



LAPG announces winners of the 2026 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards

A lawyer acting for Palestinian rights protesters; a family solicitor doing groundbreaking work with Gypsies and Travellers; and a defence lawyer challenging music video evidence in criminal trials, were among those honoured at this year's LALY awards.

Now into their 24th year, the awards are organised by Legal Aid Practitioners Group on a not-for-profit basis to celebrate lawyers at the social justice coalface.

Full list of winners, below.

The top award - for **Outstanding Achievement** - went to **Hillsborough Law Now**, a coalition which has been the driving force behind legislation to bring about a sea change in public accountability following disasters.

Charlotte Hennessy, whose father Jimmy was unlawfully killed at Hillsborough received a standing ovation, as she told the 500-strong audience:

*'It is an honour and a privilege to be in a room full of so many amazing people who hold those in positions of power to account...it is not just a change of law. It's about a change of culture. A change in the way the bereaved and survivors are treated and a change in morals. Please be part of that change. Hillsborough law **now!**'*

The Public Office (Accountability) Bill had its second reading in November 2025 but is not now expected to become law until late 2026 at the earliest.

LALY compere, broadcaster Symeon Brown, said:

'In making this award, the LALY judges want to recognise the utterly Herculean efforts needed to take the campaign to the brink of success and to say to the campaigners, as you gear up for hopefully one more heave to get this legislation over the line, the entire social justice community is behind you.'

The **Legal Aid Newcomer** award went to protest lawyer **Kate Hallam**, of ITN Solicitors, whose clients include Palestinian rights, animal welfare and climate change activists.

Oliver Conway, of Oliver Fisher Solicitors, was named **Family Legal Aid** winner for his work to increase the legal profession's understanding of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, who are often discriminated against by child protection services.



The **Criminal Legal Aid** award went to **Darrell Ennis-Gayle**, of Hodge Jones & Allen, who is challenging the convictions of three young Black men convicted of a joint enterprise murder on Moss Side in 2017, where rap music videos were allowed as evidence of gang membership.

Full list of winners:

- 1) Legal Aid Newcomer (supported by Friends of LALY26)
Kate Hallam - ITN Solicitors
- 2) Legal Aid Support Staffer/Support Team (sponsored by Bidwell Henderson)
Helen Dunn - MJC Law
- 3) Childcare Legal Aid (sponsored by Garden Court Chambers)
Deborah Piccos - TV Edwards
- 4) Legal Aid Firm/Not-for-profit Agency (supported by The Law Society)
Bristol Law Centre
- 5) Family Legal Aid (sponsored by Resolution)
Oliver Conway - Oliver Fisher Solicitors
- 6) Legal Aid Barrister (sponsored by The Bar Council)
Karen Kabweru-Namulemu - 1GC Family Law
- 7) Criminal Legal Aid (sponsored by DG Legal)
Darrell Ennis-Gayle - Hodge Jones & Allen
- 8) Public Law (sponsored by One Pump Court)
Amalia King - Deighton Pierce Glynn
- 9) Social Welfare Law (sponsored by Doughty Street Chambers)
Van Ferguson - Southwark Law Centre
- 10) Outstanding Achievement (sponsored by Matrix Chambers)
Hillsborough Law Now

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For further details and photographs of the ceremony, contact:

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