

# Four Nations Impartiality Review Follow-up: An analysis of reporting devolution

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# 1. Introduction and Overview of Findings

## The scope of the study

This study updates our 2007 report, allowing us to broadly see (where the study is comparable) whether there have been changes in coverage since the publication of our 2007 findings, as well as enabling us to provide more detailed analysis in certain areas. The central aim of this study, as it was in 2007, is to examine how devolution is reported in BBC network news and current affairs on television, radio and online. This analysis is placed within the broad framework of questions about impartiality and accuracy, and asks whether the coverage of the four nations is balanced, accurate and helpful in understanding the new political world of devolved government. The focus of both studies is the coverage of devolved politics in the broadest sense, including a range of devolved issues such as health and education, rather than being limited to the reporting of the everyday business of politics within Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay or Stormont.

To that end we examined a range of BBC and other network television programmes, BBC radio, BBC current affairs programmes and BBC online news, and identified any changes in the reporting within that sample of the four nations and, in particular, devolved politics or issues since 2007. We also explored some of the issues raised by the 2007 report.

Our study is primarily informed by a detailed media content analysis. Since devolution is a complex issue, a greater level of analysis and discursive detail is required here than with most forms of content analysis which are often limited to measuring simple categories, such as interviewees technically referred to as sources. While we have reproduced most of the categories used in 2007 to enable direct points of comparison, the 2009 study includes some simplifications and, where appropriate, greater levels of detail to explore issues raised by the 2007 study. As in 2007, the study is based on a sample of four weeks of news coverage gathered during an eight-week period in October and November 2009. We examined a total of 5,177 news items across a range of BBC (television, radio and online) and other television outlets.

The full sample included:

- For BBC television – *BBC News at One*, *BBC News at Six*, *BBC News at Ten*, *BBC News* (BBC One Saturday and Sunday afternoons), *Newsnight*, *The Politics Show*, and one hour per day of the BBC News Channel (5-6pm Mon-Fri, 6-7pm Sat, Sun).
- In addition, this time we have also included the BBC One factual programme *The One Show*.

- For BBC radio: *Today* (7.30-8.30am), *World at One*, *PM*, *Six O'Clock News* (all Radio 4), *5 live Breakfast* (7.30-8.30am<sup>1</sup>).
- For BBC online: Items on the 'UK' and 'Politics' pages at 5pm Mon-Fri.
- For other television: *Channel 4 News* (inc. Sat, Sun), *ITV News at Ten*, *ITV News* (Sat, Sun), and one hour per day of *Sky News* (5-6pm Mon-Fri, 6-7pm Sat, Sun).

Throughout this report we use the term 'news item' to denote a single unit of news coverage on a particular bulletin. This means that on some news programmes – especially radio – we may get more than one news item about the same news story. The term 'story', by contrast, usually consists of several linked but discrete news items<sup>2</sup>. So, for example, a story covered by all the news outlets in our sample will typically generate over a dozen news items. In most cases, we use the news item as our main unit of analysis, since it allows us to make comparisons between different news outlets.

To complement the content analysis we carried out a number of case studies, allowing us to explore some issues in more depth. In addition, we monitored other non-network media outlets during the sample period – including the BBC news bulletins from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and a relevant national newspaper for each nation – in order to look at the volume and range of stories that did not receive UK-wide network attention.

We also examined three BBC current affairs programmes – *Panorama* (on BBC One), *File on Four* and *Analysis* (both on Radio 4) – covering the 12-month period from October 2008 to September 2009. Finally, in the 2009 study we also examined the BBC One daily topical factual programme *The One Show* broadcast during the four week sample period for topics relevant to devolution.

## Overview

When we compare news coverage of devolution-related issues – and the four nations generally – in 2007 and 2009, two points stand out. First, across most measures, our data suggest that BBC coverage was more sensitive to devolution in 2009 (and, indeed, to news from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland more generally) than it was in 2007. Second, this change is in contrast to other television broadcasters, where we found little evidence of enhanced or increased coverage of devolved issues.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2007, we looked at the *Victoria Derbyshire* programme on *5 live*, although since the programme was not a traditional news format, it did not form part of the content analysis but was used as one of the 2007 case studies.

<sup>2</sup> A chronological list of devolution-related 'stories' consisting of one or more items that were recorded during the sampling period of the study is included in the Appendix.

When we examined news across the BBC – regardless of whether it concerned devolved issues – we found a significant increase in the proportion of news items related to (or about) Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, especially on television. So, for example, in 2007 only 7.8% of news items on BBC television related to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. By 2009, this proportion had almost doubled to 14.2%. The increase on other television channels (ITV, Channel 4 and Sky) was much smaller (2.7%). The corresponding increases on BBC radio and online were 4.7% and 6.2% respectively.

We found a similar increase in BBC reporting *on location* from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In 2007, 7.7% of BBC news reports came from reporters on location in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, compared to 4.6% on other channels. In 2009, this proportion had risen to 12.3% on BBC television outlets and dropped to 2.8% on other television channels.

When we looked specifically at news items relevant to devolution or devolved issues, we found that the proportion of news items *about* devolved issues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland increased on all BBC outlets, especially in online coverage (from 1.7% to 3.5% of online news items) and on television news (from 0.7% to 1.2% of BBC television news items). The increase in BBC radio was more modest (from 1.0% to 1.2% of radio news items). The proportion of such items on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky actually halved (from 0.6% to 0.3% on news items) suggesting that increases in BBC coverage cannot be attributed to a change in the general news agenda in the 2009 sampling period.

Similarly, the proportion of BBC news items *referring to* devolved powers or authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland almost doubled between 2007 and 2009 (from 1.1% to 2.1%). By contrast, the proportion on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky, remained at the same level (0.7%), meaning that by 2009 BBC outlets were three times as likely as ITV, Channel 4 and Sky to refer to the existence of devolved powers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Perhaps the most dramatic change was in the number of explicit or implicit references reporters made to devolved powers generally (across all four nations). In 2007 we found 71 references to devolved powers or issues on BBC news outlets. By 2009, this number had risen nearly sevenfold to 480. To put this into context, in 2007 we found one reference to devolution for every 50 BBC news items. By 2009, this ratio was up to one in eight. We also saw a rise in references to devolved powers on other channels, where the 2009 ratio of references to news items increased to one in 30 from one in 90 items in 2007.

In 2007 we found very few examples of news items that used a 'compare and contrast' approach to the treatment of devolved issues across the four nations: the few comparisons that were made were passing rather than substantive references to different approaches taken by (at least two of) the

four nations. Although the number of news items making comparisons between the policies and records of devolved nations remains low, by 2009 this number had doubled on BBC outlets while falling slightly on other channels. We also found 14 examples of the use of *substantive* comparisons, all of which were on the BBC.

So, for example, BBC coverage of proposals to delay the introduction of a formal curriculum (and adopt a play-based approach) in English primary schools often took the opportunity to compare England's approach with Wales, who already have a play-based curriculum until the age of seven. By contrast, ITV and Channel 4 referenced but did not compare the different policies in Wales (or Northern Ireland, which is like Wales in this respect) while *Sky News* failed to mention that the proposal only applied to schools in England.

Consistent with these findings, the use of politicians from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – as a proportion of the politicians interviewed – doubled on BBC outlets between 2007 and 2009, while falling slightly on other channels.

The most likely source of misleading or confusing coverage of devolved issues (such as health, education or policing) involved reporting stories that only apply to England (or England and Wales) as if they apply to the UK as a whole. Since this had been identified as a problem in the 2007 study, the 2009 study employed new measures to explore this in more detail. Although we found, once again, that BBC news outlets demonstrated a greater sensitivity than other broadcasters, the failure to make it clear when stories apply only to England (or England and Wales) remains a concern.

While six out of ten BBC news items about devolved issues in England (or England and Wales) made it clear that the story only applied to England (or England and Wales), four out of ten did not. Although this compares well with other news outlets – where only 36% made it clear when a story only applied to England (or England and Wales) – it suggests that there is still work to be done.

So, for example, a story about a review of police cautions was covered across a range of news outlets – sometimes in detail – but only BBC online news mentioned that Scotland did not have the cautions system, and that this was therefore a devolved news story that did not apply UK-wide. All the other news reports we looked at (on both the BBC and elsewhere) implicitly assumed that the context for this story was the UK as a whole.

Part of the difficulty here is that well-established news sources across a range of English institutions – as well as political parties in Westminster – often announce initiatives or proposals without specifying that they only apply to England (or England and Wales). It is left to the reporter, in other words, to contextualise the story.

We also examined BBC current affairs programmes, as well as *The One Show*. Our findings here also suggest a greater awareness of devolved politics or issues in 2009, although the changes here have been fairly modest. The approach to tackling certain issues on many of these programmes often involved investigating and telling particular people's stories, which was not always conducive to a 'compare and contrast' approach to policymaking across the four nations.

Finally, although we identified a number of stories related to devolved powers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that did not make it onto UK-wide news outlets, we found some BBC network news coverage of most of the more high-profile news stories that emerged in these nations during the sampling period.

## 2. The Broad Pattern of News Coverage of the Four Nations

The 2009 sample of the news output of all BBC and other news outlets in the study consisted of 5,177 news items, gathered over four weeks during October and November 2009.<sup>3</sup> To maintain confidentiality of the dates (so that BBC network management were unaware of when they were being surveyed), a random sample of weeks from an eight-week period was agreed on independently by the research team. Table 2.1 (below) shows the distribution of the sample amongst television (BBC and other television news outlets), BBC radio and BBC online sources compared with 2007. There was a moderate increase in the size of the sample, accounted for by three factors: the decision to include *5 live Breakfast* in the 2009 sample; an increase in the number of items on the sampled BBC online pages; and a general increase in the number of items on other television outlets (these outlets therefore covered more news items in the same amount of time). Overall, however, the distribution of television, radio and online items is more or less the same as the 2007 study.

**Table 2.1:** The table below shows the default table styling for new tables

Media	Percentage 2007	Percentage 2009	Percentage Point +/-
BBC TV	29.1	26.7	-2.4
Other TV	22.6	23.6	+1.0

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix for dates.

BBC Radio	37.1	37.4	+0.3
BBC Online	11.2	12.2	+1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(N=4,687)</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(N=5,177)</b>	

Although the inclusion of *5 live Breakfast* added a new programme to the sample, Table 2.1 above shows that this did not alter the balance of coverage on the different outlets. We isolated the *5 live* data to see if they exerted a disproportionate influence on the results for BBC Radio across various measures used in Sections 2, 3 and 4, and found that there was no significant change where it was removed. For example, of the total number of items in which devolution was the main subject on BBC Radio (dealt with in Table 2.5), the removal of *5 live* data from the analysis alters the final result by just 0.1%, and less than that for the BBC as a whole.

News relevant to devolution (news items that involved topics or issues where responsibility has been devolved) accounted for 9.8% of the total sample (505 out of 5,177 news items). This proportion was higher on BBC outlets, where 11.3% (445 out of 3,953) of news items were relevant to devolution. This represents a modest increase when compared to 2007, when 8.7% of BBC news items were relevant to devolution (or 7.7% across the whole sample). We examine these items in more detail in Section 3. In this section, we identify how – and how often – each nation appears in the news overall.

We began by establishing which nation a news item related to (or was about) within the UK, regardless of whether it concerned devolved issues. So, for example, a crime story in Manchester was classified as relating to (or about) England, while a story about flooding in Pembrokeshire was seen as relating to (or about) Wales. If we exclude international news or news items about the UK as a whole, the 2007 study found that news items related to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland accounted for 11.5% of coverage between them.

As we noted in the 2007 report, there are no precise benchmarks with which to evaluate the spread of stories across the UK. The concept of news value is unhelpful, because it is vaguely defined, imprecise and contested (thus any objective measure of the number of newsworthy events that occur in specific locations is impossible). However, our 2007 report did note that the coverage of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on news outlets did not reflect the population of the UK or the distribution of the audience. This is not to say that population *should* determine the volume of coverage, simply that in 2007 England was given significantly more coverage than might be explained by the distribution of the UK-wide audience.

Table 2.2 below suggests that while England remains the dominant source of news items, the distribution has shifted, with the proportion of news items related to the other three nations increasing (especially in relation to Scotland) from 11.5% in 2007 to 18% in 2009 and the proportion of news items relating to England decreasing. Again, while we cannot assume a



correlation between the location of the population and/or audience and the geographical relevance of a news item, we note that these percentages are now much closer to the population spread across the UK. However, Wales, although it has a larger share of the population and audience than Northern Ireland, continues to receive less coverage than the other nations. We have excluded items related to Westminster from table 2.2 since they often concerned matters relevant to the UK as a whole.

**Table 2.2: Area of geographical relevance of news items, excluding Westminster, with percentage point change between 2007 and 2009**

	Percentage 2007	Percentage 2009	Percentage Point +/-
England	88.5	82.0	-6.5
Northern Ireland	3.2	4.5	+1.3
Scotland	6.0	9.9	+3.9
Wales	2.3	3.6	+1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(N=1,334)</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(N=1,347)</b>	

Focusing on London, in 2007, we noted the high number of news items about Westminster or Downing Street politics – and hence the dominance of Westminster as a political institution (when compared to news from Holyrood, Cardiff Bay or Stormont). Although the proportion of items about Westminster politics remains high, it has fallen across the whole sample from 12.9% of all news items in 2007 to 10.5% of all news items in 2009.

In the 2009 study, we examined the geographical relevance of news items from Westminster in more detail. We found that the majority of Westminster-based news related to UK-wide rather than devolved issues. So, of 619 news items based on Westminster politics, 91.3% concerned the UK as a whole, while 5.5% concerned devolved issues in England or England and Wales<sup>4</sup>. In the case of the BBC, these figures were 92.2% and 4.8% respectively<sup>5</sup>.

By far the biggest Westminster story in this period was the MPs' expenses issue – 37% of Westminster news items were on this topic, with a further 7% related to electoral politics. In policy terms, the biggest Westminster issues were Iraq and Afghanistan (12% of Westminster news items) followed by the economy (5% of Westminster news items), legal issues and defence (both 3.5% of Westminster news items) – all of which concerned the UK as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> A full list of all supplementary item subjects in Westminster-based items is included in the Appendix.

<sup>5</sup> The combined percentages here do not equal 100. The remaining items concerned political process, or were unclear in their geographical applicability.

Table 2.3 below breaks all these data down by news outlets, and includes news items about Westminster as a separate category (as we did in 2007)<sup>6</sup>. It indicates that the most significant increases in the coverage of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were on BBC outlets. So, for example, BBC television items related to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland increased by 6.4%, compared with an increase of 4.7% on BBC radio and an increase of 2.7% across ITV, Channel 4 and Sky. BBC online coverage of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also increased (by 6.2%), although from a much higher base (overall coverage in both 2007 and 2009 is higher online because the sample involved the 'Politics' page, which is more likely to feature stories relevant to devolution, and as Table 2.3 suggests, from Westminster). Table 2.3 also shows a slight increase in news items about Westminster on BBC television and BBC online, with decreases on other television outlets and on BBC radio. Conversely it shows a decrease in the coverage of England by BBC television and online, and increases on BBC radio and other television outlets.

**Table 2.3: Geographical relevance by media outlet (percentage) with percentage point change between 2007 and 2009**

Media	England	% Point Change	Northern Ireland	% Point Change	Scotland	% Point Change	Wales	% Point Change	Westminster	% Point Change	Total
BBC TV	60.3	-8.6	3.7	+1.2	6.7	+3.4	3.8	+1.8	25.5	+2.2	100 N=522
Other TV	67.5	+4.0	3.3	+1.2	4.1	+1.2	1.3	+0.3	23.9	-6.6	100 N=394
BBC Radio	61.4	+6.5	3.4	+2.0	7.2	+2.4	2.2	+0.3	25.9	-11.2	100 N=642
BBC Online	39.0	-10.0	2.1	-1.3	11.2	+5.5	2.7	+2.0	45.0	+3.8	100 N=331
<b>Overall</b>	<b>58.4</b>	<b>-1.7</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>+1.0</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>+3.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>+1.0</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>-3.4</b>	<b>100 N=1,889</b>

Table 2.4 below develops the issue of geographical relevance to look at news items that involve a *reporter on location* in the UK (where a reporter is either live or produces a package on location). It shows that BBC outlets have, overall, increased the proportion of stories reported from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The increase is most striking on BBC television news, where the proportion of news items featuring reporters on location in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland increased by 4.6% from 2007 to 2009 (with 2.6% fewer items reported on location from England, and 2.1% fewer items from Westminster/Downing Street). By contrast, the proportion of news items with reporters on location in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on ITV,

<sup>6</sup> This does include the 5.5% of Westminster-based items that related to issues in England or England and Wales, but where the primary focus of the item was on Westminster politics.

<sup>7</sup> As in 2007, this Table excludes those news items with multiple locations, which constituted only 2% of the total.

Channel 4 and Sky fell by 1.8% points, with their proportion of news items reported on location in England increasing by 9.1% points.

**Table 2.4: Number of items with a reporter on location in one of the four nations by media outlet (percentage)**

Media	England	% Point Change	Northern Ireland	% Point Change	Scotland	% Point Change	Wales	% Point Change	West-Minster	% Point Change	Total
BBC TV	69.4	-2.6	2.8	+0.4	6.1	+2.5	3.4	+1.7	18.3	-2.1	100 N=497
Other TV	77.8	+9.1	0.3	-1.2	1.4	-0.9	1.1	+0.3	19.4	-7.3	100 N=351
BBC Radio	70.4	+8.0	3.4	+0.2	7.7	-1.3	6.4	+3.8	12.0	-10.8	100 N=233
<b>Overall</b>	<b>72.3</b>	<b>+3.4</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>+0.1</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>+0.5</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>+1.7</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>-5.5</b>	<b>100 N=1,081</b>

This gives us *a striking divergence between BBC television and other television broadcasters*. In 2007, the gap between them was significant but not huge – with 7.7% of news items reported only from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the BBC and 4.6% on other channels. In 2009 the gap is much more dramatic, rising to 12.3% on the BBC and falling to only 2.8% on the other channels.

The proportion of reports from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on BBC radio was much higher than elsewhere in 2007, and this has also increased, albeit more modestly, from 14.8% to 17.5% of all news items, mainly due to an increase in the proportion of reports from Wales, which was conspicuously low in 2007 (and slightly offset by a decrease in reports from Scotland, a figure which was notably high in 2007).

Table 2.5 below looks at the main subjects covered by news items in the larger sample and tells a similar story. The ‘Devolution (S, W, NI)’ and ‘Westminster Politics (UK)’ categories are coded in the same way as all other categories, but are highlighted to denote their special significance to the study. For the purposes of clarity, all categories that accounted for less than 1.5% of total coverage have been removed, with the exception of ‘Devolution (S, W, NI)’. The full table is reproduced in the Appendix.

**Table 2.5: Main topics covered by news items by percentage, with percentage point change from 2007 to 2009**

Subject	BBC TV	Change (+/-)	Other TV	Change (+/-)	BBC Radio	Change (+/-)	BBC Online	Change (+/-)	Total %	Change (+/-)
<b>Devolution (S, W, NI)</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>+0.5</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>+0.2</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>+1.8</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>+0.3</b>
<b>Westminster Politics (UK)</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>-4.2</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>-6.4</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>-1.4</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>-3.4</b>
Business	2.4	-1.6	3.2	-0.8	3.3	-1.2	1.1	+0.3	2.7	-1.1
Celebrity / Entertainment News	2.9	-0.4	5.8	+2.7	3.1	+1.7	2.7	-1.7	1.5	-1.2
Crime	9.0	-4.1	10.1	-4.1	5.9	-5.7	9.5	-2.8	8.2	-4.6

Defence	2.2	+1.4	1.9	+1.0	2.2	+2.0	2.0	+2.0	2.1	+1.6
Disaster / Accident / Tragedy	4.6	+1.2	5.2	+0.9	3.8	+2.1	2.7	+1.4	4.2	+1.5
Economy	5.4	+1.6	4.1	+1.6	4.2	+1.8	3.9	+1.6	4.5	+1.7
Education	2.5	-0.1	0.5	-0.6	2.2	+0.6	1.7	-0.4	1.8	-
Environment	2.7	-0.8	2.0	+0.6	2.5	-0.7	0.6	-0.2	2.3	-0.2
Europe / EU	1.4	+1.4	1.0	+0.4	2.3	+0.5	3.5	+1.4	1.9	+0.6
Health NHS	2.2	+0.1	1.8	+0.2	2.2	+0.4	0.9	-	1.9	+0.2
Health General	1.8	-1.1	1.6	-	2.3	-0.5	1.8	-0.1	1.9	-1.0
Immigration / Refugees	0.9	-1.5	0.7	+0.1	0.6	-1.2	1.7	-2.1	8.5	+6.4
Industrial Relations	3.2	+2.2	3.4	+1.7	2.7	+0.6	2.9	+2.5	3.0	+1.5
International	13.7	+4.7	19.8	+8.4	16.3	+3.8	4.8	+0.1	15.0	+4.6
Iraq / Afghanistan	8.8	+5.1	8.5	+3.3	7.3	+3.0	7.7	+6.4	8.0	+4.0
Legal Issues	1.7	+1.2	1.8	+1.8	4.0	+2.6	2.9	+1.8	2.8	+1.8
Media	2.0	+0.2	1.1	-0.7	1.3	-0.7	1.7	-0.8	1.5	-0.4
Policing	1.5	-1.0	1.5	-2.0	1.7	-1.1	1.2	+0.6	1.5	-1.4
Sport	2.3	-1.3	3.4	-2.2	2.8	-	0.5	-2.5	2.5	-1.9
UK Foreign Affairs	2.8	+2.8	2.4	+2.4	1.3	+1.3	2.1	+2.1	2.1	+2.1
Other	0.8	-1.0	1.1	-0.1	2.7	+1.1	3.9	+1.6	2.0	+0.3

We found, overall, a modest increase in the proportion of news items where the main topic involved devolved issues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (up from 1% in 2007 to 1.3% in 2009), but with a notable difference between BBC and other news outlets. The proportion of news items *about* devolved issues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland increased on all BBC outlets, especially in online coverage (from 1.7% to 3.5% of online news items) and on television news (from 0.7% to 1.2% of BBC television news items). The increase in BBC radio was more modest (from 1.0% to 1.2% of radio news items). The proportion of such items on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky actually halved (from 0.6% to 0.3% on news items) suggesting that increases in BBC coverage cannot be attributed to a change in the news agenda in the 2009 sampling period.

Table 2.5 also shows an overall shift in the proportion of news items about Westminster politics (including both domestic and international stories), with a decline from 15.4% in 2007 to 12% in 2009. Although the figures for BBC television and BBC online remained roughly the same, BBC radio contained significantly fewer items about Westminster politics (16.7% to 10.3%).

More generally, Table 2.5 needs to be seen in the context of the news agenda for that period. So, for example, we found an increase in international related news items (most notably those focused on the situation in Iraq/Afghanistan), and fewer crime stories.

Table 2.6 below isolates the 1.3% of stories in which devolved politics in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland was the main subject. Scotland, the largest of the three devolved nations, with significant devolved powers, dominates (as it did in 2007), although the proportional increase in the coverage of Wales and Northern Ireland is higher. The number of Northern Ireland news items almost doubled from seven to 13 and although there remain fewer Welsh news stories, their number increased from one to seven.

News items about devolved politics or issues in Scotland related mainly to the possibility of the Scottish Parliament acquiring new powers (12 out of 35 news items) or the SNP conference, which ran from 15 – 18 October in the first sampled week of the study (nine out of 35 news items). Northern Ireland news items were primarily about increasing powers, with Hillary Clinton's visit to Stormont on 12 and 13 October used as a focal point of the story telling. The increase in Wales news items can be explained by the Welsh Labour leadership contest following the resignation of First Minister Rhodri Morgan, a contest which lasted for almost the duration of the study: five of the seven Wales news items dealt with this election (on BBC One's main weekday news programmes at 1pm, 6pm, and 10pm, the BBC News Channel and Radio 5 live). A chronology of these news stories (in terms of clusters of news items) is set out in the Appendix.

**Table 2.6: Devolution items about Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2009, by number of items, with frequency change**

News item related to	BBC	Change from 2007	Other TV	Change from 2007
Northern Ireland	17	+10	2	+1
Scotland	35	+11	2	0
Wales	7	+6	0	0
General UK	1	-2	0	-1
England and Other	1	-1	0	-1
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>+24</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-1</b>

If we examine the subject matter of the 65 news items related to devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Table 2.7 below), we can see that over half dealt with increasing powers or establishing political independence. Likewise, candidate and party political stories doubled (largely because of the Labour leadership contest in Wales).

Table 2.7 also shows that there are still a relatively small number of policy-related stories related to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. There were four items about education policy in Northern Ireland, concerning the controversy over school selection testing, while we found five 'general' health items related to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, and one specifically about the NHS.

**Table 2.7: Subjects of items relating to devolved nations, with frequency change since 2007**

Subject	All BBC 2009	Other TV 2009	Total 2009	Total +/- Since 2007
Increasing Powers	19	1	20	+20
Independence	11	0	11	+6
Candidate / Leadership / Party Focus	8	0	8	+4

Health General	5	0	5	+5
Education	4	0	4	+4
Taxation	3	1	4	+1
Policing	2	0	2	+1
Peace Process / the Troubles	2	0	2	0
Social Policy (Other)	1	1	2	+2
Economy	1	0	1	-7
Environmental Issues	1	0	1	+1
Public Opinion (General)	1	0	1	+1
Power Sharing	0	1	1	+1
Other (SNP charity relief plan)	1	0	1	-1
N/A (No supplementary topic)	2	0	2	-14
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>N/A*</b>
<b>Total excluding N/A</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>N/A*</b>

\*Totals exclude categories that featured in 2007, but not in 2009

We can develop this analysis by looking at the larger sample, in order to identify the subject matter of those news items related to (or about) a particular nation. Table 2.8 looks at those instances when news items across the whole sample were specifically related to one of the four nations (this refers to the focus of the item, not the location of the reporter). Items related to: the UK as a whole; items about political process at Westminster with no policy relevance; and international news items (not concerning the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with their inherent relevance for defence policy) are excluded.

In 2007, one of our most striking findings was that of the 161 news items dealing with the key devolved areas of health and education, 160 were related to England, while on BBC outlets all of the 136 news items about health or education were related to England. In 2009, although England remains the focal point of news about health and education, we see a greater spread across the four nations. 104 of the 112 BBC items about health or education were related to (or about) England, with eight about the other three nations. On other news channels, we found two out of 20 health items and education news items related to Scotland and Wales.

**Table 2.8: Subjects covered by items about the four nations on BBC outlets, with frequency change between 2007 and 2009<sup>8</sup>**

Subject	England		Northern Ireland		Scotland		Wales		Total Frequency	(+/-)
	2009	(+/-)	2009	(+/-)	2009	(+/-)	2009	(+/-)		
<b>Devolution (S, W, NI)</b>	-	-1	13	+6	39	+13	7	+6	59	+24
<b>Westminster Politics (UK)</b>	24	-25	2	+2	12	+12	1	+1	39	-10
Arts (High)	25	+2	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	+2
Business	8	+5	-	-	-	-1	-	-	8	+4
Candidate/Leadership/ Party Focus	15	+14	-	-	27	+27	-	-	42	+41
Celebrity / Entertainment News	26	-	1	+1	-	-	1	+1	28	+2

<sup>8</sup> Certain subjects with very few items, and no change between 2007 and 2009, have been omitted for purposes of clarity

Consumer News	4	-	-	-	1	-1	-	-	5	-1
Crime General / Corporate	9	-8	-	-	-	-1	1	-1	10	-10
Crime Individual	206	-30	2	-8	19	+2	18	+7	245	-29
Defence	12	+7	-	-	-	-	1	+1	13	+8
Diplomacy	3	-11	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-11
Disaster / Accident / Tragedy	121	+93	1	-9	2	-	11	+10	135	+94
Economy	5	-2	-	-	5	+4	-	-	10	+2
Education	56	-6	4	+4	-	-	-	-	60	-2
Environment	12	-11	-	-	-	-5	3	-	15	-16
Health NHS	42	-5	-	-	-	-	1	+1	43	-4
Health General	6	-21	-	-	2	+2	1	+1	9	-18
Human Interest	17	-19	-	-	2	+1	2	+2	21	-16
Industrial Relations	8	+2	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	+2
International	6	+3	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	+3
Iraq / Afghanistan	24	+17	-	-	2	+2	1	+1	27	+20
Legal Issues	25	+8	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	+8
Local Government	7	-3	-	-	-	-3	-	-	7	-6
Media	5	-6	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-6
Monarchy	4	-33	-	-	1	+1	-	-	5	-32
Nations Cultural	4	+4	-	-	6	+6	-	-	10	+10
Peace Process / the Troubles	-	-	11	+6	-	-	-	-	11	+6
Policing	23	-47	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	-47
Religion	1	-2	-	-	-	-	-	-1	1	-3
Science / Technology	13	+7	-	-	-	-1	-	-	13	+6
Social Policy (Other)	16	+10	-	-	1	+1	-	-	17	+11
Sport	43	-7	-	-	-	-7	-	-6	43	-20
Terrorism	20	+15	14	+13	-	-	-	-	34	+28
Transport	9	-1	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-1
Weather	7	+7	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	+7
Other	23	+6	-	-	2	+2	-	-1	25	+7
<b>Total</b>	<b>829</b>	<b>-38</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>+15</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>+54</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>+22</b>	<b>1,046</b>	<b>+53</b>

While the overall patterns of coverage show a greater geographical spread for most subjects, a number of topics are still reported solely in relation to England. So, for example, all the news items about the arts in both 2007 and 2009 related to England, as did all the stories about policing – both subjects where we might expect to see Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland represented.

## Summary of findings

Overall, the general sample indicates a number of trends, most notably (for the purposes of this study):

- An increase in the proportion of news items related to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, particularly on the BBC.
- A growing gap between the BBC and other UK broadcasters in their use of reporters on location in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- A modest increase in BBC coverage of devolved issues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with a decrease in coverage from other broadcasters.

A similar pattern emerges in our more detailed analysis of news relevant to devolution in Section 3.

## 3. News Relevant to Devolution and Devolved Issues

Within the general sample of 5,177 items, *we identified 505 news items that had some relevance to devolution*, regardless of whether this was made clear by the news report in question. A number of news items about health or education policy – largely devolved areas – fell within this category, even if they did not actually refer to devolved powers. This corpus of news items constituted just under 10% of the total sample, a slightly higher percentage than in 2007 when just under 8% were relevant to devolution. Of these, 445 were on BBC outlets, with 60 on other news outlets (compared with 314 and 47 respectively in 2007). All the data in this section, including specific examples of individual items, come from this smaller sample of 505 items (unless specified otherwise). While we have largely retained the coding categories used in 2007 for purposes of comparison, we have tried to refine, simplify or develop these categories where possible or appropriate.

Table 3.1 below divides the sample into four broad categories:

- *Relevant Powers Referred To (outside England)* - news items making specific reference to devolved powers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, even if the story was not primarily about these powers. A story about education policy in England that made a comparison to policy in Scotland would be coded in this category, as would a story about education policy in Scotland.
- *Devolved Political Process* - news items referring to politicians, parties or elections in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This would apply to a news item that compared the MPs' expenses scandal in Westminster with the practices in devolved institutions, for example, as would a report about the Welsh Labour leadership election.
- *Whole UK, No Ref to Devolution* - news items that are about general UK-wide issues or events, but which involve areas of devolved authority that are *not* referenced in the news report (referred to in Table 3.1 as 'Whole UK, No Reference to Devolution'). So, for example, a news report about the need for citizenship education to increase



political engagement in the UK that did *not* reference devolved education policy would be coded in this category.

- *England, or England & Other*<sup>9</sup> - news items about England (or England and at least one other devolved nation, usually Wales) concerning policy areas where devolved powers exist. These items may specify that they refer to England (or England and at least one other nation) – a category we look at in more detail in Section 4. A news item based on an Ofsted report on English schools would be coded in this category, regardless of whether the report specified that it only applied to England.

**Table 3.1: Number of news items relevant to devolution by media, with frequency change between 2007 and 2009**

Devolved Power	BBC TV	Change (+/-)	Other TV	Change (+/-)	BBC Radio	Change (+/-)	BBC Online	Change (+/-)	Total	Change (+/-)
Relevant Powers Referred To (outside England)	29	+17	8	+1	34	+19	21	+9	92	+46
Devolved Politics Process	4	-11	0	-2	2	-5	1	-4	7	-22
Whole UK, No Ref to Devolution	25	+7	9	-6	26	-12	6	-2	66	-13
England, or England & Other	83	+24	43	+20	167	+83	47	+6	340	+133
<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>+37</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>+13</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>+85</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>+9</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>+144</b>

If we compare 2007 with 2009, a number of points emerge:

1. We found a substantial increase in the number of news items on BBC outlets that referred to devolved powers outside England. The number of such stories more than doubled across BBC radio, television and online (from 39 to 84). This is in notable contrast to other news outlets, where the numbers remained at roughly the same level as in 2007. The use of other news outlets is useful here, since it indicates that the increase in the number of BBC references to devolved issues or policies is based on a shift in BBC culture. Had there been a straightforward increase in the volume of news on these topics in the 2009 sample period, we would have expected an increase in other news outlets too. In short, the BBC has changed while ITV, Sky and Channel 4 have not.
2. The number of devolved political ‘process’ stories decreased across all outlets from 29 to just seven in 2009, suggesting that the coverage of devolved politics or issues in this period was largely policy oriented. The figures from 2007 were boosted by a story featured across several

<sup>9</sup> A full breakdown of items about England and one or more nations is set out in Table 4.1 (Section 4, below).

news outlets about the Scottish Labour leader, Wendy Alexander, and contributions to her leadership campaign. The politicians' expenses story was still making news during the period of our 2009 sample, but in UK broadcast news this story remained confined to Westminster (at least in this period).

3. We see a small decrease in the number of the news items categorised as 'Whole UK, No Reference to Devolution' from 79 in 2007 to 66 in 2009 (except on BBC television, where there is a small increase from 18 to 25). These refer to items that are presented in general terms about issues that are relevant to the whole UK, but that concern a devolved policy area not referenced in the news report. These items do not make misleading or inaccurate statements about the application of a particular policy, they simply make no reference to areas of devolved power/policy.

So, for example, we found a number of items about plans by the Westminster government to fast-track the construction of nuclear power stations through an overhaul of planning procedures for large infrastructure projects (reported on various outlets on 9 November 2009). The framing of many of these items concerned the need for further provision of nuclear power.

This is a complex area since energy policy is not devolved, but planning procedures are. Indeed, it is by using the ability to obstruct such planning that the SNP government has been able to enact its anti-nuclear power strategy, and this may be the reason that all of the proposed sites for nuclear power stations were located in England and Wales with none in Scotland. This story thus concerned the UK, but contained elements of relevant devolved powers.

*BBC News at One* on 9 November 2009 contained an item on this topic, in which no reference was made to the ability of the Scottish Parliament to exercise power over this issue. *World at One* also made no reference to the role of the Scottish Parliament. By contrast, *BBC News at Six* (9 November 2009) *did* refer to Scotland's powers in this area, albeit without specifying that the powers were not directly related to the main topic (energy), but their powers over planning:

The government has to keep the lights on; it also wants to cut carbon emissions. And ministers say the nuclear option is needed for both. So they've streamlined the planning system to give a fast track to projects like new nuclear stations. And here they are [points to map with UK highlighted]: ten sites, each of them at or near places already used for generating nuclear power, dotted all round the coastline. The decision doesn't fully apply to Scotland, which has devolved authority. (*BBC News at Six*, 9 November 2009)

This version of the item was retained for *BBC News at Ten*. The items on *BBC News at One* and Radio 4's *World at One* items were thus coded as 'Whole UK, No Reference to Devolution', and the items on *BBC News at Six* and *BBC News at Ten* as 'Relevant Powers Referred To (outside England)'.

4. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the largest group of news items in Table 3.1, in line with the 2007 study, are those that referred only to England (or England and at least one other nation) with over two thirds falling within this category.

It should be noted here that one of the main findings of the 2007 study was that in news items related to devolved stories in England, reporters did not always make it clear that the story they were covering referred *only* to England (or that different policy regimes existed in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). Accordingly, in 2009 we decided to break this category down even further – the results of which are outlined in Section 4.

In 2009 we found 522 references to devolved powers or authorities across the 505 news items. This is a dramatic increase from 2007, when we found just 83 references across 361 items. Tables 3.2 and 3.3 below look specifically at all these references, categorising them as follows:

- *Explicit* references to the ability of a devolved assembly (or Westminster in the case of legislation in England) to make and enact policy.
- *Implicit* references that a devolved assembly (or Westminster in the case of England news items) has competence in that area. References were usually seen as implicit when they stated where the story *does* apply (generally England), without detailing where and why it doesn't apply.
- *No Reference* – a category new to the 2009 study, noting instances when references to devolved powers would have clarified the remit of the story but were not included. In most cases, this refers to whole news items.

Table 3.2 below summarises the 2009 findings across the 505 news items.<sup>10</sup> Again, we see a clear difference between the BBC and other UK broadcasters. On BBC outlets, 71% of news items relevant to devolution (38% explicit and 33% implicit) contained at least one explicit or implicit reference to devolved powers and only 29% did not. But on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky, only 43% of relevant news items contained such references (19% explicit and 24% implicit) while 57% did not.

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<sup>10</sup> Since there were multiple references within some news items, 'explicit' refers to any item containing at least one explicit reference, 'implicit' to any item containing at least one implicit reference but no explicit references, and 'no reference' to an item with no explicit or implicit references.

**Table 3.2: Percentage of explicit / implicit / no references to devolved powers (n=505)**

BBC Outlets			Other TV Outlets		
Explicit	Implicit	No Reference	Explicit	Implicit	No Reference
38%	33%	29%	19%	24%	57%

Table 3.3 below looks at references to devolved issues and powers in more detail, and includes every reference across the corpus of news items relevant to devolution (as we did in 2007) as well as those occasions when news items relevant to devolution contained no references to devolved powers or issues. The most striking difference between 2007 and 2009 is the sheer number of references on BBC outlets. While the number of news items relevant to devolution increased from 2007 to 2009 by 40% (from 361 to 505 news items), the number of *references* to devolution increased nearly sevenfold on BBC outlets (71 to 480) and threefold on other channels.

In 2007, the main issues covered by these references were health, education, policing/crime and tax or economy – the last being somewhat surprising, since taxation and economic issues are largely non-devolved areas. 2009 was, in some senses, more predictable, with health, education (much of which is devolved across the four nations) and policing (largely devolved in Scotland) attracting the bulk of attention. Particularly notable is the significant increase in references to devolved policies or issues in news items about crime, policing or law, although this is largely confined to BBC outlets, where the number of references increased from 12 to 151. On other broadcast news programmes, the increase in relation to policing went from just one to three references – with eight instances of a failure to reference relevant devolved powers.

**Table 3.3: Number of explicit / implicit / no references to devolved powers by subject with frequency change between 2007 and 2009 (n= 522 references across 505 news items)<sup>11</sup>**

Devolved Powers	BBC Outlets (2009)					Other TV Outlets (2009)				
	Explicit	Change (+/-)	Implicit	Change (+/-)	No Reference	Explicit	Change (+/-)	Implicit	Change (+/-)	No Reference
Health	35	+22	44	+44	42	7	+4	11	+11	14
Family	5	+5	1	+1	1	0	-	0	-	0
Crime / Policing / Law	77	+66	74	+73	42	1	-	2	+2	8
Tax or Economy	17	+4	0	-3	0	2	-1	0	-	0
Transport	9	+9	0	-	0	0	-1	0	-	0
Constitutional Reform	18	+18	1	+1	0	0	-	0	-	0

<sup>11</sup> Table 3.3 does not include categories that featured in 2007, but not in 2009. These were: Animal Welfare (1 explicit reference in 2007); Culture (3 explicit references); and Equal Rights (2 implicit references).

Education	39	+25	49	+47	24	0	-2	2	+2	5
Environment	8	+6	1	+1	5	0	-	0	-	0
Social Policy	1	-3	16	+16	6	1	-1	1	+1	2
Economic Regeneration	1	-1	0	-	0	0	-	0	-	0
Other	0	+5	26	+24	7	1	+1	8	+8	3
Utilities	0	-	27	+27	0	0	-	0	-	0
Rural Affairs	0	-	0	-	1	0	-	0	-	1
None	31	+31	0	-	0	5	+5	0	-	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>+187</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>+231</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>+24</b>	<b>33</b>

N.B. 'No Reference' was not monitored in 2007 so comparisons can not be made

Table 3.4 below shows the number of comparisons made between nations with regard to devolved issues and powers. In the 2007 study, we found only a few instances where comparisons were made between devolved nations, all of which were passing references rather than more substantive comparisons. *We found a notable increase in the number of comparisons made in 2009*, the numbers almost doubling from 24 comparisons made in 2007 to 47 made in 2009 (Table 3.4). This increase is entirely accounted for by BBC outlets, where the number of comparisons increased from 19 to 44. While there was a larger number of news items relevant to devolved issues or politics in 2009 (up from 361 in 2007 to 505 news items in 2009), it is worth noting that on other news outlets, the number of comparisons actually fell from seven to three – with all three comparisons being found on Channel 4.

The table also shows which subjects these comparisons involved and breaks them down by media. The performance of BBC television is worth noting here. Even though there were more BBC radio stories in our sample, BBC television used the highest number of comparisons – in contrast to Sky or ITV, where we found no comparisons between nations at all.

While these figures undoubtedly indicate that there has been a clear development in the reporting of devolved issues for BBC outlets, 44 comparisons across 445 BBC news items relevant to devolution suggests that such comparisons are still the exception rather than the rule.

**Table 3.4: Number of comparisons between devolved nations by subject with frequency change between 2007 and 2009**

Subject Compared	BBC TV	Change since 2007	Other TV	+/-	BBC Radio	+/-	BBC Online	+/-	Total	+/-
Education	8	+6	0	-1	6	+4	1	0	15	+9
Health	3	+2	1	-1	3	0	2	0	9	+1
Crime/Law/Policing	4	-1	1	0	5	+5	4	+3	14	+7
Devolution	0	0	0	0	2	+2	1	+1	3	+3
Environment	2	+2	0	0	1	+1	0	0	3	+3
Economy	1	+1	0	-1	0	-2	0	0	1	-2
Rural Affairs	1	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	+1
Utilities	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Transport	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>-1</b>	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>-1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>+11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>+10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>+21</b>

Table 3.5 below shows the political contributors interviewed in news items relevant to devolved issues or powers in 2009, noting the change since 2007. Although we continue to find a preponderance of UK (Westminster) politicians used as interviewees (reflecting the dominance of items based in England), this has lessened. Indeed, the proportion of politicians interviewed from parties based outside of England but within the UK doubled – from 15% of politicians interviewed in 2007 to 32% in 2009. Again, this increase is entirely accounted for by BBC outlets, where the proportion increased from 15% to 33%. On other news outlets, the proportion again fell slightly, from 21% to 17%.

**Table 3.5: Politicians interviewed<sup>12</sup> in devolution-related items, with frequency change since 2007 (2009 N=505)**

Politician	BBC Outlets		Other TV		Total	
	2009 <i>N</i>	<i>N</i> (+/-)	2009 <i>N</i>	<i>N</i> (+/-)	2009 <i>N</i>	Total (+/-)
UK Labour	86	<b>-35</b>	8	<b>-6</b>	94	<b>-41</b>
UK Conservative	32	<b>-28</b>	3	<b>-6</b>	35	<b>-34</b>
UK Lib Dem	13	<b>-9</b>	0	<b>-2</b>	13	<b>-11</b>
UK Green	0	<b>-5</b>	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>-5</b>
SNP	26	<b>+12</b>	2	<b>-5</b>	28	<b>+7</b>
Scot. Labour	3	<b>-4</b>	0	<b>0</b>	3	<b>-4</b>
Scot. Conservative	4	<b>+3</b>	0	<b>0</b>	4	<b>+3</b>
Scot. Lib Dem	4	<b>0</b>	0	<b>0</b>	4	<b>0</b>
Scot. Green	0	<b>-1</b>	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>-1</b>
Plaid Cymru	0	<b>-1</b>	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>-1</b>
Welsh Labour	15	<b>+15</b>	0	<b>0</b>	15	<b>+15</b>
DUP	5	<b>+2</b>	0	<b>0</b>	5	<b>+2</b>
Sinn Fein	8	<b>+5</b>	0	<b>0</b>	8	<b>+5</b>
UUP	0	<b>-1</b>	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>-1</b>
SDLP	0	<b>-1</b>	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>-1</b>
Alliance Party	0	<b>-1</b>	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>-1</b>
Eng. Council Con	0	<b>-5</b>	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>-5</b>
Eng. Council Lab	2	<b>+1</b>	0	<b>0</b>	2	<b>+1</b>
Eng. Council LD	0	<b>-1</b>	0	<b>0</b>	0	<b>-1</b>
Independent	1	<b>+1</b>	0	<b>0</b>	1	<b>+1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>-53</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>-19</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>-72</b>

## Summary of findings

<sup>12</sup> In the 2007 study, these were referred to as 'Political Sources'. It was decided to change this, due to the potential confusion of the term 'sources' in a journalistic context

Our general sample, reported in Section 2, suggested a growing contrast between BBC outlets, who devoted greater attention than in the 2007 study to devolved politics and issues, and other news broadcasters, whose coverage remained at low or lower levels than in 2007. Our analysis of news items relevant to devolution paints a similar picture.

The number of references to devolved powers across the four nations increased dramatically – sevenfold on the BBC and threefold on other channels. But we found a number of notable contrasts between the BBC and other broadcasters, all of which suggested increasing sensitivity since 2007 about the devolved nature of many issues across the BBC, while the same measures show little change in the approach of other broadcasters.

- The number of news items referring to devolved powers or authorities outside England doubled between 2007 and 2009 on BBC outlets but remained at the same level on other news outlets.
- On the BBC, 71% of news items relevant to devolution made at least one explicit or implicit reference to devolved powers. This compares with only 43% on ITV, Sky and Channel 4.
- BBC outlets were twice as likely as other broadcasters to make *explicit* references to devolution (38% on BBC outlets compared to 19% on other news outlets).
- Although the number of news items making comparisons between devolved nations remains low, this number doubled on BBC outlets, while falling slightly on other channels.
- The proportion of politicians interviewed from parties based outside of England but within the UK doubled on BBC outlets, while it fell slightly on other channels.

In short, our findings indicate that the BBC's ability to inform the public about stories implicating devolved issues and politics has improved since 2007. Other broadcasters, however, have done little better – in some cases worse – than in 2007, and, in this regard a clear gap has emerged between the BBC and other broadcasters.

## 4. Devolution in Detail: New Measures in the 2009 Study

Sections 2 and 3 have established a clear picture of the progress made by the BBC in the coverage of devolved issues and policies since 2007. We found

improvements – in some cases, striking improvements – in every area where comparisons were possible. In this section, we turn to new or more refined categories of analysis added in 2009, so that we might explore issues raised by the 2007 study. Since these are new forms of analysis, no meaningful comparisons with 2007 are possible. We can, however, continue to compare BBC outlets with the record of other UK broadcasters.

One of the key issues raised by the 2007 study was the tendency of UK network news, both on the BBC and other channels, to cover stories that only applied to England (or England and Wales) *as if* they were relevant to the UK as a whole. This usually involved a failure to inform audiences about the geographical relevance of a policy or issue (typically in devolved areas like education, health or policing).

