OTAS LIVE

Supporting Events and Professionals at Every Stage

When a rumour moves faster than your stewards

A false stabbing rumour brought parents to the doors of an under 16s night in Wolverhampton. How to get the true message out first, hold a calm exit and reunite families safely

Correct as of 9 November 2026

A rumour travels faster than your stewards.

0 injuries found, the organiser said.[1]



OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

The facts, as reported

0

injuries found, the organiser said [1]

5

per group in the exit [1]

12 to 16

the ages on the listing [2]

What was reported

WOLVERHAMPTON, 29 OCTOBER

- Stabbing rumour, none took place [1]
- Exit in groups of five [1]
- Parents forced their way in [1]

FALSE ALARMS ELSEWHERE

- London 2017: 16 hurt leaving [3]
- Turin 2017: about 1,500 hurt [4]
- 2024: false claims to millions [7]



The rumour

Reaches parents first

OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

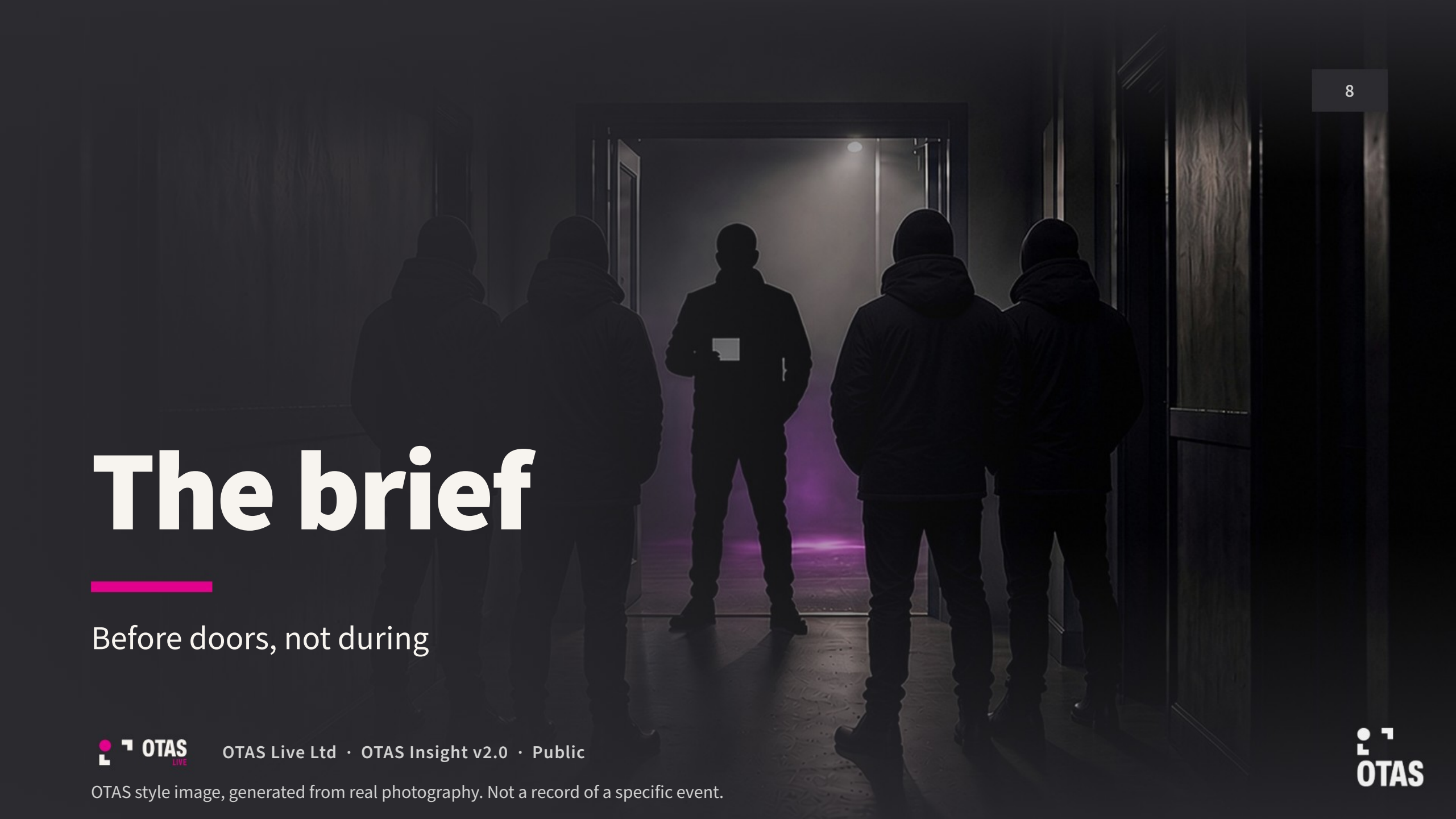
Scope of this Insight

WHAT IT COVERS	WHAT IT DOES NOT
Rumours at your event	What happened outside
The first true message	The cause of any rumour
Exit and handover	Legal advice

