

PRESS RELEASE – IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nominations for the 14th Legal Aid Practitioners Group Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards officially open today (1 March).

New for 2016: introduction of crowdfunded sponsorship for popular Legal Aid Newcomer Award; eligibility criteria extended to include lawyers in Northern Ireland.

Nomination period ends 25 April; winners to be announced 7 July in central London.

Nominations for the 2016 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year (LALY) awards are now open. There are 12 awards in total including Children's Rights, Public Law, Family Legal Aid, Mental Health, and Criminal Defence (see full list, below).

For the first time, supporters of legal aid will have the opportunity to be publicly recognised as Friends of LALY16, by making a donation (via crowdfunding) to sponsor the Legal Aid Newcomer award, which is always one of the highlights of the evening.

LAPG director Carol Storer says:

'Launched in 2002, the LALYs are one of the longest standing legal awards, set up to celebrate those lawyers who go the extra mile for their clients. They have always been ground breaking and it is fitting that our 14th year sees us continuing to innovate. The introduction of crowdfunding - which we believe is a first in this sector - is entirely in keeping with the grassroots, inclusive spirit of the LALYs that sets us apart and engenders such loyalty and support from all sectors of the legal aid profession. From as little as £10, anyone who thinks the life-changing work of legal aid lawyers is worth celebrating can become a Friend of LALY16, and have their name published in the programme on the night.'

Full details of the crowdfunding scheme and the rewards available for different levels of donation are available here: www.crowdfunder.co.uk/friends-of-LALY16

All money raised from crowdfunding will go towards the cost of staging the awards. The LALYs are non-profit-making and traditionally have relied on

sponsorship from lawyers' groups and commercial organisations which are dedicated to the legal aid sector. For a full list of this year's 10 award sponsors, see the nomination form: <http://lapg.co.uk/lalys/>

Also new for 2016, all awards categories will be opened up to lawyers in Northern Ireland.

Carol Storer says:

'Being a legal aid lawyer is never easy, but those working in Northern Ireland have the additional difficulty of carrying out their work against a unique and complex political backdrop. We are very pleased, therefore, to be able to invite nominations from Northern Ireland this year for the first time.'

The 2016 award categories in full are:

- * Children's Rights
Sponsored by Accesspoint
- * Criminal Defence
Sponsored by CILEx
- * Family Legal Aid
* Family Mediation
Both sponsored by Resolution
- * Public Law
Sponsored by Irwin Mitchell
- * Mental Health
Sponsored by DG Legal
- * Social and Welfare
Sponsored by Tikit
- * Legal Aid Newcomer
Sponsored by Friends of LALY16
- * Legal Aid Barrister
Sponsored by The Bar Council
- * Legal Aid Firm/Not-for-profit Agency
Sponsored by The Law Society
- * Access to Justice through IT
Sponsored by The Legal Education Foundation
- * Outstanding Achievement
Sponsored by Matrix

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. LAPG is the leading membership organisation for legal aid lawyers, providing a wide range of services and support. www.lapg.co.uk
2. The Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards are into their 14th year. They are organised on a not-for-profit basis by LAPG. Nominations close on 25 April, and the winners will be announced at a ceremony in central London on 7 July 2016. Nomination forms are available from: www.lapg.co.uk