Indeed, the 2007 study suggested that the main problem with broadcast coverage of devolution was not blatant or overtly inaccurate reporting: we found no litany of egregiously false statements or unsubstantiated claims. The problem was much more likely to be a sin of omission- specifically the failure of UK broadcasters to inform audiences when policies or issues applied only to part of the UK (usually England) rather than UK-wide. To the well-informed listener or viewer, this is arguably less of a problem. If they know enough about devolution, they can make an informed assumption about its geographical relevance. So, for example, they might hear a story describing a debate about schools and know - without being told - that it applies only to schools in England.

Unfortunately, public knowledge about devolution in the UK remains patchy at best. When a UK broadcaster covers a story about schools but does not specify where it applies, viewers or listeners may well assume that it applies to *all* schools in the UK. It is, after all, reasonable to assume - unless we are told otherwise - that when a domestic story is being told by a UK broadcaster, it applies to all four nations. The failure to provide the appropriate geographical context for a story is, therefore, potentially misleading.

Accordingly, we added two new levels of analysis to shed light on the extent of this problem. First, we drilled down into the 340 news items relevant to devolution (identified in Table 3.1 in Section 3 above) that applied to England (or England and at least one other devolved nation, usually Wales) to see how often their geographical applicability *was* specified. Second, we switched our focus away from an analysis of overtly inaccurate coverage to include every instance where coverage was potentially misleading.

The complexities of devolution mean that some stories may only apply to England, some only to England and Wales, and some to England, Wales and either Scotland or Northern Ireland. We categorised all these news items in three ways:



- Those that made it clear that they were about England (or England and at least one other nation).
- Those that failed to specify that the story referred only to England (or England and at least one other nation).
- Those that were confusing about their geographical applicability in the UK.

Table 4.1 below shows that most of these news items were about stories that applied specifically to England, while most of the others referred to England and Wales. Table 4.1 also indicates that, on BBC outlets at least, the majority of news items about England (or England and at least one other nation) stated correctly that the policy focus of the item applied only to England (or England and at least one other nation).

There is, however, a notable difference between BBC outlets and other broadcasters in this regard. 60% of BBC news items (correctly) identified when a story applied only to England (or England and at least one other nation), while other broadcasters only made this fact clear in 36% of the relevant items. In most cases, then, viewers of ITV, Channel 4 or Sky may have been left with the impression what was happening in England actually applied UK-wide.

Where the application of a given policy was either not reported or misreported (for example, an item where policy is stated as being UK-wide, but in reality applies only in England), the item was coded in the 'Not Stated' categories (this includes all instances where it was not stated, and where it was not accurately stated). The small number of cases where items were confused about where they applied (bottom two rows in Table 4.1) is outlined below.

**Table 4.1: Number of England (or England and...) based news items that specified their applicability, by media in 2009**

<b>Devolved Power</b>	<b>BBC TV</b>	<b>Other TV</b>	<b>BBC Radio</b>	<b>BBC Online</b>	<b>BBC Total</b>	<b>Total</b>
England Only – <b>Stated</b>	40	13	56	14	<b>110</b>	<b>123</b>
England and Wales Only – <b>Stated</b>	12	2	32	12	<b>56</b>	<b>58</b>
England, Wales and N. Ireland Only - <b>Stated</b>	2	0	5	4	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
England Only - <b>Not Stated</b>	16	19	37	9	<b>62</b>	<b>81</b>
England and Wales Only - <b>Not Stated</b>	5	6	23	6	<b>34</b>	<b>40</b>
England, Wales and Scotland Only - <b>Not Stated</b>	4	1	5	1	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
England, Wales and N. Ireland Only - <b>Not Stated</b>	2	2	0	0	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
England Only – <b>Confused</b>	2	0	7	0	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>
England and Wales Only - <b>Confused</b>	0	0	2	1	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>340</b>

Although the BBC's performance in this area is significantly better than that of the other broadcasters in the sample, we still found 108 news items (36% of items in this category) on BBC outlets that did not specify *where* in the UK the story applied (i.e. all items in 'Not Stated' categories). The failure to specify that a story applied only to England (or England and other devolved nations) often involved reporters taking the lead from interviewees who also failed to do so. So, for example, the following item from the BBC online 'Politics' page on 9 November 2009 took its lead from Conservative Party proposals:

**Tories in social home 'swap' plan**

**The Conservatives have outlined plans to help social housing tenants who want to move find properties elsewhere in the country.**

Its new "affordable house swap programme" will use a new database of properties to match tenants with suitable homes. The Tories say every family will be able to take part wherever they live. Ministers gave the go-ahead for 2,000 new council homes in September amid concerns about a growing shortage. The Tories say that social tenants who need to relocate, either for work or family reasons, are often prevented from doing so.

"If you are a social tenant, you do not have the same opportunities as other renters or homeowners," said shadow housing minister Grant Shapps. "The system means that your aspirations are squeezed, your expectations lowered, and your horizons are limited." The Conservatives also plan to set up a body to look at ways of improving mobility for social housing tenants, on which housing associations, council and tenants' organisations will be represented. (*BBC online 'Politics'*, 9 November 2009)

This is a Westminster initiative that applies only to England (housing is a policy area devolved to the legislatures in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). The location of this story on the BBC's 'Politics' page, however, gives the impression that this is a policy that would, if enacted, have ramifications for the entire UK. The fact that the source for the story also gives this impression clearly makes the reporter's job more difficult (a point we will take up later in this section).

Another example concerns the treatment of a government proposal – relating only to England – that all nurses will, from 2013, be required to possess a degree. An item on *5 live Breakfast* began:

Now, at the moment, if you want to become a nurse you can choose to do a degree or a diploma. But by 2013 – so, not long – all that will have changed and you will only be able to become a nurse if you have a degree. (*5 live Breakfast*, 12 November 2009)

There then followed an interview with the Chief Executive of the Nursing and Midwifery Council. During the item, no reference was made to the fact that this policy would apply only in England or that Scotland and Wales already practise this policy (which is scheduled to come into effect in Northern Ireland in 2011).

A small number – 12 (or 4%) of the BBC news items about England (or England and at least one other nation) – were classified as confusing on the basis that viewers or listeners might have been left wondering *which* of the four nations was under discussion. These cases often involved conflicting statistics or statements that, without any clear statement about its geographical applicability, could cause confusion as to the scope of the policy. So for example, on the BBC News Channel an item about a report condemning the administering of anti-psychotic drugs to dementia patients in England used a number of geographic contexts during the course of the item. Residential homes and care policy is a devolved issue: however, the item moved from statistics about England to statistics about the UK and then back to case studies in England without making it clear where the story applied. It began:

800 people suffering from dementia are dying every year because they are being given powerful anti-psychotic drugs they don't need. A report for the government says almost 150,000 people in England are prescribed the medicines when they shouldn't be. Anti-psychotic drugs are normally used to treat people with schizophrenia, but in some care homes and hospitals, they are also used to treat dementia patients. (*BBC News Channel* 12 November, 2009)

The use of England statistics may give the impression that the story is about England. But the item then moved to a report in which several figures are quoted from 'UK' statistics, including the 150,000 figure ascribed to England in the presenter's introduction. At this point, the viewer is required to revise their initial impression, since it now appears that the context for the story is the UK as a whole. The rest of the report looks at case studies in England, and are largely context free, though a case study on good practice in caring for dementia patients in a residential home is followed by the observation that:

Care like this doesn't come cheap, and though the government has promised action, some are asking whether the resources are there.

The use of the term 'the government' is, given the earlier ambiguity, confusing. This item thus contains inconsistent figures that, in the absence of a clear statement about the story's geographical remit, confuse the facts surrounding the geographical relevance of the story.

We now turn to a more detailed look at potentially misleading or confusing coverage of devolution. The 2007 analysis in this area was limited, so we enhanced the coding frame used to monitor these categories in order to capture every instance where coverage may be potentially misleading. This has meant that we have been more all encompassing in our analysis of potentially misleading and/or confusing coverage in 2009, making direct comparisons with 2007 impossible. However, this did not prevent us from being able to consider how the BBC's performance compares with other broadcasters.

Table 4.2 looks at the overall percentage of news items relevant to devolution that contained confusing or potentially misleading information. This includes those instances when news items did not include references to the geographical applicability of a story when it was appropriate to do so. When we compare BBC television with ITV, Channel 4 and Sky, we find that while 18.4% of BBC television news items about devolved issues contained potentially misleading or confusing information, 50% of items related to devolved issues on other television channels did so.

**Table 4.2: Percentage of news items about devolution containing potentially misleading or confusing information (N = 505)**

	2009
All Items	29.9
All BBC Items	27.2
BBC TV	18.4
BBC Radio	34.1
BBC Online	22.7
Other TV	50.0

We can also see that radio coverage is more likely to be potentially misleading or confusing about devolved issues than television or online news. This cannot be explained by the addition of *5 live Breakfast* in 2009, since its proportion of potentially misleading or confusing news items was broadly in line with radio as whole<sup>13</sup>. The most plausible explanation is that many of the radio programmes in our sample tend to be structured around recently developing stories, where there is less time to prepare and where most reports are live. It is also the case that on radio the same story may generate a number of news items leading to the proliferation of the same potentially misleading or confusing assumptions.

Table 4.3 categorises these instances of confusing or potentially misleading reporting in more detail, recording every instance of such reporting within a news item (as opposed to simply coding the item itself as containing confusing or potentially misleading information). In line with the data presented in Table 4.1, Table 4.3 shows that the most instances of potentially confusing coverage involved incorrect assumptions about the UK-wide applicability of a story. Most of the errors in job titles, for example, tend to follow from these assumptions.

<sup>13</sup> Without *5 live Breakfast*, the radio proportion of inaccuracies drops by just one per cent.

**Table 4.3: 2009 Number of instances of potentially misleading or confusing information**

	Media				Total
	BBC TV	Other TV	BBC Radio	BBC Online	
Assumption of UK-wide applicability	19	26	65	15	<b>125</b>
Confusion of geographical terms	5	6	12	2	<b>25</b>
Error in job title, etc.	7	9	14	8	<b>38</b>
Other misleading information	3	1	6	0	<b>10</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>198</b>

So, for example, on 12 October 2009 BBC online UK reported a story headlined: “Childcare swaps ‘outside rules’”. The item was introduced with the statement that:

Inspectors should not interfere in private arrangements between friends looking after each other’s children, says Children’s Secretary Ed Balls. (*BBC online UK*, 12 October 2009)

This introduction gave Ed Balls the title ‘Children’s Secretary’ (his official title is Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families with a remit largely confined to England). The general term ‘Children’s Secretary’, *without any contextual information specifying his specific English remit*, could be interpreted to mean that he has responsibility, equally generally, for the whole UK. In this context this is potentially misleading. The item continued:

Mr. Balls has written to education watchdog Ofsted to say this is not the intention of childcare legislation.

Again, it was not mentioned that the watchdog in question – Ofsted – has powers only in England, nor that the Childcare Act of 2006 applies to England and Wales only. Nothing in the subsequent report clarified these points<sup>14</sup>. As we found in a number of such cases, it should be noted that Ofsted itself consistently fails to mention the limits of its scope in its literature.

This last point is worth stressing, since it suggests that the failure to state where stories apply may often be the product of pervasive and institutional England-centric assumptions among officials rather than simply being the fault of broadcasters. While journalists may be remiss in clarifying or failing to correct them, the widespread presence of such assumptions across English institutions undoubtedly makes their job more difficult.

Similarly, on 14 October 2009 the *Today* programme reported on the Conservatives’ call for government to increase the number of university places. The item reported that:

<sup>14</sup> This example was coded as containing two potentially misleading statements: one concerning job title; and the other concerning Ofsted’s remit.

New figures obtained by the Conservatives show that 140,000 University applicants in the UK have failed to get places so far this year. That's about 30,000 more than at this time last year. The Tories want the government to create more University places, but ministers say there are already record numbers of students. (*Today*, 14 October 2009)

This item failed to mention (at any point) that this is a devolved area of responsibility. Again, this failure appears to originate from the initial claims. The same occurred across a range of 12 news items across BBC outlets on 25 November, with reports of a Conservative claim (latterly found to be incorrect) that two schools run by a foundation with links to Hizb ut-Tahrir had received £113,000 from a government scheme. The government scheme in question was the Extended Schools Pathfinder Project, which applies only in England. The related issue of funding for religious schools, which often arose as a related topic in the items, is also subject to devolution. The story was generally covered, however, as a UK-wide story.

In other instances the assumptions about UK-wide applicability did not appear to come from the source. So, for example, a report into the rise of cases of Down's syndrome on BBC News Channel between 5-6pm on 27 October 2009 began:

The number of cases of Down's syndrome detected in pregnancy has risen by 70% in the past 20 years. Researchers at the University of London say the increase is due to improved screening, and more older women becoming pregnant. The percentage of women choosing to terminate pregnancy after a positive Down's syndrome test has not changed. (*BBC News Channel*, 27 October 2009)

In the introduction, as in the rest of the news item, no mention was made of the fact that the report and statistics quoted relate to a project measuring cases of Down's syndrome only in England and Wales<sup>15</sup>, or that health is a devolved policy area.

Overall, and in keeping with our other findings, the proportion of instances of potentially misleading or confusing reporting was much higher on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky than the BBC. On the BBC, we found 156 such instances across 448 items (there may, of course, be more than one instance within an item) relevant to devolution (around one instance for every three news items). This compared to 42 instances across 57 news items on other outlets.

Finally, an area of analysis we expanded for the 2009 study was the nature of comparisons between devolved powers, shown in Table 4.4 below.

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<sup>15</sup> "This research is based on the National Down's Syndrome Cytogenetic Register – a unique resource held at Queen Mary, University of London which has recorded almost all Down's syndrome pregnancies and births in England and Wales since 1989" (<http://www.qmul.ac.uk/media/news/items/smd/20193>)

Specifically, we looked at which nations were compared, and whether comparisons were substantive or made only in passing.

In 2007 we identified no instances where *substantive* comparisons were made; in 2009 there were 14 – all on BBC outlets (this includes 5 instances where there was a substantive comparison between two or three nations *and* where another nation’s powers/policies were mentioned in passing). So, for example, a number of BBC outlets covered a story about proposals in England to move to a more play-based infant curriculum by interviewing a teacher in Wales, pointing out that such a curriculum had already been introduced there – precisely the kind of informative comparison that was missing in 2007 (this story is covered in more depth in Case Study 2 in Section 5 below).

While there had been a significant increase in both the total amount of comparisons, and in the inclusion of a number of substantive comparisons, it should be noted that of the 47 cases only one did not feature England as a comparator.

**Table 4.4: Number of comparisons between nations (BBC and other news outlets)**

Comparison	BBC			Other TV		
	Substantive	Passing	Total	Substantive	Passing	Total
England, Scotland, Wales, NI	2	10	12	0	2	2
England, Scotland, Wales	3	12	15	0	0	0
England, Wales, NI	4	0	4	0	0	0
England & Wales	3	2	5	0	0	0
England & Scotland	2	4	6	0	1	1
England & NI	0	1	1	0	0	0
Scotland & NI	0	1	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

## Summary

Sections 2 and 3 suggest that BBC coverage of devolved issues has improved since 2007, especially in comparison with other broadcasters. In this section our new areas of analysis suggest that, in line with Sections 2 and 3, confusing or potentially misleading coverage is less likely to occur on the BBC than elsewhere. However, this section has also allowed us to identify more clearly the most conspicuous area in need of improvement. The most significant source of potentially misleading or confusing coverage arises when news items about England (or England and at least one other devolved nation) do not make the geographical applicability of the story clear. In most

cases, this involves news items about England or England and Wales being presented, as far as audiences without a detailed knowledge of devolution are concerned, as if they apply to the UK as a whole. We look further at this issue in one of our case studies.

Our expanded analysis of comparisons between nations suggests that on the BBC there has been an increase in the volume of comparisons between nations, particularly in a substantive fashion.

## 5. Case Studies

We have chosen two of the three case studies in response to our quantitative findings. The first focuses on an example of the kind of reporting we highlight in Section 4: stories about England or England and Wales which are generally reported as if they apply UK-wide. The second case study looks at examples of good practice – instances which increased in 2009 – where reporters take the opportunity to compare and contrast policy between nations. The third case study contrasts coverage of stories involving devolved issues or powers on network bulletins and the subsequent opt-outs.

### Case Study 1: A review of police cautions

We have chosen this case study to exemplify the most common form of misleading coverage identified in Section 4: instances where news reports limited to England or England and Wales give the impression that they refer to the whole UK.

On 9 November 2009 the Justice Secretary, Jack Straw, announced that a review would take place about how police cautions are dealt with. While the Justice Secretary's review has implications for England and Wales, it has none for Northern Ireland or for Scotland, where criminal justice is devolved to the Scottish Parliament and the police do not use the cautions system.

Ten news items in the sample covered this story. There was one *BBC News at Six* television news item, two online pieces and six radio items (three on the *World at One*, two on *PM* and one on Radio 4's *Six O'Clock News*). Of the other news outlets, only *Channel 4 News* dealt with the story.

On both the BBC television and radio items, the reporting of the police review did not make clear that the story applied only to England and Wales, or that Scotland does not have a cautions system. *Channel 4 News* likewise made no reference to it. It was left to BBC News online to point out that Scottish police do not issue cautions. No news outlet explicitly stated that the review was not relevant to Northern Ireland.



### Lack of devolved context

The review of police cautions was not a major news story. Some news outlets dealt with the announcement in brief, without explaining that Scotland makes its own criminal justice decisions or that the review was not relevant to Northern Ireland. So, for example, on *BBC News at Six*, the news presenter George Alagiah summarised the review by stating:

The Justice Secretary, Jack Straw, has announced a review of the way the police use cautions and out-of-court fines. A BBC *Panorama* investigation to be broadcast this evening found such penalties being used to deal with some violent offences. Mr. Straw said that guidance was clear, but that the review would examine how it was applied. (*BBC News at Six*, 9 November 2009)

By referring to the “criminal justice system” without explaining that it is fully devolved in Scotland or that it does not impact on Northern Ireland policing, the introduction to the story implied that the review is relevant to UK-wide network audiences.

*Channel 4 News* – the only other news outlet to cover the story – similarly presented just a brief presenter-only item:

The way the police issue cautions and fixed-penalty notices is to be reviewed. The Justice Secretary, Jack Straw, said that the assessment would be carried out jointly with the Home Office. Up to 40,000 assaults are dealt with by a caution every year... (*Channel 4 News*, 9 November 2009)

There was, again, a lack of context about where this story applied in the introduction to the story. The “police” were mentioned in a general way while “40,000 assaults” were referenced without explaining that this source – which is contextualised in the more detailed radio examples provided below – referred to figures in England and Wales.

### England and Wales only interviewees

BBC Radio 4's *World at One* programme spent more time than television news covering the story with a package from *Panorama*, including an interview with the Director of Public Prosecutions, and interviews with a BBC criminal justice journalist and Jack Straw, the Justice Secretary. In each case, however, the relevance of the review across the four nations was not contextualised. The introduction to the story began by asking:

Are police and prosecutors handing out too many cautions instead of sending offenders to court where they could face prison sentences? The Director of Public Prosecutions has called for a review of the system, after concerns that they're being used to deal with growing numbers of offences. (*World at One*, 9 November 2009)

The item was developed with interviews from BBC's *Panorama*, most notably the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Keir Starmer. However, the remit of the DPP has jurisdiction only in England and Wales, which was not stated before, during or after the interview. On Radio 4's *Six O'Clock News* the relevant item began:

The Justice Secretary, Jack Straw, has announced there is to be a review into the way police are using cautions and fixed penalty notices. The move comes amid rising concern from the Director of Public Prosecutions and others that increasing numbers of offenders are being dealt with through out-of-court penalties, rather than going before magistrates. (Radio 4 *Six O'Clock News*, 9 November 2009)

To gain further authority on the issue, a BBC journalist was interviewed in a second news item on the story describing the cautions system as if it was a UK-wide justice issue. Finally, the Justice Secretary was interviewed at some length (four minutes and 16 seconds) about the review but at no stage in the interview was it mentioned that the remit covered England and Wales-only jurisdiction. It is clear, in this instance, that time was not a constraint on clarifying the geographical relevance of the story.

### Implied context

The only hint of the story's applicability to England and Wales on BBC broadcast news was found on Radio 4's *Six O'Clock News*. It quoted figures of cautions being handed out – over 39,000 for actual bodily harm in the past year – before adding: “The results were from 39 police forces in England and Wales”. However, at no stage was it clearly stated that *the review* was relevant only to England and Wales. While there was some implied context that the story related to England and Wales only, we found that, in other stories, these nations were often sourced together even when the story related to the UK as a whole. This may be partly explained by the way data are measured at the Office of National Statistics, but it does mean that an audience member could not assume that the use of a statistic is indicative of the story's relevance.

The only BBC news items to state that Scotland does not have a cautions system was on BBC online. A prominent box that contextualised the review was presented:

### CAUTIONS: THE FIGURES

- Results from 39 of 41 police forces in England and Wales surveyed
- 38,952 cautions issued for actual bodily harm (ABH)
- 739 cautions issued for grievous bodily harm (GBH)
- Half of all criminal cases dealt with using cautions
- Cautions are not used in Scotland

Although the box clearly stated that cautions are not used in Scotland, the fact that the review does not impact on Northern Ireland policing was not referenced. England and Wales were, compared with other news media, more frequently and prominently referred to, but again there was only an implied context. At no point was it explicitly stated that the review does not apply UK-wide.

## Summary

This case study has suggested that the reporting of the review of police cautions was not given any meaningful devolved context. Both the BBC and other broadcasters did not state explicitly – or in most cases, implicitly – stated that the review did not apply UK-wide. Some of these items were brief in length, but even when the brevity of story reporting was not an issue, in fairly lengthy interviews with experts and the Justice Secretary himself, at no stage was it made clear the review had England and Wales-jurisdiction only. BBC News online was the only media in the sample to state that Scotland did not have the cautions system. Yet, while further context was provided here, the opportunity to explore the different approaches to criminal justice between the nations was not taken.

Our next case study on the reporting of an education policy in England shows how a story *can* be shaped into a narrative in which the nations are compared and contrasted to help not just explore the relative merits of a policy but to communicate its relevance to each of the four nations.

## Case Study 2: Reporting a primary school education review

As we indicate in Section 4, the 2009 study – in contrast to 2007 – contained substantive examples of a ‘compare and contrast’ approach to the reporting of devolved issues. This case study focuses on a story where this approach was taken and provides an instance of good practice in the reporting of devolution.

This example shows how BBC reporting of a primary school review<sup>16</sup> applicable to English schools only can, at the same time, remain relevant to UK-wide audiences by comparing and contrasting the different primary education curricula pursued in the four nations. The central recommendation of the review (conducted by Cambridge University) was that the transition

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<sup>16</sup> The report was published on 16 October 2009 entitled ‘Children, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review’.

from play-based to formal learning in England should be delayed until children turn six years old. Formal learning begins in English and Scottish schools at five years of age, while Wales and Northern Ireland already employ the play-based approach recommended in the review until children reach the age of seven. Most news outlets led with the recommendation to introduce play-based learning for young schoolchildren in England.

As the content analysis showed, we found several stories where English education policy was reported as if it applied UK-wide. This story, by contrast, prominently and repeatedly drew attention to the differences between the devolved nations. Indeed, on some BBC news programming a 'compare and contrast' approach became the central narrative through which to introduce and explain the significance of the Cambridge primary school review.

Overall, the primary school review story generated 22 items over the sample period, 19 of which were on BBC outlets, three on other outlets. There were nine television items: four on the BBC News Channel; two on each of the BBC's *News at One* and *News at Six*; and one on *News at Ten*. BBC Radio featured eight items: three on both the *Today* programme and *Radio 5 live Breakfast*; and one each on *PM* and *World at One*. The story also featured twice on BBC online: as a routine UK news story; and a UK 'Features, Views, Analysis' item. *ITV News at Ten*, *Channel 4 News* and *Sky News* all produced one news item each about the story.

### Locating devolved relevance

In the 19 BBC news items that reported the primary school review story, most made reference to the other nations where formal learning started at a later age. The examples below show how the introductions to the story on different BBC media clearly located the relevance of the review *in England* as opposed to the whole of the UK.

Children in England shouldn't start formal education until the age of six. That's according to the largest review of primary education in England for 40 years. It says there's no evidence that starting formal learning at 5 brings any benefits, and could even be harmful. The government called the review disappointing and out of date. (*BBC News at One*, 16 October 2009)

An independent study of primary education in England has recommended that... (*Radio 4 Today*, 16 October 2009)

The biggest inquiry into primary education in England for 40 years is suggesting that children shouldn't start formal lessons until they're 6... (*BBC Radio 5 live Breakfast*, 16 October 2009)

Children should not start formal learning until they are six, a review of primary education in England says. (*BBC online UK News*, 16 October 2009)

## Compare and contrast

While the story was introduced with relevance to schools in England only, the reporters on the BBC news media below referred to other devolved nations (most notably Wales and Northern Ireland) to compare the various nations' education policies and explain how parts of the UK already pursue the recommendations of the review.

In Wales and Northern Ireland, although children can start school from the age of 4, in line with the rest of the UK, formal learning is put off until children are 7, with the emphasis, instead, on play. (*BBC News at One*, 16 October 2009)

Children do start school in the UK at a younger age than in many other countries, but the more important issue for the review is when the switch takes place from play-based learning, to a more formal, structured curriculum. In England and Scotland, the curriculum starts at 5, whereas in Wales and Northern Ireland, the emphasis on learning through play continues right through, until children are 7. (*BBC News at Six*, 16 October 2009)

In line with the practice in many other countries, including Wales, the review argues that... (*Radio 4 Today*, 16 October 2009)

In Wales, formal learning doesn't start until 7, after they introduce the 'foundation' phase. (*BBC 5 live Breakfast*, 16 October 2009)

## The Welsh comparison

The Cambridge Review recommendations were pursued with a Welsh angle in a number of BBC outlets. So, for example, the news items on the *News at One*, *Six* and *Ten* programmes as well as the *Today* programme were presented from a Welsh school. There were also several interviews that used Welsh education as a counter reference point to English schools. Radio 4's *PM* interviewed a headteacher from a Welsh school who was asked: "Would you feel, then, that England has something to learn from what's happening in Wales and Northern Ireland?" In another interview, Vernon Coaker (the Minister for Schools and Learners in England) was asked whether England was "out of step" because it does not promote a play-focused curriculum:

But it's interesting, then, that in Wales and Northern Ireland they're going for this more play-focused curriculum in the very early years. Why, then, are they doing that, and isn't England out of step? (*PM*, 16 October 2009)

The BBC News Channel followed up a reporter package on location (as did the *News at One*) with an interview with the Welsh Children's Commissioner. The presenter explored the primary education system in Wales in some depth and developed a broader discussion about the exam culture in Wales by asking his interviewee: "Where are you on SATs? In England, are the schools too obsessed with SATs?"

This news item was followed up with a fourth related item involving a more general education discussion between the presenter, a headteacher (in the studio), and a primary school parent (via a live link from Manchester). In a departure from the generally clear distinction between the four nations, the presenter used *English* policy to develop a broader line of questioning about “British children”. Glossing over the different exam cultures that have evolved in post-devolution Britain, he asked the headteacher “Do you think, therefore, uh – it’s kind of a leading question, but there must be no coincidence, then, that some surveys suggest British children are among the unhappiest in the world?”

While English-only exam policy was used here to represent education policy in Britain more generally, the BBC’s news outlets by and large made it reasonably clear that education policy differs across the four nations.

### Other television content

While *ITV News at Ten* and *Channel 4 News* mentioned that the Cambridge Review concerned English schools only, neither took the opportunity to compare the different age at which formal teaching begins in primary schools in Wales and Northern Ireland. *Sky News*, meanwhile, dealt with the review in a brief report. Sky did not, however, inform viewers that the review relates to English schools only or that two of the devolved nations already pursue the rejected policy.

Now, the Schools Minister has rejected proposals for children to start school a year later, at the age of 6. The recommendation was made in the most comprehensive review of primary education for 40 years, but Vernon Coaker said the plans were “counterproductive”. (*Sky News*, 16 October 2009)

This slippage between England and the UK was in contrast to most of the BBC coverage. It should also be noted that the Minister for Schools and Learners in England, Vernon Coaker, was referred to simply as the “Schools Minister”, even though Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each have their own Minister responsible for education policy.

## Summary

The reporting of the Cambridge primary school review demonstrated how a story affecting English children was both made relevant to audiences in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and informed by a ‘compare and contrast’ approach. In most cases, the different decisions made in the devolved institutions, most notably Wales, were explored in many packages (on location in Welsh schools) and in studio interviews (particularly with the Children’s Commissioner for Wales). The case study overall shows how the differences between the nations need not be an obstacle to reporting

devolution on UK-wide network news. It can instead be used to develop a narrative where the relative merits of different policies pursued across the devolved administrations are compared and contrasted. In this respect, BBC television reporting compares favourably to other television news. ITV and Channel 4 did not compare the different policies pursued in Wales and Northern Ireland, while *Sky News* failed to locate the relevance of the story to schools outside England.

### Case Study 3: Devolution stories on BBC News at Six and BBC 6.30pm opt-outs

This case study explores the relationship between the UK network news programme, *BBC News at Six*, and the 6.30pm opt-out programmes that followed in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (*Reporting Scotland*, *Wales Today* and *Newsline* respectively). Section 8 (Omissions) deals with significant devolution stories covered by the opt-outs but not included on the BBC network television bulletins.

Our brief in this case study was to explore whether there is some continuity between UK network news and the opt-outs in the way *the same* devolution-related stories are covered, or whether the opt-outs across the nations took a notably different perspective. While they may be different news programmes both the opt-outs and the UK network bulletins share the BBC's goal to serve the nations, regions and communities. Any striking differences in coverage, in other words, could reveal a disparity in how devolution is reported across BBC television bulletins. We anticipated the opt-outs may spend longer on a devolved story (since it may be of more significance to a particular nation than the UK as a whole), but our primary interest is in how the elements of a devolved story (in terms of how it is framed, the type or location of reporters used as well as use of interviewees etc) are packaged and presented.

The October-November 2009 sample of the three opt-outs generated 579 news items overall, from which we identified 150 news items as having relevance to devolved government (see Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1: Volume of items with devolved relevance on BBC opt-outs**

	No. of news items	No. of items with devolved relevance
Scotland	190	54
Wales	206	53
Northern Ireland	183	43

We then isolated instances when the *BBC News at Six* reported a story with devolved relevance that was also reported on *Reporting Scotland*, *Wales Today* or *Newsline* in order to compare coverage. While our previous report found only three stories that were duplicated on the opt-outs, in the 2009



study there were six news stories (we refer here to *stories* as opposed to *news items*). This case study therefore examines the following six stories in detail:

- 1) The visit of Hillary Clinton to Northern Ireland on *Newsline*.
- 2) A Welsh Audit Office report on flooding on *Wales Today*.
- 3) The launch of a swine flu vaccination programme on *Reporting Scotland*.
- 4) Building nuclear power stations in England and Wales on *Reporting Scotland*.
- 5) A UK Bill to devolve more powers to Scotland on *Reporting Scotland*.
- 6) A Scottish Government Bill on alcohol on *Reporting Scotland*.

### Visit of Hillary Clinton to Northern Ireland

On 12 October 2009 Hillary Clinton's visit to Northern Ireland was one of the last items on the *BBC News at Six*. It ran a two minute 23 second item featuring a reporter in Belfast summarising the events of the day. By contrast, *Newsline* led with the story and dedicated the first ten minutes of the programme to Clinton's visit with a more detailed analysis of the possible impact it will have on policing in Northern Ireland.

The introduction on *BBC News at Six* focused on Clinton encouraging the political parties to resolve their differences with minimal interference from America.

In Northern Ireland the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has urged political leaders there to settle their differences on transferring policing and justice powers from London to Belfast. Addressing the Assembly at Stormont, Mrs Clinton said it wasn't the job of the United States to meddle, but it was her hope they'd be able to complete the process of devolution.

*Newsline*, by contrast, emphasised the wide range of business and political leaders Clinton had met with throughout the day, suggesting a more diplomatically successful trip to Northern Ireland than did *BBC News at Six*.

The US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, has spent the day in Belfast on her first visit after she took up office under the Obama administration. She brought messages of continued support for the political process and urged the devolution of policing and justice, but told MLAs the timing was up to them. Mrs Clinton had talks at Stormont with the First and Deputy First Ministers separately and together. She also met business people at Queen's University, and went on to renew acquaintance with the City Hall. We have reports from all three venues, but we begin with the political element of the visit.

In *Newsline's* first item, a three-minute package with a reporter in Stormont, a range of political contributors – Peter Robinson MLA (20 seconds), Martin



McGuinness MLA (17 seconds) and Hillary Clinton (34 seconds) – were sourced. Again, in contrast to *BBC News at Six*, the package stressed the positive diplomatic intentions of Hillary Clinton, with the reporter stating she was “bringing messages of continued support for the political process”.

The *BBC News at Six* used two sources, a lengthy speech by Hillary Clinton (43 seconds) and a brief contribution from a newspaper correspondent in Northern Ireland. While Clinton appeared on camera meeting the First and Deputy First Ministers, with reference to her addressing the Northern Ireland Assembly, there is not the level of detail or analysis pursued on *Newsline*. So, for example, the *Newsline* reporter interpreted the significance of her speech by adding:

Hillary Clinton offered friendship, encouragement, and even the promise of investment. But it's not Nationalists who need to be persuaded, it's Unionists. And although her call for leadership won an ovation, two DUP MLAs, Gregory Campbell and William McCrea, stepped out early.

The second news item on *Newsline* followed up on the political impact of devolution with a live two-way in Stormont with the political editor (lasting two minutes and 29 seconds). The political editor provided an interpretative analysis of the diplomatic ties between parties:

they tend to be pleasant when they have an important visitor, and when they are over in America, but what will their relations be like in the future? Because that deal has not been signed off yet, that's something that is yet to be decided.

The live two-way also explored the latest breaking news from Stormont, such as the DUP welcoming “the Government’s latest financial proposal and they were encouraged that the issues they’ve raised are being addressed”. The reporter then revealed:

No round figures yet, but a Sinn Fein source did tell me tonight that the party had been keen to ensure there was an adequate financial proposal here which didn't cut into the block grant for areas like health and education.

Overall, while Hillary Clinton's visit to Northern Ireland was framed slightly differently in the introductions to both programmes, there is some continuity on *Newsline* and the *BBC News at Six*. Both focused on Clinton's speech and related this more broadly to the difficulties involved in devolving police powers to Northern Ireland.

### **A Welsh Audit Office report on flooding**

A Welsh Audit Office report on Welsh coastal flooding that left many homes abandoned was reported on both *BBC News at Six* and *Wales Today* on 29 October 2009. It was the lead news item on *Wales Today* (compared to one of the last items on *BBC News at Six*) which began with a dramatic introduction:

Wales is unprepared for the risk of flooding from the sea and coastal erosion, according to a report from the auditor general. Around 600,000 people in Wales live or work in areas at risk of flooding. Estimates show costs could increase twenty fold over the next eighty years, from seventy million pounds to nearly one and a half billion.

*BBC News at Six* was less specific with the source of the story (referring to “a report” compared to “a report from the Auditor General” on *Wales Today*).

Hundreds of homes along the Welsh coast might have to be abandoned because of rising sea levels. A report out today says maintaining sea defences is just too expensive and people might now have to move to higher ground.

*BBC News at Six* also downplayed the human impact of possible flooding (“Hundreds of homes” as opposed to “600,000 people” on *Wales Today*).

Both programmes featured reporters on location, but the explanation for the flooding was more detailed on *Wales Today* with a wider range of sources used to inform the report (this is perhaps inevitable given the *BBC News at Six* was two minutes and four seconds long while the *Wales Today* item was four minutes and 32 seconds).

Whereas *BBC News at Six* featured two interviewees, Jeremy Colman, Auditor General for Wales (16 seconds), and Captain Huw Lewis, an Aberaeron resident (13 seconds), *Wales Today* interviewed Jeremy Colman, Auditor General for Wales (20 seconds, a very similar interview as the *BBC News at Six* report), a Welsh male (6 seconds), another Welsh male (16 seconds), and Keith Evans, the Leader of Ceredigion Council (17 seconds).

While Jeremy Colman, the Auditor General for Wales, was interviewed on *BBC News at Six*, who authored the report on flooding was not spelt out as clearly as it was on *Wales Today* (the *BBC News at Six* reporter again labelled it “this report”). This vagueness was reinforced by a contribution from Captain Huw Lewis, an Aberaeron resident, who stated:

...it's men in suits down in Cardiff, which is well protected, saying that we have to relocate to the hills, and I don't think the people of Aberaeron would accept that at all. I think we'd have to fight against that, were that to be the situation.

*Wales Today*, by contrast, mentioned the Audit Office Report more explicitly with the recommendations examined in greater detail. So, for example, several members of the public were critical that not enough had been done, complaining of a lack of leadership and long term planning. One male resident said, “You tell me what's expensive, they waste money on other things, why shouldn't it be protected here”, while the other stated “I think it's very wrong, to be honest.”

The political implications of the Wales Audit Report were, later on in the news item, more broadly addressed by the reporter:

...much of the criticisms in the Wales Audit Report are directed towards the Environment Agency in Wales, the Assembly Government and the local authorities. This report says they're not talking to each other about potential problems from the sea...the Assembly Government comes under the heaviest criticism, and this report will also highlight concern amongst those 600,000 people living on coastal planes, especially if there's to be a question mark over our 250 miles of man-made sea defences here in Wales later this century.

In the final two-way, the reporter provided further context about the institutional powers that help flooding policy, such as the role played by the local authorities and the Assembly Government. The reporter concluded by adding:

It reminds people that there's no legal obligation to have sea defences, that's down to the homeowner. That will surprise many people.

Although the implications of flooding for local people were addressed on both programmes, overall *Wales Today* more specifically identified the author of the report and the powers local authorities have in influencing policy making, compared to the *BBC News at Six's* coverage. It was, in this sense, clearer about the devolved authorities involved.

### Launch of a swine flu vaccination programme

The launch of a UK swine flu vaccination programme on 15 October 2009 was complex in terms of devolved authority. In theory, this kind of health policy is fully devolved to the four nations. In this instance, however, the authorities were keen to work together to develop a common approach. Most of the major decisions were thus taken collectively, although there were some differences in particular areas (such as different priorities given to social groups). While the devolved aspects of the story were alluded to on *Reporting Scotland*, *BBC News at Six* focused more generally on the UK swine flu vaccination programme.

So, for example, a *BBC News at Six* item some way down the schedule began:

The UK's swine flu vaccination programme is to start next week. In all, more than eleven million people considered most at risk from the virus will be offered the jab.

*Reporting Scotland*, by contrast, led with the story and focused on the risk posed to pregnant women after one Scottish woman was reported to have died from a swine flu infection. The introduction to the news item stated:

A 17 year old pregnant woman from the Borders has died from swine flu. She is not believed to have had any underlying health problems. Pregnant women are known to be at greater risk of complications from the virus. Tonight it was announced that the

vaccination programme will begin next week, and women expecting babies will be among the priority groups.

While both *BBC News at Six* and *Reporting Scotland* dealt with the vaccine launch, the latter news outlet was primarily focused on swine flu cases related to Scotland, with Health Protection Scotland sourced for the latest figures. In addition, interviews with Professor Hugh Pennington, a microbiologist (22 seconds), Sharon Pentleton, a swine flu victim (12 seconds), and Nicola Sturgeon MSP, the Scottish Health Secretary (15 seconds) were all used within the two minute and 38 second news item.

The *BBC News at Six* item was much shorter – one minute 31 seconds – and while it had a reporter on location outside the Department of Health, it contained no interviews. This news item mentioned the Government's target of pregnant women, due to two deaths this week – one each in Scotland and Wales respectively – but it centred on the launch of the swine flu vaccine across the UK.

In summary, the launch of the swine flu vaccine was dealt with from a UK perspective on the *BBC News at Six* whereas *Reporting Scotland* focused more specifically on Scottish plans. Since the devolved administrations had responsibilities for running and covering the cost of the vaccination programme including aspects of the information campaign, *BBC News at Six*, while taking a UK-wide perspective, might have mentioned the vaccine was being administered differently across the nations. In this case, however, it is important to acknowledge that the differences between devolved nations were matters of detail rather than substance.

### **Building nuclear power stations in England and Wales**

The decision to build new power stations in England and Wales was covered (though not prominently) by both the *BBC News at Six* and *Reporting Scotland* on 9 November 2009.

The *BBC News at Six* focused, in its introduction, on the UK Government's announcement that ten potential sites could house a nuclear power station in England and Wales.

A new generation of nuclear power stations in England and Wales is to be fast tracked through the planning process. The Energy Secretary Ed Miliband has listed ten sites where nuclear plants could be built. A new planning commission will have just a year to make a final decision. Anti nuclear campaigners say local people are being cut out of the process because there won't be a public enquiry.

The two minute and 48 second item sourced the Energy Secretary, Ed Miliband MP (15 seconds) and Simon Hughes MP (23 seconds). While the report was chiefly concerned with the ten sites under observation in England and Wales, it was mentioned that "the decision does not apply to Scotland,

which has devolved authority" (as we discussed in Section 3, not all reports referred to the devolved aspects of the story).

The *Reporting Scotland* news item, lasting two minutes and 28 seconds, began by referring to the announcement in England and Wales, but it primarily dealt with the history of nuclear power, most notably at the Dounreay plant in Scotland.

On the day the UK Government paved the way for a new generation of nuclear power stations in England and Wales, scientists are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the nuclear breakthrough in which Scotland led the world. The Dounreay reactor...went critical in November 1959 and proved it could produce electricity. Half a century on, and despite the whole project being scrapped, experts say it was a towering technological achievement.

Interestingly, the news item did not explore the possible influence Scottish devolution had in the decision not to build new power stations in Scotland. This was reflected in the non-political interviewees used to inform the story – Mike Brown, decommissioning manager (15 seconds), Brian Munro, former employee (11 seconds), and Alistair Fraser, former employee (13 seconds).

Overall, the decision to build new nuclear power stations in England and Wales was covered very differently on *BBC News at Six* and *Reporting Scotland*. While *BBC News at Six* provided a general perspective on the ten new sites proposed, *Reporting Scotland* took a more Scottish angle, celebrating the history of the first nuclear power station built in the 1950s. Since there were no proposals for new Scottish power stations, this difference is to be expected. What is absent in both reports is any analysis of why this was, and the extent to which it was a success for the Scottish Parliament in pursuing a nuclear free policy.

### **UK Bill on devolving more powers to Scotland**

On 25 November 2009 a UK review of Scotland's devolved powers was published. The Bill contained details of a range of possible new devolved powers. Both *BBC News at Six* and *Reporting Scotland* stressed the significance the review had for devolution in Scotland. Half way through the *BBC News at Six* schedule, the introduction began by stating:

There are plans for Scotland to be granted a range of new powers in the most radical shake up since devolution ten years ago. Crucially, Holyrood will be allowed to raise or cut some taxes. Powers to set drink drive or speed limits may also be handed from Westminster to Scotland.

*Reporting Scotland* led with the story over two news items. Its introduction detailed a wider range of potential powers that could potentially be devolved with the caveat that it depended on the outcome of the next General Election:

A big day for devolution and the biggest shake up of Scotland's finances for thirty years. That's how the UK Government has billed its proposals to transfer more powers to Holyrood, including a new Scottish income tax, powers to regulate air weapons, set drink drive levels, and decide a national speed limit. But that will all depend on Labour being returned to power next year, since the Tories say they'd bring forward their own plans.

The *BBC News at Six* item lasted two minutes and 39 seconds with a reporter on location in Coldstream, a town in Scotland on the border with England. A driving instructor (17 seconds) was included to demonstrate how problematic the difference in speed limits may prove, not least in confusing many motorists. To reinforce this, a female resident was interviewed saying that it could be confusing, but Scotland should be able to make their own rules as well (7 seconds). The change in air gun legislation was mentioned by the BBC reporter, along with the possibility that people may lose money from their pay packets in taxes. One male resident was briefly interviewed, commenting "it works both ways. We may end up paying less tax, which suits me fine" (5 seconds).

The party political angle was explored further at length in the news item. The reporter stated:

Labour argues this would make the Scottish Government more accountable for the money it spends, the Conservatives agree but reserve the rights to make their own plans if they are next in Government.

The Secretary of State for Scotland, Jim Murphy, is quoted reinforcing the message that Scotland would be 'more accountable...within the framework of the UK' (16 seconds).

The SNP plans, meanwhile, were also given due prominence. Mike Russell MSP, the Scottish Constitution Minister (12 seconds) was quoted saying "the reality in Scotland is people need those powers. There are things in Scotland that need to be changed". The BBC reporter concluded by stating:

and for the SNP Government that means independence for Scotland from neighbouring England. And they'll be introducing their own proposals calling for a referendum on that next week.

The lead *Reporting Scotland* news item ran for two minutes and 52 seconds, with a reporter on location in Westminster. Compared to the *BBC News at Six* coverage, it emphasised the political significance of the review by asking:

Ten years on, has devolution strengthened or weakened the union? That's now a key political question. Today's been a big day for devolution. A white paper from the UK Government which aims to stop Scotland going its own way.

The item continued by exploring how the Parliament in Edinburgh would have the right to raise additional funds if it wanted to, making it more accountable. The question of economic accountability was then framed between interview

clips from Conservative and Labour interviewees. George Osborne MP, Shadow Chancellor was included (16 seconds), saying he believed in increasing the financial accountability of the Scottish Parliament but also in a stronger union, while Alistair Carmichael MP (11 seconds) stated:

The Tories are hiding, they've done the dirty on Scotland before, it's now pretty clear the Labour party are wanting to follow them.

The prominence given to the Scottish Labour and SNP opinions were broadly similar to the approach taken by *BBC News at Six*. The same interviewees were used – Jim Murphy and Mike Russell (both 16 seconds long) – in both cases.

The second item on *Reporting Scotland* was a two-way between the news presenter and reporter live on location in Holyrood lasting one minute and 27 seconds. Here the political editor discussed the different perspectives from each party towards a potential shift in powers, with additional information about a forthcoming SNP white paper for independence.

While there were some differences in how the *BBC News at Six* and *Reporting Scotland* explored the impact of more devolved powers in Scotland, there was some continuity across both programmes. Both the network and opt-out stressed the significance the review had for devolution in Scotland and drew on similar political interviewees to represent the debate around further independence.

### **Scottish Government's Alcohol Bill**

A Scottish Government Bill on alcohol – most notably to change the minimum drink price – announced on 28 November 2009 was reported on *BBC News at Six* and *Reporting Scotland*.

The *BBC News at Six* item lasted 14 seconds. It framed the story by stating:

Opposition parties in the Scottish Parliament say they'll block an attempt to introduce a minimum price for alcohol. The minority Scottish National Party Government wants to bring in the measure as part of legislation to tackle alcohol abuse.

*Reporting Scotland*, by contrast, led with this story featuring three news items that, between them, lasted five minutes and eight seconds. Given that far more time was spent on this story compared to *BBC News at Six*, *Reporting Scotland* looked at the implications of the Bill from both a political and more general health perspective.

In its first news item, however, the story was introduced in a similar way to the *BBC News at Six* with the opposition to the Bill emphasised.



