

IPSO Annual Statement for 2023

About DNG Media

A family run, independent publisher based in Dumfries and Galloway with five weekly newspaper titles.

Since the last report, we have acquired The Galloway Gazette title.

Our paid for titles are the Annandale Herald, the Moffat News, the Galloway Gazette and the Annandale Observer, while The Dumfries Courier is a freesheet, with pick up points in and around Dumfries.

All the newspapers have a readership of varied age.

We also have a website and social media presence.

Our primary focus is on news, sports and features and we aim to cover the breadth of the region and all topics.

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 it is updated on several occasions throughout the week. Facebook remains our main social media activity, but we also have Twitter and have reinstated our Instagram account. 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.

The county of Dumfries and Galloway is our main print and digital circulation area and we now cover the whole of the region after taking over The Galloway Gazette.

We also take in the fringes of northern Cumbria and the Scottish Borders due to our border location. The principal settlements in our patch are Dumfries, Annan, Lockerbie, Lochmaben, Newton Stewart 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.

In 2023 the news team comprised the editor and four reporters, of which two were trainees, along with a staff photographer.

In addition, we are members of the BBC Local Democracy scheme and make use of their reporter's feed.

We occasionally use freelancers and some content is submitted by readers representing their respective community groups.

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 24 years and editor at DNG Media for six 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. Fiona sits with her team and offers advice and feedback on fact checking, balancing stories and interviewing. Discussions are held daily about stories with reporters giving frequent updates on their work. Complaints and outcomes are also fed back to everyone.

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 2023 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 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 continues to be associated and work 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 2023, there were two journalists studying towards the Diploma in Journalism.

Record of compliance

In 2023, DNG Media logged six official complaints, of which all were resolved.

Five were sorted out directly with the complainants and comprised:

- * Two court case queries regarding permission to publish.
- * A data protection request to remove a name from a historic website story.
- * A request not to print a story (following interview) with a mental health inpatient due to their lack of capacity.
- * A complaint about a headline in which the complainer referenced the Ipsos code but did not end up lodging an official complaint as the matter was sorted out directly with us.

All the above were dealt with through discussions between the editor and parties involved, with follow up corrections published where necessary, with agreed wording.

In addition, a reader complained to Ipsos directly about a headline that they claimed was misleading, ref 19527-23. After investigating, Ipsos found no breach of the Editor's Code.

In addition, we received several other calls throughout the course of the year from readers questioning our 'right' to run court articles but these were sorted out verbally on the phone.