

## LEGAL AID LAWYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

# Legal aid's 2018 hall of fame

**Finalists in this year's Legal Aid Practitioners Group Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards have been announced. New for 2018 is the practice management award, to recognise those whose work behind the scenes is vital for keeping legal aid firms afloat.**

### Children's rights sponsored by Anthony Gold



**Silvia Nicolaou Garcia**  
Simpson Millar

Silvia is just five years qualified. She is described as a star for her work for children in community care and public law, and has a particular interest in acting for young victims of trafficking. Her clients are often highly vulnerable, and she has the empathy and sensitivity to win their confidence, and the ability to explain their rights in simple terms.

**Alex Rook**  
Irwin Mitchell

Alex has acted in some of the most important disability-related legal aid cases in recent years. These include the Nascot Lawn judicial review ([2018]



EWHC 267 (Admin)), which established that respite care provided to severely disabled children is a 'health service' under the NHS Act 2006, thus safeguarding vital provision for many families. He leads his firm's public law and human rights team.



**Dan Rosenberg**  
Simpson Millar

Dan is praised for his exceptional ability to get excellent results for his clients, often children out of education who are homeless or care-leavers in need of ongoing support. He has a knack of persuading local authorities to change their decisions, often within hours, where other solicitors have been trying and failing for weeks.

### Criminal defence sponsored by DG Legal

**Aika Stephenson**  
Just for Kids Law



In 2017, under Aika's stewardship, Just for Kids Law became the first UK charity to hold a criminal legal aid contract and, since then, she has acted for 170 young people caught up in the criminal justice system. Her entire career as a defence lawyer has been focused on giving holistic representation to children and young people.

**Helen White**  
Howells Solicitors

Helen is a chartered legal executive advocate specialising in the most serious offences, including murder, armed robbery and sexual assault, who also acts for clients charged with public order offences, particularly anti-fracking protesters. She is praised for her compassion and unfailing commitment to publicly funded work.

**Paris Theodorou**  
Hodge Jones & Allen

Paris is a barrister-turned-solicitor who now defends those accused of serious crime in complex cases.

He was instrumental last year in exposing failings in CPS disclosure when he uncovered mobile phone evidence that fatally undermined the prosecution case against his client, Samson Makele, who was accused of rape.



### Legal aid newcomer sponsored by Friends of LALY18

**Joanna Bennett**  
Hodge Jones & Allen

Joanna specialises in claims against the police and other public authorities. She is just three years qualified and has already been involved in landmark cases, including the successful Court of Appeal challenge *LL* ([2017] EWCA Civ 237), where she won damages from the lord chancellor for a man who had been sent to prison for contempt by the judge during family proceedings.



**Catherine Osborne**  
Garden Court Chambers

Catherine practises in criminal defence and public law challenges. She was called to the bar seven years ago, and has shown unwavering determination to uphold the rule of law and preserve the presumption of innocence. She appears in the Court of Appeal and advises on references to the Criminal Cases Review Commission.



**Lewis Kett**  
Duncan Lewis

Lewis works in the public law team at Duncan Lewis's Harrow office and has been involved in a formidable catalogue of high-profile cases. He was lead solicitor in a successful challenge to the Home Office policy of disregarding torture by non-state agents when considering whether asylum-seekers should be detained.



**Ifeanyi Odogwu**  
Garden Court Chambers

Ifeanyi has forged a reputation as first choice of barrister for inquests arising from state custody which engage article 2. In the past year, he has achieved seven narrative inquest verdicts where neglect or significant failures were identified as contributing to the deaths. He 'lives the case' and will 'fight for the family's concerns at every turn'.

## Legal aid barrister sponsored by The Bar Council

**Martha Cover**  
Coram Chambers



During her nearly 40-year career at the bar, Martha has been involved in many landmark family cases, helping to ensure public bodies are held accountable and families are not broken up unnecessarily. She is honorary lifetime vice-president of the Association of Lawyers for Children and is a tireless advocate for children's rights. She is praised for her 'hopeful persistence and forensic skills'.

