

Justice Media Awards 2024

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 access to justice issues,
- Inform and educate the public as to the roles in society of the law, the courts, law enforcement agencies, and the legal profession,
- Disclose practices or procedures needing reform 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 – national)
5. Broadcast journalism (radio – local)
6. Broadcast journalism (podcast)
7. Broadcast journalism (TV/video)
8. Court reporting (print/online)
9. Court reporting (broadcast)
10. Human rights/social justice reporting (print/online)
11. Human rights/social justice reporting (broadcast)
12. Environmental law/climate justice reporting (all channels)
13. International justice reporting (all channels)
14. Newcomer of the year (all channels)
15. Student journalism (all channels)

OVERALL WINNER

Winner:

Killian Woods (Business Post): *Planning and the Courts - The fallout from the state's bid to tackle judicial reviews of development projects.*

The judges said:

- In an impressive nine-part series, this journalist has examined judicial reviews, legal challenges, changes to planning laws and reactions to each of these. At each stage, he has provided helpful insights for the readers.
- This reporting is timely, educational, and is about keeping our state bodies accountable. It is exceptional legal reporting.

CATEGORY 1: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (DAILY)

Category winner:

Conor Pope (The Irish Times): *Shining a light on the Small Claims Court.*

The judges said:

- This journalist put the spotlight on access to justice in his reports. They were practical explainers for ordinary people who have disputes to resolve.

Three merit certificates were awarded:

Jenny Friel (Irish Daily Mail): *Ireland's First Deaf Barrister - Using the Legal System to Break Down Barriers.*

- This was a well written and engaging story. It highlighted challenges for people with disabilities trying to access the law. barriers can be broken down in the legal system. Hopefully, it will encourage more people with disabilities to pursue a career in law.

Malachy Clerkin (The Irish Times): *From the court room: assault on a referee in a GAA match.*

- This entry to the awards piqued the judges' interest as it delivered a legal angle to a sports story. It was both different and engaging.

Mary Carolan (The Irish Times): *End of archaic High Court wardship system welcomed but new service faces challenges.*

- This was an informative report from a prolific writer. It was an important piece which carefully explored the opportunities and challenges of the Assisted Decision-Making Capacity Act and the wardship system.

Stephen McDermott (The Journal): *Fact-checking the Family and Care referendums.*

- It is not an easy task to fight false claims. But this journalist exceeds in this area addressing claims and tackling misinformation. This was a notable piece of work aiming to do just that.

CATEGORY 2: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (SUNDAY)

Category winner:

Catherine Sanz (Business Post): *Courts Can't Respond to Political Criticism.*

The judges said:

- This was likely a much sought-after interview with the President of the European Court of Human Rights. This experienced journalist did well to draw out information and interesting insights from the interviewee.

Four merit certificates were awarded:

Mark Tighe (Sunday Independent): *High Court Cases Caught in Awful Cycle of Delays.*

- This special report analysed how long judgements have been outstanding since their hearings finished. This journalist tackled this issue with an interesting angle. It was a smart way to bring it to the public's attention.

Daniel Murray (Business Post): *Taking a stand: the enormous cost of being a whistleblower.*

- This feature amplified the voices of whistleblowers, and highlighted negative impacts of becoming a whistleblower, despite laws in place to protect them.

Barry J Whyte (Business Post): *The men behind the Custom House Capital conspiracy are finally called to account.*

- This was a thorough report outlining the roles of former executives and the fraudulent use of clients' money. It transported the reader into the courtroom and clearly explained the case at hand.

Laura Roddy (The Sunday Times Ireland): *Big Tech's Watchdog bites back over complaints of soft justice.*

- This was an excellent article giving good insight into the work of the Data Protection Office, and the issues facing it.

CATEGORY 3: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (LOCAL)

Category winner:

Aidan O'Connor (Kerry's Eye): *Character References.*

The judges said:

- The journalist delivered an excellent report on a controversial issue. This was a local story, which drew national attention from our lawmakers.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Ronan Dodd (The Tipperary Star): *Restorative Justice: Giving a Voice to Victims and a Second Chance to Offenders.*

- This special report highlighted the work of the Restorative Justice Programme. It featured an excellent interview highlighting the importance of giving a voice to victims of crime.