The SNP's plans to control the cost of alcohol in Scotland looked to have failed, after Labour said they wouldn't support the measure. It's one of the proposals in the Scottish Government's Alcohol Bill, which was published today. Police and doctors' groups have given their strong backing, but none of the opposition parties at Holyrood could be persuaded.

A more human interest perspective was then explored with Colin, an alcohol disease sufferer (23 seconds), and Dr. Alastair MacGilchrist, a liver disease specialist (13 seconds) interviewed about the health implications of excessive drinking. Iain Gray MSP, Scottish Labour Leader (19 seconds), and Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Scottish Health Secretary (13 seconds) were the final two on-screen interviewees.

The second news item was a live two-way with a health correspondent that focused on the growing drinking problem in Scotland more generally. The third item returned to the politics of the bill in another live two-way. The political correspondent in Edinburgh was asked "where we are politically tonight, is that bill dead now on its first day?" The latest breaking news ("reflecting at the end of the day in the bar nearest to Holyrood") was finally provided by the political correspondent on the ground with the suggestion that elements of the Bill could still be passed.

Even though the *BBC News at Six* coverage of the Alcohol Bill was just 14 seconds, there was some continuity with how *Reporting Scotland* covered the story. Both programmes emphasised the opposition to the Bill in the Scottish Parliament.

## Summary

Our brief in this case study was to explore whether there was some continuity between the *BBC News at Six* and the opt-outs in the way *the same* devolution related stories were covered. As we concluded in our 2007 report, on the basis of such a small sample (three in 2007, six in 2009) it is difficult to reach any firm conclusions about coverage on the opt-outs compared to the UK network bulletin. Nonetheless, we found no striking differences in how a particular story was covered, and, where appropriate, a degree of continuity in how a devolution story was framed and organised into a news package across the *BBC News at Six* and the opt-outs.

Where we identified differences in coverage, these are largely explained by a greater level of time given to devolution stories on the opt-outs than the *BBC News at Six*. As we might expect, the opt-out programmes spent more time, detail and analysis on the same stories. They also used a wider range of sources to provide further analysis or context to the issue, as well as, in some cases, providing a latest news update. While we would expect this to be the case, it is also fair to say that the opt-out reports tended to provide a clearer



and more precise picture of the nature of devolved government than the network bulletin.

Of the six stories covered by the *BBC News at Six* and the opt-outs, it is interesting to note that four were from Scotland while one each were from Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland's prominence may be because it has gained more significant economic, social and criminal justice responsibilities than Wales or Northern Ireland. As powers are increasingly devolved north of the border, it may be that UK network television news becomes more interested in exploring the economic and social policy differences that emerge with England.

## 6. Current Affairs

### Introduction

In line with the 2007 study, we examined a 12-month sample of BBC current affairs programming, again concentrating on *File on Four*, *Analysis*, and *Panorama*. We looked at all broadcasts of these programmes between 1 October 2008 and 30 September 2009, and placed them into three categories designed to complement the content analysis and case studies outlined above:

1. Programmes that dealt with topics that had no connection to devolution.
2. Programmes that specifically concerned devolution, in which the central topic was relevant to devolved powers.
3. Programmes that dealt with topics in which devolved powers were relevant (this category was subject to further subdivisions, the nature and purpose of which is outlined below).

In all, 104 broadcast current affairs programmes were analysed, and their distribution outlined in Table 6.1 below. While the majority fell into the first category, there were three programmes that explicitly dealt with devolved powers and 16 that dealt with topics that had some connection to policy areas in which power is devolved to one or more of the three national bodies.

**Table 6.1: Current affairs overview: number of programmes by category and airtime in minutes by category, 2007 and 2009**

	Total Programmes 2007	Total Programmes 2009	Irrelevant		Devolution Focus		Programme Related to Devolved Powers	
			2007	2009	2007	2009	2007	2009
File on Four	29	30	24	26	0	0	5	4
Analysis	26	21	21	17	4	1	1	3
Panorama	50	53	47	42	0	2	3	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Total Airtime (mins)</b>	<b>3440</b>	<b>3420</b>	<b>3000</b>	<b>2780</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>550</b>

For the programmes relevant to (but not about) devolved issues, we applied a further subdivision (Table 6.2 below). This is a slight departure from our 2007 study, since in 2009 we aimed to make these subdivisions as close as possible to the categories in our main content analysis. We analysed all 16 programmes and allocated them into two categories in accordance with the focus of the content analysis outlined in Sections 2 and 3. These were:

- Those programmes that referred to the existence of devolved powers in a given policy area, either with a passing mention or through a substantive comparison ('Relevant Powers Compared' in Table 6.2).
- Those programmes in which no reference was made to devolved powers despite covering a policy area in which they exist, thus implying that the focus of the programme applied uniformly across the UK, and programmes which, although related to a devolved issue, were based in England and/or dealt with English cases, but were *not* described as such ('Relevant Powers Not Compared' in Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2: Current affairs programmes relevant to devolution**

	Total	Relevant Powers Compared	Relevant Powers Not Compared
File on 4	4	1	3
Analysis	3	1	2
Panorama	9	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>

Table 6.2 shows that, in addition to the three programmes explicitly devoted to devolved issues, there were six programmes that acknowledged the presence of devolved powers in a given policy area and ten that could have done so but did not. This gives us three types of programme: those focused on devolution related issues; those that referenced devolved powers, where devolution was relevant but not the main focus; and those where devolution was relevant but not referenced. We explore all three types of programme below.

The full list of relevant programme titles is as follows:

**Devolution Focus:**

*Panorama:* The Gunmen Who Never Went Away (30 March 2009)  
Will the Scots Ever Be Happy? (29 June 2009)

*Analysis:* Blowback from Edinburgh (4 December 2008)

**Relevant Powers Mentioned or Compared:**

*Panorama:* I'll Die When I Choose (8 December 2008)  
Crime Pays (16 March 2009)  
Britain's Homecare Scandal (12 April 2009)  
Britain's Dirty Beaches (7 September 2009)

*File on Four:* Who Stole My House? (31 March 2009)

*Analysis:* No Escape (1 June 2009)

**Relevant Powers Not Mentioned or Compared:**

*Panorama:* Kids Behaving Badly (5 January 2009)  
Who'd be an NHS Whistleblower? (27 April 2009)  
Whatever Happened to People Power? (6 July 2009)  
The Truth About Spending Cuts (28 September 2009)  
Dying to be Treated (30 September 2009)

*File on Four:* Are Surrogacy Laws Outdated? (27 January 2009)  
Paying the Price of PFI (23 June 2009)  
Care Concerns (29 September 2009)

*Analysis:* Public Inquiries (30 October 2008)  
Anti-Social Housing (26 February 2009)

**Programmes with a direct link to devolution**

The three programmes that were categorised as dealing specifically with an aspect of devolved politics were: *Panorama's* 'Will the Scots Ever Be Happy?' (29 June 2009) and 'The Gunmen Who Never Went Away' (30 March 2009)

and an *Analysis* entitled 'Blowback from Edinburgh' (4 December 2008). The themes of these three current affairs programmes are subtly different from those discussed in the 2007 study – unsurprisingly given the topical nature of current affairs reporting. However, there are some common themes in this type of devolution coverage, as shown in Table 6.3:

**Table 6.3: Themes in devolution coverage**

2007	2009
Future of the Union / Scottish independence	Future of the Union / Scottish independence
Legitimacy of devolved governments	Effect of devolution on UK party politics
Effect of devolution on public services	Oil economics in Scotland
Consequences of devolution for identity	

The two programmes about Scotland were fairly similar in focus, having as a strong common theme the possibility of Scottish independence and the future of the Union. Both programmes discussed recent developments in the debates around economics and independence, in which the SNP argue that profits from oil found in the North Sea should belong to Scotland, whilst Unionists maintain that Scotland (and the other countries of the Union) are safer and stronger together, especially in view of the recent bail-out of the Royal Bank of Scotland and HBOS.

Nationalists insist Scotland could do better going solo, but the Prime Minister says recent events counter that, particularly the small matter of bailing out two Scottish banks. (*Panorama*, 29 June 2009)

Do you not feel that there's a sense of vulnerability of a small nation in a large and dangerous world that has been highlighted by this [economic] crisis? (*Panorama*, 29 June 2009)

The *Analysis* programme took the most in-depth look at the impact of Scottish parliamentary politics on the Union, having been recorded just after New Labour held onto the Glenrothes constituency in a by-election in November 2008. It considered whether the SNP's failure to take the seat made independence a more distant prospect, and considered the possibility of manoeuvres within the Scottish Conservatives to move closer to separatism in order to ally with the SNP and squeeze out Labour, asking whether:

...greater fiscal autonomy works to the advantage of Conservatives in both Westminster and Scotland? (*Analysis*, 4 December 2008)

Both programmes anticipated a potential Conservative government in Westminster and the implications for Scottish politics. *Panorama* used an interview with David Cameron declaring his intention to listen to the Scots, whilst *Analysis* drew on interviews with David Davis MP and Allan Massie, a *Scotsman* columnist.

The *Panorama* programme on terrorism in Northern Ireland traced the survival of dissident republicans, such as the Real IRA and the Continuity IRA, since the Belfast Agreement. On first inspection, it appears to be less focused on devolution than the two programmes concerning Scotland. However, it considers issues that are directly affected by devolution, such as the impact on the change from the Royal Ulster Constabulary to the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the decline in terrorist legitimacy since devolution and the relatively consensual politics in Stormont and in the integration into mainstream politics of former dissident figures such as Martin McGuinness.

It is Martin McGuinness, a former IRA leader himself, that angers [dissident Republicans] most. (*Panorama*, 30 March 2009)

In a fifteen minute interview they [the Real IRA council members] said...“it would shatter the lie of those hypocrites who sit in Stormont and try and tell us that somehow, the British have left”. (*Panorama*, 30 March 2009)

In many ways this programme gives the clearest indication of the operation of devolved politics, providing a real sense that on the ground a devolved nation has its own laws, its own politics and politicians. It is located firmly within the framework of the Belfast Agreement (also known as The Good Friday Agreement) and portrays the terrorists as failing to accept the new political situation.

[Concerning the old Belfast Crown Court]...it's a monument to the past, which is where most people wish violent politics remained. So why do some people still cling onto it? (*Panorama*, 30 March 2009)

In contrast, the programmes on Scotland are closer to the underlying question of the themes found by the 2007 report – is it better to be in the Union or out? Yet over the past ten years, questions around the legitimacy and proper working of devolved parliaments have clearly faded as those bodies have become established over time. The representation of the political identity of the nations has strengthened, with the robust analysis of Scottish politics and the treatment of the issues surrounding Northern Irish politics on its own terms on *Panorama*. Devolution has also been better represented across different current affairs outlets, as these topics were found in both *Panorama* and *Analysis*, whereas in 2007 only *Analysis* dealt directly with devolution related issues.

## Programmes in which Devolved Powers are Relevant

### Dealing with devolution

As Table 6.2 suggests, six out of 16 current affairs programmes where devolution was not the central focus referenced devolved power or issues, four on *Panorama*, one on *File on Four* and one on *Analysis*.

'I'll Die When I Choose' (*Panorama*, 8 December 2008) followed Scottish MSP Margo MacDonald on her quest to uncover the issues surrounding assisted suicide, a very personal matter for her as she suffers from Parkinson's disease. Assisted suicide remains a criminal offence in the whole of the UK, as she correctly stated (although it would be prosecuted under different laws). However, part of the reason for her quest was her campaign to change the law in the Scottish Parliament. So, for example, she was pictured at work in Holyrood, she used case studies of Scottish people, and both she and presenter Jeremy Vine stated that her campaign to change the law was specific to Scotland:

I started to bring a Bill to the Scottish Parliament. (*Panorama*, 8 December 2008)

As Margo said she is trying to get a bill before the Scottish Parliament in order to secure a change in the law there. (*Panorama*, 8 December 2008)

'Britain's Homecare Scandal' (*Panorama*, 12 April 2009) looked at the care of the elderly in the UK, using examples from both England and Scotland. The devolution of homecare is complex, with devolved governments and local authorities both involved in its regulation. The programme did a thorough job of specifying which bodies and laws applied where, in order that the viewers were properly aware of practice in their own nation, as the following statements suggest:

Scotland and Wales have a higher proportion still with local authorities... [of care agencies] (*Panorama*, 12 April 2009).

National standards in England and Wales... (*Panorama*, 12 April 2009).

...the national standard for England and Scotland... (*Panorama*, 12 April 2009).

### Failing to compare, and England as a default

We also found ten current affairs programmes which implied that the programme was about the UK or Britain, rather than the devolved areas under discussion. In some cases, this meant retaining an air of generality: the

*Panorama* programme 'Whatever Happened to People Power?' (6 July 2009), for example, discussed events, legislation, issues or personalities in which devolved powers were relevant without ever referring to devolution or devolved issues. Others, such as *Panorama's* 'Kids Behaving Badly' (5 January 2009) and the *File on Four* programme 'Care Concerns' (29 September 2009), dealt specifically with devolved areas of social policy, but conveyed the impression that they were relevant to the whole of the UK (rather than to a set of different devolved institutions) by using phrases such as 'the government'.

'Care Concerns' was about murders committed by mentally ill people when the murderers were – supposedly – being cared for in the community. It evaluated the failures of the National Service Framework for Mental Health (1999) – a Department of Health publication that addresses the mental health needs of working age adults up to 65 – but failed to state that this framework is England-only. It also discussed the inner workings of Community Treatment Orders but failed to convey that these apply only in England and Wales. Its examples and interviews all came from England, reporting murders carried out by mentally ill people in Manchester and Liverpool, with interviews that included the clinical director of the Manchester NHS Trust, a care co-ordinator in Manchester and a psychiatrist in Leeds. Any lay listener in Scotland or Northern Ireland (and to a lesser extent Wales) could be misled by the discussions about the care of mentally ill people in the community since, while the story applies only to England, it was framed as relevant to the UK by the use of phrases such as:

...the government laid out...framework for care in the community. (*File on Four*, 29 September 2009)

Other programmes, such as the *Panorama* edition 'The Truth About Spending Cuts' (28 September 2009), were less directly misleading, but the nature of the programme could be seen to contribute to a misleading view of devolved powers. The programme argued that the current national debt will force whichever party gains power in the coming General Election to impose cuts on public spending, which will impact on public services. The issue was framed as relevant to the viewer by the repeated use of the word 'our' (as in 'our finances') – used three times in the short introduction by Jeremy Vine before the report even began. However, the examples of threats to public services posed by the cuts did not distinguish between issues like defence, which are not devolved, and issues which are, such as the NHS and education. So, for example, the presenter stated that:

For waiting times in A and E, outpatients and GPs' surgeries not to start rising will require a miracle (*Panorama*, 28 September 2009).

without any reference to the devolved context of such decisions.

## Summary

Our examination of BBC current affairs programmes found examples of good practice across the BBC's current affairs output, with a number of programmes either dealing with or referencing devolved powers or authorities. Indeed, the number of programmes doing so increased from four in 2007 to nine in 2009 (three which dealt explicitly with devolution topics, six which referenced devolved powers). However, the number of programmes which neglected to reference devolved powers remained at a similar level (nine in 2007, ten in 2009).

# 7. New Developments Since 2007

For this section, we looked at two recent additions to the BBC's output with potential relevance for devolution: *The One Show* on BBC One, which was analysed over the same period as the main content analysis described in sections 2-4 above, and the web resource 'Democracy Live'.

*The One Show* is a topical magazine programme introduced in July 2007 and broadcast at 7pm Monday to Friday on BBC One. While the majority of the programme consists of light-hearted discussion and magazine-style segments, serious issues are also covered. In line with the content analysis in Sections 2 and 3, we coded all the items concerning news or current affairs, a total of 63 items across 20 editions of the programme. These items usually consisted of a package presented by a reporter on location followed by a studio discussion involving an expert on the relevant topic and that edition's celebrity guest. In the coding scheme used in this study, this counted as two items (the report and the discussion).

In line with the rest of the news output analysed (see Section 4), where devolution is covered in the first item, the accuracy of the coverage was taken to apply to the second unless it was directly contradicted. So, for example, if a report that mentioned a policy area relevant to devolved powers was followed by a discussion that used general terms for the application of the policy (the country, we, us, etc.) the discussion was *not* coded as if the connection to devolution was being ignored.

**Table 7.1:** Item subject frequencies and percentages (*The One Show*)

2009 <i>The One Show</i> Item	No. of	Percentage
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Subject	Items	
Westminster Politics (UK)	2	3.2
Celebrity/Entertainment News	3	4.8
Consumer News	9	14.3
Crime General / Corporate	1	1.6
Crime Individual	1	1.6
Defence	2	3.2
Disaster/Accident/Tragedy	5	7.9
Education	2	3.2
Environmental Issues	3	4.8
Europe/EU	2	3.2
Health NHS	2	3.2
Health General	4	6.3
Human Interest	2	3.2
Industrial Relations	4	6.3
International (Other)	2	3.2
Iraq/Afghanistan	3	4.8
Media	1	1.6
Policing	3	4.8
Religion	2	3.2
Social Policy (Other)	3	4.8
Terrorism	2	3.2
Other	5	7.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The topical output of *The One Show* covered a wide range of subjects (Table 7.1 above), encompassing both 'lighter' topics, such as celebrity/entertainment news, and a notable range of more serious subjects, including the war in Afghanistan and the European Union.

## Coverage of Devolved Issues

From the 20 programmes included in the sample, we found seven stories (generating a total of 12 items) spread across six programmes which contained a current affairs component dealing with policy areas which are largely devolved. These were:

- Adoption services (12 October; 2 items)
- Compassionate release for terminally ill prisoners (13 October; 2 items)
- A review of Primary Care Trust funding of care home residents (14 October; 2 items)
- Government facilities for single teenage mothers (16 October; 1 item)
- Careers advice for 7-year-olds (26 October; 2 items)
- Flood management (26 November; 1 item)
- Council Tax bands (26 November; 2 items)

In total, this meant that 12 out of the total of 63 items concerned subjects relevant to devolved issues. Table 7.2 shows the subjects of these items ('Consumer News' concerns the Council Tax bands story of 26 November,

where the focus of the items was to provide information to viewers on how to apply for council tax rebates).

**Table 7.2: Devolution-related item subject frequencies (*The One Show*)**

	No. of Items
Consumer News	2
Education	2
Environmental Issues	1
Health NHS	2
Policing / Justice	2
Social Policy (Other)	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

Overall, there were mixed results in *The One Show's* coverage of devolution-related topics. Of the seven stories (each comprising one or more items), three made clear references to devolved powers or authority, and four incorrectly implied that the relevant policy applied uniformly across the UK. While our unit of analysis – the news item – was the same as in our content analysis, the qualitative discussion below focuses on these seven stories.

## Stories that referred to devolved powers

### Compassionate release for terminally ill prisoners (13 October 2009)

This story followed the release of the man convicted of the Lockerbie bombing by the Scottish Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill, examining the policy of compassionate release for prisoners with terminal health conditions through the story of the mother of a terminally ill man in prison for murder. The report made clear, both in the studio introduction and in the report proper, that there were specific powers vested in the Scottish justice system and the Scottish Parliament to act on this issue, and it made implicit references to the fact that the system is different in England and Wales, noting that “Each case is considered by the relevant Minister of Justice.”

In keeping with the show's style, the report explored the human dimension of public policy. In this case the presence of different devolved policy competences was made clear. The studio discussion that followed focused on the human cost and the opinions of the studio guests.

### Primary Care Trusts (14 October 2009)

This story was based on a report into inequalities in Primary Care Trust funding for individuals in care homes across different local authorities in England. The report contextualised this with the statement that “pressure had

been mounting to sort out the discrepancies in care funding throughout England”.

Similarly the reporter’s further suggestion that “things would have been different in another part of the country” suggested, again, that the context was limited to England. The discussion item immediately following the report provided information for those living in England on how to assess whether they have been fairly treated and again made clear that the story as a whole only affected England.

### *Council Tax band rebates (26 November 2009)*

This constituted a report and a subsequent discussion in which the differences in council tax levying (and the means to contest the system) in the different nations of the UK were spelled out:

Surprisingly, in England and Scotland, your tax band is still based on the value of your house back in 1991. In Wales, they revalued four years ago. The system is different in Northern Ireland.

This clearly outlined the differences for viewers across the UK, as part of a consumer advice report outlining the means of obtaining a rebate on overpaid taxes. The related discussion continued with the same reporter in the studio stating: “In Northern Ireland, there’s a different system” and “Wales reassessed all their Council Tax in 2003, which came into effect in 2005” (thereby referencing the Council Tax (Valuation Bands) (Wales) Order 2003). Taken as a whole, this story – package and discussion – contained substantive comparisons of the council tax systems in the four nations of the UK and made several references to the existence of different powers.

## **Stories that did not refer to devolutionary powers**

### *Adoption Services (12 October 2009)*

This story adopted the conventional *One Show* format of a reporter delivering a pre-recorded package on location, followed by a studio discussion, with a representative of the children’s charity Barnardo’s, and that day’s celebrity guest. The report was inspired by the head of Barnardo’s statement that more children should be put up for adoption if their parents are unable to look after them, and investigated the moral and legal implications of the removal of at-risk children from their parents. The show presented two cases, one of a mother who had lost her children due to addiction issues and one of a woman who had formerly been put through foster care. The report focused primarily on the human cost of adoption and difficult family conditions, with no direct reference to the legislative basis of the social policies relating to adoption and fostering. However, where references to the ability of social services to

remove children were made, there was no contextualisation about the differing powers of the national governments in that area, for example:

[The head of Barnardo's]: if a family's broken, we should be removing their children permanently.

While this is clearly a general statement about the morality of the state's interference in childcare, it could – in the context of the rest of the report – be misconstrued as implying that there is a single policy framework for dealing with this issue throughout the UK. The ensuing studio discussion provided no further information.

### *Government facilities for single teenage mothers (16 October 2009)*

This story was in response to a proposed policy by the Westminster government that specialist facilities will be created to cater for teenage single mothers. The programme contained a report on the proposed facilities, and told the stories of two teenage mothers, one of whom was cared for by such an institution, while the other disagreed with the need for a policy, outlining specialist care for women in her situation. While this story dealt with an area of social policy that contains an element of devolved power to all three of the devolved authorities in the UK, the report contained no mention of this fact. What made this omission problematic was that the story did contain policy implications, with several uses of the terms 'the government', and 'in Britain'. Although the format of the report – in line with the rest of *The One Show's* current affairs items – dealt more with the human dimension of single-motherhood. Given that it was explicitly related to a proposed Westminster government policy in an area in which power is devolved, the absence of mentions of devolution was potentially misleading.

### *Careers Advice for 7-Year-Olds (26 October 2009)*

This report related to the announcement of a pilot government scheme to provide careers advice for school pupils as young as seven. Although the scheme only applies to England, no mention of this was included in the introduction to the report:

The Secretary of State for Schools, Ed Balls, thinks young minds need to be more career-focused. He's suggesting children as young as 7 should be getting careers advice.

The following package was much more light-hearted, consisting of a humorous series of vox pops conducted by the television presenter Ruby Wax, none of which touched on the policy issue. The subsequent discussion, however, returned to the policy issue without any reference to the differences in powers:

I think we're generally agreed that 7 years old is a bit young to start giving careers advice. But actually having a good careers advice system isn't a bad thing, is it?

Although not specifying the government scheme explicitly, the discussion did nothing to dispel the idea that the relevant policy is applicable generally across the UK.

### *Flood Management (26 November 2009)*

Following flooding in Cumbria, this report considered future flooding in the UK, and discussed flood defences. The tone of the package was very general, without acknowledging that flood defences are entirely devolved to Scotland, covered by the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009, and to Northern Ireland. The Draft Flood and Water Management Bill (2009) covers England and Wales only, and some parts of it are relevant only to England, some only to Wales. Although the story retained a level of generality, the report suggested that there was a need for the UK government to deal with the issue alone, and the reporter signed off with the line:

We've got a long history of moaning about the British weather, but pretty soon we're going to have to do something about it.

### *Coverage of the UK*

Table 7.3 below outlines the relevance of all 63 *The One Show* news items to the four nations of the UK. The majority of items concerned the UK as a whole, as would be expected given the tone and scope of the programme. We note, however, that none of the items was related to (or about) stories in any one of the four nations other than England.

**Table 7.3: Geographical relevance of The One Show items**

2009 Stories		
	No. of Items	Percentage
England	21	33.3
Westminster / Downing Street	2	3.2

Outside UK	4	6.3
General UK	36	57.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 7.4 below excludes all those items that were discussions, interviews and two-ways with reporters that were located in the studio. Therefore, it represents all of the 'reporter package' items filmed on location in the UK. Again, the clear majority of the 34 packages concerned the UK, although almost one third of the total concerned England only and none dealt solely with the other nations.

**Table 7.4: Reporter package items: geographical relevance of item subject**

<b>2009 <i>The One Show</i> Package Location</b>		
	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
England	11	32.4
Westminster / Downing Street	1	2.9
Outside UK	2	5.9
General UK	20	58.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100</b>

Lastly, Table 7.5 below shows the physical location of the reporter in the 34 pre-recorded package items included in *The One Show*. Of the 34 reporter packages only two saw the reporter presenting from one of the nations other than England: the first consisted of a historical look at women workers striking in Wales in 1984, with reference to the October 2009 Royal Mail strikes, and the other looked at the Birmingham pub bombing by the IRA, with part of the report located near the home of one of the wrongly convicted men in Scotland.

**Table 7.5: Physical location of reporter within package**

<b>2009 Reporter Location (Packages)</b>		
	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
England	22	64.7
Wales	1	2.9
Studio	1	2.9
England and Scotland	1	2.9
Location Unknown	9	26.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100</b>

## Summary

*The One Show* draws attention to a range of serious social and political issues, providing an accessible and human context with its use of case studies to illustrate the relevance of issues to the public. There are, however, some issues in the way *The One Show* deals with policy areas with a devolution dimension. The case study/human interest approach to tackling certain issues, particularly regarding social policy, often resulted in an absence of context when powers may be devolved (as, for example, in the adoption and single mother stories). A second issue is that while a number of stories were about England rather than the UK, there were no items specifically related to issues in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

## Democracy Live

In early November 2009, the BBC launched a new online resource called '*Democracy Live*'. Integrated into the BBC News website, but also a stand-alone resource in its own right, it claims "to search, find and watch the politics that affects you". While the site acts as a hub for information about the political institutions of the UK, it most prominently offers live coverage of parliamentary and committee business where available, as well as on-demand video coverage. As such, it is both a stand-alone source of political information, and a complementary foil for the BBC News website, containing links to the top political news stories of the day, and to relevant blogs by BBC journalists. We did not formally analyse *Democracy Live* as part of this study due to the fact that it is too different from the rest of the news coverage we looked at, and therefore the measures used elsewhere could not be applied in this case. *Democracy Live* also became active part of the way through the study. However, as a resource it is important enough in terms of devolved politics in the UK that its existence could not be ignored, given the aims of the study.

In terms of *Democracy Live's* coverage of the devolved institutions, it provides the following services:

1. Links to political information in tandem with the respective web pages for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the News website
2. Live and on-demand video coverage of political business at Stormont, Holyrood and Cardiff Bay
3. Guides to the operation of the devolved legislatures and governments as well as the remit of devolved powers in each nation.

### Live and On-Demand Video

As well as being shown on the home page of *Democracy Live*, on the page dedicated to each of the devolved bodies an embedded video link provides live coverage of parliamentary or committee business. Below this are links to recently recorded coverage of main chamber or committee-room activity of the relevant institution. Allied with a growing archive, this provides the interested citizen in the UK with a substantial amount of topical information on the operation of all of the major political bodies in the country.

### **Information Guides to Political Process**

As well as providing up-to-date political information via live or on-demand video, *Democracy Live* also provides guides to the operation of political institutions, and to the passage of legislation within the different parliaments. Taking the Scottish Parliament page as an example, a section 'Guides to devolution and the Scottish Parliament' contains four links to pages that cover, respectively: a guide to which legislation is devolved to the Scottish Parliament or reserved to Westminster; a tour of the Scottish Parliament building in Edinburgh; a description of the job of an MSP; and a guide to the process of a piece of legislation through the Parliament and into law. On the pages dedicated to Wales and Northern Ireland, there are similar links concerning the institutions and processes in the relevant devolved governments.

Combined, these two resources provide a substantial source of information on current business in the major political institutions; and a reference guide to inform an understanding of devolved politics. In effect, this can form the foundation of learning and knowledge of parliamentary business (which can often seem obscure) from which the video coverage can be better understood, presenting the citizen with the tools to better engage with devolved politics.

It should be noted, however, that although *Democracy Live* provides a wealth of information about UK and devolved politics, it is – as with all internet sources of news and information – only available to those who actively seek it out. Therefore, while it is of undoubted use to the public (accessible from outside the UK also), it is no substitute for broadcast news uniformly transmitted.



# 8. Omissions

## Introduction

In order to assess the flow of news stories with significance for devolved powers into the national news programmes on the BBC, we analysed news media salient to the devolved nations during the four weeks of sampled news. The purpose of this exercise is to see broadly how many devolution-related stories there were during this sample period, and to note which ones were covered by the BBC's UK-wide television, radio and online news and which were not.

In this section, the term 'story' is used to denote an overarching topic on which several news items are based (for example, the 'Hillary Clinton Northern Ireland visit' story concerns all newspaper stories and broadcast or online items that deal with that topic). In line with Case Study 3 in Section 5, this section departs from the rest of the report in its unit of analysis. The term 'news item' – where it is used – retains the same meaning as throughout the rest of the report. For the sample, as in 2007, we used all of the 6.30pm opt-out bulletins from the sample period, and the newspapers selected for the study were analysed for every day that we had opt-outs. We therefore examined *Reporting Scotland*, *Newsline*, and *Wales Today* – and a sample of newspapers: for Wales, the *Western Mail*; for Scotland, the *Scotsman*; and for Northern Ireland, the *Belfast Telegraph*. This gave us TV and newspaper content from the following dates:

12-16 October  
26-30 October  
09-13 November  
23-27 November

We found 115 newspaper stories across the *Belfast Telegraph*, the *Scotsman*, and the *Western Mail*<sup>17</sup>. Combined with 107 devolution stories in the opt-outs, this left us with 222 stories in total (a complete list of all stories is included at the end of this section). From this sample, we selected 64 stories that had special significance for devolved politics in the UK, based on the following two factors. The first concerned all stories that dealt with the process of devolved politics where it impacts upon relations with Westminster, or on the operation of the devolved assemblies. To this end, we excluded all process stories that had focused specifically on party infighting, or on opposition attacks on government parties or policies. The second factor concerned whether a story dealt with a high-profile policy area in which, although powers may be devolved, it could be argued that their importance may have warranted

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<sup>17</sup> LexisNexis was used to gather the newspaper sample. The search criteria used can be found in the Appendix.

coverage on the BBC's UK-wide news media. The policy areas chosen were: Health, Education, Environment, Justice, and Social Policy. The breakdown of the selected stories is shown in Table 8.1:

**Table 8.1: Frequency of omitted devolution-related stories with UK significance in 6.30pm opt-outs, and nations' newspapers (N = 64)**

Nation	Devolution & Westminster		Health		Education		Environment		Justice		Social Policy	
	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print
Northern Ireland	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Scotland	1	1	3	0	4	3	1	1	6	1	2	1
Wales	2	4	1	10	0	5	0	2	0	0	4	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>

Apart from these stories, however, in general we found that the most high-profile stories relevant to devolution and to major devolved policy issues in the three nations were in fact covered by the BBC network news outlets contained in our content analysis sample. In Northern Ireland these were: the negotiations over the devolution of further policing and justice powers; and parties' and education officials' disagreements over the nature of the secondary school entry test, both of which lasted for the duration of the period. In Scotland the major issues were: the SNP conference, discussions over the introduction of minimum pricing for alcohol, and the possibility of increased powers for the Scottish Parliament. In Wales, the Labour leadership contest following the resignation of Rhodri Morgan was the biggest single issue facing the Assembly, due to the automatic appointment as First Minister of the leader of the party. The stories discussed below comprise the remaining stories with a significant relation to devolution that were not covered by BBC network television, radio or online news during our sampling period.

## Northern Ireland

### Devolution Stories

There were three major devolution stories that were not covered by the BBC network television, radio or online news output in our sample during October and November, but which featured in the sample of print and opt-out stories. One of these was covered in different ways and with a different focus in the

*Belfast Telegraph* and on *Newsline*. This first story concerned the practice of 'double-jobbing' by politicians in Northern Ireland, where they are able to sit as both MPs and MLAs, due to the unique position of Northern Ireland parties in Westminster. On 26 October, the *Belfast Telegraph* reported that the Democratic Unionist Party leader Peter Robinson had declared that members of his party would be able to continue in the practice of holding both positions provided they forewent their Assembly salaries. On 23 November *Newsline* ran an item discussing the Ulster Unionist Party's failed attempt to have the practice banned by 2011, a story which was covered in the *Belfast Telegraph* the following day.

In the 12 November *Belfast Telegraph*, it was reported that the deputy leader of the Social Democratic Labour Party, Alasdair McDonnell, had given a speech in London, heavily criticising the nature of devolution, saying:

"[The] reality of devolved Government in Northern Ireland right now is that it is failing people. High minded arguments over policing and justice mean nothing to the old person who lives alone and in fear of crime," he said in London. "The mess which is the education system does nothing to inspire parents of primary school children – and I am one myself – that Stormont understands or even cares about their interests. [And] the failure to adequately respond to the economic downturn is cold comfort for people losing their jobs. In short, Stormont is failing the people of Northern Ireland" (*Belfast Telegraph*, 12 November)

The story thus involved a relatively senior political figure in Northern Ireland giving a speech highly critical of both the process and the outcomes of devolution.

The final devolution story of note was the unprecedented combination of the Northern Ireland and Parliamentary Ombudsmen to investigate extensive post-mortem injuries to a patient. This marked the first time that these senior positions had been combined in any such investigation.

## Health Policy

The main health story concerning Stormont during the sampling period was the funding crisis in the Northern Ireland Department of Health. This story was reported from various perspectives by the *Belfast Telegraph*, on 15 October, with the announcement of a budget shortfall of around £70m. There were numerous stories speculating on the potential effect on services that this situation was expected to cause, including proposals to reduce hospital bed numbers (*Belfast Telegraph*, 16 October). This story did not feature on *Newsline*, but on 12 October, the Northern Ireland opt-out included an item concerning the impact on Assembly budgets of meeting the cost of administering the vaccination programme for the swine flu outbreak.

## Education Policy

There were two significant stories concerning education policy in Northern Ireland (not counting the schools admission test story that dominated this issue). The first, on *Newsline*, dealt with the potential removal of certain provisions to cater for pupils with special needs in schools in Northern Ireland, following a review by the Department of Education. The second concerned a number of training schemes being introduced by the Assembly government to combat youth unemployment.

## Scotland

### Devolution Stories

Several stories concerning Scottish devolution were covered by the BBC as mentioned above. There were, however, two that were not picked up, although given that both were reaffirmations of Scottish government policy, this is perhaps not surprising. The first was covered by *Reporting Scotland* on 15 October and related to the SNP's opposition to the Trident nuclear deterrent system, and was prompted by the increased prominence of SNP statements of policy prior to the party conference, though covered separately from the conference itself. The second, in the *Scotsman* on 10 November, was a report on the SNP's opposition to the Calman Commission on Scottish devolution, again a long-standing point of contention for the SNP, whose independence agenda is at odds with the recommendations of the Commission.

### Health Policy

There were three stories that highlighted the Scottish government's devolved powers over health policy, all aired on *Reporting Scotland*. These were firstly, a report commissioned by the Scottish Government into standards in hospitals in Scotland (12 October); a story highlighting problems with a flagship health policy of the SNP government, free parking at hospitals (16 October); and a campaign launched by the Scottish Department of Health to reduce the number of pregnant women smoking (30 October).

### Education Policy

There were a number of stories concerning education policy in Scotland – seven in total – covering a wide range of topics. The most significant by far was first reported in the *Scotsman* on 16 October, regarding the admission by the Scottish Education Minister (Fiona Hyslop) that the Scottish Government

had failed to implement one of the SNP's key election pledges, to reduce class sizes in primaries 1 to 3. This issue ultimately led to the dismissal of the Minister from her post and precipitated a reshuffle of government positions; however, it was not featured on UK-wide coverage (or the opt-out) throughout the sample, which corresponded exactly to the length of the story, as the Minister was demoted on 1 December. Another significant story, first reported by the *Scotsman* on 13 October, related to comments by a Professor of Politics at Strathclyde University that the Scottish government policy – instituted in 2000 – to scrap tuition fees for Scottish students should be reversed. The story was picked up by the *Scotsman* again on 28 October, when subsequent commentators echoed these remarks.

An education story that featured both in the *Scotsman* and *Reporting Scotland* was a study into achievement in Scottish schools that found standards to be slipping relative to schools in England. This was covered by the *Scotsman* on 9 November and then on the BBC's 6.30pm opt-out on 11 November. The remaining stories related to firstly, Scottish government figures showing a rise in classroom violence (*Reporting Scotland*, 23 November); and falling numbers of teachers in Scotland (*Reporting Scotland*, 27 November).

### Justice Policy

There were seven stories related to crime and justice in Scotland. Given that the justice system has historically been entirely separate from the rest of the UK, it is not entirely surprising that so many were not featured on UK-wide news coverage by the BBC. Several stories were generally concerned with crime or prison statistics, with rates of recidivism among convicted sex offenders (*Scotsman*, 27 October), general crime statistics (*Reporting Scotland*, 27 October), and rising numbers of prisoners in Scottish jails (*Reporting Scotland*, 27 November). There were also stories on *Reporting Scotland* about a commissioned review of Scottish prisons on 12 October, which was later picked up again on 12 November as prison sentences were debated. In addition, there were two stories featured on the 6.30pm opt-out concerning new government legislation related to criminal justice. The first, on 27 October, outlined new noise pollution laws while the second, on 10 November, described the introduction of a new community service programme for low-level offenders.

## Wales

### Devolution Stories

There were several stories about aspects of devolution in Wales, with some specifically concerning the relationship between the Welsh Assembly and

Westminster. On 28 October, the *Western Mail* quoted the Welsh Secretary, Peter Hain, as saying that critics of the devolution system in Wales were 'deliberately misunderstanding' the process, and were looking to undermine the devolved institutions. This was, said Hain, part of a campaign to demand further devolution of powers. A second story in the paper, on 10 November, reported that changes to UK legislation on social care funding would detrimentally affect Welsh government budgets:

Wales has a higher proportion of disabled pensioners and other disabled people, who collectively receive around 8% of [Attendance Allowance] pay-outs across the UK. But because Wales is allocated money via the Barnett formula, the Assembly Government would only receive a population share of that money if the shake-up goes ahead, which would be less than 6% (*Western Mail*, 10 November).

This showed the tension between the funding formulae used to allocate money to the devolved government in Wales, and the interconnection of legislation at Westminster with policies in which there are devolved responsibilities. In the same vein, a story in the *Western Mail* on 12 November reported on a statement by the Equality and Human Rights Commission that the Welsh Assembly's stance on human rights is hampered by a lack of law-making powers in that area. On 13 November in the same newspaper, it was announced that the Welsh Assembly was to be granted further powers to oversee the Wales Audit Office, a small but significant increase in competence.

There were two further devolution-related stories aired on *Wales Today*. On 24 November, it was reported that the All Wales Convention had recommended that a referendum on increased law-making powers be put before the Welsh Assembly. On 26 November, it was reported that the Welsh Secretary had promised a new funding formula for the Welsh government, should Labour be returned in the 2010 general election.

### Health Policy

Welsh health policy was the subject of ten stories over the sampling period. On *Wales Today* on 26 October, it was reported that a continuing healthcare project set up by the Welsh Assembly had missed the deadline for implementation. The rest of the stories related to health policy were covered in the *Western Mail*, and were as follows:

- The creation of a five-year NHS plan by the Welsh Assembly Government (12 October).
- Criticism of waiting times for NHS cancer screenings in Wales (26 October).
- A pilot scheme to provide free toothbrushes and toothpaste to schoolchildren in Wales (26 October).

- Plaid Cymru AMs calling for a change to an 'opt out' organ donor system (9 November).
- Rhodri Morgan's praise for the Welsh system of managing the NHS (13 November).
- An inquiry launched by the Welsh Assembly into waiting lists for wheelchairs (23 November).
- Shortages of functional ambulances in Wales (23 November).
- An independent report claiming that the mental health services in Wales are failing children and young people (26 November).
- The expansion of a successful Assembly programme to reduce childhood obesity (26 November).

With the possible exception of the five-year NHS management plan announced by the Welsh government on 12 October, there is little UK-wide scope for these stories, but it is nonetheless clear that there were a significant number of developments in Welsh health policy during the sample period that were not picked up by the BBC in its UK-wide news output.

### Social Policy

Five stories covered by the *Western Mail* and *Wales Today* concerned social policy in Wales, beginning with the announcement by the Welsh government that a number of care homes across Wales were to be closed (*Wales Today*, 14 October). This was followed by the Assembly's new plans for a fuel poverty plan for the disadvantaged (*Wales Today*, 9 November), and a report stating that the Welsh Assembly's child welfare legislation had been poorly implemented across local government bodies (*Western Mail*, 10 November). There were also stories reported on *Wales Today* about the reorganization of the 'Blue Badge' scheme for disabled drivers in Wales (24 November), and of an Assembly Health Commission investigation into the standards of care homes in Wales (26 November).

### Summary

There were a substantial number of devolution-related stories found in our sample of newspapers and opt-out news bulletins circulated and broadcast in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that were not picked up by the BBC's UK-wide news providers. It was to be expected that only a small portion of such stories would be picked up, due in part to the finite space for news across all BBC media; this is particularly the case when comparing print with broadcast journalism. Nonetheless, there were several stories that had either a strong connection to devolved politics, or concerned a substantial regional issue in an important area of policy in which powers were devolved. In the first category, heavy criticism of the devolved process in both Wales and



Northern Ireland hinted at a desire for change in the nature and extent of devolved powers. In terms of important policy-based issues, the admission by the Education Minister in Scotland that a flagship election policy had failed marked one of the more important stories in the Scottish media for some time, resulting in the demotion of the Minister in question and accusations of misleading the Scottish Parliament levelled at the First Minister in relation to the initial policy pledge. The story, however, was not reported outside Scotland.

Arguably the most important stories concerning devolved politics that emerged during the sample period *were* covered by the BBC's UK-wide news output. The negotiations over the devolution of policing and justice powers, and the disagreements over school entry exams in Northern Ireland were covered (though, in the case of the school exams, on one day only despite a month of developments). In Scotland, the SNP conference and related discussions over support for independence and the further granting of powers recommended by the Calman Commission were all dealt with, along with calls for the minimum pricing of alcohol. In Wales, the Labour leadership contest was covered on most BBC outlets, as was a report into failings in the mental health screening of a man who later fatally stabbed a vicar.

In summary, there are still a number of substantial stories related to devolved powers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that do not make it into UK-wide coverage. However, in line with the general increase in coverage of devolution-related news noted in Sections 2 and 3 above, there was substantial coverage of the more high-profile news stories that emerged in these nations during the sampling period.

### Omissions Story Tables

NB: Stories covered on BBC UK-wide coverage are marked 'X'; stories with special relevance to devolution marked in bold.

