

**LEGAL AID  
LAWYER  
OF THE YEAR AWARDS  
FINALIST 2010**

The standard of entrants for the eighth Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year (LALY) awards was exceptionally high, and the finalists are announced below. The winners will be presented with their awards by Cherie Booth QC at a ceremony in central London this month.

## The LALYs 2010 finalists

### Criminal defence lawyer sponsored by Criminal Law Solicitors' Association

**PETER MAHY**

(Howells LLP, Sheffield)

Peter was recognised for his exceptional tenacity in winning the landmark case of *S and Harper v UK*, where the judges ruled unanimously that retaining an innocent person's DNA was a disproportionate interference in the applicant's right to respect for private life.

**JOHN WEATE**

(RMNJ Solicitors, Birkenhead)

John was instrumental in winning a pardon last year for Liverpool FC fan Michael Shields. Michael says: *'Not only had he secured my release from jail and been the best solicitor I could have asked for, he has been a tower of strength and will always be in our family for ever.'*

**JULIAN YOUNG**

(Julian Young & Co, London)

Julian has been a legal aid solicitor for some 33 years. His work in overturning the conviction of Sean Hodgson, jailed in 1982 for murder, won him praise from the Lord Chief Justice. Mr Hodgson was released after Julian's firm provided DNA results which destroyed the case against him.

### Family legal aid lawyer sponsored by Resolution

**CHRISTINA BLACKLAWS**

(Blacklaws Davis LLP, London)

Christina's firm is London's largest specialist family practice. Christina is the child care representative on the Law Society Council. She represents the interests of family lawyers and their clients with huge energy and commitment and is also a respected author.

**NINA HANSEN**

(Freemans Solicitors, London)

Nina specialises in the challenging and emotive area of international parental child abduction. Her clients are often children caught in bitter disputes between their parents. Nina is praised for being *'tactically strong'* and having *'a sound grasp of relevant legal principles'*.

**DAVID JOCKELSON**

(Miles & Partners, London)

David's commitment to his clients is described as *'routinely exceptional'*. Mrs Justice Pauffley wrote about an *'entrenched and complex'* case, where David was able to *'provide advice of exceptional quality so as to achieve a supremely child-focused, consensus outcome'*.

### Immigration lawyer sponsored by NatWest

**AMIE HENSHALL**

(Parker Rhodes Hickmotts, Rotherham)

Amie has been head of Parker Rhodes' immigration department since 2007. Before qualifying as a solicitor, Amie qualified as a barrister and spent several months working at the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal before joining her current firm as a paralegal. She has had many cases before the Court of Appeal and has an excellent success rate.

**JEAN-BENOIT LOUVEAUX**

(Devon Law Centre®, Devon)

Jean-Benoit has gone way beyond the remit of a legal aid lawyer by providing legal assistance to all asylum-seekers in Devon and Cornwall who have been refused controlled legal representation. He founded the innovative Asylum Appellate Project, which showed that 80 per cent of asylum-seekers were being wrongly refused legal aid for their first appeal.

**JACKIE PEIRCE**

(Glazer Delmar Solicitors, London)

Through her work for the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association, Jackie has fought to defend public funding for this crucial but unloved area of practice and is described as *'a lawyer's lawyer'*. One supporter says: *'She is formidably clever and just a treasure'*; another describes her as *'the quintessential legal aid lawyer'*.

### Legal aid barrister sponsored by the Bar Council

**STEPHEN COTTLE**

(Garden Court Chambers, London)

Stephen is a member of his chambers' Gypsy and Traveller team and has been involved in numerous landmark cases. One client, who finally won full planning permission for her site after a ten-year battle, says: *'Mr Cottle is our hero as well as the best barrister we have met and please trust me when I say we have now met a few ...'*

**MARK HENDERSON**

(Doughty Street Chambers, London)

Mark is praised for his *'agility of intellect and encyclopaedic legal knowledge combined with his forensic attention to detail'*. As well as being involved in key cases, he is also a highly-respected author and an active member of the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association.

**RABINDER SINGH QC**

(Matrix, London)

Rabinder has been involved in many legal aid cases, including those covering state discrimination on grounds of race and sexuality, murder and torture by British troops in Iraq, anti-terrorism legislation and refugee status. He is praised as being the *'consummate human rights and public lawyer'*.

## Legal aid firm/not for profit agency sponsored by Matrix

### **BEDWORTH, RUGBY & NUNEATON CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU**

(Bedworth, Rugby and Nuneaton)

'BRANCAB' has shown exceptional commitment to legal aid and increasing access to justice for local people. As well as its three offices, it also runs outreach services at two prisons, offers home visits and has dedicated advice sessions for disabled people.

### **CAMBRIDGE HOUSE LAW CENTRE®**

(London)

Cambridge House's nomination is supported

by the entire housing team at Garden Court Chambers. The centre has gone from strength to strength in recent years. In 2008/09, it took on 344 new cases, mainly in housing, employment and welfare benefits. It won every single one of its eviction cases.

