

# Annex 1: Research team credentials and coding details

## Author biographies

**Stephen Cushion** is a professor at Cardiff University School of Journalism, Media and Culture. He has led four BBC Trust impartiality reviews about news programming and a 2019 Ofcom review about the Range and Depth of BBC News and Current Affairs. He also has written three sole authored books, *News and Politics: The Rise of Live and Interpretive Journalism*, *The Democratic Value of News: Why Public Service Media Matter* (2012, Palgrave) and *Television Journalism* (2012, Sage), one co-authored book, *Reporting Elections: Rethinking the Logic of Campaign Coverage* (2018, Polity Press, with Richard Thomas) and co-edited *The Future of 24-Hour News: New Directions, New Challenges* (2016, Peter Lang, with Richard Sambrook) and *The Rise of 24-Hour News: Global Perspectives* (2010, Peter Lang with Justin Lewis). He has also published over 70 journal articles, book chapters or research reports on issues related to news, politics and journalism, many of which draw on content analysis studies. He is a former Associate Editor of *Journalism Studies* and is on the editorial board of several leading academic journals, including *Journalism Practice*, *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*, *Journalism Education* and *Journal of Applied Journalism and Media*.

**Dr. Richard Thomas** is an Associate Professor in Journalism at Swansea University. He is the Head of the Media and Communications Department. His research interests include the quantifying and qualifying of the trends and patterns in the coverage of economics, business, finance, politics and conflict. One of his central areas of interest is political communication, alternative media and the coverage of elections. He has worked on many research projects and has supervised a number of research teams. He is the co-author of *Reporting Elections: Rethinking the Logic of Campaign Coverage* and has published many other journal articles and book chapters. He has presented his research at a number of other universities and international conferences. He is the Co-Investigator in a joint Cardiff University/Swansea University project examining Alternative Political Online News and is the co-editor of *Journalism KX* – an online forum where scholars and journalists discuss how they can collaborate to address the key issues facing the news industry.

## Expert panel

**Professor Richard Sambrook** is a media consultant and emeritus Professor of Journalism at Cardiff University. In the latter role, he oversaw all the vocational post-graduate courses in the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies – ranked as the UK's top journalism school by *The Guardian*. Before his appointment at Cardiff University, Professor Sambrook worked at the BBC for thirty years as a journalist and editor, culminating in ten years on the board of management as, successively, Director of Sport, Director of News and Director of Global News.

**Jess Sargeant** is a senior researcher working on devolution. She joined the Institute of Government in May 2019 from the House of Lords Library, but previously worked as a Research Assistant at the Constitution Unit, University College London where she researched referendums. Jess has written a number of important reports for the Institute of Government about the policy

differences between the devolved nations during the pandemic. The Institute for Government is the leading think tank working to make the Government more effective. It provides rigorous, independent research and analysis, topical commentary and public events to explore the key challenges facing the Government.

## Intercoder reliability scores

Just under 10% of the whole sample of the content analysis was recoded in order to test the intercoder reliability of all variables.

In phase 1 (the sample of 1751 items), three researchers coded TV news, while one researcher analysed online items. The statistical reliability scores were calculated according to two statistical tests called Krippendorff Alpha (for three coders) and Cohen's Kappa (for two coders). They ensure that data is coded accurately and consistently. In the table below the results were expressed separately as TV and online items (apart from the order of item and the type of item which were not coded in the analysis of online news).

Phase 2 items (the subsample of 678 items) were coded by three coders, irrespective of whether they were web or TV items. The intercoder testing was expressed as one set of figures (TV and web combined).

All the scores below revealed a consistently high level of inter-coder agreement across all variables.

Variable	Level of Agreement (with Krippendorff's Alpha / Cohen's Kappa score* in brackets)
<b>PHASE 1</b>	
Order TV	98.3 (98.2)
Type TV	90.6 (85.6)
Focus TV	95.6 (88.6)
Focus Web	94.3 (87.5)
Subject TV	82.1 (80.1)
Subject Web	91.4 (90.8)
Item Location TV	83.6 (80.2)
Item Location Web	88.6 (85.0)
Reporter location TV	83.9 (81.2)
Reporter location Web	100.0 (100.0)
Phase 2 TV	91.7 (84.0)
Phase 2 Web	94.3 (88.9)
<b>PHASE 2</b>	

Signposting	89.8 (84.8)
Implicit/Explicit	89.2 (81.0)
Where in item	88.2 (84.0)
Comparison	94.9 (83.8)
Sources	96.2 (90.5)

## The challenges of coding news relevant to devolution

Items potentially relevant to devolution were often quite complex. Coverage *potentially* about devolution was not necessarily spelt out as being an area of responsibility within one or more of the four nations.

Below, we give a few examples to illustrate this complexity, and the nuances of our decisions.

For example, some coverage about the aftermath of Grenfell Tower fire related to housing policy in England, which meant decisions about safety standards and rules about landlords may be different in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. But this was not always clearly communicated in coverage. For instance, a package on Channel 4 News at 7 made reference to England, but did not explicitly spell out that “the Government’s” plans related to England only, with the other devolved nations responsible for their housing policies.

