

ITV Nations and Regions

Statement of Programme Policy 2025 and Annual Review of 2024

Annual Review of 2024

ITV News Anglia

Future Foundations Investigation

In a three-part investigation, Anglia took an in-depth look at the significant challenges facing early years childcare in the Anglia region. We carried out a survey of more than 160 Early Years providers which revealed the systemic challenges faced by hundreds of childminders, nurseries and pre-schools, with tales of chronic underfunding, businesses at risk, and the battle to recruit staff.

On-air we spoke to those working in a variety of Early Years settings, we heard from working parents about how crucial this sector is for them and also heard from the children themselves.

Online we used Flourish data visualisation to enable people to explore and interrogate the data for themselves.

The investigation revealed the crisis threatening to overwhelm this crucial sector - and the vital role it plays in our economy.

Papworth Hospital

In April, we broadcast a special programme live from Royal Papworth in Cambridge marking 40 years since the first heart and lung transplant and five years since moving to a new state of the art building.

Our programme was anchored from the centre of a hospital known for its expertise worldwide. We looked at how this specialist hospital has and continues to lead the way in medical advances.

We spoke to staff, surgeons, and patients, including a man who had suffered a heart attack just a few hours earlier. Our programme celebrated the successes of the NHS but also highlighted the pressures facing the healthcare system and the need for more investment to help save lives.

General Election 2024

We offered our viewers comprehensive coverage throughout the General Election campaign and in the hours after polls closed, as the results came in.

We ran 10 in-depth constituency profiles in the weeks leading up to the election, along with reports looking at the views of younger voters and key issues such as the economy, NHS, housing, environment and immigration. These were also showcased on ITVM.

A major overnight news-gathering operation and on-the-day reporting captured a series of key moments with some of the election's most significant characters, including Liz Truss, Kemi Badenoch, Nigel Farage and Adrian Ramsay. Online, our live rolling blog of results included a mix of data graphics, reaction and live analysis. Our coverage was read more than 250,000 times in 24 hours.

On results day, we broadcast special election programmes for the East and West of the ITV Anglia region, getting reaction from people around the East to the night's results.

Spotlight on SEND

For a number of years, ITV News Anglia has been shining a light on a crisis in the system designed to help people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. In July, Anglia led a multi-platform "Spotlight on SEND" day of coverage across the ITV regions and nations. This centred around an exclusive poll, backed up by data obtained through Freedom of Information requests to over 100 councils in England and Wales.

The results revealed the shocking number of families who were not having their needs met, along with the number of appeals being lodged against councils, leading to expensive legal costs on both sides.

We heard from parents who were struggling to access the support they needed for their children.

The new Education Secretary described the findings as "damning" and major charities, including the National Autistic Society, said they were "tragic" and "shocking". Our research has also been referred to by charities and politicians who are campaigning on the issue.

Flooding

In September, when record levels of rain brought major flooding to homes and roads in Bedfordshire and other counties, a major news gathering operation saw Anglia reporters and camera operators working together to get dramatic pictures and interviews with those most affected.

As communities battled to save their properties we heard harrowing stories of loss from people right at the heart of the story. One family's home was destroyed in less than half an hour. Another woman, who had lived in Bedfordshire for three decades said she'd never seen anything like this.

Roads were closed, and the A421 remained shut for weeks - turning from a major highway into a river - left underwater after a failure of the drainage system.

Our coverage was comprehensive, covering damage and devastation in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire - hearing stories from people right across the East as they dealt with the aftermath of a catastrophic weather event.

Essex Mental Health Inquiry

Anglia has, and will continue to, cover each chapter of this story, as the deaths of “significantly more” than 2000 patients being cared for by the NHS mental health services in Essex over the past 24 years are being examined.

The inquiry team says the alleged failings are "on a scale that is deeply shocking"; lawyers for the families say the importance of the inquiry ranks alongside those for the Post Office and infected blood scandals.

The public inquiry has come after years of insistent campaigning from the families of those who died. We have spoken to parents like Melanie Leahy - whose son Matthew died in 2012 at the age of 20 in the Linden Centre in Chelmsford. She told the opening of the Inquiry that Matthew died "alone, malnourished, over-medicated, scared, bleeding, bruised, raped, injected multiple times, ignored and frightened".

"The lack of compassion or empathy I experienced that day will stay with me for life," she said. ITV Anglia has covered multiple inquests following the deaths of patients, multiple recommendations and Prevention of Future Deaths reports, multiple admissions of failings and multiple measures imposed by the Care Quality Commission.

The Lampard Inquiry opened in September 2024 and is expected to report at the end of 2026.

ITV News Border

General Election 2024

With Labour predicted to win a comfortable majority in the General Election, Border produced reports focussing issues of importance in all seven parliamentary constituencies (six Conservative, one Lib Dem) in the region. Across the campaign, we made a point of speaking to young and first time voters, as well as coverage of the local campaign trail.

Scottish Independence Referendum anniversary

ITV Border produced a special current affairs programme for the 10th anniversary of the referendum, with key figures from the Yes and No campaigns with analysis and reflections reflecting on the events of the time, the legacy and the future. It included one of the last interviews given by Alex Salmond before his death.

Bluebird

Border produced a special programme to mark the return of Bluebird to the Lake District following a legal battle.

The hydroplane, which famously crashed killing her pilot Donald Campbell during a world speed attempt on Coniston Water in 1967, had been restored in the north east and following a lengthy legal process over where she would rest, the craft returned to what many saw as her spiritual home. It was a big deal for Consider and crowds lined the streets to welcome her home.

Maternity Services

An ITV Border investigation into maternity services in Dumfries and Galloway found women in labour faced 70-mile journeys to hospital to access maternity services. We spoke to women who had given birth by the roadside or had lost children. We presented our findings to Scotland's Human Rights Commission, which expressed "concern". Following our report, the commission announced its next monitoring area would be the south of Scotland.

ITV News Calendar

40th Anniversary of the start of the Miners' Strike

The Miners' strike was arguably the longest and most bitter industrial dispute the UK has witnessed – and it all started at Cortonwood Colliery in South Yorkshire.

40 years on, a special edition of Calendar reflected on the year-long battle and how the outcome transformed the industrial landscape of the region and the country.

Calendar's coverage, live from the National Mining Museum near Wakefield, encompassed every angle of the battle - still-defiant miners alongside a still-defiant Government Minister – Michael (Lord) Heseltine. From police and media on different sides of the picket lines, to the lasting impression the strike had on the wives and children of miners, Calendar reflected the voices of those whose lives were shaped by one tumultuous 12 months.

Women Killed By Men Known To Police

An investigation by ITV Calendar found that 18 women in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire were killed by those close to them and let down by the police forces designed to protect them. Spanning more than six months Calendar investigated the cases across the region where perpetrators were known to authorities and opportunities were missed to stop them killing.

As part of the investigation ITV Calendar gained exclusive access to a service in South Yorkshire, counselling couples in abusive relationships, and heard sobering and upsetting testimony about the harmful effects of controlling and coercive behaviour.

The Minister for Safeguarding, Jesse Philips and Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, were interviewed about our findings. In addition to coverage on ITV Calendar, the story was turned into a documentary for ITVX and became the subject of a Podcast and Vodcast for the ITV News series What You Need to Know.

General Election 2024

Yorkshire's Red Wall was always going to play a crucial role in determining the outcome of the 2024 General Election, with constituencies that turned Blue in 2019 key to Labour's hopes of winning a majority.

