

# Risk Forecast 2023



## Volatility Demands Agility

The ongoing threat from COVID-19, the continuing war in Ukraine, climate change, and a looming global recession are having myriad impacts on people and businesses, both physically and psychologically.

Organisations have dispersed and streamlined for survival, and supply chains continue to be vulnerable to disruption. Strong leadership, agile planning, and clear communication have never been more vital.

Adaptive organisations that challenge pre-existing assumptions and put robust contingency plans in place are proving more resilient to volatility. With a flexible approach, they're able to review their structures, principles, and processes; find order in the chaos; and withstand the shock of emerging crises.

We encourage all organisations to ensure they have an overarching vision running through the business – and that everyone knows what their role is and feels empowered to achieve it. Working together in partnership, with mutual trust, respect, and accountability, will serve organisations well as we navigate our journey through 2023.

# Security overview

A photograph of a modern hallway with a glass railing on the left and a polished floor. Several people are walking in the hallway, but their figures are blurred to suggest motion. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red color.

## Global Security Overview

The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine will continue to have wider-reaching implications for Europe. There is heightened risk of Russia seeking to expand its deniable sabotage operations, generating disinformation and conducting cyberattacks.

High inflation and energy insecurity across the UK (and Europe) is likely to increase the tempo of activism and protests across the region, leading to exploitation by far-right actors. Environmental activism (Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil *et al*) will continue to target energy companies, seeking to disrupt their business using non-violent tactics.

## Impact of COVID-19

Cyber criminals continue to exploit the pandemic, and hostile states have used cyber operations to steal vaccine and medical research. The pandemic has brought about an acceleration in digitisation, with businesses and government moving services online. The compromise of the software company SolarWinds and the exploitation of Microsoft Exchange Servers highlighted the threat from supply chain attacks.

## National Security Overview

On 8 February 2022, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) lowered the UK National Threat Level from SEVERE (an attack is very likely) to SUBSTANTIAL (an attack is likely).

JTAC assessed the threat from Islamist terrorism had dissipated during the period leading up to February but highlighted that the UK continues to face a threat from Islamist terrorism and extreme right-wing terrorism (XRWT), and to a lesser extent, extreme left-wing, anarchist, and single-issue terrorism (LASIT).

The primary threat is from unpredictable self-initiated terrorists (lone actors), who are difficult to detect. They utilise low-sophistication methodologies, primarily vehicles, and bladed and blunt-force weapons. This continues to be the most likely methodology to be used in a terrorist attack.

## **Counter Terrorism**

The government will carry out a review of the UK's counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) in 2023.

## **ProtectUK**

Launched in 2022, ProtectUK is a new central hub for counter terrorism and security advice. This partnership brings the knowledge of policing, private sector, and public sector to counter terrorism. Comprised of the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO), Home Office, and others, ProtectUK, can help safeguard businesses by sharing knowledge.

## **UK Protesting**

The methodology and tactics used by environmentalist groups, such as Extinction Rebellion (XR), Just Stop Oil (JSO), and others, to target businesses are likely to continue into 2023. XR has announced a temporary move away from public disruption to focus on small-scale protests outside offices, particularly those involved in energy and banking.

Specifically, the group's intent is to continue targeting businesses and institutions it perceives to be responsible for climate change (either through emissions or indirectly through funding). Protest activity at company offices is likely to remain limited to paint-throwing, glue-ons, and smashing windows.

## **Public Order Bill**

Proposed bill for changes in new offences to public order, stop and search powers, protest related activities and disruption prevention order.

[Track this bill and find out more](#)

## **Animal Rights Extremism**

While most animal rights activism is legal and peaceful, specific and targeted campaigns continue to challenge and frustrate businesses. In these instances, small numbers of individuals and groups carry out illegal actions to pursue their agenda – this is animal rights extremism (ARE). Such extremism has historically targeted many different animal rights interests, including agriculture, whaling, hunting, fur farming, the pet trade, and animal research.

[Find out more about animal rights extremism](#)

## **Protect Duty (Martyn's Law)**

In response to the Manchester Arena terrorist attack in May 2017, legislation has been proposed that would impact any venue capable of holding over 100 people and any organisation that employs over 250 staff.

The requirements include:

- Conducting a detailed security risk assessment for the location, looking at all risks and threats in detail.
- Detailed emergency procedures covering major incidents (major crime, acts of terrorism etc.) to be assessed and recorded.
- Appropriate, fit-for-purpose training, completed and documented for all relevant staff.
- Periodic reviews to ensure these requirements have been adhered to.
- The documents for each point must be produced by a qualified subject-matter specialist.



## **The Key Threat Actors**

The risk of espionage against UK interests at home and overseas continues to be a significant threat to the UK government, businesses, and society. Several state actors, primarily Russia, China, and Iran, are actively seeking to gather intelligence. Russian and Chinese intelligence services pose the greatest threat to the UK. They conspire to work against British interests in the UK and overseas with Iranian intelligence services, posing an increasing level of threat.