**Anchor:** Four years after the Grenfell fire, disabled residents living above ground-floor level across England say their lives are still being put at risk because tailored plans are not in place to safely evacuate them. The Government is currently consulting on whether to make Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans, known as PEEPs, mandatory for buildings over seven stories high, but as [name of the reporter] reports there are fears that would still leave many people vulnerable.

**Reporter:** (...) the Government has recognised this is an issue and have begun a consultation on mandatory PEEPs (...) Georgie’s managing agent told us that fire services would evacuate disabled residents in the event of a fire who, they say, are aware of any special circumstances and that their role only allows for schemes put in place by the Government (...) and with a fire that spreads over two floors or more happening every ten days in England (...) we asked local English councils how many disabled residents they have living in accommodation above the ground floor and how many residents have PEEPs – the results show an inconsistent approach in the absence of clear guidance (...) (Channel 4 News at 7, 17 June 2021).

By contrast, a 2020 BBC News Online item we identified about Grenfell (outside of the sample period) and the UK Government’s policy proposals did explicitly point this out: “The White Paper only applies to England as social housing in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has been devolved” (BBC News Online, 17 November 2020)<sup>1</sup>.

In the subsample of news relevant to devolution, some coverage was about policy decisions that were framed UK wide because they featured both UK Government decision making and devolved

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54967327>

areas of responsibility that may be different between the four nations, such as decisions about transport and environmental strategies. So, for example, a BBC News at Ten item on 24 June 2021 featured the recommendations of a UK Government's independent report about climate change and the UK's emissions targets.

There was no mention of England or any of the devolved nations despite them being able to set climate change targets, policies and measures independently<sup>2</sup>. By contrast, we found a BBC News Online item titled 'Climate change: UK Government to commit to 2050 target' from 2019 (again, outside of our sample period) that did specifically reference the devolved environmental powers of England, as well as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with relevant hyperlinks for more information:

Scotland has already committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2045, five years ahead of the UK Government's target.

The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) recommended Wales should aim to cut emissions by a lower target of 95% by 2050 due to the importance of the farming industry to rural communities. But the Welsh Government has since said it wants to go further - and will commit to net-zero by 2050, like the rest of the UK.

Northern Ireland is the only devolved administration which does not have its own climate change legislation and emissions targets (BBC News Online, 12 June 2019).

Similarly, when reporting how the UK was handling the pandemic, we included items where it could have been relevant to mention the role of the devolved bodies even if they were not acknowledged. So, for example, in a BBC News at Ten item on 30 June 2021 about booster jabs, coverage was framed generally around the UK, with the UK Secretary of Health as well as a spokesperson for NHS providers interviewed along with references to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. But while there was a reference to "the Government", audiences were not told the actors featured in the package largely had powers in England, not the devolved nations:

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, <https://eciu.net/analysis/briefings/uk-energy-policies-and-prices/around-the-uk>

**Anchor:** The NHS has been told to start planning a COVID vaccine booster programme throughout the UK in readiness for the winter months. Experts are advising that more than 30 million of the most vulnerable people should receive a booster including all adults aged 50 and over and anyone younger who qualifies for a flu vaccination. Health service bosses have said that they need plenty of warning to plan the logistics while the current vaccination programme is still going on (...)

**Reporter:** It was in December that Margaret Keenan helped launch the NHS COVID immunisation programme. Since then, nearly 33 million adults here have received both doses of vaccine. The JCVI, the body which advises Government on vaccines, says it's still unclear whether adults will need a third booster dose from September but planning needs to start now (...)

**Spokesperson from NHS Providers:** We really welcome this and it's really good to plan but we have to remember that this needs to be on a sustainable footing. The NHS is under huge pressure dealing with the backlog of care, rising demand for emergency services and mental health services, and preparing for the winter (BBC News at Ten, 30 June 2021).

On the face of it, the package appears to be about the UK as a whole but various parts, such as decisions within the NHS and vaccination programmes, differ between the nations. For instance, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation was mentioned, but according to the UK Government's website,<sup>3</sup> they are devolved matters albeit health departments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland may (or may not) choose to accept the committee's advice or recommendations.

In short, this item was potentially relevant to devolution, but *the opportunity* to explore devolved decision making in respect of administering vaccine booster programmes during the pandemic was not taken up. At the same time, reporting this issue was also complicated by the fact that some aspects of the vaccination programme fall within devolved responsibility, but are being led by the UK government on the basis of agreement with the devolved administrations. For example, vaccine procurement for the booster programme is being led by the UK Vaccine Taskforce (UKVT) in the department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on a UK-wide basis.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> According to a UK Government website (<https://www.gov.uk/Government/groups/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation>) the terms of reference for the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/224864/JCVI\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice\\_revision\\_2013\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/224864/JCVI_Code_of_Practice_revision_2013_-_final.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine-deployment-plan-update--july-2021/pages/next-steps/>