



# **Plan for the crowd without tickets**

## **At your events**

OTAS Insight: how to forecast, inform and plan for the people who come without a ticket

Operational · Tactical · Strategic | Correct as of 29 October 2026





OTAS Insight

# General information, not advice

**Read this first.** OTAS Insights shares facts and lessons to start a conversation among event professionals. It is general information, not legal or professional advice. It does not replace your own risk assessment or the advice of the police and your local authority. The case facts come from the published reports linked below.

**Correct as of 29 October 2026.** All times are GMT.



# The short version

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## Forecast

### People, not just tickets

- Ticket sales do not tell you how many people will come
- Look at past events, similar events and interest online

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## Tell

### No ticket, no entry

- Say it early and often
- Tell people before they travel

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## Plan and agree

### The street outside

- Plan the space, staff and routes outside the door
- Agree what you will do if numbers grow, and who decides

**And afterwards:** Review ticketing, entry and messages after the event.

# The case: two nights in October

|                            | London, Monday 26 October 2026                                             | Lancashire, reported 26 October 2026                                                   |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The event</b>           | The first Ballon d'Or held in London, at the London Palladium [1]          | A college Halloween ball at a nightclub [3]                                            |
| <b>The crowd outside</b>   | Hundreds of people [1]. One report put the number at about 300 [2]         | 150 to 200 students, and many came without tickets [3]                                 |
| <b>On the night</b>        | More officers were sent to help at 17:13 [2]                               | The venue asked the police for advice at about 21:00 [3]                               |
| <b>Effect on the event</b> | The start moved from 20:00 to 20:45 [1]                                    | The event ended at 22:00 so the crowd outside could disperse [3]                       |
| <b>Afterwards</b>          | Organisers said the number was "significantly higher than anticipated" [1] | No fights and no reported disorder. A review of ticketing, entry and communication [3] |

The two nights, as reported. All times are GMT. Sources: BBC Sport [1], LBC [2] and the Lancashire Telegraph [3].

# A crowd at the door affects the event inside

# 45

minutes: the London start moved from 20:00 to 20:45 [1]

**Demand is more than sales.** The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) lists ticket sales as only one input to a crowd forecast [5].

**The city can change on the day.** A new traffic-free street, a closed road or a train that does not stop can move people [4][8].

**An early finish can be a planned option.** It works best when it is agreed in advance [3].

Sources: BBC Sport [1], Lancashire Telegraph [3], Transport for London [4], HSE [5] and BBC News [8].

# What it means for event operations

- **The same pattern.** A world-famous awards night and a college social. It can happen at any event.
- **The crowd outside needs a plan.** HSE says the same crowd principles apply on streets and open spaces, even at free events [5].
- **People come anyway.** A first-time event, a famous name or a sold-out party shared on social media can each add people at the door [5].

## The door message

"Sold out. No tickets on the door."

## Put it

- On the ticket page
- In posts
- On signs at the approach

**HSE advises making clear in the advertising that it is a ticket-only event [6].**

# The plan: forecast, tell, plan the space

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## Step 1

### Forecast the people

- Start with ticket sales
- Add the people who will come anyway
- Ask what is new this time [5]

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## Step 2

### Tell them before they travel

- Ticket-only in the advertising [6]
- Stations, local radio and social media on the day [6]

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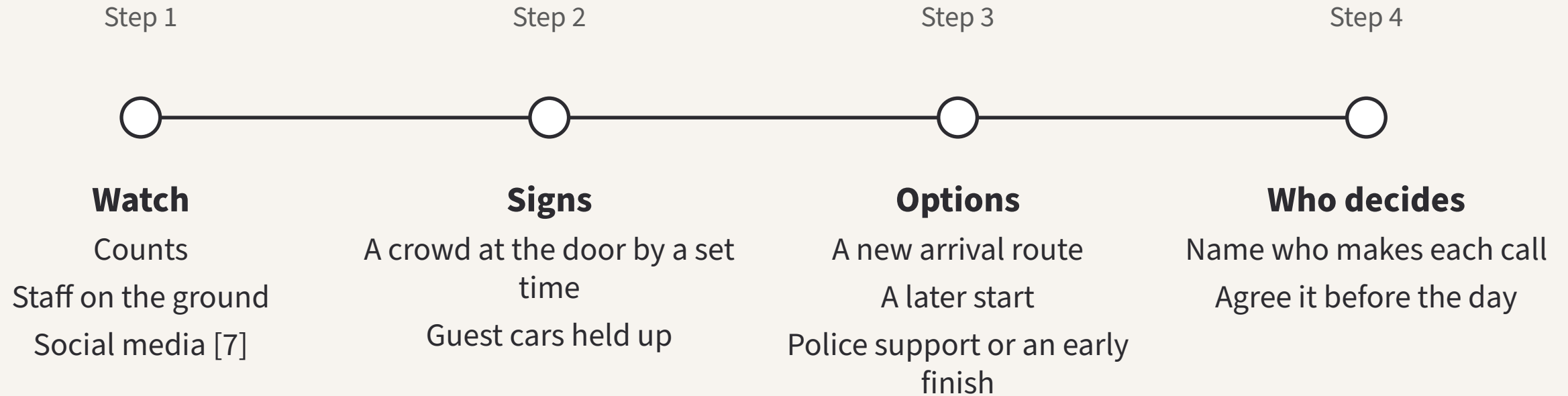
## Step 3

