

WITH THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



Irwin Mitchell is a staunch supporter of legal aid and its role in providing access to justice and protecting the interests of the most vulnerable

members of our society. As such we are proud to support the fantastic work of Young Legal Aid Lawyers and congratulate you on your 10th anniversary. Irwin Mitchell is a full-service law firm with an extremely broad public law practice including community care, education, Court of Protection, civil liberties and human rights. We believe that the ongoing work of YLAL is crucial, we congratulate you on your achievements over the past 10 years and wish you every success for the years ahead.



Garden Court North Chambers in Manchester is a huge fan of YLAL and their work to represent the voice of young legal aid lawyers. We support and contribute to many of the YLAL meetings and campaigning activities outside of London and share YLAL's belief that good quality publicly funded legal advice and representation is essential to protecting the interests of the vulnerable

in society. Congratulations to YLAL on all your achievements.



TV Edwards LLP was established in 1929 in London's East End. A predominantly Legal Aid practice, TV Edwards offers a wide range of legal services brought

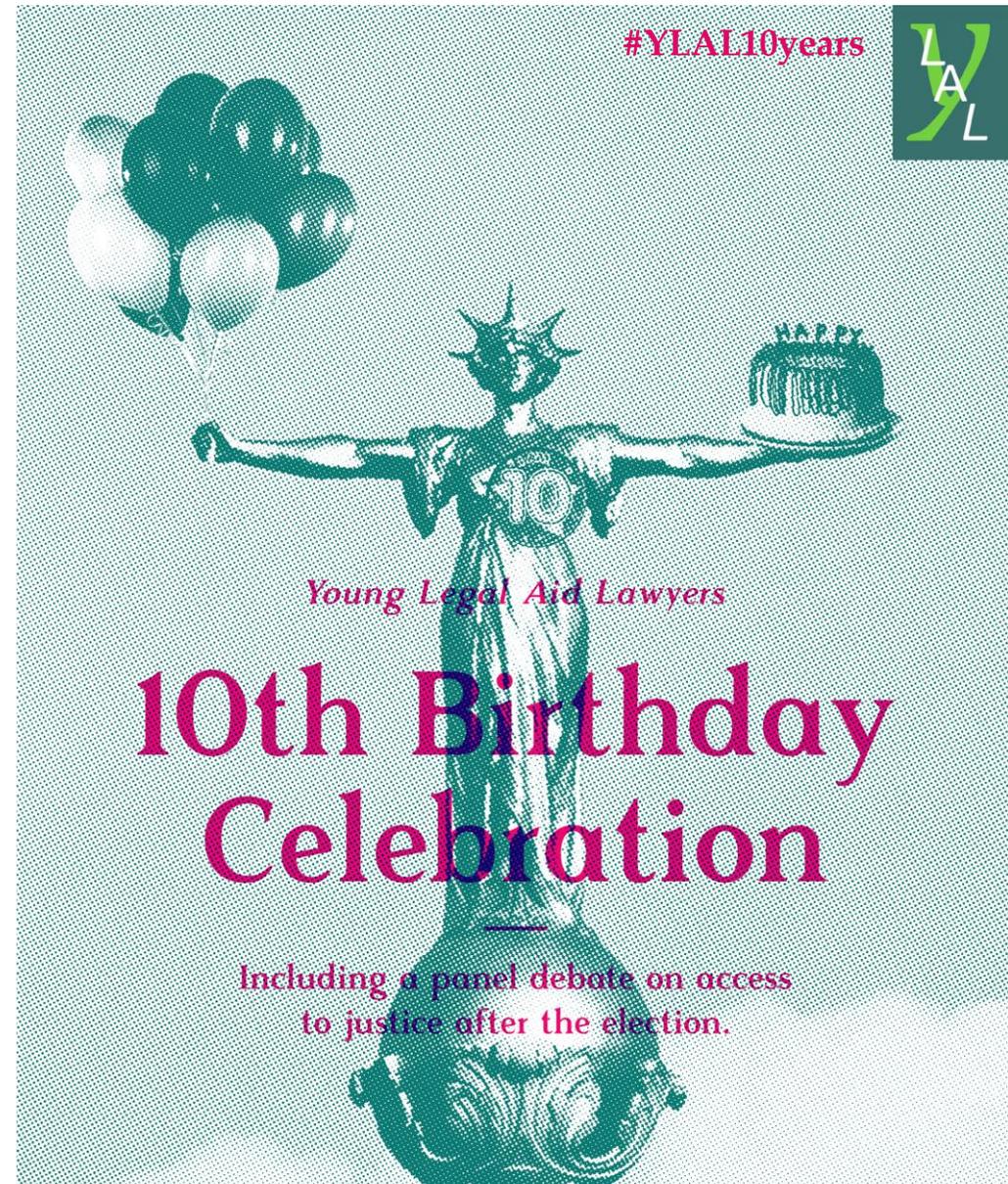
together to provide a holistic and tailored service to meet the needs of vulnerable clients. As well as remaining committed to its clients in what is a continually difficult time for the legal aid sector, TV Edwards continues to invest in the junior end of the profession and is a strong believer in YLAL and they work they do. TV Edwards is delighted to support YLAL on their 10th anniversary and wishes the organisation every success.