Our coverage aimed to engage and inform our audiences across the region by challenging the politicians competing for power and analysing their views on the issues that mattered to them. Our correspondents and presenters interviewed party leaders and key politicians across the campaign period. Nine constituency reports examined the issues relevant to people and places in the region.

On election night, our team captured and reported on key moments using video on social media and online to tell the story. There was detailed online coverage and analysis of the night's events, for those staying up through the night and later in the day our programmes reflected the seismic shift in the political landscape.

August Riots

At the start of August 2024 riots in Hull and Rotherham were covered extensively by Calendar. Our programmes reflected the events in the both towns in a distinctive way, ensuring a balance between the impact of pictures of the rioting with voices in communities who came together to clean-up and work together to emphasise community cohesion.

In the weeks immediately after the riots our team of correspondents covered the swift justice handed down to those responsible.

Calendar hosted a visit by DCMS Minister Stephanie Peacock MP a few days after the riots. She praised and paid tribute to the work of ITV journalists on the ground, in the face of covering the story in challenging circumstances.

Climate Change

During the period of the UN Climate Change Conference in Baku in November 2024 Calendar reported from across the region on the impact of climate change and the initiatives to try to

address it. Our coverage included personal testimonies from those whose homes have been destroyed by the worsening climate catastrophe. We gained rare access to an offshore gas terminal and examined how viewers in the region can make a difference in protecting the environment. Regional MP and Energy Secretary Ed Miliband spoke to Calendar at the COP conference on the issues raised in our coverage.

ITV News Central

Nottingham Attacks fallout

In January, the man responsible for killing three people and seriously injuring three others in an attack in Nottingham the previous year was sentenced. Valdo Calocane was sentenced to an hospital order after his guilty plea to manslaughter by diminished responsibility was accepted by the CPS. This enraged the families of those who died, but an appeal court confirmed this sentence will stand. The families' fight has also been to push for a judge-led, statutory public inquiry into the agencies who dealt with Calocane in the lead up to the attacks (which they have now secured). A number of other separate reviews were also published throughout the year.

ITV Central produced a special programme on the day of the sentencing, getting reaction from the families, putting concerns to police and prosecutors, and also investigating the lasting damage the attacks on the city as a whole.

Throughout the year we covered every twist and turn of the families' campaign, with extensive reports, live broadcasts and exclusives. In the run up to the general election, we asked Kier Starmer about a public inquiry, who confirmed to us that he would grant one.

Maternity crisis special

ITV Central has been telling the story of the crises in maternity care in our hospitals for years, with the most high prominent being in Shropshire, and Nottingham. While the Ockenden report into Shropshire was published back in 2022, it was apparent there were still clear failings happening at the Trust. Meanwhile, Donna Ockenden hadn't been investigating at Nottingham for all that long, but stories of failure after failure in maternity care there were coming out.

Off the back of so many heartbreaking stories, we decided to paint a real picture of what maternity care was like across the Midlands, in a special programme devoted to the subject.

We interviewed a whistleblower who works in a hospital in the Midlands, who talked candidly about the culture in maternity services. We also heard from a number of people who lost children, or suffered harm either to themselves or their child as a result of poor care.

We continued to tell stories like those throughout the year, as Donna Ockenden continues her inquiry in Nottingham, and families in Shropshire continue to campaign for better care at a national level too.

General Election 2024

We always argue the Midlands decides who wins a general election. So our coverage of the build up had to be right. The polls were predicting a Labour takeover, but what about the impact of Reform, and also an issue more prevalent in Midlands voting intention than most other places - the Gaza conflict and Britain's response to it.

We compiled ten constituency reports, and a number of issue-focussed reports (some combined with each other) to get to the heart of what people in the Midlands want from their elected representatives, as well as providing our viewers with a sense of how the region might vote.

On election results day, we were live in North West Leicestershire, Leicester South, Stratford-on-Avon, Cannock Chase and Westminster to get reaction and analysis. And we had reports giving our viewers an overview of the changes, as well as more in-depth reporting in some constituencies where there had been a surprise.

Infected Blood Inquiry report

With so many people affected by the Infected Blood scandal being from the Midlands, we set out to produce a special programme for East and West covering the day the Inquiry report was published.

In advance of the day, we filmed five incredibly powerful interviews with people battling every day to fight the illnesses they were given when being treated with contaminated blood products. On the day, we had a correspondent in the room in London where the report was initially released, and she gave the key findings, getting reaction from other people affected who were there too. We also made sure we covered the Prime Minister's speech in both programmes, despite it being so late.

Since then, those infected and affected have had to continue their fight for compensation, despite promises it will come - fearing the Government will let them die to avoid paying up. We told these stories towards the end of 2024 and into 2025 too.

End of coal power

Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station was the last remaining coal-fired power station in the country, so when it shut down operation at the end of September, we had to be there. Not only was it a monumental moment for the country, it was huge for the region, after providing jobs for decades.

We were there at midnight when it stopped operation for the final time, and followed up the day after, attending their ceremony. We interviewed people for whom working there ran in the family, as well as company bosses.

It had been controversial over the years, with numerous climate change protests taking place, so we tracked down a protester who was arrested there in 2009, and also interviewed a current environmental campaigner.

And we also wanted to get to the heart of what it meant as a landmark in the region. And we were amazed by what we found, speaking to three very emotional people who lived in its shadow, having grown up there too, and who believe it was more than just a building, it meant home.

Birmingham Pub Bombings Anniversary

The Birmingham Pub Bombings in 1974 shook the city, and those affected by it have campaigned for what they see as justice ever since. Six people who were charged with killed 21 people were acquitted years later, and nobody has since been convicted.

On the 50th anniversary in November we reported on the commemorations on the day, where victims and victims' families joined in two services to remember those who died. We also broadcast interviews with a survivor, a former police officer, and a member of the Irish community about the lasting legacy the pub bombings had for each of them.

A key part of the news coverage was also an interview with a solicitor working with victims' families to campaign for a public inquiry. He talked exclusively to us about how there may be substantial new evidence. We were able to put this drive for an inquiry to a Government minister.

ITV News Channel TV

Jersey Chief Minister ousted

The year started with major political drama in Jersey as a vote of no confidence was brought against the Chief Minister, Deputy Kristina Moore. She became the shortest serving chief minister in Jersey's history and the only one to lose a vote of no confidence.

ITV Channel has reported on the increasing unrest at the highest level of Jersey's States with fellow ministers telling ITV News that they felt they could no longer work with Deputy Moore and whistleblowers bringing allegations of a bullying culture within the Chief Minister's department.

ITV Channel followed the no confidence debate providing updates throughout the day across our digital platforms and extensive coverage of the result and aftermath, live from outside the States Chamber in our 6pm programme.

Guernsey GST Rally

The start of the year also saw a peak in the controversial Guernsey debate over the introduction of a Goods and Services tax (GST) to raise crucial revenue for the island. The Channel Islands do not have a VAT system but Jersey already has GST added to all goods and services. Guernsey's government has long debated following suit but faced an enormous public backlash.

In January, islanders in Guernsey turned out for the biggest public demonstration in recent years staging an anti-GST rally and ITV gave full coverage to the event as it unfolded, reflecting views on both sides of the debate.

The debate continued throughout the year and finally in November, Guernsey's States voted, in principle to introduce a goods and services tax. ITV Channel reporting focused on the effect of the decision on businesses and the potential impact on the already high cost of living in the island.

Jersey Zoo exclusive investigation

An example of an original news investigation was the exclusive on Jersey Zoo which led our programmes in April. The report was the result of a year-long investigation into concerns about animal welfare and an alleged toxic culture which existed in the organisation.