**Alev Giz**  
1GC | Family Law



Alev does the full range of children work, and is described as having 'an eye for justice, an eye for fairness, an eye for detail and knowing a good case when she sees one'. Her case of *F* ([2015] EWCA Civ 882) is now one of the leading judgments considered by the courts in relocation matters. She handles cases with great sensitivity, and wins praise from judges for her erudite analysis of complex issues.

**James Stark**  
Garden Court North Chambers

James acts mainly in housing and public law cases. He is described as having 'a legal brain the size of the moon' with a social conscience to match. One supporter says James's response to realising the Supreme Court is against him is generally 'well, they're obviously wrong', and usually he will keep appealing until he has proved just that.

■ The judges will also be making an award for **Outstanding Achievement** (sponsored by Matrix).

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

■ The winners will be announced by **Baroness Doreen Lawrence** at a ceremony in central London on **17 July 2018**. A limited number of tickets are available on general sale, see: [www.lapg.co.uk/lalys/](http://www.lapg.co.uk/lalys/).

## Family including mediation sponsored by Resolution

**Tony McGovern**  
Creighton & Partners



Tony has over 20 years of experience in his field and specialises in cases of the utmost complexity. His clients are often troubled and damaged, and he works tirelessly to ensure their voices are heard. In 2017, he successfully appealed a circuit court decision, which meant the mother and her children had the chance to have their article 6 rights upheld.

**Lesley Monkhouse**  
David Gray Solicitors

Lesley represents children and family members in private and public law cases. Her cases are complex and difficult, and in the past few months have included a challenge over whether religious belief should be a bar to adoption, and whether a father had a right to be told that a child he didn't know about was the subject of court proceedings.



**Philip Wilkins**  
Hudgell & Partners

Most of Philip's clients are parents involved in care proceedings facing the loss of their children. He is 'a thoroughly decent man and superlative public children lawyer'. Philip acted for one learning-disabled mother who would have lacked capacity were it not for his ability to communicate with her and win her trust.

## Legal aid firm/not-for-profit agency sponsored by The Law Society

**Barking & Dagenham Citizens Advice**



Barking & Dagenham Citizens Advice is at the heart of the community, and has specialist teams advising on housing, debt and welfare benefits. Its staff deal with desperate situations on a daily basis and its nomination was supported by many client testimonials. One wrote: 'We cannot thank them enough for making our living environment safe, clean and healthy.'

**Ealing Law Centre**

Ealing Law Centre is just five years old and is the only not-for-profit practice in this west London borough. It was set up with a grant of just £5,000, but had big ambitions right from the outset,



which it has more than achieved. It is described as 'a model of what access to justice should look like rather than a poor reflection of what legal aid still provides'.

**Greater Manchester Law Centre**

Greater Manchester Law Centre offers specialist welfare rights advice and representation to the most disadvantaged people in its area and since January 2017 has reclaimed over £500,000 in benefits for disabled and unemployed claimants. One of its clients wrote: 'I think the work you do is incredible. I wish the world was full of people like you!'



## Practice management sponsored by Accesspoint

**Adam Makepeace**  
Tuckers Solicitors



Tuckers has 14 offices and has grown significantly in recent years, including by acquiring the criminal law departments of other firms. Through use of innovation and digitisation, Adam has made it his mission to ensure Tuckers can continue to provide quality defence services, despite repeated cuts in fees. He is praised for his 'entrepreneurial spirit'.

**Richard Prust**  
Watson Woodhouse Solicitors

A qualified accountant, Richard joined the firm in 2015 when it had just won crime tenders, only to see them overturned, and the LASPO cuts were continuing to bite. He reversed its strategy of contraction and successfully embarked on a programme of growth based on mixed sources of income. He secured Lexcel accreditation in record time.



**Sally Thompson**  
Luqmani Thompson



Sally has run this small, highly-regarded immigration firm for nearly 20 years, ensuring it can fulfil its guiding principle of securing access to justice for its clients. She is praised for her innovative and robust management style, and for implementing practical systems to enable the firm to remain commercially viable while delivering the highest-quality advice.



**Housing** sponsored by Garden Court Chambers**Kate Hignett**

Henry Hyams Solicitors

Kate came to law late, but has wasted no time in making her mark. She is described as most at home covering the possession list as duty solicitor at the County Court at Leeds, where she is tireless in trying to keep a roof over the heads of her mainly poor, vulnerable clients. She is 'everything a legal aid lawyer should be' and more.