London South Bank University

London South Bank University (LSBU) is one of London's largest and oldest universities. Since 1892 we have been providing

students with vocationally-relevant, accredited and professionally recognised education. As a cosmopolitan university, with over 25,000 students, we draw students from over 130 countries. LSBU has continued to support YLAL over the years and wishes every congratulations on reaching this landmark birthday.

#YLAL10years



Keynote speech from Baroness Patricia Scotland QC

Compere: Owen Bowcott (The Guardian)

Panel including: Baroness Jenny Jones (Green Party), Andy Slaughter (Labour party candidate), Solange Valdez (Ealing Law Centre), Martha Spurrier (Doughty Street Chambers), Connor Johnston (Garden Court Chambers), Elfyn Llwyd (Plaid Cymru), Geoffrey Payne (Liberal Democrat, 25 Bedford Row), and James Symes (Conservative party candidate)

Principal sponsor:



Hosted by:

London South Bank University

ABOUT US

Young Legal Aid Lawyers (YLAL) is a group of lawyers who are committed to practising in those areas of law, both criminal and civil, that have traditionally been publicly funded. YLAL members include students, paralegals, trainee solicitors, pupil barristers and qualified junior lawyers based throughout England and Wales. We believe that the provision of good quality publicly funded legal help is essential to protecting the interests of the vulnerable in society and upholding the rule of law.

YLAL's objectives are:

- To campaign for a sustainable legal aid system which provides good quality legal help to those who could not otherwise afford to pay for it.
- To increase social mobility and diversity within the legal aid sector.
- To promote the interests of new entrants and junior lawyers and provide a network for like-minded people beginning their careers in the legal aid sector.

YLAL has a committee that steers our work. Members can play a full role in helping to achieve YLAL's objectives by joining sub-groups that focus on a particular aim or task. We hold regular meetings each month in London and have groups across the country (the north, Liverpool, Newcastle, Kent and the Midlands) so that members can discuss YLAL's latest work. For those who can't make the meetings, minutes from the London meeting are sent out shortly afterwards to keep members updated.

We work closely with other groups who share some or all of YLAL's objectives. We do not wish to duplicate work or efforts made by such groups, but we believe it is crucial for junior lawyers working in (and wanting to work in) the legal aid sector to have their own voice. And that is what we aim to provide.

Non-members can also keep up-to-date with our work by following us on twitter (@YLALawyers) or "liking" our facebook page.

PROFILES

Baroness Patricia Scotland QC, barrister at 4 Paper Buildings and Former HM Attorney General; Baroness Scotland served as HM Attorney General from July 2007 to May 2010 and practices Human Rights, Family Law, and Constitutional Law at the Bar.

Dr Laura James, Solicitor, Legal Director at the Howard League for Penal Reform, Visiting Scholar at South Bank University and Founder of YLAL; Laura is a solicitor for Scott-Moncrieff and Associates.

