

AWARD WINNERS AND FULL CITATIONS

Justice Media Awards 2018

All entries were assessed against the objectives 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 are:

- Print/online journalism (daily)
- Print/online journalism (Sunday)
- Print/online journalism (local)
- Broadcast journalism (radio/podcast – national)
- Broadcast journalism (radio/podcast – local)
- Broadcast journalism (TV/video)
- Court reporting (print/online)
- Court reporting (broadcast)
- Human rights/social justice reporting
- International justice reporting
- Best headline/caption (print/online)
- Newcomer of the year

OVERALL AWARD

WINNERS:

Paul Murphy and Doireann O'Hara (RTÉ Investigates): *Law and Disorder*

THE JUDGES SAID:

This excellent television feature, winner of the 'broadcast journalism (TV/video)' category, encapsulates everything that the Justice Media Awards strives to promote and encourage.

CATEGORY 1:

Print/online journalism (daily)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Rosita Boland of the Irish Times for her excellent article: *Irish life laid bare, one court case at a time*

THE JUDGES SAID:

"An important human interest and public service story, reported through fresh eyes on the district court."

"One of the strongest entries across the 236 entries received for this year's awards, this fascinating exposé of daily life at the District Court is an excellent contribution to the public's understanding of this vital cog in Ireland's justice system."

Three merit certificates were awarded:

Caroline O'Doherty (Irish Examiner): *Backlash to Whiplash: Fraudsters hit hard in 'compo culture' crackdown.*

- An analysis of the continuing concerns over fraudulent and exaggerated personal injury claims and the impact the dedicated Court of Appeal may be having on the level of awards
- "An excellent, comprehensive set of articles displaying nuance and balance and written from a fresh point of view. This special report on one of the key news stories of the past 12 months is an excellent contribution to the public discourse on legal issues surrounding insurance and fraud."

Conor Gallagher (Irish Times): *Women under-represented on juries in serious criminal trials*

- An article examining the gender composition of juries and the impact that can have on verdict.
- "This type of detailed analysis of the courts has become a signature of this multiple Justice Media Award winner. This piece, however, provided an unexpected, concerning insight into an important aspect of serious criminal trials. As always, it is extremely well-written and places the statistics in context through interviews with key personnel and in-depth research."

Shane Phelan (Irish Independent): *Judges give soft sentences to drivers who kill on roads*

- Analysis of an unpublished report on cases of dangerous driving causing death or serious injury.
- "This exclusive set of articles detailed the findings of a report prepared for a Courts Service sentencing committee, never published, which highlights the apparent leniency in sentencing for serious road traffic offences. An excellent insight into a highly visible area of law that can be difficult to understand."

CATEGORY 2:

Print/online journalism (Sunday)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Mark Tighe for his excellent article in the Sunday Times: *No judgement for the judiciary*

THE JUDGES SAID:

An outstanding chronicle of the judiciary's approach to ensuring the secrecy of Judicial Council findings.

"Fearless investigating and reporting from a seasoned Justice Media Awards entrant. This important work excellently presents detailed research on an intriguing aspect of the judicial system."

Four merit certificates were awarded:

Adam Higgins (The Irish Sun on Sunday): *Runaway jury*

- An important article highlighting the lack of consequences for failing to attend jury duty.
- "A first-of-its-kind analysis via the Freedom of Information Act, which highlights the rate of jury duty-skipping across Ireland and examines why no one is facing the fines that should arise as a result."

Francesca Comyn (Sunday Business Post): *A tsunami of repossessions*

- A detailed, original analysis of struggling home-owners and their overwhelming mortgage debt.
- "This standout report brings the reader into the repossession courts and paints a, at time, distressingly clear picture of a deeply human crisis. The author gives voice to individual stories and provides excellent background and context for the mortgage crisis and the legal system and processes involved."

John Lee (Irish Mail on Sunday): *Blistering memo the Garda chief must dread*

- An excellent series of articles on the recent crises facing the management ranks of An Garda Síochána.
- "This excellent body of work represents a significant contribution to the public's understanding of what has been one of the biggest stories of the past year. The exclusive report set the news agenda for several weeks and has already earned the author significant accolades."