### Newspapers

*Belfast Telegraph 12-16 October (Week 1)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
12/10/09	Decommissioning of paramilitary groups (including retrospective views of the Troubles)	
12/10/09	Devolution of policing and justice to NI Assembly / Hillary Clinton visit	X
12/10/09	PUP urge DUP and Sinn Fein to stop 'politics of fear' to appeal to their electorates	
12/10/09	Schools transfer exam crisis: Party impasse on rules and format of entrance exams to decide secondary school allocation of pupils	X



12/10/09	Cycle route due for destruction wins European award	
12/10/09	New code of conduct for MLAs when employing family members	
13/10/09	Charities campaign for better cardiac treatment in NI	
14/10/09	Police officers foil murder bid on MLA Ian Paisley Jnr	
14/10/09	NI Assembly roadshow visits North Down	
<b>15/10/09</b>	<b>NI Health Department cash crisis. Regional Trusts (Belfast) cutting costs</b>	
15/10/09	MLA expenses published – criticism of costs	

*Belfast Telegraph 26-30 October (Week 2)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
26/10/09	UUP Conference	
<b>26/10/09</b>	<b>DUP 'to continue double-jobbing' as MPs and MLAs</b>	
26/10/09	NI – cash being spent to tackle swine flu is diminishing spending on other health priorities	
28/10/09	'SDLP leader battle' – party leader quits Stormont to focus on MP role	
28/10/09	Unionists believe local BBC favours republicans, according to NI MP	

*Belfast Telegraph 09-13 November (Week 3)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
09/11/09	TUV (Traditional Unionist Voice) vow to bring down Stormont Executive	
10/11/09	Stormont to assess companies managing communal apartment blocks	
10/11/09	SDLP leadership candidate attacks Sinn Fein 'united Ireland' claims	
11/11/09	Protestants don't feel welcome at Gaelic games, says Culture, Arts and Leisure committee MLA	
11/11/09	Low-paid civil servants given deal on equal wages	
11/11/09	Stormont committee debating costs of deferring water charges in NI	
<b>12/11/09</b>	<b>Training schemes in NI to combat youth unemployment</b>	
12/11/09	Row over cost of ship restoration (Department for Social Development)	
<b>12/11/09</b>	<b>SDLP deputy leader claims 'devolution is failing the people'</b>	
13/11/09	Book about Paisley asks questions about the success of	

	devolution	
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*Belfast Telegraph 23-27 November (Week 4)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
23/11/09	DUP party conference	
<b>23/11/09</b>	<b>Stormont ministers launch cross-border carpool scheme</b>	
23/11/09	Joint loyalist and republican conflict resolution group to be formally launched	
24/11/09	'Double-jobbing' to be ended	
24/11/09	Row between Stormont and Dublin over tourism advertising	
25/11/09	Church abuse victims pressure NI Assembly for inquiry	
<b>25/11/09</b>	<b>Ombudsmen from NI and Westminster appointed to investigate hospital death</b>	
25/11/09	Ombudsman's office in need of reform	
26/11/09	MLAs in line for £7000 pay rise	
26/11/09	First elections to Northern Ireland's new councils in danger due to disagreement over boundaries	
26/11/09	NI Assembly publishes members' earnings	
27/11/09	Airports disagree over passenger cap deal	
<b>27/11/09</b>	<b>MLAs quiz health trust over hygiene record</b>	

*Scotsman 12-16 October (Week 1)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
12/10/09	Labour claims 'vote for SNP is a vote for the Tories', after SNP power-broker hint	
13/10/09	SNP conference build-up: independence referendum	X
<b>13/10/09</b>	<b>Scottish universities need tuition fees, according to professors</b>	
<b>14/10/09</b>	<b>Scottish marine bill criticised for failing to enact real change</b>	
15/10/09	Scottish government report highlights extent of unemployment	
16/10/09	Criticism of 'clan gathering' costs to taxpayer	
<b>16/10/09</b>	<b>Education Minister admits government has failed on class sizes</b>	

*Scotsman 26-30 October (Week 2)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
27/10/09	Transport Scotland under scrutiny by the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions committee over dangerous road	
<b>27/10/09</b>	<b>Justice Minister defends crime statistics regarding recidivist sex offenders</b>	
28/10/09	Scottish Government blocks hotel construction	
28/10/09	Scottish Labour shadow minister reshuffle	
28/10/09	Scottish Government urged to invest in computer games industry	
28/10/09	Scottish Government criticised for antagonising private sector	
29/10/09	Cairngorm rail report requested	
29/10/09	Donations-row MSP returns to Scottish Labour's front bench	

*Scotsman 09-13 November (Week 3)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
<b>09/11/09</b>	<b>Scottish pupils are falling behind English, says think-tank report</b>	
<b>10/11/09</b>	<b>Calman Commission was 'a messy fudge', says SNP Government</b>	
12/11/09	Legal sector in Scotland awaiting Holyrood reviews	

*Scotsman 23-27 November (Week 4)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
23/11/09	NHS Highland chief accused of approaching MSP to back alcohol minimum pricing	
24/11/09	Petition goes before Scottish Parliament calling for NHS availability of cancer drug	
24/11/09	Business groups join forces to get Glasgow Airport Rail Link back on track	
25/11/09	Poll shows low levels of support for independence	X
<b>25/11/09</b>	<b>Cost of free care up 11%, but Holyrood saves £838m</b>	
26/11/09	Tories in pledge to hand Holyrood tax-raising powers	X
27/11/09	Scottish census questions and dates being set	
27/11/09	Health Minister criticises Scottish Labour over minimum alcohol pricing	X

*Western Mail 12-16 October (Week 1)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
12/10/09	Deputy First Minister announces new Welsh business plan	
12/10/09	Welsh Labour leadership contest	X
<b>12/10/09</b>	<b>Assembly Government creates 5-year NHS plan</b>	
12/10/09	Campaigners call for action to increase organ donor numbers	
13/10/09	Welsh Assembly looking to recruit 'technology and science supremo'	
14/10/09	Civil servants' expenses row	
14/10/09	Rural councils given low funding increases by Assembly Government	
14/10/09	Environment – pollutions levels lowest since 19 <sup>th</sup> Century	
14/10/09	BBC coverage of Wales criticised	
15/10/09	Row over Welsh-language draft legislation	
15/10/09	Badger cull plan delayed by AMs' call for further debate	
<b>15/10/09</b>	<b>Colleges turning away thousands of students due to cash crisis</b>	
16/10/09	Welsh Assembly swine flu vaccination programme	
16/10/09	New Assembly Government building opened	
16/10/09	England advised to follow Welsh example on play-based learning	X
<b>16/10/09</b>	<b>Report welcomes carrier bag charges</b>	

*Western Mail 26-30 October (Week 2)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
<b>26/10/09</b>	<b>Welsh NHS waiting times for cancer tests criticised</b>	
26/10/09	'True Wales' calls for referendum on independence	
26/10/09	Welsh Assembly Government to spend millions on Mid-Wales hospital	
26/10/09	Assembly's all-party group on Autism hears evidence	
<b>26/10/09</b>	<b>Welsh Assembly funds programme to give children free toothbrushes</b>	
<b>28/10/09</b>	<b>Welsh Secretary Peter Hain claims critics of Welsh Devolution are 'deliberately misunderstanding' the process</b>	
<b>28/10/09</b>	<b>£34m invested in work-based learning programme in Wales</b>	
<b>29/10/09</b>	<b>Welsh counselling in schools scheme praised</b>	
29/10/09	Warning on Wales' flood preparations	X
30/10/09	Mental healthcare changes could have prevented fatal stabbing	X

*Western Mail 09-13 November (Week 3)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
09/11/09	<b>Plaid Cymru AM calls for organ donations 'opt-out' system</b>	
09/11/09	Assembly struggling to fulfil environmental targets due to NIMBYs	
10/11/09	<b>Assembly legislation on child welfare poorly implemented by local governments</b>	
10/11/09	<b>Welsh disabled people to lose out due to Barnett formula allocation of UK funds</b>	
10/11/09	Welsh fuel poverty plans criticised	
12/11/09	Welsh sustainable Development Commission releases report	
12/11/09	Assembly launches puppy farming inquiry	
12/11/09	Assembly report on transport usage released	
12/11/09	<b>Lack of full law-making powers is causing Welsh human rights and inequality legislation to be vetoed by Westminster</b>	
13/11/09	<b>Assembly given new powers to oversee Wales Audit Office</b>	
13/11/09	AMs criticise recession budget	
13/11/09	<b>Rhodri Morgan speech praises Welsh approach to managing NHS</b>	
13/11/09	Welsh rugby matches to join 'crown jewels' of free-to-air sport	

*Western Mail 23-27 November (Week 4)*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
23/11/09	<b>Assembly launches inquiry into wheelchair waiting lists</b>	
23/11/09	AMs reject planning of opencast coal mine	
23/11/09	<b>All food waste in Wales set to be recycled</b>	
23/11/09	<b>Ambulance shortage highlighted</b>	
24/11/09	<b>Mental health services in Wales 'are failing children and young people'</b>	
24/11/09	Plaid Cymru adviser claims Assembly Government should make more use of private funding	
24/11/09	Institute finds lack of senior management experience in AMs	
25/11/09	Nurses in Wales demand same levels of care for babies as for adults	
25/11/09	Welsh Labour / Plaid Cymru coalition under threat due to referendum confusion	X
26/11/09	<b>New strategy launched to improve efficiency in higher</b>	

	<b>education</b>	
<b>26/11/09</b>	<b>Assembly expands programme to reduce childhood obesity</b>	

## Television

### Newsline

<b>Date</b>	<b>Story Summary</b>	<b>On BBC</b>
12/10/09	Clinton urges devolution of policing and justice	X
<b>13/10/09</b>	<b>Stormont will pay for H1N1; Assembly budget cuts</b>	
13/10/09	Brown makes, Sinn Fein accepts offer on devolution	X
13/10/09	Stormont policies towards jobs	
13/10/09	Interparty fighting	
14/10/09	Sinn Fein, Alliance Party debate whether post-primary transfer tests are effective	X
14/10/09	Meeting with Gordon Brown; Peter Robinson interview; Sinn Fein and funding issues	X
15/10/09	Interparty fighting about expenses; Stormont guidelines on benefiting political parties	
15/10/09	Assembly dealing with H1N1 could be tied to policing and justice devolution deal	X
16/10/09	AM and First Minister comment on attack, need to use political process, not violence	
16/10/09	New rules from Assembly on AM finances	
26/10/09	Health chair MLA calls on staff to be vaccinated for swine flu	
26/10/09	Minister goes to see new sewer system	
<b>26/10/09</b>	<b>Department of education won't help special needs children</b>	
27/10/09	Swine flu report	
27/10/09	SDLP deputy leader pledges to put his party back in driving seat of politics	
27/10/09	Finance Minister accuses some civil servants of "swinging the lead"	
28/10/09	Sinn Fein wants devolution	X
<b>29/10/09</b>	<b>Legal aid/Court fees comparison between nations</b>	
29/10/09	Sinn Fein president/DUP policing and justice	X
30/10/09	Sinn Fein accuse DUP of doing side deal over policing	X
9/11/09	DUP appeared to put up another carrier, phasing out full time police reserve	X
9/11/09	Maintenance fees for flats: call for change in the law	
9/11/09	Entrance test for grammar schools	X
10/11/09	Chief Constable says he will not change his mind about scrapping the police reserve	X

10/11/09	Stormont debate on policing and justice	X
10/11/09	SDLP leader campaign	
11/11/09	Policing and justice	
12/11/09	DUP denies claims it shifted its position on the police reserve devolution	
13/11/09	11 plus exams	
<b>23/11/09</b>	<b>Assembly debates a call by Ulster unionists to end double jobbing for MLAs and MPs by 2011</b>	
23/11/09	Transfer tests in schools	X
24/11/09	Policing: more on street and giving them more power to deal with anti-social behaviour and on the frontline. Comment from DUP member and SDLP.	X
24/11/09	Strike: primary school teachers protest outside department of education; mentions budgets and Irish government	X
26/11/09	Policing and justice devolution	X
26/11/09	MLAs in line for pay rise	X
<b>27/11/09</b>	<b>Environment minister interview</b>	

### *Reporting Scotland*

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
12/10/09	Lockerbie bomber released	X
<b>12/10/09</b>	<b>Scottish prisons – rehabilitation prison with high assault and disturbance rates</b>	
12/10/09	Increasing numbers of grandparents having to help as child carers	
<b>12/10/09</b>	<b>Hospital standards</b>	
12/10/09	What can Scotland learn from Delhi 2010? – Commonwealth Games	
<b>13/10/09</b>	<b>Positive performance of health visitors and detections of signs suggesting children are at risk in homes</b>	
13/10/09	Allotments – Government scheme to make more room available for people to grow their own food	
<b>14/10/09</b>	<b>Government plans for more wind farms</b>	
14/10/09	Glasgow NE by-election	X
15/10/09	Swine flu vaccinations	X
<b>15/10/09</b>	<b>SNP annual conference and EU representation</b>	
15/10/09	Glasgow NE by-election	X
<b>16/10/09</b>	<b>Trident nuclear weapons – SNP annual conference</b>	
<b>16/10/09</b>	<b>Problems with free parking in hospitals</b>	
26/10/09	Lockerbie bombing	
<b>27/10/09</b>	<b>Crime rates in Scotland – Stats versus public opinion</b>	

<b>27/10/09</b>	<b>Noise pollution laws</b>	
27/10/09	History becoming more popular in schools	
27/10/09	Incapacity benefits – criticisms of new changes	
<b>28/10/09</b>	<b>Funding of Universities and issue of tuition fees</b>	
29/10/09	US ambassador visits Scotland – Lockerbie issue / US-UK relations	
29/10/09	Protests about hedges	
<b>30/10/09</b>	<b>Pregnant women smoking – health campaign</b>	
30/10/09	By-election – SNP fighting for votes	X
09/11/09	SNP-led council considers allowing schools more autonomy (first in Scotland)	
09/11/09	Nuclear power stations (England and Wales)	X
10/11/09	Prison / mental health / women in prison – prison reform	
10/11/09	Medical herbalists campaign	
<b>10/11/09</b>	<b>Scottish government announces new disclosure scheme for people working with children</b>	
<b>10/11/09</b>	<b>Offenders helping on community service</b>	
<b>11/11/09</b>	<b>Standards in Scottish schools declining</b>	
<b>12/11/09</b>	<b>Prison sentences debate</b>	
12/11/09	Legalising drugs debate	X
<b>23/11/09</b>	<b>Violence in classrooms – figures released by Scottish government</b>	
24/11/09	Lockerbie bomber	
<b>24/11/09</b>	<b>Caring for the elderly</b>	
25/11/09	More powers to Holyrood	X
25/11/09	Council reacts to Scottish government loans for employing new teachers	
25/11/09	Pay rises for council and union workers	
25/11/09	Climate change and Scottish power	
26/11/09	SNP propose minimal pricing scheme on alcohol	X
<b>26/11/09</b>	<b>Increased minimum sentences for murderers and general new minimum sentence guidelines</b>	
26/11/09	Council tax set to freeze without annual increase	
<b>27/11/09</b>	<b>Falling number of teachers – local councils might also have control of employment taken away</b>	
<b>27/11/09</b>	<b>Rise in number of prisoners in Scottish jails</b>	

*Wales Today*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Story Summary</b>	<b>On BBC</b>
12/10/09	Welsh Government grants scheme for businesses ends	
12/10/09	Rhodri Morgan replacement / Labour leadership campaign	X
13/10/09	Possible council tax cut in Wales	
13/10/09	International Business Wales criticised regarding staff	



	expenses	
14/10/09	Interview with Chief Medical Officer for Wales regarding swine flu	
<b>14/10/09</b>	<b>Care home closures</b>	
15/10/09	Swine flu vaccination programme in Wales	
15/10/09	Labour leadership contest – Interview	X
15/10/09	Rhodri Morgan opens new building project	
<b>16/10/09</b>	<b>Education plans for deaf children</b>	
<b>26/10/09</b>	<b>Healthcare project misses deadline</b>	
09/11/09	Assembly action on building sea defences	X
<b>09/11/09</b>	<b>New fuel poverty plan by Welsh Government</b>	
10/11/09	Labour leadership contest update	X
11/11/09	Unemployment rates in Wales	
11/11/09	Welsh Assembly Government review of dog-breeding licensing	
12/11/09	Finance committee criticises Welsh Assembly Government for action on recession	
23/11/09	Campaigning with Labour leadership candidates	X
<b>24/11/09</b>	<b>Labour and Plaid Cymru row over future referendum on law-making powers for Welsh Assembly</b>	
<b>24/11/09</b>	<b>Disabled badges for children, and Welsh Assembly Government statement on improving 'Blue Badge' scheme in Wales</b>	
24/11/09	M4 roadworks and plans to keep motorway running in years ahead	
<b>26/11/09</b>	<b>Peter Hain does deal with Alistair Darling regarding funding for Wales</b>	
26/11/09	Swansea Council accuses Edwina Hart of making untrue allegations against its social services department	
26/11/09	Labour leader – ballots close today	X
<b>26/11/09</b>	<b>Policing of standards at care homes – Welsh Assembly Government health committee</b>	

## Appendix: 2009 Coding Sheet Changes

### *Summary of Changes to Content Analysis*

A number of changes to the coding sheet employed in the content analysis outlined in Section 2 were enacted for the purposes of this study. These were introduced firstly to streamline the 2007 sheet, which contained some categories and questions that had limited applicability for the new report; and secondly to extract more information from some of the questions posed in the earlier study. Significant care was taken to ensure that any changes would have no detrimental effect on the comparability of the current study to the 2007 iteration, but instead would represent a means of drawing out more information from the same questions, remove redundant categories, and facilitate data analysis. The changes are annotated in bold with regards to their correspondence to questions on the coding sheet, a sample of which is included below, along with the revised instruction sheet for coders.

1. **[General]** to avoid confusion in the study, the unit of analysis will be systematically referred to as news 'item/items', to avoid confusion with the term 'story/stories'. This reflects the inadequacy of the latter definition to take into account that a news story may consist, in our analysis, of more than one discrete unit.
2. Alterations to the categorisation of News Items **[Q9 – Type of News Item]**. In this case, the category '*Anchor + package*' from 2007 was removed for ease of coding, due to its lack of mutual exclusivity with other categories. It was instead assimilated into the '*Reporter Package on Location*' category. Secondly, an online category '*Supplementary to Item 1*' was added to take into account the increased inclusion of stories related to the main headline on the BBC Online pages studied. Lastly, the term '*DONUT*' was renamed '*Live report, package embedded*' for clarity.
3. Some item subjects were changed **[Q11 – Item Subject]**, reflecting the different salient news stories that occurred during the sample period. Most notably, the '*Sleaze / Cash for Honours*' category from 2007 was amended to include the MPs' expenses scandal. Also amended were: '*Iraq general*', to accommodate the increase in coverage of Afghanistan; and '*Disasters*' was broadened to accommodate accidents or tragedies involving single or multiple loss of life.
4. New categories were added to Item/Reporter Location **[Q12/13]** allowing for multiple regional locations to be more easily recorded (e.g. England and Wales), and also where it was unclear where the item was located, due to a lack of specification of the scope of the policy area being discussed. For example, an item covering 'changes in British schools' would fall into this category.

5. Categories for **[Q14 – Devolved Political Focus]** were changed so that more detailed conclusions could be drawn from the treatment of devolved politics. Categories were subdivided in such a way that the new categories could be collapsed back into their 2007 counterparts for comparability, at the same time as allowing for better scrutiny of devolution-related coverage. During the study, the 2007 category '*D: Relevant Powers Not Referred To*' was recognised to be redundant, as its applicability was assumed by another category. The full list of categories and their relationship to each other is outlined below in the sample Coding Instruction Sheet.
6. The recording of mentions of specific devolved powers was changed in a number of ways **[Q16]**. The explicit / implicit reference distinction used in the 2007 study was changed to allow better recording of mentions of devolved powers. The new distinction designates *explicit* references as those that directly mention the power of devolved assemblies to create legislation or amend policy; *implicit* references are those where there are mentions of devolved powers without reference to the legislative process; and the *ignored* designation is used where the presence of devolved powers in a given policy area is not mentioned. The purpose of this is to allow a deeper analysis of the ways in which devolved powers are dealt with than the method employed in 2007.
7. The old category dealing with references to non-devolved powers being referred to as if they had been devolved powers **[Q17]** was simplified, due to the extremely low number of positive results in the 2007 study. This was vindicated, as there were only 6 cases that fulfilled this condition, and they were all related to the same topic as in 2007 (Scottish Independence).
8. There were two changes to the recording of misleading/confusing/potentially inaccurate information **[Q18]**. The first was a rewording of the old category '*Confuses UK with Britain/Great Britain*', so that it now dealt with general confusion of the application of a relevant policy where an element of devolution was present. The second was the introduction of the facility to measure whether a given assumption was produced by a journalist, or by a public or official source.
9. The recording of direct comparisons of devolved powers **[Q19]** was expanded, so that distinction could be made between direct substantive comparisons of legislative power in a given policy unit, and more passing references to the presence of devolved power in a given area. This reflected the increased incidence of positive comparisons.
10. Finally, the facility in the 2007 study that sought to quantify 'themes' in substantive comments of devolved bodies was removed, due to the low incidence of such comments in both the previous study, and in the current project.

## Sample (2009) Coding Sheet

CODER

**1. TV/Radio/Online**

**2. Start Time of Recording (DVD):**

**3. TV** B1 / B6 / B10 / BSat / BSun / BBC News / SKY / ITV / CH4 / Newsnight / One Show / Politics Show /

**4. Radio:** Today / World@1 / News@6 / PM / Five Live

**5. BBC online:** Politics / UK

**Is Duplicate:**

**6. Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **7. Length** \_\_\_\_\_ **8. Item in News Agenda (not headlines)** \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Type of News item (mark S if specialist correspondent contributes)**

Presenter only (must be standalone or 30secs+)	Reporter studio package	Live Report, Package Embedded	ONLINE: Stories 123	ONLINE: Features, Views, Analysis
Breaking News	Reporter live in studio	Interview	ONLINE: Top Stories	ONLINE: Supplementary to item 1
Reporter package on location	Reporter/presenter 2-way	Discussion	ONLINE: Also in News/Sport	

**10. One-sentence summary of item** \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Item subject (if ticking a category in side the black box, one category *outside* it can be ticked S for subsidiary. Alternatively, if ticking a category *outside* the box, one category *inside* it can be ticked S for subsidiary). Where the upcoming Westminster election is mentioned, mark the item focus E for election**

Devolved Politics (S, W, NI)	Freedom of Information	Public opinion (general)
Westminster Politics (UK)	Government Restructuring	Religion
Agriculture	Health NHS	Rural Affairs
Arts (high)	Health general	Science/Technology
Britishness	Horse race/opinion polls	Sleaze/Cash for honours/Expenses
Business	House of Lords - general	Social policy (other)
Candidate/leadership/party focus	Human interest	Sport
Celebrity/entertainment news	Immigration/Refugees	Taxation
Constitutional Affairs	Industrial Relations	Terrorism
Consumer news	Inheritance Tax	Transport
Crime general/corporate	International law	UK Foreign Affairs
Crime individual	International politics	War/conflict
Defence	International (other)	Weather
Diplomacy	Iraq /Afghanistan	Devolution & everyday life
Disaster / Accident / Tragedy	Legal Issues	Funding of devolution
Economy	Local government	Increasing powers
Education	Media	Independence
Electoral system	Monarchy	Power sharing
Energy	Nations cultural (e.g. language)	West Lothian Question
Environment and natural world	Other	
Environmental issues	Peace process/the Troubles	
Europe/EU	Policing	

**12/13. Item/Reporter Location** (mark S for unit (main focus) and R for reporter)

England	N. Ireland	Studio	Gen. UK
Westm./Downing St.	Scotland	Other	Multiple (specify):
Britain	Wales	Location Unknown	Unclear

#### 14. Devolved political focus

If 'Devolved Politics (S, W, N)' was chosen at 11, One of B1, B3 or C **MUST** be ticked below.

<b>A. Irrelevant</b> (no connection to devolved politics)	<b>B1. Devolution, Relevant Powers</b> Devolution focus, powers referenced	<b>B2. Non-Devolution, Devolved Powers Referenced</b>	<b>B3. Devolved Politics Process, Powers Mentioned</b>	<b>C. Devolved Politics Process</b> (No reference to relevant powers)	<b>D. Relevant Powers Not Referred To</b>
<b>E. Items about the whole UK but elements of Devolved Powers Involved</b>	<b>F1. Items about England or England and Wales Only (Stated)</b>	<b>F2. Items about England or England and Wales Only (Not Stated)</b>	<b>F3. Items about England or England and Wales Only (Confusion)</b>	<b>G. Opinion Only</b> (Opinions expressed by S, W, NI parties on non-devolved politics issues)	

#### 15. Countries covered (tick all countries covered, mark with M if only mentioned in passing)

England	Scotland	Wales	N.Ireland	Gen. UK	Britain	Non-specified
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16. Are real devolved powers that are relevant to the subject of the item referred to **explicitly** (tick X)? Or, does the item **implicitly acknowledge** that relevant devolved powers exist (tick I) ? Or, does the item **clearly ignore** relevant devolved powers (tick G)? Indicate in each case which nation the powers belong to (E, S, W, N) (*can tick more than one*)

Health	Immigration or asylum	Family	Crime / Policing / Law	Tax or economy	Transport	Constitutional reform
Education	Pensions	Environment	Social policy	Europe	Rural Affairs	Equal rights
None	Culture	Economic Regeneration				

17. Are powers which have *not* been devolved referred to as if they have been? Indicate in each case the nation concerned (S, W, N).

Yes:	No:	S:	W:	NI:
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18. Does the item feature any of the following inaccuracies, either in the **headline** to the report (mark H), the **intro** (mark I) or in the **report itself** (mark R) (*tick and specify exception S/W/N*) Where inaccuracy is due to source, indicate using P

<b>States explicitly</b> that a policy applies UK-wide when it does not	<b>Assumes</b> that a policy applies UK-wide when it does not	<b>Confuses</b> UK with Britain/Great Britain	<b>Errors</b> re politicians' names, job titles etc.	<b>Other inaccuracy</b> (specify either here or in section 23)
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**19. Has the report taken the opportunity to compare relevant devolved powers across two or more nations? If so, indicate which nations the powers belong to (S, W, N, E) . (*can tick more than one*)** If differences are described substantively, mark 'D'; if they are mentioned only in passing, mark 'M'

Yes:	No:	E:	S:	W:	NI:
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**20. Sources speaking in news item** (use numbers) If location known, indicate E, S, W, N

Military	<b>Monarchy</b>	<b>Medical</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Sport</b>	<b>Intelligence</b>
Politics	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Science/tech</b>	<b>Friend/relative</b>	<b>Showbiz</b>	<b>Govt. agency</b>
Law and order	<b>Academy</b>	<b>Trade union</b>	<b>Witness</b>	<b>Terrorist group</b>	<b>Other</b>
Business	<b>Media</b>	<b>Think tank</b>	<b>Pressure grp</b>	<b>NGO</b>	<b>Not identified</b>
<i>Male</i>		<i>female</i>			

**21. Political interviewees contributing to report** (use numbers) If location known, indicate E, S, W, N. If LEADER of party directly contributes to report, add \*. If a minister (cabinet/junior) appears, add M. If a secretary of state for W/S/NI appears, add SS.

Westminster	Scottish Parliament	Welsh Assembly	N. Ireland Assembly	European Parliament	Councils
<b>UK Lab Party</b> <b>BNP</b>	<b>SNP</b>	<b>Welsh Labour</b>	<b>DUP</b>	E/S/W/NI Con	Con
<b>UK Con Party</b> <b>Liberal</b>	<b>Scot Lab</b>	<b>Plaid</b>	<b>SF</b>	E/S/W/NI Lab	Lab
<b>UK LD</b> <b>Respect</b>	<b>Scot Con</b>	<b>Welsh Con</b>	<b>UUP</b>	E/S/W/NI LD	LD
<b>UK Green</b>	<b>Scot LD</b>	<b>Welsh LD</b>	<b>SDLP</b>	E/S/W/NI Green	Green
UKIP	<b>Scot Soc. All.</b>	<b>Welsh Socialist</b>	<b>AP</b>	SNP	BNP

	<b>Scot Greens</b>	<b>Welsh Greens</b>	<b>PUP</b>	Plaid	UKIP
				Liberal	Liberal
				UKIP	Respect
					SNP
<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>
<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>				

22. Does the reporter/presenter refer the viewer/listener to any other sources of information (e.g. Newsnight, BBC website etc.) (*cite source*) Yes / No

23. Notes



## Sample 2009 Coder Instruction Booklet

### Four Nations Impartiality Review 2009 Instructions for Coders

#### *Guidelines for completing coding sheet*

1. **TV/Radio/Online:** Circle one option
2. **Time of Recording:** Note the time of the start of the item of the recording on the DVD file, i.e. 00:01:25  
This is to allow easy location of the unit for later reference, if necessary.
- 3-5: **Source:** Circle relevant programme  
**Is Duplicate (Online Only):** If an online news item appears on both the 'UK' and 'Politics' pages, mark both as 'Y'. Otherwise, leave blank.
7. **Length:** Note the length of the item *in seconds*, i.e. 3 minutes and 5 seconds would be marked '185'.
8. **Item in News Agenda (not headlines):** Number of the item in the overall running order. Code 1, 2, 3, then '4+' for all subsequent items. For online coding, supplementary links to main item should be coded '4+'.
9. **Type of News Item** – Choose the relevant category. Apart from the 'Main presenter only' category, it is assumed that most items will contain a short introduction by the presenter.  
Do not include headline summaries. Also, do not include adverts/links, sports packages, weather, or – especially on Radio 5 live – studio chatter or UGC/audience text/email summaries,  
  
*Main presenter only* – report presented by presenter in studio. Item is either full standalone report or is at least 30 seconds long and clearly separate from the subsequent package.  
*Reporter package on location* – reporter on location introduces pre-recorded report  
*Reporter studio package* – Reporter in studio introducing pre-recorded report  
*Reporter live in studio* – Specialist correspondent giving report live in studio (for example, economics editor using graphics / green screen for general economic unit)  
*Reporter/presenter 2-way* – reporter and presenter discuss item  
*Live Report, package embedded* – Reporter live on location introduces package, then resumes discussion, either to camera or with presenter.  
*Interview* – journalist interviews one respondent (non-journalist)  
*Discussion* – presenter and two or more respondents in discussion  
*ONLINE: Stories 123* – Main items on page; listed top, then lower left, then lower right  
*ONLINE: Top Stories* – Items in 'Other Top Stories' list on right hand of page  
*ONLINE: Also in News/Sport* – Items in the 'Also in the News' and 'Sport Headlines' on the relevant page  
*ONLINE: Features, Views, Analysis* – Items in the 'Features, Views, Analysis' bar underneath headlines  
*ONLINE: Supplementary to unit 1* – Links beneath item one, linking to related units
10. **One-sentence summary of unit** – summarise content of item as concisely as possible
11. **Item Subject** – tick one category to indicate the *main* subject focus of the item. The exception to this is if either of the devolution-related categories located in the bold outlined region of the Table are ticked. If this is so, you can mark another category in the main Table with an 'S' to indicate a subsidiary focus for the item. If the item alludes in any way to the forthcoming 2010 Westminster general election, mark the main subject focus with an 'E'
- 12/13. **Item/Reporter location** – indicate with an 'S' the main location to which the item is linked. Indicate with an 'R' the location of the reporter, if known. (For example, if the subject of the item is relevant to the UK as a whole, but the reporter is based in Westminster, these would be coded as 'S' next to 'Gen. UK', and 'R' next to 'Westm./Downing St.'). If the item is located in multiple regions, mark the corresponding box and specify the regions used.

**14. Devolved political focus** – Tick the category that applies to the item. Only ONE category is to be ticked (*NB: If 'Devolved Politics (S/W/NI)' was chosen in part 11, then one of the codes 'B1', 'B3', or 'C' MUST be coded*):

**A. Irrelevant:** Item has no connection to devolved politics. This is the most common category. If this is selected there is no need to continue coding.

**B1. Devolution, Relevant Powers** – Item about or relevant to devolution, in which explicit reference is made to devolved powers in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. Concerns direct mentions of devolved powers.

**B2. Non-devolution, Devolved Powers Referenced** – Item in which devolution is not the main topic, but where reference is made to devolved powers in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. This usually occurs at the end of the item.

**B3. Mix of Devolved Process and Powers** – Item about 'process' in devolved politics in Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland, where specific devolved powers are mentioned. 'Process' here means non-policy-based political coverage, e.g. party infighting, scandals, etc.

**C. Devolved Politics Process** – Items about 'process' in devolved politics in Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland, where there are no references to devolved powers

**D. Relevant Powers Not Referred To** – Item's main subject explicitly deals with policy areas that are devolved in some way to Scotland, Wales, and/or Northern Ireland, but makes no connection to devolution.

**E. Units about the whole UK but elements of devolved powers involved** – This is essentially a weaker version of 'D', where a secondary aspect of a UK-based item is concerned with a devolved policy area, but is not referenced. For example, an item on UK obesity that makes reference to the related impact on NHS costs, or to the need for changes in education to deal with the issue.

**F1. Items about England, or England and Wales Only (Stated)** – Item about either England and Wales, or England alone, where it is clearly stated that this is the case. In this case, tick the 'E' box for 'England', and 'E&W' for 'England and Wales'

**F2. Items about England, or England and Wales Only (Not-stated)** – Items about either England and Wales, or England alone, where no reference is made to this fact, or where England/E&W is confused with the UK. In this case, tick the 'E' box for 'England', and 'E&W' for 'England and Wales'

**F3. Items about England, or England and Wales Only (Confusion)** - Items about either England and Wales, or England alone, where there is inconsistency throughout about the use of terms, i.e. the conditions of F1 and F2 are both satisfied within the news item. In this case, tick the 'E' box for 'England', and 'E&W' for 'England and Wales', where reference is made.

**G. Opinion Only** – For items where politicians from devolved parties comment on non-devolution units, for example criticising Afghan War. This code was rarely used in earlier studies.

**15. Countries covered** – Tick all countries covered, mark with M if country is mentioned only in passing

**16. Relevant devolved powers referred to** – where the powers of a given devolved assembly are *explicitly* referred to (or where Westminster deals with England-only legislation), mark 'E'; where the item *implicitly acknowledges* that relevant devolved powers exists, without explicitly mentioning the role of the assembly, mark 'I'. Where the possibility to mention devolved powers in a given policy area is *ignored*, mark 'G'. Indicate which nation(s) the powers belong to. In each case indicate which nation the powers belong to (E, S, W, N).

**17. Non-devolved powers (inaccuracies)** – are powers which have *not* been devolved referred to as if they had been? Tick yes or no, depending on which is the case. If 'yes', then tick the relevant boxes for the nations referenced, 'S' for Scotland, 'W' for Wales, and 'NI' for Northern Ireland.

**18. Specific inaccuracies** – where the relevant inaccuracies feature in the headline of the report, mark 'H'. If in the intro, mark 'I', and if in the report itself, mark 'R' where there is a suggestion that the inaccuracy may come from a quoted source, mark P

*'Errors'* - An example of this would be Ed Balls being referred to as 'Schools Minister', as opposed to his correct title of 'Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families')

*'Confusion of geographical terms'* applies to instances where certain specific or general terms are incorrectly used to explain either the application of policy, or the operation of certain civic institutions. For example, the term 'British Schools' is problematic in a policy context, due to the devolved powers concerned. Also, the use of the terms 'the country' with regards to policy areas related to devolution, or the term 'British' in a UK-wide context

**19. Comparisons made across nations** – tick either yes, or no, depending on whether some reference has been made to comparing powers across different nations. If 'yes', then tick the relevant boxes, 'E' for England, 'S' for Scotland, 'W' for Wales, and 'NI' for Northern Ireland. If the item gives a substantive description of differences in powers, mark 'D'; if the differences are only mentioned in passing, mark 'M'.

**20. Sources speaking in news item** – if a direct contribution from a source is used in the report, indicate to which category they belong, marking numbers for each category and the location of the source(s), if this can be determined. Add each number to the corresponding gender category.

**21. Political interviewees** – if a direct contribution from a political interviewee is used in the report, indicate to which party they belong, using numbers for each category and indicating the location of the source if known. If a contribution from the leader of a given party is used, or if they are referred to directly by the reporter/presenter, mark a '\*' next to the appropriate party. Add each number to the corresponding gender category

**22. Referral to other sources of information** – circle yes or no, and specify source

**23. Notes** – Add anything here you want to discuss afterwards, such as aspects of devolved government which may be relevant to the report but about which you are unsure, or any features of the report you see as particularly significant for the research goals of the project. If you consider that the subject of the report might make a particularly good case study for the project, flag this up here.

### ***Dates of Sample:***

Week 1: 12-18 October  
Week 2: 26 October – 1 November  
Week 3: 09-15 November  
Week 4: 23-29 November

### ***LexisNexis Search Criteria for Newspaper Omissions***

The newspaper content was obtained from LexisNexis, using consistent and easily-replicable search terms to obtain our data. The selected newspapers were subjected to a keyword search containing the terms 'devolution' OR 'devolved' OR '<name of devolved legislature>' so, for example, the *Scotsman* would be searched using the terms 'devolution' OR 'devolved' OR 'Scottish Parliament'. The relevant terms for Northern Ireland and Wales were 'Stormont' and 'Assembly' respectively. It was decided that the application of these three search terms would, in each case, cover a large enough number of items, and that, should some particular relevant items be missed by these terms, it would be unlikely that all other items relating to any prominent news story would also be missed. The resulting lists were then filtered, so that only those items categorised as 'news' by LexisNexis' category system were retained, so that there was an element of parity with the unit of analysis we applied to the broadcast news content. Finally, in the case of the newspaper stories all duplicate items pertaining to a particular news 'story' (i.e. devolution of policing and justice powers to Northern Ireland) were grouped and could then be checked against our broadcast sample to ascertain whether it had been covered. A small number of duplicate stories were retained in the analysis of the 6.30pm opt-out programmes, though these were in all cases from stories that were covered by the BBC news media in our sample.

## Subjects covered by stories from the four nations on other news outlets

2009 Subjects Covered by Stories from the Four Nations (Other news Outlets)									
Subject	England		Northern Ireland		Scotland		Wales		Total Frequency
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
<b>Devolution (S, W, NI)</b>	0	0.0	2	50.0	2	50.0	0	0.0	4
<b>Westminster Politics (UK)</b>	8	61.5	0	0.0	5	38.5	0	0.0	13
Agriculture	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Arts (High)	5	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5
Britishness	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Business	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Candidate / Leadership / Party Focus	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0	2
Celebrity / Entertainment News	16	94.1	0	0.0	1	5.9	0	0.0	17
Consumer News	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Crime General / Corporate	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	50.0	2
Crime Individual	85	89.4	5	5.3	5	5.3	0	0.0	95
Defence	4	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4
Diplomacy	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Disaster / Accident / Tragedy	49	96.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.9	51
Economy	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Education	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
Electoral System	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Energy	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Environment and the Natural World	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Environmental Issues	4	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4
Europe / EU	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Freedom of Information	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Government Restructuring	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Health NHS	9	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	9
Health General	5	71.4	1	14.3	1	14.3	0	0.0	7
Horse-Race / Opinion Polls	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
House of Lords General	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Human Interest	5	83.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7	6
Immigration / Refugees	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Industrial Relations	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
International Law	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
International Politics	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
International (Other)	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Iraq / Afghanistan	16	94.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	5.9	17
Legal Issues	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	6
Local Government	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Media	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Monarchy	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Nations Cultural	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
Other	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Peace Process / the Troubles	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Policing	10	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	10
Public Opinion (General)	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Religion	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Rural Affairs	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Science / Technology	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
Sleaze / Cash for Honours / Expenses	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Social Policy (Other)	3	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3
Sport	18	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	18
Taxation	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Terrorism	1	16.7	5	83.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	6
Transport	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
UK Foreign Affairs	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
War / Conflict	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Weather	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>88.7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>300</b>

**Chronology of Stories (groups of items) During Sampling Period  
(Stories with more than 5 items highlighted)**

<b>Devolution-Related Stories 12-18 October (Week 1)</b>			
<b>Story</b>	<b>Story Span</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>BBC Items</b>
<b><u>Clinton in NI / Devolution of Policing and Justice</u></b>	<b><u>12-13 Oct</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>
<b><u>OFSTED Report on Child Neglect</u></b>	<b><u>12-15 Oct</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>
OFSTED Childcare Arrangements	12-Oct	3	2
Environment / Recycling / Local Govt.	12-Oct	4	4
Lockerbie Bomber	12-17 Oct	2	2
Welsh Leader Race	12-Oct	1	1
Royal College of Surgeons Report	12-Oct	1	1
Local Govt. Initiative for Deprived Areas	13-Oct	3	3
Support for ASBO victims, E&W	13-Oct	2	2
Government money for carers	13-Oct	1	1
Family Law	13-Oct	1	1
University Places	14-Oct	2	2
Standards in English Schools	14-Oct	2	2
NEETs Future Job Fund	14-Oct	1	1
Unemployment / Youth Training	14-Oct	1	0
OFWAT Proposed ban	14-Oct	1	1
<b><u>SNP Conference</u></b>	<b><u>15-18 Oct</u></b>	<b><u>30</u></b>	<b><u>28</u></b>
<b><u>Fall in Standards, NHS Trusts</u></b>	<b><u>15-Oct</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>
<b><u>Swine Flu Vaccination</u></b>	<b><u>15-Oct</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>
Mental Health Funding	15-Oct	1	1
Rape Statistics, E&W	15-Oct	1	1
Supermarket Drink Price Warning	15-Oct	1	1
Agricultural Policy	15-Oct	1	1
<b><u>Raised School Age Report</u></b>	<b><u>16-Oct</u></b>	<b><u>22</u></b>	<b><u>19</u></b>
Alcohol Confiscation in England	16-Oct	2	2
Hare Coursing	16-Oct	1	1
English / French teaching in England	17-Oct	1	1
Social Housing in Scotland	18-Oct	1	1
NHS Diabetes Care	18-Oct	1	1

<b>Devolution-Related Stories 26 October - 1 November (Week 2)</b>			
<b>Story</b>	<b>Story Span</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>BBC Items</b>
<b><u>Swine Flu Vaccination Update</u></b>	<b><u>26 Oct - 1 Nov</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>
<b><u>Career Advice for 7-Year-Olds</u></b>	<b><u>26-Oct</u></b>	<b><u>8</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>
Anti-Slavery Laws	26-Oct	2	2
Pregnancy Mortality Rates	26-Oct	1	1
<b><u>Down's Syndrome Diagnosis Rise</u></b>	<b><u>27-Oct</u></b>	<b><u>6</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>
Scottish Election Reform	27-Oct	1	1
Drug Death / Help for Addicts	27-Oct	2	1
British Crime Survey / Statistics	27-Oct	2	0
Civil Courts System	27-Oct	2	2
Religious Schools Admissions	27-Oct	2	2
UK 'Justice Reform'	27-Oct	1	1
Councils' Asset Seizure Powers	28-Oct	1	1

NI Arrests	28-Oct	3	3
Criminal Convictions Complaints	28-Oct	2	2
Welsh Environmental Report	29-Oct	2	2
Prison Reform	29-Oct	1	1
Race Relations Act in Schools	29-Oct	1	1
NHS Staff Assaults	29-Oct	2	2
NHS Waiting Lists	31-Oct	1	1
Conservative Fox-Hunting Bill	31-Oct	1	0
University Advice for School Leavers	01-Nov	1	1

<b>Devolution-Related Stories 09-15 November (Week 3)</b>			
<b>Story</b>	<b>Story Span</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>BBC Items</b>
<b><u>Changes in Cautions System</u></b>	<b><u>09-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>	<b><u>9</u></b>
<b><u>Nuclear Power Stations</u></b>	<b><u>09-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>21</u></b>	<b><u>17</u></b>
<b><u>Rhodri Morgan Replacement</u></b>	<b><u>09-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>
Rise in Tuition Fees in England	09-Nov	3	3
New NHS Budget	09-Nov	1	1
Social Housing Policy (Tories)	09-Nov	1	1
NI Policing	09-Nov	1	1
<b><u>Revised Sentences for Knife Crime</u></b>	<b><u>10-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>6</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>
<b><u>Poverty Strategy</u></b>	<b><u>10-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>6</u></b>	<b><u>6</u></b>
OFSTED Holds Evidence From Court	10-Nov	2	1
Conservative Welfare Plans	10-Nov	1	1
EHRC Row	10-Nov	1	1
Secret Inquests - Legal Changes	10-Nov	1	1
Brian Taylor's Blog - Scottish Economy	10-Nov	1	1
Govt. Health Treatment Policy	10-Nov	3	3
Childcare Vouchers Taxation	10-11 Nov	3	3
<b><u>DNA Database</u></b>	<b><u>11-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>17</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>
<b><u>English Coastal Path</u></b>	<b><u>11-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>
Marine Conservation Plans	11-Nov	1	1
Skills / Training (England)	11-Nov	1	1
Recruitment in Social Workers	11-Nov	1	1
<b><u>Nurses Required to Have a Degree</u></b>	<b><u>12-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>9</u></b>	<b><u>8</u></b>
<b><u>Dementia Drugs Review</u></b>	<b><u>12-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>20</u></b>	<b><u>16</u></b>
E&W Burglary Awareness Drive	13-Nov	1	1
Labour By-Election Win	13-Nov	1	1
Risks of Tanning Salons	13-Nov	1	0
<b><u>Child Compensation After Assault</u></b>	<b><u>13-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>
<b><u>Primary School Exams in NI</u></b>	<b><u>14-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>
<b><u>Private Security Firms</u></b>	<b><u>14-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>
Parole Boards & Reoffending Rates	14-Nov	2	2

<b>Devolution-Related Stories 23-29 November (Week 4)</b>			
<b>Story</b>	<b>Story Span</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>BBC Items</b>
Exams to Boost League Tables (England)	23-Nov	1	1
MSP Seeks Drink-Drive Limit	23-Nov	1	1
<b><u>NI Troubles</u></b>	<b><u>23-Nov</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>
<b><u>OFSTED Criticism</u></b>	<b><u>23-24</u></b>	<b><u>8</u></b>	<b><u>8</u></b>

	<b><i>Nov</i></b>		
DNA Database / Criminality	24-Nov	2	2
Civilians Used in Policing	24-Nov	2	2
Welsh Assembly Coalition Breakdown	24-Nov	1	1
Police Arrests 'Made to Get DNA'	24-Nov	1	1
Policing Tactics (E, W, NI)	24-Nov	1	1
NHS Recommendations for Cancer Drug	24-Nov	1	0
Report on Re-offending Youths	24-26 Nov	3	3
<b><i><u>CAFCASS Working Conditions</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>24-27 Nov</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>9</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>9</u></i></b>
<b><i><u>Policing Protests</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>25-Nov</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>11</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>9</u></i></b>
<b><i><u>Domestic Violence Lessons (E. Schools)</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>25-Nov</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>12</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>11</u></i></b>
<b><i><u>School Funding, Links to Extremists</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>25-26 Nov</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>15</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>13</u></i></b>
<b><i><u>Increased Powers for Scotland</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>25-27 Nov</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>15</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>14</u></i></b>
<b><i><u>Scotland Alcohol Pricing</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>26-Nov</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>6</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>6</u></i></b>
<b><i><u>Water Bills (E&amp;W) / Scotland</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>26-Nov</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>12</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>12</u></i></b>
<b><i><u>NHS Trust Report</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>26-29 Nov</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>40</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>28</u></i></b>
Libel Laws in E&W	27-Nov	4	4
Faith Schools 'More Community-Minded'	27-Nov	1	1
Vicar Stabbing in Wales (Mental Health)	27-Nov	4	4
Teachers' Jobs in England	27-Nov	1	1
<b><i><u>Bail Hostel Under Scrutiny (E&amp;W)</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>27-28 Nov</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>7</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>7</u></i></b>
<b><i><u>Scottish Independence Referendum</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>27-29 Nov</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>10</u></i></b>	<b><i><u>10</u></i></b>
College of Social Work Plan	28-Nov	2	2
Scottish Health / Obesity	28-Nov	1	1
Conservative Hospital Inspections Policy	29-Nov	1	0
SNP Blog Smear Campaign	29-Nov	1	1



### *Supplementary Subjects in Westminster Items*

<b>Supplementary Subject</b>	<b>BBC</b>	<b>Other TV</b>	<b>Total</b>
Devolved Politics (S/W/NI)	0	1	1
Business	4	0	4
Candidate / Leadership / Party Focus	31	4	35
Constitutional Affairs	7	0	7
Defence	17	4	21
Disaster / Accident / Tragedy	4	1	5
Economy	26	5	31
Education	10	2	12
Electoral System	4	0	4
Energy	5	0	5
Environment	4	0	4
Europe / EU	13	6	19
Government Restructuring	2	0	2
Health NHS	1	1	2
Health General	12	3	15
Horse Race / Opinion Polls	1	0	1
Human Interest	1	0	1
Immigration / Refugees	3	0	3
Industrial Relations	1	0	1
International	1	3	4
Iraq / Afghanistan	61	16	77
Legal Issues	14	8	22
Media	13	0	13
Nations Cultural	1	0	1
Peace Process / The Troubles	1	0	1
Policing	8	0	8
Public Opinion (General)	1	0	1
Science / Technology	7	5	12
Expenses	190	39	229
Social Policy (Other)	12	0	12
Taxation	11	0	11
Terrorism	6	0	6
UK Foreign Affairs	0	2	2
War / Conflict	2	0	2
Other	9	0	9
N/A	21	15	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>619</b>

# **Four Nations Impartiality Review: An analysis of reporting devolution**

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# 1. Introduction and Overview

## The scope of the study

The central aim of the study was to examine how devolution is reported in UK-wide BBC network television and radio news, BBC network factual programmes and BBC online news. This analysis took place within the broad framework of questions about impartiality and accuracy, and asked whether the coverage of the four nations is balanced, accurate and helpful in understanding the new political world of devolved government. The focus of the study fell on the coverage of politics in the broadest sense, including the impact of specific policies and debates over the future of devolution, rather than being limited to the reporting of the everyday business of politics within Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay or Stormont.

We conducted two substantive pieces of content analysis. The first was based on a sample of four weeks of news coverage gathered during an eight week period in October and November 2007. This involved 4,687 news items across a wide range of BBC and non-BBC outlets. The second sample monitored 12 weeks of BBC news programming around the devolved elections in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the English local elections in the spring of 2007 – elections which witnessed the historic handshake between Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley, the emergence of the first Scottish National Party (SNP) led government in Scotland, and the first Labour/Plaid coalition government in Wales.<sup>1</sup>

The first analysis generated a series of case studies, allowing us to take a closer look at the coverage of stories that were, in terms of devolution coverage, either typical or notable. We monitored other media outlets during the sample period – including the BBC 18.30 opt out news bulletins from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – in order to assess the volume and range of stories that did not receive UK wide attention.

We also examined current affairs coverage (*Panorama*, *File on Four* and *Analysis*) and phone-in programmes (on Radio Five Live) of topics relevant to devolution. Finally, we conducted a series of focus groups in order to test the accessibility of the BBC website as a source of information about UK devolution.

