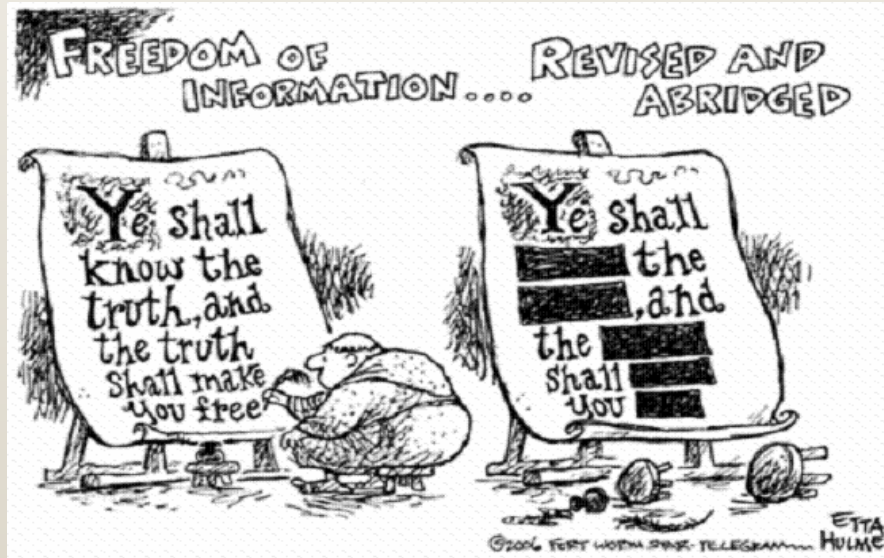


KATHRYN TORNEY

The Detail

www.thedetail.tv

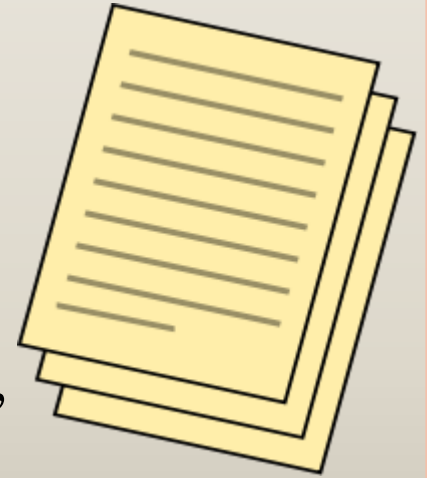


1. Introduction & what is FOI
2. Data journalism & story examples
3. Top tips & challenging the response
 4. What next?
 5. Questions



WHAT IS FOI?

- The Freedom of Information Act is a law which gives the right to access information held by public authorities – eg. from government departments, schools and the PSNI.
- Recorded information includes printed documents, computer files, letters, emails, photographs, datasets & sound or video recordings.
- Lodge a request. 20 days to reply. Exemptions can apply. In most cases, no cost.



A GOOD IDEA?

NO: Former PM Tony Blair regrets introducing FOI.

"You idiot. You naive, foolish, irresponsible nincompoop."

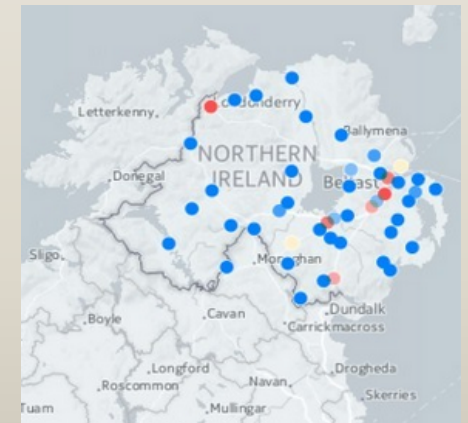
YES: Journalist and FOI campaigner Heather Brooke.

"Responding to what people actually want to know is a different form of democracy from telling people what you want them to know through bloated governmental press offices."



WHAT IS DATA JOURNALISM?

- Strong journalism with numbers at its core
- Allows us to challenge government reports on data
- Research led
- Layer stories – big picture & local stats
- Personalise reading via interactive graphics
- Makes full use of online



DATA PROJECTS AT THE DETAIL

- Segregation in Northern Ireland's schools
<http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/150/religioninschools/how-integrated-are-schools-where-you-live>
- Gun ownership
<http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/116/firearms/who-owns-northern-irelands-153000-legally-held-guns>
- Parking tickets <http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/77/parking-tickets/where-every-parking-ticket-was-issued-in-2011>
- Suicide deaths <http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/304/suicide-1998-2012/suicide-kills-as-many-as-the-troubles>



AND MORE...

- Domestic violence <http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/293/domestic-abuse-data/murder-rape-kidnap-and-assault-a-year-of-domestic-abuse-in-northern-ireland>
- School leavers <http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/246/school-leaver-data/how-our-school-leavers-fare-by-school-and-by-postcode>
- Fine defaulting <http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/280/fines-defaulting-2013/how-an-unpaid-5-fine-can-still-land-you-in-jail>
- Fire Service response times <http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/187/fire-response-times/how-quickly-did-the-fire-service-respond-to-emergencies-where-you-live>



AND EVEN MORE...

- Children of prisoners: the forgotten victims of crime
<http://www.thedetail.tv/articles/children-of-prisoners-the-forgotten-victims-of-crime> and
<http://www.thedetail.tv/articles/prisoners-and-their-families-both-serving-time>
- Sexual assault – using an organisation’s data
<http://www.thedetail.tv/articles/15-000-victims-of-rape-and-sexual-assault-receiving-support-in-ni>
- Punishment attacks
<http://www.thedetail.tv/issues/372/paramilitary-style-attacks/above-the-law-paramilitary-punishment-attacks-in-northern-ireland>



10 TOP TIPS

1. Time: Read. Research. Don't rush it. Get it right. Google Advanced Search.

http://www.google.co.uk/advanced_search

2. Be precise and formal in your request. Column headings. State format. Correct terminology.

3. Consider geography.

4. Talk directly to statisticians.

5. Predict exemptions.



10 TOP TIPS



6. Consider cost and time (time period, number of documents, scope of request). Note 20 day deadline.
7. Look out for errors in the data you receive. Check and double check any analysis.
8. Add people to bring the numbers to life.
9. Visualisation. How will you tell your story? Text, visualisation, interactive graphics, charts, video?
10. Don't over-complicate. Focus.



CHALLENGING THE RESPONSE



- “Duty to assist and advise”.
- ICO website – check out exemptions. Do they apply? Has public interest test been applied?
- Liaise with authority directly and seek advice from ICO.
- Internal review – should take 20 days but can take much longer.
- Lodge complaint with ICO.
- First tier tribunal.



CASE STUDY CHALLENGES

- Electronic format
- South Eastern Education Board's finances:
<http://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2007/news/belfast-paper-wins-foi-case-after-five-month-battle/>
- The Children's Commissioner's Office:
<http://www.thedetail.tv/articles/nicky-the-insurance-policy-and-government-secrecy>
- Case management reviews:
<http://www.safeguardingni.org/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/imce/Child%20abuse%20and%20neglect%20-%20Guidance%20for%20media%20reporting.pdf>



WHAT NEXT

- The Detail Data project (www.thedetail.tv/data)

detaildata

- Other research partnerships
- Impact



ANY QUESTIONS?