Dan Danaher (The Clare Champion): *Woman Seeks Reform of Family Law Courts Which "Bankrupt" Victims.*

- This special report outlined the need for an overhaul of family law proceedings. The journalist carefully shared the story of a woman seeking divorce and highlighted real access to justice issues within the family courts system.

CATEGORY 4: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (RADIO – NATIONAL)

Category winner:

Evelyn O'Rourke and Niamh Lyons (Today with Claire Byrne, RTÉ Radio 1): *Inside the Children Court*

The judges said:

- This was brilliant reporting which explored the Children Courts system. Contributions from the judiciary and court reporting from in camera proceedings gave a real insight into the experiences of different court-users and underage offenders.

Three merit certificates were awarded:

Justin McCarthy and Elayne Devlin (This Week, RTÉ Radio 1): *Reforming contempt law: Enoch is enough.*

- This was a special report on the repeated jailing of schoolteacher Enoch Burke. With insights from a legal expert, this report carefully assessed Ireland's civil contempt laws.

Brian O'Connell (Today with Claire Byrne, RTÉ Radio 1): *Special Emergency Arrangements and the Courts.*

- This special report provided a well-balanced discussion, which highlighted an area of unregulated court ordered care. Importantly, it was journalism that sparked a response from members of the Oireachtas.

Andrea Gilligan, Dee King, Heather Blackbyrne, Ross Leahy and Mark Simpson (Newstalk's Lunchtime Live Team): *Cross Examination for those providing character references.*

- This team delivered a detailed discussion into character references in sexual offence cases and the proposal to cross examine providers. With contributions from multiple legal experts, it was accessible legal reporting, highlighting a controversial issue.

CATEGORY 5: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (RADIO – LOCAL)

Category winner:

Niall Delaney (Ocean FM): *The Holy Week Murders - Crimes of Hate.*

The judges said:

- This experienced journalist tackled the issue of hate crime and LGBTQ murders in a sensitive way. Crucially, it gave the victims' families a platform to share their stories.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Joe Finnegan, Eoghan Murphy and Kevin McDermott (Shannonside Northern Sound FM): *The Assisted Dying Legislation*

- This was a balanced special report on the sensitive issue of assisted dying. The report looked at other jurisdictions and offered good debate from legal and health experts.

Patricia Messinger and JohnPaul McNamara (C103 Cork Radio): *The Importance of Family Mediation.*

- This was useful public service journalism. It was an interesting report explaining mediation and its benefits in family law issues.

CATEGORY 6: BROADCAST PODCAST (TV/VIDEO)

Category winner:

Kevin Doyle, Fionnán Sheahan, Tabitha Monahan and Niall McMonagle (*The Indo Daily*): *The South Dublin planning saga and the quest for 'go away' money.*

The judges said:

- This public interest podcast had it all - planning, mildly inconvenienced south Dublin residents, fraudulent payments and a law firm scandal. The short format of these podcasts is convenient for people on the go.

Four merit certificates were awarded:

Michael O'Toole, Paul Healy and Andrei Scintian (Reach Ireland/Irish Mirror/Irish Daily Star): *Shattered Lives: the Ashling Murphy trial.*

- This special podcast series provided good end of case reporting, discussing witnesses and statements, and how they perceived them, as well as the unusual defence approach of taking to the stand.

Frank Greaney, Aisling Moore and Lochlainn Harte (Newstalk): *All Rise - The Ashling Murphy Murder Trial.*

- This podcast was informative piece from these seasoned journalists. It was engaging and explained legal concepts clearly.

Róisín Ingle, Suzanne Brennan and JJ Vernon (The Irish Times): *The Women's Podcast Referendum Special.*

- This podcast struck a good balance between legal information and legal debate. It was a timely report examining the issues of the referendums on family and care.

Ian Doyle, Damien Lane, Stephen Breen, Michael Doyle and Vivienne Wood (The Irish Sun): *The Kinahans.*

- This was a superb podcast series. It gave real insights into Ireland's crime world and one of Ireland's most famous crime families.

