

PRESS RELEASE - 19 May 2021

## LAPG announces Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards 2021 finalists

**A housing barrister who is playing a leading role in challenging 'No DSS' landlords; and a solicitor who defended the parents of 'Jihadi Jack' Letts, have been honoured by this year's LALY awards judges.**

The pair are among 26 individuals and nine organisations chosen as finalists in the Legal Aid Practitioners Group 2021 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards.

2021 sees the introduction of a new Disability Rights award: finalists selected for this inaugural award are: **Amy Butler**, Atkins & Palmer; **Kate Jackson**, MJC Law; and **Kirsty Stuart**, Irwin Mitchell.

Organisations shortlisted this year cover a wide geographical spread, including: **Watkins & Gunn**, in Cardiff; **Law Centre Northern Ireland**, in Belfast; **Family Law Company**, in Exeter; and **Cartwright King**, in the Midlands.

**Chris Minnoch, CEO of LAPG, which organises the LALY awards on a not-for-profit basis to celebrate the work of social justice lawyers, says:**

*'This year's finalists give an insight into the range, depth and breadth of the incredible life-changing work that social justice lawyers do - and the vital role they play in ensuring access to justice for individuals, families and communities. It is testimony to the importance of the LALY awards to the legal aid sector that we had a bumper crop of compelling and inspiring nominations this year - despite the extreme pressures we are all facing due to the pandemic.'*

Finalists in the Legal Aid Barrister category are: **Tessa Buchanan** (Garden Court Chambers), recognised for a run of cases establishing that banning DSS tenants is discriminatory against women and disabled people; **Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh** (Matrix Chambers), who helped overturn the convictions of the 'Stansted 15' protestors; and **Stephen Lue** (Garden Court Chambers), praised for his skilful handling of complex child abduction cases.

Criminal defence finalists are: solicitor-advocate **Anna Renou** (ITN Solicitors), who played a key role in defending John Letts and Sally Lane for sending money to their son Jack Letts, who was accused of supporting terrorism; **Caroline Liggins** (Hodge Jones & Allen), a youth justice specialist and founding member of Women in Criminal Law; **Suzanne O'Connell** (Tuckers), who has led the way in challenging police over their use of grime music videos as prosecution evidence.

The winners will be announced at the LALY21 ceremony to be broadcast live on 6 July. Registration is free, and open to all:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-2021-virtual-legal-aid-lawyer-of-the-year-awards-tickets-141808734743>

LALY20 was our first online event, and the ceremony has now been watched 4,000 times: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XluqzBlh-z0>

**See below for a full list of finalists in our 12 award categories:**

**1. Disability Rights (sponsored by Bidwell Henderson)**

Amy Butler - Atkins & Palmer  
Kate Jackson - MJC Law  
Kirsty Stuart - Irwin Mitchell

**2. Criminal Defence (sponsored by Doughty Street Chambers)**

Anna Renou - ITN Solicitors  
Caroline Liggins - Hodge, Jones & Allen  
Suzanne O'Connell - Tuckers Solicitors

**3. Family (sponsored by Resolution)**

Cris McCurley - Ben Hoare Bell  
Novlet Levy - Goodman Ray  
Oliver Conway - Oliver Fisher Solicitors

**4. Housing (sponsored by One Pump Court)**

Adrian Brazier - Barking & Dagenham Citizens Advice  
Jeinsen Lam - South West London Law Centres  
Kathleen Cosgrove - Greater Manchester Law Centre

**5. Legal Aid Barrister (sponsored by The Bar Council)**

Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh - Matrix Chambers  
Stephen Lue - Garden Court Chambers  
Tessa Buchanan - Garden Court Chambers

**6. Legal Aid Team (sponsored by Accesspoint)**

Cartwright King Mental Health Team  
Duncan Lewis Public Law Team  
Matthew Gold & Co Public Law & Community Care Team

## **7. Legal Aid Firm/Not-for-profit Agency (sponsored by The Law Society)**

Centre for Women's Justice  
MJC Law  
Howard League for Penal Reform

## **8. Regional Legal Aid Firm/Not-for-profit Agency (sponsored by The Legal Education Foundation)**

Law Centre Northern Ireland  
Family Law Company  
Watkins & Gunn

## **9. Legal Aid Newcomer (sponsored by CILEx)**

Alice Irving - Doughty Street Chambers  
Audrey Cherryl Mogan - Garden Court Chambers  
Bianca St Prix - Hodge Jones & Allen  
Killian Moran - Kesar & Co Solicitors

## **10. Public Law (sponsored by DG Legal)**

Maria Thomas - Duncan Lewis Solicitors  
Nkiru Okafor - Wilson Solicitors  
Rakesh Singh - Public Law Project

## **11. Social Welfare (sponsored by Garden Court Chambers)**

Imogen Townley - Wilson Solicitors  
Jeni Lloyd - TRP Solicitors  
Kristen Bender - Tuckers Solicitors  
Andrew Sperling - SL5 Legal/Tuckers Solicitors

## **12. Outstanding Achievement (sponsored by Matrix Chambers)**

No shortlist for this award

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT**

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### **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

1. LAPG is the leading membership organisation for legal aid lawyers, providing a wide range of services and support.  
[www.lapg.co.uk](http://www.lapg.co.uk)

2. The Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards are into their 19th year. They are organised on a not-for-profit basis by LAPG, and are the only awards aimed solely at lawyers doing publicly-funded work.