

Justice Media Awards 2019

Award winners & citations



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:

1. Print/online journalism (daily)
2. Print/online journalism (Sunday)
3. Print/online journalism (local)
4. Broadcast journalism (radio/podcast – national)
5. Broadcast journalism (radio/podcast – local)
6. Broadcast journalism (TV/video)
7. Court reporting (print/online)
8. Court reporting (broadcast)
9. Human rights/social justice reporting
10. International justice reporting
11. Newcomer of the year

OVERALL WINNER

WINNERS:

Richard Newman, Lyndsey Telford, Gwyneth Jones & Jeremy Adams (BBC NI): *Spotlight: When is Sex Rape?*

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:

Tony Connelly (RTÉ): *How the backstop deal was done - and why Cox blew it apart*

THE JUDGES SAID:

- "A comprehensive analysis of the events surrounding the agreement on legally-binding assurances to the Irish backstop.
- "Brilliant, highly-entertaining and searingly insightful reporting by a journalist at the height of his powers amid the floundering and tension surrounding the Brexit backstop talks. It's a play-by-play account of one of Brexit's pivotal moments, explaining resurrected Victorian legal concepts, outlining the various 'robust exchanges' and spanning from Dublin to Brussels and Strasbourg via Grimsby. The reader feels as though they were in the room throughout."

Four merit certificates were awarded:

CORMAC O'KEEFFE (IRISH EXAMINER): *THE SPYING GAME*

- A series of exclusive articles on the State's use of controversial data access powers.
- "This was one of the strongest entries in a highly-competitive category, which showcased this reporter's investigative nous and persistence in tracking down what he was after. Compelling and comprehensive data on surveillance is presented alongside sharp analysis of the legal issues involved in this excellent, impactful body of work."

CAROLINE O'DOHERTY (IRISH EXAMINER): *SHAKY FOUNDATIONS FOR GRAND HOME LEADS TO DECADE-LONG LEGAL BATTLE*

- An exposé of the audacity and impact of unauthorised building developments.
- "Focussed on the particularly fascinating case of a magnificent home in County Meath built almost entirely without planning permission, this is an original, very well-illustrated insight into the problem of unauthorised building and the legal machinations surrounding the issue."

SINEAD O’CARROLL (THEJOURNAL.IE): *HOW PETER CHARLETON FOUND THE FACT AMONG THE RUMOUR, GOSSIP, LIES AND DECEIT*

- An examination of how the head of a major tribunal came to believe some witnesses more than others.
- “This journalist has well established her credentials in analysing tribunals, both historic and contemporary. She continues her award-winning work on this topic with an excellent exploration of what Judge Peter Charleton himself described as the “dreadful struggle” of uncovering the truth during the Disclosures Tribunal process.”

LAURA COLGAN (IRISH DAILY STAR): *“ANOTHER PERSON WILL DIE IF INSANE DRIVER GETS BACK BEHIND THE WHEEL”*

- An important article about the first person to be found not guilty by reason of insanity in a dangerous-driving case.
- “This reporter displays a keen eye for important public interest cases in her coverage of a first-of-its-kind case, where a charge of dangerous driving causing death resulted in a verdict of not guilty by reason of insanity. She has produced an original, interesting report that highlights a legal anomaly and provides clear, concise legal information to readers, with a strong emphasis on the human side of the case and giving a voice to the victim’s family.”

CATEGORY 2: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (SUNDAY)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Elaine Byrne (Sunday Business Post): *Due Process Abandoned on the Altar of Social Media*

THE JUDGES SAID:

- A gutsy article challenging widely-held public opinions on the outcome of one of the most high-profile trials ever held on the island of Ireland.
- “This writer is renowned for her ability to discuss difficult issues with utter clarity, even in the face of strong public sentiment and heated debate. Balanced with an understanding of the public expressions of emotion, she highlights the vital importance of due process and respect for the legal principles that underpin our entire criminal justice system. This persuasive, impactful article is data-driven and richly-detailed but human-focussed and accessible.”