## Overview

Our findings for both BBC and non-BBC output suggested that while devolution was not ignored, the great bulk of political coverage remained focused upon Westminster. Stories about devolution played a tiny part in everyday news coverage, and even during an election period which saw historic new governments elected in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, political coverage was still clearly oriented towards London.

During the election period we found that for every one election-related story, there three Westminster-related stories. We also found that coverage of the elections tended to focus on the *process* of politics (general campaigning, deal-making between the

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of the elections, our study had not been commissioned. However, during the October-November period, the BBC was aware that our research was taking place, although not the specific weeks being monitored.

parties etc.) rather than on questions of policy. Although this is often the case, when we compared our findings with earlier studies, we found that the coverage of the devolved elections was particularly process-oriented, with very few policy-oriented election stories about the devolved nations. This was, in part, a consequence of the elections themselves, all of which generated a period of negotiation and deal-making in the formation of new governments. While these processes were clearly both newsworthy and important, the limited time made available for the coverage of devolution meant that there was little space left for the coverage of policy issues.

Outside election periods – although still within the first six months of new governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – Westminster stories outnumbered stories about devolution by a factor of 17 to one. Indeed, we found nearly three times as many stories reported from Westminster as the total number of stories on *any* subject from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Overall, a Westminster focus is apparent both in terms of volume and style. Stories about devolution are often told in relation to their relevance to or impact upon England in general and Westminster in particular. So, for example, when we looked at how the news of the SNP-led government's first budget was interpreted for UK-wide audiences, we found that a number of reports adopting a framework in which the SNP – or Scotland in general - was seen less in its own terms than in contrast/opposition to England and/or Westminster.

This tendency combined with a general bias in favour of stories about England, which, by most measures, received at least twice as much coverage as we would expect if we were simply to judge on the basis of the size of relative populations in the UK or the distribution of the audience for BBC network news<sup>2</sup>. When Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland did make the news, coverage was more likely to involve topics such as sport and crime, rather than those policy areas that are now devolved responsibilities. So, for example, of the 161 news items about health and education in our general sample, no fewer than 160 were about England. On BBC outlets, all 136 stories about health and education were about England.

It is not simply that more stories were told about England, but storytelling often assumed an English perspective, or else an assumption that England can safely stand in for Britain or the UK. So, for example, one of our case studies suggested that when news items were about Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, viewers were frequently reminded of this fact, while news items about England contained very few references to their location. England is, in this sense, treated as something of a 'default' location: audiences therefore need to be attentive during stories about England to understand that they refer to one nation rather than three or four.

Any lapses in accuracy in the coverage of devolved issues tended to follow from inappropriate uses of this assumption, and involved a blurring of the distinction between England and the UK. In some cases stories were told in ways that created the impression that policy initiatives in England applied to Britain or the UK as a whole. One of our case studies, for example, examined how a story that applied only to England was widely reported as a British story.

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<sup>2</sup> Around 20% to 25% of the audience for BBC network news lives in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

The potential to enrich stories by comparing and contrasting the performance of different policies in the four nations remains untapped. When comparisons of this kind were made, we found that they tended to simply refer to (rather than examine) differences in social policy between England and Scotland, often in the context of larger questions about the funding of devolution.

Our analysis of BBC current affairs programmes broadcast during 2007 (*Panorama*, *Analysis* and *File on 4*) suggested a similar pattern. Devolution received little attention, and was often neglected even when it was relevant to the issues under discussion. There were exceptions to this, notably on Radio 4's *Analysis*, which featured some programmes that dealt effectively with some of the complexities of devolution. Overall, however, we found a tendency in current affairs coverage to use terms such as 'England', 'the nation' and 'the country' interchangeably, inviting confusion over the remit of agencies, initiatives and policies, particularly in areas such as health and social care, and education and training.

Our analysis of the morning phone-in programme on Radio Five Live (during both sample periods) also confirms broader trends observed in the wider general and election samples. The amount of coverage given to the Welsh elections, and by extension, the amount of airtime given to Welsh participants, was significantly smaller than that devoted to the Scottish and English elections and to Scottish and English participants. In the October/November sample period, we found little discussion of devolution-related topics, and the little there was tended to avoid discussion of the specifics of devolved responsibilities. Instead, where Scottish devolution was discussed, issues tended to be framed in terms of English 'grievances', such as the West Lothian question.

When we looked at a sample of non-network media (including the BBC's), we found several stories (during our October/November sample period), which might prove important both for the future direction of devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as for the future of the Union. In Scotland, the prospect of increasing devolved powers over the seas around the Scottish coast brought the possibility of changes in responsibility for the oil industry, together with alterations to how the profits of North Sea oil are shared. In Wales, the All-Wales Convention and the debates over a referendum on the extension of law-making powers suggested another major realignment of the relationship between Westminster and Cardiff. At Stormont the Programme for Government represented a roadmap for the progress of devolution in Northern Ireland. None of these stories received network news coverage on the BBC or on the other broadcast outlets we examined.

So, for example, on the day when an England-only training policy was being reported under the rubric of Gordon Brown's "British jobs for British workers" speech, the fact that the Welsh Assembly had just gained powers which were directly relevant to its own responsibility for formulating training policy in Wales went unreported in the UK news.

Finally, we conducted focus groups in order to see how useful people found the BBC website as a source of information about devolution. When we asked our focus groups to use the web as a resource to answer questions about devolution, those we restricted to the BBC website did just as well as those who had access to the world wide web.

This suggests that the BBC website is as good a source as any about devolution (although given their criticisms of other websites, this may be rather faint praise).

Generally people found the BBC website excellent for news coverage, although less helpful looking for facts that were less linked to news stories. There were also criticisms about the lack of a more sophisticated search engine with the ability to filter by date (and thereby access the most up to date information about devolution), as well the assumption in many articles of a prior knowledge of devolution issues.

## 2. General sample

### The broad pattern of news coverage across the four nations

The general sample consisted of 4,687 news items, gathered over four weeks during October and November 2007.<sup>3</sup> Table 2.1 shows the distribution of the sample amongst TV, BBC radio and BBC online sources.

**Table 2.1: Distribution of sample by media (n=4687, whole sample)**

Media	Frequency	Percentage
BBC TV	1363	29.1
Non-BBC TV	1057	22.6
BBC Radio	1740	37.1
BBC Online	527	11.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4687</b>	<b>100</b>

While most of these stories (92% of the total sample and 91% of the BBC sample) were irrelevant to an analysis of devolution coverage (giving us a smaller sample of 361 stories that were, or might have been, concerned with aspects of devolved government), the larger sample paints a broad picture of the extent to which the four nations feature in news coverage as a whole.

Previous studies have suggested that Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales receive much less news coverage than England (Lewis et al 2004). Since the bulk of the audience is English, this is, perhaps, to be expected. However, the dominance of England in news coverage is striking. Table 2.2 measures where *stories* are located (not where reporters are located – an aspect we look at shortly). By story location, we mean that the story is presented as being about or relevant to a certain location. If we exclude non-domestic stories (31% of stories) and stories that apply to Britain or the UK generally (25% of stories), Table 2.2 suggests that for every one story located in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales there are 12 located in England (including those from Westminster and Downing Street). If we exclude stories from Westminster/Downing Street, the ratio is still around eight to one. These findings replicate other studies we have conducted on news channels (on Sky and BBC News 24), where the ratio of news located in England to the other nations combined was 14 to 1 on the BBC and 30 to 1 on Sky

**Table 2.2: Number of stories located in one of the four nations (n=1964 from 4687 items in total)**

Location	Frequency	Percentage
England	1181	60.1
Westminster/Downing Street	630	32.1
Northern Ireland	43	2.2
Scotland	80	4.1
Wales	30	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1964</b>	<b>100</b>

There are no major differences between the media outlets we studied in the geographical spread of their coverage – indeed, what is more notable is the consistent

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix for dates.



pattern across media outlets (Table 2.3). Although BBC television outlets covered a slightly higher proportion of stories from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales than non-BBC television outlets (7.8% of stories on BBC television news compared with 6% of stories on non-BBC television news), the differences are minimal. The main differences are between those media putting a greater emphasis on Westminster, which may be about England, the UK or parts of the UK (BBC radio and BBC online) – as opposed to an emphasis on England in general (BBC and non-BBC television).

**Table 2.3: Story locations by media (n=1964 from 4687 items in total)**

Media	Story Location					Total stories by medium
	England	Wminstr	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	
<b>BBC TV</b>	68.9% (415)	23.3% (140)	2.5% (15)	3.3% (20)	2.0% (12)	100% (602)
<b>Non-BBC TV</b>	63.5% (266)	30.5% (128)	2.1% (9)	2.9% (12)	1% (4)	100% (419)
<b>BBC Radio</b>	54.9% (355)	37.1% (240)	1.4% (9)	4.8% (31)	1.9% (12)	100% (647)
<b>BBC Online</b>	49% (145)	41.2% (122)	3.4% (10)	5.7% (17)	0.7% (2)	100% (296)
<b>Total</b>	<b>60.1%</b> <b>(1181)</b>	<b>32.1%</b> <b>(630)</b>	<b>2.2%</b> <b>(43)</b>	<b>4.1%</b> <b>(80)</b>	<b>1.5%</b> <b>(30)</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>(1964)</b>

While over half the stories in our overall sample (56.7%) were reported by reporters/presenters in the studio, a significant number involved reporters on location. If we look at those stories involving reporters on location in the UK (Table 2.4), we can see that, once again, England dominates. Indeed, there are three times as many stories that come from reporters in Westminster (or outside No. 10 Downing Street) than the total number of stories on any subject reported from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This is not to say that stories from Westminster do not concern all four nations (although in an era of devolved government, they may only concern England), but to draw attention to the dominance of Westminster as a location.

**Table 2.4. Number of stories with a reporter on location in one of the four nations (n=872 from 4687 items in total)**

Media	Reporter Location					Total stories by medium
	England	Wminstr	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	
<b>BBC TV</b>	72% (303)	20.4% (86)	2.4% (10)	3.6% (15)	1.7% (7)	100% (421)
<b>Non-BBC TV</b>	68.7% (180)	26.7% (70)	1.5% (4)	2.3% (6)	0.8% (2)	100% (262)
<b>Radio</b>	62.4% (118)	22.8% (43)	3.2% (6)	9% (17)	2.6% (5)	100% (189)
<b>Total</b>	<b>68.9%</b> <b>(601)</b>	<b>22.8%</b> <b>(199)</b>	<b>2.3%</b> <b>(20)</b>	<b>4.4%</b> <b>(38)</b>	<b>1.6%</b> <b>(14)</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>(872)</b>

Even if we exclude Westminster, we found that reporters were more than eight times more likely to report from England as from the three other nations combined. Here there are differences between BBC and non BBC outlets, with non-BBC outlets being especially Westminster oriented (on BBC TV the Westminster to Northern Ireland/Scotland/Wales ratio is close to three to one while on non-BBC TV news programmes it is six to one).

There are no precise benchmarks to provide a basis for evaluating the spread of stories. The concept of news value is, in this sense, unhelpful, because it is vaguely defined, imprecise and contested (thus any objective measure of the number of newsworthy events that occur in specific locations is impossible). What we can say is that, both in terms of where stories come from and the location of reporters, outlets would need to considerably increase their coverage of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to reflect the population of the UK or the distribution of the audience. This is not to say that population should determine the volume of coverage, simply that England is given significantly more coverage than might be explained by the distribution of the UK-wide audience.

Table 2.5 looks at the main story subjects covered in the larger sample. For the purposes of this study, the most notable finding is the extent to which Westminster politics (i.e. stories about the activities of Westminster politicians or political initiatives coming from Westminster) overshadow stories about devolution.<sup>4</sup> Less than 1% of stories in our sample referred explicitly to devolution (and some of these references were only in passing), compared to over 15% of stories that concerned Westminster politics.

**Table 2.5 Overall story subjects (n=4687, whole sample)**

Subject	BBC TV	Non-BBC TV	BBC Radio	BBC Online	Total Percentage (n=4687)
<b>Devolution</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<b>West Lothian question</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Westminster politics</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>15.4</b>
<b>Funding of Devolution</b>	<b>.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>
Agriculture	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.5
Arts high	1.4	1.0	1.5	0.6	1.3
Business	4.0	4.0	4.5	0.8	3.8
Candidate/Leadership/Party focus	0.3	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.6
Celebrity/Entertainment news	3.3	3.1	1.4	4.4	2.7
Consumer news	1.7	2.0	1.3	0.4	1.5
Crime general/corporate	1.9	1.2	1.3	1.1	1.5
Crime individual	11.2	13.0	10.3	11.2	11.3
Defence	0.8	0.9	0.2	.0	0.5
Diplomacy	2.1	1.8	1.8	0.2	1.7
Disasters	3.4	4.3	1.7	1.3	2.7
Economy	3.8	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.8
Education	2.6	1.1	1.6	2.1	1.8
Environment and Natural World	1.1	0.7	1.2	0.2	0.9
Environmental issues	2.4	0.7	2.0	0.6	1.6
Europe/EU	1.0	0.6	1.8	2.1	1.3

<sup>4</sup> We should note here that these concern stories that *explicitly* deal with devolved politics or areas where policy is identified as devolved, whereas the larger sub-sample looks at all those stories for which an understanding of devolution would be relevant.

Health NHS	2.1	1.6	1.8	0.9	1.7
Health general	4.3	1.6	2.8	1.9	2.9
Human interest	2.1	1.8	1.4	0.9	1.6
Immigration/refugees	2.4	1.5	1.8	3.8	2.1
Industrial relations	1.0	1.7	2.1	0.4	1.5
International politics	6.7	7.0	9.5	3.4	7.4
International other	2.3	4.4	3.0	1.3	3
Legal issues	0.5	0.7	1.4	1.1	1
Local government	0.1	.0	0.5	1.9	0.4
Media	1.8	1.8	2.0	2.5	1.9
Monarchy	2.9	2.8	1.0	0.8	1.9
Other	1.8	1.2	1.6	2.3	1.7
Peace process/the troubles	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.1
Policing	2.5	3.5	2.8	3.0	2.9
Religion	1.5	1.8	2.2	0.6	1.7
Science/technology	1.5	1.0	1.3	1.1	1.3
Sleaze/labour donations	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.8	0.3
Social Policy other	0.8	0.3	0.6	1.3	0.7
Sport	3.6	5.6	2.8	9.3	4.4
Terrorism	2.0	2.2	2.8	2.7	2.4
Transport	1.5	0.3	1.0	0.8	0.9
War/conflict	3.7	5.2	4.3	1.3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

There were also 12 stories about the West Lothian question (0.3% of the sample), which, while they could technically be added to the Westminster tally, do raise questions about devolution.<sup>5</sup> There were a further five stories about the funding of devolution, which obviously concerned devolved government but from a Westminster perspective. The small numbers do not alter the overall picture of Westminster-dominated coverage.

Table 2.6 looks at the geographical spread of those stories that referred to devolution. Most of these stories – 37 out of 42 – were reported on BBC outlets. As we might expect Scotland, as the largest of the three devolved nations with significant devolved powers, dominates. Northern Ireland has notably more coverage than Wales. So while six out of ten devolved stories were about Scotland (25 out of 42), we only found *one* story in the whole sample that involved devolution in Wales – about the use – and potential banning - of electric dog collars.

**Table 2.6 Location of devolved stories (n=42, from 4687 items in total)<sup>6</sup>**

	<b>BBC Outlets</b>	<b>Non-BBC Outlets</b>	
<b>Location</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Total</b>
England	1	0	1 <sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The West Lothian question was first posed by Tam Dalyell, MP for West Lothian, in 1977. It refers to the anomaly that while Scottish MPs could vote on some English policies, English MPs could not vote on those policies as they affect people in Scotland because those matters had been devolved. Since devolution in Wales and Northern Ireland, this anomaly extends to Welsh and Northern Ireland MPs.

<sup>6</sup> Percentage column here has been omitted as frequencies are extremely small.

<sup>7</sup> This item, on Radio 4 *6pm News* reported on a reading survey (see the section below on *Case Studies*, pp. 28-30) which focused on the survey's coverage of English reading standards, but also briefly mentioned Scotland in passing, with the reporter's comments carrying an implicit reference to Scottish

Westminster/ Downing Street	1	1	2
Northern Ireland	7	1	8
Scotland	23	2	25
Wales	1	0	1
General UK	3	1	3
Westminster and Scotland	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>42</b>

What is striking about Table 2.7 is how few of these devolution stories – only one, in fact – concern health or education, which are widely seen as the two most significant areas of devolved responsibility. While we did find a small number of stories that referred to health and education in a devolved context (so, for example, a handful of stories referred to differences in Scotland’s approach to care for the elderly and tuition fees) this was rarely the main focus of the story.

**Table 2.7: Subjects covered by stories from BBC outlets referring to devolved government**

Subject	Subject			Total
	Devolution	West Lothian question	Funding of devolution	
N/A	68.8% (11)	25% (4)	6.3% (1)	(16)
Westminster Politics	0	0	(4)	(4)
Candidate/Leadership/Party	50% (2)	50% (2)	0	(4)
Constitutional Affairs	0	100% (2)	0	(2)
Crime General/Corporate	(1)	0	0	(1)
Economy	(8)	0	0	(8)
Education	0	0	0	(0)
Electoral System	(2)	0	0	(2)
Health	0	0	0	(0)
Industrial Relations	0	(1)	0	(1)
Media	0	0	0	(0)
Nations cultural	(1)	0	0	(1)
Other	(2)	0	0	(2)
Peace Process/ Troubles	100% (2)	0	0	(2)
Policing	(1)	0	0	(1)
Devolution and Daily Life	(3)	0	0	(3)
Funding of Devolution	0	0	0	(0)
Independence	80% (4)	20% (1)	0	(5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>71.2% (37)</b>	<b>19.2% (10)</b>	<b>9.6% (5)</b>	<b>(52)</b>

We can develop this analysis by isolating the 1334 stories specifically located in one of the four nations<sup>8</sup> (again, this refers to the location of the story, not the location of the reporter), and excluding those with a general UK focus, Westminster-based stories or international stories (Table 2.8A). Of the 161 stories in this sample that dealt with health or education, 160 were located in England (or all 136 of the stories on BBC

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education powers. The story was therefore coded as a story carrying an implicit reference to devolved powers, despite having an overwhelmingly English focus.

<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this analysis we have excluded the tiny number of stories in the sample that deal with more than one of the four nations.

outlets)<sup>9</sup>. Overall, 14% of stories based in England concern health or education. The effect of devolution, in this instance, would seem to be that stories about education and health ignore Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

**Table 2.8: Subjects covered by stories from the four nations**

**A: BBC Outlets**

Subject	Story Location								Total Frequency
	England		Northern Ireland		Scotland		Wales		
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
<b>Devolution</b>	1	3.1	7	21.9	23	71.9	1	3.1	32
<b>West Lothian Question</b>	0	.0	0	.0	1	100.0	0	.0	1
<b>Westminster Politics</b>	49	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	49
<b>Funding of Devolution</b>	0	.0	0	.0	3	100	0	.0	3
Agriculture	43	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	43
Arts (high)	23	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	23
Business	3	75.0	0	.0	1	25.0	0	.0	4
Candidate/Leadership/ Party Focus	1	100	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	1
Celebrity/Entertainment news	26	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	26
Consumer News	4	66.7	0	.0	2	33.3	0	.0	6
Crime General/Corporate	17	85.0	0	.0	1	5.0	2	10.0	20
Crime Individual	236	86.1	10	3.6	17	6.2	11	4.0	274
Defence	5	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	5
Diplomacy	14	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	14
Disasters	28	68.3	10	24.4	2	4.9	1	2.4	41
Economy	7	87.5	0	.0	1	12.5	0	.0	8
Education	62	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	62
Environment and Natural World	8	50.0	0	.0	5	31.3	3	18.8	16
Environmental Issues	15	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	15
Health NHS	47	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	47
Health General	27	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	27
Human Interest	36	97.3	0	.0	1	2.7	0	.0	37
Immigration /Refugees	6	85.7	1	14.3	0	.0	0	.0	7
Industrial Relations	4	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	4
International Politics	3	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	3
Legal Issues	17	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	17
Local Government	10	76.9	0	.0	3	23.1	0	.0	13
Media	11	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	11
Monarchy	37	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	37
Other	17	94.4	0	.0	0	.0	1	5.6	18
Peace Process/The Troubles	0	.0	5	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	5
Policing	70	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	70
Religion	3	75.0	0	.0	0	.0	1	25.0	4

<sup>9</sup> The one story located outside England concerned the treatment of six patients suffering from *C. difficile* at a Glasgow hospital.

Science/Technology	6	85.7	0	.0	1	14.3	0	.0	7
Sleaze/Labour	1	100	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	1
Donations Row									
Social Policy (other)	6	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	6
Sport	50	79.4	0	.0	7	11.1	6	9.5	63
Terrorism	5	83.3	1	16.7	0	.0	0	.0	6
Transport	10	100	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	10
War/Conflict	7	100	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>87.7</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1043</b>

*B: Non-BBC outlets*

Subject	Story Location								Total Frequency
	England		Northern Ireland		Scotland		Wales		
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Devolution	0	.0	1	33.3	2	66.7	.	.0	3
West Lothian Question	1	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	1
Westminster Politics	5	83.3	0	.0	1	16.7	0	.0	6
Funding of Devolution	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0
Agriculture	14	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	14
Arts (high)	8	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	8
Business	1	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	1
Candidate/Leadership/ Party Focus	1	100	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	1
Celebrity/Entertainment news	13	92.9	0	.0	1	7.1	0	.0	14
Consumer News	1	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	1
Crime General/Corporate	3	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	3
Crime Individual	82	89.1	4	4.3	2	2.2	4	4.3	92
Defence	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0
Diplomacy	0	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	9
Disasters	9	64.3	4	28.6	1	7.1	0	.0	14
Economy	2	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	2
Education	9	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	9
Environment and Natural World	2	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	2
Environmental Issues	2	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	2
Health NHS	10	90.9	0	.0	1	9.1	0	.0	11
Health General	6	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	6
Human Interest	12	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	12
Immigration /Refugees	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0
Industrial Relations	1	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	1
International Politics	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0
Legal Issues	3	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	3
Local Government	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0
Media	2	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	2
Monarchy	17	94.4	0	.0	1	5.6	0	.0	18
Other	4	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	4
Peace Process/The Troubles	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0
Policing	22	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	22

Religion	3	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	3
Science/Technology	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0
Sleaze/Labour Donations Row	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0
Social Policy (other)	0	.0	0	.0	1	100.0	0	.0	1
Sport	20	90.9	0	.0	2	9.1	0	.0	22
Terrorism	4	100.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	4
Transport	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0
War/Conflict	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>91.4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>291</b>

Similarly – and somewhat surprisingly given the spread of agricultural land in the UK – all 57 of the stories about farming or rural affairs were based in England, although this can largely be accounted for by the widespread coverage given to the outbreak of bird flu in Suffolk. In addition, all of the 31 arts stories in this sample came from England.

This data suggests a general absence of social policy stories, notably in Scotland and Wales. Here, stories about crime and sport tend to dominate, especially in Wales, with over a third (37%) of Scottish stories and three quarters of Welsh stories (73%) on these subjects. This compares with 17% of stories about crime and sport across the sample as a whole, and 33% of English stories (see Table 2.5 above).

### The coverage of stories relevant to devolution

Within the general sample (of 4687 stories), we isolated all those news items that had some relevance to devolution, regardless of whether this was made clear by the news report. So, for example, a story about a subject in which policy has been devolved was categorised under this heading, even if this fact was not made clear to audiences. Our aim here was to look in more detail at those stories that either contained or might have contained information about devolution.

This amounted to 361 news items<sup>10</sup> – just under 8% of the total sample (313 on BBC outlets and 48 on non-BBC outlets). We then coded these 361 news items under a variety of headings listed in Table 2.9. Some of the 361 items were coded under more than one heading (the total number of stories in Table 2.9 adds up to more than 361).

**Table 2.9 Number of stories relevant to devolution by media (n=361)**

<b>Devolved Power</b>	<b>BBC TV</b>	<b>Non-BBC TV</b>	<b>Radio</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>Total</b>
Relevant powers referred to	12	7	15	12	<b>46</b>
Relevant powers not referred to	10	9	16	12	<b>47</b>
Devolved political process	16	2	6	6	<b>30</b>
England, or England and Wales only	60	19	78	32	<b>189</b>
Whole UK, elements devolved	18	15	39	10	<b>82</b>

Overall, only around one in eight of these news items made any specific reference to devolved powers, while a further one in ten mentioned politicians in the devolved administrations – such as Scottish Labour leader, Wendy Alexander, whose

<sup>10</sup> As outlined in Section 7, this involved 71 different stories across these 361 news items

involvement in the campaign contributions scandal was featured across several outlets (referred to in the Table as ‘devolved political process’). In other words, the bulk of those stories about a subject in which policy has been devolved – specific aspects of education or healthcare, for example – made no explicit reference to devolution.

As Table 2.9 shows, the most common example of such a story – 52% of the 361 news items relevant to devolution (54% of BBC outlets and 40% of non-BBC outlets) - were those that dealt with an area of devolved government but referred only to England (or, in some cases, England and Wales) . So, for example, there were a number of stories that took their lead from an Ofsted report into failing schools in England. These stories raised issues about education policy, but made no reference to the different policies being pursued in the four nations, or to schools outside England (we look more closely at this story in our case studies). As we noted earlier, this is typical of the English focus of health and education stories.

The second most common type of story (‘whole UK, elements devolved’) - around a quarter of the sample - were UK stories that dealt with topics where relevant policy areas are partly or implicitly devolved, without referring to devolution or policies. So, for example, a story about the problem of ‘binge drinking’ that mentioned the role of education in tackling the problem was coded under this heading. While we would not expect stories of this kind to routinely refer to devolved powers or policies, they do provide an opportunity (in these cases, not taken) to compare different approaches in the four nations to issues and problems.

We also found a number of stories – 38 on BBC outlets, 47 overall – that dealt explicitly with areas of devolved policy in a UK contexts without referring to devolved government. So, for example, there were a number of stories about tackling hospital ‘superbugs’ such as *C. difficile*, which made no reference to the different approaches and records of the four nations in dealing with this problem. It is in these cases that we might say that there has been a failure to discuss or explain the nature of devolved government (or to compare the records or approaches of the four nations). Overall then, the great majority of stories that could have referred to devolved powers or policies did not do so.

The 46 stories (39 on BBC outlets) in which references *were* made to devolved powers often mentioned more than one policy area. Across these 46 stories we counted 75 separate explicit references and 8 implicit references (roughly two references per story) to devolved powers/policies.

**Table 2.10 Explicit/implicit references to devolved powers by subject (n=83 references across 46 stories from a total of 361 news reports))**

	BBC Outlets		Non-BBC Outlets		Total
	Explicit	Implicit	Explicit	Implicit	
Devolved power					
Animal Welfare	1	0	0	0	1
Crime	11	1	1	0	13
Culture	3	0	0	0	3
Economic Regeneration	2	0	0	0	2
Education	14	2	2	0	18
Environment	2	0	0	0	2



Equal rights	0	2	0	0	2
Health	13	0	3	0	16
Social Policy	4	0	2	0	6
Tax or economy	13	3	3	0	19
Transport	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>83</b>

An implicit reference is more opaque: so for example, a story about changing the legal smoking age specified that this applied to England, Scotland and Wales, thereby implying that Northern Ireland had powers to develop their own policy. We did not include stories about ‘England only’ in this category unless they specifically implied different policies existed in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales (rather than being stories that were simply about England). In most cases stories about England made no reference of any kind to any of the other three nations

When references were made, Table 2.10 shows that they tended to refer to health, education, taxation or the economy (areas like economic regeneration) or crime/policing. The most common references signalled the fact that the Scottish government does not have full tax raising powers (a point explored in our case study on the SNP’s first budget), or mentioned Scotland’s policies on tuition fees and healthcare for the elderly.

We also looked at all 361 stories (both BBC and non-BBC – relevant breakdowns below) in the ‘relevant to devolution’ sample to see if they were factually accurate or confusing. We found a significant proportion (74 stories – or 20.5% of the sample) that contained information relating to devolution that was confusing or – implicitly or explicitly – inaccurate (Table 2.11). If we break this down, 19% of BBC news items and 27% of non-BBC news items in this sample contained information that was confusing or inaccurate. We found few instances – four (all on BBC outlets) - of explicitly misleading statements. Rather, they involved, in 54 of the 58 cases (42 on BBC outlets, 12 on non-BBC outlets), statements or assumptions that were misleading by implication or suggestion.

So, for example, a story about new government training programmes in England was widely reported in the context of Gordon Brown’s speech about “British jobs for British workers”, and in most cases this gave the impression that the new training programmes were being rolled out across the UK rather than only in England (we look at this story in more detail in our case studies).

Table 2.11 also includes the small number of stories (ten on BBC outlets, 11 overall) in the sample of 361 stories that confused Britain with the UK.<sup>11</sup> A further eight stories (all but one on BBC outlets) implied that a devolved government had power to do certain things when in fact it did not. All of these involved the suggestion that the SNP-led Scottish Parliament had the power to declare independence should a referendum mandate it – a power that actually remains legally in the hands of the Westminster government.

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<sup>11</sup> An error of this kind would be to e.g. confuse the United Kingdom (as a political entity, across which UK-wide policies from Westminster apply) with the island of Great Britain (therefore excluding Northern Ireland by implication).

**Table 2.11 Information about stories that was confusing or inaccurate, by media (n=74 from a total of 361 news reports)**

Inaccuracy/confusion	Media				Total
	BBC TV	Non-BBC TV	BBC Radio	BBC Online	
States explicitly that a story applies UK-wide when it does not	1	0	3	0	4
Assumes that a story applies UK-wide when it does not	12	12	23	7	54
Confuses UK with Britain/Great Britain	2	1	3	5	11
Incorrectly implies devolved powers	3	1	3	1	8
Other Inaccuracy	3	0	2	1	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>74</b>

Finally, we asked whether stories in the devolution sample compared specific devolved policies between nations. Only 16 stories (or 4%) in our ‘relevant to devolution’ sample of 361 stories did so, with 24 comparisons being made across these stories (19 on BBC outlets, 5 on non BBC outlets). It is worth adding here that few of these comparisons went beyond references to the fact there were different policies – again, the notable examples here were brief comparisons between England and Scotland on tuition fees and healthcare for the elderly. These stories were often about the funding of devolution rather than about social policy, in which comparisons were made to indicate different spending levels in England and Scotland.

We found *no* stories that compared the approaches taken in the four nations to tackling hospital infections, or to many aspects of education policy where Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland have not followed various English initiatives around testing, league tables, city academies etc.

**2.12 Number of comparisons between devolved nations (n= 24 comparisons in 16 news reports from a total of 361 news reports))**

Subject Compared	Media				Total
	BBC TV	Non-BBC TV	BBC Radio	BBC Online	
Health	1	2	3	2	8
Education	2	1	2	1	6
Crime	5	0	0	1	6
Tax or Economy	0	1	2	0	3
Transport	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>

As we might expect, the dominant sources used in the devolved stories sample were politicians (who comprised 47% of all sources used – far and away the biggest single category). We looked at this group in detail, in order to see the extent to which politicians from the devolved governments - i.e., Welsh Assembly Members (AMs), Northern Irish Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), or Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) – were used to inform these stories.

The Westminster focus of many of these stories is clearly indicated by the dominance of Westminster/UK politicians – who comprise 83% of political sources used (on both BBC outlets and overall - Table 2.13) in the devolved sample. The only other notable presence was Scottish politicians – especially the SNP - while only one Welsh AM was used. Partly for this reason, the politicians used were overwhelmingly – by a ratio of nearly five to one – male.

**Table 2.13: Political sources used in devolved stories sample**

Political Source	BBC Outlets		Non-BBC Outlets		Total
	Freq.	Percent.	Freq.	Percent.	Freq.
UK Labour Party	121	48.0	14	42.4	135
UK Conservative Party	60	23.8	9	27.3	69
UK Liberal Democrats	22	8.7	2	6.1	24
UK Green Party	5	2.0	0	0.0	5
SNP	14	5.6	7	21.2	21
Scottish Labour	7	2.8	0	0.0	7
Scottish Conservatives	1	0.4	0	0.0	1
Scottish Liberal Democrats	4	1.6	0	0.0	4
Scottish Green Party	1	0.4	0	0.0	1
Plaid Cymru	1	0.4	0	0.0	1
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)	3	1.2	0	0.0	3
Sinn Fein	3	1.2	0	0.0	3
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)	1	0.4	0	0.0	1
Social Dem and Labour (SDLP)	1	0.4	0	0.0	1
Alliance Party (AP)	1	0.4	0	0.0	1
English Councils – Conservative	5	2.0	0	0.0	5
English Councils – Labour	1	0.4	0	0.0	1
English Councils – Lib Democrats	1	0.4	1	3.0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>285</b>

So, for example, the Welsh Assembly has a much higher proportion of women representatives than Westminster (indeed it became the first government in the world to achieve gender parity): the focus on Westminster is therefore likely to increase the prominence of male politicians.

In summary, the picture painted by these data suggests the following conclusions:

- Stories about devolution are a tiny part of UK news coverage, both on BBC and non-BBC outlets.
- The bulk of political coverage remains firmly Westminster-focused.
- News in general is dominated by England, with only a small proportion of stories either about or reported from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- Social policy stories that might involve devolved issues or policies – in areas like health or education – are overwhelmingly about England.
- The devolution sample confirms the English/UK focus suggested by the larger sample, with around three quarters of the stories in this sample being about England or the UK, and the great majority of political sources (e.g. via interviews, recorded speeches etc.) coming from Westminster.

- We found few stories that compared the different approaches taken by governments in the four nations, and none that did so in any detail.
- By contrast, we found a number of stories that were confusing or misleading about devolution – most typically, by blurring the distinction between England and the UK, sometimes creating the impression that policy initiatives in England applied to Britain or the UK.

### 3. Case Studies

#### Introduction

The purpose of these case studies is to illuminate the quantitative data presented in Section 2, specifically:

- Stories about health and education tend to be limited to stories in England, rather than extending to the other three nations (Case Study 1). This case study also suggests that when a story is about England, this is often assumed rather than stated by reporters, whereas when a story concerns one of the other three nations, its location is repeatedly made clear;
- For both BBC and non-BBC outlets, most of the small number of stories about devolution concerned Scotland (see Table 2.8 above) – Case Study 2 looks at the most prominent of these stories;
- Most of the inaccuracies we found in the reporting of devolution came from English stories being reported as if they were about Britain or the UK – Case Study 3 looks at one such instance, when an initiative in England was reported in connection with Gordon Brown’s earlier speech on “British jobs for British workers”;
- In the context of the general dominance of reporting about England – our final case study looks at how a new report that looked at reading standards in both England and Scotland was reported mainly in terms of its significance to England.

#### *Case study 1: Reporting an England-only story: covering an Ofsted report on failing English schools*

This case study is an example of the many stories we found that dealt with an area of devolved government – in this case education - based on a news story that applied only to England. While the stories we examined were consistent in locating the story in England, they were also consistent in doing so only cursorily, without making any reference to devolution. A comparison with stories that apply to the other three nations suggests that when a story is about nations other than England, viewers/listeners are repeatedly reminded of its location. The risk here is that audiences may mistake English stories as being about Britain or the whole of the UK.

On 17 October 2007 the results of an Ofsted report into English secondary schools were published. The report claimed that half of these schools were failing and that one-in-ten were deemed to be 'unsatisfactory'. We found nine instances in broadcast media of this story being covered, often in some detail, with a sequence of different reports and/or interviews (giving us a total of fifteen news reports/interviews across the nine stories). All of these items were categorised during coding as 'Stories about England, or England and Wales only'. The story was also covered online,<sup>12</sup> where the fact that the report only covered English schools was mentioned at the head of the story.

None of the broadcast media stories was, in a technical sense, misleading: in every case, the fact that the Ofsted report referred only to English schools was mentioned at

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<sup>12</sup> See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7048753.stm>

the beginning of the story (see Table 3.1). So, for example, BBC *Ten O’Clock News* opens with the line, "an appalling indictment of the education service, that's the verdict of the Chief Inspector of Schools after a report found that one in ten secondary schools in England are inadequate and almost half are offering a no-better than satisfactory education".

However, although the story was generally covered in some detail, at no point was its English location stressed. Only one of the individual reports/interviews we looked at (on the BBC *Ten O’Clock News*) made any further reference to England (in this case, before presenting statistics generated by the Ofsted report – statistics which were presented earlier at 1pm and 6pm without such a reminder). These stories *may* therefore have given the impression, to a less attentive viewer/listener, that the report refers to the whole of the UK.

**Table 3.1 Number of English location is mentioned in Ofsted story (BBC and non-BBC outlets)<sup>13</sup>**

Story on:	Mentions of England
BBC One O’Clock News	1
BBC Six O’Clock News	1
BBC Ten O’Clock News	2
BBC News 24 (Unit 1) <sup>14</sup>	1
BBC News 24 (Unit 2)	0
SKY News	1
Channel 4 News	1
Radio 4 6pm News	1
World At One (Unit 1)	1
World At One (Unit 2)	1
World At One (Unit 3)	0
World At One (Unit 4)	0
World At One (Unit 5)	0
PM (Unit 1)	1
PM (Unit 2)	0

This is particularly the case when there was a sequence of reports/interviews based on this story, without any reminders that this was a story about schools in England rather than Britain or the whole of the UK. So, for example, coverage on *News 24* consisted of two pieces (a package and an interview). The only reference to English schools was contained in the first few seconds of the package, and was not repeated or mentioned at any point during the subsequent interview.

Across 15 different reports/interviews, England was mentioned explicitly only 11 times. 13 of these were BBC reports, involving nine explicit mentions. We did not find, however, any instances of confusing or ambiguous references to schools in 'the nation', 'the country' or 'Britain'. Thus, in contrast to the stories reported on in Case Study 3, all these stories are accurate.

<sup>13</sup> All mentions were made by newsreaders or presenters.

<sup>14</sup> For definitions of what counts as a ‘unit’ for the general sample, election sample and case studies, see Appendix.

Any confusion between England and the UK or Britain on the audience's part would therefore depend upon their missing or forgetting the initial reference to English schools. Research on news audiences suggests that this is, in fact, quite likely to occur: if information is not stressed or repeated, it tends not to be recalled unless it is already a well-established fact (Lewis 1991, 2001).

Such confusion may have been increased by the use of UK politicians in the reports, such as Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, (on the BBC *Ten O'Clock News*) and, to a lesser extent, other Westminster politicians like Lord Adonis and Nick Gibb (used widely). While this is often appropriate, at no point is it made clear that UK ministers or "the government" is, in this context, only responsible for schools in England.

Confusion may also have arisen when this story was followed immediately by other stories about schools in the UK, without any clear explanation of the shift in focus. So, for example the *World at One* did a series of reports that drew on this story, one of which was based on a report from the Children's Society, a report which covers the whole of the UK, and focuses on the social divide in schools. The interview with the Chief Executive of the Children's Society thus moves the story from an English to a UK focus without signalling to the viewer the change.

None of these reports compared education in England with education in schools in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

A brief comparison with stories from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland is instructive here. In these cases, the viewer/listener is generally much more likely to be reminded of its location. For example, in a two minute BBC story on a Welsh Assembly proposal to ban electric dog collars (the only story in our sample to deal directly with devolved government in Wales) there were six explicit mentions of Wales; four by the reporter and two by interviewees.

Similarly, in a 306-second BBC interview on the issue of paramilitaries in Northern Ireland decommissioning their weapons, there were five explicit references to Northern Ireland and five mentions of the Irish parties or paramilitary groups, by both the presenter and the interviewee. And in a 73-second BBC report on the Scottish Parliament's move to recruit and retain more police officers there were three explicit mentions of Scotland (reference to the Scottish Government, a Scottish respondent and the Scottish budget) and four references to the SNP.

**Table 3.2: Number of times locations are mentioned in stories from Wales/Scotland/N.I**

Story location	Reference to Wales/ Scotland/N.I.		Indirect reference	
	Journalist <sup>15</sup>	Other <sup>16</sup>	Journalist	Other
Northern Ireland	5	0	5	0
Scotland	3	0	4	0

<sup>15</sup> Includes references by a newsreader or studio presenter and reporters.

<sup>16</sup> This refers to any non-journalists, such as guests, experts or politicians.

Wales	4	2	0	0
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In total, then, audiences were reminded of the story location 23 times across just three news items: this is a ratio of location identifiers to reports that is *ten times* higher than in the English schools story. It appears from this analysis that when stories are about England, reporters do not feel the need to remind audiences of its specificity, while they routinely do so when stories are about Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. This is true of both the BBC and non-BBC stories we looked at.

### ***Case study 2: Reporting a devolved story: The SNP Government's First Budget***

We chose to look at this story in detail because it was the only story about devolved government outside England in our general sample to receive much coverage. It reveals a variety of approaches to reporting devolution.

On 14 November 2007, the SNP government in Scotland announced its first budget. We found nine news reports on this story: five on BBC radio, and two on BBC television, one on the BBC Online Politics site, and one on Channel Four (which also carried a preview story the night before the budget announcement, which we did not analyse for this case study). Four of the reports were broadcast from the studio, three (including the Channel Four report) had a reporter on location in Scotland and one report had a reporter on location in Westminster.

All of the reports were categorised in our sample as having a clear devolved political focus in which a direct connection was made between the subject focus and devolved powers. Every report made it clear that this was a Scottish story, although coverage included discussion of its relation to Westminster and England. Indeed, this relationship was the focus of much of the coverage.

The reports on *Newsnight*, *Channel 4 News* (which featured reports on the evening before the budget, and on 14 November), and the BBC1 *Six O'Clock News* all discussed the SNP's case for the need to make Scotland independent, thereby allowing it to control its own revenue and balance its own books. The reports on the *World at One* included a debate about Scotland setting and collecting its own taxes but contained only a brief mention of independence. They also focused upon perceived mutual resentment between England and Scotland. In contrast, the Radio 4 *6pm News* did not mention the SNP's declaration of intent to become independent within ten years, preferring to emphasize the machinery of government and the processes of compromise and deal-making that must occur in order for political parties to get their policies supported and passed through the Scottish Parliament.

Coverage of this story took devolution seriously and made it clear that the Scottish Parliament is a significant legislative body. We also found a number of instances where significant information about the economics of devolution is provided.

A number of reports used a framework in which the SNP – or Scotland in general - is seen less in its own terms than in contrast/opposition to the UK Government and/or England. Or, to put it another way, this may be a story about Scotland, but it is sometimes reported through English eyes. This was perhaps most notable on the *World*



*at One*, which, after a brief mention of the story in headlines at the very beginning, placed the report at the end of the programme, leading with the line: "It's budget day today. No, not here in Westminster but in the Scottish Parliament". This was, of course, simply a statement of fact (given the location of the broadcast) but the decision to cover the story from Westminster rather than Edinburgh placed the story 'not here but there', indicative, perhaps, of the way in which the coverage of devolution has done little to displace Westminster-oriented routines. This emphasis was notably less in evidence with reports on location from the Scottish Parliament, such as that on Radio 4's *6pm News*, which focused more on relations between parties in Scotland.

Some of this emphasis undoubtedly came from the SNP itself: thus many of the reports focused less on how the money is to be spent than where it comes from, and the antagonism between Westminster and Scotland on funding the Scottish Parliament. Some reports used Westminster politicians or non-SNP MSPs as sources to highlight the discrepancies between Scottish and English public spending without allowing SNP members to offer their views. A more detailed description of the coverage breaks down as follows:

#### *The Today Programme*

The first report (of the material we monitored) lasted for 18 seconds, and came during the 7-8am hour of the programme. The report was read by the presenter and focused on the expectation that that the SNP would announce a reduction in business rates and call for council taxes to be frozen. The presenter also referred to opposition claims that the SNP had already backtracked on promises about police recruitment and class sizes. While there is no explicit statement to make clear that this story is about Scotland, the report is introduced as "Ministers from the Scottish National Party...". In both this report and the one that came later, there is a reminder to listeners that the SNP took power in May.

The second report appeared in the 8-9am hour of the programme, and presented the story more with more explicit reference to the Scottish context. This time the presenter explicitly mentioned that this budget relates to "Scotland's devolved government". There was also some explanation of how Scotland's budget works, with information about how Westminster gives a block of money to the Scottish government and how Scottish politicians then decide how to spend it. This report included a package from BBC Scotland's political editor, Brian Taylor, and noted that the SNP believe they have received a tight deal from Westminster. The main policies mentioned were the cutting of business rates, freezing council tax, investment in improving skills and renewable energy and improving Scotland's health record.

#### *The World at One*

Two reports about the SNP Budget were aired back-to-back in the latter half of the programme. The first was a two-way, with the reporter in Westminster, and the second was a studio discussion involving the SNP's Westminster spokesman on the economy and a Labour MP. Both reports focused heavily on the perceived (or otherwise) imbalance between English and Scottish public spending.

The first report opened with the presenter announcing that: "It's budget day today. No, not here in Westminster but in the Scottish Parliament". It could be argued that this statement assumes an English audience: one reported from 'over here' (London or England) about somewhere 'over there' (Scotland).

The report focused less on policy and more on the way that Scotland's money is raised. For example, in the first report, the reporter refers to one of "the paradoxes of devolution" - the fact that Scotland can decide how to spend money but doesn't have the power to raise it. This then led into a discussion about whether or not Scotland receives too much money from Westminster and how this issue could be fairly resolved.

In the first report a number of English Labour MPs were quoted saying that Scotland receives too much money and therefore has a public spending advantage. The suggestion was made by one MP that if the resentment felt in England about this topic were to increase, it could lead to the break up of the union between Scotland and England. During the later studio discussion, the reporter put the suggestion forward to the SNP representative that the SNP was pushing this debate in order to increase resentment north of the border so as to increase support for independence.

#### *Radio 4 6pm News*

The Radio 4 *6pm News* contained a 130-second report, which consisted of a reporter package on location in Scotland. This opened by stating that the SNP had unveiled its first budget since being elected as a minority government, before discussing the freeze on council tax and the cut in business rates for small businesses. The reporter James Shaw emphasized the fact that, as a minority government, the SNP need to make deals with the other parties in order to get their bills passed. The report contained quotes from SNP leaders who acknowledged they need the support of parliament to get their policies through, and also contained a clip of the Liberal Democrat Leader accusing the SNP of having "sums that don't add up".

The report talked about the process of deal-making between parties, discussing how opposition parties will attempt to get their policies on the agenda in exchange for supporting the SNP's policies in parliament. The SNP condemned the settlement from the Treasury as being "painfully tight" and say that their aim will be to forge ties with the other parties in order to pass their key objectives.

#### *Newsnight*

The *Newsnight* story consisted of a 218-second interview. The presenter contextualized the issue by stating that the SNP had announced that a deal had been struck to cut council tax in Scotland, but that it blamed the "tightest settlement since devolution from Westminster" for them having had to shelve other manifesto commitments, including plans to scrap student debt. This then led into an interview between the presenter and the SNP Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth John Swinney, in which Swinney claimed that the intention to introduce expensive policies such as reinstating student grants was genuine. However, he blamed the low settlement from Westminster for preventing the SNP from keeping their manifesto promises. Swinney went on to criticize the way devolved governments are funded by Westminster, claiming that

North Sea oil revenue goes to the Treasury and should go directly to Scotland. He suggested that Scotland should be responsible for both income and expenditure.

