



19 May 2016

2016 LEGAL AID PRACTITIONERS GROUP LEGAL AID LAWYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS – SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED

The barrister who will be the next director of Liberty; a carpenter-turned-housing-caseworker; and the solicitor who won an historic victory at the Supreme Court in the Jogee joint enterprise case, have all been selected as finalists in this year's Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year (LALY) awards.

Legal Aid Practitioners Group director Carol Storer says:

'The range and quality of finalists this year illustrates not just the important legal aid work that is being done, but also the diversity of people who are drawn to this vital area of law.'

The LALYS, which are run on a not-for-profit basis by LAPG - were opened up to lawyers in Northern Ireland for the first time this year.

Belfast-based KRW Law has been shortlisted in two categories: Legal Aid Firm/Not for profit Agency; and Darragh Mackin, who qualified as a solicitor at the firm in 2014, is a finalist in the Legal Aid Newcomer category. The LALY judges were impressed with Darragh's challenging caseload, handling high-profile criminal defence work, including murder and terror-related offences.

Martha Spurrier, of Doughty Street Chambers who takes over as director of Liberty in June, was shortlisted for Legal Aid Barrister of the Year, in recognition of her work for bereaved families, and challenging cuts to legal aid funding.

Simon Natas was shortlisted for Criminal Defence Lawyer of the Year, after his nomination was supported by the campaign group Joint Enterprise Not Guilty by Association. A string of appeals is expected to follow the Supreme Court's ruling earlier this year that the courts had taken a wrong turn in relation to joint enterprise 32 years ago.

Finalists in the Social and Welfare law category include Lou Crisfield, who ran a furniture-making business before becoming a housing caseworker at Miles & Partners. Her clients included a disabled man living on the second floor, who had only left his flat twice in a year, both times having to be carried down by ambulance staff. With Lou's help, he was rehoused in wheelchair-accessible accommodation.

Leeds-based Lester Morrill fared particularly well this year, with finalists in three award categories: Rhiannon Jones (Legal Aid Newcomer); Keith Coughtrie (Social and Welfare); Gemma Vine (Public Law).

The winners will be announced by Baroness Doreen Lawrence at a ceremony in central London on 7 July 2016.

See full list of finalists, below.

The LALYs are organised by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group, and are into their 14th year.

For more information, contact Carol Storer, LAPG Director: 020 7833 7431; 07432 104088; carol.storer@lapg.co.uk

Fiona Bawdon, LALY Co-ordinator: 07740 644474;
Fiona.bawdon@blueyonder.co.uk

LAPG LALY AWARDS 2016 FINALISTS IN FULL

1) Legal aid Firm/Not-for-profit Agency (Sponsored by The Law Society)

Anti-Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit (ATLEU)
Islington Law Centre
KRW Law

2) Legal Aid Newcomer (Sponsored by Friends of LALY16)

Rhiannon Jones (Lester Morrill)
Darragh Mackin (KRW Law)
Joseph Markus (Garden Court Chambers North)
Tom Stoate (Garden Court Chambers)

3) Legal Aid Barrister (Sponsored by The Bar Council)

Elizabeth Callaghan (Dere Street Chambers)
Sonali Naik (Garden Court Chambers)
Martha Spurrier (Doughty Street Chambers)

4) Social and Welfare (Sponsored by Tikit)

Lou Crisfield (Miles & Partners)
Ian Greenidge (Mary Ward Legal Centre)

Keith Coughtrie (Lester Morrill)
Tim Shotton (TRP Solicitors)

5) Public Law (Sponsored by Irwin Mitchell)

Simon Creighton (Bhatt Murphy)
Gemma Vine (Lester Morrill)
Jane Ryan (Bhatt Murphy)

6) Mental Health (Sponsored by DG Legal)

Philippa Curran (Odonnells Solicitors)
Tam Gill (Gledhill Solicitors)
Carolyn Taylor (TV Edwards)

7) Family Legal Aid (Sponsored by Resolution)

Baljit Bains (Wilson Solicitors)
Naomi Smith (GT Stewart)
Lisa Phillips (Switalskis)

8) Family Mediation (Sponsored by Resolution)

Jackie Norton (National Family Mediation)
Tracy Winstanley (Heaney Watson)

9) Children's Rights (Sponsored by Accesspoint)

Clare Jennings (Matthew Gold)
William Ford (Osbornes)
Rajitha Kumar (South West London Law Centres)

10) Criminal Defence (Sponsored by CILEx)

Simon Natas (Irvine Thanvi Natas Solicitors)
Zoe Gascoyne (Quinn Melville Solicitors)
Edward Caute (FMW Law)

11) Access to Justice through IT (sponsored by The Legal Education Foundation)

Youth Justice Legal Centre
CrowdJustice
Siaro

12. Outstanding Achievement (sponsored by Matrix)

The judges will also be making an award for Outstanding Achievement