Jersey Zoo (founded as a conservation trust by Gerald Durrell) is revered around the world for its work, it's also a celebrated tourist destination and loved by islanders. The team spent months building the trust of both whistleblowers and other contributors.

Following the story's broadcast the Zoo's Chief Executive addressed the bullying and animal welfare concerns and said lessons had been learnt. Later in the year attempts were made to remove the Zoo's Board of Trustees.

Assisted Dying Debate

The biggest story of the year was perhaps the debate by Jersey's States on the introduction of assisted dying legislation. It was a debate which attracted national and international interest and the challenge was exploring the issues in a sensitive way and with balance.

We spent many months developing key relationships with case studies on both sides of the debate exploring the views of the public, health professionals, religious leaders and politicians. Such was the interest and importance of the debate, that ITV Channel received permission (for

the first time) to broadcast a special 6pm programme from the floor of Jersey's States Chamber on the eve of the debate.

The programme featured a woman with terminal cancer as a case study who we had spoken to and filmed with for several months prior to the debate but who passed away just days before the programme was aired.

Royal Visit

In July King Charles and Queen Camilla made their first visit to the Channel Islands since the accession to the throne and it was particularly significant being one of the first trips the King had made outside the UK since resuming his Royal duties following his cancer treatment.

In special 6pm programmes across the two day visit, ITV Channel reflected the important relationship the islands have with the Crown and the warm reception and sense of celebration across Jersey and Guernsey during the formal events and informal walkabouts with islanders.

Ferry Operator controversy

Towards the end of the year ITV Channel followed the controversial tender process to choose an operator for the lifeline routes to Jersey and Guernsey. Our coverage reflected the importance of the decision in both islands given their reliance on the UK ferry route for all food and freight and passenger services.

The protracted tender process took an unexpected turn when it was announced the islands could not jointly agree on a single operator with each announcing a separate contract causing widespread concern for inter-island services and the viability of the individual routes.

ITV Channel explored the effects of the announcements and political fallout from the decisions. With a mix of lives on location, reports and analysis, we explored the impact on all industries across the islands and the implication for supply chains and tourism.

ITV News Granada

Brianna Ghey Murder Trial

The murder of the transgender girl Brianna Ghey shocked the nation, it was a major crime that had a huge impact beyond the North West of England. Brianna's killers were teenagers and she thought they were her friends. They brutally stabbed her to death in a park in Warrington in 2023. The trial of Scarlett Jenkinson and Eddie Ratcliffe started in November 2023 and concluded in February 2024. Jenkinson was sentenced to 22 years and Eddie to 20 years. The case raised issues over access to social media by school age children and sparked debate over the banning of phones in schools. Brianna's Mother Esther Ghey has gone to set up a

community interest company to help bring awareness of harmful online content and educate families alongside teaching mindfulness and wellness in schools.

At the conclusion of the trial and the sentencing of her killers we produced a special programme hearing from Brianna's friends and family. This was the first time we could reveal the names of Scarlett Jenkinson, girl X and Eddie Ratcliffe, boy Y, both just 16 years old. People wanted to understand how this could have happened, what could be done to prevent further violence among people so young and what lessons needed to be learned. There was a lot of new content released at this stage and we were able to use it to help our audiences better understand what had led up to the killing and try to put into context the shocking circumstances.

We had exclusive interviews with her friends who were able to convey Brianna as a person, taking us beyond the images and to put into words what impact her loss had on them and her family. We spoke with a criminal psychologist who endeavoured to explain the behaviour of Jenkinson and Ratcliffe on CCTV footage leading up to the murder. Our correspondent who was in court throughout the four month long case and was able to explain the sentencing in detail.

General Election

Ahead of the 2024 General election we wanted to truly examine some of our constituencies in detail and we chose to look in detail at 8. These were Burnley, Wirral West, Cheadle, Bury North, Rochdale, Warrington South, Barrow and Chorley. These gave us the opportunity to speak to the public about what they were looking for in their local candidates and their priorities when facing the choice at the ballot box. What this exposed as demonstrated in our Rochdale profile was how some parties were hijacking local important issues and claiming to have solved them but when we were able to challenge and present facts their arguments fell away an example of this was George Galloway claiming to have won the maternity unit back at Rochdale but this was not the case and we were able to reveal the truth to our audience.

We provided the public and our party candidates with an opportunity to discuss issues concerning young people, disabled people and business owners and the NHS. We produced a live half an hour debate programme for 6pm simulcasting on facebook where we continued the debate allowing more of our audience to participate. This ensured a robust and meaningful debate. The candidates were grateful for the opportunity to be face to face with the public and answer their questions directly and our audience both in the room and online were pleased to be able to get over their experiences and what matters most to them.

ITV News London

London mayoral election:

With Sadiq Khan aiming for an historic third term as Mayor of London, ITV News London produced a special live debate programme with candidates from the four main parties going head-to-head.

We put questions to the panel that voters cared most about - including crime, policing and the cost of living.

We also interviewed the candidates individually to hear their vision for London and how they would make the capital a better place.

And we covered a lively hustings event in the weeks before voting day.

Finally, we delivered comprehensive analysis when the final result was declared.

Night time economy:

In a special programme ITV News London explored whether issues such as the cost of living, personal safety and transport links mean that the capital has lost its reputation as a 24-hour city.

London's night-time economy is worth around £26 billion annually and supports around 700,000 jobs.

We surveyed dozens of members of the Night Time Industries Association revealing their main concerns which included business rates, rising costs and more people working from home.

The programme was presented live from Soho where we spoke to businesses on the brink, industry experts and customers about what they believe the future holds.

Phone fraud:

In this 18-month investigation we uncovered a London gang committing phone fraud on a massive scale.

The gang sold phones that allowed criminals to clone the phone number of anyone – an individual or organisation – by using deepfake technology to clone voices.

Our investigation led to the arrest of the leaders of the gang and the findings will be used by the Crown Prosecution Service in a criminal trial.

We invested heavily in this report with undercover filming - joining raids with the National Crime Agency.

It took months to secure interviews and gain the trust of people to go on camera to give this report the impact it needed to bring down a criminal network.

Grenfell Inquiry:

Seven years after Grenfell's deadly fire, our live outside broadcast in the shadow of the tower reported on the official inquiry's scathing findings and the shock and emotion of survivors whose lives were changed forever.

We reported on the incompetence, dishonesty and greed within the construction industry and the long wait by survivors for criminal charges.

We met families still living with the constant daily worry of living in flats wrapped in flammable cladding.

And we broadcast the first TV interview with a woman who was only 12 when she escaped the tower and is using art to help cope with losing her best friend.

The programme reflected a wide range of voices - made possible by building close contacts with the community over many years.

Hainault attack:

Our coverage of the Hainault sword attack began with the shocking news that a boy was almost decapitated on his way to school.

ITV News London quickly secured eye-witness footage of a man brandishing a huge Samurai sword strolling around the streets at rush hour.

People living nearby also gave us their first-hand accounts as the attacker tried to pick out his next victim.

Doorbell video footage captured the moment the suspect dropped to the ground after being surrounded by police and Tasered.

We presented our main programme from the police cordon in east London to ensure our viewers were kept right up to date with a fast-moving situation.

ITV News Meridian

The Infected Blood Inquiry

In May 2024 ITV News Meridian planned a day of in-depth coverage of the NHS infected blood scandal for when the Public Inquiry findings were published. This is a story that has been rooted in our region for decades and over the past ten years our reporter Rachel Hepworth has led our coverage.

