



CALL OF DUTY

Debbie Heald MBE examines how Brits rate 2024 event safety in the wake of Protect Duty updates

Heald surveyed 2,000 Brits to uncover their perception of safety at public gatherings during the year ahead. This timely investigation gains significance in light of recent Protect Duty updates, including the recent six-week public consultation. This consultation is focused on updating security measures for Standard Tier premises under the legislation (also known as Martyn's Law and the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill).

The survey, which engaged 2,000 respondents from various demographics across the UK, unveiled notable concerns among the public regarding safety at public gatherings. Approximately 6 percent of the respondents expressed apprehensions about attending such events, citing worries about potential security risks. Delving

deeper into specific event categories, sporting events emerged as a focal point of concern, with 28 percent of respondents expressing a lack of confidence in their safety. Interestingly, the survey revealed a gender disparity, with men (30 percent) displaying higher levels of apprehension than women.

One respondent succinctly encapsulated the prevalent unease surrounding football games, highlighting concerns about the aggressive behaviour often observed among certain segments of fans. This sentiment resonates with statistics from the 2022/23 football season, where incidents of public disorder (35 percent) and violent disorder (20 percent) accounted for a significant proportion of total arrests.

Furthermore, the survey shed light on regional disparities in safety perceptions, with cities like Cardiff,

Southampton and Norwich emerging as areas where sporting events are perceived as particularly unsafe. These findings underscore the need for tailored security measures to address localised concerns and ensure the safety of event attendees across different regions.

In addition to sporting events, music festivals and concerts featured prominently in the survey findings, with 37 percent of female respondents expressing discomfort attending such gatherings. These findings corroborate with YouGov research, which indicates that one in five women have experienced harassment at a festival.

The data revealed heightened unease among gig attendees in cities like Belfast, Bristol and Edinburgh, reflecting broader concerns about safety and security at cultural events. This highlights the need for event organisers to prioritise implementing robust security measures to address specific challenges unique to different locations. Additionally, it highlights the importance of community engagement and collaboration with local authorities to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all attendees.

Central to the public's perception of safety at events is the impact of various factors on their sense of security. Heald's survey identified crowd size as the most significant influencer, with 25 percent of respondents citing it as a key determinant of their perceived safety. Concerns surrounding crowd size stem from various factors, including the potential for overcrowding, difficulty navigating dense crowds and heightened anonymity, which may facilitate misconduct or criminal activities.

Respondents indicated that the presence of bollards and barriers surrounding event venues could substantially alleviate their security concerns, with 20 percent expressing a preference for enhanced physical security measures. This preference highlights the role of visible infrastructure in reassuring event attendees and delineating safe zones within event spaces.

This finding is particularly significant given respondents' emphasis on past incidents like the Manchester Arena attack, which negatively impacted their confidence in attending future events. In addition to implementing perimeter security solutions, there's a notable call for increased security personnel, which could also extend to factors such as bag checks and metal detectors to mitigate potential threats. These measures not only enhance deterrence, but also provide reassurance to attendees that their safety is a top priority. Additionally, the survey revealed a desire for improved communication channels during emergencies, emphasising the need for clear evacuation procedures and real-time updates to ensure swift and orderly responses to incidents.

In response to the survey findings, the importance of adopting a holistic approach to event security cannot be over stated. While physical security measures like bollards and barriers play a crucial role in mitigating specific threats, the need for a comprehensive security framework encompassing multiple elements must be underlined.

It is also vital to integrate various different security measures, including:

Perimeter security solutions: Installing robust bollards and barriers around event venues can

effectively manage crowd flow, deter unauthorised access and protect against hostile vehicle attacks. Heald's range of innovative solutions, rigorously tested to industry standards, offers reliable protection tailored to the specific needs of different event spaces. Moreover, these perimeter security measures not only create a physical barrier but also serve as a visible deterrent, reassuring attendees and dissuading potential threats.

Surveillance systems: Comprehensive surveillance systems play a crucial role in enhancing overall situational awareness by enabling constant monitoring and early detection of suspicious activities. These systems, equipped with advanced features such as motion detection and facial recognition, provide valuable insights for security personnel, enabling timely intervention in case of security threats. Additionally, real-time monitoring capabilities allow security teams to swiftly identify and respond to any emerging risks, minimising potential harm to event attendees.

