

# Editorial Policy



## Guidance Note

### Reporting the United Kingdom

*This guidance note should be read in conjunction with BBC Editorial Guidelines ([www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines](http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines)).*

*In cases of doubt, further assistance can be sought from the duty Editorial Policy Adviser by telephoning 0870 333 4550 or BBC extension (02) 81819.*

*All Guidance Notes can be found at [edpol.gateway.bbc.co.uk/guidance\\_notes.shtml](http://edpol.gateway.bbc.co.uk/guidance_notes.shtml) (BBC internal link) or [www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/advice/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/advice/).*

### **Introduction**

BBC programmes and services should be relevant and appropriate for all our audiences in all parts of the United Kingdom. Audiences approach our output in different ways and with different expectations because their lives are shaped by different:

- cultural backgrounds
- life experiences
- civic and political institutions.

We should respect and reflect the national and regional differences and sensitivities and report all parts of the UK accurately, consistently and fairly, avoiding stereotypes or clichés.

We should note that varying differences exist between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland which principally include:

- the powers of their political institutions - Westminster, the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, Northern Ireland Assembly and the London Assembly
- legal systems
- education

- crime
- health services
- social services
- transport
- local government and housing
- environment
- religious institutions
- political parties
- timing and length of school holidays
- job titles

### **Referrals to BBC National Controllers**

#### **Northern Ireland**

Any content producers intending to produce programmes about Northern Ireland or significant projects involving the Republic of Ireland should refer their proposals at an early stage to Controller Northern Ireland. Referral means a formal, usually written, submission of a programme plan.

A referral may also be appropriate to Controller Editorial Policy.

*See also BBC Editorial Guidelines Section 11: War, Terror and Emergencies.*

All news programmes must consult the Head of News and Current Affairs Northern Ireland.

The contact point for all daily news issues is the Head of News and Current Affairs, Northern Ireland even though network news programmes have a permanent presence in Belfast.

Content producers must ensure that the relevant people are aware of any understandings reached with Controller, Northern Ireland, or their nominee about a programme. This involves liaising with Presentation, Publicity, and the editor of *Radio Times* to ensure that publicity, promotion and presentation are all in the forms agreed.

## Scotland and Wales

Content producers outside Scotland and Wales should inform the Controller of the relevant nation in writing of their plans to produce programme material which significantly deals with national issues or themes, or which is based in the relevant nation.

## Other Sources of Advice

Content producers with particular queries about national, regional or local issues should contact the relevant Newsrooms for advice.

Advice on the correct pronunciation of names and places can also be obtained from the relevant Newsroom and the BBC Pronunciation Unit.

## Style and language

**When our UK audiences are affected differently by a story or issue we are reporting we should make it clear.** We should normally explain the difference in the first sentence of our report and in News programmes signal it in the headline as well. News Correspondents should try to refer at least once to the people actually affected by the story in their package. This will sometimes be achieved by simply stating to which part of the UK a story relates, in other cases a more creative approach may be appropriate, for example, in a story about schools, highlighting the differences in the curriculum across the country.

**The word “nation” can mean different things to different people.** We must be clear what is meant when the word is used. It may be clearer to say United Kingdom or “the UK”.

**Groups which have “National” in their title do not always have a remit across the UK.** For example, the National Union of Teachers is the biggest teaching union in England and Wales but it has no remit in Scotland, where the largest teaching union is the Educational Institute of Scotland

**We should use the correct names for the Parliament and Assemblies and the political posts in them:**

- the National Assembly for Wales
- the Northern Ireland Assembly
- the Scottish Parliament
- The London Assembly

## UK Political Parties

**We should refer to the three biggest political parties at Westminster (Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat) as the three main parties at Westminster or the three biggest UK parties and not the three main parties. They are not the three main parties in Scotland Wales or Northern Ireland.**

**We should be accurate and consistent in our graphics and insets.** For example, we should not use the Union flag to illustrate a story about exam results in Scotland or England or Wales.

**Geographical location should be described in a consistent way and with as much detail as is reasonable.** We should take care when talking about “north, south, east and west...” Yorkshire may be the North if you are watching or listening in Southampton but not if you are in Inverness or Carlisle. If we mean the North of England we should say so.

**The prefix Anglo- describes an English relationship with something and should not be used as a short hand for the UK’s relationship.** However, when its usage is so common as in, say, the **Anglo-Irish Agreement** (though this is not its official title) then it would be odd to use another phrase.

**Job titles can be different.** In Scotland, the word **Depute** (as in Depute Head at a school) is widely used. It is a word that may be unfamiliar to audiences in other parts of the UK. So in scripting it is acceptable to refer to someone as: “her deputy”. However we should not change Depute to Deputy when using the official title.

The use of the word **Principality** as a substitute for Wales is not wrong but it can sound out of touch to Welsh audiences. The exception is when talking about the Prince of Wales and Wales as a principality in that respect.

**Although interviewees may refer to Northern Ireland as Ulster we should not use Ulster as a synonym.** Ulster is one of the four provinces of Ireland. It consists of nine counties - the six in Northern Ireland and three in the Republic of Ireland.

The term “**province**” is often used synonymously with Northern Ireland and it is normally appropriate to make secondary references to “**the province**”

**We should take care when using the word “British” and “English” - they are not interchangeable.** While some people in Northern Ireland regard themselves as “**British**” others regard themselves as “**Irish**”. When referring to the population as a whole we should use the term “**the people of Northern Ireland**”.

**We should avoid using the word “mainland” when talking about Great Britain in relation to Northern Ireland.**