AWARD WINNERS AND FULL CITATIONS

Justice Media Awards 2017

All entries were assessed against the objective of the Justice Media Awards, namely published works or broadcasts which:

- Promote the highest standards in legal journalism
- Foster greater public understanding of the law, the legal system or any specific legal issue
- Inform and educate citizens as to the roles in society of the law, the courts, law enforcement agencies and the legal profession
- Disclose practices or procedures needing reform so as to encourage the development and modernisation of Irish laws, courts and law enforcement agencies, and/or
- Assist the legal profession, the judiciary, and all others involved in the administration of justice in attaining the highest professional standards.

The award categories were:

- Overall Justice Media Award Winner
- Daily Newspapers
- Sunday Newspapers
- Regional Newspapers
- Court Reporting Print
- Court Reporting Broadcast
- Court Reporting Online/Digital
- National Radio
- Local Radio
- Television News
- Television Features/Documentaries
- Digital/Online News
- Digital/Online Features

CATEGORY: Overall award winner

WINNER:

Mary Fanning, Mary Kennedy and Eileen Magnier: feature on RTE *Nationwide* on the Access Programme and Street Law.

THE JUDGES SAID:

"The TV Features category usually – and rightly – contains entries devoted to gaps and flaws in the justice system, coverage of distressing trials, articles that criticise the Society and work that highlights unjust and unfair events."

"This year's category winner is the opposite. Shining a light on two very positive legal initiatives – Street Law and the Access Programme – this feature is a heat-warming, entirely original, well-produced programme that focuses on the work being done to ensure the

solicitors, barristers and judges of the future are a diverse, tech-savvy, highly-educated group."

"We openly admit this may appear biased, but we believe we have been able to dispassionately assess the entry and are delighted to be able to recognise quality legal programming that highlights a very positive side of the system."

CATEGORY:

Daily Newspapers

CATEGORY WINNER:

Shane Phelan of the Irish Independent for his excellent series of articles: *Ireland's response* to international terror threats

THE JUDGES SAID:

"An enlightening and comprehensive series of reports and analysis pieces on international terrorism as it relates to us here in Ireland."

"By delving into specific cases of foreign-born individuals suspected of terrorist activity and securing an interview with then-Minister for Justice Frances Fitzgerald, this journalist has provided readers with an excellent picture of how the Irish authorities are handling the threat of terror. Reliance on information from foreign intelligence agencies is revealed and the Irish approach of deportation, rather than prosecution, is analysed."

"For his frank, thorough and measured reporting and analysis, this well-written series of articles on the Irish aspect of the world's most urgent story richly deserves recognition."

SIX MERIT CERTIFICATES WERE ADDITIONALLY AWARDED:

Kieran Dineen (The Irish Sun): Claims, pains and automobiles

- A public-interest led piece on staggering increases in motor insurance premiums.
- "Closely examining an issue which we at the Law Society feel very strongly about, this article – part of an impressive piece of campaigning journalism – drilled down past unsubstantiated claims by the motor insurance industry to bring important data to the audience in a clear, balanced and accessible way."
- "With fairness and the public interest to the forefront, this journalist's work was recognised by Minister Eoghan Murphy in his Action Plan on motor insurance."

Liz Farsaci and Conor Gallagher (Irish Examiner): *Concerns grow over private appeals tribunal*_

- An article highlighting a serious concern regarding the new employment law system.
- "Employment law is of huge public importance and this article highlights one of the key areas of concern regarding the new legislative regime – the holding of employment rights hearings in private, rather than in public – which was subsequently raised in the Dáil."
- "Featuring the voices of experts, important background detail and highlighting the key principle of the public administration of justice, the article's authors take care to tell a complex story in a clear and understandable way."

David Labanyi (The Irish Times): Garda breath test figures fail to add up

- The first article to report on the discrepancy between breath test figures reported by Gardaí and the number of tests actually carried out.
- "Shining a light on the gaps in road-side breath testing figures, which turned out to be one of the major news stories of 2017, this front-page story triggered close examination of the discrepancies, and is most deserving of a merit award for its public-interest impact."

Conor Gallagher (The Irish Times): Rape sentences averaging ten years after rise over the last decade

- An in-depth look at sentencing in rape cases.
- "Addressing the reality versus the perceptions involved in the sentences handed down for rape convictions, this journalist's excellent research skills and ability to contextualise important, often misunderstood, statistics for his readers shine through in this piece."

