will not only meet their legal obligations but also achieve genuine improvements in protective security and organisational resilience.

1. Introduction: The Genesis of Martyn's Law

1.1 The Manchester Arena Attack and Its Aftermath

On the evening of 22 May 2017, a suicide bomber detonated an improvised explosive device in the foyer of the Manchester Arena as concertgoers were leaving an Ariana Grande performance. The attack killed 22 people, including children, and injured hundreds more [1]. Among the victims was Martyn Hett, a 29-year-old public relations professional whose death would catalyse one of the most significant counter-terrorism legislative reforms in recent United Kingdom history.

The subsequent public inquiry, chaired by Sir John Saunders, revealed systemic failures in security arrangements, staff training, and emergency response procedures at the venue [2]. The inquiry found that opportunities to identify and challenge the attacker had been missed, evacuation procedures were inadequate, and communication between security staff and emergency services was deficient. These findings underscored a broader reality: many publicly accessible locations across the United Kingdom lacked basic preparedness for terrorist attacks, despite the persistent threat environment.

1.2 Figen Murray's Campaign

Figen Murray, Martyn Hett's mother, channelled her grief into a determined campaign for legislative change. Her advocacy focused on a simple but powerful proposition: venues and events that welcome the public should have a legal duty to implement basic protective security measures and procedures [1]. Murray's campaign gained widespread support from victims' families, security professionals, and parliamentarians across the political spectrum.

The campaign's success lay in its pragmatic framing. Rather than calling for onerous security requirements that might prove economically unviable for smaller venues, Murray advocated for proportionate, risk-based measures tailored to venue capacity and threat profile. This approach resonated with policymakers seeking to balance public protection with the economic vitality of the hospitality, entertainment, and events sectors.

1.3 Legislative Journey

The Government's response evolved through several stages. Initial proposals emerged in 2020 under the working title "Protect Duty," followed by two public consultations in 2021 and 2023 that refined the scope and requirements [3]. The draft Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill underwent pre-legislative scrutiny by a Joint Committee of Parliament, which recommended significant amendments to improve clarity, proportionality, and enforceability [4].

The revised Bill was introduced to Parliament in 2024 and, following detailed scrutiny in both Houses, received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025 [5]. The Act establishes a minimum 24-month implementation period, with the legislation anticipated to come into force in April 2027. This extended timeline reflects the Government's recognition that duty holders require sufficient time to understand their obligations, conduct risk assessments, implement measures, and train staff.

2. Legislative Framework and Scope

2.1 Qualifying Premises

The Act applies to "qualifying premises" where members of the public have access and where it is reasonable to expect a specified number of individuals to be present at the same time from time to time [5]. The capacity thresholds are:

- **Standard Tier:** 200 to 799 individuals
- **Enhanced Tier:** 800 or more individuals

This capacity-based approach represents a deliberate policy choice to focus regulatory attention on locations where terrorist attacks could cause mass casualties whilst avoiding disproportionate burdens on smaller venues. The 200-person threshold was

selected following consultation feedback indicating that venues below this capacity typically lack the resources and operational complexity to justify regulatory intervention [3].

Determining capacity is a critical compliance step that will require duty holders to assess maximum occupancy during peak periods, considering factors such as:

- Physical layout and usable floor space
- Fire safety capacity limits
- Typical occupancy patterns during different times of day, week, or year
- Special events or seasonal variations that may temporarily increase capacity

The Act does not prescribe a specific methodology for capacity determination, instead requiring duty holders to adopt a reasonable approach based on their specific circumstances. Statutory guidance from the Home Office is expected to provide further clarity on acceptable methodologies.

Premises types encompassed by the Act include, but are not limited to:

- **Entertainment and assembly venues:** Theatres, concert halls, cinemas, sports stadiums, nightclubs, bingo halls
- **Retail premises:** Shopping centres, department stores, supermarkets, markets
- **Food and drink establishments:** Restaurants, cafes, pubs, bars
- **Visitor attractions:** Museums, galleries, theme parks, zoos, historic sites
- **Places of worship:** Churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, gurdwaras
- **Educational establishments:** Universities, colleges, schools (where public access areas exist)
- **Healthcare facilities:** Hospitals, clinics (public-facing departments)
- **Transport hubs:** Railway stations, airports, bus terminals, ferry ports
- **Hotels and accommodation:** Hotels, hostels, conference centres
- **Office buildings:** Where significant public access occurs (e.g., public-facing services, large reception areas)

Certain premises are **excluded** from the Act's scope, including:

