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New book looks at how courts make child protection decisions

A leading Northumbria University academic has just published a new book looking at how complex child protection decisions are made within the family justice system.

Professor Kim Holt, Head of Northumbria's Department of Social Work and Communities, is a unique expert in the field of family justice. She spent 20 years as a social worker specialising in the area of child protection, before re-training as a barrister specialising in family law, moving into academia in 2004, where she is now a Professor of Social Work and Family Law.

Her new book, *Contemporary Family Justice: Policy and Practice in Complex Child Protection Decisions*, provides a critical account of current family justice policy and the issues which are commonly presented in the courts, such as neglect, child sexual exploitation and pre-birth assessments.

The book draws on recent legislation, case law and research findings, using case studies to bring complex material to life. It provides information and advice on how to make the difficult decisions involved in child care proceedings.

Sir James Munby, President of the Family Division of the High Court of England and Wales, has described the book as: “very interesting, important, challenging and in places appropriately provocative,” adding that: “everyone involved professionally with the multi-faceted challenges of child protection would do well to read.”

Speaking about the book, Professor Holt said: “I was keen to offer a critical account of current family justice policy and practice which builds on my experience on both sides of the coin – as both a practitioner in social work, and as a barrister specialising in family justice, as well as an academic researching into both areas.

“The book highlights the importance of undertaking informed and effective assessments based on the best outcome of the child, referencing child protection legislation and practice frameworks. However, it also recognises the constraints facing practitioners, such as working under considerable pressure within tight time frames and the issues which commonly present challenges for those working in practice.

“I hope that this book will become essential reading for students and practitioners in social work and law, as well as policy-makers and professionals concerned with the current state of child welfare.”

Contemporary Family Justice: Policy and Practice in Complex Child Protection Decisions is published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers and is available to [purchase now from Amazon](#) and all good book stores.

Professor Holt is currently organising a major international conference on family justice which will be held at Northumbria University in October. Up to

400 academics and practitioners from the fields of law, social work, health and mental health will gather at the University to hear the latest research and policy decisions which are impacting on cases relating to family justice. For more information or to book a place at the conference, visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/achievingjustice2016

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