Owen Bowcott, Journalist and Legal Affairs Correspondent for The Guardian; Prior to working for The Guardian, Owen worked for The Birmingham Post, BBC Panorama and The Daily Telegraph.

Andy Slaughter, Labour Candidate for Hammersmith and Shadwell Justice Minister ; Andy is a Labour Party politician and Member of Parliament for Hammersmith from 2010 until March 2015.

Connor Johnston, Barrister at Garden Court Chambers and Co-Chair of YLAL; Connor is a barrister practising primarily in housing, homelessness and community care law.

Ellyn Llywyd, MP and Westminster Parliamentary Group Leader for Plaid Cymru; Ellyn is a Welsh barrister and politician. He was a Member of Parliament from 1992 to 2015.

Martha Spurrier, Barrister, Doughty Street Chambers; Martha specialises in public law and civil claims against public authorities. She has acted at all levels, including the Supreme Court.

Geoffrey Payne; member of the Liberal Democrat National Policy Committee, chair of party policy group on crime & criminal justice, criminal barrister at 25 Bedford Row Chambers.

Solange Valdez, Solicitor and Founder of the Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens; Solange is supervising solicitor at Ealing Law Centre, which provides free specialist legal advice.

Baroness Jenny Jones, Green Party Assembly Member, Chair of Economy Committee, and a Working Peer; Jenny joined the House of Lords in 2013 and is a Green Party member of the London Assembly.

James Symes, Conservative parliamentary candidate for Ealing Southall; James is a chartered accountant at a top four accounting firm and has also helped to set up a free school.

entitled *"Nowhere else to turn: The impact of legal aid cuts on MPs' ability to help their constituents"*. We returned to this subject in 2013 when we carried out a follow-up survey, confirming our predictions that there would be an increase in demand for legal advice in areas excluded from the legal aid scheme and that MPs would find it more difficult to help constituents resolve their legal problems.

Throughout all of this time we have endeavoured to use social media to engage both with our members and with the general public on legal aid issues. In 2010, we launched our *"Save Legal Aid"* website as a place where non-lawyers could read about the importance of legal aid and follow our campaigning activities. Building on this we now have over 6,000 followers on Twitter, a strong presence on Facebook, and excellent blogs dealing with the realities of life as a young legal aid lawyer ('View from the gravy train'), and telling stories of legally aided clients ('Thanks to legal aid').

From the beginning YLAL has also tried to look beyond the London environs for members, holding meetings in Sheffield and Cardiff in the early years. Today we are a national organisation with 2,000 members located up and down the country and meetings in the north, Liverpool, Newcastle, Kent and the Midlands as well as London.

And throughout we have always been lucky to enjoy the support of the better established organisations including the Legal Action Group (for whose magazine we now write a regular column), the Law Society, the LAPG, and the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers. We sit on the LAPG committee and run two seminars at their annual conference, usually including one session on a career in the legal aid sector, to continue engaging with law students considering a career in this area.

As a result of all of this work we have been lucky enough to win the Outstanding Achievement Award at the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards in 2009 and also the Young Person of the Year Award at the Liberty Human Rights Awards 2010: an award which makes little grammatical sense for a group as large as YLAL, but of which we remain particularly proud. Both awards provide some recognition of the hard work and dedication of our members to the causes of legal aid, social justice and human rights over the last decade.

We are pleased you are here to help us celebrate these last 10 years, and have little doubt that the commitment of our members will see us through the next 10 years ahead.

TONIGHT'S RUNNING ORDER

- 6.30 Welcome from Katie Brown, co-chair YLAL
- 6.40 Dr Laura Janes, "Ten years of YLAL"
- 6.50 Keynote speaker, Baroness Patricia Scotland QC
- 7.10 Legal Aid team animation
- 7.20 Panel event chaired by Owen Bowcott, Legal Affairs Correspondent, The Guardian
- 8.20 Closing remarks, Katie Brown

Please join us for refreshments after the event on the mezzanine level outside the lecture theatre.

