



THE THREAT TO RETAIL IN A POST COVID WORLD

In Partnership with
CrimeStoppers

GLOBAL SECURITY



As the country takes its first tentative steps back to normality, Mitie and the independent charity Crimestoppers are appealing for people to anonymously report what they know about crime against commercial outlets.

With at least 400 shopworkers suffering some form of abuse every day, anti-social behaviour and violence towards retail workers is a bigger problem than most people realise, and this has only been exacerbated by the global pandemic and the impact of lockdown restrictions.

Mitie and Crimestoppers are working together to encourage people to report what they know about crime against local businesses, from shops to company premises, factories to warehouses. These shops and businesses play a crucial role in society – indeed, many staff in these businesses are now classed as key workers, providing essential services.

Throughout this document we will cover some of the biggest threats facing the retail industry in a post-Covid world, and how you can play a part in preventing abuse and violence towards retail and shop staff.

INCREASE IN ABUSE

The Association of Convenience Stores' 2021 Crime Report from March 2021 details the extent of the issues faced by retail staff, with over 1.2 million incidents of verbal abuse, and around 40,000 incidents of violence against people working in convenience stores throughout the past year. Of these, more than a quarter involved a weapon, such as a knife, hammer, axe, or syringe.

In conjunction with these concerning statistics, two-thirds of retailers (65%) have experienced Covid-related threats, with the most common causes of abuse being: reminding customers to wear face coverings, reminding customers of social distancing measures, and the implementation of queueing outside stores.

The British Retail Consortium has already spoken out about the enforcement of the rules with Andrew Opie, the BRC's director of food and sustainability, recently stating:

“While enforcement of face coverings is the responsibility of the police, retailers continue to do what they can to encourage their use throughout stores. Sadly, this has led to a SHARP RISE IN INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE AGAINST SHOP WORKERS, which is why police must support the work being done by retailers.”

TARGETS OF ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Through the pandemic the violence and abuse has been seen by many roles within the retail environment. The charts indicate the trends of individuals targeted by the violence and provide a snap-shot of the increase since the mask enforcement policy was implemented.

Throughout the pandemic, the retail teams have been subject to various examples of violence or threatening behaviour when asking individuals to follow Covid guidance. These include:

Threats of extreme violence to Security Officers, including the threat of knives.

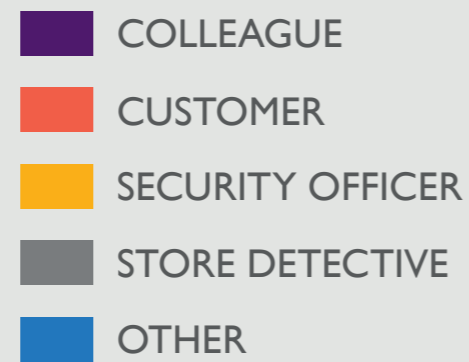
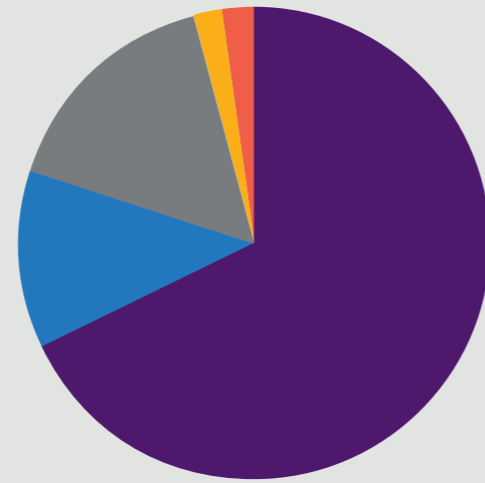
Violence for ensuring that masks are worn or that individuals maintain social distancing or queue to enter or use the tills.

Spitting or threat of spitting. This is often accompanied by a threat that the individual is currently infected with Covid.

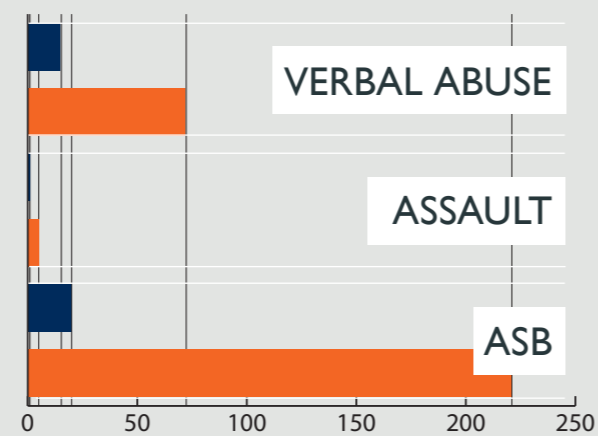
Verbal abuse for requesting that individuals wear masks.

