

Martyn's Law

Martyn's Law, also known as the Protect Duty, is a new piece of UK legislation that enhances safety measures in public spaces. Named in memory of Martyn Hett, one of the victims of the 2017 Manchester Arena attack, this law encourages better preparedness to keep people safe.

The law was given royal assent on 3 April 2025, meaning Town and Parish Councils should start considering how it might apply to their community spaces. Since many councils manage public venues, organise events, and maintain facilities where people gather, it's important to understand the key aspects of Martyn's Law and how to prepare for it.

What is Martyn's Law?

Martyn's Law is designed to encourage public spaces to consider security risks and implement sensible precautions. It applies to venues, events, and locations where the public gathers, such as town halls, community centres, parks, and markets.

The legislation categorises locations and events based on their capacity (including staff):

- Standard Tier (200 - 799 capacity) — Requires basic security measures and staff training. The Security Industry Authority (SIA) must be notified of the premises.
- Enhanced Tier (800+ capacity) — Involves more detailed risk assessments, security protocols, and collaboration with authorities. If an organisation is responsible for the premises, they must assign a senior individual to oversee compliance.

Why is Martyn's Law important?

While the likelihood of a security threat in smaller towns and villages may be low, taking steps to improve awareness and preparedness can make a big difference. This law promotes a proactive approach to safety, ensuring that communities have clear plans in place should the unexpected happen.

Types of venues parish and town councils manage that may be affected

Parish and town councils oversee a range of public spaces that may need to consider Martyn's Law requirements, including:

- Town and village halls — Often used for meetings, events, and community gatherings.
- Community centres — Spaces that regularly host activities and events open to the public.
- Parks and open spaces — Areas used for festivals, fairs, and other large-scale outdoor events.
- Markets — Including farmers' markets, seasonal fairs, and Christmas markets.
- Sports and leisure facilities — Such as playing fields, sports halls, and public gyms.
- Libraries — Places of learning and community engagement with regular visitors.
- Public squares and local landmarks — Locations used for celebrations, vigils, and public gatherings.

How might Martyn's Law affect parish and town councils?

If your parish or town council operates venues or organises events that meet the capacity thresholds, some additional planning and measures may be required. This could include:

- Carrying out risk assessments to identify potential security considerations.
- Offering security awareness training for staff and volunteers.
- Developing clear emergency response plans to ensure readiness.
- Working with local authorities and emergency services for guidance.
- Installing practical security measures where appropriate, such as CCTV or bag checks for larger events.

Steps parish and town councils can take now

Even though Martyn's Law is still in the early stages of implementation, councils can start preparing by:

- Reviewing venues and events — Identify which spaces may be covered by the law.
- Raising awareness — Ensure council staff, event organisers, and volunteers understand basic security considerations.
- Engaging with local authorities — Seek advice from police and security professionals.
- Developing contingency plans — Create clear procedures for handling security-related situations.
- Staying informed — Keep up with official guidance to ensure compliance when the law is fully enacted.

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