

Data Journalism at BBC North West Tonight

Eva Waite-Taylor, BSoSc Politics and International Relations



Data journalism is a journalistic process based on analysing and filtering large data sets for the purpose of creating or supporting a news story. It's a service for the public, helping audiences understand figures. Data-driven journalism is the

collaboration between traditional investigative reporting, traditional newsrooms and technology, and new technology advances. The future of data journalism is bridging the gap between technological advancements and traditional journalism

Objectives

During my time at BBC, the projects and research undertaken, varied hugely. Mostly I was researching potential news stories and aiding reporters and producers for future broadcasts. Research that led to a story was regarding free school closures occurring within the North West. The findings were interesting and showed that 3 schools were closing within the region, by the end of the academic year. While working on this story I also organised a down the line interview with a free schools representative and gathered a statement regarding the issue from the Department of Education. Thus, this internship not only developing my data skills, but also enabled me with key journalistic techniques.

Other research areas included: the financial situation of NHS Trusts and CCGs in the North West; the financial situation of local councils; arson attacks; knife crime; BHS stores, a year on and fly tipping. This research was used to aid reporters for planning future stories.

Method

Microsoft Excel was used for all of the research conducted. On most occasions, data was collected by myself. Data varied extensively, some data was collected from sources such as ONS or from the government website, producing national data. Excel filtering was used to ensure data was regional and therefore relevant to the local news.

Other data was not freely available to the general public, for example when researching financial figures of NHS Trusts and CCGs. On these occasions Freedom of Information Requests were required. The data was then entered into Excel.

BHS stores:

A year on

20

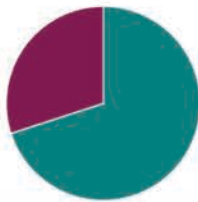
stores in the North West

70% remain vacant



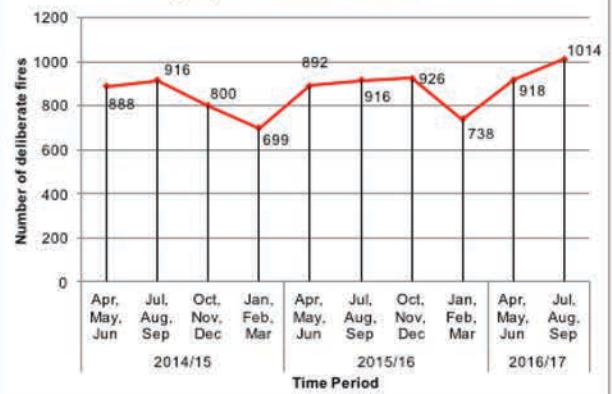
BHS, a year on: What's the situation in the North West?

■ Vacant
■ Occupied



Visualisations to show the number of stores that remain vacant within the North West

Total number of deliberate fire incidences in North West per quarter 2014/15 - 2016/17



A graph to show the number of deliberate fire incidences in the North West per quarter from 2014/15 to 2016/17.

Results and Conclusions

The editor of North West Tonight was interested in exploring what had happened to the BHS stores a year since their closures. Data was collected on the number of BHS stores that were initially in the North West, and then explored the number of stores that remained vacant a year on. It was found that 70% of stores remained vacant. On top of this research, I began setting up the story, organising a range of interviews and collective archive footage.

Following news on arson attacks, data was collected from the government website

regarding the number of arson attacks that had occurred in the North West between 2009-2016. It was found that between these dates there was a percentage decrease of 44%. However, when exploring the difference between 2014/15 and 2015/16, there was a 5% increase in the number of arson attacks. Suggesting arson attacks are on the rise.

Data journalism is becoming increasingly integral to news stories and is considered the future of journalism. Data is a tool and aids journalism, it can support a story and even create new news stories. Data journalism organises data in an easily accessible and consumable way for audiences.



Contact
eva.waite-taylor@student.manchester.ac.uk



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