We produced a full half an hour programme focusing purely on this subject, it took viewers through the damning report, with reaction from those affected. We looked at what went wrong and heard from experts on the impact. We also prefilmed interviews with families Meridian had first featured nearly a quarter of a century ago.

One impactful report focused on Treloar's school in Alton in Hampshire, where in the 1970s and 1980s more than 100 boys with haemophilia were treated with infected blood transfusions. The boys known as the 'blood brothers' were used as guinea pigs for new blood treatments. Fewer than 20 of the group survive and Rachel Hepworth spent months negotiating to take some of the men back to their old school. They talked openly and emotionally about what happened to them.

D-Day 80

The 80th anniversary of the Normandy D-Day landings was another big story for the Meridian news patch. We split our coverage into two key areas, interviews with surviving veterans and the events taking place both here and in France.

Our programme on the eve of the anniversary was anchored live from Portsmouth where the national commemorations had taken place in front of a large audience, including the King and VIPs from around the world. We were also live in a French village next to Pegasus bridge - where troops had landed wooden gliders, a mission that was a key part of the strategy of Operation Overlord.

An important part of this project was also the interviews with the men and women who were involved in D-Day. People like Ken Cooke who jumped out of a landing craft onto the beaches and Roy Hayworth from the Isle of Wight who had his legs amputated after a shell hit his tank. It was especially important for us to hear the stories of female veterans such as Marie Scott who worked as a switchboard operator in secret tunnels outside Portsmouth on D-Day.

Our team spent a year conducting 80 interviews for D-Day 80, some appeared in our television programmes, but all now live on a specially designed ITV website called *D-Day 80 The Last Veterans*. Some of those interviewed have since passed away but their families wanted the stories to be included for future generations.

General election July 2024

Compared to 2019 when only one seat changed hands in our region we knew the General Election was likely to be a very different story. Seats, some which had been under Conservative control for more than 100 years, were predicted to change hands.

In the lead up to the election our coverage focused on three main areas. The first was constituency profile reports that focused on key seats and issues and introduced viewers to candidates and what they stood for. We put the spotlight on fifteen constituencies across the

region and we also explained to viewers how and why some constituency boundaries had been redrawn.

In the weeks leading up to polling day ITV News Meridian spoke to first time voters about the issues they are interested in, we covered visits by the party leaders to our region and focused on the party manifestos.

On the night the polls closed we had reporters and crews at as many counting venues as possible. They were feeding results and pictures back to base for our morning bulletins, our digital coverage and the ITV News overnight election programme.

For our 6pm programmes that evening our reporters produced extended reports on the main stories of the night for each of the three Meridian regions and we were also live in four locations. Our Political Correspondent was at number 10 Downing Street and we had reporters live in three counties, in Botley in Oxfordshire where the Lib Dems held a photo call to celebrate their wins, in the Medway Towns in Kent where Labour had a clean sweep and in Portsmouth where the former Conservative MP Penny Maudant, once tipped to lead the party, lost her seat.

In the first few months after the General Election we produced a series of MP profile interviews with new MPs, many on their first day in the job. We spoke to Josh Babarinde the Lib Dem MP for Eastbourne, Darren Paffey the MP for Southampton Itchen and Yuan Yang the MP for Earley and Woodstock in Berkshire.

General stories

Thames Valley region - Reading terror attack Inquest

ITV News Meridian's Thames Valley team covered the Inquest into the deaths of three men stabbed to death in a park in Reading. The men had been enjoying a warm sunny evening at Forbury Gardens in the town when they were stabbed at random by a man called Khairi Saadallah. The inquest heard he was known to the authorities and had been visited by police the day before. We had a sit down interview with the mother and father of one of the victims - James Furlong, who was a teacher at a local school near Reading.

South East region - Soldier stabbing

In July 2024 our reporter was one of the first journalists on the scene after a soldier was stabbed in the middle of the day outside his barracks in Brompton in Kent. The incident was witnessed by many residents who spoke to us about what they saw and we were able to obtain ring door bell footage that captured some of the reaction as people looked on. The victim was Lt Col Mark Teeton, 47, who was taken to hospital with serious injuries. A 24 year old, Anthony Esan from Rochester was arrested later that day and charged with attempted murder.

West region - Inclusive school

As part of a series of stories covered in 2024 about a lack of Special Educational Needs provision across the region, our social affairs correspondent put the spotlight on the work being done in a mainstream school in Worthing where a quarter of the students have additional needs. St Andrew's has won an award for inclusion and has introduced a range of initiatives to keep children in school and to support their learning. In the report the students speak openly about the challenges they face and how they navigate lessons thanks to a unique approach to learning.

ITV Tyne Tees

General Election 2024

The General Election of 2019 had seen a sea change in North East politics with the Conservatives breaking down the 'red wall' to a region that had long been a bastion of the Labour Party. 2024 was therefore going to be an interesting election as we discovered whether people would stay with the Conservatives, revert to Labour or vote for the Reform Party, which had begun to make inroads in the area.

An important element of our Public Service Broadcasting remit was to report on the issues that most concerned voters and on the policies that the political parties were promoting. We did this by reporting from individual constituencies on what most concerned people locally, by reporting on issues across the region and by reporting on the party's policies. We also held politicians to account and questioned them in depth by filming with them and interviewing them during visits to the region.

We had a presence at the main election counts, feeding results and footage into the National News for ITV and newsgathering for our local on air and online coverage. With the Conservatives losing all but five of their seats in the region, we looked at what it was that had caused voters to desert a party they had voted for in such a big way just five years before.

Summer riots

The riots that erupted nationwide in the wake of the Southport attack were among the UK's biggest stories of 2024 and the North East was affected particularly badly. Rioting in the area broke out just two days after the murder of three girls at a Taylor Swift dance class. The first of those riots in the region, in Hartlepool, seemed spontaneous and was particularly nasty as rioters targeted police, the homes of people of colour and randomly destroyed cars and broke windows.

That was followed in later days by larger scale riots in Sunderland and Middlesbrough. Places of worship were targeted, buildings, including a Citizens Advice office, were set alight and police were attacked.

Through all of this, we deployed reporters and camera operators to report on the events, the clear-ups that followed and the lasting impact that has caused for those left fearful of attack.

As rioters began to appear in court, we were there to report on the often tough sentences they received. We used the 'Cameras In Court' project to apply to Judges to allow us to film them as they sentenced those convicted on charges relating to the rioting.

40th anniversary of the miners' strike

The coal miners' strike of 1984 was a defining and traumatic time for the North East, and continues to impact the area to this day. It was therefore very important for ITV News Tyne Tees to report on the 40th anniversary of the strike.

In a special single issue programme, presented from the former Herrington Colliery, we used Tyne Tees archive footage from the 1980s, along with present day interviews with miners and others, to reflect on the bitter struggle that divided communities and families. We examined the contribution of the wives, mothers and sisters of miners who many miners credit with being their backbone through this challenging time. We also looked at how the strike and the subsequent closure of the coal mining pits helped shape the future of the region.

Our coverage was comprehensive both on television, on ITVX and on digital. It was praised highly by viewers who contacted us, emphasising how much impact the events of 1984 had affected them, their families and their communities.

Acid attacks

In August 2023, Andrew Foster was sprayed in the face with ammonia on his doorstep in Gateshead. It caused him breathing difficulties which led to a heart attack and then his death. In 2024, four men were convicted of Andrew Foster's murder and three other acid attacks in the space of 11 days, in which one victim lost an eye.

In looking at the case, we discovered a shocking rise in the number of such attacks, with England and Wales showing a 75% increase year on year. At the time, the Northumbria Police area was showing more of these incidents than even London.