CATEGORY 7: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (TV/VIDEO)

Category winner:

Sallyanne Godson, Barry Cummins and Sean Mooney (RTÉ Prime Time): *Lifers*

The judges said:

- This was an informative explainer on the realities of imprisonment in Ireland. It offered a balanced discussion looking at prison sentences and featured excellent insights from legal experts. It was an interesting and educational report.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Conor Hunt (RTÉ News): *The Stardust Inquests*

- Detailing victims' statements, this journalist has provided harrowing accounts and extensive

reporting on a case that has shaken Irish society for over 40 years.

Mariana Rios Sanchez, David Harvey and Kevin Cantrell (Virgin Media): *Murdered: The Baby on the Beach*

- This was an excellent, comprehensive documentary detailing firsthand accounts and highlighting the apology for wrongly accusing Joanne Hayes of murder. It spotlighted one of the most notorious miscarriages of justice in Irish memory.

CATEGORY 8: COURT REPORTING – PRINT/ONLINE

Category winner:

Mary Carolan (The Irish Times): *A day trip to the Aran Islands with a District Court judge.*

The judges said:

- This was a beautifully written article which transported the reader into the island court. It highlighted how justice must be delivered even in the most remote parts of the country, and as Gaeilge.

Three merit certificates were awarded:

Shane Phelan (Irish Independent): *Letter reveals lonely life and ‘cruel’ death of Tipperary couple.*

- This seasoned journalist provided an exclusive report demonstrating the importance of seeking all information to build a complete picture. It also offered excellent insights into the Coroner’s Court.

Hannah McCarthy (The Irish Times): *Pte Seán Rooney’s case at the Military Court in Beirut.*

- This journalist was commended for reporting on the trial of the killing of Pte Seán Rooney in Beirut. Notably it was a topic that no other Irish reporter was covering.

Fiona Ferguson (CCC Nuacht News Agency): *Court reporting on rape offences.*

- This was an excellent and cleverly curated selection of court reports highlighting the reporting of rape trials from the last year.

CATEGORY 9: COURT REPORTING (BROADCAST)

Category winner:

Barry Cummins and Brídóg Ní Bhuachalla (RTÉ Prime Time): *Nora.*

The judges said:

- This report highlighted the advances in forensic science to aid a long-overdue conviction. This piece was earmarked for its powerful storytelling. It showed how, even after a substantial amount of time, murders can be solved with new sciences and technologies and justice can still be served.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Frank Greaney (Newstalk): *Puska takes the Stand.*

- This special report detailed the testimony of the accused in a high-profile murder case. This experienced reporter has delivered another exceptional piece of journalism. It was clear, informative and skilfully transported listeners into the court room.

Mark Lynch (Radio Kerry): *Judge Warns Kerry Money Mules.*

- This was an excellent broadcast piece. It was public service journalism highlighting the consequences of breaking the law and the ramifications of being caught up in money-laundering schemes.

CATEGORY 10: HUMAN RIGHTS/SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORTING (PRINT/ONLINE)

Category winner:

Eoghan Dalton, Sinéad O'Carroll and Daragh Brophy (The Journal): *Bill Kenneally case: How a TD, a priest and gardai handled Waterford child abuse complaints.*

The judges said:

- This series of articles focused on how prominent institutions mis-handled disclosures. This in-depth reporting tied together historical events and the current investigation. The reports amplified the voices of the victims and highlighted the unacceptable non-action by prominent members of the community following child sex abuse reports.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Órla Ryan (The Journal): *Landmark Supreme Court Ruling on Pension Rights.*

- This series detailed a landmark Supreme Court ruling and amplified the voices impacted by the gap in the law. It was educational and informative within this niche area.

Ann Murphy (Irish Examiner): *The inadequacies of mental health care for children in care.*

- This experienced journalist highlighted a significant gap in our services for children in Tusla. It was journalism that drove action and prompted further research in the area.

