



Shomrim Scotland – Initial Guidance Pack

Who We Are

Shomrim Scotland is a volunteer, community-based organisation committed to safeguarding Jewish life in Scotland. We work alongside local communities to increase awareness, deter threats, and provide practical security measures for synagogues, schools, and other communal properties.

Why Security Matters

- Jewish communal institutions remain visible targets for antisemitic incidents and terrorist threats.
- Experience across the UK shows that prepared communities deter opportunistic attacks.
- Security begins with awareness: vigilance and preparedness save lives.

First Steps – Low-Cost, Immediate Actions

Access Control

- Always keep doors locked; never leave entrances unattended.
- Install simple mechanical door closers to prevent doors being propped open.
- Limit entry to one main access point; keep side/rear doors locked from the outside.
- Use an intercom or door-viewer (peephole or camera) before admitting anyone.

Visibility & Deterrence

- Ensure external lighting is operational and bright at entry points.
- Use motion-activated lights at side and rear doors.
- Keep landscaping trimmed to eliminate hiding places near entrances.



Awareness & Training

- Train staff, volunteers, and regular attendees to challenge strangers politely.
- Agree on a “code word” for staff/volunteers to discreetly raise an alarm.
- Encourage members to report suspicious behaviour immediately (no assumptions too small).

Emergency Readiness

- Keep mobile phones charged and available; ensure emergency services numbers are displayed.
- Identify and brief a small group of responsible people to take lead in emergencies.
- Practise simple evacuation drills during quieter times.
- Agree a safe meeting point outside the building.

Vehicle & Perimeter Security

- Do not allow vehicles to park directly outside main entrances.
- Use bollards, planters, or barriers (even temporary ones) to keep vehicles at a distance.
- Ensure car parks are well lit and checked before and after services.

Internal Procedures

- Keep a register of key-holders and update regularly.
- Store valuables securely and out of sight when not in use.
- Ensure fire exits are clearly marked, unobstructed, and known to all.



Security for Holy Days, Festivals, and Events

Why Extra Security is Needed

- Antisemitic threats and attacks are more likely on visible, high-attendance days.
- Crowds outside synagogues present an easy target if entry is slow or unmanaged.
- Planning ahead ensures safe, smooth, and respectful access to the building.

Door Security & Access Management

- At least two volunteers (door security team) should be present 30–45 minutes before the event begins.
- Volunteers should admit members and guests promptly, with no unnecessary waiting outside.
- Door volunteers remain on post until the service/event is underway and late arrivals have entered.
- Where possible, rotate volunteers to ensure full coverage.

Preventing Linger Outside

- Politely encourage members not to linger outside before or after events.
- Designate a welcoming area inside the building for socialising.
- Remind attendees that outside loitering increases risk.

Entry Verification Methods

- **Password System:** Circulate a simple keyword (changed each event) to members and registered guests only.
- **Membership Cards:** Cards with barcodes, QR codes, or NFC/NSF tags can provide quick scanning.
- **Digital Guest List:** For ticketed/registered events, maintain a printed or tablet-based guest list.
- **Personal Recognition:** For smaller gatherings, door volunteers who know most members by sight admit them quickly.



Halakhic Considerations on Shabbat and Festivals

- Some communities will object to the use of electronic cards, mobile phones, or scanners on Shabbat and Yom Tov.
- In such cases, alternative non-electronic methods (e.g., password system, printed guest lists, personal recognition by door volunteers) should be prioritised.
- Each community should consult its Rabbi to ensure that security measures are consistent with Halakhah.
- **Pikuach nefesh (the protection of life)** overrides other prohibitions. Where there is a real and credible threat, measures necessary to protect life must be implemented, even if they would normally be restricted.

Physical Aids for Security

- Use a portable stanchion or rope barrier at the entrance to control flow.
- Consider a secondary check-in table inside the doorway for guest confirmation.
- Ensure external lighting is bright and welcoming for evening services.

Volunteer Preparation

- Volunteers should be friendly but firm, ensuring no unauthorised persons gain access.
- Provide a short briefing before each festival/event:
 - Emergency contacts (police, organisers, Shomrim Scotland)
 - Entry method for that day (password, card, recognition)
 - Process for late arrivals or unknown persons
- Volunteers should remain alert and discreetly report suspicious behaviour.



Options for Enhancing Long-Term Access Security

Low-Cost Options

- Membership cards with unique QR codes scanned by smartphone.
- Rotating password/code word distributed securely before events.
- Volunteer recognition lists with photos of members.

Medium-Cost Options

- Keypad entry with a code changed regularly.
- Electronic NFC/NSF card system with logged access records.
- Doorbell camera system with smartphone-linked access.

High-Security Options (long-term)

- Biometric access (fingerprint/facial recognition).
- Integrated alarm and access control systems with monitoring.
- Professional guard deployment for large events or high-threat periods.

Important to Remember

- Security is everyone's responsibility. A secure building begins with alert people.
- Most attacks are opportunistic; visible vigilance and deterrence reduce risk.
- Never assume "it won't happen here." Preparedness ensures resilience.



Next Steps with Shomrim Scotland

- We can provide further advice and community briefings.
- A security walk-through can be arranged to highlight specific vulnerabilities.
- Training sessions for staff and volunteers can be scheduled.

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