

# Q-Step Internship: Data Journalism at BBC North West Tonight

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Data journalism requires using statistics to assist in and create local news stories based in and around data. As an intern at BBC North West Tonight, my research looked into, homelessness,

fly-tipping, NHS trust financial accounts and Ambulance response times.

## Objectives

I researched a lot of potential news stories. Not all of them led to a story.

One story that did lead to a news report on the local news was my research into hospital budget deficits in the region. I was required to search for NHS trust financial accounts and then create a spreadsheet with all the local trusts' budget surplus or deficit. The findings were very interesting as some of the scales of these deficits were shocking.

Another area that was published into a news story was my research into the response times of the North West ambulance service. This requires me to submit several freedom of information requests. My findings showed that on a national scale, no ambulances were

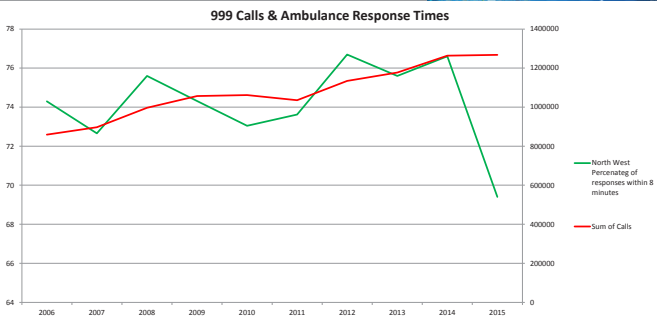
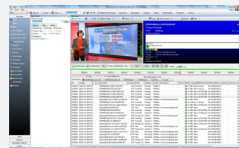
hitting their response time targets.

## Method

I used Microsoft Excel for most of my work. I was required to find most of the data myself. I often used national data sources such as the ONS. I was then required to filter this data to present a local picture. I used Excel to filter the data into something that would be relevant to local news.

There were instances where the data I was looking for was not freely available online, such as the number of 999 and 111 calls received by the North West ambulance service. In these cases I was required to submit Freedom of Information Requests and then process the data I received into Excel.

## Key Findings



One of the biggest stories where I was able to contribute with data was a story on the scale of NHS deficits in the North West. I was required to look through financial reports and decipher financial jargon. I then compared this data with data from previous years to show that there has been a growing problem within the NHS for the past few years.

Another area I looked into was the response times of North West ambulances. I found that although the service had been hitting response time targets for 9 years, it failed, along with other services to hit its target last year. Following this I looked into the number of 999 and 111 calls to see if there was any correlation. I found that although the 111 service was implemented to ease

pressure from 999 calls it did little to help.

## Conclusion

- Data journalism is integral to news stories now-a-days.
- Data can act to both support a news story or it can create a news story entirely on its own.
- Data journalism organises statistics so that information that may already be available to the public is made clear and understandable.