03

What UK guidance says

COMMUNICATE	DECIDE AND PROTECT
Talk to the whole crowd [8]	Do not wait for police to decide [14]
Holding statements ready [14]	M/ETHANE to services [16]
Watch social media [14]	Two staff with lost children [20]



The brief

Before doors, not during

OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

04

Holding messages

READY BEFORE DOORS
To staff on the radio
On the PA
Online and to parents

RULES
Only say what is true
Say when you will update
Then update on time [14]

05

Who owns what

ROLES	AND
Manager: hold or exit [14]	Security: the doors
Control: facts and police [16]	Welfare: the handover [20]
Speaker: the message	One name per role

From a rumour to a safe handover

1 Rumour heard

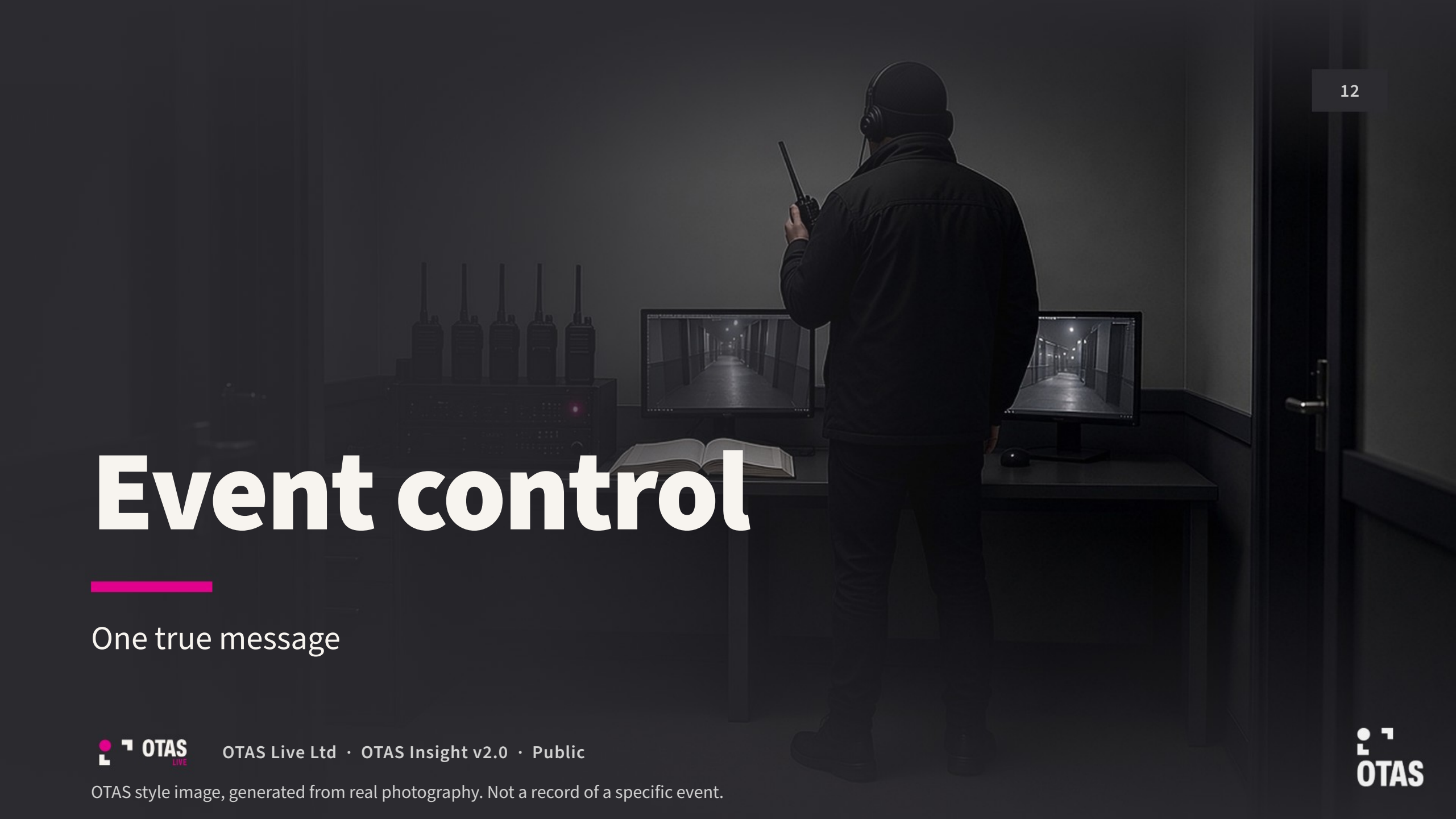
2 Facts checked

3 One true message

4 Calm exit

5 Child to a known adult

OTAS guidance, drawing on Cabinet Office crowd guidance [8] and ProtectUK [14].