Laura Colgan of the Irish Daily Star for her article: Killers on the loose

- An article tackling the troubling topic of crimes committed by people on bail.
- "Using statistics from the CSO and never losing sight of the impact on victims of crime and their families, this reporter addressed a difficult topic with clarity and sensitivity. A strong focus on the figures, rather than hearsay or anecdotal evidence, was an important feature of this article and lends it weight and impact."
- "An excellent piece of crime writing from a skilled reporter."

Aaron Rogan (The Times (Ireland Edition)): Diesel-gate in Mayo

- A series of reports documenting an unusual case with potentially huge impact.
- "These articles make for highly entertaining reading, despite the serious nature of their contents. Featuring a court walkout, threats of judicial review, and potential global impacts for the Volkswagen company, a case taken in Castlebar District Court against the car-maker for damages as a result of their emissions deception is a highly unusual one."
- "Detailed court reports, accompanied by well-written analysis pieces, brought this case to life for readers and the judges were pleased to see the role of the District Court highlighted so well."

CATEGORY:

Sunday Newspapers

CATEGORY WINNER:

Francesca Comyn for her excellent Sunday Business Post article: *Inside the Commercial Court*

THE JUDGES SAID:

A comprehensive, well-crafted look at the Irish Commercial Court.

"Described by the judges as among the strongest entries to this year's awards, this journalist's skill and dedication to her craft shine in this excellent long-read on a crucial cog in the Irish economy and legal system – the Commercial Court."

"Vibrant writing, witty observations, and important insights from key players are the standout features of this piece. The author highlights the efficiency with which cases are handled, while paying attention to the criticisms levelled at the court, and gives the reader a real insight into its atmosphere and workings."

TWO MERIT CERTIFICATES WERE ADDITIONALLY AWARDED:

Niall Brady (Sunday Times): Road rage

- An important article asking questions about the pricing practices of motor insurance companies in Ireland.
- "Another high-quality article focussing on the outrageous costs of motor insurance premiums, this piece delves into the specifics of whether insurance companies may have used the media to illegally signal pricing plans to each other."
- "Shining a light on a contentious and for consumers highly emotive topic, this writer closely examines the various claims and provides excellent background information for readers."

Mark Tighe, Catherine Sanz and Karrie Kehoe (Sunday Times): Judging the judges

- A detailed, original analysis of judgements reviewed by the Court of Appeal.
- "Taking a deep and detailed look at an area of the justice system long the subject of anecdote and speculation, this incredibly detailed piece of legal reporting examined judgements reviewed by the Court of Appeal in an attempt to quantify judicial standards."
- "The judges congratulate the reporting team on the sheer level of work involved in this thought-provoking piece."

CATEGORY:

Regional Newspapers

CATEGORY WINNER:

Tom Mooney of the Wexford Echo for his article: The Last Word

THE JUDGES SAID:

A valuable insight into the role of the Coroner's Court in the aftermath of deaths by suicide.

"Recognising that the loss of a loved one to suicide is a fiercely traumatic experience, which is compounded by the requirement of an inquest, this reporter used his considerable skill and sensitivity to deliver an insightful piece on what happens when these difficult but necessary cases come before the Coroner's Court."

"This work, supported by the Mary Raftery Journalism Fund, has added greatly to the reader's knowledge of the Court and demystified a complicated, often painful emotional legal process, and has contributed to the local and national discourse on mental wellbeing."

THREE MERIT CERTIFICATES WERE ADDITIONALLY AWARDED:

Carol Byrne (Clare Champion): *Breaking new ground in prison law: the late Judge Michael Reilly*

- A report on the proposal for a database of deaths in prison custody developed by law students, inspired by the pioneering work of Ireland's first Inspector of Prisons.
- "Written shortly before his sad passing late last year, this article takes a look at the work and influence of the late Judge Michael Reilly; in particular, the proposal developed by a group of law students at University of Limerick to create a database recording all prisoner deaths an area of concern to Judge Reilly in his role as Inspector of Prisons."
- "This well-researched piece combines a strong focus on the local, with rich and welcome background on Judge Reilly's difficult work; a humane take on the complex topic of prisoner rights."