#### *Channel 4 News*

*Channel 4 News* opened its report by emphasizing the SNP's desire for independence within ten years and the possible dissolution of the 300-year old Union between England and Scotland. It listed the SNP's policies, including a 'council tax freeze' and 'business rates cut', but also mentioned that there was no money to cut student debt or to keep pledges on policing. This then led into a reporter package on location in Scotland (lasting 277 seconds) which was titled "Disunited Kingdom: Economic Challenges". There was discussion of the pledges that the SNP had kept and those it had failed to implement, and it was explicitly stated that nationalists view the Union as 'constraining'. The report tended to focus on the failures of the SNP to keep manifesto promises, and talked to the Labour leader in Scotland about her criticisms of the budget.

#### *BBC 6 O'Clock News*

A 120-second report on the *BBC Six O'Clock News* led with information on the freeze on council tax and cut in business rates. This reporter package on location involved a reporter in Scotland. In a clip included in the package, SNP Cabinet Secretary for Finance John Swinney called for independence and control over oil revenues to enable Scotland to balance its own income and spending. However, the report also detailed the SNP's pledge of 240 million for renewable energy, along with tax cuts. The report presented the opposing side of the argument against Scottish independence, featuring clips from opposition MPs accusing the SNP of breaking promises they made in their pre-election manifesto.

#### *BBC Online*<sup>17</sup>

Coming third in the running order on the Politics site on 14 November, this report comprised 860 words, and included a link to a 162-page PDF of the main Budget document. The report led with John Swinney's announcement of a council tax freeze, and listed other key pledges, alongside a summary of the timetable for the Scottish budget process. The report also noted that the SNP's pledge to cut student debt had been removed from the budget, and featured responses from the Scottish Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Green parties.

#### ***Case Study 3 'British jobs for British workers'.***

This case study is an example of an English story that was largely reported as if it is a British or UK story. Like the Ofsted story, it was about an English initiative in an area (training) where responsibility is devolved to the four nations. In this case, however, the story was often explicitly reported as if it is about Britain as a whole. This was particularly significant in the light of the advice given by the BBC to journalists on the

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<sup>17</sup> See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/7094879.stm>

use of 'Britain' when 'England' is in fact the intended referent of a report (BBC 2003, p. 40).

On 16 November 2007 the UK government announced a new initiative to create millions of new training places and apprenticeships *in England* in order to equip workers for jobs. The story appeared on *The Today Programme* on BBC Radio 4 (6 items totalling 1218 seconds) and on the *ITV 6.30pm News* (one item of 124 seconds). It was *Today's* lead story at 7am and 8am and returned to later in both hours. On *ITV 6.30pm News* the item aired at 18 minutes into the bulletin. It also appeared on BBC Online's UK and Politics sites, below the top three stories in the running order in the 'Other Top Stories' section.<sup>18</sup>

*Today's* opening line from the newsreader at the top of the 7 am hour framed the story in a way that was repeated throughout the coverage: "The government is creating seven and a half million training places to make good on the Prime Minister's promise to train 'British workers for British jobs'". The promise referred to had been made by Gordon Brown in speeches at the Labour party conference and TUC conference in September. While references to 'British workers for British jobs' may have provided the story with a legitimate news angle, the initiative announced by Skills Secretary John Denham to the Commons applied to trainees in England only.

The newsreader then introduced a one minute package from the social affairs correspondent who again referred to "unskilled British workers" after saying that one third of people in the UK of working age are poorly qualified. The report went on to outline the government plans, including the creation of apprenticeships specifically for those over 25, 120,000 new apprenticeships for those under 25 and 3.5 million new training places. It was never explained that the scheme would apply only to England (indeed, England is not mentioned at any point). The report also brought up the themes of immigrants vying with the "British" for jobs and the alleged failure of the education system, which has made the new training initiative necessary.

*Today* returned to the story at 7.09 am in an interview with Jack Dromey, Deputy General Secretary of UNITE. The discussion centred on "British jobs" and "British workers" again, citing the creation of apprentice places and the type of training to be offered and again brought up immigration and education failures. During this item 'Britain' (or 'British') is used 18 times (see Table 3.3), 'England' (or 'English') not at all.

**Table 3.3: Number of times reports locate the story in a particular context** (J= journalist, O = other, guest, interviewee etc.)

Story:	English/ England		UK		British/ Britain		'The country'		Scotland/ Wales/N.I.	
	J	O	J	O	J	O	J	O	J	O
Today (unit 1)	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Today (unit 2)	0	0	0	0	10	8	0	0	0	0
Today (unit 3)	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Today (unit 4)	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Today (unit 5)	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	1	0	0
Today (unit 6)	2	1	0	0	9	3	0	0	0	0

<sup>18</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7097125.stm>

ITV News	1	0	6	0	3	0	2	0	0	0
BBC Online	1	0	1	1	3	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

The opening of the 8 am hour was identical to the 7 am story in the newsreader's introduction and the package, with the addition of a clip of Jack Dromey speaking. The story was picked up again at 8.10 am, and for the first time, England was mentioned, albeit briefly. The interviewer opened with a reference to immigration figures released the day before and then says: “today, the government is going to announce the creation of seven and a half million training places in England”. The interviewer went on to interview a man who runs an employment agency. The presenter moved the interview on to a discussion of British workers competing with migrants. The interviewer then had a ten minute interview with John Denham which he opened with the following:

*Let's try and be clear first of all, these seven and half million, er, training places in England, is the idea that you are training British people, English people in this particular case perhaps, er, to compete with immigrants for jobs?*

This was the first reference to the fact that the training schemes being announced were in England. Nonetheless, throughout the two interviews 'England' (or 'English') was used a total of four times while 'British' was used 15 times. A very attentive listener to the *Today Programme* may have grasped the devolved nature of this story during the interviews at 8.10 am. Otherwise s/he may have been left with the notion of the schemes being for 'British workers' as a whole rather than for workers in England

The ITV news item aired 18 minutes into the bulletin. The newsreader's introduction did not specify for whom the training places were to be provided. Rather, the government announcement was used as a way to lead into a package about Polish workers coming to the UK to work. The report used 'Britain', 'UK' and 'England' interchangeably throughout, never making it clear the new training places are for England only.

The BBC Online report ran to 690 words, and mentioned in the second paragraph that the initiative was restricted to England alone. It went on to provide a UK context for the initiative in terms of statistics about the proportion of the UK workforce with low qualifications. It featured quotations from John Denham's appearance on the *Today* programme (and noted that he was Skills Secretary in the Westminster government), together with a response from his Conservative shadow David Willetts.

Across the seven BBC reports, 'England' was used only four times (three times by journalists), 'Britain' or 'British' 50 times (36 times by journalists), 'UK' four times (once by a journalist), and 'the country' twice (once by a journalist). If the focus of BBC reports was on Britain, the ITV report was decidedly ambiguous, 'England' was used once by journalists, 'Britain' or British three times, 'UK' six times and 'the country' twice. The writer(s) of the BBC Online story used 'England' once, 'UK' once, and 'Britain/British' three times. The devolved nature of this story – prompted by the announcement of a training initiative in England - was this obscured by a repeated emphasis on Britain as a whole.

#### ***Case Study 4: Reading standards survey.***

This case study highlighted the English-oriented nature of some reporting, in this case on the devolved social policy area of education. On 28 November 2007 the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Pirls) was released. The study carried out by Boston College in the US investigated reading ability in children after four or, in some cases, five years of formal education in a number of countries and regions. This was the second Pirls study, the first having been carried out in 2001. The report covered 40 countries counting England and Scotland separately. The study showed that England had fallen from third to 19th place (a fall of 16 places) and that Scotland had fallen from 14th to 26th place (a fall of 12 places) since the 2001 report.

The story was covered on television on the BBC1 *Six O'Clock News* (one item of 124 seconds) and BBC1 *Ten O'Clock News* (1 item of 147 seconds). On BBC radio it featured on Radio 4's *PM* (2 items totalling 478 seconds) and the *6 pm News* (one item of 116 seconds). Table 3.4 shows how often England and Scotland were mentioned – as well as, rather confusingly ‘the nation’ or ‘the country’. While it shows the preponderance of references to England, it is important to stress that the focus of the coverage was very clearly on England with references to Scotland only in passing.

On *PM* the story appeared in the headlines as the fourth story lasting 14 seconds. Only England was mentioned. They returned to the story at 35 minutes into the bulletin. The presenter introduced the story, mentioning both English and Scottish rankings. This was followed by an interview with Schools Minister Jim Knight (introduced without specifying his responsibility for English schools rather than Scottish ones) and the shadow Schools Secretary Michael Gove. The debate covered issues such as parental responsibility, the role of computers and the effectiveness of reading policy. The discussion by two Westminster politicians about education policy and how to tackle the problem dealt solely with English policy. No Scottish minister was asked to explain falling standards in Scotland. Scotland was only mentioned, once again, in passing by the presenter.

On the *6 pm News* on Radio 4 the story was previewed third in the headlines with the words: “An international study has found reading standards among 10 year olds in England have fallen dramatically.” The story then came up as fourth story in the bulletin at about 15 minutes past the hour. The newsreader’s introduction mentioned both England and Scotland's fall in the tables and the response of Education Secretary Ed Balls (without specifying his responsibility for English schools rather than Scottish ones). This was followed by a package from an education correspondent which concentrated on England throughout, discussing the details of why “English” children dislike reading and how much time they spend on computer games. The report also included a clip of Ed Balls speaking. The only mention of Scotland (the headlines at the beginning of the programme only refer to England) came in the final sentence: “according to the study more than 37% of children in England are playing computer games for more than three hours a day - in Scotland the figure is even higher at 38%”. Much of the report examined the reasons for falling standards in England and how to improve them. No such examination was made of Scotland, or of why Scotland, although it has not fallen quite as far as England, still lagged well behind.

**Table 3.4: Number of times reports locate the story in different contexts**

Media	English/England		National/ Nation		'The country'		Scotland	
	Journalist	Other	J	O	J	O	J	O
BBC1 Six O'Clock News	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BBC1 Ten O'Clock News	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PM (unit 1)	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PM (unit 2)	4	1	0	2	0	1	3	0
Radio 4 6pm News	6	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

On the BBC1 *Six O'Clock News* the story appeared around 23 minutes in (the eleventh story). A graphic behind the newsreader showed England in the table of countries accompanied by the newsreader saying: "just a few years ago England was ranked third in the world when it came to children's reading but look where the English are now - 19<sup>th</sup>. Why? Well, ministers are blaming parents for not doing enough to encourage children to read." A package shot on location in an English school then followed, opening with the line "Reading - something we used to be the best in the world at". The report talked to pupils and parents about why 'we' were getting worse. The use of 'we' in a UK-wide news bulletin clearly meant the English rather the British.

On the BBC1 *Ten O'Clock News* the story aired seventh, at around 16 minutes into the programme. The same graphic from the *Six O'Clock News* showing 'England' appeared behind the newsreader as he introduced the story, and only 'England' was mentioned in the introduction. Again, no mention at all was made of the Scottish figures.

While BBC radio coverage did at least mention Scotland, albeit in passing (all discussion about education policy was Westminster based) BBC television's coverage of the report only covered the England figures. This was also reflected in BBC Online news headlines. "England falls in reading league" was the headline on the UK site (although it should be noted that the Scottish figures are mentioned in body of the story), whilst "Scotland slips in reading league" was on the Scotland site. BBC Scotland did not cover the story at all on its 18.30 pm opt-out bulletin, so audiences in Scotland would not have learnt about this information from the BBC broadcast outlets covered in our report.

## 4. Reporting the 2007 elections

### Method and sample

In order to examine a period when devolution was likely to be in the news, we conducted a content analysis of the BBC's coverage of the elections in the Northern Ireland, Scottish, and Welsh devolved administrations and the English local councils. This involved monitoring a range of BBC output between 1 March and 25 May 2007.<sup>19</sup> Within the sample period, the Northern Ireland elections fell on 7 March, which means that the distribution of stories about Northern Ireland was not strictly comparable with stories about the other elections. Our data set included the BBC *One O'Clock News* (Monday to Friday), BBC *Six O'Clock News* (Monday to Friday), BBC *Ten O'Clock News* (Monday to Friday), BBC news on Saturday evening and early evening Sunday, Radio Four's *World at One*,<sup>20</sup> *6pm News*, *Today*,<sup>21</sup> *Newsnight*, *The Politics Show* and BBC Online election news.

We monitored all the news coverage during this period in order to analyse *every* election related story: the total number of news items dealing with the elections came to 537. The coverage on weekday television BBC bulletins was broadly similar, each of the *One*, *Six* and *Ten O'Clock News* carrying between 40-45 news items each. The weekend bulletins carried a much lower number of election-related items, airing only five during the entire election period. *Newsnight* and *The Politics Show* carried 71 and 20 items, respectively. Because many of the programmes we monitored differ in length, format and style, any comparisons between different news formats (e.g. between conventional TV news bulletins and Radio news programmes) should be interpreted cautiously.

### Prominence of Election coverage

Our sample period comprised 12 weeks (86 days in total). Previous studies of elections have shown how coverage increases, by some way, *days* rather than weeks before the Election (Thomas *et al.* 2004). Our data confirms this trend. Graph 4.1 shows coverage overall across the 12 week monitoring period.

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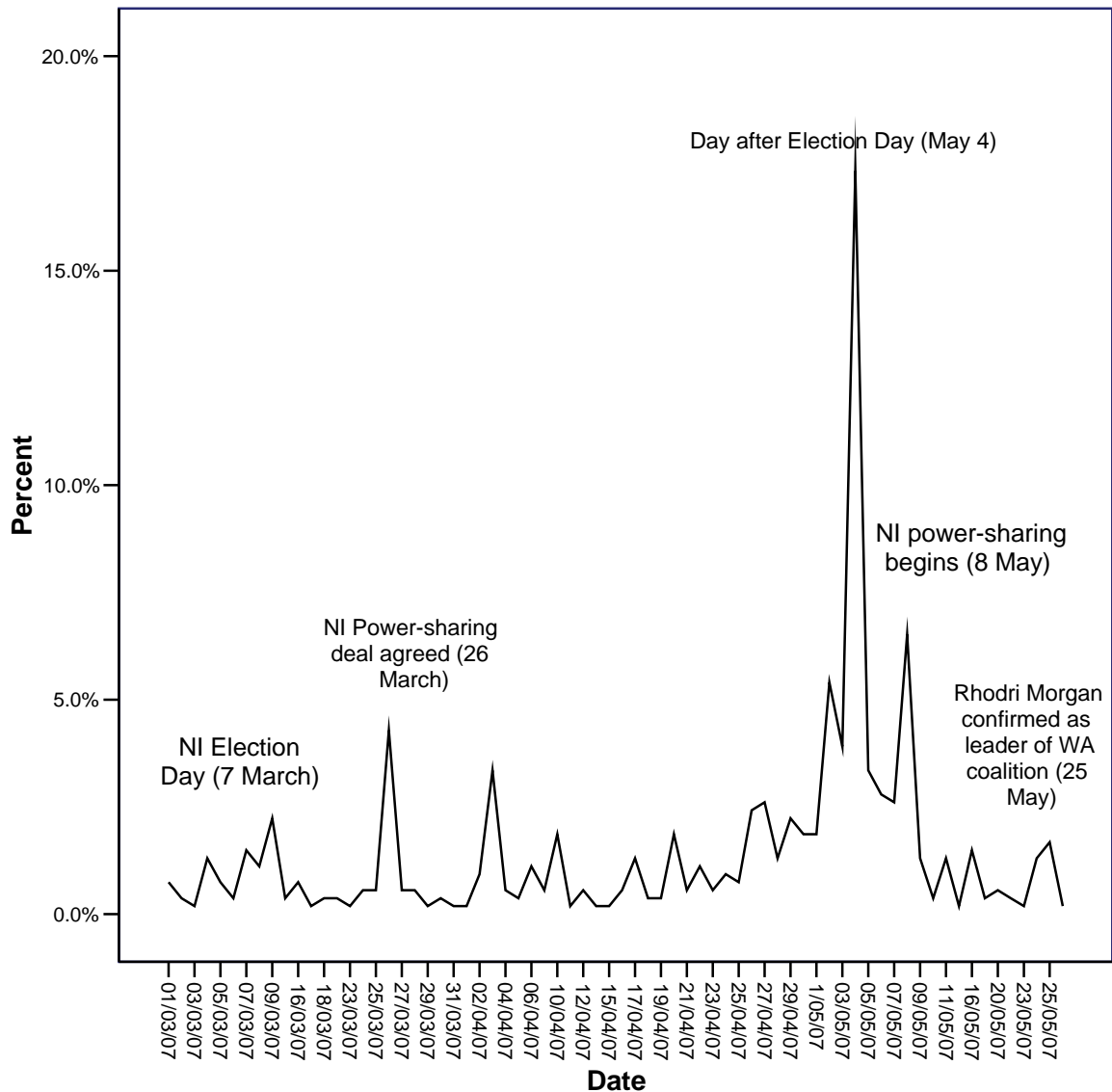
<sup>19</sup> This period was defined in the project brief by the BBC Trust.

<sup>20</sup> For the *World at One*, we did not code the headlines.

<sup>21</sup> For our analysis of the *Today* programme, we coded the programme from 7.00am to 8.30am, and did not code for the news headlines at the top of the hour and on the half-hour.



**Graph 4.1: Frequency and percentage of election news items between 1 March – 25 May 2007**



As Graph 4.1 indicates, election coverage was fairly low on the radar throughout March/April 2007. Coverage gradually increased from 26 April– eight days before the elections in Scotland and Wales on 3 May. We found more coverage before 3 May (58.1% of the election sample overall occurs before the elections in Scotland or Wales), although this period does incorporate the election in Northern Ireland. Table 4.1 indicates the distribution of the sample before and after the election days.

The amount of post-election coverage in Scotland and Wales can largely be accounted for by reports about the results of the election, speculation about the building of coalitions in Scotland and Wales along with the voting problems that marred the aftermath of the elections in Scotland.<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that the period covered by our dataset does not extend to the final confirmation of the make-up of the new Welsh

<sup>22</sup> One drawback with the chosen sample period is that the periods before and after the Scottish and Welsh elections are of different lengths to those before and after the Northern Ireland elections.

administration, which occurred some weeks after Rhodri Morgan was declared the leader of the Assembly coalition.

**Table 4.1 Percentage and frequency of election coverage before and after 3 May (n=537, total election news items)**

Sources	1 March – 3 May 2007		4 May – 25 May 2007	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Newsnight	47	66.2	24	33.8
One O’Clock news	25	61	16	39
BBC Online	54	63.5	31	36.5
Politics Show	14	70	6	30
Radio 4 6pm News	30	57.7	22	42.3
Saturday evening news	2	66.7	1	33.3
Six O’Clock news	24	60	16	40
Sunday evening news	2	100	/	.0
Ten O’Clock news	26	57.8	19	42.2
Today	51	51.5	48	48.5
World At One	37	46.8	42	53.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>41.9</b>

To measure the prominence (as distinct from the presence) of election news, we categorised news items in four ways: whether they appeared as a leading story, whether they were second or third on the agenda, or if they placed fourth or later in the news programme. Table 4.2 indicates the level of prominence across the different media.

**Table 4.2: Frequency (in brackets) and percentage of prominence of election related news (n=537, total election news items)**

	Lead story	Second in agenda	Third in agenda	Fourth or later in agenda
Newsnight	43.7% (31)	12.7% (9)	22.5% (16)	21.1% (15)
One O’Clock News	29.3% (12)	0	2.4% (1)	68.3% (28)
Radio 4 6pm News	25% (13)	3.8% (2)	7.7% (4)	63.5% (33)
Saturday Evening News	0	0	33.3% (1)	67.7% (2)
Six O’Clock News	22.5% (9)	2.5% (1)	12.5% (5)	62.5% (25)
Sunday Evening news	0	0	0	100% (2)
Ten O’Clock News	28.9% (13)	13.3% (6)	13.3% (6)	44.4% (20)
The Politics Show	5% (1)	0	0	95% (19)
Today	20.2% (20)	2% (2)	4% (4)	73.7% (73)
World At One	17.7% (14)	5.1% (4)	0	77.2% (61)
<b>Total</b>	<b>25% (113)</b>	<b>5.3% (24)</b>	<b>8.2% (37)</b>	<b>61.5% (278)</b>

A high proportion of stories on *Newsnight* – 44% - featured as the ‘lead story’ with close to a fifth (21.1%) running fourth or later in the running order (making it the most prominent broadcaster of election news) – although since *Newsnight* has fewer stories we would expect greater prominence. Two to three out of ten election news items on the BBC daily TV bulletins warranted headline status, while election news on BBC radio tended to be reported less prominently than on BBC television news (although comparisons across programmes are, of course, most meaningful between similar bulletins).

Table 4.3 shows the distribution of pre- and post-election prominence. Lead stories were less likely to appear before election day. When they did, nine in 20 of them dealt with the implications of the Northern Ireland elections held on 7 March 2007.

**Table 4.3: Distribution of pre and post election news across all election sample (excluding BBC online) (n=452, excluding BBC Online<sup>23</sup>)**

	Pre-election		Post-election	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Lead story	41	36.3	72	63.7
Second in agenda	14	58.3	10	41.7
Third in agenda	23	62.2	14	37.8
Fourth or later	180	64.7	98	35.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>258</b>		<b>194</b>	

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Fein’s coalition agreement on 26 March 2007 was a lead item across all media. Indeed, headlines about devolution settlements – such as the DUP’s Reverend Ian Paisley and Sinn Fein’s Gerry Adams’ famous hand shake – were a key theme in pre- and post-election coverage across Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Election stories were more likely to move up the agenda if ‘horse-race’ elements of the campaign were introduced, and one fifth of headlines had a party specific focus. These mainly explored the possibility of political parties losing key marginal constituencies or the possible electoral implications for UK party leaders (who, as we note later, played a key part in informing devolved election stories). So, for example, a BBC *One O’Clock News* story on 24 April explored the possibility of Labour losing in the Welsh Assembly elections whilst a Radio 4 news story on 20 April debated the prospects of whether David Cameron could sway enough voters to vote Tory and win previously safe Labour and Liberal Democrat seats across the UK.

Close to one in two post-election stories dealt with reporting the polls results, and a third of these were headline stories across most BBC media. The prominence of the elections in Scotland, followed by England and Wales was again apparent in how the elections results were reported. So, for example, BBC’s *One O’Clock News* the day after the election (4/05/07) spent 54% of its time on Scotland, 24% on England and 22% on Wales. Likewise, the *Ten O’Clock News* spent 44% on Scotland, 41% on England and 15% on Wales. By Saturday (5/05/07) – two days after election day – BBC News spent nine times longer explaining the election results in Scotland than

<sup>23</sup> It was not possible to assess the prominence of online stories as we only had access to the stories themselves, not the front pages of the UK and Politics websites on the day they appeared. See Appendix for a note on Online monitoring methodology.

Wales. As one *Ten O’Clock News* presenter put it, the English and, to a much greater degree, Welsh elections were “overshadowed by events in Scotland” largely because of the voting problems north of the border, but also because of the implications of the SNP’s success.

A third of post election coverage dealt with the ongoing coalition talks across nations and between political parties, most notably involving Northern Ireland (44%), but also Wales (29%) and Scotland (27%). Wales appeared to gain greater prominence after the election (from a very low base) with two more election-related pieces and twice as many lead stories. Scotland, similarly, had more post-election news and four times more headline items than before the 3 May election.

So, overall, while there was more coverage overall before the elections in Scotland and Wales, the aftermath of the devolution settlement in Scotland and Wales was more prominently reported than the election campaigns.

### **Elections across the four nations**

Our analysis looked at the volume of coverage across the four nations more generally. Table 4.4 shows the extent to which Northern Ireland, Scottish, and Welsh election news featured in BBC UK broadcast news along with other election news on, for example, the English and Scottish local elections.

**Table 4.4: Frequency and percentage of election focus across the four nations (n=537, total election news items)**

<b>Election focus</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
England	113	21
Northern Ireland	107	19.9
Scotland	143	26.6
Wales	66	12.4
Reference made to more than one election	108	20.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>100</b>

Of the four elections examined, Scotland received most coverage overall, twice as much as Wales, although only a little more than the elections in England and Northern Ireland. Indeed, the council elections in England were received almost twice as much coverage as the Welsh Assembly elections. When one of the four nations was the exclusive focus of a news piece, one in three stories related to the elections in Scotland, one in four to Northern Ireland or England, while Wales accounted for less than one in seven.

While we might expect Scotland – as the largest of the three devolved nations with more law making powers – to have received the most election coverage, especially given the news value of the result - the lack of election coverage in Wales is striking. This is very much in line with our analysis of day-to-day coverage in Section 2. This is worth noting in the context of a rather shocking recent poll of the Welsh public (ICM 2008) – who are largely reliant on UK news media - which found over six in ten voters

did not know who ran the Welsh Assembly Government (i.e. Labour/Plaid Cymru coalition).

There were also a number of fairly cursory updates on ongoing electoral developments across Scotland, England and Wales. In most cases, the elections in Scotland were introduced first, followed by England and then Wales.

The coverage of the different elections was not uniform across all BBC news coverage. Tables 4.5-4.7 indicate the spread of coverage across different media. Perhaps most notably, attention to Scotland overall is largely accounted for by radio coverage: TV coverage was, in fact, more likely to focus on Northern Ireland.

**Table 4.5: Percentage and frequency of country focus in the 2007 English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland elections on BBC TV (n=131, all BBC TV items)**

	<b>One O'Clock News</b>	<b>Six O'Clock News</b>	<b>Ten O'Clock News</b>	<b>Saturday Evening News</b>	<b>Sunday Evening News</b>
England	14.6% (6)	25% (10)	15.6% (7)	33.3% (1)	0
Northern Ireland	31.7% (13)	25% (10)	35.6% (16)	33.3% (1)	100% (2)
Scotland	22% (9)	25% (10)	24.4% (11)	33.3% (1)	0
Wales	19.5% (8)	15% (6)	6.7% (3)	0	0
Reference to more than one election	12.2% (5)	10% (4)	17.7% (8)	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0% (41)</b>	<b>100.0% (40)</b>	<b>100.0% (45)</b>	<b>100.0% (3)</b>	<b>100.0% (2)</b>

For the daily news bulletins on BBC1, the focus on each nation varied across each bulletin. The *One O'Clock* and *Ten O'Clock News* dedicated roughly a third of their election coverage to the Northern Ireland elections (31.7% and 35.6% respectively). A quarter of election coverage was given to the Scottish elections across the three daily weekday bulletins. Just three news items on the BBC's flagship *Ten O'Clock News* were exclusively about the elections in Wales, only one of which ran before the election. These covered offers of incentives by the main parties to voters (27 April), along with the Assembly election results. The two items which covered the results emphasized in each case the lack of any overall majority for Labour and the consequent need for a coalition to be formed (3 and 4 May)

Radio coverage, by contrast, was more likely to focus on Scotland (the high volume of radio coverage in our sample accounting for Scotland's overall prominence). The *World at One*, was the exception here, running most election stories about the English local elections, whilst a third of Radio 4's *6pm News* and *Today's* election coverage concerned Scotland. Wales received just nine election stories on *Today*, with just one election related story appearing *before* the election. This dealt with the possibility of a potential coalition between Plaid and Labour.

**Table 4.6: Percentage and frequency of country focus on the 2007 English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland elections for BBC Radio (n=230, all BBC Radio items)**

	<b>World at One</b>	<b>Radio 4 6pm News</b>	<b>Today</b>
England	24.1% (19)	15.4% (8)	20.2% (20)
Northern Ireland	12.7% (10)	25% (13)	17.2% (17)
Scotland	21.5% (17)	32.7% (17)	36.4% (36)
Wales	15.2% (12)	11.5% (6)	9.1% (9)
Non-specific	6.3% (5)	0	0
Reference to more than one election	20.3% (16)	15.3% (8)	17.1% (17)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b> <b>(79)</b>	<b>100.0%</b> <b>(52)</b>	<b>100.0%</b> <b>(99)</b>

For the rest of the sample – *Newsnight*, *The Politics Show* and BBC online election news – Table 4.7 indicates the spread of coverage across the four nations.

**Table 4.7: Percentage and frequency of country focus in the 2007 English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland elections for other media outlets (n=176, all other BBC items)**

	<b>Newsnight</b>	<b>Politics Show</b>	<b>BBC Online</b>
England	16.9% (12)	25% (5)	29.4% (25)
Northern Ireland	19.7% (14)	15% (3)	9.4% (8)
Scotland	33.8% (24)	30% (6)	14.1% (12)
Wales	8.5% (6)	10% (2)	16.5% (14)
Non-specific	2.8% (2)	5% (1)	5.9% (5)
Reference to more than one election	18.3% (13)	15% (3)	24.7% (21)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b> <b>(71)</b>	<b>100.0%</b> <b>(20)</b>	<b>100%</b> <b>(85)</b>

*Newsnight* was four times more likely to cover the elections in Scotland than in Wales. *The Politics Show*, with much longer pieces, also focussed primarily on the elections in Scotland.

Three in ten BBC online stories were exclusively about the Council elections in England. The next largest category – making up a quarter of online news – consisted of election round ups too, with smaller parties given greater prominence. So, for example, one headline (4 May) read “UKIP fails to win council seats”, before describing how UKIP had “been aiming to get its first Welsh assembly member – where it hoped to benefit from the proportional representation system”.

### **Reporters on location?**

While the analysis so far has looked at which elections were most frequently covered, our study now explores how coverage was reported. Our election sample found that a third of news came from the studio. This figure would have been a little higher had we included certain presenters from locations across the four nations. So, for example, John Humphrys, Fiona Bruce, James Naughtie or Huw Edwards presented news programmes at some point over the campaign, from locations in England, Wales or Scotland. But we did not, it should be made clear, include this as an instance of a reporter on location. Instead, we only quantified reporters out on location when they were reporting about the election from a location away from the studio to a presenter. Table 4.8 indicates the number of times reporters were used on location across the four nations (on a total of 255 out of 452 total non-BBC Online items).

**Table 4.8: Percentage and frequency of reporter location for stories with reporters on location in the 2007 English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland elections (n=452, total election news items excluding Online)**

<b>Reporter location</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
England/London	68	26.9
Northern Ireland	66	26.1
Scotland	84	33.2
Wales	37	13.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>100</b>

The pattern here reflects the coverage overall, with Scotland a little ahead of England and Northern Ireland with Wales receiving the least coverage. But in stories exclusively about the elections in Scotland, England, Northern Ireland or Wales, we found a remarkable consistency in coverage: in all cases, six in ten overall had a reporter on location. Again, this suggests that, at election time at least, reporters were more likely to report the issues from locations in the nations away from the programme’s main studio.

Indeed, when we break down the numbers of reporters on location before and after the election, we found they were four times more likely to be reporting from England and twice more likely to be reporting from Northern Ireland before election day. By contrast, the same frequency of reports on location occurred before and after the election in Wales, whilst more occurred in Scotland after the election.

Our data, in other words, confirms that the aftermath of the elections in Wales and Scotland appeared to be more newsworthy than the devolved election campaigns in these nations.

## Westminster politics vs local elections and elections to the devolved administrations

Previous studies have shown how political journalists collectively focus their reporting on the twists and turns of the campaign when a General Election is called (Deacon *et al.* 2005). The devolved elections, by contrast, had to compete with the world of Westminster, including the imminent handover of power from Tony Blair to his successor. To explore just how much competition from Westminster-based politics the elections faced, we quantified the type and prominence of every Westminster-based story that appeared over the sample period. This included day-to-day events in and around Parliament (such as reports about process, procedure, leadership contests and so on), as well as Westminster-based policy stories (such as a Government spokesperson announcing a new health initiative, etc.).

While we found 452 election news items across our sample of BBC output (excluding the online sample), we found over three times more Westminster-based news items (1408) over the same period.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the only point in which the election campaigns received more coverage was immediately after the elections themselves. Table 4.9 indicates the difference between the frequency of election coverage and Westminster news across media.

**Table 4.9: Distribution of Election and Westminster news across BBC outlets (excluding BBC online)**

	Election news		Westminster news	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Newsnight	71	40	108	60
One O'Clock News	41	31	93	69
Politics Show	20	39	31	61
Radio 4 6pm News	52	7	227	93
Saturday Evening News	2	18	9	82
Six O'Clock News	40	34	78	66
Sunday Evening News	3	10	28	90
Ten O'Clock News	45	45	55	55
Today	99	15	562	75
World At One	79	27	217	73
<b>Total</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1408</b>	<b>76</b>

Table 4.9 indicates that every news outlet sampled featured more Westminster news than news on the devolved elections. Radio stood out as being the most Westminster-focused (nine times more likely for Radio 4, six times for *Today* and three times for the *World at One*). For the *One* and *Six O'Clock News*, twice as much Westminster news was reported. The weekend early evening bulletins largely ignored election coverage.

If we compare the *prominence* of election coverage with Westminster-based news, a slightly different picture emerges. The frequency of pre-election lead stories for the

<sup>24</sup> Online sources are excluded here because the timing of the study meant we did not have access to a full data set of online stories about Westminster politics.



four nations (15.9%) was broadly in line with Westminster stories (17.6%). But around seven in ten post-election stories were lead ones (63.7%) – four times more than Westminster (16.7%). In other words, while the election overall was three times *less* likely to be reported, the stories that did get reported were given more prominence than Westminster stories in the immediate weeks following election day.

To get a sense of the kinds of Westminster stories covered over the sample period, we categorised every type of news item in terms of its specific subject matter (see Table 4.10). This table gives sense of the range of stories involving everyday business at Westminster.

**Table 4.10: Subjects for all Westminster-based stories (n=1408, all Westminster news items)**

Story subject	Frequency	Percentage
House of lords -- nations	1	0.1
Power sharing	7	0.5
Agriculture	10	0.7
Arts high	8	0.6
Britishness	2	0.1
Business	3	0.2
Campaigning generally	5	0.4
Candidate focus/leadership	174	12.4
Celebrity/entertainment news	3	0.2
Constitutional affairs	17	1.2
Consumer news	25	1.8
Crime general/corporate	61	4.3
Crime individual	15	1.1
Defence	84	6
Diplomacy	107	7.6
Economy	26	1.8
Education	72	5.1
Electoral system	2	0.1
Energy	12	0.9
Environment and natural world	5	0.4
Environmental issues	44	3.1
Europe/EU	14	1
Freedom of information	26	1.8
Government restructuring	14	1
Health NHS	105	7.5
Health General	21	1.5
Horse race/opinion polls	1	0.1
House of lords general	5	0.4
Immigration/refugees	49	3.5
Industrial relations	22	1.6
International law	3	0.2
Iraq general	19	1.3
Legal issues	44	3.1
Monarchy	4	0.3
Other	37	2.6
Policing	13	0.9
Public opinion general	14	1
Religion	6	0.4
Science/technology	18	1.3
Sleaze/cash for questions	48	3.4
Social policy other	90	6.4
Sport	8	0.6
Taxation	35	2.5
Terrorism	64	4.5

Transport	15	1.1
UK foreign affairs	28	2
War/Conflict	19	1.3
Media	3	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1408</b>	<b>100</b>

In one sense, Table 4.10 reflects the priority accorded to what we have called a candidate or leadership type of news item (174 in total – the largest single category of stories). The majority of these dealt with Tony Blair’s impending departure from Downing Street, and the speculation surrounding his likely successor. But while this personalisation of politics – a handover of power to a new party leader, the latest resignation or ministerial sacking – is a familiar and well-documented trend in media coverage of UK politics (e.g. Franklin 2004), Westminster stories also featured a wide range of standard domestic policy issues – health, crime, education, the economy and transport for example. As we shall see, this is stark contrast to the coverage of the elections in the four nations.

### **Process or Policy?**

To explore the nature of election coverage, we examined every type of election story in terms of whether it was about the process of the elections or about the policies of political parties across the local and three devolved elections. Our definition of ‘process’ stories includes stories which deal with the razzmatazz associated with election campaigning, the personalities of and clashes between rival politicians as well as the horse trading between political parties, such as the building of coalitions. Process stories also include news about the process of voting itself and the electoral system (such as the problems in Scotland). Policy news, by contrast, refers to stories which attempt to engage, in some form, with the policies of a political party or government.

Historically election studies have shown that it is process rather than policy driven news which tends to dominate coverage over a campaign period. Recent General Election studies in UK-wide media (Deacon *et al.* 2005) and regional and local press (Cushion *et al.* 2006), along with studies examining coverage in previous devolved elections (Thomas *et al.* 2004) have shown process stories account for around 50-60% of coverage overall.

**Table 4.11: Frequency of type of election news items during the 2007 English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland elections (n=537, total election news items)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Power sharing/building a coalition	131	24.4
Election results	128	23.8
General campaign	91	16.9
Party specific	74	13.8
Electoral system	52	9.7
Westminster main focus	35	6.6
Policy specific	13	2.4
General policy	10	1.9
Process leadership	3	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.11 suggests media coverage of the devolved elections was even more process-driven than in previous UK electoral campaigns. This, as Graph 4.1 indicated, may

partly be because our analysis, unlike the previously cited studies, went beyond election day and included the building of coalitions in Scotland and Wales (hence power-sharing or coalition-building was the most frequent type of story overall). Nonetheless, the absence of policy stories is striking.

Overall, a quarter of media coverage in the sample overall dealt with the possibility of power sharing (23.8%) and, following election day, the horse trading between parties needed to (re)form government coalitions (24.4%) and voting problems in Scotland (9.7%). Just under a tenth of news items overall were classed as electoral system stories. These, generally speaking, involved cases of voting problems (such as difficulties with postal voting), and came primarily from Scotland where the results process became newsworthy because 140,000 ballot papers were rejected and delays in the processing of results occurred etc.

We found remarkably few exclusively policy-orientated stories. These ranged from party-specific policies (2.5%) to a more general round up of what each political party's policy was on crime, the economy, the environment and transport (2.1%). All 23 policy-related election stories are summarized in Table 4.12.

**Table 4.12: Summary of policy stories from election period**

Date	Source	Running Order	Subject	Devolved powers referred to	Election(s) Covered
01/03/07	One O'Clock News	4+	NI business leaders and an academic talk about the economic challenges facing a reconstituted NI Assembly	Economic regeneration	Northern Ireland
16/04/07	Six O'Clock News	4+	A businessman and NGO representative talk about the achievements of devolution in Wales	Health, education, economic regeneration	Wales
16/04/07	Today	4+	Overview of environmental policies of the main Scottish parties (including Greens)	SNP's 'veto' on nuclear power	Scotland
03/04/07	World At One	4+	Labour and Lib Dems launch election campaigns in England, Scotland and Wales – general policy overview	None	England, Scotland, Wales
06/04/07	World At One	4+	Tories' weak position in North of England linked to policy	None	England
12/04/07	World At One	4+	SNP announces plans to look into renationalisation of Scottish railways	Transport	Scotland
16/04/07	One O'Clock News	4+	Overview of the Welsh Assembly's record since devolution	Health, economic regeneration	Wales
12/03/07	Ten O'Clock News	2	Overview of main UK parties' environment policies	None	England
22/04/07	BBC Online	N/A	Major parties in Wales back anti-racism rally	Social policy (equality)	Wales
28/04/07	Today	4+	Interview with Nick Clegg on Lib Dem crime policy	None	England
28/04/07	Today	4+	Investigation of crime in Nottingham against backdrop of UK Government crime policy	None	England
28/04/07	Today	4+	Focus on Government crime policy in discussion with Home Office minister and Conservative home affairs spokesman	None	England
23/04/07	Six O'Clock News	4+	Impact of environmental issues on English local elections	None	England
26/04/07	Six O'Clock News	4+	Impact of issue of congestion charge in Manchester on local elections	None	England
26/04/07	Newsnight	1	Impact of environmental issues on English	None	England

			local elections		
26/04/07	Newsnight	1	Studio discussion between representatives of SNP, Scot. Labour, UK Conservative and UK Lib Dems on Scottish independence	Tax or economy	Scotland
26/04/07	Newsnight	1	Investigation of Scottish Government's spending plans and of the constitutional issues surrounding independence	Health, constitutional reform	Scotland
08/05/07	Six O'Clock News	1	As power-sharing returns in NI, reporter talks to member of the public about policy challenges people expect new Assembly to tackle	None	Northern Ireland
18/03/07	Today	4+	Alex Salmond launches policy document for 'first 100 days in government'	None	Scotland
03/04/07	BBC Online	N/A	Party campaign policy on meals for prospective voters criticised by peer	None	England, Scotland and Wales
12/04/07	Ten O'Clock News	4+	Scottish parties respond to new SNP manifesto	Implied Scottish government has constitutional powers it does not have	Scotland
26/04/07	Ten O'Clock News	4+	Report on economic viability of Scottish independence	Education, social policy	Scotland
27/04/07	Ten O'Clock News	4+	Welsh parties offer incentives to voters to illustrate key policies	None	Wales

It is interesting to note that most attention was given to policy stories within the context of the English local elections. Where devolved policy issues were reported, the focus was mostly upon the Scottish elections, with items on *Newsnight*, the *Ten O'Clock News*, *Today* and the *World at One* all looking either at possible expansions of Scottish Government powers after the elections, or at the viability of independence. The only story about the Welsh elections to feature on the *Ten O'Clock News* focused on the main parties' (Welsh Labour, Conservatives, Lib Dems and Plaid) use of incentives to highlight their major policies ahead of the elections (e.g. Plaid's pledge to give laptops to all school pupils 11 and over).

The importance of Westminster politics in the devolved elections was again apparent in media coverage: we found that 6.6% of news items interpreted the elections through the prism of Westminster. The impact the elections might have on Tony Blair's status, for example, was a repeated theme as was, to a lesser extent, speculation surrounding the chances of David Miliband deciding to run for the Labour leadership.

The character of election coverage varied noticeably across the four nations (Table 4.13). Most of the power sharing stories (63.4%) were about the Northern Ireland elections, while reports on the Scottish elections were much more likely to focus on the results themselves or on the electoral system. General campaign stories, or items dealing with specific policies were both much more likely to come from England and Scotland, with the low levels of coverage of the Welsh elections across the board. These findings reflect the fact that the Northern Ireland elections took place earlier than the others.

**Table 4.13: Types of news items associated with elections in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (n=537, total election news items)**

Election covered	Type of News Item								% and Number of all stories/ Country
	General policy	General campaign	Policy specific	Process: leadership	Process: power sharing	Party specific	Election results	Electoral system	
English Council	30.0%	39.6%	53.8%	/	/	41.9%	14.8%	17.3%	21.0% (113)
Scotland	20.0%	30.8%	38.5%	66.7%	16.8%	27.0%	31.3%	36.5%	26.6% (143)
Wales	30.0%	11.0%	7.7%	/	18.3%	16.2%	11.7%	1.9%	12.3% (66)
Northern Ireland	20.0%	4.4%	/	33.3%	63.4%	2.7%	7.0%	5.8%	19.9% (107)
Scottish council	/	/	/	/	/	/	.8%	/	.2% (1)
Non-specific	/	/	/	/	/	4.1%	/	3.8%	2.4% (13)

The pattern of election coverage was fairly similar across the media sample, although some interesting differences were apparent. For the *One* (36.1%), *Six* (34.1%) and *Ten O'Clock News* (28.9%) bulletins, the story of power sharing, of building government coalitions, dominated election coverage. Compared to other media, the daily bulletins contained what little policy oriented news we found. Approximately one in ten election stories were policy oriented during the *Six* and *Ten O'Clock* election news coverage, compared to one in twenty for the *One O'Clock News*.

## References to devolved powers

In the general sample we showed how coverage across BBC and non-BBC outlets only rarely made explicit references to specific devolved powers. This was also the case in the election coverage: we found only 51 explicit references to devolved powers across our 537 BBC election stories.

**Table 4.14: Number of explicit references to devolved powers across types of news items (since there can be more than one reference per news item, these are not percentages)**

Type of news item in which explicit references occur	Number of explicit references
General or specific policy	6 across 23 stories
General campaign/leaders	8 across 94 stories
Process power sharing	13 across 131 stories
Party specific	14 across 74 stories
Westminster main focus	2 across 35 stories
Election results	5 across 128 stories
Electoral system	1 across 52 stories
<b>Total</b>	<b>51 out of 537 stories</b>

These reference were made across many different types of story (Table 4.14), although, not surprisingly, they were more likely to occur in policy stories or stories about

specific parties, and less likely to occur in stories based on election results or problems in the electoral system.

Explicit references to powers (or lack thereof) covered a range of responsibilities, notably health, education, and, perhaps more surprisingly, tax and spending (Table 4.15).

**Table 4.15: References to devolved powers in election stories (n=51, total number of stories containing either explicit or implicit references)**

<b>Powers referred to</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Health	21
Education	21
Immigration or Asylum	1
Environment	10
Crime	7
Social Policy	9
Tax or Economy	24
Transport	6
Rural Affairs	0
Constitutional Affairs	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Most of these references (around half) were made to Scotland (and often about Scotland’s lack of full tax raising powers) with only a few references to devolved powers in Northern Ireland (Table 4.16). Both *World at One* and Radio 4’s *6pm News* (25/05/07) explored whether Welsh Labour’s re-organisation of hospitals across Wales might be threatened by the party’s poor performance at the polls. Similarly, Sinn Fein and the Unionists’ disagreement on class selection at age 11 was specifically dealt with on Radio 4’s *6pm News* (26/3/07).

**Table 4.16: Explicit references to devolved powers cross-referenced with election covered (n=537, total election news items)**

<b>Election covered</b>	<b>Percentage of explicit refs</b>
Scotland	53.2
Wales	31.9
Northern Ireland	14.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Informing election news**

Our general sample found that, even in a fairly routine, non-election period, the dominant sources used to inform devolved stories were overwhelmingly party politicians (close to one in two sources for BBC and non-BBC outlets). In our election sample, the overall volume of party political sources was six in ten sources (we examine these in more detail in a moment), whilst members of the public accounted for two in ten sources. This left little time and space for other voices from business, think

tanks, trade unions or the academic world to have any meaningful input into the devolved elections. In other words, the actors involved in the elections were primarily politicians from across the four nations. Table 4.17 shows the distribution of political party sources across all media.

**Table 4.17: Percentage and frequency of political party sources across election stories, 1 March -25 May 2007 (n=537, total election news items)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
UK Labour Party	112	17.7
UK Conservative Party	55	8.7
UK Liberal Democrats	47	7.4
UK Green	5	0.8
UK Independence Party (UKIP)	7	1.1
UK Plaid Cymru	2	0.3
British National Party (BNP)	3	0.5
Liberal	1	0.2
Respect	1	0.2
Scottish National Party (SNP)	70	11.1
Scottish Labour	37	5.9
Scottish Conservative	18	2.8
Scottish Liberal Democrat	22	3.5
Scottish Greens	6	0.9
Welsh Labour	26	4.1
Plaid Cymru	25	4.0
Welsh Conservative	10	1.6
Welsh Liberal Democrats	14	2.2
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)	36	5.7
Sinn Fein	40	6.3
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)	10	1.6
Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)	7	1.1
Alliance Party	5	0.8
Progressive Unionist Party (PUP)	1	0.2
English Councils - Conservative	20	3.2
English Councils - Labour	16	2.5
English Councils - Liberal Democrat	15	2.4
English Councils - Green	39	0.9
English Councils - BNP	10	1.6
English Councils - Respect	1	0.2
Scottish Councillor	1	0.2
Councillor other	3	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>100</b>

Although there were no UK-wide elections during this period, a third of all sources were from the three main UK political parties. For devolved political sources across the four nations, a quarter came from Scotland (45% of this from the SNP), three in twenty from Northern Ireland and 12% from Wales. English councillors accounted for 11%

sources. Out of the four nations, most political sources came from England (see Table 4.18).