Event control

One true message

OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Signs a rumour is getting ahead of you

Drawn from the Wolverhampton report and two 2017 false alarms.

01 **Parents arriving early**

02 **Phones up, heads down**

03 **Pressure at the doors**

04 **A sudden surge**

05 **Calls about something you have not seen**

08

Hold, exit or lock down

OUTSIDE	INSIDE
Rumour: hold and check	Threat: evacuate away [14]
Not linked: hold inside [14]	Parents pushing: hold doors
Threat: invacuate [14]	Open the meeting point

Five stages, from planning to the last pick up



STAGE 1

Before

Holding messages ready

STAGE 2

Brief

Every steward, every channel

STAGE 3

Check

Facts first, police early

STAGE 4

Tell

One true message, repeated

STAGE 5

Hand over

Child to a known adult

From the plan in this Insight. OTAS guidance.



The exit

Calm, steady, staffed

OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

What to do at each level

Operational

Call in rumours

Calm the doors

Hold until matched

Tactical

Check facts fast

One true message

Staffed exit

Strategic

Holding messages

Police link agreed

Name the speaker

11

Readiness

BEFORE DOORS	DURING AND AFTER
Messages written	Watch social media
Speaker named	Update on time
Police link agreed	Log and debrief
Meeting point set	

“

During an incident, initial decision-making should not be delayed pending instruction or action from the police.

ProtectUK [14]

Where the facts come from

1	Birmingham Live, parents force their way into an under 16s event following reports of a stabbing, 31 October 2026	birminghammail.co.uk
2	Organiser's ticket listing for the Wolverhampton date of its Halloween tour, October 2026	reloadunder16s.com
3	BBC News, platform altercation caused Tube panic, November 2017	bbc.co.uk
4	BBC News, about 1,500 injured at a football screening in Turin, 4 June 2017	bbc.co.uk
5	The Guardian, more than 1,500 fans injured in a Turin square, 3 June 2017	theguardian.com
6	Ofcom, letter from the Chief Executive to the Secretary of State, 22 October 2024	ofcom.org.uk
7	BBC News, Ofcom finds a clear link between online posts and violent disorder, 22 October 2024	bbc.co.uk

Where the facts come from

8	Cabinet Office, Understanding crowd behaviours: guidance and lessons identified	gov.uk
9	Cabinet Office, Understanding crowd behaviours, summary of the five reports	gov.uk
10	University of Sussex, crowd panic research programme	sussex.ac.uk
11	Drury, J., Everyone for themselves? A comparative study of crowd solidarity among emergency survivors, British Journal of Social Psychology, 2009	bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com
12	Drury, J., Novelli, D. and Stott, C., Psychological disaster myths in the perception and management of mass emergencies, Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 2013	doi.org
13	Barr, D., Drury, J. and others, Beyond stampedes: towards a new psychology of crowd crush disasters, British Journal of Social Psychology	doi.org
14	ProtectUK, evacuation, invacuation, lockdown, protected spaces	protectuk.police.uk

Where the facts come from

15	**ProtectUK, communication**	protectuk.police.uk
16	**JESIP, M/ETHANE**	jesip.org.uk
17	**Licensing Act 2003, section 4, the licensing objectives**	legislation.gov.uk
18	**Home Office, revised guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003, published September 2026, updated 3 November 2026**	gov.uk
19	**Home Office, Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 collection, updated 10 September 2026**	gov.uk
20	**The Purple Guide, safeguarding children and young people**	thepurpleguide.co.uk
21	**NSPCC Learning, safer activities and events**	learning.nspcc.org.uk

Where the facts come from

22	**NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit, missing children and young people at sports events, procedure and flowchart**	sport.nspcc.org.uk
23	**Cambridge Safety Advisory Group, lost children and vulnerable persons procedure**	cambridge.gov.uk
24	**HSE, event safety, put crowd controls in place**	hse.gov.uk

Web sources opened 9 November 2026 and labelled with their publisher.

OVER TO YOU

If a stabbing rumour reached parents before it reached your control room tonight, what would your first message say, and who would send it?

If you need support with planning communications and safeguarding at your event, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

OTAS Live Ltd.

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