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Frequently Asked Questions – Visits and the threat from terrorism

What should we do about visits given the current threat of terrorist attacks?

The current global situation means that the possibility of being close to, or caught up in, a terrorist attack is a risk faced by us all. Like all risks this needs to be kept in perspective and managed in a thoughtful and proportionate way. To provide some perspective - the UK government identifies five levels of threat from 'low' to 'critical'. Since 2006, when this level was first published, it has never been below 'substantial' – the middle level.

The understandable anxiety of parents, teachers, children and young people is particularly heightened following an incident. As part of the response to staying vigilant and carrying on as normal, it is important to decide about each visit on its merit. The following guidance for visit planning explains how we may reduce our vulnerability while carrying on as normally as possible.

When planning any visit consider the likelihood of the destination, venue or transport hubs being at risk of a terrorist attack.

It is sensible to:

- Be aware of the latest news relating to your destination
- In the UK know the current threat level (available at: <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels>.)
- When travelling abroad check the FCO website www.fco.gov.uk in the early stages of visit planning, at regular intervals and immediately prior to leaving.
- Consider the threat of terrorism as part of visit risk management and include it within visit emergency plans.

When visiting crowded places such as a major city, venue or event, where the risk of attack may be greater, consider within your planning:

- Possible safe areas or venues, near where you intend to be, that you could use as an emergency shelter.
- How to minimise waiting time at busy venues. Where to wait and gather for head counts.

- How to minimise queuing times (such as not carrying unnecessary items) to speed up search and entry.
- Are staff phones charged and numbers shared?
- Do all leaders have all group information? Will they be spaced apart?
- A contact card for all participants giving a number to call if separated from the group, and the name and telephone number of the establishment
- How you would get away in an emergency, bearing in mind that the direct route and planned transport might no longer be an option. Are you aware of alternatives and can you access emergency funds to pay for them?
- Do you need to leave the site immediately with the crowd at the end of the visit event?
- The possibility of an enforced overnight stay and what this might entail – for example do you need a reserve of any critical medication?
- How the leadership team might manage an enforced group split.

During the visit:

- Be vigilant and aware of your surroundings – know where the exits are and where you would run to.
- Be aware of the possibility of suspicious items. (See point 5 the 4Cs - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-counter-terrorism-security-office>). You may need to copy and paste this link into your browser to make it work.
- When staying at any place for more than 30 minutes, identify emergency meeting points in case the group is forced to move and becomes split.
- Avoid congregating too long around entrances to major public sites.
- At ports and airports don't linger unnecessarily on the public side of security screening.
- Be aware of the 'Stay Safe' principles: 'Run, Hide, Tell' and know what to expect if you encounter armed response officers (see point 2 in 'recognizing the terrorist threat': <http://tinyurl.com/pp4fxmu>)
- The experience of the National Counter-Terrorism Security Office is that **decisive leadership is key.**

The website of the National Counter-Terrorism Security Office:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-counter-terrorism-security-office>. If this link doesn't work, try <http://tinyurl.com/o5qjkvs>, or copy and paste the link into your browser.