Ann Murphy (Evening Echo): Fathers' rights – or lack of them?

- An in-depth examination of the complex area of fathers' rights in Ireland.
- "Taking a much-needed magnifying glass to a complex and emotive topic with her usual skill and sensitivity, this reporter speaks to legal experts, advocates, and the relevant authorities, and examines the legislation and the Constitution to deliver a balanced, human, impactful and comprehensive series on the rights of fathers in Ireland."
- "A typically high-quality body of work from one of Ireland's consistently excellent legal writers."

Tony Galvin (Tuam Herald): *The best judges are human*

- A unique and welcome glance into the workings of the legal system at a local level.
- "Writing with humour and experience about the cases heard by Judge Geoffrey Browne on the day of his retirement, this reporter displays very fine command of his craft and brings humanity to the proceedings, without diminishing their seriousness. This piece is both a court report and a warm tribute to the retiring judge, and very worthy of recognition this afternoon."

CATEGORY: Court Reporting - Print

CATEGORY WINNER:

Helen Bruce of the Irish Daily Mail for her coverage of the trial of Bernadette Scully.

THE JUDGES SAID:

A series of powerful court reports from the Bernadette Scully trial.

"Among the best entries across all categories this year, this reporter's coverage of one of the country's most emotionally-charged trials is simply excellent. Thoughtful, balanced writing brings the reader through the technical evidence, incredibly difficult testimony from Scully, her sister and her partner, Emily Barut's profound disabilities, right through to the judge's summation and the eventual verdict of not guilty."

"This journalist displays exemplary skill in delivering such comprehensive coverage and bringing an important and heart-rending case to her readers over an extended period of time."

SIX MERIT CERTIFICATES WERE ADDITIONALLY AWARDED:

Noel O'Driscoll (Kildare Nationalist): series of reports from the family courts

- An important series of reports from the family law courts.
- "Writing about emotionally-charged hearings before Naas District Court, this reporter takes his role in the court seriously, remaining respectful of the individuals involved and their privacy, while making sure that these important cases – involving elder abuse, emergency care orders for neglected children, and parents needing support are reported on."
- "Using clear language, he delivers an excellent insight into this complex area of the law."

Mark Tighe (Sunday Times): Why won't you leave me alone?

- A wry look at a rare court appearance by businessman Denis O'Brien.
- "Writing about one of Ireland's most high-profile and fascinating business figures, this journalist weaves court reporting with complex background information, wry humour, observation and a potted history of article 15.13 of the constitution, regarding Dáil privilege."
- "Skilled journalism once again from a multiple-Justice Media Award-winning reporter."

Nicola Donnelly (the Herald): Justice and a voice for animals

- A series of court reports on an under-served aspect of the legal system animal cruelty cases.
- "Highlighting the relatively new legislation which attempts to give a voice to animals that have suffered cruelty or neglect, this reporter brings the reader through several diverse and often quite distressing cases before Dublin courts, and underlines the important work done by animal protection officers."
- "These cases are important and this journalist has served the public interest well by delivering clear, balanced, well-written reports on the proceedings."

Michael Tracey (Carlow Nationalist): *Businessman sues car dealership over rust on his luxury Merc*

- Unusually in-depth coverage of a case before the Carlow Circuit Court.
- "A row over a rusty Mercedes probably doesn't sound fascinating but balanced, clear, and most importantly, *interesting* coverage of a civil suit, delivered in what can be described as this reporter's signature style, provided fodder for several dozen inches of newsprint."
- "Excellent coverage of court proceedings delivered by a skilled court reporter and a deserving merit winner."

Catherine Fegan (Irish Daily Mail): View from the gallery – the Bernadette Scully trial

• Excellent reporting on a harrowing trial in the Criminal Courts of Justice.

 "The trial of Dr Bernadette Scully was a heartbreaking one, which truly gripped the nation. Having been under extreme pressure caring for her profoundly disabled daughter Emily, Dr. Scully's plight was acutely felt by all. This reporter's clear, sensitive report on her testimony focussed on the human side of the proceedings, detailing as they did the severity of Emily's disabilities and the story of a mother who devoted her life to the care of her child."