**Table 4.18 Location of political sources for all election items, where specified (n=537, total election news items)**

Location of Political Source	Frequency	Percentage
England	273	43.8
Northern Ireland	121	19.4
Scotland	157	25.2
Wales	73	11.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>624<sup>25</sup></b>	<b>100</b>

Of the 665 political sources we examined, party leaders accounted for over 82.9% of sources, perhaps supporting the recent claim that the media have helped create a “Presidentialization” of UK politics (e.g. Munghan 2000). Male politicians were seven times more likely to appear on television or radio, or be quoted online than their female counterparts. This might be, as we noted in the general sample, a reflection of male dominance in Westminster both for MPs and Ministers as opposed to the greater proportion of women in the devolved administrations.

Finally, we examined whether a news item referred viewers or listeners on to other sources of information, BBC or otherwise. In the vast majority of cases – 95% -- they did not. When sources were referred to, however, it was limited to three outlets – the BBC Election Website, *News 24* or *Newsnight*.

### **Summary of election findings**

The key findings of the election study tend to reinforce some conclusions reached by previous studies of election campaigns.

- While UK General Election campaigns tend to dominate news agendas, the devolved elections in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales found it hard to compete with the overall emphasis on news from Westminster. We found three times more Westminster stories than stories about election issues or the campaigns.
- Coverage of the elections tended to focus on the process of politics (general campaigning, deal-making between the parties etc.) rather than questions of policy. Whilst this might have led to a greater prominence of election coverage than might otherwise have been the case, viewers, listeners and readers of BBC election coverage would have struggled to find information about the differences in policies between political parties and across nations.
- In keeping with the lack of policy focus, fewer than one in ten election stories made explicit or implicit references stories to devolved powers (see tables 4.14-4.16 above)

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<sup>25</sup> This figure differs from the figure of 665 given in Table 4.13 because a location was not given for each political source in every case.



## 5. Current Affairs Coverage 2007

### Introduction

We examined BBC Current Affairs output across three programme formats (*File on Four*, *Analysis* and *Panorama*) for the whole of 2007.<sup>26</sup> Programmes were placed in one of three categories:

- (a) those programme that covered topics with no connection to devolution;
- (b) those programmes that referred to devolved powers/issues (i.e. the programme was directly connected with devolved powers);
- (c) those programmes that dealt with issues that involved devolved powers but where this connection was *not* explicitly clarified.

The vast majority of programmes fell into the first category, covering topics that were irrelevant to the politics of devolution. We found nine programmes in which relevant powers might have been referred to but were not, and only four that dealt with devolved powers or issues (all four of which were on *Analysis* - see Table 5.1). None of the 29 *File on Four* or 50 *Panorama* programmes made any explicit references to devolved issues or policies. We will look at those programmes that referred – or did not refer – to devolution in more detail.

**Table 5.1: 2007 Current affairs overview: number and percentage of programmes by category and airtime in minutes by category**

	Total progs 2007	A) Irrelevant		B) Relevant Powers referred to		C) Relevant Powers not referred to	
			%		%		%
File on Four	29	24	83.0	0	0.0	5	17.0
Analysis	26	21	81.0	4	15.0	1	4.0
Panorama	50	47	94	0	0	3	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>92</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>9</b>	
<b>Total Airtime (mins)</b>	<b>3440</b>	<b>3000</b>		<b>120</b>		<b>320</b>	

<sup>26</sup> For *Panorama*, broadcast editions of the programme were viewed, except in one case (the *Please Look after Mum* programme), where a transcript available on the BBC website was referred to. In the case of the radio programmes, transcripts available through the BBC website were used.

## Programmes That Did not Explore Relevant Devolved Powers

We found instances of a failure to examine the devolved nature of UK government in all three programmes, as follows:

*Analysis* (Radio 4, Thursdays 2030-2100 GMT)

ROH            The Roof Over Your Head (16 Aug 2007)

*File on 4* (Radio 4, Tuesdays 2000-2040 GMT)

CC            Crack Cocaine (23 Oct 2007)  
LSC          Learning & Skills Council (22 Feb 2007)  
CH            Care Homes (18 Sep 2007)  
SH            Social Housing (17 Jul 2007)  
VA            Vulnerable Adults (20 Mar 2007)

*Panorama* (BBC 1, Mondays 2030 – 2100 GMT)

PLD          Please Look After Dad (3 December 2007)  
PLM          Please Look After Mum (12 February 2007)  
WNC          What Next for Craig? (12 November 2007)

All these programmes looked at an issue affecting the UK where one or more of the nations has significant devolved competencies. They all did so by examining the record of UK Government agencies, policies or initiatives whose remit does not necessarily extend to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In each case, there were references by the presenter to England and the UK which gave the misleading impression that the remits of certain English agencies, policies or initiatives extend over the UK (cf. BBC 2003, p. 40). Against this backdrop, references by programme participants to both UK and England policy contexts increased the possibility of confusion.

Although programmes often referred to UK-wide contexts, English locations were favoured. Sometimes it was specifically stated that the programme subject was of UK-wide, before the focus shifted back to locations in England. One example of this was in a *File on 4* on 'Crack Cocaine', where it was reported that a new epidemic of crack cocaine was spreading from "from Bodmin to Inverness", before focusing solely on English locations in Brixton and Middlesbrough (see Table 5.2).

The possibility of confusion between the UK and England usually stemmed from a lack of clarification of the context and coverage of the report. In each case, the programme opened with a UK context either being assumed, e.g.

*MASANI: [...] Gordon Brown's new government has made affordable housing a central plank of its policy launch. According to the latest figures, the price of an average British home is now eleven times the average salary.*  
**(ROH)**

or explicitly stated, e.g.

**URRY:** *It's a scene being played out almost daily across Britain. Our research shows crack cocaine has broken out of the inner cities and spread across the UK, from Bodmin to Inverness.*

(CC)

**URRY:** *The Government's been spending a fortune trying to increase Britain's productivity to meet the challenge of a global economy by improving the skills of young people.*

(LSC)

**NORTHAM:** *A new Prime Minister and a new burst of political interest in Britain's housing crisis.*

(SH)

**NORTHAM:** *Every week new cases of adult abuse come to light in what one campaign calls Britain's greatest hidden scandal.*

(VA)

**Table 5.2: References to UK and English contexts in programmes with implicit connections to devolved powers<sup>27</sup>**

Programme	Intro of Programme (first 40 lines or before signature tune)		Rest of Programme						
	UK context implied	UK context stated	UK context implied	UK context stated	Mention of England or England/Wales-only agency/policy/initiative <sup>28</sup>	Mention of UK-wide agency/policy/initiative	English Location (no direct link with prog. focus)	Non-English Location	
CC	0	2	6	0	2	2	3	0	
CH	2	0	1	0	6	0	0	0	
LSC	1	1	11	1	9	3	2	0	
PLD	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	
PLM	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
ROH	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	
SH	1	0	0	1	0	1	3	0	
VA	1	1	4	2	1	0	0	0	
WNC	0	1	3	1	2	0	0	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	

Against this backdrop, the programmes explored English policy contexts for their investigations, without explicitly noting the change of focus. The use of terms by the

<sup>27</sup> References by presenter or by participants in direct discussion with presenter (as distinguished from stand alone statements by participants) are both included.

<sup>28</sup> Mentions of a policy, initiative or agency with an England or England/Wales remit where the specificity of remit is not also mentioned.

presenter and also by participants like ‘across the country’, ‘national’, and ‘the Government’ carried the suggestion that a UK focus was being maintained, even where the reach of statutes, agencies and initiatives was limited to England or England and Wales only (for other example of this problematic usage in news coverage, see Case Study 3).

In ‘Vulnerable Adults’ on *File on 4* for example, a Government policy document from 2000, “No Secrets”, is referred to as “the government’s national policy on adult abuse”, and states that:

***NORTHAM:** To the Government, these figures are a setback. The No Secrets policy launched in 2000 was intended to provide proper protection for all vulnerable adults, wherever they live.*

In fact, the policy was only actionable across England. Social care remains one of the powers extensively devolved to the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland administrations.

When *File on 4*’s programme on care homes focused on the Commission for Social Care Inspections (CSCI), it was contextualised in relation to the findings of a UK parliamentary committee on standards in care homes.

***URRY:** A care worker from Portsmouth has just been jailed for abusing elderly residents in the home where she worked. Two other staff were also convicted. File on 4 is here at the courts to see them sentenced and to investigate this, the latest in a series of disturbing cases which raise serious questions about the failure to care for the frail and the mentally ill in residential homes. Last month a parliamentary committee found more than 20% weren’t even reaching basic minimum standards laid down by the Government.*

This might suggest that the remit of the organisation (introduced as ‘the regulator’) is UK-wide. In fact, the CSCI is only concerned with the regulation of care homes in England. An earlier *Panorama* documentary (‘Please Look After Mum’) also referred to the CSCI, without further clarification of the agency’s remit, within a story on care homes which, again, framed its subject within a UK context from the outset.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, *File on 4*’s investigation into the resurgence of crack cocaine across the UK presented data from the National Treatment Agency and British Crime Survey. The NTA covers England, whilst the BCS’s coverage extends to England and Wales. In ‘What Next for Craig?’, another *Panorama* programme (which served as a source for news reports broadcast on the same day about ADHD treatments – see below, p. 69), the National Treatment Agency was referred to, again without clarification of its reach. This programme also referred to the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, whose remit over drug licensing does not extend to Scotland, although this was not mentioned.

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<sup>29</sup> The remit of the CSCI is correctly qualified as ‘the regulator for homes in England’ on the BBC webpage for this edition of *Panorama*, however. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6332327.stm> (accessed 21/02/08).

Some programmes referred to agencies or initiatives with genuinely UK-wide responsibilities or coverage, but without necessarily explicitly distinguishing between the remit of these agencies and those of the England or England/Wales-only organisations referred to in the rest of the programme.

In *File on 4's* programme about the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the LSC, together with its initiative "Train to Gain", are repeatedly referred to in the context of the UK Government's responses to "Britain's skills shortage". The coverage of the LSC and its initiatives is restricted to England, but an organisation called Summit Skills is also referred to. This, unlike the Learning and Skills Council, is a UK-wide organisation. However, it is possible from the programme to draw the conclusion that the LSC is the organisation with wider responsibilities:

*URRY: The Learning and Skills Council, Britain's largest quango, has been pouring money into Further Education colleges for vocational training to increase the supply of those hoping to become tradesmen and women, but they've left the tap running.*

*URRY: Blane Judd used to be operations director of an organisation called Summit Skills. It's part of the system set up by Government to make sure industry gets what it wants.*

As we found in our case study of the "British jobs for British workers" story, reporters sometimes gloss over the politics of devolution by switching between English and UK policy context, without making these moves clear to the viewer or without any references to relevant policies or practices in the other three nations.

## **Programmes with Explicit Connection to Devolved Powers**

All four references to devolved powers were made on *Analysis*, as follows:

*Analysis* (Radio 4, Thursdays 2030-2100 GMT)

B&B	Bravehearts and Bankers (5 Apr 2007)
OW	One Wales? (25 Oct 2007)
LPD	Let The People Decide? (29 Nov 2007)
BGS	Beginner's Guide To Separation (6 Dec 2007)

All these programmes dealt with subjects in which issues relating to devolution were explicitly examined. The key analytical themes present in the four programmes were as follows:

- The consequences of devolution for identity
- The legitimacy of devolved government (including the North-South divide in Wales), especially relating to increasing administrative costs.
- The effect of devolution on public services
- The future of the Union/Scottish Independence

These themes appear to reflect findings from the Electoral Commission (2000a, 2000b) on what the primary areas of concern in Scotland and Wales are regarding the

continuing process of devolution. There was no similar coverage for Northern Ireland within the sample.

‘Let The People Decide?’ falls into this category of programme because it briefly mentioned the possibility of a referendum on Scottish independence, although its focus did centre on a debate over the democratic credentials of referenda *per se*.

### **Programme Contexts**

The key contextual background in three of these programmes was the uncertainty associated with the ongoing process of devolution – economic, political and cultural:

**WEIGHT:** *Amid all this uncertainty, Britain is preparing to be governed by a Scottish Prime Minister. And the Scottish economist Adam Smith has just replaced the composer Edward Elgar on the reverse of the twenty-pound Bank of England note. But few now deny that the currency of British national identity has been steadily devalued since the Second World War.*  
**(B&B)**

**BOWLBY:** *[...] Everyone acknowledges the Union's in flux since devolution, and no one's sure exactly where it's heading. The scenario envisaged by the SNP sees a referendum in Scotland in which a majority approves negotiations for independence.*  
**(BGS)**

**DEVICHAND:** *[...] My journey around Wales revealed that both English and Welsh speakers were united in their quest for a stronger Welsh identity and a revived Welsh language. But because those in charge are using public money and an element of compulsion to achieve this, they risk creating divisions and resentment. There's only one way to stop that and that's to allow all the bottled up sentiments out into a vigorous debate about what kind of society Wales should become.*  
**(OW)**

Although two of the programmes (‘Bravehearts and Bankers’ and ‘Beginner’s Guide To Separation’) dealt with Scottish independence in some depth, neither discussed in any detail how an independent Scotland might come about. These two programmes, together with ‘Let The People Decide?’ (which touched on it only briefly), reflected some of the news coverage of Scottish politics. As we suggested in our analysis of the general sample (see p. **Error! Reference source not found.****Error! Bookmark not defined.** above), where independence is mentioned, it is sometimes implicitly presented as an outcome which could be brought about without the UK government’s intervention.

An exception was the ‘Beginner’s Guide To Separation’, although the presenter did not explicitly spell out what constitutional procedures would need to be followed in order for Scotland to become independent:

**BOWLBY:** [...] A deal to divide up the common state would then be subject, it's assumed, to approval by further referendum or by votes in the Scottish and Westminster parliaments. This deal would matter to every UK citizen.

### ***Consequences of Devolution for National Identity***

The impact of devolution on identity was discussed in detail across 'Bravehearts and Bankers' and 'Beginner's Guide To Separation') in relation to Scotland, and by 'One Wales?' in relation to Wales. This proved the most dominant theme on the programmes which explicitly focused on devolution-related issues. Across all three programmes, the discussions touched on economic influences on identity and cultural expressions of identities post-devolution. 'Bravehearts and Bankers' and 'Beginner's Guide To Separation' also covered the historical influences on Scottish political identity, particularly with reference to the effect of decolonisation, given the extensive participation of Scots in administering the British empire. The former dealt at length with these topics, comparing the rise of Scottish political nationalism in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century with that of Catalonia in Spain, which was caught up in the process of Spanish decolonisation.

**WEIGHT:** *Like Scotland and England, Catalonia and Castille have been rivals for centuries. And while the loss of lucrative colonies like Cuba or Kenya was not the start of the smaller partner's discontent with the State they'd bought into, decolonisation, and the direct or indirect effect it had on the Catalanian and Scottish economies, was clearly a dynamic catalyst. A shift from cultural to political nationalism, accelerated by economic decline, is a feature of both these small ex-colonial nations.*

The complexities of Scottish involvement with the empire were addressed, including Scottish involvement with slavery, with a range of opinions concerning the benefits to Scotland of empire together with its costs (including political suppression):

**WEIGHT:** *So the Scots not only played a disproportionate role in the British Empire, in the creation and maintenance of the Empire, but they were also involved in the slave trade as well?*

**DEVINE:** *They were all up to their necks in it. But the second and more important thing is slavery gave Scotland an important economic platform. Scotland's economy in the 18th century depended on the sugar, cotton and tobacco trades, all of which themselves depended on un-free labour.*

**DEVINE:** *They promised, for example, compensation for those who had lost out in the so-called Darien disaster, Scotland's attempt to create a colony in the Isthmus of Panama in the 1690s. They also promised that Scots private law and the Scottish if you like system of higher education and even the private courts of Scottish landowners would be maintained within the Union. But there was also the potential stick. There were troops stationed across from the most recalcitrant part of Scotland, the Western Lowlands, and there were definitely brigades on the borders.*

‘One Wales?’ saw the revival of the Welsh language as closely tied to the establishment of a political identity for the nation, and having different significance in the south of the country, where the new political institutions are located, but where Welsh has historically been spoken much less:

***DEVICHAND:** One thing that struck me was that I met indigenous Welsh speakers in the North of Wales and they didn’t seem to be as het up as English speakers in the South, which is a more post-industrial place. In the South they seem to identify more with the language although, paradoxically, they didn’t speak it and in fact you know it may not even be the case that their ancestors spoke it.*

The programme interpreted the resurgence of the Welsh language as a symbol of a renewed sense of confidence in Welsh identity, against a backdrop of long-standing economic decline in South Wales.

***DEVICHAND:** [...] But patriotism in these Valleys used to mean the Welsh Rugby team, the rousing hymns and arias on match days, the male voice choirs that sang them. The strongly working class identity here took a hit when Mrs Thatcher opened the economy to global markets and Welsh coal mining collapsed. So it’s great news to me that the people here do feel a renewed sense of confidence.*

Whilst portraying the promotion of Welsh as a response to global forces, it also referenced people’s worries about the possibly isolating consequences of relying on language as a marker of identity.

***CASTELLS:** You use this attempt to build on your language as a sign of creating autonomy. It’s a reaction against globalisation.*

***MALE 1:** Not a chance, no. More chance of getting them to speak Arabic. (laughter)*

***DEVICHAND:** Why do you say that?*

***MALE 1:** It would broaden people’s horizons a bit more than actually becoming even more insular than they’re trying to make us.*

### ***Legitimacy***

Mention of public perception of the legitimacy or otherwise of devolved administrations was made in the ‘One Wales?’ investigation into the Welsh Assembly’s funding for the development of the Welsh language, and, more broadly, whether such political intervention for cultural goals could be considered a legitimate use of public money:

***DEVICHAND:** [...] But there’s an official plan to fashion a bilingual society in Wales. Public services must be offered in both English and Welsh by law,*



*and now, after a decade of limited self-rule from Cardiff, there's a push to extend this into the private sector too.*

*Where there's friction it's not really about the Welsh language itself but about the specific way state power and funds are being used to promote it - over £19million a year from the Welsh Assembly government.*

***ANONYMOUS:** We seem to be so worried about creating the perfect Welsh person and that perfect Welsh person must speak the Welsh with a certain accent, using certain words and terminology, that we forget about the fact that the rest of the world is out there.*

### ***Effect on Public Institutions/Services***

In 'One Wales?', the focus on the use of public money to promote the Welsh language addressed the impact of Welsh language policies on the culture of public institutions and on civil society more broadly, with various issues being explored. The effect of devolution on public institutions and the economy formed a minor focus of 'Bravehearts and Bankers' and 'Beginner's Guide To Separation'. With respect to Scotland, the latter ended with comments on devolution's economic and political outcomes so far from John Curtice, Professor of Politics at Strathclyde University, and on its cultural effects from the Director of the Edinburgh Book Festival.

***CURTICE:** I think it's quite difficult to argue so far that the creation of the separate institutions in Scotland has been of clear economic advantage to Scotland.*

*[...] certainly since 1999 rates of economic growth in Scotland have tended to be lower than they are in England. There have been one or two quarters when there's actually been recession, which has not been true across the UK as a whole.*

***CURTICE:** Certainly ask Scots whether or not the Scottish Parliament has made much difference and the principal answer, almost irrespective of how you ask the question and what you ask it about, tends now to be no difference.*

***LOCKERBIE:** I think the evidence is that since devolution Scottish writing has diversified greatly and we don't any more get the sense of people having to bang a particular drum.[...]This is about Scotland not being a constricting, confining concept, but actually a liberating, outward looking one. The chip is off the shoulder. The cringe is leaving and farewell to it. We want to see the back of it altogether.*

## *The Future of the Union/Scottish Independence*

The question of the present and future appetite for independence amongst the Scottish electorate was touched on in both programmes which dealt with Scotland.

***BOWLBY:** Given what's at stake for, say, Gordon Brown or Alistair Darling, they'll take comfort from opinion polls in Scotland suggesting under twenty-five per cent of voters currently favour independence.*

***(BGS)***

***CURTICE:** [...] Around a third of people support independence. That was roughly the position back in 1999.*

***(B&B)***

Support for independence was presented as tied to economic performance. To look at the issues surrounding independence in this way reflects the emergence of economic autonomy as a key concern amongst the Scottish electorate, as evidenced by opinion polls for the Electoral Commission. It is seen as a determinant of Scotland's potential to be independent from the rest of the UK (Electoral Commission 2006: p. 27).

'Beginner's Guide To Separation' followed on from a series of reports both on the BBC website (Stamp 2007) and on BBC radio concerning the funding of independence, all of which made the connection between Scotland's claim to oil revenues from the North Sea and its need to pay for pensions and care for an ageing population.

The Union between England and Scotland was represented as a deeply embedded and complex intertwining of cultures and institutions, resting on economic and political arrangements which would produce a long-drawn-out process of separation which would be traumatic for both partners, should independence happen. The imagery of marriage and divorce was often used to make this point.

***CANNADINE:** I think the unravelling, should it come, would probably be a protracted nightmare. It would be a divorce, a division of the spoils on a kind of epic, spectacular scale. If we think of such issues as the army, things like British embassies overseas, Britain's permanent representation on the United Nations, all of these things would have to be unravelled and negotiated and fixed somehow. And I suspect that that would be extremely difficult, it would take a very long time, and I think that maybe for one or two years Great Britain - and I use that term advisedly - would just kind of go out of business in terms of its relations with the rest of the world while all this was sorted.*

***BOWLBY:** And what would emerge would not only be a new Scotland but also a new remainder of the UK in search of a name and a new sense of coherence, shorn of its historic Scottish part. The Scots have been making the running in discussing what their independence might mean and whether or not it's desirable. But all UK nations need to face more clearly the prospect of the Union ceasing to exist and, Neal Ascherson believes, that applies particularly to one of them.*

***ASCHERSON:** It would be a traumatic event for England and it would be also an opportunity to think about what England is. If Scotland isn't there, the*

*English are free to think seriously hard about themselves and their constitutional arrangements and what they want to do in the world and what sort of power this is going to be,*

‘One Wales’ presented the future of Wales within the Union as more a slowly-evolving matter of its own distinctive cultural identity, particularly with respect to language, although it did make the link between the attractiveness of a renewed sense of cultural identity against a backdrop of the economic hardships of the 1980s. It saw a need to bring to the surface the conflicts the programme alleged were being aggravated by the Welsh Government’s language policies, particularly within a context where the Assembly ‘is now asking for more powers’. The uncertainties here were presented in terms of positive and negative potentials for language to exclude and include and create political divisions or new forms of identity:

**DEVICHAND:** *But if language is by its very nature exclusionary, can the society being created here in Wales really be an open one? I’m not fluent in Welsh and I’m the child of outsiders – my parents came here from India. But the warm fabric of Welsh life absorbed us. The risk is that this linguistic vision for Wales could end up with Welsh-speaking identity becoming a powerful members only club.*

**DEVICHAND:** *Talking to Guto, you pick up the clear sense that the youthful scene around the revival of Welsh is not in any way exclusionary. Like him, many in the flourishing Welsh media set have moved to inner-city areas of Cardiff like Grangetown and Butetown, where the Somali community that lived there before now runs Welsh classes. It made me realise that the construction of identity around language is not meant to shut others out. The aim is to invite others in.*

The programme related this inclusionary/exclusionary potential of language policy to public perceptions of its political uses:

**DEVICHAND:** *[...] But when it comes to utopian visions, it’s wise to tread carefully. There is an alternative theory out there about why nationalism of many stripes is rising. That theory argues that it isn’t the grassroots but instead the elite establishment who entrench their power by creating a national culture or “imagined community” in their own image.*

In addition, it opened up a longer term view of the dynamics at work behind shifts in linguistic identity, using this to introduce a discussion with members of the public in Newport on the changing nature of Welsh identity:

**HUWS:** *I don’t think you’re talking about wholesale transformation overnight though. I think this is such a slow process. In language planning terms, we talk about a window of thirty years and that’s what we’re talking about here. In 2010 you won’t see a totally bilingual Newport. By 2040 we could see something that is very, very different.*

## **Summary**

Overall, the trends found in our content analysis of news is reflected in current affairs programming. Devolution receives little attention, and is often neglected even when it is directly relevant to the issues being discussed. For example, the tendency to use terms such as 'England', 'the nation' and 'the country' more or less interchangeably (against the advice of the current BBC News style guide, BBC 2003, pp. 39-41) invites confusion over the remit of agencies, initiatives and policies, particularly in areas such as health and social care, and education and training. However, where devolved powers and policies are explicitly the subject of programmes, some of the available BBC radio current affairs output show that it is possible to deal effectively with some of the complexities of devolution.

## **6. Five Live Phone-In Programmes (Oct-Nov and Election Samples)**

### **Introduction**

The format of the Five Live phone-in programme on weekdays changed slightly with the handover in 2007 from Matthew Bannister to Victoria Derbyshire. Bannister (and Richard Bacon) presented the show during the election period (defined as 1 March 2007 – 25 May 2007) across 62 programmes. In this period, the show lasted for three hours (9.00am – 12.00pm). Of the 62 editions falling within the sample period, five contained topics directly related to the election, with 55 units being coded across these five programmes. During the October-November sample period, we examined a dipstick sample of twenty editions of the two hour phone-in show (hosted in this period by Victoria Derbyshire, with Phil Williams covering), with three of these including topics with some relevance to devolution.

### **Note on Methodology**

The unit of analysis the morning phone-in show on Five Live differs from the other coding exercises. Since the programme cannot be divided into distinct news items, we decided to code each *exchange* within the programmes. An exchange was defined as one of the following kinds of segment:

- a) an introduction or similar section spoken by the presenter alone,
- b) a conversation between presenter and guest,
- c) conversation between presenter and reporter,
- d) reporter package on location,
- e) the presenter discussing an issue with a caller (or more than one caller if all engaged in the same conversation),
- e) the presenter in discussion with a guest and caller or callers,
- f) the presenter discussing an issue with a reporter and caller(s),
- g) the presenter summarising text messages and/or emails that had been received dealing with the same issue,
- h) the presenter in discussion with a caller(s) and also summarising text messages and/or emails, and
- i) the presenter inviting comment from a guest or guests on text messages and emails.

Where phone-in participants were involved, the end of one segment and the beginning of another was assigned once the topic of discussion changed, or if one caller was replaced by another. If a caller was brought in to join a conversation on a given topic, this was treated as being part of the same unit.

### **October-November 2007 devolution coverage**

In this period, the format of the programme differed slightly from the election period, with a different topic often being covered within each hour of the show, although callers were permitted to respond to earlier topics throughout the rest of the programme. This arrangement varied slightly from programme to programme, with individual editions of the show covering from two to four topics within the two hours.

Across these 20 programmes, only three shows featured topics which were relevant to devolution. The featured topics were the following:

- 1) the West Lothian question and differences between devolved social policy in Scotland and policy in England (29 October)
- 2) Scots' 'willingness to work' (29 October)
- 3) the resurgence of "slum housing" for immigrants in Glasgow (14 November)
- 4) the implementation of free prescriptions in Wales and proposed free prescriptions for Scotland (16 November).

Among these, 1) and 3) can be classified as programmes where the link between devolved powers and the topic was an explicit feature of the programme, while 2) and 4) were programmes where a link existed between their subject and devolved government, although this was not clarified.

### *1) The West Lothian Question*

Taking in two exchanges between the presenter (Phil Williams), callers and invited experts, these two units comprised together just under 16 minutes of airtime, with the first unit occupying the last slot of the programme's first hour before the news, and the second unit beginning straight after the news. Coverage of this issue was prompted by Malcolm Rifkind's suggestion (BBC 2007a) for an English grand committee to be set up in order to solve the West Lothian issue. In the first exchange, an initial call from a female participant in England expressed resentment concerning the higher levels of funding given to Scotland under the Barnett formula,<sup>30</sup> and at SNP MPs in Westminster being allowed to vote on the introduction of university tuition fees in England. For the caller, the abolition of tuition fees and of prescription charges in Scotland showed this funding difference most significantly. Scottish and English regional journalists gave their perspectives. In the discussion, the funding differentials between different English regions and London were compared by the Scottish journalist with those between England and Scotland.

In the second exchange, the themes of the cost of devolution to the UK and constitutional problems attributed to it were expanded on further in a discussion that included a Scottish male caller, together with the previous three participants. Various solutions to the West Lothian problem were discussed, with Scottish independence being suggested by the English caller as one possible way out.

### *2) Service Industries in Scotland and the Public Sector*

This exchange followed on directly from the West Lothian discussion as a fresh topic, and lasted for nearly five and half minutes. The presenter introduced the former racing driver Jackie Stewart who had recently made comments on the unwillingness of Scots to work in Scottish service industries and the relative size of the public sector in Scotland (O'Kane 2007). Connections were made between the latter topic and the West Lothian discussion, particularly with the idea that Scotland benefits unfairly from 'handouts' from Westminster. Two male callers, one from England and one from Scotland were introduced, both of whom took issue with Stewart's comments. The

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<sup>30</sup> A financial instrument used by the Westminster Government to adjust some elements of public expenditure in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to reflect decisions concerning other parts of the UK.

Scottish caller commented that the Scottish public sector reflected how public services had improved in general in Scotland. No specific devolved powers were mentioned during the discussion of public sector employment, as it was conducted at the level of the public sector in general.

### *3) Slum Housing for Immigrants in Glasgow*

This story comprised six units and took up just under 33½ minutes of the second hour of the programme, beginning after the news. Phil Williams introduced the first of two consecutive reports from Five Live's Scotland correspondent James Shaw which looked at the resurgence of privately rented 'slum housing' in Glasgow in which recent immigrants from Eastern Europe were felt by local people and the local authority to be concentrated. The two reports covered social problems highlighted by representatives of the police and other agencies, focusing on crime and 'pressures on social services'. Together these reports comprised just over 23 minutes of airtime.

They were followed by a discussion of emails from two English listeners concerning immigration, followed by a call from a Scottish listener with local knowledge. Another English caller related the stories to his experience of different cities around the UK, followed by a final call from Scotland. Throughout the six units, the main responsibility for the situation was seen to belong to Glasgow council, but within Shaw's second report, a council representative pointed to the wider context for housing policy, namely that established by the Scottish Government. There was no explicit discussion of the Scottish Government's responsibilities on housing or immigration, with the main emphasis of the discussion with callers being on immigration to the UK as a whole from Eastern Europe and the problems participants associated with it. This shift of focus back to the UK as a whole meant that the programme could not examine the policy relationship on immigration and housing between the Westminster and Scottish governments. This relationship had been highlighted just two weeks before the programme in the *Scotsman*, which reported that some of the new strengthened provisions on immigration in the UK Borders Act 2007 would not apply to Scotland (See below, Omissions, p. 73).

### *4) Free Prescriptions in Wales and Scotland*

This story comprised two exchanges, with a total duration of just over 9 minutes, beginning before the news at 10 am and continuing afterwards. The presenter (Victoria Derbyshire) introduced calls from two female callers in England who discussed the provision of free prescriptions in Scotland and Wales. The inequalities with which they were concerned were not to do with differences in funding between the nations, but with certain chronic medical conditions. These required medication for which free prescriptions used to be available but, following a change in UK Government policy on these conditions, English sufferers now had to pay. In the second unit, a male representative of the Patients' Association was introduced, commenting that the settlement amounted to a 'postcode lottery', a claim which had been receiving publicity across other media during the previous week (Devlin 2007).

Although the comparison between the different situations in England and in Wales and Scotland was made in both units, the majority of references, particularly in the second

unit, were to the situation in Scotland. This might reflect the fact that the Scottish government had announced on 22 October that it planned to abolish prescription charges (BBC 2007b), a proposal which was later confirmed in early December 2007.

## Elections Coverage

No programmes in the election period we sampled dealt with the Northern Ireland elections in the run-up to voting, but a special programme from Stormont was aired on 8 May, the day when power-sharing began. In the week before the 3 May elections, a series of related programmes took place, with representatives of the Liberal Democrats, Labour and the SNP taking questions (no representative of the Conservatives or Plaid were interviewed). On May 4<sup>th</sup>, Richard Bacon hosted a results programme covering the English, Welsh and Scottish elections.

Because the programmes featured individual party representatives, most units across the elections coverage consisted of exchanges between presenter, guest and caller(s), and the presenter and guest, followed next in frequency by the presenter inviting the guest to respond to one or more text messages or emails (see table 6.1).

**Table 6.1: Frequency of unit types for all election programmes (n=68)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Presenter + reporter	4	5.9
Presenter and callers	5	7.4
Presenter & texts/emails	3	4.4
Presenter & guest(s)	16	23.5
Presenter, guest(s) and callers	26	38.2
Reporter package on location	1	1.5
Presenter, guest(s) and reporter	1	1.5
Presenter, callers & txts/emails	1	1.5
Presenter, reporter & caller(s)	1	1.5
Presenter, guest(s) & txts/emails	10	14.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Across these programmes, most references to the elections contained within individual exchanges were to the Scottish elections, with the English elections being next and substantially fewer references to the Welsh and the earlier Northern Ireland elections (see table 6.2).

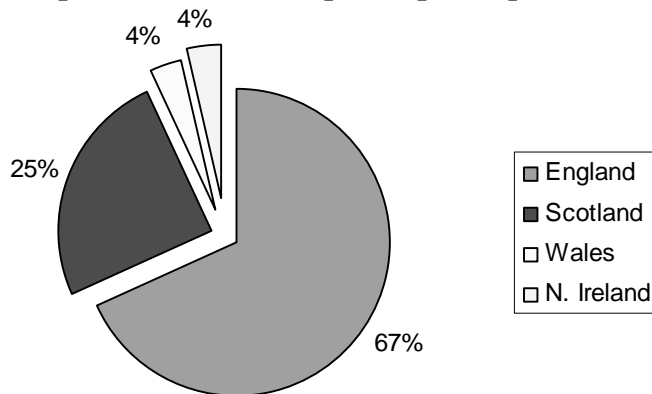
**Table 6.2: Elections covered for all election period programmes**



<b>Election</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
England	16	21.3
Scotland	21	28.0
Wales	5	6.7
Northern Ireland	2	2.7
Scottish Council	7	9.3
Not specified	24	32.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The controversy over voting problems in Scotland dominated discussions during the results programme on 4 May. Nonetheless, the substantially smaller presence of the Welsh elections in the available Five Live phone-in coverage is in line with both our content analyses, in which the Welsh presence is notable mainly by its absence. Occasionally within the election special programme, the fact that there had been elections in England and Scotland was mentioned without the Welsh elections being included. In terms of the location of members of the public participating in the programmes, the highest number by far came from England, twice as many as from Scotland and around ten times as many as from Wales and Northern Ireland. The lack of a pre-election programme featuring a Plaid candidate<sup>31</sup> and the fact that the Northern Ireland elections took place much earlier in the election period may have been responsible for some of this variation (Graph 6.2).

**Graph 6.1: Location of public participants**



Gender participation followed a tendency which has long been noticed in studies of phone-in debates (McNair, Hibberd & Schlesinger 2003: pp. 43-4), with the great majority of members of the public calling in being male.

**Table 6.3: Gender of participating members of the public for all election period programmes**

<sup>31</sup> This shortfall may have been compensated for elsewhere in Five Live programming during the election period which fell outside the scope of our data set

	<b>Txt/Email</b>	<b>Caller</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	3	5	8	<b>14.0</b>
Male	18	31	49	<b>86.0</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>57</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*1) Party Representatives – 23 April (SNP), 24 April (Labour) and 25 April (Lib Dem)*

In each case, a prominent member of the party was present for discussion with members of the public during the first hour of the programme: for the SNP, Alex Salmond; for Labour, David Miliband (the then Environment Secretary) and for the Liberal Democrats their then leader, Menzies Campbell. No Conservative representative appeared during this pre-election period on the phone-in show.<sup>32</sup> The amount of airtime given to discussion varied between the three parties as follows (see Table 6.5):

**Table 6.5: Total Airtime for Parties in Pre-Election Programmes**

	<b>Number of Units Analysed</b>	<b>Total Airtime (seconds)</b>
UK Labour	15	2690
UK Liberal Democrats	17	2580
Scottish National Party	13	2268

The programme with Alex Salmond on 23 April was dominated by discussion of the effects that independence could have on the UK and Scottish economies, and on the relationship between the UK and an independent Scotland on defence issues. Salmond offered comments on the constitutional arrangements for achieving independence, which covered the questions of just how much support there was for independence or a referendum. Salmond referred to recent polls which he suggested had shown support for independence.<sup>33</sup> Out of the three programmes with party representatives, Salmond's appearance featured the most references to the upcoming elections, all of these being the vote for the Scottish parliament.

David Miliband's appearance saw participants focusing on environmental and transport issues. Indeed, the discussion overall very much concerned the record of the party in

<sup>32</sup> This shortfall may have been compensated for elsewhere in Five Live programming during the election period which fell outside the scope of our data set.

<sup>33</sup> Poll results on this issue, it has been argued, tend to be particularly sensitive to how the poll question concerning independence is framed, e.g. questions that frame the concept of independence positively as a single alternative to the status quo show a much larger degree of support (40-52%), whereas questions which frame the choices in much more nuanced and 'technical' terms result in reduced levels of support (around 27%) (Wells 2007).

Westminster (together with the possibility of Miliband standing for the party leadership), with the local elections not receiving a single mention in the programme.

Issues discussed on the Menzies Campbell edition concentrated on Campbell's record as party leader together with his age and suitability for the post, although a number of participants raised queries concerning the Liberal Democrats' electoral strategy at the local level in the English elections, and particularly wards where no candidate was standing, or deals which had allegedly been struck between the Liberal Democrats and other parties. The focus was overwhelmingly on the English local elections, with Campbell limiting discussion of his party's chances to what he saw as the different situations "south and north of Birmingham", except for one reference in the third unit to their opposition in Scotland to any referendum on independence.

Although these programmes took place in the run up to elections in Scotland and Wales, public participants in the three programmes came predominantly from England, with none from Wales or Northern Ireland (see Table 6.6).

**Table 6.6: Pre-election programmes - location of public participants**

Party Represented in programme	Location of participant			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
UK Labour	13	0	0	0
UK Liberal Democrats	13	0	0	0
Scottish National Party	3	8	0	0

## **2) Election Results Special (4 May)**

This programme, presented by Richard Bacon, examined the outcomes of the elections which took place on 3 May in England, Wales and Scotland (including the Scottish Council elections). Guests invited to discuss the results included the comedian and television presenter (and former member of New Labour's NEC) Tony Robinson, together with representatives of the Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, SNP and Plaid. Robinson and a Conservative MEP were allowed by the presenter to make the most contributions across a number of exchanges, with the Lib Dem, SNP and Plaid representatives contributing only one exchange each.

The programme was dominated by discussion of the voting problems which had affected the elections in Scotland. Across all units analysed, coverage of the Scottish elections was most frequent. The number of units referring to the Welsh elections, by contrast, was lower than those referring to the Scottish, English or Scottish Council elections (see Table 6.7). As noted above, on two occasions the fact that there had been elections in England and Scotland was mentioned without the Welsh elections being included.

**Table 6.7: References to Elections in 4th May Results Special**

<b>Election</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Scotland	14	40.0
England	9	25.7
Wales	5	14.3
Scottish Council	6	17.1
N. Ireland	1	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The locations from which public participants were drawn showed a similar pattern of weighting away from Wales and towards England and Scotland, with a slight majority of participants coming from England (see Table 6.8).

**Table 6.8: Location of Participants in Election Results Special**

<b>Location of Participant</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
England	10	45.5
Scotland	8	36.4
Wales	2	9.1
N. Ireland	2	9.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Once again, callers were overwhelmingly male, men outnumbering women by 23 to three, an even higher percentage (88.5%) than for the election sample as a whole.

### **3) Stormont Special (8 May)**

This segment fell within the second hour of the programme, and consisted of one report, just over eight minutes in length by Northern Ireland correspondent Kevin Connolly from Stormont, covering the reinstatement of power sharing government in the province, together with an overview of the history of the peace process leading up to this point. A theme common to many of the reports on power-sharing in Northern Ireland across other channels was repeated here, namely that the resumption of devolved government in Northern Ireland would enable former enemies to collaborate in addressing issues of everyday concern, of which the impending water charges were selected as the most pressing. The report was a stand alone piece, with no public participation.

## **Summary**

Although the Five Live samples represent only a small number of programmes, it is still possible to view them as indicative of some of the broader trends we have observed in

the wider general and election samples. The amount of coverage given to the Welsh elections, and by extension, the amount of airtime given to Welsh participants, was significantly smaller than that devoted to the Scottish and English elections, and to Scottish and English participants. In October and November, as well as there being only a small number of programmes where devolution was relevant to one or more topics, it was evident that the framing of these topics was done in a way which tended to avoid discussion of the specifics of devolved responsibilities. Instead, where Scottish devolution was discussed, issues might be framed in terms of English 'grievances', as in the case of the West Lothian question, or that of the Scottish public sector. Or alternatively, as in the case of the 'slum housing' story, focusing on a Scottish location was used as an occasion for broadening the discussion to cover general trends in immigration to the UK, at a time when the Scottish administration's specific attitudes to the UK Borders Bill might have offered other alternative ways of framing or opportunities for enriching the content of the programme.

## **7. Devolution Stories on BBC *Six O’Clock News* and 6.30pm Opt-Outs**

### **Introduction**

We also looked at the relationship between the network BBC1 *Six O’Clock News* and the opt-out programmes that followed in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales (*Reporting Scotland*, *BBC Newslines* and *Wales Today*). From the October-November 2007 sample, there were 71 stories in total (occurring on different days, across 361 news items) which were concerned either explicitly with devolution-related topics, or where devolved powers were relevant to the subject, even if not explicitly mentioned. Of these, there were ten news items that appeared on the *Six O’Clock News*. We then looked at *Reporting Scotland*, *BBC Newslines* and *Wales Today* to see whether they had picked up these stories and, if so, to compare the *Six O’Clock News* coverage with that of the opt-out programmes.<sup>34</sup>

Only three of the ten stories were picked up on the opt-out bulletins, as described below.

#### ***1. Effectiveness of ADHD Drug Treatment (11 November)***

This story drew on *Panorama*’s investigation of American research into the effectiveness of drugs currently available through the NHS for treating children diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (see Section 5). It appeared in the second half of the *Six O’Clock News*, but was the second item on *Reporting Scotland*. The reports were similar in length, and both featured the American academic who had directed the research.

The UK bulletin also featured a male psychiatrist engaged in drawing up treatment guidelines for practitioners in England and Wales (in an extract from the *Panorama* programme), with the Scottish bulletin replacing this expert with a female representative from a Scottish psychiatric body (not in the *Panorama* documentary). In the Scotland bulletin, direct reference was made to a figure of 47,000 children diagnosed in Scotland with ADHD, and to the Scottish Government’s powers to vary treatment policies (neither was mentioned in *Panorama*). No reference was made in the main UK bulletin to these powers: reference was made to the UK-wide increase in prescriptions, but the inclusion of the psychiatric expert changed the focus to new measures that would apply only to England and Wales, without further explicit mention of the fact.

#### ***2. Scottish Government Budget (14 November)***

The SNP-led Scottish Government’s first budget, and its announcement that it would look to freeze council tax rates and reduce business rates, was reported by the *Six O’Clock News*. The item came far down the news order, in the last third of the programme, and comprises a single unit on location in Scotland, lasting for two

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<sup>34</sup> For these 10 stories, 3 of the relevant opt-outs were missing from the sample. All three were of the Northern Ireland 6.30pm news.

minutes. Andrew Cassell covered the main proposals in the budget, mentioning measures regarding taxation, health and education policy, policing levels and environmental protection, along with responses from the Scottish Labour finance spokesman and the leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

It was the second item on *Reporting Scotland* (following a new development in a murder case unsolved since 1991), and comprised three discrete items: i) a location report on public responses to the budget, with five people interviewed, and devolved powers with regard to tax and education policy mentioned; ii) a report by the presenter covering the proposals to freeze council tax and cut business rates, which also covered the main policy areas covered in the earlier UK bulletin and included political reactions from the same figures, plus the Scottish Conservative finance spokesman; iii) a two-way discussion between the presenter and BBC Scotland's Political Editor Brian Taylor concerning the discussions the SNP would be involved in with local councils to ensure the council tax freeze would be carried through. The total length of these three items was 6 minutes 41 seconds.

### **3. Welsh Assembly bans electric dog collars (15 November)**

This item was placed far down the running order on both the *Six O'Clock News* (last item but one before the weather) and *Wales Today* (eighth item). The preceding items on the Welsh news were: the funeral service for the rugby player Ray Gravell, a proposed new road bridge to Anglesey, the ongoing consequences of severe flooding in Wales, and reduced levels of service provision for drug treatment programmes in North Wales. The item covered measures taken by the Welsh Assembly to ban electric shock collars used by some trainers for training hard-to-control dogs.

The *Six O'Clock News* item, with a reporter on location in Swansea, interviewed two dog trainers critical of the policy, together with Elin Jones AM, the Assembly's Minister for Rural Affairs, who defended it. This unit was two minutes in length. *Wales Today* featured two reports, giving a rather different impression of public attitudes. The first outlined the policy and talked to three members of the public who were broadly in agreement with it. The second was a studio interview with a representative from the Welsh RSPCA who was, again, supportive of the ban. In total, these two units were two minutes and 52 seconds in length.

### **Summary**

The small number of devolution-related stories covered on the UK BBC *Six O'Clock News* makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions. However, the fact that only three stories were picked up or developed on the relevant 6.30pm opt-outs across a four week period suggests that the UK bulletins and the opt-outs do not currently work together effectively to remedy the lack of devolution reporting across the UK-wide outlets.

## 8. Omissions

### Introduction

Coverage of devolution-related stories across the Northern Ireland, Scottish and Welsh media (the BBC1 6.30pm news opt-outs - *Reporting Scotland*, *BBC Newsline* and *Wales Today* - and a selection of newspapers<sup>35</sup>) was examined during the October-November period. The aim was to ascertain the range and number of stories of potential UK-wide significance (and particularly stories that were important for understanding the ongoing development of devolved governance) that were reported in Scottish/Welsh/Northern Ireland media, but were not picked up by the BBC outlets we monitored during the four weeks of the general sample (including those sections of the BBC Online's UK and Politics sites we monitored).<sup>36</sup> Although we only looked at a sample of the available media outlets, we found a wide range of stories - a full list of which is provided at the end of this section. We would not, of course, expect the BBC network to have picked up all these stories: nonetheless, coverage of stories of some of them would have aided an understanding how the nations are changing under devolution.

We found 230 stories in total, of which 58 were selected as being of particular importance in the context of devolution, before being grouped into three broad topic areas:

- a) the political process in the devolved administrations, including the emergence of conflicts between parties;
- b) the significance of particular policy areas for the ongoing development of devolution;
- c) the evolving relationship between the devolved administrations and Westminster, particularly in relation to the possibility of increased devolved powers (see Table 8.1).

