

BE PREPARED

CAROLINE MAIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HEAD OF RETAIL AT MAPP, DISCUSSES WHAT MARTYN'S LAW MEANS FOR THE RETAIL AND LEISURE INDUSTRY

As 'Martyn's Law' legislation, which places a statutory duty on the owners and occupiers of public spaces to protect the public against major incidents, comes one step closer to becoming enshrined in law following its inclusion in last month's King's Speech, it is time to reassure the public that their favourite shopping and leisure spot is ready.

For the worst of reasons, the UK's resilience to terrorism is to be stepped up. The Protect Duty has been introduced following the Manchester Arena terrorist attack in 2017. It is commonly known as 'Martyn's Law' in tribute to Martyn Hett, who was killed alongside 21 others in the attack.

The legislation requires landlords and occupiers to be fully prepared and ready with strict protocols of how to respond in the event of a terrorist attack to help save lives and minimise injuries. This involves putting in place a series of measures to understand the risks associated with each location and develop a bespoke plan should an incident occur.

As we adopt a stringent approach to this from an operational perspective, we should always keep in mind that this is as much a customer care issue as it is a health and safety one.

Systems and processes

We need to have systems and processes in place to tackle incidents quickly and effectively, but in a way that keeps panic to the minimum. There are also things that we can do on a daily basis to demonstrate our preparedness, with things like clearly-marked CCTV.

While the move should be welcomed, it does place significant liability on landlords and managing agents, particularly on shopping centres and retail destinations where larger crowds of people often congregate.



ABOVE: MAPP'S CAROLINE MAIN

A central requirement of the legislation is to increase cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, including the respective security and emergency services. It is important in any emergency incidents to have robust plans, communication channels, escalation protocols and record keeping that help in emergency situations.

Landlords, managing agents and supplier partners should be planning together on how to do the above effectively and ensure that all are familiar with the protocols and what preventative, or reactive actions will be required of them. The best-practice way to achieve this is to conduct a security audit and create a Terrorism Risk Assessment template, which should then be rolled out across multiple sites, as necessary, to ensure consistency.

Pre-planned response

As the property managers of 364 retail landmarks across the UK, MAPP has been working with our clients to prepare for the incoming legislation since it was announced in the summer of 2021. In the first of its kind, we conducted a pre-planned emergency response training exercise at The Potteries shopping centre in Stoke-On-Trent. Involving the police, ambulance, fire and rescue, firearms, business improvement district staff, Stoke-On-Trent Council members and MAPP staff – in addition to 150 extras playing the public, victims and wounded – the extensive and life-like exercise enabled participants to test their response and coordination skills, with key learnings captured to further enhance the plans.

While it is important to adopt a thorough, uniform and systematic approach across retail portfolios, there are inevitably site-specific considerations to take into account. Proposed solutions should be influenced by the types of customers and not just numbers. Will you have sufficient numbers on hand

to support if customers have a higher-than-average incidence of mobility issues, for example.

Collaboration should occur on an ongoing basis and plans evolve as circumstances change. For example, when appropriate, property managers should liaise with landlords on instances where additional investment into assets might be required eg safety barriers or bollards. Regular conversations with security providers are also important and managers of large shopping centres should push for daily visits from police community support offices to build close working relationships and provide ongoing reassurance to visitors.

There is no doubt that Martyn's Law will shake up retail property management and create an additional burden on resources at a challenging time for the industry. But it is right that we stand ready to play our part in the fight against terrorism and reassure our customers that we are doing everything possible to keep them safe, so that they can get on and enjoy their retail experience.

BELOW: CENTRE MANAGERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT ALTHOUGH A UNIFORM APPROACH CAN BE TAKEN ACROSS A PORTFOLIO, THERE ARE SITE-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS



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