We reported on the testimonies of survivors of such incidents to highlight the terrible mental and physical scars these attacks can leave. We also showed how easy it was to buy the chemicals online and used tests to show how corrosive it is and why authorities were being called upon to ban the easy sale of such substances.

Terrorist attack

The North East saw its first terrorist attack in modern history when Ahmed Alid stabbed his housemate and roamed the streets of Hartlepool with a knife until he chanced upon and murdered a pensioner who was out for his early morning walk. Alid said afterwards that he did it in revenge for the conflict in Gaza.

Alid was a Moroccan asylum seeker, something that fuelled already existing anti-immigrant sentiment in Hartlepool. Our reporting of the story included that wider context of racial tensions in the town, which some accused the local MP of stoking further in the House of Commons.

ITV West Country

Bristol Stabbings

When news first broke in January 2024 that two teenage boys, Max Dixon and Mason Rist, had been killed on an estate in Bristol, we knew this would be a story that would have an enormous impact on that part of our community and our viewers more widely. The story became all the more shocking when it emerged this was a case of mistaken identity. From a special programme on location at the time of the murders, our coverage of the trial and the eventual conviction and sentencing, we had the families and friends of those killed, as well as those deeply traumatised by the events in the community, at the heart of our storytelling.

Our reporters were committed to telling this story authentically, responsibly and avoiding any criticisms of sensationalism. Their expertise in home and social affairs, their tireless work fostering relationships with key members of the community, including youth workers and gang members, resulted in exclusive and shocking narratives, as well as compelling and emotional interviews, reflecting the horror but, perhaps more importantly, also providing hope for the future.

It's worth noting the impact of these murders on our colleagues too. At the start of the trial, we had briefed three reporters to be on rotation to cover the story and put in a specific duty of care process because of the nature of what will have been shown throughout the course of the trial. Little did we know at that time of this programme the impact this story would have on the community, our viewers more widely and those who have covered this story ever since then.

Brixham Infected Water Supply

In May 2024, the water supply in Brixham in South Devon was infected by a parasite, resulting in an outbreak of a diarrhoea-type illness affecting hundreds of people, with many more left without their water supply. South West Water also came under major scrutiny for a lack of transparency, particularly with their CEO not being made available for interviews.

The impact was shocking - peoples' lives thrown into chaos through illness, delays in water supplies and significant disruption to tourism. Throughout our coverage, we remained at the

forefront in the local community, hearing from residents about the impact on them and their families and ensuring a proactive approach to tell the many stories. The CEO of South West Water has still not spoken to us directly, despite repeated requests.

General Election 2024

The General Election saw a huge shift away from the Conservatives in the West Country and significant gains for the Liberal Democrats and, to a lesser degree, Labour. There was also clear evidence of growing support for Reform.

We had a number of high profile visits to the region, including two studio interviews with Rishi Sunak, Keir Starmer's visit to Swindon as part of his election campaign, numerous visits by Ed Davey (who perhaps was the leader campaigning in the most pictorial way!) and Nigel Farage in Cornwall. We also featured a range of constituency profiles right across our region: Truro and Falmouth, Camborne and Redruth, St Ives and Isles of Scilly, Plymouth Moor View, Bristol Central, Swindon South, Gloucester, North East Somerset and Hanham, Cheltenham, West Dorset and Taunton and Wellington.

August Riots

While Bristol might be known as a city of protests, the scale of the riots following the Southport murders was shocking to see and arguably even more so in Plymouth. Following our initial coverage looking at how such strength of feeling had produced such, at times, disturbing scenes, we then followed up on the impact and how people were left feeling.

We wanted to gauge the feelings of Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic people who felt they were no longer welcome in the city they call home. This was an idea that came from a personal experience, from our presenter Sabet Choudhury, of that fear, when his own father started to be concerned about going out by himself. Fixing up the project took a while, as balance was key. As part of the sequence, Sabet filmed a piece in Bristol's Stapleton Road, the multicultural heart of the city. The piece included honest and frank comments from people in the area about their experiences about the riots and how it had affected people's view of the UK as a whole. As well as this piece, Seb also sat down with a group from the Senegalese community, who were left feeling threatened and unsure if they were safe in the city they've called home for so many years.

The section of the programme then finished with an interview with a senior police officer who spoke openly about the work that needs to be done to make people from these communities feel safer. We are now working on a long-form project called Disunited Kingdom? which is following up on the impact of the riots and also aims to hear from those who felt the need to protest, to understand why there is such a strength of feeling.

Plymouth Bomb

It's not often you have an unexploded wartime bomb in one of your biggest cities, bringing it practically to a standstill and causing major disruption to lives and livelihoods. It was an incredibly challenging, fast-moving news story to cover but it's what we do best - head to the danger to cover the story for our loyal viewers and new audiences too. In addition to our programmes and digital offering, our journalists also featured on the Network News at Lunchtime and the Evening News.

Statement of Programme Policy 2025

ITV News Anglia

ITV News Anglia has led the way in reporting the crisis in Special Educational Needs for nearly a decade, and we will continue to cover this important issue throughout 2025, shining a light on those affected across the East.

We will highlight the pressures facing mainstream schools as they struggle to cope with the rising demand for special educational needs.

Educational leaders and politicians have been grappling with the issue of funding for extra help for those with additional needs, with many schools forced to pay for that support out of budget. Coupled with a general rise in the number of children being identified as needing extra support, we will speak to school headteachers who tell us they are at breaking point.

We'll hear from the schools in Suffolk and Essex which have a third of pupils with additional needs, putting huge pressure on budgets. We'll hear from the students forced to wait years for an appropriate school place. We'll also put all of our findings to the schools minister Catherine McKinnell.

We'll also be investigating the thousands of families forced into court battles to secure an education for their child. Our work on these tribunal hearings will look to open up what is an extremely secretive part of the SEND system - which affects thousands of families a year, and is largely unreported.

In February we'll investigate a paediatric hip surgeon at Addenbrooke's hospital in Cambridge who was suspended after failings were found in the treatment of 9 children. We'll hear exclusively from families affected, as a widespread review is now looking into hundreds more patients' care.

Kuldeep Stohr was suspended by the hospital after failings were found in the cases of 9 children who received 'below standard care' which affected their quality of life. We'll speak to members of the 800 strong group of patients now subject to a widespread review and we'll break the news of further failings by this surgeon.

We'll hear from multiple families who will say their children have been left in pain, emotionally scarred and frightened to go to the hospital following their ordeal with this surgeon, and we'll hold the hospital to account as they try to uncover what may have gone wrong in identifying failings which were first highlighted in 2015.

We'll have reporters across the East covering the campaign and results of the local elections in what is the first major test at the ballot box for the government.

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, a new Mayor will be elected. With the rise of Reform and general dissent towards Labour and the Conservatives it could be a bellwether for national opinion - opening up into a four way race which could go any way.

In Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire, council seats are up for grabs - with the Lib Dems and Reform most likely to do well as the country pushes back against the two main parties.

We'll be following campaign visits from all of the major leaders and giving our viewers expert insight and analysis into their policy proposals. We'll put the key questions to every politician we speak to, giving our viewers vital, balanced information as they prepare to cast their votes on the 4th of May.

In May, we'll focus on bringing the events of VE Day around the region to our viewers. From the start of May, right up to the day itself, we'll be immersed in communities preparing for a day of remembrance and celebration - organising street parties and events.

We'll hear from two 100 year old WW2 veterans, who will recall their memories of bittersweet jubilation as the world ended 6 years of war. They'll give a powerful message of protecting peace at a time when the world finds itself amidst conflict again.

