

DNG Media IPSO Annual Statement for 2021

About DNG Media

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

Our paid for print titles are the Annandale Herald, the Moffat News and the Annandale Observer. The Dumfries Courier is our free newspaper, which is distributed through pick up points.

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

We also have a website and social media presence.

Our content is predominantly made up of news, sports and features and in 2021 this was still dominated by covid, its impact and the region's recovery.

The papers take an independent editorial political stance and we ensure all the political parties and local representatives are included regularly, with both MSPs and MPs given the chance to submit a monthly column, of which we run six in total.

The website complements the print titles and carries all the main stories and breaking news. In addition, it includes sports, features, weather and travel information.

Our print and digital circulation area is primarily focused on Dumfries and Galloway but also stretches into parts of north Cumbria and the Scottish Borders.

However, the main focus is on eastern Dumfries and Galloway, around the towns of Dumfries, Annan, Lockerbie, Lochmaben and Langholm and their rural hinterlands.

The website has a wider reach and its news patch extends out to the far west of Dumfries and Galloway.

The company's headquarters, incorporating the newsroom, is located in Annan and all content is created and edited here.

The news team comprises the editor, associate editor and staff reporters. We use the services of the local democracy reporter and have recently been accepted onto the Meta/NCTJ Community News Project and are currently recruiting for this role.

There is a staff photographer but freelancers are also used and readers submit some content, reports, columns and letters.

During the 2021 lockdown we operated a partial home working system but this is now coming to an end, although we do have a flexible working from home arrangement with one of the journalists.

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

Editorial Standards

The news team continues to be led by Fiona Reid, who has worked for the company since 2000 and has been editor since April 2018 and is well acquainted with the firm's policies, procedures and standards.

The journalists are in daily contact with readers, who are encouraged to contact us via social media, the phone and online.

All feedback - both positive and negative - is welcomed, shared and scrutinised and it helps to reinforce editorial standards.

We take our reporting responsibilities seriously, with several levels of proof reading and fact checking in place.

Our aim is to be fair and balanced in what we publish, to satisfy the demand for local news and to provide an effective local advertising service.

The Editors' Code of Practice is on display in the newsroom and is regularly referred to and consulted- and updated when applicable.

As a team, we take ongoing professional advice on the latest legal developments impacting on the media and examples of best practice elsewhere.

When contentious stories arise, we seek to verify facts from various sources, including our own legal consultants, and in the past we have used IPSO's own pre-publication guidance service as well for advice.

During 2021 we received a low number of complaints relating to our content and 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.

We continue to receive occasional queries from readers questioning the legality of carry court content in the paper. This usually just requires an explanation of the rules around court reporting.

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 reporting services, 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 link](#)
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

The small editorial team comprises the editor with over 20 years experience and industry qualifications, supported by senior journalists with varied backgrounds, including journalism graduates.

The newspaper group 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.

In early 2021 we held an elections and purdah workshop for all reporters.

Record of compliance

In 2021, DNG Media logged six complaints, of which five were related to court stories and were submitted by the person convicted or their family member and were objecting to their details appearing in the paper or querying charges.

There was another complaint pertaining to an ongoing town row.

They were resolved satisfactorily through discussions between the editor and parties involved with explanations/clarifications given about specific points of law and about the parameters of court reporting.

There were no complaints relating to our newspapers or website submitted to IPSO for independent adjudication.