Shane Phelan (Sunday Independent): *Analysis of the Disclosures Tribunal*

- A forensic analysis of proceedings at the Disclosures Tribunal.
- "Outstanding, detailed reporting from the Disclosures Tribunal which makes a very difficult topic understandable for the public. This excellent series of articles unpacks

the dense and often contradictory evidence, illuminates the key players and outlines the process and context behind the Tribunal for readers.”

CATEGORY 3:

Print/online journalism (local)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Dan Danaher of the Clare Champion for his series of reports: *Special investigation about the environmental compliance of 17 Clare companies and environmental law*

THE JUDGES SAID:

An exceptionally detailed series of articles revealing major environmental breaches in County Clare.

“This excellent special investigation is highly unusual for a local paper in its breadth and depth and the judges commend the resources and time given over to the exhaustive research and reporting involved. Highlighting serious environmental breaches and flagging major inadequacies in the legislation, this incredible body of work is highly deserving of the Justice Media Award.”

One merit certificate was awarded:

Carol Byrne (The Clare Champion): *You can go safety from court*

- A report highlighting inadequacies in the prosecution of speeding offences by Go Safe operators in County Clare.
- “Detailed reporting from the District Court is the heartland of local newspaper journalism and this article is an excellent example. Directly quoting the presiding judge, the author brings the courtroom to the public on an issue of considerable interest all across the country.”

CATEGORY 4:

Broadcast journalism (radio/podcast – national)

CATEGORY WINNER:

John Burke and Colm O’Mongain of *This Week* on RTÉ Radio One for: *A dog in need of teeth: revelations of critical under-resourcing in the policing watchdog GSOC*

THE JUDGES SAID:

A revealing investigation highlighting the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission’s frustration at a perceived lack of resources and support.

“An excellent example of detailed investigative reporting, bringing previously unpublished information to the public attention and providing incisive analysis of the difficulties involved. The report prompted unprecedented response from the key players and was a seminal moment in the wider saga surrounding An Garda Síochána over the past year.”

No merit certificates were awarded

CATEGORY 5:

Broadcast journalism (radio/podcast – local)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Jane Mulcahy for her report on UCC 98.3FM: *Humanising human rights*

THE JUDGES SAID:

An excellent insight into the UN system of human rights monitoring.

“A very impressive documentary series providing brilliant insights into how human rights compliance is monitored at State level, featuring high quality production values and extensive, revealing interviews with those at the frontline of human rights work in modern Ireland.”

One merit certificate was awarded:

Fiona McGarry (Clare FM): *Keeping kids out of crime*

- An in-depth series on young people and crime in County Clare.
- “These extensive reports asked questions about the prevalence of youth crime and the effectiveness of the justice system in dealing with it. Featuring statistics, expert interviews and the stories of the young people caught up in the justice system, this series is important and impactful.”

CATEGORY 6:

Broadcast journalism (TV/video)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Paul Murphy & Doireann O’Hara for: *RTÉ Investigates: Law and Disorder*

THE JUDGES SAID:

A fascinating insight into the workhorse of Ireland’s criminal justice system - the District Court.

“This truly exceptional body of work went deep into the District Court over 100 days of sittings involving more than 6,500 defendants. What the reporters found was an often chaotic system, hamstrung in various ways by legislation and featuring inconsistent and, at times, improper practices. This report goes to the heart of what the Justice Media Awards are about and led to serious public conversation and an immediate response from Government.”

Two merit certificates were awarded:

RTÉ News: ‘A significant first’ – Supreme Court proceedings are broadcast on television for the first time in the history of the State

- An historic first in Irish broadcast news history.
- “A striking piece of journalism, breaking new ground in Irish television reporting, taking viewers into the Supreme Court to witness judgements being handed down. Featuring a seminal interview with the Chief Justice, this is a deeply impactful work of major historical interest.”

Seán Ó Méalóid and Sinéad Ní Churnáin (RTÉ Scannal): *Sweepstakes*

- A documentary looking back at one of the greatest examples of international law-breaking in history.
- “This unusual story reveals the depths of illegality behind the infamous Irish Hospital Sweepstakes, which was launched with huge State fanfare. Using contemporaneous footage and expert current-day commentary, this is an excellent recount of one of the shadier chapters in recent Irish history.”