We'll also hear the memories of those people who were children at the time of VE day - and how they're influencing the next generation to continue to remember our fallen heroes.

We'll focus on being among our communities, and hearing the stories of love, loss and remembrance on an occasion which will be marked internationally, but also locally too.

As the Labour government focuses on growth, we'll cover the impact that will have on a future decision to build the Sizewell C Nuclear plant in Suffolk.

The Chancellor is expected to announce her decision in May/June - and local campaigners are worried about the impact it could have on local wildlife in what is an area of Special Scientific Interest.

We'll hear from those campaigners who say coastal Suffolk is not the right place for the UK's nuclear energy future, and compare the impact similar construction work has had in Hinckley in the West Country.

We'll put important questions to EDF Energy, who are behind Sizewell C, and the government about the real impact this will have on the East, positive and negative.

ITV News Border

We will be investigating domestic abuse across the year. We are already aware of some victims with compelling stories, so we hope to shine a light on this subject as well as investigate what police and the judiciary are doing about the problem.

Our Scotland Political Editor has been following a lead for some time about poor culture in the Scottish Fire Service. He has made FOI requests and we hope to air a full report on his findings.

We have extensive plans to cover the 80th anniversary of VE Day in May, including memories from those who remember the day.

We will be watching the debate on assisted dying closely, in particular because there are two separate votes - one in the Scottish Parliament and one in the UK Parliament. If the two votes have different outcomes, it will create an interesting constitutional debate.

We will be covering the controversial issue of whether Dumfries and Galloway should become Scotland's next national park. It has divided opinion bitterly in the area. We will look at both sides of the argument and investigate the advantages and disadvantages of national park status.

We will also be delving into our archives and looking at our region through the ages as ITV celebrates its 70th birthday in September.

ITV Regional News hosts the Fundraiser category in the Daily Mirror Pride of Britain Awards and each of the 17 regions will select a local Fundraiser to send along to the awards and be in with a chance of being named national Fundraiser of the Year.

ITV News Calendar

In 2025 we'll be following Bradford's year as the UK City of Culture starting with a special programme in January to mark the opening ceremony.

Our programme will be fronted from Bradford and will include a number of special features; What culture means to people in the city; Former reality tv star Gareth Gates returns to talk

about how proud he is to be from the city; A look ahead to one of the set-piece events during the year. One of our On-Screen Journalists is now based in the Bradford area.

In January we'll be revealing the results of an investigation by Calendar that has found that at least 1700 people across Yorkshire and Lincolnshire are living in unsuitable homes while waiting for wheelchair accessible council houses. Figures obtained by Calendar show that in some places, the wait for an accessible property can be two and a half years.

Our coverage of the local election campaign, leading up to polling day on May 1st will include interviews with party leaders when they visit the region and a look ahead to mayoral elections in Greater Lincolnshire and Hull and East Yorkshire. There are also county council elections in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and voters in Doncaster will elect a new council and a new metropolitan mayor.

Sunday 11th May 2025 marks 40 years since the Bradford fire in which 56 people died and more than two hundred people were injured in a fire at Valley Parade. It's the country's worst stadium fire disaster. Our coverage will include a special programme reflecting on the disaster and including interviews with a survivor and survivor's families, the police officer in sole charge of the ground on the day, emergency service personnel who were sent to the scene and the commentators who were reporting on the game.

May will see the 80th anniversary of VE Day. Our programmes will cover events across the region. We'll also be following Ken Cooke, a 99 year old veteran from York who is returning to Normandy on a battlefields tour with his son and will take part in the commemorations on Gold Beach on May 8th.

ITV News Central

In the first major poll since the General Election we'll be covering the Shire county council and the Lincolnshire mayoral elections. Voting is taking place in Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire. These councils last held elections in 2021 when Boris Johnson was riding high as Prime Minister and the Tories made major gains.

Birmingham and the Black Country have been dubbed the street racing capital of the UK. Following the introduction of injunctions and various clampdowns on illegal car cruising we'll be investigating whether the measures are having any effect and why hundreds of people regularly attend these highly dangerous events in our urban areas.

We will be focusing on the state of NHS services in the Midlands with a week-long series, life on the frontline of patient care. We'll show the patient experience across the range of NHS services. We'll be looking at how innovative approaches are helping to meet demand and pressures, in both primary and secondary healthcare such as GP practices, community nursing

and outreach. The series will culminate in a sit-down interview with a senior leader of NHS Midlands who'll outline the challenges that she foresees this year, and how the NHS aims to address those.

May will see the eightieth anniversary of VE Day. From Bank Holiday Monday to the anniversary day, we'll feature stories of those involved in the war effort and how it is being remembered today. We'll have two special programmes for the East and West Midlands on the day itself including lives from the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire.

March marks the sixtieth anniversary of East Midlands Airport. As well as catering for millions of passengers, it is now the biggest air freight hub in the country. We are planning to celebrate this important landmark with a special live programme airside at the airport, delving into our archive, looking to the future and shooting behind the scenes packages of the current operation.

As well as our domestic football coverage we'll be following Aston Villa's progress in the Champions League. It's their first return to Europe's top flight since the early 1980s, they won the European Cup in 1982. We'll also be featuring special reports on East and West Midlands interest in the women's Euros in the summer.

ITV News Channel TV

On 9th May, the day after the VE Day anniversary celebrations across the rest of Britain, ITV Channel will be focusing on an historic 80th anniversary of the Liberation of the Channel Islands. Liberation Day is a hugely significant day in the Channel Islands calendar and ITV Channel is planning extensive on air and online coverage in the lead up to the 80th anniversary, speaking to Occupation survivors who are inevitably fewer in number as the years go by, hearing their important stories and capturing the way the islands will be celebrating.

In addition to an archive content which will be curated for our digital platforms, the Channel Newsroom has planned a series of features to broadcast in the week leading up to the Liberation anniversary and a special 6pm regional programme, which will be anchored on location with lives from across the islands.

In June, Guernsey will elect a completely new government as the island goes to the polls for their General Election. ITV Channel is planning extensive coverage in the lead up to the election focusing on key issues such as housing and cost of living, transport, tourism and taxation.

The election coverage plans will include significant digital coverage in the lead up with a series of special podcasts, 'Guernsey Votes', hosted by two of our Guernsey-based journalists and programme plans include a special 6pm regional news programme, presented on location in Guernsey with full analysis of the results.

In the following weeks, our Guernsey team will follow the election of a new Chief Minister for Guernsey and investigate the new Government's plans to introduce a controversial new goods and services tax for the island.

During the summer, all the islands will be sending hundreds of athletes to compete in the 'Island Games', an international sporting competition which is being hosted in Orkney. An ITV Channel team will travel to Orkney to follow our athletes and their supporters providing up to date daily coverage and lives from Orkney throughout the week-long Games.

ITV Channel will also be producing a special series on the impact that screen time is having on young people in the Channel Islands. Working with a local school we will be taking all devices away from a group of thirteen-year olds for a two week period.

We will document the process through each week in school and at home with observations from parents and the students involved.

We plan to put our findings to the Children's Ministers in both islands and ask what changes they would like to see made.

ITV News Granada

DOMESTIC ABUSE: We are planning a three-part series, backed with some live interviews, focusing on measures aimed at tackling domestic abuse in the Greater Manchester Police area - as the force has been strongly criticised for its past handling of the issue. We will embed with an overnight response team to find that a large proportion of the work they do in the overnight period is connected to domestic abuse. We will broadcast a feature looking at the new Domestic Abuse Protection Orders or DAPOs and seeing how these offer further protection to victims. We will conclude by featuring a programme which supports abusers who wish to change their lives.

