

241025 - Talking Law - Figen Murray OBE - WillEdit

[00:00:00] **Figen:** So I'm Figen Murray and I'm the mother of Martyn Hett and, uh, Martyn was, uh, one of 22 people who was very sadly murdered at the Manchester Arena attack on 22nd of May, 2017. [00:00:15]

[00:00:15] **Sally:** And since, uh, Martyn's death, you've been campaigning for a change in the law, or Martyn's law, is that right?

[00:00:25] **Figen:** Yes, that's right. Um, and I hadn't anticipated at the beginning of [00:00:30] this campaign that started in my kitchen on my kitchen unit, um, with a six month online campaign, never in a million years would I have envisaged that, um, uh, seven and a half years [00:00:45] after the attack, I am still here campaigning and it's turned into a full time job.

[00:00:51] **Sally:** Wow. Well, I wonder if we can start from the beginning. Firstly, I'm so sorry for your loss and for the [00:01:00] other victims. I wanted to really start by asking, what is Martyn's Law? Normally on this podcast, I interview lawyers about their careers or cases that have been meaningful to them. In fact, I've interviewed a lawyer [00:01:15] who was involved in the Manchester bombing case advising families.

[00:01:19] **Sally:** But What is the campaign that you've been campaigning for? Just so one understands what it is. So

[00:01:27] **Figen:** at this moment in time, uh, in the UK, [00:01:30] there is no legislation that mandates any venue, big or small, to keep you safe from terrorism. Um, it's absolutely optional so far. Um, and the [00:01:45] general public have not got a clue how unsafe they actually are.

[00:01:49] **Sally:** Wow.

[00:01:50] **Figen:** So what, what

[00:01:51] **Sally:** will

[00:01:52] **Figen:** the new law

[00:01:54] **Sally:** do?

[00:01:55] **Figen:** Yeah, so then, uh, myself and eventually, I got a [00:02:00] campaign team together. Then we eventually went to meet the very first security minister with our white paper. What we said Martyn's law should be about is five points. Point number one is that, um, people, staff [00:02:15] should do the free of charge, um, ACT e learning training, which is available on the Protect UK website.

[00:02:23] **Figen:** It's a government website and the government provides this training free of charge. And it literally is a 45 minute [00:02:30] interactive video, uh, e learning packet that you need to do. Point number two is that people should carry out a risk assessment, both inside and outside the premises. Point number three is anything they identify as a [00:02:45] vulnerability in number two they should actually mitigate the risk and deal with whatever they've discovered is a vulnerability.

[00:02:54] **Figen:** Point number four is that venues ought to have a [00:03:00] counter terrorism action plan and that all staff are informed so that every member of staff, from the cleaning person to the chairperson, knows how to lock down if need be, in case something happens, how to [00:03:15] evacuate, Or if they can't evacuate, how to evacuate, um, and how to communicate to each other and the authorities what's happening.

[00:03:25] **Figen:** And number five is that for bigger venues, the local [00:03:30] authorities are working with the venue together.

[00:03:33] **Sally:** And in your view, does that seem to be quite simple changes that can be implemented?

[00:03:38] **Figen:** Yeah. So what's happened is obviously we've been working with the home office for many years now, [00:03:45] five and a half years, and we've had many, many discussions, even, you know, face to face meetings.

[00:03:50] **Figen:** We even had, during COVID, we had Teams meetings regular. So we have been in regular contact with all the different security ministers and I'm on [00:04:00] security minister number seven, I think now. Um, albeit one of them sadly died, but, um, they kept changing and so did Prime Ministers and Home Secretaries. But we, we kept ploughing on and carrying on talking about it, um, with [00:04:15] these people at the Home Office.

[00:04:16] **Figen:** There's now a dedicated department within the Home Office who work purely on Martyn's Law, and they're working very hard on this. But

unfortunately, um, about a year and a half ago, we had the [00:04:30] scrutiny, um, process, the two month scrutiny, uh, Home Affairs Select Committee, uh, that sat. And unfortunately, um, that didn't go so well.

[00:04:41] **Figen:** And what happened as a result of that is that [00:04:45] They, the government has made the legislation far more complicated than it needs to be. They put all sorts of obstacles in the way and they diluted, um, the whole thing a little bit and it's now ended up, um, with a piece [00:05:00] of legislation we have to accept in its current format, um, pending on what else they're going to do in the next few, uh, months.

