

**LEGAL AID
LAWYER
OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

The finalists for the 2015 Legal Aid Practitioners Group's Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards have been announced. This year sees three new awards, access to justice through IT, children's rights, and public law. The calibre of entrants remains as high as ever.

Legal aid's 2015 roll call of honour

Children's rights (sponsored by Accesspoint)

NOEL ARNOLD

(Coram Children's Legal Centre)



Noel specialises in all areas of children law, including care proceedings and adoption. He is widely admired and

respected. One client wrote: 'At times, I felt I was hitting a brick wall, but you were always there supporting us.'

CHARLOTTE IMAGE

(Wainwright & Cummins)



Charlotte's work ethic and client-centred approach are genuine and heartfelt. An

active member of Young Legal Aid Lawyers, she has already made a big impression in her chosen field of family and childcare work.

RACHEL KNOWLES

(Just for Kids Law)

Rachel (pictured right) is a highly skilled litigator and dedicated to helping young people who have been failed by agencies which are meant to be supporting them. She battles fearlessly on their behalf, obtaining housing and other essential services and support.



ZUBIER YAZDANI

(Deighton Pierce Glynn)

Zubier is tireless in his efforts to challenge injustices endured by vulnerable children, particularly those who have been trafficked or sexually exploited, many of whom are denied their fundamental rights here and abroad.

Criminal defence (sponsored by CILEx)

MARK ASHFORD

(TV Edwards)



Mark is the doyen of youth justice work and has literally written the book in this vital but often overlooked field of criminal law. His knowledge and commitment to his young clients is legendary.

JENNY DURHAM

(Swain & Co)

Miscarriages of justice can only be identified and rectified if a dedicated lawyer is prepared to devote the time and expertise needed. Jenny is just such a lawyer. She specialises in criminal appeals work and is tireless in her dedication to clients.

UMAR ZEB

(JD Spicer Zeb)



Umar is described by one QC as 'focused, dedicated and industrious'. Another says he is 'an outstanding criminal lawyer'. 'He has not forgotten his roots and is a remarkable man. An inspiration to those of disadvantaged backgrounds.'

Public law (sponsored by DG Legal)

ROOPA TANNA

(Islington Law Centre)



Roopa is an immigration and asylum lawyer who meets her clients as equals. She is a brilliant lawyer, ferocious litigator, and defender of legal aid. As well as focusing on clients individually, she thinks strategically, to maximise the impact her cases have.

STEFAN VNUK

(Lawrence Lupin)



Stefan undertakes all types of immigration work, conducting judicial reviews and bringing cases in the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court. He has a string of reported cases to his name, and his work is often urgent, to prevent his clients' removal or where clients are detained in immigration removal centres.

MARCIA WILLIS-STEWART

(Birnberg Peirce)

Marcia (pictured above) somehow manages to combine being her firm's managing partner with taking on some of the highest profile, controversial and important cases of our age. She acted for the families of Mark Duggan, Jean Charles de Menezes and 75 Hillsborough victims.

LOUISE WHITFIELD

(Deighton Pierce Glynn)

Louise was nominated by Inclusion London, which works on behalf of disabled people. She has changed the face of public law by a series of test cases using the public sector equality duty (PSED) to advance the rights of disabled people.



SARAH BOOKER

Family legal aid (sponsored by Resolution)

SARAH COVE
(Miles & Partners)

Sarah is a solicitor-advocate, handling mainly public law proceedings for children and young people. She is praised by guardians for her ability to develop a rapport with young clients, ensuring they feel part of the proceedings.

SARAH MILLER
(Tozers)

Sarah is an associate legal executive, specialising in domestic violence. She works closely with the local DV service and last year set up Dart (Domestic Abuse Response Team) which operates out of Tozers' Newton Abbot office.

REBECCA STEVENS
(Withy King)

Rebecca is an associate solicitor-advocate. She was praised by the president of the Family Division, Sir James Munby, last year when she acted free of charge for a father with learning difficulties, at risk of losing his child, who did not qualify for legal aid.

Family mediation (sponsored by Resolution)

DENISE INGAMELLS
(TV Edwards)

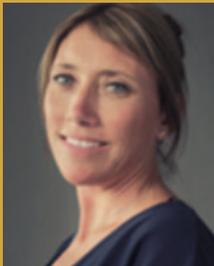
Denise has headed up her firm's mediation department for five years and is a trustee for National Family Mediation. She is author of the CAFCASS-run 'separated parents information programme', and is praised for her passion and dedication.



member says: 'The nomination ought to be for canonisation.'

TRACY WINSTANLEY
(Heaney Watson)

Tracy set up her firm's mediation department in 2012, in anticipation of the LASPO cuts, just when many mediators were going in the opposite direction and getting out of the work. She is described as 'the bees knees' in getting things done.



MARGARET PENDLEBURY
(MiD Mediation)

Margaret is a longstanding champion of mediation services and has been a mediator since 1993. Her success rate for agreements reached is 89 per cent. A staff

Social and Welfare (sponsored by Tikit)

LISA HAYTHORNE
(Derbyshire Law Centre)



Lisa started out as a housing case worker and qualified last year as a solicitor. She is a tireless campaigner for the law centre movement and for justice for the poor and disadvantaged. She has a down-to-earth and no-nonsense approach.

JO RENSHAW
(Turpin & Miller)

Jo is a brilliant immigration lawyer and described by colleagues as 'the glue that keeps the team together' in challenging times. Her nomination is supported by umpteen clients, lawyers and campaigners. An immigration judge praises her 'calm resilience'.

