

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

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March 2010

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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* (7.30-8.30am¹).
- 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 items². 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.

¹ 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.

² 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 2009.³ 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

³ See Appendix for dates.

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

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
Total	100 (N=1,334)	100 (N=1,347)	

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 Wales⁴. In the case of the BBC, these figures were 92.2% and 4.8% respectively⁵.

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.

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

⁵ 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)⁶. 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
Overall	58.4	-1.7	3.2	+1.0	7.1	+3.0	2.5	+1.0	28.7	-3.4	100 N=1,889

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,

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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
Overall	72.3	+3.4	2.2	+0.1	4.9	+0.5	3.3	+1.7	17.3	-5.5	100 N=1,081

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 (+/-)
Devolution (S, W, NI)	1.2	+0.5	0.3	-0.3	1.2	+0.2	3.5	+1.8	1.3	+0.3
Westminster Politics (UK)	10.9	-0.3	9.4	-4.2	10.3	-6.4	24.4	-1.4	12.0	-3.4
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
Total	61	+24	4	-1

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
Total	61	4	65	N/A*
Total excluding N/A	59	4	63	N/A*

*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 2009⁸

Subject	England		Northern Ireland		Scotland		Wales		Total Frequency	(+/-)
	2009	(+/-)	2009	(+/-)	2009	(+/-)	2009	(+/-)		
Devolution (S, W, NI)	-	-1	13	+6	39	+13	7	+6	59	+24
Westminster Politics (UK)	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

⁸ 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
Total	829	-38	48	+15	121	+54	48	+22	1,046	+53

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*⁹ - 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
Total	141	+37	60	+13	229	+85	75	+9	505	+144

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

⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.

¹⁰ 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)¹¹

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

¹¹ 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
Total	241	+187	239	+231	128	17	+5	24	+24	33

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	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0	-1
Total	19	+11	3	-4	17	+10	8	+4	47	+21

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 interviewed¹² 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	-35	8	-6	94	-41
UK Conservative	32	-28	3	-6	35	-34
UK Lib Dem	13	-9	0	-2	13	-11
UK Green	0	-5	0	0	0	-5
SNP	26	+12	2	-5	28	+7
Scot. Labour	3	-4	0	0	3	-4
Scot. Conservative	4	+3	0	0	4	+3
Scot. Lib Dem	4	0	0	0	4	0
Scot. Green	0	-1	0	0	0	-1
Plaid Cymru	0	-1	0	0	0	-1
Welsh Labour	15	+15	0	0	15	+15
DUP	5	+2	0	0	5	+2
Sinn Fein	8	+5	0	0	8	+5
UUP	0	-1	0	0	0	-1
SDLP	0	-1	0	0	0	-1
Alliance Party	0	-1	0	0	0	-1
Eng. Council Con	0	-5	0	0	0	-5
Eng. Council Lab	2	+1	0	0	2	+1
Eng. Council LD	0	-1	0	0	0	-1
Independent	1	+1	0	0	1	+1
Total	199	-53	13	-19	212	-72

Summary of findings

¹² 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

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

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 whole¹³. 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.

¹³ 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	125
Confusion of geographical terms	5	6	12	2	25
Error in job title, etc.	7	9	14	8	38
Other misleading information	3	1	6	0	10
Total	34	42	97	25	198

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 points¹⁴. 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:

¹⁴ 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 Wales¹⁵, 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.

¹⁵ "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
Total	14	30	44	0	3	3

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 review¹⁶ 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

¹⁶ 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
Total	105	104	92	85	4	3	9	16
Total Airtime (mins)	3440	3420	3000	2780	120	90	320	550

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
Total	16	6	10

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
Total	63	100.0

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
Total	12

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
Total	63	100

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

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

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

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

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*¹⁷. 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

¹⁷ 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
Totals	4	8	5	11	5	9	2	4	7	1	6	2

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	
15/10/09	NI Health Department cash crisis. Regional Trusts (Belfast) cutting costs	
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	
26/10/09	DUP 'to continue double-jobbing' as MPs and MLAs	
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	
12/11/09	Training schemes in NI to combat youth unemployment	
12/11/09	Row over cost of ship restoration (Department for Social Development)	
12/11/09	SDLP deputy leader claims 'devolution is failing the people'	
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	
23/11/09	Stormont ministers launch cross-border carpool scheme	
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	
25/11/09	Ombudsmen from NI and Westminster appointed to investigate hospital death	
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	
27/11/09	MLAs quiz health trust over hygiene record	

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
13/10/09	Scottish universities need tuition fees, according to professors	
14/10/09	Scottish marine bill criticised for failing to enact real change	
15/10/09	Scottish government report highlights extent of unemployment	
16/10/09	Criticism of 'clan gathering' costs to taxpayer	
16/10/09	Education Minister admits government has failed on class sizes	