[00:05:09] **Figen:** whilst it's going through its journey through Parliament in all the different stages. [00:05:15] Um, but at the moment, um, it's watered down to a point where if they water it down further, they're going to be doubtful that it's going to be effective. So we are actually doing a lot of lobbying and campaigning and [00:05:30] giving evidence, um, at the next stage, um, of the whole process in Parliament, um, to try and combat that.

[00:05:38] **Sally:** I see. Well, I'll come back to that in a moment. But why is the legislation under the Home Office just out of [00:05:45] interest? Well, that's a good

[00:05:46] **Figen:** question. I don't know where else it could be. I mean, somebody obviously has to make a decision. And I think the Home Office are probably in charge of it because they have the security minister.

[00:05:59] **Sally:** Yes. [00:06:00]

[00:06:00] **Figen:** That is the reason why, because it's national security.

[00:06:03] **Sally:** Well, only because a lot of people will hear, reference the Home Office, will think about migration and that type of thing, won't they? So it's just good to clear, to clear that up. Um, I want [00:06:15] to go back to the beginning, if I may. How did this campaign even start?

[00:06:20] **Sally:** Because are you a lawyer? You sound like you're a lawyer. No, not at all. I'm just a Well, I know that. I've done my research. Don't worry. But that's why I'm interested in [00:06:30] how you

[00:06:30] **Figen:** started. It's quite weird. So, then Martyn died in the May, um, campaign. I, the first year, I couldn't do anything. I was very zombie like in my grief, um, and I'd lost my job.

[00:06:43] **Figen:** I couldn't continue. [00:06:45] I was self employed. I had my own private practice as a, uh, life coach, counselor, clinical supervisor. I had a very busy practice, and the day Martyn died was my last working day. So I just existed the first [00:07:00] year, but my children bought my husband some concert tickets for a singer he likes.

[00:07:06] **Figen:** And although it was a Father's Day gift in the June, the concert was in the first week in 20, December 2018. This would have been 18 [00:07:15] months after the arena attack. So and that was the evening when we ventured into Manchester socially for the first time since the attack. And I remember getting ready and changing my handbag to my smallest handbag to make [00:07:30] the bag search at the theater easier at the venue, because I assumed foolishly that, especially in Manchester, after what happened at the arena, that there's going to be strict security everywhere in town.

[00:07:44] **Figen:** And we got there, my [00:07:45] husband gets his tickets out, and we walked in, staff looked at us, and then looked away again, and carried on talking, and he said, oh, we need to be upstairs. We walked upstairs, sat down, and that was it. And I during the concert [00:08:00] cried after I don't particularly like the singer. I'm not going to name her, but it's more my husband's cup of tea.

[00:08:06] **Figen:** So during the concert, my husband realized I'm crying and he said, it's the songs, isn't it? And I said, no, it's not the songs. I'm not [00:08:15] listening to them. And he, he looked confused and said, well, why are you crying then? And I whispered because nobody checked my bag. I could not believe that 18 months after 22 people, a lot of them children, died in a music [00:08:30] concert.

[00:08:30] **Figen:** Here we are, 18 months later, no bag checks, no nothing. I was devastated. And that's when I, at that moment in time, I was a complete lay person. I knew nothing about security or terrorism at all, um, but I [00:08:45] became curious in December and I started during the Christmas period. researching security at venues and came across the government's contest document and under the protect duty, there it was.

[00:08:59] **Figen:** Venue [00:09:00] security is a recommendation. It's totally, to this day, seven and a half years later, still optional. And I could not believe it. believe that this is only optional. I was completely dumbfounded. So, um, after Christmas [00:09:15] and New Year went, I decided to do something about it and started a petition online.

[00:09:21] **Figen:** I could have gone the change. org route, which would have possibly given me lots and lots of extra signatures, but I didn't. I went [00:09:30] the government petition route purely because, right from the word go, I wanted the government, uh, supporting this. I wanted them on board. So I went the government petition route, which after six months, they automatically stop.