Verbal abuse for enforcing distancing regulations.

VICTIM OF VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

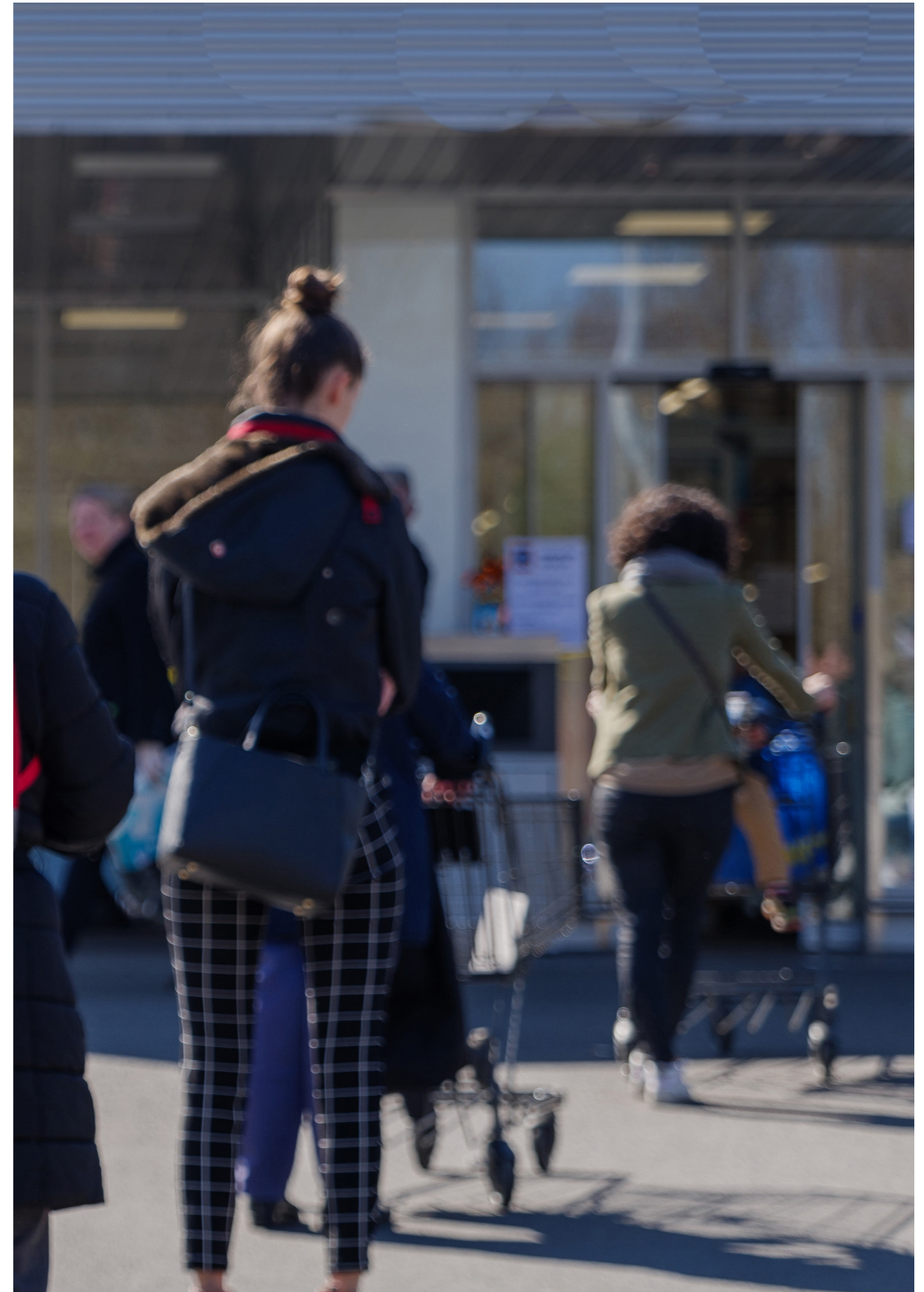


TYPE OF ABUSE



07/01/21

21/01/21



WIDER THREATS TO RETAIL

Whilst targeted abuse against retail colleagues remains a significant concern, it is important to not lose sight of wider threats to the retail sector.