CONCERNS HAVE BEEN RAISED ABOUT THE SLOW PACE OF LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Trained security personnel: Deploying well-trained security personnel ensures a prompt response to security incidents and enhances crowd management capabilities, particularly at entrance points. By maintaining a visible presence and adopting proactive security measures, trained personnel contribute significantly to maintaining a safe and secure environment for event attendees. Furthermore, ongoing training and development programmes ensure that security staff are equipped with the latest techniques and protocols, enabling them to address evolving security challenges effectively.

Effective emergency response protocols: Establishing clear and effective emergency response protocols is essential for mitigating risks and ensuring swift and coordinated action in crises. By conducting regular drills and simulations, event organisers can prepare staff and volunteers to respond effectively to various emergency scenarios, minimising the impact of potential security threats. Additionally, clear communication channels and designated emergency assembly points facilitate efficient coordination and evacuation procedures, enhancing overall event safety measures. Regular reviews and updates to emergency response plans ensure adaptability to changing circumstances and maintain readiness for any unforeseen incidents.

The combination of these aforementioned elements, alongside effective hostile vehicle mitigation solutions, ultimately contributes to the desired outcome of safe visitors and secure event environments. She emphasised the importance of proactive measures in addressing widespread concerns among individuals attending events, urging event organisers and venues to prioritise the safety and security of attendees.

37 percent of female respondents expressed discomfort attending gatherings such as sporting events, music festivals and concerts

Against evolving security threats and public safety concerns, the impending enforcement of legislative measures such as Martyn's Law (also known as the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill) assumes critical importance. These legislative frameworks aim to enhance security measures and mitigate the risk of terrorist attacks and other crimes in public spaces.

THE SURVEY REVEALED A DESIRE FOR IMPROVED COMMUNICATION DURING EMERGENCIES

Martyn's Law, named after Martyn Hett, a victim of the Manchester Arena bombing, seeks to mandate increased security measures and perimeter protection for public venues, organisations, and spaces with large public gatherings. This legislation aims to strengthen security measures for Standard Tier premises, ensuring that appropriate security arrangements are in place to prevent and mitigate the impact of terrorist attacks.

While these legislative initiatives represent significant steps towards enhancing public safety, there is a growing consensus that more still needs to be done. Despite widespread support for Martyn's Law and the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, progress through the government has been much slower than anticipated. The consultation process for these legislative updates highlights commitment to engaging stakeholders and soliciting feedback on proposed security measures. However, concerns have been raised about the pace of legislative action and the need for expedited implementation to address pressing security challenges.

By incorporating input from security experts, industry stakeholders, and the general public, policymakers aim to develop robust legislative frameworks that effectively address emerging security challenges and safeguard public spaces. However, there is a sense of urgency among stakeholders to accelerate the legislative process and ensure timely implementation of security measures to protect public gatherings.

In addition to its commitment to supporting event organisers and venues, it is imperative to stay ahead of emerging threats in the realm of event security. With the continuous evolution of technology and tactics employed by potential threats, Heald remains vigilant in pursuing innovative security solutions. This proactive approach not only addresses current security concerns, but also anticipates future challenges, ensuring the sustained resilience of public gatherings.

Moreover, Heald emphasises the importance of collaboration among stakeholders, including government agencies, law enforcement and private sector entities to bolster the overall security infrastructure. Encouraging partnerships and information sharing can significantly strengthen the collective response to security threats, enhancing the safety of events nationwide.

Dedication to research and development enable the integration of cutting-edge technologies into its security solutions. From advanced surveillance systems to biometric identification measures, Heald continuously explores new avenues to bolster event security without compromising the attendee experience.

In conclusion, a multifaceted approach to event security encompasses proactive measures, stakeholder collaboration, and technological innovation. By prioritising safety and resilience, Heald is poised to shape the future of event security, ensuring public gatherings remain vibrant and secure in the years to come ●

Debbie Heald MBE

is the Co-Owner and Managing Director of Hornsea-based security product manufacturer, Heald Ltd. Debbie leads on all aspects of the business and has driven the firms' growth which has seen its high-security products installed in some of the world's most high-profile locations including palaces, stadia, airports and embassies.

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