

“2018 LEGAL AID PRACTITIONERS GROUP LEGAL AID LAWYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS – SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED

Public law solicitors who were behind some of last year's most significant legal challenges have been selected as finalists for this year's Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year.

After reading over 800 pages of nominations, the LALY judges met in London earlier this week to make their selections for the 2018 awards.

Finalists in the Public Law award category include: Harriet Wistrich, from Birnberg Peirce, who acted in the landmark judicial review of the parole board's decision to release black cab rapist John Worboys; and Emma Norton, from Liberty, who represents families in the Deepcut Barracks inquests into the deaths of four young army recruits, where judgment is expected in June 2018;

Also selected as a finalist in the Public Law category is Nancy Collins, from Hodge Jones & Allen, who acts on behalf of those with learning disabilities who are caught up in the criminal justice system, and also for bereaved families of people with learning disabilities at inquests.

There are 12 LALY award categories in total (see full list and names of all finalists, below), including Children's Rights, Criminal Defence, Family Legal Aid, and, new for 2018, Practice Management.

Finalists in the Practice Management award include Adam Makepeace, from Tuckers, the biggest criminal defence firm in the country; Richard Prust, from Watson Woodhouse Solicitors in Middlesbrough, which successfully mixes legal aid work with privately funded and conditional fee work; and Sally Thompson, from immigration specialists Luqmani Thompson, who is credited with ensuring the firm's survival, despite swingeing cuts to legal aid.

LAPG director Carol Storer says:

'The LALYs are known for celebrating those lawyers whose skills and commitment directly transform the lives of so many vulnerable people - and rightly so. However, this year, we also wanted to recognise those practice managers who do vital work behind the scenes so firms and agencies can stay afloat and keep providing a service to clients, and whose contribution is rarely publicly acknowledged. As one nomination said, "practice managers do not get cards or flowers from clients at the end of each success".'

The winners will be announced by Baroness Doreen Lawrence OBE at a ceremony in central London on 17 July. See full list of finalists, below.

The LALYs are organised by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group, and are into their 16th 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

LIST OF FINALISTS HERE

1. Children's Rights – Sponsored by Anthony Gold

Alex Rook, Irwin Mitchell LLP
Dan Rosenberg, Simpson Millar LLP
Silvia Nicolaou Garcia, Simpson Millar LLP

2. Criminal Defence – Sponsored by DG Legal

Aika Stephenson, Just for Kids Law
Paris Theodorou, Hodge Jones & Allen LLP
Helen White, Howells Solicitors

3. Family including Mediation – Sponsored by Resolution

Tony McGovern, Creighton & Partners
Lesley Monkhouse, David Gray Solicitors LLP
Philip Wilkins, Hudgell & Partners Solicitors

4. Practice Manager – Sponsored by Accesspoint

Adam Makepeace, Tuckers Solicitors LLP
Richard Prust, Watson Woodhouse Solicitors
Sally Thompson, Luqmani Thompson & Partners

5. Housing – Sponsored by Garden Court Chambers

Kate Hignett, Henry Hyams Solicitors
Giles Peaker, Anthony Gold Solicitors
Miles Richardson, Citizens Advice Southend

6. Legal Aid Barrister – Sponsored by The Bar Council

Martha Cover, Coram Chambers
Alev Giz, 1GC|Family Law
James Stark, Garden Court North Chambers

7. Legal Aid Firm/Not for Profit Agency – Sponsored by The Law Society

Barking & Dagenham Citizens Advice
Ealing Law Centre
Greater Manchester Law Centre

8. Legal Aid Newcomer – Sponsored by Friends of LALY18

Joanna Bennett, Hodge Jones & Allen LLP
Lewis Kett, Duncan Lewis Solicitors
Catherine Osborne, Garden Court Chambers
Ifeanyi Odogwu, Garden Court Chambers

9. Public Law – Sponsored by Irwin Mitchell

Nancy Collins, Hodge Jones & Allen LLP
Emma Norton, Liberty
Harriet Wistrich, Birnberg Peirce

10. Social and Welfare – Sponsored by Tikit

Julie Cornes, Simpson Millar LLP
Sophie Freeman, Coram Children's Legal Centre
Caroline Hurst, Switalskis Solicitors

11. Access to Justice through IT – Sponsored by The Legal Education Foundation

CaseRatio – Tuckers Solicitors LLP
KIM – The Jeanie Project
DIYLaw – Law for Good

The judges will also be making an award for Outstanding Achievement, sponsored by Matrix. There is no shortlist for this award.”