

IPSO Annual Statement for 2024

About DNG Media

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

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 and appear on the Google News Showcase.

Local news, sports and features are our primary focus 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 updated on several occasions throughout the week.

Facebook remains our main social media activity and while we have a presence on X and Instagram, our postings here are limited. We use social media to interact with readers and garner their views and to promote our website and titles. We aim to update it several times a week.

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

The principal settlements in our patch are Dumfries, Annan, Moffat, 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.

At the start of 2024 the news team comprised the editor and four reporters, along with a staff photographer. This dropped to three reporters in May at the cessation of the NCTJ/Facebook scheme. One of our reporters is currently a trainee, having just finished his preliminary exams and moving on to the senior side of his training. In addition, we make regular use of the BBC Local Democracy scheme.

We occasionally use freelance photographers 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 worked at the paper for 25 years and been the editor for seven years.

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. The court reporter, in particular, is always keen to discuss what information should and should not be included in his pieces.

Complaints and outcomes are also fed back to everyone and when it's content or tone related we discuss how that will/should inform future reporting and writing.

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.

In 2024 we covered several particularly 'nasty' court cases featuring disturbing information, including a murder trial at Crown Court and a necrophilia/bestiality case at sheriff court. We took the decision to label these stories with 'graphic content' warnings to alert readers.

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 2024, complaints were slightly up on previous years but still of a low number overall. They all related to content, and in particular to our court coverage. We have noted over the last year that some defendants object to appearing in the press and do not understand the role/rights of journalism when it comes to the courts. One individual, in particular, made threats to the team over the phone after his case was printed.

We often find that engaging with the complainants and explaining the role of the press and the access we have to criminal cases usually resolves these complaints.

Overall, we believe the generally low level of negative feedback that we receive can be attributed to our high editorial standards and thorough procedures.

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 to the general public for any news stories. We do, however, make occasional use of court agencies, freelance journalists, photographers and columnists.

Additionally, 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 too.

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 labelled and placed appropriately.

The editor handles more serious complaints, which 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.

During 2024 we also welcome several youngsters on work experience and were delighted to be able to offer this opportunity to future journalists.

Record of compliance

In 2024, DNG Media logged 11 official complaints, of which all were resolved, including two that went to IPSO.

They included:

- * Five court case queries regarding permission to publish either the story or certain details.
- * A request to remove a historic website story.
- * A complaint about claims made in a blocked drain story.
- * An address query in a court file.
- * Several threatening calls were made to members of staff by the defendant in a court case, who wanted the story to be removed from the paper post-printing.
- * Concerns from a reader about the tone used by one of our columnists.

All the above were dealt by way of through discussions between the editor and parties involved, None of them required corrections or clarifications to be published.

On two occasions readers complained directly to IPSO. The complaints were assessed and rejected.

In both instances (refs 06589-24 and 05180-24) IPSO found no breaches of clauses or the Editor's Code.

Furthermore, we received several 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.