Declan Brennan (Sunday Independent, Sunday Times and Irish Times): *The Anglo/Irish Life trial*

- A reporter who attended all 89 days of evidence in one of the country's most notorious banking trials.
- "This series of reports played a vital role in educating the public on extremely complex proceedings surrounding a €7 billion fraud, fraught with technical jargon, hotly disputed evidence and, often, incredibly tedious detail."
- "This journalist's attendance at each day of evidence is remarkable and we are delighted to reward such dedication and attention to detail."

CATEGORY:

Court Reporting - Broadcast

CATEGORY WINNER:

Laura Hogan of TV3 News for her reports from the trial of Bernadette Scully.

THE JUDGES SAID:

An excellent series of TV reports from the trial of Bernadette Scully.

"An extremely impressive, authoritative, fact-driven, and detailed set of reports from the Criminal Courts of Justice during and after the conclusion of the heart-breaking Bernadette Scully trial."

"This reporter demonstrated huge skill in the live pieces to camera in particular. A difficult trial to report on was delivered with exceptional gravitas and professionalism."

TWO MERIT CERTIFICATES WERE ADDITIONALLY AWARDED:

Brian O'Connell (RTÉ Radio 1): A home for Christmas

- An excellent radio report on the difficult cases of family home repossessions in the run up to Christmas.
- "This reporter's experience and sensitivity shine through in this powerful, poignant piece which brings listeners deep into the heart of an increasingly difficult aspect of the legal system."
- "By delving into one of the individual cases through a deeply personal interview with a mother of five on the brink of losing her home, the stress and pain of those at the centre of repossession cases is heartbreakingly evident. A truly moving piece."

Stephanie Grogan (98FM News): The Jobstown protests: a day in the Children's Court

- News reports from outside the Children's Court in Smithfield where a high profile case attracted a large number of protesters.
- "Striking a brilliant balance between clear, informative reporting of the verdict in the case of a 17 year old, convicted of falsely imprisoning then-Tánaiste Joan Burton during the Jobstown protests, and bringing the tense and noisy atmosphere of the crowd outside the court to the listener, this reporter's radio reports are conscientious and compelling. Excellent reporting of a divisive case."

CATEGORY: Court Reporting – Digital/Online

CATEGORY WINNER:

Cianan Brennan of thejournal.ie for his report: "Shane Ross doesn't take no for an answer" – court hears Dáil committee had remit to ask about Angela Kerins' salary.

THE JUDGES SAID:

An impressive scene-setting report on what would become a contentious case.

"Reporting from day one of the damages action taken against the Oireachtas public accounts committee by former Rehab CEO Angela Kerins, this reporter carefully and clearly brought the opening submissions to readers in a lengthy, but digestible, article."

"Detailed background information and direct quotes from counsel are used extensively to paint a compelling picture and the article, updated as it was as the day went on, is an important record of the opening day of this high-profile case."

THERE WERE NO MERIT CERTIFICATES ADDITIONALLY AWARDED

CATEGORY: National Radio

CATEGORY WINNER:

Evelyn O'Rourke of RTE Radio 1 for her Family Court Reports series

THE JUDGES SAID:

"The experience and skill of this reporter is more than evident in her presentation of a series of emergency applications and other cases involving family breakdown and disputes."

"Keeping the human side of each court report to the forefront, while clearly outlining the legal processes, orders and decisions, these are excellent examples of reporting difficult and often highly-emotionally charged cases."

ONE MERIT CERTIFICATE WAS ADDITIONALLY AWARDED:

John Cooke (RTE Radio 1 – Today with Sean O'Rourke): *Human stories from the repossession courts*

- Another report on the human side of the repossession court system, this time in the run up to the most recent election.
- "Delivered in his distinctive style, this reporter goes behind the statistics and politicalspeak surrounding the ongoing housing crisis - thrown into the spotlight in particular during the 2016 election campaign - and asks homeowners to describe the process in their own words, and the toll it takes on families."
- "These excellent reports also feature advice from MABS and shine a light on the housing crisis as it manifests outside of the large cities."

CATEGORY:

Local Radio

CATEGORY WINNER:

Marian O'Flaherty for her report on Kerry Today: The special and substantial defence

THE JUDGES SAID:

Excellent reporting of a complex case involving the application of Supreme Court principles to a road traffic case in Listowel District Court.