MICHAEL SPENCER
(Child Poverty Action Group)

Michael brings test cases to help children in poverty, and specialises in public law and welfare benefits, all the way from tribunals to the UK and European appeal courts. He is energetic and highly effective at identifying test cases.



Housing (sponsored by Irwin Mitchell)

JAYESH KUNWARDIA
(Hodge Jones & Allen)

Jayesh specialises in disrepair, possession and homelessness cases, and was nominated by the Nextdoor Project, run by the Zaccchaeus 2000 Trust. He was behind 'the most significant housing case of the year', *Titinia Nzolamesco v Westminster Council*.

PARMINDER SANGHERA
(Community Law Partnership)

Parminder works with the Travellers Advice Team, and deals with evictions, homelessness, problems on rented sites, and is a leading expert on planning law, in relation to Gypsies and Travellers. She has been involved in two groundbreaking judicial reviews.

SARA STEPHENS
(Anthony Gold)

Sara is an executive member of the Housing Law Practitioners Association and convener of its legal aid working group. She is an active campaigner against legal aid reforms and writes regularly on housing issues. Her commitment is described as 'outstanding'.

Legal aid newcomer (sponsored by Anglia DNA)

EMMA CORDOCK
(AFG Law)

Emma has run her firm's Bury office's family department since it opened, and has thrown herself into forging links with the community and local groups. She is active on Resolution's legal aid committee and is described as 'epitomising the legal aid lawyer'.

CONNOR JOHNSTON
(Garden Court Chambers)

Connor is a housing, community care and public law barrister, who was called to the bar in 2010. He has made an extraordinary impact and his commitment to legal aid clients has been unwavering. He recently stood down as co-chair of Young Legal Aid Lawyers

AISLING NI CHUINN
(Wilsons)

Aisling is due to qualify this summer but is already blazing a trail as an asylum lawyer. Raza Husain QC, who worked with her on 'two difficult cases', says: 'I have been in practice over 20 years, and found it inspirational to work with her.'

Legal aid barristers (sponsored by the Bar Council)

IAN BROWNHILL (No 5 Chambers)

Ian is nominated by the Prisoners' Advice Service and, although still a relative newcomer to the profession, is 'knowledgeable and fierce in pursuit' of his clients' cases. One says: 'He seemed to be the only person who actually listened to us.'



RANJIV KHUBBER (1 Pump Court)

Ranjiv (pictured left) has worked tirelessly for legal aid clients for 20 years, and is known as an immigration and public law barrister. He skillfully reminds the court it is their job to protect the vulnerable, even if they are from a group vilified by the press.

ALISON PICKUP (Doughty Street)

Alison (pictured right) is described as 'wonderfully kind and caring' and 'a rising star at the Bar'. She was junior counsel in the key exceptional funding case of *Gudanaviciene* and is known for her immigration work. She has a rare gift both for legal detail and explaining complex law to clients.



Legal aid firm/not-for-profit agency (sponsored by the Law Society)

A & N CARE

A&N Care is an innovative, Sheffield-based niche family law firm, set up by a former local



authority solicitor and a former social worker. Elizabeth Newbold and Helen Alder aim to provide the best legal representation and holistic support to their clients.

CENTRAL ENGLAND LAW CENTRE

Central England Law Centre, based in Coventry and Birmingham, has 41 staff and covers 10 areas of social welfare

law, nearly all under legal aid contract. Stephen Knafler QC says it has proved to be 'brilliant at strategic test case litigation'.

DEIGHTON PIERCE GLYNN

Deighton Pierce Glynn prides itself on being a campaigning firm, focusing on human rights and the welfare of its clients. One migrant support group says: 'Working with DPG has restored

our confidence in the British legal system.'

EDWARDS DUTHIE

Edwards Duthie has around 100 staff at six offices across east London and Essex, and covers civil, family and crime. It is passionately committed to defending the rights of local people and has strong community links.

Access to justice through IT (sponsored by Legal Education Foundation)

COURTNAV

(Royal Courts of Justice Advice Bureau & Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer)

CourtNav was developed as an online tool following an upsurge in demand for family advice following LASPO. Using CourtNav, 45-minute face-to-face sessions are reduced to around 10-minute solicitor reviews of information submitted online.
www.courtnav.org.uk

FISHER JONES GREENWOOD

This Essex-based firm has put itself at the forefront of technology innovation to increase access to justice. Together with Essex University, it has spent nearly a year redesigning and streamlining its business processes, so that staff can work more quickly and efficiently.

RIGHTSNET (LASA)

Rightsnet is one of the longest standing, most successful online services around. Founded in 1998, it was a visionary project, grasping the potential of the internet to support social welfare law advisers at a time when many organisations barely had computers.
www.rightsnet.org.uk

ROAD TRAFFIC REPRESENTATION

An innovative service offering free initial online assessment for road traffic offences, supplemented by paid for telephone advice or representation, where needed. The LALY judges thought it was an interesting model which could be adapted to other areas of law.
www.roadtrafficropresentation.com

■ The judges will also be making an award for outstanding achievement (sponsored by Matrix Legal Aid Link).

■ *Legal Action* is the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards media partner.

■ The winners will be announced on 1 July 2015.



The Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards are organised on a not-for-profit basis by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group to celebrate the work of lawyers and advisers in this increasingly challenging field. The awards are into their 13th year. LAPG is the leading membership organisation for practitioners in the publicly-funded sector, and provides a wide range of services and support. It is at the forefront of campaigning to protect vital client services. www.lapg.co.uk