

# Justice Media Awards 2026

## 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 (feature)
4. Print/online journalism (local)
5. Broadcast journalism (radio – national)
6. Broadcast journalism (radio – local)
7. Broadcast journalism (podcast)
8. Broadcast journalism (TV/video)
9. Court reporting (print/online)
10. Court reporting (broadcast)
11. Human rights/social justice reporting (print/online)
12. Human rights/social justice reporting (broadcast)
13. Environmental law/climate justice reporting (all channels)
14. International justice reporting (all channels)
15. Newcomer of the year (all channels)
16. Student journalism (all channels)

## OVERALL WINNER

### Winner: Broadcast Journalism (podcast)

**Tim Desmond, David Doran, Pamela Fraher, Philip Gallagher, Aoife Hegarty, Mel Mercier, Ruth Negga & Liam O'Brien (RTÉ Radio 1): *First Conviction***

### The judges said:

- This podcast series was a standout winner. The judges described this entry as current and capturing the mood of the nation, at a time when bias towards immigrants still exists.
- This podcast was educational and informed the public on the systematic failures that can still take place within our legal system. It was a hugely important piece of journalism.

## CATEGORY 1: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (DAILY)

### Category winner:

**Sinéad O'Carroll & Aoife Moore (The Journal): *The full story of how the operator of gossip site Tattle Life was unmasked in an Irish court***

### The judges said:

- This report provided an excellent analysis of the case and its aftermath. It was a public legal education piece, written in layman's terms.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

**Mary Carolan (Irish Times): *Landmark case means e-bike users in collisions may be held liable for injuries***

- This series had huge public interest value. This report stood out for its great detail and for drawing attention to a landmark decision which was very nearly knocked down.

**Shane Phelan (Irish Independent): *Irish rugby concussion cases fall by wayside as ex-player Corkery focuses on the UK***

- Exposing the legal and procedural barriers facing former rugby players pursuing concussion-related claims, this reporter highlighted why most cases have collapsed - despite growing concerns over player welfare and alleged failures in duty of care. It was a standout piece.

## **CATEGORY 2: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (SUNDAY)**

### **Category winner:**

**Michael O'Farrell (Irish Mail on Sunday): *Brother Aidan Clohessy abuse investigation***

### **The judges said:**

- This was a series of outstanding investigative reports, hitting on legal issues, public policy issues and victim impact reporting. It was a powerful read and is important for the public to continue to see issues like this reported on and for justice to be served.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

**Catherine Fegan (Sunday Independent): *The desire for a baby is greater – surrogacy business is booming in Ukraine despite bombings***

- This well researched reporting offered insights into the human cost of a commercial arrangement. It stood out for highlighting the interplay between Irish and Ukrainian law, and the risks and legal limbos facing Irish parentage.

**Daniel Murray (Business Post): *Planning and infrastructure legal reforms***

- This forensic reporting explains legal issues in a digestible way for an average reader. It was excellent, educational reporting.

## **CATEGORY 3: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (FEATURE)**

### **Category winner:**

**Cormac O'Keeffe (Irish Examiner): *Inside Ireland's Deportation System***

### **The judges said:**

- With excellent access and resources dedicated to this feature, it showcased that the justice system is prepared to be in full view. This report highlighted legal processes, protections in place, and justice in action. It put a human face to an emotive issue and had noteworthy accompanying visuals.

One merit certificate was awarded:

**Shane Raymond (The Journal): *Debunked: Enoch Burke was jailed again, but not for refusing to endorse transgender ideology***

- This provided a fresh take on a story that keeps on giving. It was forensic, educational and helped stop misinformation. It offered insights on the international perception of this story, including views of the 'anti-woke brigade'.

#### **CATEGORY 4: PRINT/ONLINE JOURNALISM (LOCAL)**

##### **Category winner:**

**Bernie English (Limerick Post): *New laws on what happens when your name ends up in the paper for the wrong reasons: Stop thief: The words no shopkeeper can say: 'I just want the record set straight'***

##### **The judges said:**

- This was an interesting report, which comprised thorough detail and a clear explanation of defamation laws. The injection of humour was attention grabbing – it was journalism worthy of national standard.

Five merit certificates were awarded:

**Pádraig Byrne (The Wexford People): *Despite a post-mortem and a grave, the law says my baby didn't exist' – Wexford mum launches campaign after crash tragedy***

- This reporting got recognition nationwide. It is journalism that was so strong, it could bring about support for a change in the law.