- Private dwellings and residential accommodation

- Premises used exclusively for worship (though ancillary facilities such as community halls may be included)
- Premises operated by the armed forces or intelligence services
- Diplomatic premises

2.2 Qualifying Events

In addition to permanent premises, the Act applies to “qualifying events” where 800 or more individuals may be present [5]. Qualifying events include:

- Music festivals and concerts
- Sporting events (matches, tournaments, races)
- Cultural festivals and celebrations
- Markets and fairs
- Public demonstrations and rallies
- Temporary exhibitions and shows

The Enhanced Tier threshold (800+) applies to all qualifying events, reflecting the Government’s assessment that temporary gatherings present heightened security challenges due to their transient nature, outdoor settings, and often less-controlled access points [3].

Event organisers must assess whether their event meets the qualifying threshold and, if so, implement appropriate public protection procedures and measures. This includes events held on premises that may themselves fall within scope, requiring coordination between premises operators and event organisers to ensure comprehensive security coverage.

2.3 The Responsible Person

The Act designates a “responsible person” for each qualifying premises or event [5]. This individual holds legal accountability for compliance and must possess the authority, competence, and resources necessary to fulfil the role effectively.

For **premises**, the responsible person is typically:

- The owner or operator of the premises

- A senior manager with operational control
- A designated security or compliance officer with appropriate authority

For **events**, the responsible person is usually:

- The event organiser or promoter
- A designated event safety or security manager

The responsible person concept mirrors approaches in fire safety and health and safety legislation, where clear individual accountability has proven effective in driving compliance. However, the Act recognises that responsibility may be shared or delegated in complex organisational structures, provided accountability remains clear and documented.

3. Tiered Requirements: Standard and Enhanced Duty

3.1 Standard Tier (200-799 Capacity)

Standard Tier premises face two core requirements [\[5\]](#):

1. Notification to the Regulator

Duty holders must notify the Security Industry Authority (SIA) that they are responsible for qualifying premises. This notification serves several purposes:

- Establishes a register of premises within scope, enabling regulatory oversight
- Provides the SIA with contact information for guidance dissemination and compliance monitoring
- Creates a formal record of the responsible person's acknowledgment of their duties

The notification process is expected to be straightforward, likely involving an online portal where duty holders provide basic information about the premises, capacity, and responsible person details.

2. Public Protection Procedures

Standard Tier duty holders must have in place, so far as reasonably practicable, appropriate public protection procedures that could be expected to reduce the risk of physical harm to individuals if a terrorist attack were to occur at or near the premises [5].

The emphasis on **procedures** rather than physical measures reflects the Government's intent to keep compliance costs low for smaller venues. Effective procedures can significantly enhance preparedness and response capabilities without requiring capital investment in security infrastructure.

Examples of public protection procedures include:

Evacuation Procedures

- Clearly defined evacuation routes and assembly points
- Staff training on initiating and managing evacuations
- Communication protocols for alerting occupants
- Coordination with emergency services

Lockdown Protocols

- Criteria for initiating lockdown (e.g., armed intruder, suspicious package)
- Procedures for securing entry points and restricting movement
- Communication methods for instructing occupants to shelter in place
- Designated safe areas within the premises

Suspicious Behaviour and Item Reporting

- Staff training on recognising indicators of hostile reconnaissance or attack preparation
- Clear reporting channels for suspicious observations
- Protocols for responding to unattended items or packages
- Liaison arrangements with local counter-terrorism policing

Incident Command and Communication

- Designation of incident commanders and deputies

- Communication systems for coordinating response (radios, public address systems, mobile phones)
- Protocols for contacting emergency services
- Business continuity arrangements for post-incident recovery

Crucially, there is **no requirement** for Standard Tier premises to implement physical security measures such as CCTV, access control systems, or barriers [6]. This distinction is central to the Act's proportionality and reflects feedback during consultation that smaller venues could not afford significant capital expenditure.

3.2 Enhanced Tier (800+ Capacity)

Enhanced Tier premises and qualifying events face all Standard Tier requirements **plus** additional obligations [5]:

1. Public Protection Measures

In addition to procedures, Enhanced Tier duty holders must implement, so far as reasonably practicable, appropriate public protection measures that could be expected to reduce both:

- The vulnerability of the premises or event to a terrorist attack occurring
- The risk of physical harm to individuals if an attack were to occur

The inclusion of **measures** alongside procedures reflects the greater resources typically available to larger venues and the higher potential consequences of an attack at a location with 800+ occupants.