[00:09:44] **Sally:** So [00:09:45] just to be clear, if someone wants to start a campaign, there's a change. org website. You need so many signatures, don't you? And then that will then be debated in Parliament. But there's also another means, which is the government petition route. And you chose that secondary one. [00:10:00] I did.

[00:10:01] **Figen:** But it was really interesting because my petition by the end of the six months was about, about 23 and a half thousand or thereabouts, just under.

[00:10:11] **Figen:** However, halfway through my petition, two other ones [00:10:15] emerged and they overtook mine by the hundreds of thousands of signatures within two, three weeks. And one of them was bring back the Jeremy Kyle show. And the other one was bring back plastic straws for McDonald's and I [00:10:30] don't blame. The general public because a they don't have a clue about security and it's not on people's radar It wasn't on my radar before Martyn died.

[00:10:41] **Figen:** I I never even gave security a thought ever [00:10:45] when I was out and about Uh anytime, uh, so I get it that people don't think about it Um, so yeah there I was

[00:10:54] **Sally:** wow Extraordinary, really, because, I mean, you talk about lobbying and all these [00:11:00] things as an ordinary person and an ordinary, you know, a mother, a grieving mother, um, talking about these things.

[00:11:07] **Sally:** I mean, did you even know what lobbying meant? No,

[00:11:11] **Figen:** I, um, I actually, um, Well, I [00:11:15] was on my own doing this, completely on my own. I even said to my husband, I need to do this as a mother, not as a parent. I have to do this on my own. And, uh, it took him a while to get his head around that, but he's on board with it now.[00:11:30]

[00:11:30] **Figen:** Um, I just felt very much, I took it personal, that, um, you know, I had this thought, you kill my baby, you watch what I'm going to do. I

took it very personal as a mum that Martyn was killed and I felt very strongly I need to do this [00:11:45] journey by myself and um, then the petition was still ongoing, uh, Brendan Cox phoned me.

[00:11:52] **Figen:** I didn't know who he was to be honest. I had heard in the past that a lady MP got killed but I didn't realise that was [00:12:00] his wife. He said, look, my wife was killed in a terrorist attack a year before your son was killed. I've seen your petition. I believe it's the right thing to do. I have contacts in government.

[00:12:10] **Figen:** I want to help you. Can I sit you in front of the security [00:12:15] minister? And of course I said, yes, I was grateful for the help and I met him and then he said we need to put a white paper together when we go to the security minister. I can't do it, I'm more into politics than into policy [00:12:30] and I don't know much about security but I know somebody who can put it together.

[00:12:34] **Figen:** So he introduced me to Nick Oldworth, who at the time when I met him in, uh, on Valentine's Day 2019, uh, at Scotland Yard, he was at the time the [00:12:45] National Coordinator for Prepare and Protect, and at the time he couldn't immediately help me because he was still working and it was conflict of interest. But he retired that year in May, and as soon as he retired, he came on board and got the white paper [00:13:00] together, which we then presented to the board.

[00:13:02] **Figen:** Security Minister at the time.

[00:13:05] **Sally:** Wow. I mean, it is extraordinary and it's really interesting understanding the route and the journey to actually having something that [00:13:15] can look like Martyn's Law. Uh, but when I was talking about lobbying before, one of the physical things that you did was 10 Downing Street.

[00:13:27] **Sally:** I only learned in some of the research when I saw [00:13:30] you were awarded a Woman of Achievement award recently by Wattie, a woman in business awards in Manchester Stadium and the video they produced as a precursor to your speech featured that. How did it come about that you were walking from [00:13:45] Manchester to London?

[00:13:46] **Sally:** I mean, firstly, how long did it take you and whose idea was it? So it was

[00:13:50] **Figen:** my idea, though it came about a few years, about four years ago. We had yet another face to face meeting in the Home Office, so I dashed down [00:14:00] to London to attend this meeting with the security minister and his team. That particular meeting didn't go so well.

[00:14:06] **Figen:** And when we came out of the home office, outside the home office, I said to Brendan, this is really, really annoying that they are [00:14:15] being so difficult about this, you know, for goodness sake, if they don't get this law done, I'll bloody well walk from Manchester to London just out of protest. And I'll take the media with me in tow and make a big song and [00:14:30] dance about it.