With lockdown measures easing across the UK, the threat of terrorism is likely to increase as public spaces and shopping centres once again become densely populated areas.

With more than 43,000 people currently featuring on the MI5's Terrorism watchlist, UK shopping centres, retail establishments and public spaces are likely to face the return of a longstanding terrorist threat as they reopen in the coming weeks and months, as the crowded nature and easy accessibility of these locations makes them attractive targets for aspiring terrorists seeking to carry out mass-casualty attacks.

In recent years, multiple terrorist groups have used their media platforms to call for attacks specifically targeting shopping centres, among a broad range of other targets. To combat such threats, the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) advises that multi-layered security practices focused on the principle of deter, detect and delay as the optimal method for protecting crowded spaces such as shopping centres, retail and public spaces.

Recent years have demonstrated an increasing trend toward IED attacks that are suicide initiated, a trend creating additional challenges for security personnel at shopping centres, retailers and public spaces.

Although there has been a rise in vehicle-ramming attacks in the UK and elsewhere, the increased use of hostile vehicle mitigation barriers at UK shopping centres, retail and public spaces is likely to preclude the viability of such an attack. Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) is a prominent consideration for any public space, and through the use of risk and resilience experts and assurance managers, locations can be proactively or retroactively designed to minimise the risks of criminal activity and terrorist acts, such as vehicle-ramming.

Whilst the terrorist threat remains severe it is not the only wider threat the retail industry faces. Organised crime groups (OCGs) have been on the rise as the lockdown restrictions have lifted, and through our customer Security Operations Centres and Crime Intelligence Managers, Mitie have identified four new



OCGs in March 2021 alone.

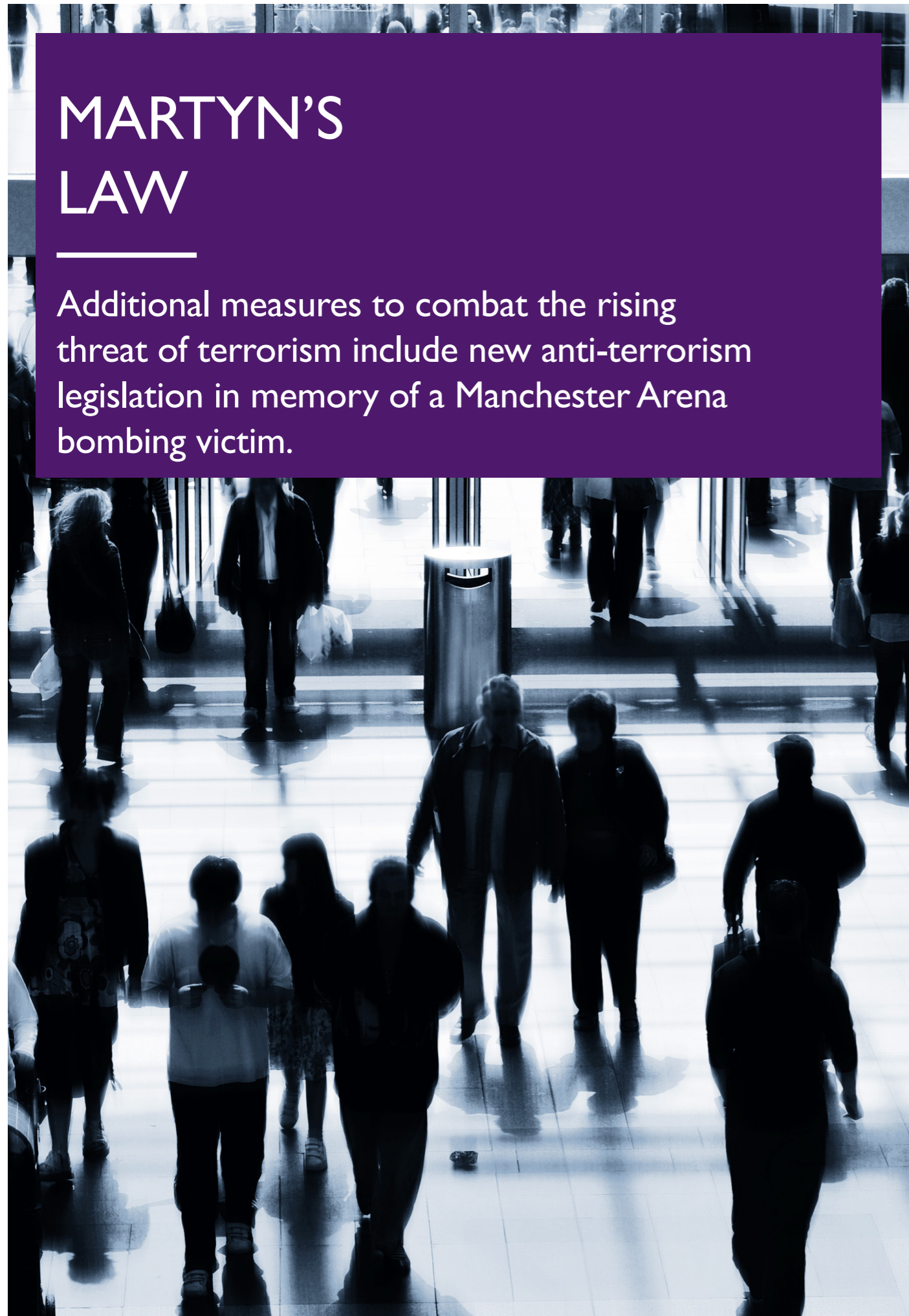
The National Crime Agency (NCA) classes serious and organised crime as one of the deadliest threats to the UK, costing £37 billion each year. However, organisations can take steps to mitigate the impact of OCGs. Through the use of intelligence software, such as Mitie's Merlin 24/7 system, data can be captured and aggregated from multiple sources. Thanks to an extensive leading retail UK customer base, Mitie utilise Merlin 24/7's intelligent case file management function to work closely with the police to provide data that can assist in convictions and civil recoveries, as well as inform collaborative operations against OCGs and prolific offenders.

Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) is wide-reaching, affecting more citizens more frequently than any other threat and leads to more deaths in the UK than terrorism. The NCA estimates at least 350,000 individuals in the UK are involved in this type of crime, with the threat only increasing as social tensions rise as a result of the turbulent past 12 months.

4,772 known OCGs are actively operating in the UK, a quarter of which are estimated to be involved in violent criminal activity, with recruitment and networking for these groups largely taking place in prisons. Around two-fifths of these OCGs are non-British based, with most of their UK members not being British. Both British and non-British OCGs have a presence in multiple countries, making them harder to dismantle.

As well as being international, OCGs are not involved in only one crime type; an OCG may specialise in one type of crime but will likely commit a host of other offences alongside their speciality.

This highlights the need to target the cross-cutting enablers that allow criminal activities to be carried out, such as the financial flow of a group. Finance continues to be the main criminal motivation, making illicit financial flows very important. There is no indication that OCGs in the UK are cooperating with terrorist groups.



MARTYN'S LAW

Additional measures to combat the rising threat of terrorism include new anti-terrorism legislation in memory of a Manchester Arena bombing victim.

This new legislation, known widely as 'Martyn's Law', would require companies to engage with freely available counter-terrorism advice and training, conduct vulnerability

assessments of their operating places and spaces, mitigate the risks created by the vulnerabilities, and create and implement a counter-terrorism plan.

The types of locations that will likely be within scope of the legislation include:

PUBLIC VENUES	LARGE ORGANISATIONS	PUBLIC SPACES
or entertainment and sports, tourist attractions and shopping centres	including retail, or entertainment chains	such as public parks, beaches, town / city squares and pedestrianised areas

What do I have to do?

