

01/06

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EXCELLENCE IN THE COURTS RECOGNISED

Outstanding achievements by court staff have been rewarded at an awards ceremony in Birmingham today. The first Her Majesty's Courts Service National Awards ceremony was held to recognise the hard work and commitment of staff in magistrates, Crown and county courts throughout England and Wales.

The Lord Chancellor's Award was given to Martin (Andy) Andrews, Bailiff Manager, Grimsby Combined Court Centre. Lord Falconer, the Lord Chancellor, selected Andy from all the category winners to be the overall winner. Andy has actively taken the initiative to engage with solicitors, local councils and housing associations. He also set up a number of advice surgeries in local libraries. Notably he organised an event at a local college to provide greater awareness of the consequences of getting into debt.

Other awards were given to individuals for community engagement; customer service; diversity; innovation; leadership; and skills and development. Team awards were given for community engagement; customer service; and innovation. Over 110 nominations were received from England and Wales.

Lord Falconer, the Lord Chancellor said:

"Courts play a vital role in our criminal justice system. I very much welcome the opportunity to recognise and congratulate the hard work and dedication of people like Andy. People who work tirelessly to ensure that the justice is served and that

the courts enforce the law – criminal, civil and family – effectively.”

Sir Ron De Witt, HMCS Chief Executive, said:

“I am delighted to mark HMCS’ first anniversary with a ceremony celebrating success. I congratulate Andy and the other winners on the excellent service they provide to court users.

“The number of nominations we received far exceeded our expectations and the standard was extremely high. From my visits to courts, I have come away with a real and abiding impression that everything we do is for the public – the victim, witness, jurors, defendant and plaintiffs – they come first. Building the service around their needs is what defines us and establishes our reputation.”

The winners were:

Individual awards

Lord Chancellor Award and individual award for Community Engagement –

Martin (Andy) Andrews, Bailiff Manager,
Grimsby Combined Court Centre

Customer Service – Joint winners: Simon Madden, Small Claims Support Officer, Reading County Court and Kim Bray, Policy & Communications Manager, The Shire Hall, Bedford. Simon won for the great commitment to the Small Claims Support service advising unrepresented litigants facing small claims hearings. Kim saw the need for a DVD to help and inform adult witnesses appearing in criminal courts in Bedfordshire. Although she had no experience of media production she identified a production company and oversaw the making of the DVD.

Diversity – Rosean Robinson, Finance Manager, Barnsley. Ros has worked for many years to provide training and development placements for people with disabilities, showing a real commitment to the diversity agenda.

Innovation – Helen Andrews, Senior Listing Officer, Gloucester. Helen won for establishing new working practices providing listings for all courts within the county. She explored new processes to bring down wasted court time, and introduced a novel reminder system to ensure that parties come to court.

Leadership – Joe Soosai, Team Leader, Barking Magistrates' Court. Joe is described as an outstanding leader and motivator, instilling staff with a sense of confidence and worth.

Skills & development - Mary Appleton, Finance Officer, City of Salford Magistrates' Court. Mary won for her work ensuring that staff and magistrates understand the finance procedures. She is noted for her helpfulness, tact and diplomacy.

Team awards

Community Engagement – Rhian Davies Rees, Head of Operations & Performance; Ann Beaumont, Judicial Liaison Manager; Amanda Williams, Area Customer Service & Communication Manager and Nichola Gilman, Area Performance Officer (maternity cover), all from Area Director's Office, Carmarthen. The team organised and helped deliver a series of successful open days. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Customer Service - The staff at Carlisle Combined Court and Carlisle Magistrates' Court and the central support from Area Director's Office, including IT and Estates. The team won for the customer service they provided under very difficult circumstances following the floods that hit Carlisle in early 2005.

Innovation – The Community Justice Centre Team, North Liverpool. The team won for their work engaging the community in the centre and their work with other criminal justice agencies.

NOTES

1. Her Majesty's Courts Service brought together, on 1st April 2005, 42 independent magistrates' courts committees and the Court Service into one single organisation for the first time. It is an executive agency of the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA). Its purpose is to deliver justice effectively and efficiently to the public. It is responsible for the management of the civil, family and criminal courts in England and Wales.
2. For further details on the awards and nominations please call Mark Kram, HMCS Chief Press Officer on 020 7340 6697.