

Children's playgrounds

Terrorism threat to children's playgrounds

- It is highly unlikely that terrorist actors in the UK would have the intent to conduct a directed attack against playgrounds in the UK.¹ However, playgrounds in the UK could be indirectly impacted during attacks on a local park or wider leisure complex.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a playground in the UK would be conducted by an individual or small cell using a low-sophistication methodology. E.g., Bladed or Blunt Force Weapons, Vehicle as a Weapon, or Fire as a Weapon.
- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could have the capability to conduct a high-sophistication attack at a playground in the UK. E.g., Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), Person Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (PBIED), or Firearms attack. The complicated nature of plotting a high-sophistication terrorist attack makes it highly likely that there will be greater opportunity for UK police and security services to disrupt potential attacks.
- The assessments in this report were made using the PHIA Probability Yardstick, for further information please see the Assessment Methodology [section below](#).

Location based threats to children's playgrounds in the UK

- It is highly likely that there is a heightened terrorism threat to playgrounds in major cities and those in proximity to iconic sites and/or major transport hubs. There is a realistic possibility that a playground located in proximity to iconic sites and/or busy public spaces could be impacted by a Marauding Terrorist Attack in proximity to their site.

Previous terrorist incidents related to children's playgrounds in the UK and overseas

- At this time, there have been no terrorist attacks against playgrounds in the UK.
- Individuals have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct attacks against playgrounds globally, including:
 - **2023 France:** Although not officially designated as terrorism, an individual conducted a Bladed Weapons attack in the playground of a local park in the French city of Annecy. Four young children and two adults were injured.²
 - **2023 France:** Media reporting suggests that three individuals were arrested for allegedly making terrorist threats toward students at a playground at Blessed Sacrament Elementary School in La Crosse.³

Other potential threats to children's playgrounds in the UK

- There is a realistic possibility that the threat posed to playgrounds in the UK could be dynamic and dependent on the time of year. E.g., It is almost certain that playgrounds would have a higher footfall during summer and spring bank holidays, encouraging larger crowds that would be an attractive target for terrorist actors.
- There is a realistic possibility that the increasing number of under-18-year-olds arrested for terrorism-related offences in the UK could increase the threat posed to playgrounds, both in public parks and schools. In February 2023, the head of Counter Terrorism Policing revealed that UK police and security services have disrupted "real threat[s]" from teenagers plotting US-inspired attacks on schools.⁴
- There is a realistic possibility that there could be a heightened threat to playgrounds within communities with a pronounced minority culture. It is highly likely that individuals inspired by an Extreme Right-Wing or Islamist ideology would have the intent to conduct attacks against varying minority communities in the UK.

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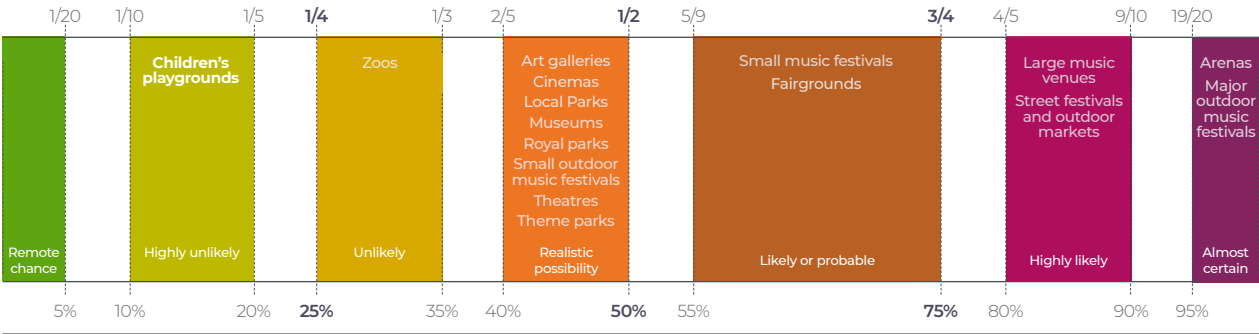
Threat visualisation

The diagram below outlines the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to conduct attacks against children's playgrounds within the arts, culture and entertainment sector.

Terrorist intent can be defined as the desire and/or determination of an individual to conduct an attack against any given site.

The intent of terrorist actors to conduct an attack against the arts, culture and entertainment sector in the UK is subject to change based on the assessments outlined in this report.

Note: The terrorism threat to any given site is not based solely on intent, but also the capability of terrorist actors in the UK as outlined in this report. Terrorism threat is also mitigated by the UK's countrywide terrorism risk mitigation infrastructure including both public and private security and safety capabilities.



Assessment Methodology

The assessments made in this report have been made using the Professional Head of Intelligence's "Probability Yardstick" (above). The Probability Yardstick is a standardised instrument used to provide a professional standard for intelligence assessment.

- **Almost certain:** An event has a greater than 90% chance of occurring.
- **Highly likely:** An event has a 76% to 90% chance of occurring.
- **Likely:** An event has a 55% to 75% chance of occurring.
- **Realistic possibility:** An event has a 40% to 54% chance of occurring.
- **Unlikely:** An event has a 25% to 39% chance of occurring.
- **Highly unlikely:** An event has an 10% to 24% chance of occurring.
- **Remote chance:** An event has a less than 10% chance of occurring.

Time spans

- **Short Term:** 0–6 Months.
- **In the next 12 months.**
- **Medium Term:** 12 months–5 Years.
- **Long Term:** 5+ Years.

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Intelligence cut-off date: 20 February 2024

For more information please contact solutions@poolre.co.uk

Bibliography

1. Playground is defined in this report as an outdoor area provided for children to play in, especially at a school or public park.
2. [France stabbing: Residents in Annecy left shaken after playground knife attack; World News - Sky News](#)
3. [Men arrested for making 'terrorist threats' toward children on La Crosse school playground Wednesday - \(lacrossetribune.com\)](#)
4. [Counter-terror chief reveals 'real threat' of school terror plots; UK security and counter-terrorism - The Guardian](#)

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