**Table 8.1: Frequency of omitted devolution-related stories with UK significance in 6.30pm opt-outs and nations newspapers (n=58)**

	<i>Crime policy</i>		<i>Devolution Process</i>		<i>Social Policy (Health/Ed. etc.)</i>		<i>Immigration policy</i>		<i>Increasing Powers</i>		<i>Transport/ Environment policy</i>	
	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print	Opt-out	Print
N. Ireland	1	1	3	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Scotland	2	1	2	8	1	1	0	1	3	3	1	3
Wales	0	0	0	4	1	2	0	0	1	8	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

<sup>35</sup> Northern Ireland, *Belfast Telegraph*; Scotland: *The Scotsman*, *Scotland on Sunday*; Wales: *Western Mail* and *South Wales Echo*, *Wales on Sunday*.

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix for dates and details of Online monitoring.



## **Northern Ireland**

### *Political Process*

Several stories involving major differences of opinion between parties at Stormont were reported during October and November 2007. The first of these concerned the DUP's Iain Paisley Jr.'s involvement in lobbying for a private property developer engaged in a development scheme near the Giant's Causeway, which the *Belfast Telegraph* described on 10 October as "the first big policy-bust up of a fledgling devolved Assembly". The resulting controversy continued throughout October and November.

Among these stories were several which were seen as having great significance for the future of power-sharing. On 16 October, the 6.30pm *Newsline* carried stories about NI Culture Minister Edwin Poots' opposition on cost grounds to the introduction of an Irish Language Act, and on the Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie's decision to remove funding from a Loyalist community project (the former story appeared at the bottom of the Top Stories section of the BBC Politics website on the same day). In addition, the same edition of the 6.30pm news carried a report on differences of opinion between Nationalists & Unionists on a huge re-development project (including social housing) in deprived areas of Belfast.

27 October's edition of the *Belfast Telegraph* carried a number of reports on the NI government's first draft budget and its proposed legislative programme for the next few years, the Programme for Government.

On 27 November's edition, a report was aired on how 'deals' being struck between the DUP and Sinn Fein in the Executive were creating new divisions in Stormont. These were brought out in debates over the proposed NI Programme for Government, in which the UUP and SDLP voted against an outline of the power-sharing government's proposed legislative programme. The positive impact of devolution since the elections was the subject of a report in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 28 November, dealing with projections by NI's First Trust Bank of a 3% rise in NI GDP due to the return of devolution.

### *Crime Policy*

The relationship between the Stormont assembly and Westminster was highlighted by a story on 18 October's 6.30pm news about new proposals to double the maximum sentence for carrying a knife. It was pointed out that any changes would have to wait until the middle of 2008 as new legislation on this matter could not proceed without Westminster's approval (this story appeared on the BBC Northern Ireland website, but did not include a mention of the latter issue). A similar limitation on Stormont's law-making powers in relation had been reported in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 11 October, in relation to a proposed law to allow children aged 12 to train with guns at gun clubs. Whether such a law could be introduced, it was noted, remained a decision for Westminster.

### *Environmental Policy*

The relationship between Stormont and Westminster was addressed in a story in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 11 October, when two SDLP MLAs launched a motion in the

Assembly calling for the UK government to close down and decommission the Windscale nuclear site according to a schedule which considered Irish and Northern Ireland interests.

## **Scotland**

### ***Crime Policy***

New legislative measures outlawing kerbcrawling which mirrored laws in countries such as Sweden (as opposed to the rest of the UK) were reported in the *Scotsman* and on BBC Scotland news on 15 October. Differences in penal policy were also highlighted by a report on the 6.30pm *Reporting Scotland* on 27 November that the SNP government would be seeking an extension of the use of non-custodial sentences in Scotland.

### ***Immigration Policy***

In the *Scotsman* on 28 October, it was reported that the Scottish Government would not be implementing all measures contained within the UK Borders Bill, which was about to pass into law. The report asked whether this would increase the threat of terrorism, along with people trafficking and illegal immigration.

### ***Health Policy***

The differences between the Scottish and English positions on health care for the elderly were highlighted by the decision by the SNP Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon (reported 19 October by the *Scotsman*) to tighten up rules on the provision of free care, following a court case.<sup>37</sup> Later, it was reported on *Reporting Scotland* on 26 November that the Scottish Government had announced a new three-year funding plan to address the problem of MRSA in hospitals, making Scotland the first part of the UK to have a full screening programme for all hospitals.

### ***Transport and Environmental Policy***

The vote by MSPs to approve plans to scrap tolls on the Forth and Tay road bridges on 15 November was reported on *Reporting Scotland* as being the focus of a debate at Holyrood on the likelihood of congestion and environmental consequences.

### ***Increasing Powers***

Significant stories regarding devolved responsibility over the seas around Scotland and North Sea Oil were reported on in late October and late November respectively. On 29 October, *Reporting Scotland* looked at the issue of Scottish fisheries and the allocation of rights to fish in them, and whether the Scottish Government should seek powers to restrict these. This was accompanied at the end of October in the *Scotsman* by a series of reports launching a campaign (“Save Our Seas”) that also lobbied for increased Scottish powers over the seas (such as extending conservation areas out to a 200 mile limit). On 26 November, *Reporting Scotland* reported on the SNP’s call for powers over oil rig health and safety to be devolved to Holyrood, and on the possibility that powers may be sought to allow oil revenues to come to Scotland rather than to the UK.

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<sup>37</sup> This story was picked up by the national BBC news on television and radio, but not until 16 November.

## ***Political Process***

In the *Scotsman* on 19 October, it was reported that MSPs would receive an extra week off in October as the Scottish Parliament had run out of business for the current session. On 27 October, *Reporting Scotland* and the *Scotsman* both reported that Scottish election officials would be examined by the Scottish Affairs Committee at Westminster, following the problems with the Scottish voting system during the 2007 elections. On 1 November, *Reporting Scotland* reported that the Scottish Justice Secretary was considering allowing English jurisdiction over a Scottish air force base to allow quicker inquests into the deaths abroad of Scottish military personnel to take place. The *Scotsman* reported on 25 November that the SNP had decided to lift its ban on the possibility of future coalition talks with the Scottish Conservatives. On 29 November, the paper addressed the aftermath of the 2007 elections voting problems, noting a proposal that in future Scottish voting may be spread over several days to avoid a repeat of the problems that occurred in May.

## **Wales**

### ***Increasing Powers***

In Wales, there were significant developments throughout October concerning the future of devolution, especially around the issue of expanded powers and the prospect of a referendum in Wales to secure expanded law-making powers for the Assembly.

The *Western Mail* reported on 18 October that the Shadow Welsh Secretary had made cautious remarks about the possibility of a referendum on a further increase in powers for the Assembly. In the same edition, a story was printed covering a row over the constitutional settlement in Wales, and the lack of anything like a Welsh Sewell Convention. Welsh First Minister Rhodri Morgan had protested against a Westminster ruling that new Assembly legislative proposals would have to be vetted before being admitted as valid. There was debate over the meaning of this “interference” for the future of devolved government in Wales. On 29 October the *Western Mail* reported remarks by Secretary of State for Wales Peter Hain that if Wales rushed into an early referendum on full law-making powers for the Assembly, the vote would be lost. This was reported on the 6.30pm *Wales Today* as a “row” between Westminster and the coalition Assembly government over the prospect of a referendum. On 26 November, the *Mail* reported Plaid’s Dafydd Wigley’s proposal for a “coalition team” of Labour and Plaid peers to be created to ensure the House of Lords could not block plans for extending WA powers.

In the same edition of the *Western Mail*, a report covered the likely make-up of the All-Wales Convention, which is designed to look at the appetite in Wales for full law-making powers, together with their likely scope, and hence to pave the way for a referendum perhaps by the next general election. This story was taken up again by the *Western Mail* on 24 November, covering suggestions by constitutional experts that the Convention should look at controversial legislative issues. The differences between Plaid and Welsh Labour on the extent of further powers, and the potential consequences for the One Wales coalition were explored in a *Western Mail* story on 31 October. This was followed two days later on 2 November by another story in the *Mail* that reported extensive disquiet within Plaid over the attitude of Welsh Labour to the prospect of a

referendum before 2011, with some Plaid AMs threatening to pull out of the governing coalition.

### ***Education Policy***

On 15 November (the day when Gordon Brown's proposals on British Jobs for British workers' were being reported – see Case Study 3) the *Western Mail* reported on how the Assembly had just gained new powers to decide on education and training provision.

### ***Health Policy***

*Wales Today* reported on 12 November that Welsh clinicians had sent a letter to the Assembly requesting that £20m more per year be made available for long-term medical research to keep health care in Wales in line with the standards available in England.

### ***Social Policy***

On 14 November, the relationship between Cardiff and Westminster was the subject of a report in the *Western Mail* which detailed how the Assembly's new plans for expanding affordable housing had been delayed by Whitehall for being "too wide-ranging".

### **Summary**

Several stories emerged in October and November which could prove important both for the future direction of devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as for the future of the Union as such, which were not covered in the BBC's UK-wide broadcast programming. In Scotland, the prospect of increasing powers in Scotland over the seas around the Scottish coast brings the possibility of changes in responsibility for the oil industry, together with alterations to how the profits of North Sea oil are shared. In Wales, the All-Wales Convention and the debates over a referendum on the extension of law-making powers could result in another major realignment of the relationship between Westminster and Cardiff. At Stormont the Programme for Government represents a roadmap for the progress of devolution in Northern Ireland.

But at the level of specific policy, there were also significant developments which could be important for a public understanding of the current state of devolution and its future, including crime and environmental policy in Northern Ireland, and health, environmental and immigration policy in Scotland. And at the level of the everyday process of politics, the emergence and management of new differences of opinion within the Stormont Assembly, and their significance for the future, has remained unreported, despite the level of interest shown in the run-up to the 2007 elections in detailing the sectarian divisions which formed the historical background to the return of power-sharing. It is also interesting that, on the day when an England-only training policy was being discussed under the rubric of Gordon Brown's "British jobs for British workers" speech, the Welsh Assembly had just gained powers which were directly relevant to its own responsibility for formulating training policy in Wales, but which remained unreported in the UK news.

*Omissions: Full List of Stories*

Those stories selected as having potential UK-wide significance in terms of their meaning for devolution are indicated **in bold**.

*Belfast Telegraph 10-16 October Week 1*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
<b>10/10/07</b>	<b>Row over Ian Paisley Jr's role in lobbying for private property developer's plans for development near Giant's Causeway – "the first big policy-bust up of a fledgling devolved Assembly"</b>
<b>10/10/07</b>	<b>"Paltry" rise in budget allocation for Ulster from Westminster</b>
10/10/07	Friends of the Earth call on Assembly to cut NI CO <sub>2</sub> emissions
10/10/07	NI education minister urged to sort out teachers' strike by NI Mencap
<b>11/10/07</b>	<b>Children aged 12 may train with guns: Ulster law change in prospect, but likely to be decided at Westminster</b>
<b>11/10/07</b>	<b>SDLP MLAs launch motion in Assembly calling for UK government to close down and decommission Windscale nuclear site according to a schedule which considers Irish and NI interests</b>
12/10/07	NI Health minister announces delay in introduction of restructuring to NI NHS via setting up of new Health and Social Services Authority
13/10/07	Labour Relations Agency to manage negotiations in NI teachers' strike
15/10/07	DUP Deputy Leader Robinson seeks radical shake-up of Stormont, with less departments
16/10/07	UUP and DUP ministers in disagreement over policy on water charges

*Belfast Telegraph 27 October – 2 November Week 2*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
27/10/07	Stormont makes new pledges on landfill targets
<b>27/10/07</b>	<b>Several stories around Stormont Draft Budget/Programme for Government</b>
<b>29/10/07</b>	<b>SDLP minister's historic speech to UUP offers cooperation</b>
29/10/07	UUP Executive to gain new powers to endorse election candidates
31/10/07	NI Education Dept figures show 55000 excess school places in NI
31/10/07	Key figures in Ulster peace process to hold conference in May 2008
<b>01/11/07</b>	<b>Ulster party donors set to remain secret - intimidation 'is still a possibility'</b>
01/11/07	Margaret Ritchie officially terminates €1.2 million loyalist regeneration fund
01/11/07	Stormont Education Ctte discovers extent of drain on schools' budget by compensation claims
<b>02/11/07</b>	<b>Ian Paisley Jnr's role in lobbying for private property developer – row continues</b>
02/11/07	NI Friends of the Earth criticise Environment Minister for 'dragging her heels' over implementation of EU directives

*Belfast Telegraph 10 – 16 November Week 3*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
<b>13/11/07</b>	<b>Paisley Jnr and SF clash over cottage development</b>

13/11/07	NI local government association asks Assembly to transfer powers to councils
13/11/07	NI Education minister calls for 'zero tolerance' of bullying
14/11/07	NI teachers' union votes to reject pay offer
14/11/07	NI agriculture minister tightens rules on importation of birds in response to threat of bird flu
15/11/07	Paisley makes new overtures towards unity at launch of Dana autobiography
15/11/07	NI and Irish agriculture ministers announce new plans for cooperation on animal welfare and bluetongue controls
15/11/07	Education Department criticises teachers' strike's effects on special needs pupils
16/11/07	Stormont forks out £42m for outside consultancy advice in 2006/07

*Belfast Telegraph 24-30 November Week 4*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
27/11/07	Energy Action NI budget for 2008 to be halved by Stormont Ministry of Social Development
28/11/07	Stormont Finance minister announces plans to reduce rates bills for pensioners which increased under direct rule from Westminster
28/11/07	NI mental health expert attacks Assembly's budget for mental health support
<b>28/11/07</b>	<b>Assembly disagreements over Programme for Government continue</b>
<b>28/11/07</b>	<b>First Trust Bank predicts 3% rise in NI GDP due to return of devolution</b>
29/11/07	Union writes to Stormont minister about extra pay for NI teachers to bring them into line with English colleagues
30/11/07	Community festivals to receive extra funding under Assembly's matched funding scheme
30/11/07	MLAs' retirement fund continued to increase during Stormont suspension

*The Scotsman 13-19 October Week 1*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
<b>13/10/07</b>	<b>Separate education laws mean Scotland can show 'An Inconvenient Truth' in schools, despite English controversy</b>
14/10/07	SNP wants to outlaw 2-for-1 deals on alcohol. Challenged by Westminster, leading to cross-border row.
14/10/07	Cross-border row over Westminster refusal to compensate Scottish farmers
14/10/07	New Bank of Scotland notes refused in Holyrood vending machines
<b>14/10/07</b>	<b>Scottish Parliament comments on councils housing homeless people out of their own areas</b>
14/10/07	David Cameron looks to Alex Salmond for an electoral model
<b>15/10/07</b>	<b>Introduction of 'Prostitution (Public Places) Scotland And' criminalises</b>

	<b>kerb-crawlers in Scotland</b>
17/10/07	Scottish universities seek GBP168m to compete with English counterparts
18/10/07	MSPs respond to House of Lord's ruling to end asbestos-related compensation
18/10/07	Westminster fails Scottish sheep farmers
18/10/07	Another fall in Scottish joblessness
<b>19/10/07</b>	<b>SNP Health Secretary vows to changes laws to tighten rules on care for the elderly (although this is reported in the UK-wide news, this isn't until Nov 16<sup>th</sup>)</b>
19/10/07	Attacks on Scottish police rise by 50%, says Justice Secretary
<b>19/10/07</b>	<b>MSPs get extra week off in October as Parliament has run out of business</b>
19/10/07	MSPs to be asked if they want better pension plans

*The Scotsman 27 Oct-2 Nov Week 2*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
<b>27/10/07</b>	<b>Scottish election officials to face Commons grilling over election fiasco</b>
27/10/07	Scottish universities to get £400m for major building projects
28/10/07	Alex Salmond meets Rupert Murdoch to hope to win his support
28/10/07	SNP vows to improve surgery targets by 6 weeks
28/10/07	Scottish civil servants and whistle blowing
28/10/07	Elections in Scotland should be over-seen by an independent monitor
<b>28/10/07</b>	<b>Scottish Govt. not implementing UK Borders Bill – will this increase terrorism, people trafficking and illegal immigrants?</b>
<b>29/10/07</b>	<b>Should Scotland gain devolved responsibilities over the sea in order to get profits from the fishing industry?</b>
30/10/07	Alex Salmond plans Norwegian energy link-up
30/10/07	Rivals quash SNPs plans to reduce quangos and government agencies
30/10/07	Lib Dems aim to curb tenant's right to buy council houses
31/10/07	Police cast doubt on Salmond's claim of 1,000 extra officers
31/10/07	Salmond popular but independence isn't
31/10/07	Deputy Leader of Scottish Tories proposes a 'federal' solution to UK's constitutional problems
1/11/07	MSPs banned from making a speech to Scottish Parliament after policy details leaked
1/11/07	Scottish govt. unveils plans to improve housing
1/11/07	SNP MP accuses opposition and English press of anti-Scottishness as tensions heighten over Holyrood budget
1/11/07	Microsoft boss says SNP is 'wrong' to try to fully fund Universities through public funding
2/11/07	SNP accused of breaking its promise to cut class sizes
2/11/07	MSPs should let artists lead way on environment
2/11/07	£68,000 Scots boost for Malawi businesses

*The Scotsman 10-16 November Week 3*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
<b>10/11/07</b>	<b>MPs throw spotlight on the West Lothian Question</b>
11/11/07	Comment Story on the 'myths' surrounding English subsidies to Scotland
<b>12/11/07</b>	<b>Scots Labour's Kerr backs talks on independence poll</b>
<b>12/11/07</b>	<b>SNP 'needs another GBP 1bn' to meet pledges</b>
<b>14/11/07</b>	<b>Salmond: Scotland independent in 10 years</b>
15/11/07	The Scottish Budget 2007: Key policy plans laid out, but will MSPs back them?
15/11/07	New rules 'threaten whole Scottish dairy industry'
16/11/07	Degrees of success for Cabinet members
16/11/07	Islanders in plea for their own government minister
16/11/07	Scot Labour accuses SNP of betraying pre-election promises in Budget
16/11/07	The Scottish Budget 2007: Opposition aims to influence spending plans

*The Scotsman 24-30 November Week 4*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
<b>25/11/07</b>	<b>SNP lifts ban on coalition pact with the Tories</b>
25/11/07	Scots NHS workers data files lost in the post by Scottish pensions agency
<b>29/11/07</b>	<b>Scottish voting may be spread over several days to avoid repeat of May fiasco</b>
29/11/07	Wendy Alexander drawn into Labour donor row
30/11/07	Scottish Transport spokesman forced to quit over illegal donation

*The Western Mail 13-19 October Week 1*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
13/10/07	Wales Millennium Centre seeks more money from Assembly
15/10/07	First research into closure of small schools
15/10/07	Wales' economy shows growth as rest of UK slows down
16/10/07	Rural Affairs AM says foot and mouth ban lift in England will boost Wales
15/10/07	Assembly defers the need for animal transport certificates of competence until April 2008
16/10/07	AM urges funding increase for recycling schemes
16/10/07	Welsh MP urges Westminster to pay in full for welfare packages for Welsh farmers after foot-and-mouth outbreak
16/10/07	Assembly Heritage Minister makes statement on financial uncertainty surrounding WMC
17/10/07	Wales' chief medical officer says Welsh beginning to head healthy eating messages
17/10/07	Welsh Tory Leader alleges cover-up over WMC cash crisis
17/10/07	Post Rhodri Morgan's "Bonfire of the quangos", the decision to "merge" the Welsh Development Agency, the Wales Tourist Board and Elwa with the Assembly Government is still having an impact



17/10/07	Former quango employees cost WAG £2m per year despite not having been found proper jobs
<b>18/10/07</b>	<b>Shadow Welsh Secretary adopts “wait and see” attitude to referendum on powers to increase devolved responsibilities</b>
<b>18/10/07</b>	<b>Constitutional row after it was confirmed Rhodri Morgan and other Assembly Ministers will not be able to announce new legal proposals without having them vetted by Whitehall first</b>
18/10/07	Welsh girls outperform boys in education by up to more than 20% in the first year of secondary school, new figures show
18/10/07	AMs “annoyed” by Plaid failure to attend a scrutiny session
18/10/07	Law Lords ruling could prevent Welsh workers from claiming compensation over asbestos exposure
18/10/07	Future financial support for WMC will be coupled with efficiency improvements
18/10/07	Mental health care is “substandard” says Shadow Health Minister for Wales
18/10/07	Cost-cutting in schools is better than firing teachers
18/10/07	Unemployment in Wales falls by 3,000 between June and August 2007
19/10/07	Schools fail to meet infant class-size guidelines
19/10/07	Drug crime hits new high in Wales as police target more offenders
19/10/07	Job cuts in probation service could result in increased murders, claims Politian
19/10/07	Recycling rates must improve, councils told
19/10/07	Commission for Equality and Human Rights comes under fire for having no Welsh on its website

*The Western Mail 27 Oct-2 Nov Week 2*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
27/10/07	Wales-only smack ban dismissed by Westminster
27/10/07	Plaid AM suggests Royal Family “does not reflect Wales’ radical progressive tradition”
29/10/07	Wales takes a cautious approach to PFI hospital schemes – are they missing out?
29/10/07	Areas in Wales make up half of the top ten of those with the highest proportion of people who have been on benefits for five years or more
<b>29/10/07</b>	<b>An early referendum for independence for Wales would be lost, claims Hain</b>
<b>29/10/07</b>	<b>All Wales Convention (to pave way for a referendum for full law-making powers) – who will sit?</b>
30/10/07	Peter Hain urged to step in to save jobs in Wales by Plaid
30/10/07	All of Swansea’s comprehensive schools are being assigned their own police officer
31/10/07	Plaid wants to make irresponsible lending a criminal offence
<b>31/10/07</b>	<b>Plaid wants further devolution, but Labour not so keen – will coalition suffer?</b>
31/10/07	Forecasters say Wales will be amongst worst hit by house price fall
31/10/07	Plans to change school inspection service
01/11/07	Piloting of Chartered Teacher schemes in Wales a success
01/11/07	Welsh Assembly developed Bilingual e-course in special needs for teachers
01/11/07	Costs £1,200 less to die in Wales than anywhere else in the UK
01/11/07	Bed blocking costs Welsh NHS £69m a year – not enough being done

01/11/07	Welsh GPs getting higher % pay raise than anywhere else in UK but still don't earn as much as English ones
02/11/07	Welsh businesses failing to embrace globalisation, compared to businesses in other parts of the UK
<b>02/11/07</b>	<b>Elements within Plaid Cymru threaten to pull out of coalition over the timing of a referendum on a law-making parliament.</b>

*The Western Mail 10-16 November*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
10/11/07	Dafydd Wigley: Coalition at risk if Labour backtracks on spending and reforms
<b>10/11/07</b>	<b>Institute for Welsh Affairs warns Assembly needs more AMs to manage any extended law-making powers</b>
<b>12/11/07</b>	<b>Research cuts could cost lives, medical experts warn Assembly</b>
13/11/07	Health Minister releases new guidelines on preventing superbugs in hospitals
14/11/07	WAG budget will hit public services, say Tories
14/11/07	Assembly Health Minister announces development of oral health action plan for Wales
14/11/07	Health Minister denies health research funds are too low
<b>14/11/07</b>	<b>Assembly affordable housing plans are delayed by Whitehall for being 'too wide-ranging'</b>
15/11/07	New head of Estyn (Welsh Ofsted) appointed
<b>15/11/07</b>	<b>Assembly gains new powers over FE and training</b>
15/11/07	Local government heads condemn Assembly's funding settlement for councils
<b>16/11/07</b>	<b>RAC Foundation judges Welsh roads 'worst in EU'</b>
16/11/07	Welsh teachers may strike, say unions, if Assembly's local government budget causes education cuts

*The Western Mail 24-30 November*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>STORY</b>
<b>26/11/07</b>	<b>Dafydd Wigley: A "coalition team" of Labour and Plaid peers should be created to ensure the Lords does not block Welsh lawmaking plans</b>
26/11/07	Welsh Lib-Dems delay selection of European candidates after women fail to apply
26/11/07	Assembly grants help create Welsh multi-university neuroscience academy
27/11/07	'Lack of guts' and the memory of Merthyr debacle cited as a reason Plaid Cymru gave up chance to lead May coalition
27/11/07	Labour AM calls for a probe into the results of Assembly elections after Plaid MPs' misuse of cash
27/11/07	Auditor General for Wales judges rural management funding scheme (Tir Gofal) to have been success so far
27/11/07	Farmers call on the Assembly to pay compensation to livestock farmers

	following foot-and-mouth outbreak
<b>29/11/07</b>	<b>Law-Making Powers: Hain denies he would block any further transfer of power to Assembly</b>
29/11/07	Welsh CBI warns high proportion of population with no qualifications 'puts Welsh economy at risk'
29/11/07	Fishing group meets AMs to protest against banning of ancient fishing technique
30/11/07	More funds for Wales Mental Health Primary Care Network
30/11/07	Assembly under fire from Welsh Councils over funding for 'pet projects'
30/11/07	National Botanic Garden of Wales seeks further funding from Assembly

*BBC 6.30pm Opt-Outs*

*NORTHERN IRELAND<sup>38</sup>*

DATE	STORY
15/10/07	Striking classroom assistants to return to work following strike over pay
<b>16/10/07</b>	<b>NI Executive – rows over loyalist funding and Irish Language Act</b>
<b>16/10/07</b>	<b>Nationalists &amp; Unionists have different views on huge re-development project (including social housing) in deprived Belfast areas</b>
17/10/07	Fingerprint school dinner system
18/10/07	Ministers meeting – community development project axing Loyalist funding independent report into water charges
<b>18/10/07</b>	<b>Tougher sentences for knife crime introduced by govt. but may have to wait for next Summer before change as NI at mercy of Westminster</b>
18/10/07	Pathways to work scheme for lone parents
19/10/07	Ministers meeting controversy over Loyalist funding
14/11/07	Classroom assistants strike – how will schools cope?
14/11/07	Row over ministerial comments on causeway development in private sector
26/11/07	Changes in school system & comments on striking classroom assistants
26/11/07	Jobs and urban regeneration projects
27/11/07	Rates package unveiled – benefits for pensioners
<b>27/11/07</b>	<b>Divisions in Stormont over ‘Programme For Government’</b>
27/11/07	Classroom Assistant strikes continue
28/11/07	Research facility cancer research
28/11/07	Northern Ireland executive comments on new “Maze” stadium
30/11/07	Union representing class assistants vote to accept pay deal
30/11/07	Paisley & McGuinness to make trip to USA to get investments

<sup>38</sup> Programmes for Week 2 (27 October – 2 November) not available.

SCOTLAND

DATE	STORY
<b>15/10/07</b>	<b>Scottish Govt introduces legislation to criminalise kerb-crawlers as well as prostitutes</b>
17/10/07	Free care for elderly threatened by new Court legislation – should councils have to fund private care?
17/10/07	Farmers petition Scottish Govt for compensation over foot and mouth in England
29/10/07	Report on treatment of people with autism by other people – bullying, police etc.
30/10/07	MP asking for legislation to protect people from damage to houses caused by neighbouring properties
31/10/07	Scottish Govt. plans for tackling housing shortage – new council houses but not enough to meet need
31/10/07	Study suggests people voted for SNP because they like Salmond and party, not independence
<b>1/11/07</b>	<b>Scotland thinking about handing over part of country to England – something to do with coroners investigating Iraq deaths</b>
1/11/07	Opposition says SNP have backed down over class size promises
1/11/07	Head teachers want better pay – pay doesn't compare to work involved
1/11/07	Are SNP back-tracking on pledge to cut class sizes and improve numbers of police?
2/11/07	Alex Salmond proposes a Winter Festival of Scottish Culture
2/11/07	Scottish gov. rules out possibility of English coroner issues
12/11/07	Commonwealth Games – Alex Salmond goes home
12/11/07	ADHD – use of drugs on children according to Quality Improvement Scotland and Health boards in Scotland
12/11/07	SNP confirms it will not fund 1,000 new police officers
12/11/07	Food poisoning test kit developed by Scottish scientists with funding from Scottish Enterprise
12/11/07	Badger baiting – 50 reports in Scotland each year
14/11/07	Company to be set up to organise Commonwealth Games, Alex Salmond tells Parliament
15/11/07	SNP budget fallout (failing to wipe out student debt etc.)
<b>15/11/07</b>	<b>Legislation to abolish tolls on 2 bridges has passed first Parliamentary hurdle – expected to become law next year (2008)</b>
<b>26/11/07</b>	<b>Scottish party plans to tackle MRSA – first part of UK to screen all hospitals</b>
<b>26/11/07</b>	<b>SNP says Scotland should be in charge of oil and its revenues, rather than Westminster</b>
27/11/07	St. Andrew's celebrations – is this a sign of growing Scottish pride?
27/11/07	Waiting times cut in NHS hospitals in Scotland
27/11/07	Change to Scottish exams in Higher English
<b>27/11/07</b>	<b>Prison sentencing – new Scottish guidelines to increase non-custodial sentencing</b>
29/11/07	Asbestos compensation law in Scotland overturned by House of Lords

29/11/07	Child welfare – too many at risk 56,000 referred to this year
29/11/07	New Scottish legislation being drawn up to screen foreign medical workers
30/11/07	Poor hand-writing – consideration of allowing schoolchildren to type in exams

WALES

DATE	STORY
16/10/07	Health protests – future of hospitals in Mid and North Wales (report mentions Assembly elections)
17/10/07	Assembly Government to consider giving Millennium Centre more money
26/10/07	Cancer patient surgery is cancelled – issues in NHS Trusts in Wales
29/10/07	Autism – new research done in Wales by National Autism Society
<b>29/10/07</b>	<b>Row between Welsh Assembly &amp; Westminster over referendum on full law-making powers</b>
29/10/07	Fire services re-organisation in Swansea area
31/10/07	Welsh Assembly plans to complete coastal path around Wales
1/11/07	Bed blocking – council funding row
<b>12/11/07</b>	<b>Assembly needs to spend £20m more per year to keep up with England and stop Welsh patients missing out, say 30 medical clinicians in letter to Assembly</b>
16/11/07	Plaid not sure they should have backed a military training camp
23/11/07	New Welsh Assembly figures on drinking
27/11/07	Divisions in care home allowance depending on where you live
27/11/07	Campaigners lobby Assembly over facilities for disabled children
28/11/07	Poor ambulance service in Wales
29/11/07	Welsh Botanic gardens want more money from assembly as they did for Millennium Centre – should they?
30/11/07	Welsh Health Service failing on cleanliness, patient privacy etc.
30/11/07	Welsh Assembly initiative on being Green
30/11/07	Pay rise row of party whips (Rhodri Morgan)

## **9. Devolution Online: The BBC Website as an Information Source**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to test the utility of the BBC website – and the web in general – as a source of information about UK devolution. Our concern here was not so much the content of websites, but what was easily available to reasonably well informed young citizens fairly used to using the internet.

Four focus groups involving six to eight people were carried out in December 2007 and January 2008. Each group was asked to individually complete a questionnaire about devolved issues by looking for the answers on various parts of the internet. This was followed by a group discussion covering their user experiences of the various sources of information they had employed to answer the questions. The participants were all either Masters or BA students at Cardiff University studying either journalism or politics (see Appendix for breakdown of groups).

To complete the questionnaire the groups were asked to only use specific parts of the internet to find answers. While some were asked to use only BBC websites (BBC only) others could use any BBC site plus any links to other sites. Once at a linked site, however, they were not allowed to move to another part of the web (BBC+1). The remaining participants could use the entire internet (www). The aim was to compare online user experience across BBC and external web sources.

The groups were given 30-40 minutes to complete the task, followed a 30 minute discussion of user experiences. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in the Appendix.

### **Questionnaire results**

The questionnaire consisted of ten questions, and in total the participants were required to find 31 separate pieces of information. For each question the participant had to fill in the answer and also to note down the URL of where they found it. Some questions were one word answers, for example, “How many elected members are there for the National Assembly of Wales?” Other questions required one or two sentences of explanation, for example, “What is the 'West Lothian Question?'”.

The questions were based on information the research team felt would be useful for citizens to know with regard to how devolved government functions and what practical differences devolution was making in the various nations.

Before starting the participants were asked to rate themselves on a scale of one to five of how badly or well informed they were about politics, one being the least informed and five being the most well informed. One person rated themselves as two, everyone else rated themselves as 3 or 4 with two people rating themselves at five. Even with 40 minutes, few participants managed to complete all the questions with some only managing three or four.

Most participants searched on key words either putting in a country name or “devolution” or combinations such as “schools+inspections+wales”. Some people also

put in whole questions such as “What is the West Lothian Question?” which did bring up the answer. A few people started by going to specific sites that they thought may contain the answers and working out from there.

The most notable result was that there was no discernable difference in either accuracy or amount of information between the three groups who could search solely the BBC, BBC+ or the whole web. While users did make a number of critical comments about the BBC website, this finding suggests that information on the site appears to be at least as comprehensive as other easily available sources of information about devolution.

Certain types of information seemed easier to find than others. Simple numerical questions - such as the number of elected members to the various bodies - presented few difficulties for most participants and everyone except one person who answered got the question right. Questions with more obvious search words such as “West Lothian” or “Ofsted” also seemed to turn up answers more readily.

However, complex questions – for example about how the voting system worked in the three nations – proved rather more difficult. The groups were asked to find out if the voting system in each country was by proportional representation, first-past-the-post or a mixture of both. Most respondents had a stab at answering some of this question but only a tiny number got all three countries right. In discussions afterwards people complained about being confused by terminology which assumed a familiarity with voting systems that they did not possess.

## **Discussion of findings**

### ***The BBC website***

The groups were asked questions about what they had found easy or difficult, the quality of the information they had found, and the relative merits of various websites. Although there were differences between participants in terms of prior knowledge of devolution, the following themes were raised in all the groups and were often returned to several times during discussions.

Coverage of Scotland and Wales was deemed better than for Northern Ireland. One respondent who used BBC+1 found all his Welsh answers within the BBC site and did not need to use any links. All four groups stated that Northern Ireland was the most difficult country to find out information about – both on the BBC and the Northern Ireland government sites.

CBBC’s *Newsround* site was praised by one group in particular as a source of clear, comprehensible information. The *Action Network* site was brought up by two of the groups as a good place to find concise factual rundowns of issues. It was seen as slightly “biased” on occasions but participants all seemed to understand the rationale behind the site and factored it into their answers.

The question about Ofsted brought up praise for education coverage for all the nations. One participant called it “very, very good”. Another said:

*... quite a good page on all different aspects of school inspections and the way that the school system works and they have one for Wales and one for Scotland which was really useful.*

Those using the whole web found the BBC at times came up when they ‘googled’ questions, not as the first hit but generally as the third or fourth. When this happened, participants, especially the overseas students, would go straight to the BBC rather than the first hit as they felt they would have more chance of finding answers in the BBC site.

However, there were a few major concerns about information retrieval on the BBC website. The main complaint was that the search facility brought up a number of old articles and participants found it hard to establish whether the information was still current. For example, one group member said:

*It kept throwing up answers from like 1997 and you didn’t know if they were still true or not.*

No one in the group found any facility for searching in chronological order or in fact, any advanced type of search at all. As one group explained:

*A.. When you search the whole of the BBC I kept getting stuff about the Welsh assembly and the Scottish government but it was about five years old and I was like, how can I get up to date information and there didn’t seem to be a search...*

*B. Yeah, like 2001 information.*

*A. Yeah, so I’d be like – this is clearly out of date now. And they’d come up at the top especially when it was, like, about Welsh students or like the Scottish government, at the top you’d get like Scottish government, devolution blah, blah, blah, 2001. And well, that’s not a lot of use.*

Even when participants searched with a date as a key word, they complained that it still returned old articles, many of which dated from when the devolved institutions first came into being. Respondents were thus unable to verify that the situation was still the same in 2007 or 2008.

People also complained that, when they searched the BBC site, there was *too much* and, without the facility of filtering search results (e.g. by date), they spent large amounts of time trawling through large numbers of hits to find information. As one participant put it:

*I find that generally and today when we were doing this exercise - searching through the BBC website can be like wading through treacle.*

All groups said they ran out of time for the task, largely because they had to read long articles in an attempt to glean the particular answer they were after. People suggested it



would be helpful if the search could (like Google) highlight the key words in the article, as this would save having to read a lot of text to find the relevant information. As one group discussed:

A. *There was a page on the Welsh Assembly on the BBC and I thought 'ah, this will be where it all is'. It was all about 'your views' and the building and art in the Assembly - nothing about the actual people who work in the Assembly though. I was, like, searching in all the little sections about who works there and how many people work there and I couldn't find anything... And that was a dedicated page to the Welsh Assembly on the BBC news page and yeah I was, it was a load of teenagers going 'if I was an AM I would make..' you know.*

B. *There was an eleven year old – what would you do to combat terrorism? 'Well I'd make everyone happy'*

A. *Yeah,*

B. *More concerned with random things like the artwork rather than the basic facts.*

A. *As if it's trying to justify its existence.*

Also a lot of the articles, being 'news of the day', were about the political process. For example in a discussion about Northern Ireland one group member summed it up as:

*There's a lot of news coverage of like the 'Troubles' and the back and forth and a time line of the development but no kind of facts on, you know, voting systems or things like that.*

All four groups expressed concern that most of the coverage presumed a prior knowledge by the reader, of the issues and terminology. One participant described how the web articles:

*...talk around the subject without actually answering it, if that makes sense. They'd be relying on me to actually know the subject in depth.*

In sum, the groups found a lot of the answers to the questionnaire using BBC sites and in many cases found the BBC more helpful than the rest of the web. But they also found the search facility to be a rather blunt instrument, and found it difficult to establish the current picture with respect to devolution.

### ***Non-BBC sites***

The external links provided on the BBC sites received a mixed reaction. Some found these useful, with one person saying as soon as you got to one decent website you could use that for a lot of the information. Others found the links unhelpful but acknowledged

that this was not really the BBC's fault as often the links were to the most logical site – for example the Scottish Parliament. Some found there were very few links – but this was usually due to the age of the articles searches brought up.

The various devolved administrations' official websites came in for a lot of criticism. The Welsh site was regarded as the most useful. The Scottish Parliament site was brought up as an example of a bad site by two groups, who complained that it was difficult to find something as basic as the number of SMPs. One respondent found it “bafflingly difficult”, gave up and eventually found the answer on the BBC website. Another found herself having to count individually from a list of members' names, before eventually giving up and ‘googling’ the answer instead. All four groups singled out the Northern Ireland Assembly site as the worst saying it looked “old-fashioned” and that information was hard to find using it.

Wikipedia was often used by those with access to the whole web, saying it was often the most concise and was useful as a starting point even if participants were wary of completely trusting the veracity of information. Often Wikipedia came up first in searches.

Online newspaper sites were found to be useful when they came up in web searches. *The Telegraph* was mentioned in three groups as a good source with clear and concise fact files, even though participants were aware of the paper's political stance. *The Guardian* and *The Independent* were also cited by one group.

### **Summary**

Generally people found the BBC excellent for news coverage, and the BBC site clearly stands up well in comparison with other sources or information about devolution. One participant reflects this saying he always uses it to find out what is happening in Wales. Where it falls down is looking for facts that are not currently in the news. As one person put it:

*If you want it for a political research point of view it's not a very good site. But if you are looking generally, you know, for issues of the day then I think it is.*

There were also complaints about the lack of a more sophisticated search engine with the ability to filter by date; articles containing more rhetoric than facts; and the assumption of a prior knowledge of devolution issues. There was a consistent observation voiced by all the groups that Northern Ireland was the least well served nation.

However, many of these problems pertain not just to the BBC but are applicable to the internet in general. Indeed, some participants found it more difficult to find the answers within the allotted time when they ‘googled’ the entire web than did those participants who used the BBC site only.

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## **11. Appendix**

### **A. Dates of Sample**

#### *Election Period*

01 March 2007 – 25 May 2007

#### *General Sample*

01 October 2007 – 30 November (9 weeks)

#### Dipstick (four weeks):

13 October – 19 October

27 October – 2 November

10 November – 16 November

24 November – 30 November

## **B. Outlets:**

### *Election sample*

BBC One O'Clock News  
BBC 6 O'Clock News  
BBC Ten O'Clock News  
BBC News Saturday Evening  
BBC News Sunday Evening  
BBC Online  
Five Live Phone-In  
Newsnight  
Politics Show  
Today  
Radio 4 6pm News  
World At One

### *General Sample*


BBC One O'Clock News  
BBC 6 O'Clock News  
BBC Ten O'Clock News  
BBC News 24 (5-6pm weekdays, 6-7pm weekends)  
BBC News Saturday Evening  
BBC News Sunday Evening  
BBC Online  
Newsnight  
PM  
Politics Show  
Radio 4 6pm News  
Today  
Victoria Derbyshire  
World At One

Channel 4 News  
ITV News  
Sky News (5-6pm weekdays, 6-7pm weekends)

## C. Online Monitoring

We monitored stories available on BBC Online's UK and Politics sites at 5pm each weekday during the four weeks of the October-November sample period. To make the analysis manageable, we separated the front page of each site into 'above the fold' and 'below the fold' sections, separated by the 'Features, Views, Analysis' content bar. Only the stories 'above the fold' were assigned a 'running order' and coded (see screenshot below), as below this section, links are included to the Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales areas of the site. As we were interested in the presence of devolution in the UK context, it was logical to disregard this part of the website.

**UK**  
Last Updated: Friday, 9 November 2007, 10:15 GMT



### 1 Tide fears recede as surge passes

Fears of widespread flooding in East Anglia diminish while surge tides move towards the Kent coast.


- In pictures: Fears of flooding
- The threat to England and Wales

**WATCH** Flood preparations




#### 2 Youth charged over bonfire death

Police charge a 13-year-old boy with murdering a man whose body was found in the embers of a bonfire.




#### 3 Rising speed penalties pondered

The Department for Transport is to consider proposals to increase the penalties for speeding drivers.



#### 11 Landlord says he will not be dictated to over 'Hitler' pub sign


**SPORT HEADLINES**



#### 12 Scotland awaits 2014 Games result


13 Football: Everton beat Nuremberg

**FEATURES, VIEWS, ANALYSIS**




#### 15 Pienaar's view

John Pienaar on why Gordon Brown is not grinning any more.



#### 16 Fuel for thought

Which firms lose and which ones gain from surging pump prices?



#### 17 'Miracle babies'

UK-based preacher told women trafficked children were theirs

## **D. Definition of ‘Unit’ for Analytical Purposes**

For the purposes of coding, news programmes in the general sample, election sample and case studies were divided up into the following units, with one coding sheet being filled out per unit.

*Anchor only* – report presented by presenter in studio. Item is either full stand alone report or is at least 30 seconds long (may include images).

*Reporter studio package* – reporter in studio introduces pre-recorded report.

*Anchor + package* – pre-recorded report introduced by presenter.

*Studio interview* – anchor interviews one respondent.

*Reporter/anchor 2-way* – reporter in studio or on location and presenter discuss story.

*Studio discussion* – presenter and two or more respondents in discussion.

*Reporter package on location* – reporter on location introduces pre-recorded report.

*DONUT* – Reporter on location presents package, followed *directly* by two-way with presenter.



## **E. Focus Groups**

### *Breakdown of groups*

#### Tuesday 2007 group:

The Tuesday 2007 group consisted of 6 people all of whom were 2nd year students on the BA in Journalism, Film and Media at School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies (JOMEC), Cardiff University. The group was made up of 4 British women and two British men.

For the online task they were divided into:

2 x BBC only

2 x BBC+1

2 x www

#### Wednesday 2007 group:

The Wednesday 2007 group consisted of 7 people all of whom were students on the Diploma in Journalism at School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies (JOMEC), Cardiff University. The group was made up of seven British men.

For the online task they were divided into:

3 x BBC only

2 x BBC+1

2 x www

#### Thursday 2007 group:

The Thursday 2007 group consisted of 8 people all of whom were students on the MA in International Journalism at School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies (JOMEC), Cardiff University. The group was made up of one French Canadian woman, one Zambian woman, one Greek woman, two Indian women, two Chinese women and one Italian man.

For the online task they were divided into:

3 x BBC only

3 x BBC+1

2 x www

#### Wednesday 2008 group:

The Wednesday 2008 group consisted of 6 people, 3 of whom were students on the MA in Journalism Studies at the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies (JOMEC), Cardiff University and three were third year BA politics students. The group was made up of 5 British and one American woman.

For the online task they were divided into:

2 x BBC only

2 x BBC+1

2 x www

## F. Sample Focus Groups Questionnaire

Number:  
 Sex:  
 Nationality:  
 Course:  
 Year of study:  
 How well informed would you say you are about politics?  
 1 2 3 4 5  
 (Circle one – 1 being badly informed and 5 being well informed)

BBC only  
 BBC + 1  
 WWW

## Nations Impartiality Review

### Devolution on the Internet – Focus Groups December 2007

**REMEMBER – please include on this sheet the URL(s) of the webpage where you got the information you used in writing your answer.**

1. How many elected members are there in the

	No.	URL
a. National Assembly of Wales		
b. Northern Ireland Assembly		
c. Scottish Parliament		

2. What kind of voting systems are used for elections to these bodies? Is it a) proportional representation (PR), b) 'first past the post' as in Westminster, or c) a mix?

	A	B	C	URL
To the National Assembly of Wales				
To the Northern Ireland Assembly				
To the Scottish Parliament				

3. a) What is the 'West Lothian Question'?

Answer:

URL:

b) Can you describe the position that the UK Conservative party has recently taken on the West Lothian Question?

Answer:
URL:

4. What different tax-raising powers are possessed by the individual devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland?

Scotland:
Scotland URL:
Wales:
Wales URL:
Northern Ireland:
Northern Ireland URL

5. OFSTED is the government agency responsible for carrying out inspections of schools in England. What are the equivalent bodies in Wales and Scotland? Do they provide league tables for Welsh and Scottish schools in the same way that OFSTED does for English schools?

Wales:
Wales URL:
Scotland:
Scotland URL:

6. Although powers have been devolved to the Scottish parliament, Scotland remains part of the United Kingdom. Could the Scottish Government actually make Scotland a fully independent nation? If so, how? If not, why not?

Answer:

URL:

7. Since devolution, how might life for a Welsh student studying at a Welsh University be different from life for a Welsh student studying at an English university?

Answer:

URL:

8. What are primary and secondary legislative competences? Do the Welsh Assembly Government, Northern Ireland Assembly Government, and Scottish Government all possess both?

Answers:

URL/s:

9. Which of the following policy areas are:

- a. reserved to the UK parliament
- b. devolved powers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- c. devolved powers in Scotland only

Care for the elderly  
 Decisions on levels of defence spending  
 Varying rates of income tax  
 Building prisons  
 Provision of pre-school education

A	B	C	URL

10. How much did the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament cost to build? How many millions were both institutions over budget?

Welsh costs:
URL/s:
Scottish costs:
URL/s:

## G. Inter-coder reliability statistics

### *General Sample*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Percentage of accuracy (%)</b>
TV/radio/online	100
Source	100
Date	100
Item number	100
Story subject	90
Story location	93
Reporter location	98
Devolved political focus	98
Countries covered	93
Political sources	90
Devolved powers referred to	100
Non-devolved powers referred to	98
Inaccuracies	98
Comparisons	100
Directs you to other sources of info.	100

*Election Sample*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Percentage of accuracy (%)</b>
Source	100
Date	100
Item number	92
Type of news item	94
Story subject	91
Story location	94
Reporter location	90
Elections covered	98
Political sources	96
Devolved powers referred to	84
Non-devolved powers referred to	97
Inaccuracies	100
Comparisons across nations	96
Directs you to other sources of info.	98