LOCAL ELECTIONS: We have a critically-important by-election in Runcorn and Helsby, with Labour defending its record since coming into Government AND a large majority against a strong push from Reform UK. We will talk to people in the constituency about what they want from their new MP, but also talk to the candidates of the major parties in with a chance of winning. We also have Lancashire County Council's local election, where Reform also have high hopes of upsetting the balance of power.

FOOTBALL: We have several football stories to plan for:

A - The likelihood of Liverpool winning the Premier League and the subsequent victory parade, which will be a massive event involving several hundred thousand people taking to the streets of the city.

B - Staying in Liverpool, we will have the poignant story of the last competitive match to be played at Goodison Park, the home of Everton FC, as they transition to their new stadium at Bramley Moore Dock. We have guests and access to both grounds lined up for this.

C - We are planning for Manchester United to reach the final of the Europa League in Bilbao, and for a team to go to Spain to report on the build-up and colour of a major European final.

ISLE OF MAN: We will as always cover the biggest event on the island every year, the TT races. This event draws massive crowds to the island and is a major boost to its economy, but questions over the safety of the course will no doubt be raised if there are more accidents and fatalities this year.

The other major stories from the island are:

A - The Assisted Dying Bill, which, if passed, would make the Isle of Man the first UK territory to have such a law. We have covered this extensively and have case studies from both sides of the debate lined up to talk.

B - The Summerland Disaster - it's fair to say that our reporting of this disaster from 1973 in which 50 people died has put pressure on the Manx Government to publicly recognise the anguish that still remains among survivors. We have exclusively followed a campaign by survivors to get the original inquest verdict of Misadventure overturned and fresh inquests held. The application is with the Isle of Man Attorney General now and we will report on the response.

SOUTHPORT ATTACKS: It is the first-year anniversary of the stabbings in Southport which claimed the lives of three little girls, which were then followed by several days of violent disorder in Southport, our region and elsewhere in the UK. We are making plans for covering the anniversary, hoping to reach out to the families of the three girls and other survivors, while also reporting how the community in Southport has come together to rebuild in the wake of the tragedy.

We will also be reporting extensively on the resumption of a public inquiry into the incident, whenever that happens.

VE DAY: We are planning a live outside broadcast for the celebration of VE Day, with a venue lined up where an all-day VE Party is being held and a piece rounding up how our region will be marking the event. We have also commissioned VTs in which we speak to a veteran of WW2 and also two women who were children at the time, who can talk about life back home when the news of the end of the war in Europe was announced.

ITV News London

2025 is set to be a busy year in the capital and the south east, from local elections to the Londoners representing the Lionesses in the European football championships.

A seismic political shift is expected in May, and ITV News London will be at counts across the home counties - with a particular focus on Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. We'll also dip into parts of Kent where Reform are expected to make gains.

A focus this year will be our coverage around violence against women and girls. In June, on the anniversary of the murder of student Zara Aleena, we will be broadcasting a special programme, featuring top lines from an exclusive ITV News London poll on how unsafe London women feel on the streets. The programme will feature interviews with victims, the met police, and we hope Jess Philips, the Minister for safeguarding and Violence against women and girls.

Before that, in May, we will be across the capital and the Home counties at street parties to mark VE day. On the day itself we will be in Windrush Square in Brixton, to honour the impact ethnic minority soldiers had on the war effort. We will also reflect the larger events in London, like the service at Westminster Abbey, where the Royal family will mark the day.

In July, we plan to speak to victims of the July 7th terror attacks, on the 20th anniversary of the atrocity. We will also feature extended interviews on our streaming platform, ITV X. All eyes will be on England's women football team this summer, as the Lionesses hope to triumph in the European championships again. Many London players feature and we'll be with fans across the capital throughout the tournament.

ITV News Meridian

VE Day commemorations

As part of our coverage of the Victory in Europe commemorations we will be reporting on events taking place across our region. We know that some communities will be holding street parties, and the day will be marked in towns, cities and institutions. It will be important to make sure we reflect a cross section of events from multiple locations in all three the Meridian regions. We will have reporters live at some events and speak to local people marking the 80th anniversary.

In addition to the same day coverage of the anniversary we will produce a series of in-depth news features to run in the lead up to VE day and on the day itself. We are planning a special report about the work of the Land Army and plan to speak to women who were land girls about the contribution they made to the county during the war. The Land Army was directed from a mansion in Sussex so we have a good local link to the story.

ITV Meridian is also planning content about what life was like for people at home during the war and this will include hearing from members of the home front. Milestones museum in Hampshire is an obvious element for this report as it has an exhibit designed to show visitors what life was like at home.

Local elections 2025

Due to devolution plans, some of our local authorities are not having elections on May 1st but many are. Kent County Council is holding an election as is Wiltshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. We also have a small number of council by-elections.

Anecdotally across the country there are suggestions that some councils that have been run by the Conservative Party for decades could change hands. Kent County Council has been controlled by the Tories since 1997, here Reform is predicted to do well. The Liberal Democrats performed well during the General Election in the Thames Valley region and will be hoping to gain seats at Oxfordshire County Council.

In the lead up to the election we will cover any party leader visits to the Meridian region, we will also speak to local people in the areas holding an election about the issues they would like to see prioritised.

High profile Court cases

Each of the ITV Meridian news regions have high profile court cases taking place in 2025 and our reporters will be in court during the trials.

In the South East of the region a woman goes on trial for the murder of her husband. Jeremy Rickards, who was a geologist, was reported missing in July 2024. Ten days later his wife, 50 year old Maureen Rickards, was arrested for murder. Police discovered Mr Rickard's body buried in the back garden of the family home in Canterbury. In addition to covering key evidence in the trial we will produce an in-depth background report focusing on the crime and the police investigation.

In the South of the Meridian region a man is on trial this year accused of killing one woman and attempting to murder another on Bournemouth Beach. Amie Gray and Leanne Miles were stabbed multiple times in a random attack in May last year. They had been enjoying an evening on the beach at Durley Chine. Nasen Saadi was arrested at his home in Croydon

In the Thames Valley patch a group of men will be in the dock accused of stealing a solid gold toilet worth over 4.8million pounds. The 18 carat working toilet was installed as part of an art exhibition at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire. It was taken during a nighttime raid and has never been recovered. The removal of the art installation also caused damage and flooding at the stately home. The story was covered locally, nationally and internationally.

Dunkirk Little Ships crossing

The Little Ships of Dunkirk was a flotilla of private boats that sailed from Ramsgate to Dunkirk in France between May 26th and June 4th, 1940. Code named Operation Dynamo, they were part of a rescue operation to save hundreds of thousands of British and Allied troops who were trapped on the beaches of Dunkirk during the second World War.

800 'Little Ships' , many of which had sailed along the South coast and down the river Thames took part in this flotilla, and many of the original ships still exist. To mark the anniversary, around 60 surviving vessels will re-enact the famous crossing once again for the first time in 10 years and ITV Meridian is planning to produce in depth coverage of the event.

We plan to embed a presenter or reporter and camera operator onboard some of the ships, and we aspire to anchor the programme from both Ramsgate and Dunkirk. We will also produce a series of features about the history of Operation Dynamo and about ongoing restoration projects that are preserving the remaining 'Little Ships'.