**Richard Canny (Roscommon Herald): *The Probation Service: managing the delicate balance between rehabilitation and risk***

- By showcasing the importance and impact of the probation service at a local level, and by providing an easy explainer of term definitions, this journalist's reporting stood out for being sympathetic, informative and educational for members of the public.

**Sarah Coleman (Limerick Post): *What is restorative justice and how does it work within the Irish courts?***

- This was a strong article highlighting an evolving justice model, which gives victims a stronger voice in court proceedings. It was ear-marked for a win, as the journalist drew attention to a lesser known justice system.

**Bartira da Silva Augelli (Dublin Inquirer): *Lack of speed-limit data from Dublin City Council hampering 'lifesaving' technology in cars***

- This journalist stood out for her reporting on a novel, but important and worthy topic. It was a niche area of law not reported anywhere else.

**Gemma Good (The Anglo Celt): *Money Mules: Trapped in the Transfer***

- This was true community justice reporting. Focusing on how this issue impacts young people, it was well written, informative, and highlighted the real-life consequences for partaking in money laundering.

## **CATEGORY 5: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (RADIO – NATIONAL)**

**Category winner:**

**Brian O’Connell (RTÉ Radio 1) *Inside the Drug Treatment Court***

**The judges said:**

- This journalist brought focus to a programme that doesn’t get much attention elsewhere. Delivered in an accessible, educational style, it provided insights into the courts, the procedures, and the law - all while keeping people front and centre.

One merit certificate was awarded:

**Margaret Curley & Justin McCarthy (This Week – RTÉ Radio 1): *The Evan Fitzgerald Case: Policing or Entrapment?***

- Focusing on a story that should have received more media attention, this report had excellent interviews, highlighting issues of Oireachtas privilege, suicide, and the dark web, all while detailing nuances at play.

## **CATEGORY 6 BROADCAST JOURNALISM (RADIO – LOCAL)**

**Category winner:**

**Niall Delaney (Ocean FM): *Beaten to Death - The Tom Niland case***

**The judges said:**

- It was encouraging to see the resources invested in covering this criminal trial. It was a moving report on a tragic case. This was another exceptional report from this experienced radio journalist.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

**Kevin McDermott, Joe Finnegan & Eoghan Murphy (The Joe Finnegan Show, Shannonside Northern Sound FM): *Bail review recommendations explained and examined***

- This report offered a clear and accessible explanation of the bail review process, making a complex legal framework easier for the public to understand.

**Patricia Messinger & Mairead Twohig (CorkToday, C103): *'There it is in black and white'***

- This is an experienced team, delivering a feature that can be defined as public legal education. With expert legal guests, this report focused on matters of importance to their listeners.

## **CATEGORY 7: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (PODCAST)**

### **Category winner:**

**Tim Desmond, David Doran, Pamela Fraher, Philip Gallagher, Aoife Hegarty, Mel Mercier, Ruth Negga, & Liam O'Brien (RTÉ Radio 1): *First Conviction***

### **The judges said:**

- This was a standout winner. Detailing horrific injustices and a story that sounded like it was from a different era, this experienced podcast team left the listener without doubt that the legal system can still show terrible biases towards immigrants.

Three merit certificates were awarded:

**Shane Beatty, Tom Donnelly & Aaron Harte-Hughes (Newstalk): *Inside Ireland's Witness Protection Programme***

- This was a fascinating listen. It was educational, eye-opening and highlighted the extent the system needs to go to prevent intimidation and to protect witnesses in the criminal law system.

**Eoin Brennan, Darren Cleary, Siobhan Maguire, John Sweetman & Siobhan Walsh (GoLoud): *Lines of Enquiry - Nora Sheehan***

- This podcast presented a cold-case story in an engaging way. It explained how forensic evidence could be introduced to bring about justice. It was an excellent and engaging listen.

**Mark Tighe, Ciaran Dunbar, Olivia Peden and Adam Shanahan (Sunday Independent and Belfast Telegraph): *The Indo Daily: 'One strong punch' – Trinity law graduate gets six-year sentence for killing Limerick student after Greek trial***

- The format of this podcast makes it digestible and easily accessible. This was a story that needed attention. Highlighting the differences between Irish and Greek law, this podcast drew attention to the victim's family and their search for justice.

