



LAPG announces finalists in 2025 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards!

A chartered legal exec praised for her work representing Category A prisoners; a personal assistant to a busy human rights department 'who always shows patience in the face of short-tempered-ness'; and the solicitor who secured a 'blistering' inquest ruling following the death of a two-year old, which was the first fatality linked to the Home Office's 'no recourse to public funds' policy, are among those shortlisted for this year's Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards.

The Legal Aid Practitioners Group, which organises the LALYs on a not-for-profit basis, is proud to announce the individuals and organisations selected as finalists in this year's awards. Full list of finalists, below.

The LALYs, now into their 23rd year, are a unique celebration of the work of those on the social justice frontline. The winners in these nine categories will be announced at a central London ceremony on 4 July, along with the winner of the 2025 LALY award for Outstanding Achievement, which is the highest honour the LALY judges can bestow.

LAPG CEO Chris Minnoch says:

'Reading about the achievements of this year's finalists really tells you everything you need to know about the breadth, depth and importance of the work done by those on the legal aid frontline. And they do so despite the considerable barriers presented by the legal aid scheme, such as low fees and the recent data breach impacting on all areas of legal aid work. Their nominations are a testament to the professionalism, resilience and expertise, not just to them, but of the entire social justice sector. We at LAPG send our warmest congratulations to everyone shortlisted.'

LALY25 finalists include:

- Yasmin Karabasic, from SL5 Legal, a legal exec who specialises in representing Category A prisoners, who had a string of successes last year, including securing freedom for an IPP prisoner, and a landmark ruling which led to the release of a terminally ill prisoner on compassionate grounds.

Yasmin is shortlisted for the always hard-fought **Legal Aid Newcomer** award. Other finalists in this category are: Samantha Maher, Community Law Partnership; Nadia O'Mara, Garden Court Chambers; Katie Sinclair, Rook Irwin Sweeney LLP.

- Rachael Kirk, who provides support to around 18 fee-earners in Leigh Day's human rights department. Colleagues describe Rachael as 'the glue that holds our teams together', 'an integral member of the department', and 'truly irreplaceable'.



Rachael is shortlisted for the **Legal Aid Support Staffer/Support team** award. Other finalists in this category are: Kuda Tayengwa, ATLEU; Public Law and Human Rights Support Team, Irwin Mitchell.

- Juliet Spender, a public law solicitor at Irwin Mitchell, who acted in an 'utterly harrowing' inquest for a bereaved mother, whose two-year-old daughter drowned in a bin. Social workers had previously refused to provide foster care while the toddler's mother - who had no access to public funds due to her immigration status - was in hospital with her unwell baby.

Juliet is shortlisted for the **Public Law** award. Other finalists in this category are: Shaun Livingston, TV Edwards Solicitors; Sabrina Simpson, Coram Children's Legal Centre; Jennifer Wright, Rook Irwin Sweeney.

Full list of LALY25 finalists

1. Legal Aid Newcomer - sponsored by Friends of LALY25

Yasmin Karabasic - SL5 Legal
Samantha Maher - The Community Law Partnership
Nadia O'Mara - Garden Court Chambers
Katie Sinclair - Rook Irwin Sweeney LLP

2. Legal Aid Support Staffer/Support Team - sponsored by Accesspoint Legal

Rachael Kirk - Leigh Day
Kuda Tayengwa - ATLEU
Public Law and Human Rights Support Team - Irwin Mitchell LLP

3. Family Legal Aid incl. Children's Rights - sponsored by Resolution

Mary Richardson - Miles and Partners LLP
Beverley Watkins - Watkins Solicitors
Lynsey Welsh - Cartwright King

4. Criminal Defence - sponsored by Communicourt

Manisha Knights - MK Law
Emma McClure - SL5 LEGAL
Georgia Patterson - TV Edwards Solicitors

5. Legal Aid Barrister - sponsored by The Bar Council

Justin Ageros - 4PB
Ali Bandegani - Garden Court Chambers
Lucy Masoud - 33 Bedford Row



6. Legal Aid Firm/Not for Profit Agency - supported by The Law Society

Asylum Aid

GT Stewart Solicitors and Advocates

Phoenix Law Human Rights Lawyers

7. Immigration & Asylum Law - sponsored by Garden Court Chambers

Molly Nicolson - Asylum Aid

Laura Smith - JCWI

Milla Walker - Luqmani Thompson LLP

8. Social Welfare Law - sponsored by Doughty Street Chambers

Laura Coyle - Turpin Miller

Rachel Hogan - Children's Law Centre

Kevin Long - Hackney Community Law Centre

Erika Wright - Irwin Mitchell LLP

9. Public Law - sponsored by One Pump Court

Shaun Livingston - TV Edwards Solicitors

Sabrina Simpson - Coram Children's Legal Centre

Juliet Spender - Irwin Mitchell

Jennifer Wright - Rook Irwin Sweeney LLP

10. Outstanding Achievement - sponsored by Matrix Chambers

There is no shortlist for this award.

Along with our category sponsors, the LALY awards are also generously sponsored and supported by DG Legal, Leigh Day, 39 Essex Chambers, The Legal Education Foundation, Miles & Partners and our media sponsor Legal Action Group.

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