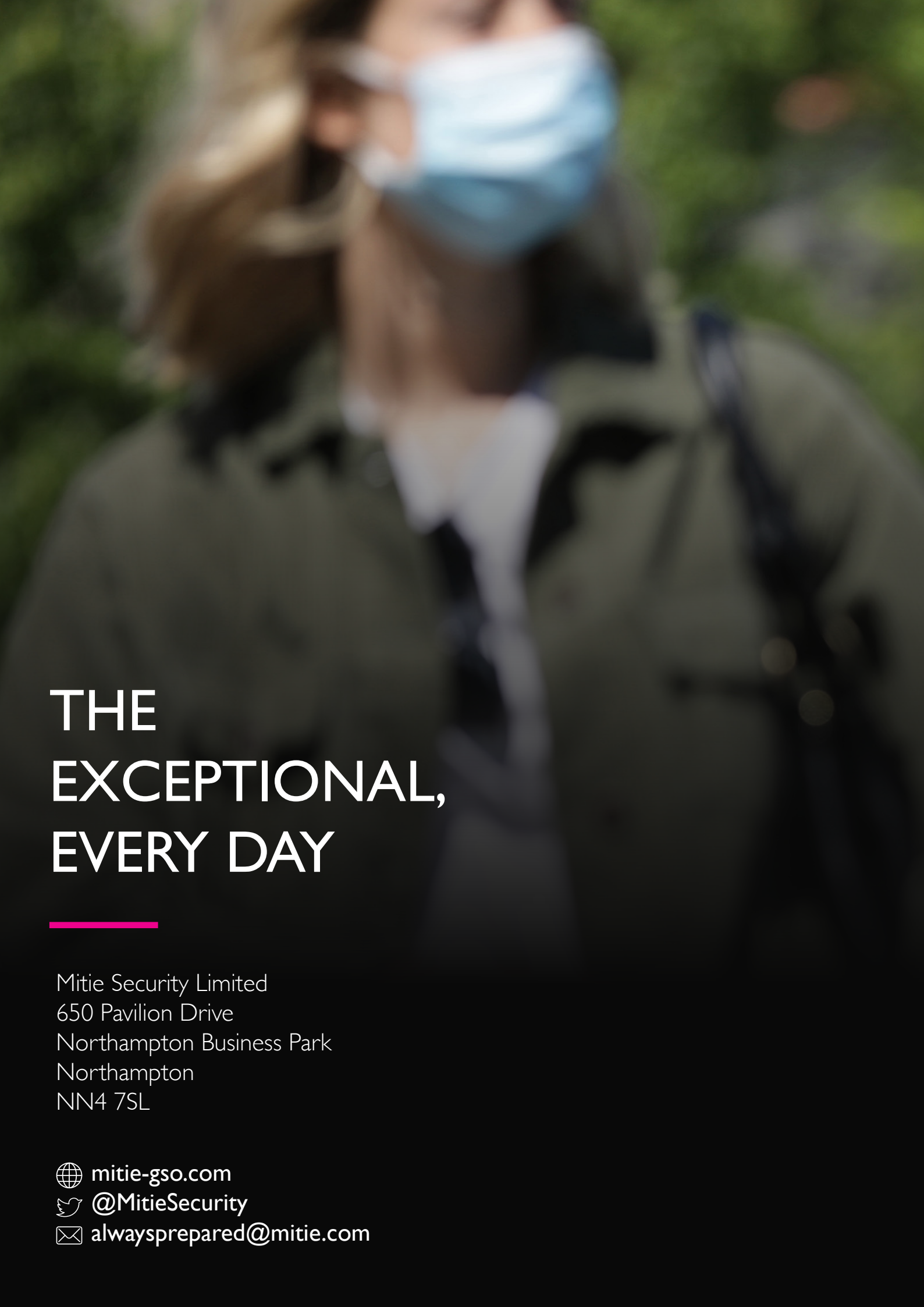
Take proportionate and reasonable measures to prepare for, or prevent, a terrorist attack; this will likely include:

CONDUCT	MITIGATE	PREPARE	ENGAGE
vulnerability assessments of operating places and spaces	the risks created by the identified vulnerabilities	a counter-terrorism plan	with freely available Centre for Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) counter-terrorism advice and training attractions and shopping centres

The key objective of 'Martyn's Law' is to improve the security at publicly accessible locations and venues by requiring owners and operators to actively consider and implement measures to keep the public safe from a terrorist attack. Whilst the new legislation is still under consultation, businesses should begin planning now, working with risk and resilience experts to properly identify, plan and implement new measures to protect their locations and the general public.

Crimestoppers is an independent charity that gives people the power to speak up to stop crime. If you have information on a crime, but want to remain 100% anonymous, contact Crimestoppers by calling freephone 0800 555 111 or visiting crimestoppers-uk.org.

No police contact. No witness statements. No courts. Every year we help stop thousands of crimes. So let's make communities safer together.



THE EXCEPTIONAL, EVERY DAY

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