**Giles Peaker**

Anthony Gold

Over the past decade, Giles has worked on cases from the Supreme Court down, on a whole range of housing issues, including homelessness, housing benefit, immigration status and council tax. He is also an active campaigner for housing law reform and his Nearly Legal blog is described as 'absolutely indispensable' to practitioners nationwide.

**Miles Richardson**

Citizens Advice Southend

Miles works tirelessly to promote social inclusion and improve the lives of clients through housing casework and supporting other advisers. He is a role model to colleagues because of his expertise, work ethic and unwavering dedication to ensuring access to justice. He is respected by solicitors in private practice and held in great affection by his clients.

**Public law** sponsored by Irwin Mitchell**Nancy Collins**

Hodge Jones &amp; Allen



Nancy qualified at Clifford Chance before moving to Liberty, and has been a

partner at Hodge Jones & Allen since 2016. She is nominated for her cases under the Human Rights Act 1998 involving vulnerable people with learning difficulties who have been neglected or mistreated by their carers. Much of her casework is demanding and emotionally gruelling.

**Harriet Wistrich**

Birnberg Peirce

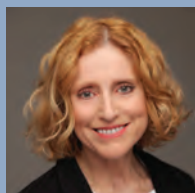


Harriet is a creative and fearless civil litigation lawyer, and has been behind some of the most ground-breaking cases in recent years, including the challenge to the Parole Board decision in the Worboys case ([2018] EWHC 694 (Admin)). She has an 'innate sense of justice', and 'will only accept a "no" when it comes from a judge at the European Court of Human Rights'.

**Emma Norton**

Liberty

Emma manages Liberty's strategic litigation and acts in human rights test cases and interventions. She works with bereaved families at article 2 inquests and is described as being able 'to console personal tragedy by confronting state failings and demanding better for the future'. She is representing families in the Deepcut Barracks inquests.

**Social and welfare** sponsored by Tikit**Julie Cornes**

Simpson Millar

Julie specialises in community care and mental capacity cases, and is known for acting for particularly vulnerable clients. She is a solicitor advocate and sits as a part-time judge in the Asylum Support and Social Security Appeal Tribunals. The parents of a very severely and multiply-disabled adult son said Julie offered support when no one else was willing to help.

**Caroline Hurst**

Switalskis Solicitors

Caroline is a chartered legal executive specialising in mental capacity law and practises in the Court of Protection. She has a particular interest in issues around capacity to consent to sexual relationships or marriage, and is praised for 'steadfastly representing her clients with sensitivity' and 'her desire to place them at the heart of the proceedings in every sense'.

**Sophie Freeman**

Coram Children's Legal Centre

Sophie specialises in working with children and young people in asylum and human rights cases. She often works with victims of trafficking and abuse and clients who have severe mental health conditions. She is praised for her 'calm thoughtfulness to meet the young person's needs at the level they can manage'.

**Access to justice through IT**  
sponsored by The Legal Education Foundation**CaseRatio**

Tuckers Solicitors



This innovative software package facilitates collaboration between solicitors' firms, police station representatives and advocates in the magistrates' and Crown courts. It includes an online diary, map and register of members, and can be used on a standalone basis or to enable closer working. Tuckers makes it available free to other firms.

**KIM**

The Jeanie Project

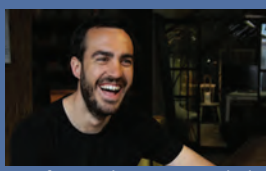
Although still at the pilot stage, this project aims to provide software developed by Riverview Law that can be used by civil society organisations to put vulnerable people in touch with lawyers and legal advisers. It will save referral fatigue, and cut down the amount of time both the client and agencies spend on gathering necessary information.



the jeanie project  
access to justice through active goodwill

**DIY Law**

Law for Good



Law for Good's Jimmy Vestbirk

DIY Law, previously known as Help4Lips, provides clear and accurate information in a range of areas, including debt, family and consumer law. It took what was described as 'a poor brochure website' and transformed it into one that is intended to be 'responsive, refreshed and optimised'. All the work was donated, so there was no cost to the charity.