[00:14:30] **Figen:** And he laughed at me, he said, don't be daft, Pig, and you don't need to do stuff like that. That's crazy. Anyway, this January, he phoned me, first thing after New Year, and he said, You know that conversation we had outside the Home Office [00:14:45] about walking? And I said, yeah. He said, I think you need to walk. Get practicing.

[00:14:50] **Figen:** You need to walk in May. We need to arrive at the, at number 10 on the 7th anniversary on 22nd of May. You need to do that.
[00:15:00] And then I managed to get a campaign team together with Nick Oldworth and the PR guy who worked out my route and we walked for 16 days every day without a break in between, um, uh, every consecutive day.

[00:15:14] **Figen:** [00:15:15] We walked seven to eight hours a day and it was 200 miles, just 299 miles because So, um, yeah, and, uh, I did that with a already damaged hip to [00:15:30] start with. I had, I've had osteoarthritis for many years and, uh, I was concerned about my hip and showing off on day three, my pain started and I spent every night crying in pain.

[00:15:43] **Figen:** I'm married to a doctor. [00:15:45] So he made, he was also the walk doctor looking after all of us. He was dishing out bandages for our feet, but also painkillers for all of us. Cause a lot of us were in pain for different reasons. So, and on the last three days, [00:16:00] I was literally limping. Uh, and the last day I was in excruciating pain, but, um, it wouldn't have stopped me.

[00:16:07] **Figen:** I would have crawled to number 10.

[00:16:09] **Sally:** Wow. I mean, you're extraordinary and your work is, is.
[00:16:15] Really extraordinary. I'd like to ask you really. You know, you've received an honorary doctorate from the University of Salford, uh, for your

work. You have won several awards. Before we started recording, I was [00:16:30] talking to you about awards, and you said, oh gosh, you know, it always feels a bit funny when you receive an award.

[00:16:36] **Sally:** And I said, but your work is extraordinary. And I wonder, why do you feel like that? Because I think Martyn would be so proud of what you're doing. [00:16:45]

[00:16:45] **Figen:** Yeah, so my mother in law, texted me the other day because I said to her, it feels so uncomfortable and awkward receiving awards. And she said, look, it's people giving you recognition for all the hard work you're doing.

[00:16:58] **Figen:** But the way I [00:17:00] see myself is, um, you know, I'm, I'm now fairly educated. I went and did a master's in counterterrorism at the age of 58 after Martyn died, because I had so many questions. And I didn't understand anything about [00:17:15] terrorism and the only way I could get answers about why he died and Who these people are and what they want was to educate myself.

[00:17:22] **Figen:** So I've got the masters, but I feel Apart from having the masters that I've worked hard [00:17:30] for I am simply Martyn's mum. That's all I see myself as. I'm nobody special. I'm simply a grieving, heartbroken mother.

[00:17:40] **Sally:** Tell us, because, you know, the law is in Martyn's name. What was [00:17:45] Martyn like?

[00:17:46] **Figen:** Oh my goodness, how can I describe Martyn?

[00:17:48] **Figen:** He was just the life and soul of any room he entered. It, it, it brightened the room instantly. Um, he lived life. Uh, to [00:18:00] the max in fact, um so much so It's really odd because um when he died We didn't know what to do about his funeral and one of his friends said oh, don't worry about it He's got it all written down on his [00:18:15] laptop and we found very detailed funeral instructions That he wanted to be cremated that he wanted two white horses and a white coach.

[00:18:24] **Figen:** He was gay. He wanted to go out like a diva. He wanted people to be dressed in something [00:18:30] fabulous but black. He had two playlists, one that he wanted the songs and the other one was headed, don't you dare play these. So he had a sense of humor, a massive sense of humor. But he always used to say to us, I'm not going to see my [00:18:45] 30th birthday.

[00:18:46] **Figen:** And he always used to say, I'm going to die a spectacular death. And he died at 29 and a half. And, um, you know, it's almost as if he knew, but he lived life to the marks. He loved life and [00:19:00] he loved human beings. And he had this incredible knack of making every single person he encountered feel as if they are their best friend.

[00:19:11] **Sally:** Wow. Well, how wonderful. I feel [00:19:15] almost like he's listening to us now, um, as we record isn't it, talking about him in his, in his memory. Um, what next for you Figen and indeed for Martyn's Law?