"Road traffic cases before the District Courts are of huge public interest and it is important that interesting or unusual cases are reported in a clear and understandable way."

"A thorough account of the facts, in the form of an extended news bulletin report followed by a Q & A segment, brings one such case to life for the listeners and carefully and accurately describes the key aspects. The journalist displays a keen skill for court reporting and excellent attention to detail."

TWO MERIT CERTIFICATES WERE ADDITIONALLY AWARDED:

Niall Delaney (Ocean FM): In the soup on North West Today

- An unusual case involving the charities regulator bringing its authority to bear on a soup kitchen in Sligo town.
- "Bringing the viewpoints of all parties involved to the listener, highlighting the importance of charity regulation as well as the impact regulatory action can have on volunteers and the people who benefit from the work of the charities, as well as providing detail on the court proceedings, this is an interesting, thoughtful and wellpresented report."

Jerry O'Sullivan and Miriam McGillycuddy (Radio Kerry): regular legal advice slot '*The Legal Lowdown*'

- A regular legal advice slot focussed on listener interaction which has been running since 2009.
- "Helping listeners solve legal problems and understand various legal concepts, this well-established legal advice slot on Radio Kerry succeeds because of the down-to-

earth nature of the sometimes dense and complex information delivered in an accessible and helpful way."

• "A format that we in the Law Society would love to see emulated in local stations across Ireland, we are delighted to recognise this collaboration between journalist and solicitor."

CATEGORY: Television News

CATEGORY WINNER:

Katie Hannon and Nigel Power for their news report on RTE Prime Time: The McCabe File

THE JUDGES SAID:

An extensive news report detailing a sinister saga which gripped the nation.

"The revelations, outlined in this excellent report, that child sexual abuse allegations made against Garda whistleblower Maurice McCabe were false and had been made in error, compounded by evidence that the claims were spread widely via an orchestrated smear campaign, sent shockwaves through the country and revealed a disturbing element at the heart of the justice system."

"The fallout from this skilful broadcast was huge among the public and in political and legal circles, leading to the establishment of an independent Garda review and a statutory inquiry, among other investigations."

TWO MERIT CERTIFICATES WERE ADDITIONALLY AWARDED:

Dyane Connor (RTÉ News): Held to ransom: law firms under fire

- A concise news report on the potential dangers of ransomware attacks on law firms.
- "An area of increasing concern for law firms, and indeed many businesses, is the potential for their IT system to fall victim to a so-called ransomware attack. This reporter put together a concise news package, explaining the background, risks, potential impacts on clients and customers and outlining the preventative measures available."
- "A very good report that strikes a fine balance between alerting the public to the potential hazards while avoiding the common pitfalls of technical jargon and a scaremongering effect."

Michael Ryan, Marie Mulcahy and Ruairi Carroll (TV3 News): reports on Apollo House

- A detailed series of reports documenting one of the most prominent stories of the last 12 months.
- "The takeover of the now infamous Apollo House by a group agitating for action on the homelessness crisis in the lead up to Christmas 2016 certainly stands out as one of the key news stories of the past year.
- "Displaying considerable skill in distilling the various court rulings during excellent live pieces to camera and compiling pre-recorded reports reflecting the often frantic pace of events during this period, this news team are to be congratulated for their pacey, varied and comprehensive coverage of a stand-out news story."

CATEGORY:

Television Features/Documentaries

CATEGORY WINNER:

Mary Fanning, Mary Kennedy and Eileen Magnier for their feature on RTE Nationwide on Street Law and the Law Society Access Programme

THE JUDGES SAID:

A feature on two important programmes promoting and facilitating access to the legal profession.

"The TV Features category usually – and rightly – contains entries devoted to gaps and flaws in the justice system, coverage of distressing trials, articles that criticise the Society and work that highlights unjust and unfair events."

"This year's category winner is the opposite. Shining a light on two very positive legal initiatives – Street Law and the Access Programme – this feature is a heat-warming, entirely original, well-produced programme that focuses on the work being done to ensure the solicitors, barristers and judges of the future are a diverse, tech-savvy, highly-educated group."

"We openly admit this may appear biased, but we believe we have been able to dispassionately assess the entry and are delighted to be able to recognise quality legal programming that highlights a very positive side of the system."