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	
27/10/09	Justice Minister defends crime statistics regarding recidivist sex offenders	
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
09/11/09	Scottish pupils are falling behind English, says think-tank report	
10/11/09	Calman Commission was 'a messy fudge', says SNP Government	
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
25/11/09	Cost of free care up 11%, but Holyrood saves £838m	
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
12/10/09	Assembly Government creates 5-year NHS plan	
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 th 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	
15/10/09	Colleges turning away thousands of students due to cash crisis	
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
16/10/09	Report welcomes carrier bag charges	

Western Mail 26-30 October (Week 2)

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
26/10/09	Welsh NHS waiting times for cancer tests criticised	
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	
26/10/09	Welsh Assembly funds programme to give children free toothbrushes	
28/10/09	Welsh Secretary Peter Hain claims critics of Welsh Devolution are 'deliberately misunderstanding' the process	
28/10/09	£34m invested in work-based learning programme in Wales	
29/10/09	Welsh counselling in schools scheme praised	
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	Plaid Cymru AM calls for organ donations 'opt-out' system	
09/11/09	Assembly struggling to fulfil environmental targets due to NIMBYs	
10/11/09	Assembly legislation on child welfare poorly implemented by local governments	
10/11/09	Welsh disabled people to lose out due to Barnett formula allocation of UK funds	
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	Lack of full law-making powers is causing Welsh human rights and inequality legislation to be vetoed by Westminster	
13/11/09	Assembly given new powers to oversee Wales Audit Office	
13/11/09	AMs criticise recession budget	
13/11/09	Rhodri Morgan speech praises Welsh approach to managing NHS	
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	Assembly launches inquiry into wheelchair waiting lists	
23/11/09	AMs reject planning of opencast coal mine	
23/11/09	All food waste in Wales set to be recycled	
23/11/09	Ambulance shortage highlighted	
24/11/09	Mental health services in Wales 'are failing children and young people'	
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	New strategy launched to improve efficiency in higher	

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

Television

Newsline

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
12/10/09	Clinton urges devolution of policing and justice	X
13/10/09	Stormont will pay for H1N1; Assembly budget cuts	
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	
26/10/09	Department of education won't help special needs children	
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
29/10/09	Legal aid/Court fees comparison between nations	
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	
23/11/09	Assembly debates a call by Ulster unionists to end double jobbing for MLAs and MPs by 2011	
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
27/11/09	Environment minister interview	

Reporting Scotland

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

27/10/09	Noise pollution laws	
27/10/09	History becoming more popular in schools	
27/10/09	Incapacity benefits – criticisms of new changes	
28/10/09	Funding of Universities and issue of tuition fees	
29/10/09	US ambassador visits Scotland – Lockerbie issue / US-UK relations	
29/10/09	Protests about hedges	
30/10/09	Pregnant women smoking – health campaign	
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	
10/11/09	Scottish government announces new disclosure scheme for people working with children	
10/11/09	Offenders helping on community service	
11/11/09	Standards in Scottish schools declining	
12/11/09	Prison sentences debate	
12/11/09	Legalising drugs debate	X
23/11/09	Violence in classrooms – figures released by Scottish government	
24/11/09	Lockerbie bomber	
24/11/09	Caring for the elderly	
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
26/11/09	Increased minimum sentences for murderers and general new minimum sentence guidelines	
26/11/09	Council tax set to freeze without annual increase	
27/11/09	Falling number of teachers – local councils might also have control of employment taken away	
27/11/09	Rise in number of prisoners in Scottish jails	

Wales Today

Date	Story Summary	On BBC
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	
14/10/09	Care home closures	
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	
16/10/09	Education plans for deaf children	
26/10/09	Healthcare project misses deadline	
09/11/09	Assembly action on building sea defences	X
09/11/09	New fuel poverty plan by Welsh Government	
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
24/11/09	Labour and Plaid Cymru row over future referendum on law-making powers for Welsh Assembly	
24/11/09	Disabled badges for children, and Welsh Assembly Government statement on improving 'Blue Badge' scheme in Wales	
24/11/09	M4 roadworks and plans to keep motorway running in years ahead	
26/11/09	Peter Hain does deal with Alistair Darling regarding funding for Wales	
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
26/11/09	Policing of standards at care homes – Welsh Assembly Government health committee	

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.