In 2005 legal aid practitioners were facing an uncertain future. Following a review by Lord Carter of Coles, the Labour Government had published plans to introduce price competitive tendering in the legal aid sector. Legal aid contracts would - critics feared - be awarded not to those who could provide the best quality representation to those unable to afford a lawyer, but to those who would do the work for the cheapest price. Alongside these plans came a proposal that lawyers should be paid cut-price fixed fees, as opposed to being remunerated for the hours that they actually worked: a further barrier to providing decent quality legal help to those lacking in means. The "Access to Justice Alliance", an umbrella organisation of charities, practitioner groups and non-governmental organisations, was set up to campaign against the plans. A key concern held by the group was that the plans would mean that fewer newcomers would be motivated to undertake publicly-funded work resulting in a lost generation of legal aid lawyers.

Three junior lawyers, each on the road to qualification - Laura Jones and Ashley Dias Patel, trainee solicitors at Alexander and Partners, and Felicity Williams, a pupil barrister - shared these particular frustrations. They decided to set up a new group to represent the views of the junior end of the legal aid sector, to add their voices to the campaign against the cuts and to fight for decent access to justice so that legal aid lawyers can provide good quality legal advice and representation to clients, regardless of their means. They called the group the Young Legal Aid Lawyers.

YIAL's first meeting took place at Doughty Street Chambers on 13 April 2005, a few weeks after the first incarnation of YIAL's website had gone live. The group decided that a response to the Government's consultation on price competitive tendering, written from the point of view of junior and aspiring legal aid lawyers was needed: YIAL's first task.

Our work in that first year saw an expanding membership attending law fairs and speaking at the College of Law encouraging students to work in legal aid, beginning to work with other practitioner groups, campaigning on better pay and conditions for junior legal aid lawyers, hosting events with Jon Snow (a patron of YIAL) Lord Falconer (the then incumbent Lord Chancellor) and Roger Smith (Director at JUSTICE at the time) and providing training for junior lawyers. In the years that followed, we continued to make our voice heard

responding to innumerable consultations on cuts to legal aid and proposals that would impact on junior lawyers, hosting public meetings and engaging with MPs and Ministers (when they would let us into their offices).

We published our first major research project on social mobility in 2008. The report was based on a survey of our members and addressed the worrying trend of "paralegalisation": whereby legal aid firms were having to rely increasingly on unqualified junior lawyers often working long hours for little pay and with little supervision. This was a subject we returned to in February 2010 as part of our response to two Government consultations on social mobility and then again in 2013, following a further survey of our members, in our most recent report on the issue, "*One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*". A report launched at London South Bank University with Lady Hale as the keynote speaker.

Meanwhile, on 2 June 2009, together with the Legal Aid Practitioners Group (APPG) on legal aid, with Karen Buck MP as chair. The APPG has met regularly since that time, allowing MPs and Peers to engage in debate on legal aid issues and hear from practitioners and clients on the importance of legal aid, and the practical impact of the cuts.

It was to highlight these points that in 2010, together with the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, we set up a Commission of Inquiry into legal aid. The Commission consisted of the Reverend Professor Nicholas Sagovsky of Westminster Abbey, Diana Holland the assistant general secretary of the Unite Union and Liberal Democrat Dr Evan Harris. It considered written and oral testimony from around 30 clients who had benefited from legal aid in life changing circumstances, as well as from practitioners, academics and proponents of the rule of law such as Shami Chakrabarti of Liberty. This evidence formed the basis of the Commission's staunchly pro-legal aid report, "*Unequal before the law? The future of legal aid*", published with the assistance of YIAL.

The powerful testimony on which this report was based subsequently provided ammunition in the campaign against the swinging cuts to legal aid proposed by the newly elected coalition Government in 2010. It was in reaction to these cuts, which went on to form the basis of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO), that we carried out our first research in MPs' constituency surgeries. The results of this snapshot survey on the likely impact of LASPO on MPs' ability to help their constituents were published in our 2012 report.