Examples of public protection measures include:

Access Control and Screening

- Bag search policies and procedures
- Walk-through metal detectors or hand-held screening devices
- Ticket validation and entry management systems
- Segregation of public and back-of-house areas

Surveillance and Monitoring

- CCTV systems with appropriate coverage of entry points, public areas, and perimeters
- Monitoring arrangements (live or recorded review)
- Integration with alarm systems and access control
- Data protection compliance for surveillance activities

Perimeter Security

- Hostile vehicle mitigation measures (bollards, barriers, street furniture)
- Fencing, gates, and controlled access points
- Lighting to deter hostile reconnaissance and enhance natural surveillance
- Landscaping and urban design to reduce vulnerability

Security Staffing

- Trained security personnel at entry points and within premises
- Coordination with local policing and counter-terrorism advisers
- Security control rooms for monitoring and incident coordination
- Roving patrols and visible deterrence

Technology and Systems

- Intrusion detection systems
- Public address and emergency communication systems
- Integration of security systems for coordinated response
- Counter-drone capabilities for outdoor events

The specific measures adopted will vary significantly depending on the nature of the venue, its location, the activities conducted, and the resources available. A concert arena will require different measures than a shopping centre, and an outdoor festival will face distinct challenges compared to an indoor sports stadium.

2. Documentation and Submission to the SIA

Enhanced Tier duty holders must document their public protection procedures and measures and provide this documentation to the SIA [\[5\]](#). This requirement serves several purposes:

- Ensures duty holders systematically assess and plan their security arrangements
- Provides the SIA with visibility of compliance efforts for regulatory oversight
- Creates an auditable record that can be reviewed following incidents or during inspections
- Facilitates knowledge-sharing and identification of good practice across sectors

The documentation is expected to include:

- Description of the premises or event, including capacity and activities
- Risk assessment identifying potential terrorist attack scenarios
- Details of procedures and measures in place or planned
- Rationale for selected approaches, demonstrating consideration of “reasonably practicable”
- Training and competency arrangements for staff
- Review and maintenance schedules for measures and procedures

4. The Regulator: Security Industry Authority

4.1 Role and Powers

The Act designates the Security Industry Authority (SIA) as the regulator responsible for overseeing compliance with Martyn’s Law [\[7\]](#). The SIA is an existing non-departmental public body sponsored by the Home Office, currently responsible for regulating the private security industry through licensing and standards enforcement.

The SIA’s regulatory functions under Martyn’s Law include:

Guidance and Support

- Publishing operational guidance on compliance requirements
- Providing advice and support to duty holders
- Developing training resources and competency frameworks
- Facilitating information-sharing and good practice dissemination

Compliance Monitoring

- Maintaining a register of qualifying premises and events
- Conducting inspections and audits of duty holders
- Reviewing documentation submitted by Enhanced Tier premises
- Investigating complaints and reported non-compliance

Enforcement

- Issuing compliance notices requiring duty holders to address deficiencies
- Imposing financial penalties for non-compliance
- Prosecuting serious or persistent breaches
- Publicising enforcement actions to deter non-compliance

The SIA's approach is expected to be **proportionate and supportive**, particularly during the initial implementation period. The regulator has indicated that its priority will be to help duty holders understand and meet their obligations, reserving enforcement action for cases of serious or wilful non-compliance [7].

4.2 Sanctions and Enforcement

The Act provides the SIA with a graduated enforcement toolkit [7]:

Compliance Notices

- Issued when the SIA identifies non-compliance or deficiencies
- Specify the steps required to achieve compliance
- Set deadlines for remedial action
- Failure to comply with a notice may result in escalated enforcement

Financial Penalties

- The SIA may impose monetary penalties for breaches of the Act
- Penalty levels will be set out in regulations, likely calibrated to the severity and persistence of non-compliance
- Penalties may be imposed on both organisations and responsible individuals

Prosecution

- Serious or persistent breaches may result in criminal prosecution

- Offences under the Act may carry fines and, in extreme cases, imprisonment for responsible individuals
- Prosecution is expected to be reserved for cases involving reckless disregard for public safety or deliberate obstruction of regulatory functions

The enforcement regime mirrors approaches in health and safety and fire safety legislation, where the threat of sanctions incentivises compliance whilst regulators prioritise education and support.

5. Reasonably Practicable: The Central Compliance Standard

5.1 Legal Interpretation

The concept of “reasonably practicable” is central to Martyn’s Law, appearing throughout the Act’s requirements for procedures and measures [5]. This term has a well-established legal meaning in United Kingdom law, particularly in health and safety and fire safety contexts.

