

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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# **2017 LEGAL AID PRACTITIONERS GROUP LEGAL AID LAWYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS – SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED**

The Belfast law firm representing families of the 21 Birmingham pub bombings victims and a solicitor who successfully challenged the Home Secretary over the detention of unaccompanied refugee children are among the finalists for this year's Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards.

**Legal Aid Practitioners Group director Carol Storer says:**

*"It is such a privilege to be able to celebrate the ground breaking, life changing work of access to justice lawyers. The calibre of this year's nominations was staggeringly high, and a real reflection of the expertise, grit and compassion which characterises the legal aid sector."*

The LALYS are run on a not-for-profit basis by LAPG and are now into their 15th year.

KRW Law was nominated as Legal aid firm/Not-for-profit organisation of the year by the Justice4the21 campaign.

**Julie Hambleton whose sister was among the bombing victims, said:**

*'This incredible law firm has provided the families still grieving the loss of their loved ones with the most professional and powerful legal representation. The whole team has been available to us 24 hours a day, every day. They investigate any new information as it becomes available, with a level of immediacy that would put many police forces to shame.'*

Nottingham-based social welfare solicitor Stuart Luke was nominated by the British Refugee Council. His case of AA (Sudan) v Home Secretary led to a dramatic reduction in the number of age-disputed unaccompanied refugee children in detention. Another of his cases involved a dispute with a local authority over whether it should pay for a young care-leaver to be able to put flowers on her baby's grave. Her baby had died after she fell down stairs in dangerous and poorly lit accommodation provided by the council.

Other finalists include Criminal Law Solicitors Association chair Zoe Gascoyne, a partner at Quinn-Melville in Liverpool (Criminal defence award); and Gareth Mitchell of Deighton Pierce Glynn (Social and Welfare award), whose successful high court challenge led to tens of thousands of council tenants in the London Borough of Southwark

receiving refunds on their water rates, after the court agreed they had been overcharged for more than a decade.

The winners will be announced by Baroness Doreen Lawrence at a ceremony in central London on 5 July 2017.

See full list of finalists, below.

The LALYs are organised by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group to celebrate the work of access to justice lawyers.

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LAPG LALY AWARDS 2017 FINALISTS IN FULL

## **1. Children's Rights**

- i. Jennifer Twite, Just for Kids Law
- ii. Solange Valdez-Symonds, Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens/ Migrant Resource Centre
- iii. Melanie Stooks, G T Stewart

## **2. Criminal Defence**

- i. Zoe Gascoyne, Quinn-Melville

ii. Graeme Hydari, Hodge Jones & Allen

iii. Jude Lanchin, Bindmans

### **3. Family Private including Mediation**

i. Mark Gilmartin, Wilson Solicitors

ii. Mary Shaw, David Gray Solicitors

iii. Amardeep Pattni, Sternberg Reed

### **4. Family Public**

i. Sheila Donn, Philcox Gray Solicitors

ii. Deborah Piccos, TV Edwards Solicitors

iii. Heather Thomas, Creighton & Partners

### **5. Immigration and Asylum**

i. Kaweh Beheshtizadeh, Barnes Harrild and Dyer

ii. Toufique Hossain, Duncan Lewis Solicitors

iii. Marcela Navarrete, Wilson Solicitors

### **6. Legal Aid Barrister**

i. Brenda Campbell, Garden Court Chambers

ii. Jesse Nicholls, Doughty Street Chambers

iii. Philip Rule, No5 Chambers

## **7. Legal Aid Firm/Not for Profit Agency**

i. Community Law Partnership

ii. Harrow Law Centre

iii. KRW Law

## **8. Legal Aid Newcomer**

i. Jennifer Blair, No 5 Chambers

ii. Paul Clark, Garden Court Chambers

iii. Ravi Naik, Irvine Thanvi Natas Solicitors

iiii. Tom Royston, Garden Court North

## **9. Public Law**

i. Dr Keith Lomax, Minton Morrill Solicitors

ii. Katy Robinson, Wilsons Solicitors LLP

iii. Christopher Stanley, KRW Law

## **10. Social and Welfare**

i. Laura Hobey-Hamsher, Bindmans LLP

ii. Manjit Mandair, Osbornes Solicitors

iii. Gareth Mitchell, Deighton Pierce Glynn

iiii. Stuart Luke, Bhatia Best

## **11. Access to justice through IT**

i. Advicelocal, Lasa

ii. Law for Good, Legal Geek

iii. Advicenow, Law for Life

## **12. Outstanding achievement**

The judges will also be making an award for outstanding achievement. There are no nominations and no shortlist for this award.

### **Notes for editors:**

1. LAPG is the leading membership organisation for access to justice lawyers. [www.lapg.co.uk](http://www.lapg.co.uk)
2. Tickets for the 5 July ceremony are on sale now: see [here](#).
3. The LALYs are non-profit-making and only possible thanks to our award sponsors: Accesspoint; Bar Council; CILEx; DG Legal; Irwin Mitchell; Law Society; The Legal Education Foundation; Matrix Chambers; Resolution; Tikit; Legal Action Group (media partner).
4. The Legal Aid Newcomer award is sponsored by Friends of LALY17, who donated over £5,000 via crowdfunding. All money raised goes towards the cost of staging the awards and celebrating legal aid lawyers.