Three merit certificates were awarded:

SAMANTHA MCCAUGHREN, DEARBHAIL MCDONALD & SHANE PHELAN (SUNDAY INDEPENDENT): *ODCE CLAIMS INM DATA TAKEN OFF-SITE AND ‘INTERROGATED’ BUT ‘BOARD DID NOT KNOW’*

- The first in a series of articles which lifted the lid on the ODCE investigation into serious data access issues within the paper’s own parent company.

- “Fintan O’Toole described this article as a ‘terrific piece of journalism’, and we agree. This is gutsy, commendable reporting with a strong public interest slant. It shines a light on a hugely important topic – data protection – and what happens when that protection is breached. It also does a great job of explaining the legal framework around what happens when data privacy and journalistic integrity are not respected.”

JOHN LEE (IRISH MAIL ON SUNDAY): JOANNE HAYES: STATE TO ‘BUY HER SILENCE’

- An exclusive story revealing the details of the strict conditions attached to a planned compensation offer to the family at the heart of a decades-old scandal.
- “This excellent, in-depth report shines a light on a disturbing situation relating to the decades-old Kerry Babies scandal. Displaying a close connection to his sources and their trust in his journalistic ability and integrity, this reporter brings the reader through the facts of the case and highlights the danger to democracy when an individual, mistreated at the hands of the State, is asked to remain silent and forfeit their right to future legal action.”

MARK TIGHE (THE SUNDAY TIMES): SHOULD THIS 9-YEAR OLD BOY BE FORCED TO LEAVE IRELAND?

- An excellent contribution to the debate around some controversial aspects of our immigration and deportation system.
- “This reporter is consistently responsible for some of the best writing on the law and legal issues and surely has a display cabinet full of Justice Media Awards and other accolades. This detailed, crystal-clear report on of the most emotive and ill-understood aspects of the Irish legal system – immigration and deportation – excellently balances humanity with thorough analysis of the legal framework.”

CATEGORY 3: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (LOCAL)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Jess Casey (Limerick Leader): *‘It’s Abuse all over again’: Legal Fight has put Former Students ‘Through the Mill’*

THE JUDGES SAID:

- A special feature highlighting the case of a group of primary school abuse survivors and their struggle to secure State compensation.
- “This is an important piece of reporting with a focus on the voice of the victim and strong analysis of a difficult legal anomaly. However, the key distinguishing feature of this journalist’s work is the impact it had: alongside dedicated advocacy by survivor groups, this article brought vital attention to their case, ultimately leading to a change in redress scheme policy.”

Two merit certificates were awarded:

CAROL BYRNE (THE CLARE CHAMPION): *IS A DRUGS DAY THE BEST MEDICINE?*

- A detailed court report and analysis of how the courts system might benefit from a dedicated Drugs Day.
- “This is an insightful and impactful body of work on drugs cases in Ennis by a standout local reporter. This reporter is to be commended for an excellent scoop in the form of her interview with Judge Patrick Durcan and the quality of the accompanying articles highlighting the extent of the issue of drugs offences before the Clare courts.”

ANN MURPHY (THE ECHO): *CORK’S MOST EXPENSIVE OFFENDERS*

- a series of articles assessing the cost of free legal aid in cases featuring a high number of previous offences.
- “This reporter has produced insightful work of the highest standard with an ambitious investigation into serious repeat offending and the questions around free legal aid in such cases. This is thoughtful, detailed and balanced reporting on a complex and controversial topic, creating greater public understanding of important legal issues.”

CATEGORY 4: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (RADIO/PODCAST – NATIONAL)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Andrea Gilligan (Newstalk): *Sentencing: Crime and Punishment*

THE JUDGES SAID:

- An examination of how sentences are handed down following criminal convictions, and the reasoning behind them.
- “This reporter has created an extremely valuable and welcome space on Irish radio where important topics are given the time to be discussed in a comprehensive and insightful way. Benefiting from the expertise of a deeply credible and influential expert panel moderated by a presenter with a clear vision, the listener comes away with a strong sense of the “hows” and “whys” of sentencing in the Irish courts. A worthy winner of this competitive category.”