TWO MERIT CERTIFICATES WERE ADDITIONALLY AWARDED:

Eithne O'Brien (RTÉ Prime Time): Legal pains

- A truly moving examination of the effect the adversarial medical negligence system has on affected families.
- "An important insight into the flaws of the current, adversarial medical negligence system, this report puts the families affected to the forefront and allows them to tell us how the justice system is failing them."
- "Deeply moving, intensely personal accounts of families fighting the system while negotiating life-altering injuries due to medical negligence are the key features of this simply excellent report, while an admission from the State Claims Agency that this system doesn't serve families well is pivotal."

BBC Northern Ireland's Spotlight team: Stalking law

- An examination of stalking laws in Northern Ireland
- "Highlighting a very serious gap in Northern Irish criminal law, this reporter takes the personal stories of three women subjected to stalking and harassment and outlines that not only is there no specific criminal legal offence for stalking, there are no statistics on stalking convictions, no research, and no victim support mechanisms."
- "This impactful report led to a debate in Stormont and the announcement of a review of the need for stalking legislation by the Justice Minister."

CATEGORY:

Digital/Online News

CATEGORY WINNER:

Conor Gallagher for his irishtimes.com Series on lay litigants

THE JUDGES SAID:

An examination of a growing aspect of the legal system - lay litigation.

"Two articles exemplifying this reporter's wonderful writing style and skilled storytelling, this series is a very important insight into a significant element of the legal system, whereby litigants choose to represent themselves in court actions."

"Featuring an interesting profile of one of the country's more prolific lay litigants, their reasons for doing so and the potential pitfalls, this work is informative, clear, balanced and substantial."

TWO MERIT CERTIFICATES WERE ADDITIONALLY AWARDED:

Michelle Hennessy (thejournal.ie): Factcheck report 'is it illegal for Gardaí to go on strike?'

- A thorough and careful fact-check piece examining the legality, or otherwise, of Garda strike action.
- "Taking an issue of huge interest and debate nationwide, this journalist delved behind the speculation and carried out significant, valuable research into the claims by some that a threatened Garda strike would be illegal."
- "Her careful work and nuanced conclusion added greatly to the public's understanding of this issue. Work of this type and quality is to be encouraged."

Paul O'Donoghue (Fora.ie): *Here's why a scheme for struggling companies has never been used*

- An investigation into a relatively obscure legal mechanism designed to help struggling companies
- "I know many of you will have never heard of 'schemes of arrangement' a feature of the new Companies Act – and indeed it appears never to have been used by companies in crisis, despite being designed for that purpose."
- "This reporter lifted the veil and produced a valuable, interesting and useful piece on 'schemes of arrangement', boosting the public's understanding of a complex area of law."

CATEGORY: Digital/Online Features

CATEGORY WINNER:

Sinead O'Carroll of thejournal.ie for her piece: The tribunal is dead, long live the tribunal

THE JUDGES SAID:

A look at the complicated Irish relationship with tribunals of inquiry.

"An in-depth examination of tribunals of inquiry, from the mammoth Beef, gargantuan Mahon and epic Moriarty to the recent tribunal established to investigate allegations that a smear campaign was waged against Sergeant Maurice McCabe by senior Gardaí."

"Providing excellent historical context and weaving entertaining anecdotes throughout in a pithy, substantial style, this is an excellent long-form analysis piece."

TWO MERIT CERTIFICATES WERE ADDITIONALLY AWARDED:

Orla Ryan (thejournal.ie): Series on wills: personal stories and legal advice

- An examination of an ever-important issue that affects every family.
- "Personal experience of the legal system, from the client perspective, is always a valuable thing. A well-researched and written series on wills, probate and succession law, such as this body of work, is always welcome."
- "This reporter spoke to individuals for their personal stories, documented sad tales of family breakdown and outlined some of the common pitfalls that can destroy family harmony. These articles reached over 130,000 readers."

Conor Gallagher (irishtimes.com): Series on drug treatment

- A feature highlighting a little-known element of the legal system the drug treatment court.
- "This excellent piece examines the workings and statistics of this unusual court, which helps people tackle their addictions and stay out of trouble."
- "Receiving his fourth award of the day, we are delighted to recognise this reporter's skill and dedication to top-quality legal journalism."