

Press release - 23 May 2019

**2019 LEGAL AID PRACTITIONERS GROUP
LEGAL AID LAWYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS –
SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED**

A criminal defence solicitor based at the law centre closest to Grenfell Tower, and a former refugee who brought a string of successful human rights challenges on behalf of migrants last year, have been selected as finalists for this year's Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards.

After reading over 800 pages of nominations, the LALY judges met in London earlier this week to make their selections for the 2019 awards.

The judges selected four finalists in the Public Law category, in recognition of the exceptional calibre of entrants. They are:

- Polly Brendon, of Public Law Project, who has been instrumental in a series of challenges to the LASPO cuts, including relating to exceptional case funding; the payment regime for pre-permission judicial review work; changes to the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme; to restrictions on legal aid for unaccompanied minors. She is praised for combining 'excellent legal analysis with a fearsome eye for detail and order'.
- Sam Genen, of SCOMO LLP, is recognised for his exceptional work ensuring proper protections from illegal strip-searching for women and transgender prisoners. The success of his case earlier this year, *LW v Sodexo and SSHD*, will have far reaching effects, establishing that government cannot contract out its human rights obligations and must ensure safeguards are in place. 'What I really love about Sam is his strong moral compass and willingness to be brave,' says one supporter.
- Raja Rajeswaran Uruthiravinayagan, a public law solicitor and supervisor at Duncan Lewis, whose nomination was supported by a raft of QCs, judges and NGOs. Raja left Sri Lanka due to the war at the age of 13, leaving his family behind. His notable cases last year include a challenge to the Home Office immigration removal window policy, which is described as 'one of the most important cases in a generation in the sphere of immigration and asylum affecting all irregular migrants'.

- Martin Williams is a welfare rights adviser at Child Poverty Action Group with over 20 years experience. His detailed knowledge of the history and development of types of benefits is invaluable to CPAG's legal team. He has conducted his own cases, including the hugely complex Incapacity Benefit-Employment Support Allowance backdating case, heard by the Upper Tribunal, which transformed the lives of many people.

CPAG has had a double success this year.

As well as seeing its welfare rights adviser Martin Williams shortlisted for in the Public Law award category, the charity was selected as a finalist in the Legal Aid Firm/Not for Profit category. Other finalists in this category are Cartwright King and Southwark Law Centre.

There are 11 LALY award categories in total, including Children's Rights, Practice Management and Criminal Defence. See full list and names of all finalists, below.

LAPG CEO Chris Minnoch says:

'It is always humbling and uplifting in equal measure reading about the life-changing work of legal aid lawyers. LAPG is proud to organise these important awards on behalf of the entire grassroots legal aid profession, which give us all a much needed boost. Working in legal aid can be relentlessly difficult but each year the LALYs remind us that legal aid lawyers are not only skilled professionals but are also incredibly driven, committed and compassionate.'

The winners will be announced by Baroness Helena Kennedy QC at a ceremony in central London on 10 July.

The LALYs are organised by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group, and are into their 17th year.

In addition to the LALY awards, the LAPG committee is also making three Special Awards this year, [see separate press release for more details](#). The Special Awards have been proudly sponsored by Doughty Street Chambers.

For more information, contact

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1. Children's Rights – Sponsored by Anthony Gold

Edward Taylor	Osbornes Law
Fiona Couzens	Simpson Millar
Nusrat Uddin	Wilson Solicitors LLP

2. Criminal Defence – Sponsored by DG Legal

Lydia Dagostino	Kellys Solicitors
Kerry Spence	Hodge Jones & Allen Solicitors

Alexandra-Maria Eugenicos North Kensington Law Centre

3. Practice Manager – Sponsored by Accesspoint

Joanne Dalton	MSB Solicitors
Julie Obiamiwe	Foster & Foster
Sally Thompson	Luqmani Thompson & Partners

4. Family including Mediation – Sponsored by Resolution

Paul Szabo	Cartwright King
Keeley Lengthorn	McMillan Williams Solicitors
Philip Wilkins	Hudgell & Partners Solicitors

5. Legal Aid Barrister – Sponsored by The Bar Council

Joanne Cecil	Garden Court Chambers
Martin Hodgson	One Pump Court Chambers
Samuel Jacobs	Doughty Street Chambers

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

Cartwright King
Child Poverty Action Group
Southwark Law Centre

7. Legal Aid Newcomer – Sponsored by Friends of LALY19

Maria Petrova-Collins	Duncan Lewis Solicitors
Una Morris	Garden Court Chambers
Helen Mowatt	Public Interest Law Centre

8. Public Law – Sponsored by Irwin Mitchell

Polly Brendon	Public Law Project
Martin Williams	Child Poverty Action Group
Sam Genen	Scomo LLP
Raja Rajeswaran	
Uruthiravinayagan	Duncan Lewis Solicitors

9. Social and Welfare – Sponsored by Tikit

Monica Kreel	TV Edwards LLP
William Ford	Osbornes Law
Lisa Haythorne	Derbyshire Law Centre

10. Access to Justice through IT - Sponsored by The Legal Education Foundation

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11. The LALY judges will also be making an award for Outstanding Achievement - sponsored by Matrix Chambers. There is no shortlist for this award.