Two merit certificates were awarded:

EVELYN O’ROURKE (RTÉ RADIO 1): *REPORTS ON THE FAMILY COURTS, STREET LAW AND SMALL CLAIMS COURT*

- A series of reports from the family courts, Small Claims Court and Mountjoy Prison’s Education Centre.
- “This reporter is no stranger to the Justice Media Awards, consistently displaying great skill in the difficult art of reporting in-camera family law cases and shining a light on some of the more under-appreciated corners of our justice system. This excellent series of reports serves a hugely important function in providing her

significant listenership with unique insight into the everyday work of our courts system and prison system that rarely receives media attention.”

RONAN KELLY & LIAM O'BRIEN (RTÉ RADIO 1): *DOCUMENTARY ON ONE: NOTES FROM A BELFAST RAPE TRIAL*

- A radio documentary that put the listener in the position of jury member in one of Northern Ireland's most high-profile and controversial trials.
- “Featuring contributions from some of the key legal professionals behind the trial, this excellent documentary tackles some of the most difficult aspects of the notorious and incredibly divisive Belfast rape trial. Ultimately, it helps the listener to understand how and why the jury reached their verdict. This is a well-executed, valuable body of work.”

CATEGORY 5: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (RADIO/PODCAST – LOCAL)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Fiona McGarry (Clare FM): *Bedford Row: Supporting Clare's Prison Families*

THE JUDGES SAID:

- An extended radio feature highlighting a scheme designed to support prisoners and their families in County Clare.
- “This excellent feature shines a light on an innovative court project which replaced the ‘poor box’ with a special fund, which is then used to provide advice, support, counselling and vocational training to prisoners and their families. This reporter displays a real understanding of the subject, its importance and how to present valuable data to her listeners in a balanced, accessible and engaging way.”

One merit certificate was awarded:

RUTH O'CONNELL (LMFM): *WHEN THE INQUEST OF MURDERED GARDA TONY GOLDEN HEARD MORE THAN THE “WHO, WHAT, WHERE AND HOW”*

- A detailed discussion on the evidence heard at the inquest of a Garda murdered in the line of duty.
- “Detailed, compassionate reporting on the evidence presented at the inquest into the death of Garda Tony Golden. This reporter displays great skill in helping listeners understand the inquest proceedings and the wider circumstances involved in an extremely difficult case that shocked the people of Louth and across the nation.”

CATEGORY 6: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (TV/VIDEO)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Richard Newman, Lyndsey Telford, Gwyneth Jones & Jeremy Adams (BBC NI): *Spotlight: When is Sex Rape?*

THE JUDGES SAID:

- A unique TV experiment exploring the law pertaining to the prosecution of rape in Northern Ireland.
- “Top-quality, truly innovative journalism which explored some of the most difficult themes and questions raised by the Belfast rape trial. Detailed discussions about conviction rates and areas of law reform was combined with a highly-engaging, enlightening mock trial based on a fictitious scenario – respectful of the laws surrounding media coverage of such trials. Receiving unanimous praise from our judges, this was a brilliant idea, brilliantly executed.”

Two merit certificates were awarded:

KATHLEEN HARRIS (IRISHTIMES.COM): *THE EIGHTH: IRELAND’S BATTLE OVER ABORTION*

- A video documentary tracing the history of the Eighth Amendment in Ireland.
- “An excellent piece of work that provided viewers with clear context and background for one of the biggest and most divisive news stories not only in 2018, but in the history of the State. Engaging, balanced and rich in historical, constitutional and legal detail, it’s a standout piece among the vast sea of coverage generated before, during and after the referendum.”

