**PRESS RELEASE**

8 July 2016

**Hillsborough lawyers honoured at Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards**

The legal teams who acted for families of 96 Hillsborough victims won award for Outstanding Achievement at last night's ceremony, organised by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group.

Opening the evening, LAPG co-chair Jenny Beck described Hillsborough as 'the most significant legal case in a generation'.

One of the Outstanding Achievement award winners, Terry Wilcox from Liverpool-based EAD Solicitors, revealed his brother was a survivor of the 1989 disaster. 'I could easily have been sitting on the other side of the courtroom,' he said.

He, along with the other winners, was presented with his award by Baroness Doreen Lawrence, to a standing ovation from the 500-strong audience.

Speaking earlier in the evening, Baroness Lawrence had likened her family's situation to that of the Hillsborough families.

'It is so important to us to have support from legal aid lawyers. Without that, families like ours would never have got justice,' she said.

Speaking after the ceremony, Trevor Hicks, president of the Hillsborough Family Support Group, whose two teenage daughters died in the disaster, also paid tribute to the lawyers:

'The lawyers who represented the Hillsborough families have transformed my view of lawyers. They fully deserve the Outstanding Achievement Award for the way they handled a complex task with great competence and sensitivity. They worked extremely well with us and with each other. I would like to say that we are extremely grateful to them for a good job very well done.'

More than 60 lawyers from six law firms and six sets of chambers acted in what was the longest inquest in British legal history, lasting over two years, and involving a million pages of evidence. The jury ruled that the fans had been unlawfully killed, and were in no way to blame for the tragedy.

Speaking on stage on behalf of the award winners, Ruth Bundey from Harrison Bundey, talked about the exceptional level of 'comradeship and co-operation' that had developed among the legal teams. 'We were all in it together.'

She also spoke about the families' enduring agony and loss, and their relief as the jury's decision was announced: 'We saw stress and worry lift from the faces of the family members.'

She added that the inquest verdict was not the end of it for the lawyers: 'That must be translated into scrutiny of what comes next. We look forward to prosecutions and new legislation - and real justice for the 96.'

**Outstanding Achievement winners:**

Bindmans Hillsborough Team

Birnberg Peirce Hillsborough Team

Butcher & Barlow Hillsborough Team

Broudie Jackson Canter Hillsborough Team

Doughty Street Chambers Hillsborough Team

EAD Solicitors Hillsborough Team

Garden Court Hillsborough Team

Garden Court North Hillsborough Team

1 Gray's Inn Square Hillsborough Team

Harrison Bundey Hillsborough Team

Mansfield Chambers Hillsborough Team

4 Paper Buildings Hillsborough Team

**Full list of LALY16 award winners:**

1. Legal Aid Newcomer - Darragh Mackin, KRW Law

2. Social & Welfare Lawyer - Lou Crisfield, Miles & Partners

3. Family Legal Aid Lawyer - Baljit Bains, Wilsons Solicitors

4. Family Mediator - Tracy Winstanley, Heaney Watson

5. Legal Aid Barrister - Elizabeth Callaghan, Dere Street Barristers

6. Mental Health Lawyer - Philippa Curran, Odonnells Solicitors

7. Children's Rights - Clare Jennings, Matthew Gold & Company

8. Public Law Lawyer - Simon Creighton, Bhatt Murphy

9. Criminal Defence Lawyer - Simon Natas, Irvine Thanvi Natas Solicitors

10. Legal Aid Firm/Not-for-profit Agency - Anti Trafficking & Labour Exploitation Unit

11. Access to Justice through IT - Crowdjustice

12. Outstanding Achievement - Hillsborough Lawyers (see above)

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**Notes for editors**

1. The Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards are organised on a not-for-profit basis by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group, to celebrate the work of publicly-funded lawyers. They were founded in 2003.

2. LAPG is a membership organisation which represents lawyers delivering publicly-funded services. It operates throughout England and Wales, and members include private practice and not-for-profit organisations, barristers and costs lawyers. www.lapg.co.uk

3. The LALYs are funded by the generosity of our sponsors. Sponsors of the 2016 awards were: Tikit; Resolution; The Bar Council; DG Legal; Accesspoint; Irwin Mitchell; CILEx; The Law Society; The Legal Education Foundation; Matrix Chambers. Thank you to Legal Action Group our media sponsor.