CATEGORY 7:

Court reporting (print/online)

CATEGORY WINNERS:

Mary Carolan (Irish Times): *More than 2,600 judged incapable protected as ward of court*

THE JUDGES SAID:

An excellent overview of the wards of court system.

“This outstanding work is an emotional, evocative piece which takes a fair, clear-eyed view of the Irish wardship system, which is central to the lives of thousands of vulnerable people. The author is highly commended for her focus on the human aspect of wardship and her careful handling of the complexity of the cases.”

Four merit certificates were awarded:

Conor Gallagher (Irish Times): *Coverage of the Tom Humphries sentencing*

- A series of articles covering the sentencing of former Irish Times sports writer Tom Humphries.
- “A crystal clear example of classic court reporting featuring excellent writing, attention to detail and clarity of context surrounding a disturbing and controversial trial and sentencing.”

Francesca Comyn (Sunday Business Post): *Anatomy of a shambles*

- The story of the slow but inevitable demise of one of the most flawed State prosecutions in recent memory.
- “Fine court reporting summarising complex, dense legal argument and highlighting the myriad prosecution failures which led to the spectacular collapse of the Sean FitzPatrick trial after 126 days.”

Helen Bruce (Irish Daily Mail): *Key witnesses at the Disclosures Tribunal*

- A series of articles in which key witnesses of the Disclosures tribunal, tell their own versions of this compelling story.
- “The Disclosures Tribunal has filled more column inches than probably any other story over the past year. This series of articles sets itself apart as it carefully relays witness testimony as told to the Tribunal, bringing this important hearing to the reader as it unfolds.”

Sean Murray (TheJournal.ie): *Contradictions, ‘coercions’ and a private life made public: Keith Harrison’s partner at the Disclosures Tribunal*

- Reporting from one intriguing aspect of the on-going Disclosures Tribunal.
- “Another excellent example of reporting from the Disclosures Tribunal, this time focussed on the evidence given by the partner of Garda Keith Harrison, Marisa Simms. Characterised by clear writing, excellent context and colour, this report is an important piece of the on-going Tribunal puzzle.”

CATEGORY 8:

Court reporting (broadcast)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Frank Greaney of Newstalk for his reports on the Pat Kenny Show from the Belfast rape trial.

THE JUDGES SAID:

An in-depth account of what was happening in Belfast rape trial from one of the only journalists to cover all 42 days of proceedings.

“Superb reporting from what we all know to have been a difficult and demanding trial. In particular, the format of a highly-skilled court reporter in conversation with one of Ireland’s most experienced broadcasters is highly effective and listener-friendly while retaining a very sharp focus on accuracy and balance.”

Three merit certificates were awarded:

John Cooke (Drivetime, RTÉ Radio 1): *Baby Stevie’s Inquest*

- A moving and sensitive report on the inquest into a baby’s death.
- “Reporting from the Coroner’s Court is never easy for either the reporter or the listener, but it’s a vital element of our justice system. This outstanding report from the inquest of baby Stevie Cullivan connected the medical negligence to human tragedy in a way that was impactful and respectful.”

Kevin McGillicuddy, Eoghan Murphy, Bernie O’Toole, Anne Norris, and Una Molloy (Shannonside FM): *A year in the Shannonside courts*

- An excellent series of court reports spanning a year in the Shannonside courts.

- “From District Court to High Court sittings and the Coroner’s Court, this news team is highly commended for the sustained quality of its reporting on cases of local and national significance, truly bringing the justice system to their listeners.”

Laura Hogan (TV3): *The Belfast rape trial*

- A detailed account of one of the most controversial and high-profile trials on the island of Ireland over the past year.
- “Incorporating a strong visual element into her TV news reports, this reporter showed her skill in relaying the often difficult and disturbing evidence, finding the balance between faithful re-telling of the courtroom proceedings while being aware of the potentially upsetting nature of the facts.”