Flytipping special Investigation

This year ITV Meridian will continue our coverage of the issue of flytipping across the region, as it is a topic that really strikes a chord with viewers. This year the clean up begins of one of the country's worst cases of flytipping ever discovered. 35,000 tonnes of waste was found at Hoads Wood in Bethersden in Kent at the end of 2024. This specific case was identified as organised crime. We will be covering the clean up operation when it gets underway and looking at the impact on the land.

There are a number of hot spots for flytipping in the Meridian patch and we will be looking at how councils are tackling the issue and how much it is costing them. We will also be highlighting what checks residents must do to ensure waste removal firms are disposing of rubbish legally and not dumping it.

We will reach out to our local authorities to try and see if we can go out with the teams investigating where dumped rubbish has come from and look at the challenges of removing different types of rubbish. We will also speak to farmers who often find their land is used as a dumping ground by flytippers.

Health scandals

ITV Meridian will continue to report on the Infected Blood Scandal as so many victims and their families continue to wait for compensation payments following on from the 2024 public Inquiry findings. Many boys were infected while at Treloars College in Alton in Hampshire during the 1970's and 1980's so this is a key story for our region. Will 2025 be the year the few surviving boys of Treloars finally get the compensation payments they have been waiting for?

We will also be shining a light on another health scandal that has impacted the lives of women including many in our region. Sodium Valproate is a common drug for Epilepsy sufferers but it is not suitable for pregnant women because it is linked to birth defects. However for decades some women took the pills without being aware of the risks and now live with the consequences. Today the drugs come with a clear pregnancy warning but for some families this came too late to prevent their unborn children from being harmed. Just like the blood scandal victims they say were not informed about the risks and are looking for

justice.

ITV Tyne Tees

Sycamore Gap Trial

It is hard for those who have never been to the Sycamore Gap, a U shaped gap in the line of Hadrian's Wall, to understand why the felling of the tree that stood in its centre for 150 years meant so much to the people of Northumberland and the Tyne Tees region. Its symmetry and its grace lifted the Gap to make it a special place. The felling of the tree in 2023 therefore horrified and outraged the region.

We will cover the trial of two Cumbrian men accused of felling the tree, looking at the evidence which police say proves they are guilty, questioning the motivation for anyone to destroy a thing of beauty and looking at how the felling of the tree has impacted people in the region.

We will also look at the legacy of the tree - the saplings that have been grown from it have been distributed to organisations around the country and there are hopes that shoots currently sprouting from the stump of the tree may, in time, replace the iconic tree which had so long been a feature of our region. We will report on this for our ITV Tyne Tees and network news, for ITVM and online, including putting together an ITVM documentary to tell the story of the case.

Local elections

May will see local elections being held across parts of England with all of the council seats being up for grabs in County Durham and Northumberland. The position for Mayor of North Tyneside, which is effectively the position of leader of the local council, is also being voted for.

We will report on the elections for our news programmes, ITVM and digital, feeding our coverage and results into ITV National News to help them draw a picture across the country.

The changing face of politics in the North East is likely to continue. Reform is expected to do well in County Durham, an area that had been firmly Labour for a century until 2021 when the Liberal Democrats led a coalition running the council.

MOBOs

In February, the MOBOs will be held in Newcastle for the first time. We will cover the build up to the event and look at what it brings to the region in our news programmes, on ITVM and on our news website.

In a region which has an ethnic diversity figure of just 6.4%, there can be a feeling of isolation for black musicians and opportunities are more limited than in cities like London or Birmingham.

Part of the MOBO's reasoning for moving the annual awards out of London is to encourage and help provide opportunities for talented musicians around the country through fringe events which showcase local artists.

We will report on the local black music scene and speak to musicians about their excitement about the arrivals of the MOBOs in the North East and look at the opportunities that may be provided to them through fringe events.

Newcastle United

Newcastle United have not won a domestic trophy for 55 years and there are hopes this year that, in the rollercoaster world of football, they may go on to win the Carabao Cup and re-enter European football. With the club now owned mostly by the Saudi Public Investment Fund, fans are hugely optimistic about its chances of success. With football being such a passion in the North East, we will provide a service to our viewers by following the story of the team's progress. If they win the cup, we do expect there to be a huge victory parade through the city of Newcastle - something we can be sure will attract thousands of people.

We will provide coverage of the parade, which is bound to have some celebrity participants, for ITV News Tyne Tees, ITVM and digital and we will put together an ITVM documentary.

Should the team fail to win the cup, there will still be a huge interest from the region in the team's progress which we will follow through the year.

Shatter Labs

In 2025 a man and a seven-year-old boy were killed in an explosion which destroyed two flats in Newcastle. It soon emerged that the ground floor flat had been used to make 'shatter cannabis' a potent extract of cannabis that resembles brittle orange coloured glass.

The drug itself can be very dangerous for users, with strong side effects and the risk of addiction. But its dangers are wider for the general public due to the habit of its makers to store a key component in bulk in 'shatter labs', which are often in domestic premises.

Shatter's production involves using butane, a very volatile gas. In the Newcastle case, the drug was being produced in a ground floor flat and large quantities of butane canisters were stored there. When they exploded, they destroyed that flat and the one above it. We will cover the police investigation into the case and speak to police and experts about the danger of the drug and of the gas used to make it.

ITV West Country

We will be looking at the impact of last Summer's riots and the long-lasting impact on community life, particularly in Bristol - a city well-known for its protest history. While reporting of the riots seemed to die down quite quickly, we want to explore how the riots have either created or reopened wounds of racism, why people took part in the riots in the first place and where we are then heading as a society, especially in a world where right-wing narrative is increasingly prominent.

With the latter in mind, the local elections, including the West of England Mayoral, will be the first major poll since the General Election, where our region saw a significant shift away from the Conservatives towards the Lib Dems and a little towards Labour - and Bristol's first ever Green MP. Voting is taking place in Devon, Cornwall, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, as well as the next West of England Mayor. With Sir Keir Starmer's government now in place for six months, these elections will give us a gauge of how people locally are feeling. It will be interesting to see how the Greens and Reform also perform.

In January 2024, two teenage boys were stabbed to death in south Bristol in a case of mistaken identity. The murders of Max Dixon and Mason Rist shocked the city - their killers were convicted in November. Since then, we are working closely with key figures in the community in Bristol and more widely in our region to look at the impact of knife crime and gang culture, examining how and why this continues to happen (despite these shocking cases), what needs to happen locally to educate young people about the dangers and also a forensic look at the unseen trauma of knife crime, such as for those responding to these incidents (both first responders and those working in hospitals).

In May 2024, the water supply in Brixham in South Devon was infected by a parasite, resulting in an outbreak of a diarrhoea-type illness affecting hundreds of people, with many more left without their water supply. South West Water also came under major scrutiny for a lack of transparency, particularly with their CEO not being made available for interviews. We intend to produce special coverage to look at the challenges around water more widely, from pollution and sewage spills to supply and cost, and how all of these affect viewers and the wider population here in the West Country, as well as pursuing South West Water for access to their CEO and to their operations more widely.

Agriculture is such a significant part of everyday life in our region and so we are planning a three-part series looking at the past, present and future of farming in the West Country, particularly interesting at a time when farmers say they are facing more financial and industrial challenges than perhaps ever before. We'll also have special coverage of the Devon County Show and the Royal Cornwall Show, in May and June respectively. These shows are an intrinsic part of the West Country way of life.

For the 80th anniversary of VE Day, we intend to produce special coverage on the day across our region, covering events in Plymouth, Falmouth, Bristol, Somerset and Wiltshire. Our reporting will feature the reflections of the veterans who still remember that day, the families of

those who are no longer with us and the contributions of those from across the Commonwealth who now call the West Country their home.