## **Cyber Threat**

The cyber threat to the UK continues to grow, primarily from indiscriminate mass phishing scams, ransomware attacks, and targeted hostile acts against critical national infrastructure and government. These threats come from a wide range of actors using an array of methods, with the impact including life savings being stolen, critical and sensitive data compromised, healthcare and public services disrupted, and food and energy supplies affected.

## Mitigating Risk

To be ready for the introduction of the proposed Protect Duty legislation and to maintain an appropriate level of protection for your business, we recommend the following:

- **Business Risk Analysis:** Conduct a thorough review of existing protective security mitigations to protect your people and your business.
- **Threats:** To establish the current emerging threats, we recommend organisations conduct regular assessments periodically. Partnering closely with security teams, law enforcement or intelligence agencies on wider threats, such as state actors, criminality, or related protest activity, can enhance assessments and reduce organisational risk.
- **Training:** Training security and the wider workforce can strengthen your resilience and business continuity plans (BCPs). Consider upskilling existing personnel through free 'see, check, and notify' (SCaN) security awareness training.
- **Communications:** Continue to invest and deploy security-minded communications to promote the range of security capabilities your business has in place. Communication is the key to successful actions and reactions. It can be effective against a range of hostile activities, including organised crime, protest groups, and terrorist groups.

# Employment Legislation

A blurred photograph of several business professionals walking through a modern office hallway. The image is overlaid with a solid red color. The text 'Employment Legislation' is centered in white, sans-serif font.

## Flexible Working

The long-awaited Employment Bill may not come to fruition in 2023. However, it includes several reforms which have already been backed by the government and are being progressed via private member's bills.

One to watch out for is the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Bill, which is currently being debated and significantly changes the process for requesting flexible working.

Proposals are likely to include:

- The right for employees to request flexible working from day one – a 26-week qualifying period is currently in place.
- Employers should consult with their employees to explore available options before rejecting a flexible working request.
- Employers will be required to respond to requests for flexible working within two months instead of three.
- Removal of the requirement for employees to explain how the effects of their request might be dealt with by their employer.

## Industrial Action

New anti-strike laws ensuring minimum service levels are maintained have recently been announced. Under the proposals some public sector workers would be required to work during a strike.

[Track the bill's progress](#)

## **Brexit Freedoms Bill**

Perhaps the most significant piece of UK employment legislation for decades, and one that could have a major impact on the rights of UK workers, may go ahead at the end of 2023.

Counter Mitigating:

- Changes to Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) terms and conditions after a transfer.
- Potential removal of the 48-hour week and changes to holiday and break entitlement.
- Trade unions – possible changes to make it more difficult for unions to mobilise to strike.
- Potential changes to part-time and fixed-term workers' rights.
- Potential changes to the rights and protections for agency workers.
- Changes to a wide range of health and safety regulations.

## **Pregnancy and Family Leave**

The Protection from Redundancy (Pregnancy and Family Leave) Bill 2022–23 passed its second reading in October. Under the new proposed legislation, pregnant women and new parents will receive greater protection from being made redundant. Currently, employers making an employee on maternity leave, shared parental leave, or adoption leave redundant must offer them a suitable alternative vacancy where one exists before others who are provisionally selected for redundancy.

[Track the bill's progress and find out more](#)

## Statutory Pay Increases

A range of increases in statutory pay rates have been announced for this year. The National Living Wage (NLW) for workers aged 23 and over will increase by 9.7% to £10.42 per hour from 1 April 2023 and will also rise for the following groups:

- 21–22 year olds – £10.18 per hour
- 18–20 year olds – £7.49 per hour
- 16–17 year olds – £5.28 per hour
- Apprentice rate – £5.28 per hour

Other increases include:

- The rate of statutory maternity pay, statutory paternity pay, statutory adoption pay, and statutory shared parental pay will go up to £172.48 per week from 2 April 2023.
- The rate of statutory sick pay will increase to £109.40 per week from £99.35 from 6 April 2023.

## Hiring and Firing

A new statutory code of practice on the use of fire and re-hire practices is likely to be published in 2023. The new code will require businesses to hold fair, transparent, and meaningful consultations with workers when proposing changes to their terms of employment. This was announced by the government in the aftermath of mass redundancies at P&O Ferries last year.

[Find out more about fire and re-hire practices](#)

More information



## Useful Links

Counter Terrorism: [Review of government counter-terror strategy to tackle threats](#)

ProtectUK: [Protect Duty Update](#)

ProtectUK: [NaCTSO Competent Persons scheme](#)

National Crime Agency: [Annual Plan 2022–2023](#)

[Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure](#)

[SIA Licence Security Industry Authority](#)

[Living Wage Foundation](#)

Home Office: [Protect Duty](#)

Home Office: [Protect Duty Fact Sheet \(Martyn's Law\)](#)

[Data Protection Act 2018](#)

National Cyber Security Centre: [Mitigating malware and ransomware attacks](#)

Met Office: [Climate change in the UK](#)

CIPD: [Flexible Working](#)

[Debt Advice Foundation](#) 0800 043 40 50

NSPCC: [Help for adults concerned about a child](#) 0808 800 5000

Homelessness: [Crisis](#) 08000 384838

Refuge: [Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) 0808 2000 247

Galop: [National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) 0800 999 5428