CATEGORY 9:

Human rights/social justice reporting

CATEGORY WINNER:

Sharon Lynch (TV3 News): *Coercive control - re-framing domestic violence*

THE JUDGES SAID:

An excellent report on the efforts to re-frame domestic violence laws in Ireland.

“Several high-profile and heart-breaking cases of severe domestic violence have brought the issue to the forefront of the public conscience in recent times. This reporter’s coverage of the work of anti-domestic abuse advocates to bring ‘coercive control’ onto the statute books is excellent, highlighting the awful human impact, outlining the legislative delays and underlining the importance of making this sinister form of abuse illegal once and for all.”

Three merit certificates were awarded:

Cianan Brennan (TheJournal.ie): *The Public Services Card, privacy, and the rights of the adopted*

- A particularly comprehensive series of articles relating to the Public Services Card and its privacy implications for adopted citizens.
- “Taking very complex legal and social matters and making them accessible, this is a fine example of in-depth, public service reporting with a strong focus on the data privacy questions involved in the rollout of the Public Services Card. The inclusion of a Facebook Live discussion panel on the topic highlights the innovation possible in online reporting.”

Conall Ó Fátharta (The Irish Examiner): *Finally righting a wrong - the fight for Magdalene women wrongly denied redress*

- An excellent series of articles on one of the State’s darkest chapters – the Magdalene Laundries – and the problematic redress scheme.
- “This reporter has for several years been to the fore in bringing public awareness to the State’s treatment of Irish women held in the Magdalene Laundries. In particular,

his investigation and coverage of issues around the redress scheme is of enormous national significance. These articles on the Ombudsman's highly critical report on the scheme mark a seminal point in this dark saga."

Zara King (TV3 News): *No legal access to live-saving drug*

- A detailed news account of an Irish family's fight to access medicinal cannabis in Ireland on behalf of their young daughter.
- "Highlighting a heart-breaking issue of social injustice and shining a spotlight on a problematic law, this reporter's excellent, in-depth coverage of the struggle to secure access to medicinal cannabis for a 7 year old with rare, severe epilepsy is educational, informative and human-centred."

CATEGORY 10:

International justice reporting

CATEGORY WINNER:

Catherine Fegan (Irish Daily Mail): *The murder trial of Molly and Tom Martens in North Carolina*

THE JUDGES SAID:

A detailed insight into the twists and turns in a trial that was taking place thousands of miles away.

"These gripping reports brought the North Carolina murder trial of Molly and Tom Martens to an Irish audience with the reporter's well-established flair, clarity and precision. Pictures, courtroom anecdotes, and sharp analysis combine to create an outstanding body of work on a high-profile and often disturbing trial."

One merit certificate was awarded:

Paul O'Donoghue (Fora.ie): *Inside the row between Fyffes and its Honduran workers*

- An in-depth investigation into allegations of employee rights abuses against Fyffes fruit company.
- "This is an excellently researched and written piece on the allegations of abuse made against Fyffes by dozens of its Honduran workers. Speaking to individual workers about their experiences, balanced with the response from the company, the judges commend the reporter's highly relevant and impactful work."

CATEGORY 11:

Best headline/caption

CATEGORY WINNER:

Niall Murray (Irish Examiner): *Leo Burdock tried to batter Black & Tans*

THE JUDGES SAID:

“A tongue-in-cheek, irreverent yet accurate headline which describes a famous fish-and-chip shop owners’ wartime activities as detailed in his application for a military pension.”

One merit certificate was awarded:**Kieran Dineen (The Irish Sun): *Licence to nil***

- “A catchy and clever headline describing the implications – or lack thereof - of not paying for your TV licence.”

CATEGORY 12:

Newcomer of the year

CATEGORY WINNER:

Gráinne Ní Aodha (TheJournal.ie)

THE JUDGES SAID:

“Highly detailed, concise reporting and a strong sense of balance characterise this reporter’s work over the past year. In particular, her coverage of the complex, high-profile and hugely significant case on the rights of the unborn, coming as it did at a critical time before the referendum on the 8th amendment, demonstrates a skill and insight that is highly commendable at such an early stage in her career.”