CLAIRE BYRNE, JANE MURPHY, JOHN BYRNE, STEPHEN WALLACE, JACK GOOD AND PAUL TAYLOR (RTÉ): *HER NAME IS CLODAGH*

- A programme on domestic homicide cases, the unanswered questions families are left with and the legal reforms needed.
- “Hugely impactful reporting which focussed on the human side of domestic homicide cases and highlighted the very serious reforms needed in the legal framework surrounding them. The team behind this programme displayed skill, compassion and vision in providing a vital platform for the family members left behind and the questions they had about the system.”

CATEGORY 7: COURT REPORTING – PRINT/ONLINE

CATEGORY WINNER:

Helen Bruce (Irish Daily Mail & Extra.ie): *The Cervical Check Scandal*

THE JUDGES SAID:

- Excellent coverage of the cases brought by the women at the centre of the Cervical Check scandal.
- “Hugely impressive, genuine front-page exposé news, centred around the voices of the women most affected. This stalwart of the Justice Media Awards continues her success with an important series of articles on the outrage and tragedy of the Cervical Check scandal. Exceptional court reporting.”

Two merit certificates were awarded:

CONOR GALLAGHER (IRISH TIMES): *INSIDE COURT 12: THE COMPLETE STORY OF THE BELFAST RAPE TRIAL*

- a detailed article telling the complete story of the Belfast rape trial
- “Every year, the coverage of one trial or court case has a big impact on the Justice Media Awards. Having reported from Laganside Court from start to finish on the Belfast rape trial, this journalist delivered an excellent ‘complete story’ article following the verdicts. Richly descriptive writing details the key points of contention in the case, the legal strategies involved, as well as examining what was happening outside the courtroom.”

ORLA O’DONNELL (RTÉ): *DAVID DRUMM: THE LONG ROAD FROM ANGLO COLLAPSE TO CONVICTION*

- A comprehensive long-read article on one of the key criminal convictions following a notorious bank collapse.
- “Expertly drawing on her years of covering criminal trials related to the collapse of Anglo Irish Bank, this reporter weaved many threads together to develop a comprehensive and colourful written summary of the road leading to David Drumm’s conviction. This authoritative analysis includes details not possible to show on television while retaining the reporter’s distinctive voice.”

CATEGORY 8: COURT REPORTING (BROADCAST)

CATEGORY WINNER:

Frank Greaney (Newstalk): *The Mr. Moonlight Trial: Mary Lowry Takes the Stand*

THE JUDGES SAID:

- A series of radio reports on key elements of the infamous “Mr Moonlight” trial.
- “Focussed on the prosecution’s overview of evidence, as well as the evidence given by key witness Mary Lowry, this reporter’s daily coverage of the trial provided listeners with a comprehensive account of what she had to say in a conversational, balanced and user-friendly way. Detailed, clear and, above all, respectful and empathetic reporting on a trial that gripped the nation for weeks on end.”

Two merit certificates were awarded:

NICOLE GERNON (VIRGIN MEDIA NEWS): *STATE TO APPEAL MOBILE PHONE RULING IN GRAHAM DWYER CASE*

- A series of reports on the State’s appeal of a High Court decision relating to crucial evidence in the Graham Dwyer trial.
- “Featuring a skilled re-telling of some of the key aspects of one of the State’s most high-profile murder cases, these reports clearly explain to viewers the significance of the High Court’s finding on mobile phone evidence and its implications for this

case and others. This reporter's ability to recap and explain complex and controversial court decisions and legal concepts is very impressive."

FIONA CORCORAN (CORK'S 96FM & C103 NEWS): *ON THE STEPS*

- A series of court reports excellently amplified by interviews with those involved in the cases.
- "This reporter's approach to court reporting for radio is rich and detailed, seeking out those involved in the court cases she covers to get their reactions and their warnings to others. These reports feature protests on the courthouse steps, interviews with the families of murdered women, a family facing eviction and more. People-centred court reporting that is of huge value to listeners."