CATEGORY 11: HUMAN RIGHTS/SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORTING (BROADCAST)

Category winner:

Sallyanne Godson, Sarah McInerney and Martin Vale (RTÉ Prime Time): *Surrogacy: An Irish Solution to an International Problem*

The judges said:

- This was an excellent and emotive investigation into the difficulties facing Irish families with children conceived via surrogacy. It was timely and informative, and highlighted the importance of producing a considered law and protecting human rights in this area.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Nicole Gernon, Ronan McIntyre and Alvaro Valero (Virgin Media): *Detained in Iraq - A wife's fight to get her husband home.*

- This report spotlighted human rights abuses and the importance of external intervention. It was presented in a digestible way for viewers and highlighted the impact that accusations can have on families.

Paul Quinn and Oisín Moran (Virgin Media): *Hate Crime - The Anthony Burke Interview*

- This special report carefully addressed the sensitive topic of hate crimes and highlighted real fears for a frightened member of the LGBTQ community. It was an important issue to cover.

CATEGORY 12: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE REPORTING (ALL CHANNELS)

Category winner:

Shane Phelan (Irish Independent): *Google forced to stop telling publishers about 'right to be forgotten' decisions.*

The judges said:

- This experienced journalist has delivered an important update on the Right to be Forgotten and delisting of webpages. It is clearly written and addresses key legal information for readers.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Jade Wilson (The Irish Times): *Temporary Protection Directive investigation in Europe.*

- These reports showed the real-life consequences that temporary protection directives have on people. The journalist coupled this well with the legal explanation of the process. It was high quality journalism.

Stephen McDermott (The Journal): *What is a war crime and is international law being broken in Israel and Gaza?*

- This journalist offered a detailed and informed explanation of what constitutes a war crime. This is timely and helpful journalism in light of the ongoing conflict.

CATEGORY 13: ENVIRONMENTAL LAW/CLIMATE JUSTICE REPORTING (ALL CHANNELS)

Category winner:

Luke Butterly (The Detail): *Most 'alarming' environmental scandal in decades being overlooked, campaigners claim.*

The judges said:

- This three-part investigative series examined the falsification of key environmental documents and fabricated livestock planning applications across Northern Ireland. It highlighted how journalists can, and should, use FOI requests to their advantage. It was excellent investigative reporting.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

Lauren Boland (The Journal): *Ireland's late submission of long-term climate strategy and EU's infringement proceedings in response.*

- This series of articles spotlights the government's delay in publishing its EU directed climate plan. This reporting helped the public understand our EU obligations, as well as the action needed for our climate strategy and what this means for the industry.

Niall Sargent (The Currency): *Unauthorised Peat Extraction*

- This experienced journalist has followed Ireland's peat extraction industry closely over the years. He has included good analysis and puts Freedom of Information requests to good use. It was excellent reporting.

CATEGORY 14: NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR

Category winner:

Muiris O’Cearbhaill (The Journal)

The judges said:

- This journalist has highlighted key issues facing public services and focused on stories in the public interest. This reporting has been coupled with research and contributions from experts in the field and is a well-deserved winner.

Three merit certificates were awarded:

Jack White (Irish Examiner)

- This journalist has reported on an important range of public interest stories, all while keeping the victims’ voices front and centre.

Mark Lynch (Radio Kerry)

- This newcomer has demonstrated exciting, but careful reporting on a range of issues.

Patrick O’Donoghue (The Sunday Times Ireland)

- This journalist has demonstrated his skill and experience as he was tasked with setting the agenda for reporting on the Enoch Burke trial.

CATEGORY 15: STUDENT JOURNALISM

Category winner:

Tom O’Connor (Flirt FM): *Boyle’s Law: The Story of Kevin Boyle.*

The judges said:

- This special report explored the life of a human rights lawyer, activist, and academic. This student journalist has demonstrated impressive skill and storytelling. His reporting would be worthy of recognition in any category.

One merit certificate was awarded:

Caoimhe Looney (Student Independent News): *The realities of immigration: challenges and advocacy surrounding international protection applicants in Ireland.*

- This student journalist highlighted the challenges facing immigrants seeking protection in Ireland. It was a well written and covered a highly topical issue.
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