### **JUST FOR KIDS LAW/LAWRENCE & CO**

(London)

The charity Just for Kids Law works in partnership with the legal aid firm Lawrence & Co to provide support, advice and representation to local young people who find themselves in difficulty with the law.

It provides a holistic service, giving advice and help with education, employment, immigration and community care.

### **PIERCE GLYNN**

(London)

Pierce Glynn was nominated by the charity Doctors of the World, which praises its 'outstanding work' on behalf of vulnerable migrants and others denied essential medical treatment. Its work culminated in a Court of Appeal decision which led to new guidance benefiting thousands of vulnerable people.

## Mental health lawyer sponsored by Allen & Overy LLP

### **SOPHY MILES**

(Miles & Partners, London)

Sophy's nomination includes support from the Official Solicitor. One barrister writes: 'All of us who work in legal aid know that there are a handful of absolute stars who lead the rest of us ... Sophy Miles is this person for mental health and mental capacity.' A client writes: 'I am proud to say [she] is my solicitor.'

### **ANDREA SPYROU**

(Duncan Lewis, London)

Andrea has a long-standing commitment to mental health work. While at university, she took up a part-time position as tribunal clerk for the Mental Health Review Tribunal, and also acts as associate hospital manager for the East London Mental Health NHS Trust. She continues to work tirelessly for her clients.

### **RANJIT THALIWAL**

(Thaliwal Bridge Solicitors, Leicester)

Ranjit has taken the firm he founded from scratch in 2002 to its current position of leading provider of mental health legal services in Leicestershire. Over 97 per cent of its work is in mental health and the firm is highly regarded by clients, medical professionals and fellow lawyers alike.

## Social and welfare lawyer sponsored by Trimega Laboratories

### **JOCELYN COCKBURN**

(Hodge Jones & Allen, London)

Jocelyn acted for Catherine Smith whose son died of heat stroke while serving in Iraq in 2003. The Court of Appeal's landmark ruling confirmed that the Human Rights Act 1998 can apply to the battlefield. The Ministry of Defence appealed and a Supreme Court decision is expected soon.

### **KATHY MEADE**

(Tower Hamlets Law Centre®, London)

Kathy 'puts a human face on law', says one testimonial. Stephen Knafner QC describes her as 'one of the finest solicitors in London'. As well as her knowledge of housing law, she is praised for her expertise in asylum support and the interaction between EU law and social welfare assistance.

### **OLIVER STUDDERT**

(MG Law Ltd, Lancaster)

Although Oliver qualified as recently as 2005, he has already built a national reputation in social and welfare law, with a focus on helping young people. One barrister supporter says: 'These are some very difficult cases and this is a track record that would usually be expected of someone much more senior.'

## Young legal aid barrister sponsored by Irwin Mitchell LLP

### **ALISON PICKUP**

(Doughty Street Chambers, London)

Alison works mainly in the area of immigration and related areas of civil actions arising out of immigration detention, asylum support and community care, age disputes, mental health and prison law. She is praised by solicitors and support groups for her hard work, commitment and professionalism.

### **ADAM STRAW**

(Tooks Chambers, London)

Adam is one of the leading inquest lawyers in the country. One solicitor says: 'I genuinely believe that Adam is outstanding.' A client writes: 'At a time which proved to be the most difficult of my entire life, Adam has given me back the hope and belief that the law will abide and justice will be served.'

### **FELICITY THOMAS**

(Westgate Chambers, Lewes)

Felicity is nominated by the charity Shelter for her outstanding work in housing. She is described as a 'rare talent'. Felicity is praised for her ability to communicate clearly and persuasively and for making the client feel at ease and an equal in court.

## Young legal aid solicitor sponsored by the Legal Services Commission

### **KATHERINE CRAIG**

(Christian Khan, London)

Katherine specialises in actions against the police and public law, but her commitment to access to justice spreads beyond her day-to-day practice. She is an active member of Young Legal Aid Lawyers, and was instrumental in setting up the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Legal Aid.

### **GILES PEAKER**

(Anthony Gold, London)

In 2006, Giles set up the *Nearly Legal* website. It has rapidly become the forum for analysis and comment on key legislative and case-law developments by lawyers at all levels, even, on occasion, judges. Giles is on the executive committee of the Housing Law Practitioners Association.

### **CHRYSTAL THEOFANOUS**

(Sills & Betteridge, Lincoln)

Chrystal specialises in representing victims of domestic violence. She goes to exceptional lengths to ensure that clients are supported and have legal representation. Chrystal holds fortnightly clinics at the local Sure Start and runs outreach services across a vast geographical area.

- The panel of judges will also be making an award for **Outstanding achievement**, which is sponsored by Manches LLP.
- The LALYs are organised by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group (LAPG). The principal sponsor of the 2010 awards is the Law Society and *Legal Action* is the awards' media partner. LAPG is grateful to all the sponsors of the LALYs.