CATEGORY 9: HUMAN RIGHTS/SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORTING

CATEGORY WINNER:

Paddy Hayes (Magamedia/TG4): *Finné: Martin Conmey*

THE JUDGES SAID:

- A moving documentary about a wrongfully convicted man's campaign to clear his name.
- "Giving a platform to Martin Conmey and his family for the first time in 40 years, this excellent documentary highlights an often unseen side of Ireland's criminal justice system: those wrongfully convicted of the most serious crimes and their battle for justice. Atmospheric, detailed, and hugely compelling, this terrific body of work richly deserves today's award."

Three merit certificates were awarded:

CHRISTINA FINN (THEJOURNAL.IE): *'THE DE FACTO DETAINED ARE STILL THERE':*

VOLUNTARY PATIENTS STILL HELD WITHOUT REVIEW DUE TO DELAYS IN LAW REFORM

- An exposé of slow progress in reforming mental health law and its impact on human rights.
- "Five years after publishing a Mary Raftery Journalism fund-backed investigation into mental health law in Ireland, this reporter returns to the topic to reveal that just one of 165 recommended changes had been made to the *Mental Health Act 2001*. This is an excellent, detailed examination of the laws, their impacts on those seeking mental health treatment and the very real effect of political inaction on human rights."

CONOR GALLAGHER (THE IRISH TIMES): *MENTAL ILLNESS AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM*

- A series of articles on how the prison and health systems fail mental health sufferers who commit crimes.

- “This reporter never shies away from difficult topics and this excellent, impactful examination of the interactions between mental health sufferers and the criminal justice system is to be commended. Interviewing psychiatrists, prison workers, lawyers and families of sufferers, his characteristically holistic and thoughtful approach earns him a second prize today.”

SORCHA POLLAK AND KATHLEEN HARRIS (THE IRISH TIMES): *FROM SYRIA TO WICKLOW: A DESPERATE FAMILY, AN IRISH WELCOME*

- An expansive reporting project following a Syrian family’s escape from war to relocate in Wicklow.
- “Highly engaging, detailed reporting on a project in Wicklow designed to welcome Syrian refugees to the local community. Combining a long-read article with excellent video-journalism, the reader comes away with a deeper understanding of the life of a refugee and the systems and frameworks behind their settlement in Ireland.”

CATEGORY 10: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE REPORTING

CATEGORY WINNER:

Paul O’Donoghue (The Times, Ireland Edition): *How Labour Problems in Honduras Tainted Fyffes’ Fair Trade Image*

THE JUDGES SAID:

- A series of articles exposing the difficulties faced by Honduran workers in their mission to unionise.
- “Having already won a Justice Media Award for exposing allegations of worker abuse at a plantation owned by Fyffes, an Irish multinational company, this reporter now revisits that story to examine their progress in unionising. This detailed, consistent and persistent reporting on the international conduct of a major Irish company has already had a positive impact on the lives of workers in one of the world’s poorest regions.”

No merit certificates were awarded.

CATEGORY 11: NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR

CATEGORY WINNER:

Eamonn Hickson (Radio Kerry)

THE JUDGES SAID:

- “This reporter has already developed a distinctive voice in a well-established, award-winning newsroom, displaying particular strength in court reporting. Balancing complex and sometimes distressing detail with concise reporting, he also demonstrates a strong eye for the human impact of the courts system and its failings.”

Two merit certificates were awarded:

SEAN MURRAY (THEJOURNAL.IE)

- “Just two years into his journalism career, this reporter has shown confidence and tenacity in particular in his coverage of the Disclosures Tribunal. He has demonstrated a strong interest and capacity for reporting on legal issues and we hope to see much more of his work at the Justice Media Awards.”

HARRY MANNING (THE IRISH SUN)

- “The judges were particularly impressed with this reporter’s excellent synopsis of a difficult, complex and highly emotive story on gangland deaths. Writing with clarity, accuracy and empathy on a broad range of subjects and stories, this reporter is one to be watched.”
-