

PRESS RELEASE - 23 May 2019

Legal Aid Practitioners Group to honour Young Legal Aid Lawyers duo; and former mental health lawyer, who now sits in Court of Protection.

Anselm Eldergill, the District Judge who, literally, wrote the book on mental health review tribunals law; and two former YLAL chairs, immigration and family barrister Rachel Francis and public law solicitor Oliver Carter, are to be presented with LAPG Special Awards, at the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards ceremony in July.

This is only the third time the LAPG Committee has chosen to make Special Awards, which celebrate campaigners and others who make an exceptional contribution to legal aid and access to justice. The Special Awards are proudly supported this year by **Doughty Street Chambers**.

The previous recipients of LAPG Special Awards are Baroness Doreen Lawrence OBE, who was honoured in 2012; and criminal practitioners Bill Waddington, Robin Murray, Jon Black and Paul Harris, who were recognised in 2015 for their tireless campaigning against cuts to duty solicitor contracts.

LAPG CEO Chris Minnoch said:

'LAPG Special Awards are reserved for truly exceptional individuals who have achieved incredible things, often alongside of their day to day legal practice. Anselm was a mental health lawyer for 25 years, and is a true legend in this field. He now sits as a District Judge in the Court of Protection, and has been responsible for developing the law in relation to people with impaired capacity, in ways far beyond his formal status as a judge. He has made an incomparable contribution to the protection of those with mental illness. Through his 1997 book 'Mental Health Review Tribunals', he shared his expertise, and equipped many practitioners to represent the most vulnerable clients in a way that would not otherwise have been possible in what was a developing area of law. It explicitly recognised the Tribunal as a way of enforcing civil rights and had a transformative effect. Now that he is on the bench, Anselm has lost none of his approachability, and remains vigilant to ensure people can exercise their rights.

'Rachel and Oliver led Young Legal Aid Lawyers as co-chairs at one of the most challenging times in its history, due to the LASPO cuts and much else besides. They rose to every challenge, displaying great skills of leadership, resilience and diplomacy. Under their stewardship YLAL went from strength to strength and is now recognised by all sides as an important and influential campaigning organisation. They ensured that the distinctive voice of young legal aid lawyers, who are truly the future of this profession, could not be ignored. The fact that they were able to achieve so much with YLAL, alongside carving out successful legal practices is quite remarkable. The profession is lucky to have them. We are confident they are just at the beginning of what will be long and distinguished legal careers, and that they will continue to be an inspiration to lawyers young and old.'

Finalists in the 10 LALY award categories have been published (see below), and the winners will be announced at a ceremony in London on 10 July, along with the name of this year's Outstanding Achievement award winner. For details, [see here](#).

For more information, contact

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Notes for editors

1. LAPG is the leading membership organisation for lawyers and advisers working in the publicly funded sector. www.lapg.co.uk
2. The Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards are organised by LAPG on a not-for-profit basis to celebrate the work of lawyers doing publicly funded work.