## **CATEGORY 8: BROADCAST JOURNALISM (TV/VIDEO)**

### **Category winner:**

**David Doran, Pamela Fraher, Philip Gallagher, Aoife Hegarty, Tim Desmond and Liam O'Brien (RTÉ Investigates): *First Conviction***

### **The judges said:**

- This exceptional documentary highlighted how translations are routinely misinterpreted within the courts system. It brought this story to a wider audience and called out the flawed system. It is doing what good journalism needs to do.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

**Miriam O’Callaghan & Tara Peterman (RTÉ Prime Time): *Margaret Loftus – The Long Road to Justice***

- This experienced team handled this story sensitively. It gave power back to the survivor and spotlighted the legal issues for members of the public.

**Miriam O’Callaghan & Tara Peterman (RTÉ Prime Time): *The Murder of Kirsty Ward & the Legal Complexities Here & Abroad.***

- This powerful interview brought public attention to the issue of coercive control. It gave a voice to the victim’s family and with expert commentary, it highlighted flaws in the system when it comes to the care of children in such cases. It was excellent reporting.

**CATEGORY 9: COURT REPORTING – PRINT/ONLINE**

**Category winner:**

**Mary Carolan (The Irish Times): *The struggle to rein in Ireland's teen offenders: 'These gangs have no fear of recrimination'***

**The judges said:**

- This stalwart journalist delivers another exceptional article. Drawing attention to the lack of facilities and resources for repeat young offenders, it highlighted the realities of an underfunded justice system.

Four merit certificates were awarded:

**Catherine Fegan (Irish Independent): *Sentencing ‘The Dodger’ – colour reports from the Central Criminal Court in Dublin as DJ Carey is jailed for fraud***

- This experienced legal journalist has honed the skill of amplifying the voices of victims of crime. This was captivating reporting, detailing this mind-boggling celebrity case.

**Shane Phelan (Irish Independent): *Inside story of Flatley’s bruising court battle over ‘Lord of the Dance’ show.***

- This journalist captivated its readers with comprehensive details of the case. Drawing on evidence and affidavits, he painted a clear picture of this high-profile financial and legal dispute.

**Niall Sargent (The Currency): *Battle of the Barne***

- This journalist stood out for his ability to dissect complex judicial findings, while balancing the human and legal drama. This is superb legal journalism.

## **CATEGORY 10: COURT REPORTING (BROADCAST)**

**Category winner:**

**Barry Cummins, Sallyanne Godson, Sean Higgins & Martin Vale (RTÉ Prime Time): *Tina's Truth***

**The judges said:**

- This expert team has delivered another standout piece. This report acts as a stark reminder that manipulators will always try shape the narrative – but the truth lies beneath. It is important not to get too close to the subjects and to maintain the journalistic lens.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

**Nicole Gernon (Virgin Media News): “*Our loved ones deserve better, as a society we must do better*” - *Grieving mother calls for dangerous driving sentences to be increased.***

- This experienced court reporter has delivered another impactful report. Amplifying the voices of the victim’s family, it highlighted an area of law and gaps in justice that will tragically resonate with so many.

**Frank Greaney (Newstalk): *Enoch Burke jailed (again)***

- In a story that is standing the test of time, this journalist offered clarity and an explainer on the significance and legal basis for new court decisions. By doing this, he helps to dispel misinformation where the narrative has been hijacked.

## **CATEGORY 11: HUMAN RIGHTS/SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORTING (PRINT/ONLINE)**

**Category winner:**

**Alison O’Reilly (Irish Examiner): *The 11-year investigation that led to Ireland's first ever mass exhumation***

**The judges said:**

- This was an exceptional long running series. The journalist showed sensitivity, commitment, professionalism and did public service reporting on a human rights issue that shook the country.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

**Liz Dunphy (Irish Examiner): “*All of that could happen again... the damage has been done*”**

- In a world where we can feel numb to migrant crisis stories, this journalist continues to amplify the voices of those suffering at the edges of society, while highlighting the policies and practices directly impacting their lives.

**Kathleen Gallagher (Business Post): *How end of Victorian system leaves Ireland's vulnerable financially exposed***

- This journalist highlighted serious flaws and gaps with the wardship system that is meant to protect the most vulnerable. It was timely and informative and drew attention to an area that still needs reform.

## **CATEGORY 12: HUMAN RIGHTS/SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORTING (BROADCAST)**

### **Category winners:**

**Gavin Cooney, Ronan Early, Niall Kelly, Gareth Lyons, Sinéad O'Carroll & Nicky Ryan** (*The Journal and The 42*): ***Blathnaid Raleigh on the aftermath of a rape trial and the two sides of sport***

### **The judges said:**

- This was extraordinary reporting - telling the story of an extraordinary woman - and handled carefully by this team. The survivor's testimony was compelling and did the public a service by sharing her story, in particular, to a sporting audience. It was a standout piece.