The leading judicial interpretation comes from *Edwards v National Coal Board* [1949], where the Court of Appeal held that “reasonably practicable” requires a balancing exercise: duty holders must weigh the risk of harm against the cost, time, and effort required to mitigate that risk [8]. A measure is reasonably practicable if the risk reduction achieved is proportionate to the resources required for implementation.

Importantly, “reasonably practicable” is **not** the same as “possible” or “feasible.” Duty holders are not required to implement every conceivable security measure, only those where the risk reduction justifies the expenditure. This standard provides flexibility whilst maintaining accountability.

5.2 Factors in Determining Reasonably Practicable

When assessing what is reasonably practicable, duty holders should consider:

Nature of the Premises or Event

- Type of activities conducted (entertainment, retail, worship, etc.)

- Physical layout and architectural constraints
- Location and surrounding environment
- Historical or cultural significance that may limit physical alterations

Threat and Risk Profile

- General terrorism threat level in the United Kingdom
- Location-specific threat intelligence
- Vulnerability to different attack methodologies (vehicle, firearms, explosives, bladed weapons)
- Potential consequences of an attack (casualties, economic impact, societal disruption)

Resources Available

- Financial resources of the organisation
- Operational capacity to implement and maintain measures
- Availability of trained personnel
- Access to specialist advice and support

Effectiveness of Measures

- Evidence base for the effectiveness of proposed measures
- Potential for unintended consequences (e.g., creating new vulnerabilities, impeding emergency egress)
- Integration with existing security and safety arrangements
- Scalability and sustainability over time

The “reasonably practicable” standard ensures that Martyn’s Law does not impose one-size-fits-all requirements but instead allows for context-specific, risk-based decision-making.

6. Integration with Existing Regulatory Frameworks

6.1 Fire Safety

Martyn's Law will operate alongside the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which requires duty holders to conduct fire risk assessments and implement fire safety measures [9]. There are significant synergies between fire safety and terrorism preparedness:

- Both require risk assessment and mitigation planning
- Evacuation procedures serve both fire and terrorism scenarios
- Staff training can be integrated to cover multiple emergency types
- Physical measures (e.g., emergency exits, signage, communication systems) support both objectives

However, potential conflicts may arise. For example, terrorism lockdown procedures may require securing entry points and restricting movement, which could conflict with fire safety principles of rapid evacuation. Duty holders must carefully integrate Martyn's Law requirements with fire safety obligations, ensuring that procedures are coherent and do not create new risks.

6.2 Health and Safety

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of employees and others affected by their activities [10]. Martyn's Law complements this framework by addressing a specific category of risk (terrorism) that may not have been systematically addressed under general health and safety duties.

Integration opportunities include:

- Incorporating terrorism risk into existing health and safety risk assessments
- Aligning incident response procedures with health and safety emergency plans
- Leveraging existing health and safety governance structures for Martyn's Law compliance
- Training health and safety officers to understand terrorism risks and protective security measures

6.3 Safeguarding

Organisations working with children, young people, or vulnerable adults have safeguarding duties under various legislative frameworks. Martyn's Law procedures, particularly those involving lockdown or evacuation, must be designed with safeguarding considerations in mind:

- Ensuring children and vulnerable individuals are not separated from carers or supervisors during emergencies
 - Providing age-appropriate training and communication
 - Considering the psychological impact of security measures and emergency procedures
 - Coordinating with safeguarding leads to ensure coherent policies
-

7. Implementation Challenges and Considerations

7.1 Capacity Determination Complexity

Determining whether a premises falls within scope, and which tier applies, may prove challenging for venues with variable occupancy. Seasonal businesses, multi-use spaces, and venues that host occasional large events must carefully assess their typical and peak capacities.

Mitigation strategies:

- Maintain detailed occupancy records over time to support capacity assessments
- Adopt a conservative approach, assuming Enhanced Tier status if capacity regularly approaches 800
- Consult with the SIA for guidance on borderline cases
- Review capacity determinations annually or following significant operational changes

7.2 Resource Constraints for Smaller Organisations

Whilst Standard Tier requirements focus on low-cost procedures, even these may present challenges for smaller organisations with limited staff and financial resources. Training staff, developing procedures, and maintaining compliance documentation all require time and expertise.