[00:19:26] **Figen:** So obviously, um, Martyn's Law just [00:19:30] had the second reading. Um, I've just been emailed yesterday by the Home Office.

[00:19:35] **Figen:** that I am supposed to come on the 29th of October to the Houses of Parliament to give evidence alongside Brendan Cox [00:19:45] in the next committee meeting, uh, to make my case and answer questions. Um, And then obviously there'll be a third reading and then there'll be more committee debate, I suppose. Then it'll eventually go to the House [00:20:00] of Lords, first, second, and third reading.

[00:20:02] **Figen:** Possibly a ping pong between the two houses and hopefully by the eighth anniversary next May, the King will have signed it off and it's in the statute books. After that, once it's in the [00:20:15] statute books and signed off by the King. The government are giving venues, um, uh, two years as an implementation period, which sounds long, but obviously the regulator needs to be set up and, uh, the infrastructure and [00:20:30] the contents of what they're going to regulate and, and how they're going to do it.

[00:20:34] **Figen:** And the people power everything needs to be set up. So it will take two years, plus it gives venues the opportunity to, to prepare themselves for when it's fully [00:20:45] implemented. Um, what comes after people often say, what are you going to do when Martyn's law is done? Well, my work isn't done yet because, because of the law, the way they have changed some of the things we asked for.

[00:20:58] **Figen:** I feel that [00:21:00] it's not watertight enough. It's not strong enough and the rest of my campaign team feel the same. So what, um, I said to one of my co campaigners is We're in this for another five years or so. And he [00:21:15] said, Oh my goodness, you've done this bigger picture thing again. That's why I always do a look at the bigger picture.

[00:21:20] **Figen:** He said, Go on then. What do you mean by that? And I said, Look, we've got till next May when the legislation is signed. Then we have two years for the [00:21:30] implementation period. Then we need to see if Yvette Cooper hopefully will do a review after a year. Thank you for your time. to see if we can tighten the legislation.

[00:21:40] **Figen:** And in order for her to do that, you and I have to really lobby hard. We need to [00:21:45] speak to lords and baronesses at the House of Lords. We need to talk to MPs. We need to get people in the industry on board and, and, and mobilize people again to make sure that we get this legislation done the way it needs to be done.

[00:21:59] **Figen:** [00:22:00] Because Martyn's Law will save lives, but it will save more lives if it's done properly.

[00:22:06] **Sally:** Absolutely. So I've got in here, I probably need to re interview you around about October 2027, so you can, [00:22:15] um, tell us how, how it's, how it's going and how it's, it's been and hopefully the drafting is, uh, um, much better.

[00:22:23] **Sally:** How has it been, I'm a lawyer, I have no interest in becoming a politician at all. And apart from [00:22:30] voting, that's the extent of my interest in politics. Um, but I, I wondered how Have you found the process, is it actually a political process, campaigning to change a law? And what impact has the changes in [00:22:45] government had for you?

[00:22:46] **Sally:** I don't know if you're a Liberty or able to comment on that.

[00:22:49] **Figen:** So, um, I've had many promises by, uh, different ministers and also Rishi Sunak promised me in a phone call, uh, In December [00:23:00] 2022. He promised me that he'll get this done very quickly. He said he's as a government and him personally, they're very committed to Martyn's law, and he will get it done very, very quickly.[00:23:15]

[00:23:15] **Figen:** That's the reason I walked because 18 months later, nothing had changed. And that's when we decided to do the walk. But, um, in terms of politics, so when we arrived at number 10 on the 22nd of May this year on the eighth, seventh anniversary, [00:23:30] um, it was really odd because, um, Obviously that was also unbeknown to us the day Rishi Sunak called an election in the afternoon and had we not arrived at, uh, for this meeting at 12.

[00:23:42] **Figen:** 45, had it been two, three hours [00:23:45] later, he most likely would have cancelled the meeting and the walk would have been for absolutely nothing because the papers and the media would have been in election frenzy rather than be interested in the walk. Um, so we were lucky the [00:24:00] universe was on our side, but in terms of politics, so we met Rishi Sunak and James Cleverly and, um, then half an hour later we met Keir Starmer and his MPs and the meetings were different like day and night.