### Plan the space outside

- Where people without tickets will stand
- Routes for guests and cars kept clear
- Where an overflow space could go

HSE suggests agreeing with the police and other agencies how extra people could be redirected before they reach the venue [6].

# Watch the numbers and agree triggers



**Decide in advance:** which signs mean you act, and what each one leads to.

# Coming up: Halloween and Bonfire Night

- **Halloween** Saturday 31 October.
- **Bonfire Night** Thursday 5 November. Both bring busy nights at free and ticketed events.
- **East Sussex.** Visitors have been asked not to travel to the Lewes bonfire celebrations. Road closures start at 16:45 and trains will not stop at Lewes from 17:00 [8].
- **Before your own event.** Check what your local partners are saying.

## **Review after the night**

**Review** while it is fresh

**Look at** ticketing, entry and messages [3]

**Share** what you learn with your partners

## **If demand ran ahead**

Review the plan, as the Lancashire venue said it would [3].

# Actions by level

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## Operational

### At the door

- People outside are part of the event
- Same message: "Sold out, no tickets on the door."
- Report a growing crowd at once

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## Tactical

### Before the day

- Triggers agreed with the venue and police
- Staff, welfare and space outside
- Options ready, and who decides

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## Strategic

### From the start

- Forecast demand beyond ticket sales
- Check what changes in the city
- "Ticket-only" in the advertising

Strategic: review any night when demand ran ahead of the plan.

# Questions event professionals ask

| Question                                                          | Short answer                        | What to do                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Why plan for people who do not have a ticket?</b>              | Because they still come.            | Plan for the entrance, guest routes and nearby streets.                     |
| <b>How can I tell if more people will come than have tickets?</b> | Look beyond sales.                  | Past and similar events, publicity, fame and transport. Watch social media. |
| <b>Is ending an event early a good idea?</b>                      | It can be one option among several. | Agree when you would use it, and who decides, before the day.               |

Full answers in the article and the full report.



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Sources:

BBC Sport, LBC, Lancashire Telegraph, Transport for London, HSE and BBC News. Full list in the full report.

Spotted an error? Tell us via the OTAS Insights page and we will correct it and update the 'Correct as of' date.

Interest: OTAS Live Ltd, which publishes OTAS Insights, sells event operations services, handbooks and training related to this topic.

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By OTAS Insights | Edited by Kris Dailly | [otas.live/insights/](https://otas.live/insights/)



### **Briefing card • about 1 minute**

“This event is sold out. There are no tickets on the door. People without tickets may still come, and they are part of our plan.

Give the same message every time: ‘Sold out, no tickets on the door.’ Keep the routes for guests and cars clear.

**Event Control channel:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Waiting space outside:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Overflow space:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who decides:** \_\_\_\_\_

If you see a growing crowd, blocked routes or held-up cars, report it to Event Control at once. Any questions?”

Read at the start of each shift at a sold-out or ticket-only event. Fill in the blanks first.

## **Crowd without tickets: the checklist, by level**

**Operational** People outside treated as part of the event. Same door message. Routes clear. Report at once.

**Tactical** Triggers agreed with the venue and police. Staff, welfare and space outside. Options ready. Who decides named.

**Strategic** Demand forecast beyond sales. City changes checked. Ticket-only in the advertising. Review after the night.



# How do you plan for the people who come without a ticket?

If you need support with planning for crowds without tickets, [reach out to us](#) to see how we can support you.

