

IPSO Annual Statement for 2022

About DNG Media

We are an independent publisher based in Dumfries and Galloway with four weekly newspaper titles.

Of those, the Annandale Herald, the Moffat News and the Annandale Observer are paid titles, while The Dumfries Courier is a free distribution model.

All four newspapers date from the 1800s and have a readership of varied age.

We also have a website and social media presence.

News, sports and features are our primary focus and we are politically neutral and give monthly column space to all the region's MPs and MSPs, as well as including their views, comments, reactions and press releases on a weekly basis in a variety of stories.

The website is a reflection of our titles and their content and is updated seven days a week.

Our main social media activity is via Facebook, but we also have Twitter and are looking at other platforms. We use social media to interact with readers and garner their views and to promote our website and titles. We aim to update it most days.

Dumfries and Galloway is our main print and digital circulation area but we also take in the fringes of northern Cumbria and the Scottish Borders.

The principal settlements in our patch are Dumfries, Annan, Lockerbie, Lochmaben and Langholm and their rural surroundings.

The newsroom is located on Annan High Street and staffed Monday to Friday by reporters and advertising staff. A production team are also here for part of the week.

The editor oversees a team of four reporters, of which two are trainees, and a staff photographer. Three of the reporters were new recruits in 2022 and one of them is taking part in the Meta/NCTJ Community News Project.

In addition, we are signed up to the BBC Local Democracy scheme and make use of their reporter's feed and occasionally use freelancers, as well as having reader input and submissions.

Our chief reporter also has the role of court correspondent and attends Dumfries Sheriff Court every day.

In terms of DNG Media's IPSO membership, the responsible person is Peter Laidlaw, managing director. His contact is 01461 202417.

Editorial Standards

Editor Fiona Reid is a fully qualified NCTJ journalist, also with a degree in journalism. She has been a reporter for 23 years and editor at DNG Media for five years. Her experience includes training numerous young journalists and she currently sits on the NCTJ/Meta CNP panel.

Fiona keeps up to date with company policies and procedures and industry developments, passing on this information to colleagues as it comes out.

The news team is also kept abreast of legal developments and any new caselaw and precedents via our legal advisors.

Responsible reporting and fact checking is actively promoted in the newsroom and scrutiny and proof reading are a daily part of office life

We take a fair and balanced approach to story publication and operate an open door policy for readers to contact us with feedback, concerns or complaints.

An up-to-date copy of The Editors' Code of Practice is on display in the newsroom for use when applicable and reporters have been briefed about the role of IPSO and the guidance it can give, which we have accessed in the past.

During 2022 we, again, received a low number of complaints relating to our content. Most of those were minor factual errors which were dealt with by corrections or clarification statements in the next edition.

We believe this low level of complaints can be attributed to our high editorial standards and thorough procedures.

Readers do occasionally contact us with queries and questions relating to court content and publication of various cases. These enquiries are handled by the editor or chief reporter.

With regards to our policies relating to transparency regarding financial relationships or conflicts of interest: as a company it is our policy not to make payments for any news stories to the general public. We do, however, make occasional use of court agencies, freelance journalists, photographers and columnists.

In addition, our journalists' employment contracts contain the firm's Anti Bribery Policy.

Complaints Handling

We aim to correct factual errors at the earliest opportunity and individuals have a right of reply through our letters page.

Minor factual mistakes are usually dealt with by the reporter concerned, overseen by a senior member of editorial staff, who ensures it's reviewed and placed appropriately.

More serious complaints go straight to the editor or her deputy for consideration. They are logged and fact checked, then a memo is drawn up for our records. We keep in touch with the complainant with updates on our findings/assessment and if a correction is required then we agree a form of words with them.

A summary of our complaints policy and contact details for IPSO and ourselves appear in all our newspapers and on our website.

DNG Media takes complaints about our titles seriously and we are committed to abiding by IPSO rules and regulations and the Editors' Code of Practice.

Complaints Policy

- 1. This policy relates to all complaints made against the Editors' Code of Practice administered by IPSO.*
- 2. DNG Media aims to handle all complaints as efficiently and effectively as possible.*
- 3. All complaints will be acknowledged within five working days.*
- 4. If we receive multiple complaints about the same issue, we may make one response to all.*

5. *We may request further information from you in order to investigate your complaint.*
6. *We will seek to resolve the complaint once all the details have been established to your satisfaction within 28 days where appropriate. If we fail to resolve this to your satisfaction then you may refer the matter to IPSO.*
7. *If we feel that we cannot take your complaint forward because we do not believe it has raised a complaint against the Editor's Code, we will let you know.*
8. *You can see a copy of the Editor's Code here - [web link](#)*
9. *If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint you can contact IPSO here - [web](#)*
10. *If at any stage we do not hear back from you within a 28 day period, we will consider your complaint to be resolved.*

Training Process

DNG Media has a long association with the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) and has put many reporters through their recognised qualifications.

Our trainees learn through a mix of on the job experience, in house training with professional tutors, courses and distance learning.

There is ongoing internal discussion and training updates in law and on legislation which could impact our work.

There are currently two journalists studying towards the Diploma in Journalism and covering a variety of modules, including shorthand, media law and public affairs.

Record of compliance

In 2021, DNG Media logged five official complaints, of which three were querying details in court stories.

They were resolved satisfactorily through discussions between the editor and parties involved, with follow up corrections published in two instances.

We did receive several other calls through the year from readers questioning our 'right' to run court articles but these were sorted out verbally on the phone.

Furthermore, IPSO was in touch with us in June after an article (court story) was referred to them. We supplied the requested information, including a copy of the page, but never heard any more.