[00:24:13] **Figen:** They're all very, very nice [00:24:15] people, but, um, the first meeting felt very much like a business meeting and the second meeting with Keir Starmer and his MPs felt like uh, meeting with human beings who actually are really interested in the work we do. [00:24:30] Um, and, uh, that's no criticism of Rishi Sunak. It was just the state, uh, of the play.

[00:24:36] **Figen:** It was, he was in that day with the election looming. Um, It was really odd, but I'm not a political person at all. I just want the [00:24:45] legislation done. But what I'm finding myself in is, I am up to my neck in politics now, whether I like it or not. And it feels like playing a massive big game.

[00:24:58] **Sally:** Yes. Right. [00:25:00] Maybe you should come to my side and just stick to the law.

[00:25:05] **Sally:** Vegan, can I ask you about well being? You know, you've suffered a massive, traumatic, life changing, bereavement death [00:25:15] of your beloved son. And then you've taken on this big campaign to change things for and save lives in the future. And so I wonder, what do you do for your well being and how do you look after yourself?

[00:25:28] **Sally:** I noted earlier, you've got other [00:25:30] children, you know, you're married and then this is a big task. How and what do you do for your own wellness and well being or what would you like to do?

[00:25:39] **Figen:** So as an ex therapist, I used to always tell my, my paid, my clients. get [00:25:45] creative. It's good for your mental health. And, uh, I, um, uh, certainly after Martyn, even before Martyn died, I was quite creative.

[00:25:52] **Figen:** I was knitting. Um, uh, and that knitting was for my wellbeing even before Martyn died, because I have a very rare [00:26:00] condition, uh, that happens to one in 20, 000 people. And I lost my hearing on my left side, um, which as a therapist is really quite a disaster because my ears

are my working tools. And when I lost Hearing on the left hand [00:26:15] side, I got nearly depressed and realized I need to do something about it.

[00:26:19] **Figen:** So I started knitting, and knitting has been absolutely transformational for me. I knit the same thing over and over again. I've knitted teddy [00:26:30] bears over 2, 000 now. I've even written a I've even written a book called, um, Bears Have Issues Too. It's a therapeutic storybook for grownups and it is for grownups.

[00:26:42] **Figen:** It's got some saucy bits in it. Um, [00:26:45] but we have a book club. I think we might have to read it in the book club. It's basically a teddy bear, um, um, therapeutic, uh, self help book with 16 bears with mental health issues and how they [00:27:00] resolve them. Um, so, amongst them a naughty solicitor who's having it away with the legal secretary.

[00:27:07] **Figen:** Oh, really? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, but, um, so, so I've written a book, so that was quite creative, but [00:27:15] The Bears, um, you know, during the Manchester Arena Inquiry, we sat through nearly every single day of it. Yes. So Sir John has been so kind, he allowed me my knitting needles into court. So I was sat every single [00:27:30] day listening to the inquiry about knitting and I always knew when there was a really stressful day because I'd be on to my second bear.

[00:27:39] **Figen:** Normally I managed one a day and when it got really stressful I just knitted [00:27:45] faster and the next pair would just be starting again. So, um, so knitting has been a massive and I, after Martyn's death, decided I used to sell them on Depop and now I have decided to make them my peace [00:28:00] bears and I give them to everybody who has helped me along the journey with Martyn's Law.

[00:28:05] **Figen:** For instance, all the people who walked with me along the walk, everybody gets a bear. I've done 89 already, I've got another 40 odd to do [00:28:15] and I just, as soon as I have three, four ready, I post them to these people with a thank you note. And my peace bears are really important because they're sent with Martyn's love.

[00:28:26] **Sally:** Absolutely. Absolutely. Figen, you are an [00:28:30] extraordinary, um, uh, lady and, uh, really powerful in a trailblazer in campaigning in this law. This podcast, I'm told, um, by our producers is in the 2 percent of all podcasts [00:28:45] globally. So I hope if people are listening and would like to get involved in your campaigning, they can contact you, Figen Murray.

[00:28:51] **Sally:** OBE. And whilst there have been moments of laughter on this podcast, um, please do not think that detracts from what has been the [00:29:00] tragedy of Martyn and the need for this law. Uh, and I take my hat off to you and thank you for giving up the time to talk about Martyn's law.

[00:29:11] **Figen:** for having me on your program.