Mitigation strategies:

- Leverage free resources from ProtectUK, the SIA, and counter-terrorism policing
- Collaborate with neighbouring premises or industry associations to share costs and knowledge
- Implement measures incrementally, prioritising highest-impact, lowest-cost interventions
- Seek grants or funding support where available (e.g., from local authorities or industry bodies)

7.3 Integration with Existing Systems

Aligning Martyn's Law requirements with existing fire safety, health and safety, and safeguarding frameworks requires careful planning to avoid duplication, inconsistency, or conflicts.

Mitigation strategies:

- Conduct integrated risk assessments that consider multiple regulatory requirements
- Develop unified emergency procedures that address terrorism, fire, medical emergencies, and other scenarios
- Engage specialist advisors to ensure regulatory coherence
- Leverage existing governance structures rather than creating parallel systems

7.4 Staff Engagement and Competency

Achieving consistent staff competency across large, dispersed workforces with high turnover can be challenging, particularly in sectors such as hospitality and retail.

Mitigation strategies:

- Embed Martyn's Law training in induction programmes for new staff
 - Use e-learning platforms to deliver scalable, consistent training
 - Conduct regular refresher training and competency assessments
 - Recognise and reward staff who demonstrate exemplary security awareness
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8. International Comparisons

8.1 France: Vigipirate and Security Obligations

France has operated a comprehensive counter-terrorism framework, Vigipirate, since 1978, enhanced significantly following the 2015 Paris attacks [11]. French law imposes security obligations on certain venues, including:

- Mandatory security staffing and screening for large venues
- Coordination with national security authorities
- Regular security audits and risk assessments

The French approach is more prescriptive than Martyn's Law, with detailed technical standards for security measures. However, it has faced criticism for imposing significant costs on venues and creating bureaucratic complexity.

8.2 United States: Post-9/11 Security Enhancements

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States implemented extensive security measures for aviation, critical infrastructure, and major events. However, there is **no federal equivalent to Martyn's Law** mandating security measures for general public venues [12].

Instead, the US approach relies on:

- Voluntary adoption of security best practices
- Federal grants for security enhancements (e.g., Urban Area Security Initiative)
- State and local regulations for specific venue types
- Industry-led standards and certification schemes

The absence of a federal mandate has resulted in inconsistent security standards across venues, though major facilities (sports stadiums, concert arenas) typically implement robust measures driven by liability concerns and insurance requirements.

8.3 Australia: Crowded Places Strategy

Australia's Strategy for Protecting Crowded Places from Terrorism, launched in 2017, takes a partnership-based approach similar to Martyn's Law [\[13\]](#). The strategy provides guidance and tools for venue operators but does not impose mandatory requirements.

Key elements include:

- Risk assessment frameworks tailored to different venue types
- Voluntary adoption of protective security measures
- Collaboration between government, industry, and law enforcement
- Public awareness campaigns (e.g., "See Something, Say Something")

Australia is currently considering legislation to mandate security measures for high-risk crowded places, reflecting a similar trajectory to the United Kingdom's move from voluntary guidance to legal obligation.

9. Conclusion

Martyn's Law represents a watershed moment in the United Kingdom's approach to counter-terrorism preparedness. By placing legal duties on venue operators and event organisers to implement protective security measures and procedures, the Act addresses a significant gap in the nation's protective security architecture. The legislation's tiered, risk-based framework balances public protection with operational practicability, drawing upon established legal concepts such as "reasonably practicable" to provide flexibility whilst maintaining accountability.

Successful implementation will require sustained collaboration between government, regulators, industry bodies, and duty holders. The Security Industry Authority faces the substantial challenge of building regulatory capacity, developing clear guidance, and supporting thousands of duty holders through the compliance journey. Duty holders, in turn, must move beyond viewing Martyn's Law as a compliance burden and

recognise it as an opportunity to enhance organisational resilience, protect their people, and contribute to national security.

The 24-month implementation period provides a critical window for preparation. Organisations that commence planning now, conduct thorough risk assessments, engage stakeholders, and invest in staff training will be well-positioned to achieve compliance whilst realising genuine security improvements. Those that delay or adopt a minimalist approach risk not only regulatory sanctions but also failing to protect their staff, customers, and communities from a persistent and evolving threat.

Martyn's Law is, ultimately, a tribute to the 22 lives lost at Manchester Arena and a commitment to ensuring that such a tragedy is never repeated. Its success will be measured not by the number of premises registered or compliance notices issued, but by the lives saved when the next attack is prevented, disrupted, or mitigated by the preparedness and vigilance of those who welcome the public into their spaces.

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Document Information

Author: Rittel Consulting Limited

Publication: The Cambridge Sentinel Research Library

Version: 1.0

Date: December 2025

Document ID: CS-ML-RSH-001

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