Three merit certificates were awarded:

**David Doran, Aoife Hegarty, Matt Naughton, Doireann O'Hara, Rita O'Reilly & Martin Vale** (*RTÉ Investigates*): ***Christian Brothers - The Assets, The Abusers***

- This entry focused on a well-reported subject matter, but it is one that deserves to be revisited time and again. This entry stood out for its strong legal content and storytelling.

**Aaron Heffernan & Kate McDonald** (*RTÉ Prime Time*): ***Trace Data***

- At a time where there is consent fatigue on phone apps and elsewhere, this report highlighted how phone data is being used. It was both eye-opening and educational.

**Sallyanne Godson, Sean Malone, Paul Murphy & Mark Siung** (*RTÉ Prime Time*): ***A Serious Scandal?***

- This was extremely interesting reporting on the State's approach to personal injury claims. It highlighted the legal context and personal stories of a serious scandal in the making.

## **CATEGORY 13: ENVIRONMENTAL LAW/CLIMATE JUSTICE REPORTING**

### **Category winner:**

**Niall Sargent** (*The Currency*): ***Data Centre Climate Disclosures***

### **The judges said:**

- This reporting reminded us of the environmental costs of a growing a data centre industry. It was accessible, informative and reminded the reader of the need to keep this sector accountable.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

**Hannah McCarthy** (*The Irish Times*): ***'There's no water anymore': How palm oil plantations drained a Guatemalan rainforest community***

- This on-the-ground reporting provided good legal content on a lesser-known issue. The journalist easily conveys the human and environmental impacts of an industry altering local communities in rural Guatemala.

**Caroline O'Doherty** (*The Irish Times*): ***Unauthorised and unenforced - how a concrete***

***plant operated for 15 years without planning permission***

- It's beggars' belief how a business can operate for so long without planning permission and with complaints from the public. This piece was informative with expert insights.

**CATEGORY 14: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE REPORTING**

**Category winner:**

**Alice Chambers (The Currency): *The 'teen' category was one of the most profitable***

**The judges said:**

- Unravelling a financial web and explaining details of a class action lawsuit, this public interest reporting highlighted how multinationals can misrepresent their true activities. This was excellent journalism.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

**Hannah McCarthy (The Irish Times): *'The men who hurt us are still free': Mayan survivors of civil war violence fight for justice in Guatemala***

- This journalist highlighted the disregard for women survivors. It was a very strong investigation bringing attention to the consequences of a war-torn world.

**Niall Sargent (The Currency): *Central Bank and the Israeli Bonds***

- This was remarkable, in-depth reporting. This exceptional journalist reminded us how easily things can be 'overlooked', and how in this modern world, money makes things happen.

**CATEGORY 15: NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR**

**Category winner:**

**Ella Sloane (The Irish Times)**

**The judges said:**

- This journalist caught the attention of judges for highlighting issues that others were rowing back on, and standing out for her ability to weave storytelling together with the law for a captivating read.

Three merit certificates were awarded:

**Oisín Gaffey (Business Post)**

- This is a journalist who has demonstrated effective reporting, standing out for his analysis and ability to get into the detail of legal issues.

**Darragh Murphy (Waterford News & Start)**

- This journalist is a promising regional newcomer who reminded us that all politics is local.

**Eoin O'Hare (Business Post)**

- This newcomer demonstrated a series of strong articles, standing out for his legal content and injection of humour.

## **CATEGORY 16: STUDENT JOURNALISM**

### **Category winner:**

**Orla Mahon & Adam Schmitz (The University Observer): *Coverage of UCD School of Medicine Sexual Assault and Image Based Sexual Abuse***

### **The judges said:**

- From engaging with local representatives, requesting court documents and dealing with legal threats, these journalists highlighted an issue that their college would much prefer not to be reported on. This was hard-hitting public service investigative journalism.

Two merit certificates were awarded:

**Arpita Chowdhury (University Observer & EA Worldview): *Gigged and Ghosted: How the Gig Economy is Failing Young Workers in Ireland***

- This was a strong entry, with clear and accessible reporting focusing on a system that fails young workers and undermines basic labour rights.

**Kaelin Hanley, Ella Rafferty & the Women in Law Society Team (University of Galway): *Mná of the law***

- From profiles to career advice columns, this series of articles was practical, personal, and a joy to read.
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