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

States explicitly that a policy applies UK-wide when it does not	Assumes that a policy applies UK-wide when it does not	Confuses UK with Britain/Great Britain	Errors re politicians' names, job titles etc.	Other inaccuracy (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	Monarchy	Medical	Public	Sport	Intelligence
Politics	Religion	Science/tech	Friend/relative	Showbiz	Govt. agency
Law and order	Academy	Trade union	Witness	Terrorist group	Other
Business	Media	Think tank	Pressure grp	NGO	Not identified
<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
UK Lab Party BNP	SNP	Welsh Labour	DUP	E/S/W/NI Con	Con
UK Con Party Liberal	Scot Lab	Plaid	SF	E/S/W/NI Lab	Lab
UK LD Respect	Scot Con	Welsh Con	UUP	E/S/W/NI LD	LD
UK Green	Scot LD	Welsh LD	SDLP	E/S/W/NI Green	Green
UKIP	Scot Soc. All.	Welsh Socialist	AP	SNP	BNP

	Scot Greens	Welsh Greens	PUP	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.	%	
Devolution (S, W, NI)	0	0.0	2	50.0	2	50.0	0	0.0	4
Westminster Politics (UK)	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
Total	266	88.7	13	4.3	16	5.3	5	1.7	300

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

Devolution-Related Stories 12-18 October (Week 1)			
Story	Story Span	No. of Items	BBC Items
<u>Clinton in NI / Devolution of Policing and Justice</u>	<u>12-13 Oct</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>OFSTED Report on Child Neglect</u>	<u>12-15 Oct</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
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
<u>SNP Conference</u>	<u>15-18 Oct</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>Fall in Standards, NHS Trusts</u>	<u>15-Oct</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Swine Flu Vaccination</u>	<u>15-Oct</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>11</u>
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
<u>Raised School Age Report</u>	<u>16-Oct</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>19</u>
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

Devolution-Related Stories 26 October - 1 November (Week 2)			
Story	Story Span	No. of Items	BBC Items
<u>Swine Flu Vaccination Update</u>	<u>26 Oct - 1 Nov</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Career Advice for 7-Year-Olds</u>	<u>26-Oct</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>
Anti-Slavery Laws	26-Oct	2	2
Pregnancy Mortality Rates	26-Oct	1	1
<u>Down's Syndrome Diagnosis Rise</u>	<u>27-Oct</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>4</u>
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

Devolution-Related Stories 09-15 November (Week 3)			
Story	Story Span	No. of Items	BBC Items
<u>Changes in Cautions System</u>	<u>09-Nov</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Nuclear Power Stations</u>	<u>09-Nov</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Rhodri Morgan Replacement</u>	<u>09-Nov</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
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
<u>Revised Sentences for Knife Crime</u>	<u>10-Nov</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Poverty Strategy</u>	<u>10-Nov</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>
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
<u>DNA Database</u>	<u>11-Nov</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>English Coastal Path</u>	<u>11-Nov</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Marine Conservation Plans	11-Nov	1	1
Skills / Training (England)	11-Nov	1	1
Recruitment in Social Workers	11-Nov	1	1
<u>Nurses Required to Have a Degree</u>	<u>12-Nov</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Dementia Drugs Review</u>	<u>12-Nov</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>16</u>
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
<u>Child Compensation After Assault</u>	<u>13-Nov</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Primary School Exams in NI</u>	<u>14-Nov</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Private Security Firms</u>	<u>14-Nov</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Parole Boards & Reoffending Rates	14-Nov	2	2

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

	<i>Nov</i>		
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
<i><u>CAFCASS Working Conditions</u></i>	<i><u>24-27 Nov</u></i>	<i><u>9</u></i>	<i><u>9</u></i>
<i><u>Policing Protests</u></i>	<i><u>25-Nov</u></i>	<i><u>11</u></i>	<i><u>9</u></i>
<i><u>Domestic Violence Lessons (E. Schools)</u></i>	<i><u>25-Nov</u></i>	<i><u>12</u></i>	<i><u>11</u></i>
<i><u>School Funding, Links to Extremists</u></i>	<i><u>25-26 Nov</u></i>	<i><u>15</u></i>	<i><u>13</u></i>
<i><u>Increased Powers for Scotland</u></i>	<i><u>25-27 Nov</u></i>	<i><u>15</u></i>	<i><u>14</u></i>
<i><u>Scotland Alcohol Pricing</u></i>	<i><u>26-Nov</u></i>	<i><u>6</u></i>	<i><u>6</u></i>
<i><u>Water Bills (E&W) / Scotland</u></i>	<i><u>26-Nov</u></i>	<i><u>12</u></i>	<i><u>12</u></i>
<i><u>NHS Trust Report</u></i>	<i><u>26-29 Nov</u></i>	<i><u>40</u></i>	<i><u>28</u></i>
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
<i><u>Bail Hostel Under Scrutiny (E&W)</u></i>	<i><u>27-28 Nov</u></i>	<i><u>7</u></i>	<i><u>7</u></i>
<i><u>Scottish Independence Referendum</u></i>	<i><u>27-29 Nov</u></i>	<i><u>10</u></i>	<i><u>10</u></i>
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

Supplementary Subject	BBC	Other TV	Total
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
Total	504	115	619