

One little conversation with your client can help them...



Source: Robert Aberman

NEWS

Legal aid ‘heroes’ honoured at special ceremony

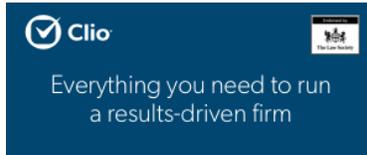
By **Monidipa Fouzder** | 11 July 2019



Hundreds of legal aid lawyers gathered at a special ceremony in London last night to celebrate the unsung ‘heroes’ within their community. The prestigious event, now in its 17th year, was founded by the Legal Aid Practitioners Group.

The evening began with special awards being presented to three people who the LAPG committee believe have made an exceptional contribution to legal aid and access to justice: Anselm Eldergill, a district judge in the Court of Protection, and barrister Rachel Francis and solicitor Oliver Carter, former co-chairs of the Young Legal Aid Lawyers group.

Eldergill told the ceremony that the justice budget had been cut by 40% since 2010, ‘not just decimated but decimated four times’.



He said: 'It's a depressing picture but would be even more depressing if it was not for your amazing efforts. I intend to return to practice next year and do my bit to rebuild the justice system that's open to all citizens regardless of their means and social class.'



Joanne Cecil with compère Anna Jones and presenter Helena Kennedy QC

Source: Robert Aberman

Garden Court Chambers' Joanne Cecil, who won the legal aid barrister award, helped with crowdfunding efforts to provide every MP with a copy of legal blogger Secret Barrister's book, *Stories of the Law and How It's Broken*. Asked by host and Sky News presenter Anna Jones about whether the attitude in parliament has changed, Cecil said: 'We have lots of nice words from the government but not a great deal of action yet - that's really where the proof is.'

The social welfare law award went to solicitor William Ford of London firm Osbornes Law. Ford represented a vulnerable refugee and challenged a Hillingdon council housing policy, describing the three-year battle as one requiring endurance.

Solicitor Sally Thompson, who runs north London immigration practice Luqmani Thompson & Partners, praised her colleagues who she said 'make me look good' and talked about how proud she was of her team.

Duncan Lewis solicitor Raja Rajeswaran Uruthiravinayagan, who won the public law award, said he was surprised that he was shortlisted and joked: 'I thought I got shortlisted because of my really long name.' Uruthiravinayagan had to leave Sri Lanka due to the civil war when he was 13 and said that was the reason he specialised in human rights law.

This year's 'outstanding achievement' award went to Paul Bowen QC, a human rights barrister at Brick Court Chambers, who acted in the right to die and assisted suicide cases brought by Debbie Purdy and Tony Nicklinson.

Bowen began his speech by applauding the audience, who he described as legal aid 'heroes'. He concluded his speech with four tips for young legal aid lawyers: 'Question everything; fear no one; prepare, prepare, prepare; shut up and sit down when you're ahead.'



Paul Bowen QC

Source: Richard Gray

The full list of winners

Legal aid newcomer: Una Morris, Garden Court Chambers

Children's rights: Edward Taylor, Osbornes Law

Legal aid barrister: Joanne Cecil, Garden Court Chambers

Family (including mediation): Philip Wilkins, Hudgell & Partners

Social welfare law: William Ford, Osbornes Law

Legal aid practice management: Sally Thompson, Luqmani Thompson & Partners

Legal aid firm/Not-for-profit agency: Child Poverty Action Group

Access to justice through IT: FormShare, GT Stewart

Criminal defence: Lydia Dagostino, Kellys Solicitors

Public Law: Raja Rajeswaran Uruthiravinayagan, Duncan Lewis

Outstanding achievement: Paul Bowen QC

LAPG special awards: Anselm Eldergill, district judge; Rachel Francis, One Pump Court and former co-chair of Young Legal Aid Lawyers; Oliver Carter, Irwin Mitchell and former co-chair of Young Legal Aid Lawyers