

## **The Transparency Project today launches its Family Court Reporting Watch project.**

**Family Court Reporting Watch** will monitor the publication of judgments and media coverage of family courts, highlight and try and secure corrections of inaccurate or misleading reporting, and explain difficult or controversial cases for non-lawyers, through clear explanatory blog posts. The project will also make official judgments and reliable commentary / explanations of cases available in one location by collecting and linking to them.

Family Court Reporting Watch is a new venture up by the **Transparency Project**, made possible by funding from the **Legal Education Foundation**.

The Transparency Project was set up in 2014 to combat the problem of poor legal understanding in the field of family law, and to improve the quality of material that is available for the public to learn from. The Project and its individual members regularly blog about family cases where there is legal or public interest or inadequate or confusing reporting. We provide legal explanation, contextualise disembodied case reports, and correct inaccuracies. We link to sources, so people can make their own enquiries and form their own opinion about the case they are reading about.

The Transparency Project is made up of a cross-disciplinary team of practising and academic lawyers, legal bloggers, social workers, publishers and journalists. Collectively, as individuals and as a Project, the team has an expanding network and audience on social media and real life.

Explaining the bid for funding, barrister and Chair Lucy Reed says:

“Family law is generally poorly understood by the public (and the media). There are increasing numbers of unrepresented litigants in family court cases, and less access to legal advice. There is widespread mistrust of the family courts and the child protection system. Because family courts operate largely in private, media reports about them are an important route through which the public acquire their understanding of family law and procedure (along with the internet) – they cannot attend court in the way that is possible in other areas. However, much mainstream news and media reporting of family court cases is legally confused, factually highly selective or inaccurate. Although many judgments are publicly available, only cases with certain “newsworthy” characteristics reach the attention of the media. There is poor accessibility and low public understanding of how family law actually works, and a number of unhelpful and dangerous misconceptions and urban myths persist. We found that we could not cover the volume of published cases and news reports that warranted responses. We were getting an increasing number of media enquiries. This funding will help us to respond to more cases and more stories, which we are really excited about.

We want to interact proactively with the press, encouraging and helping them to correct errors and to add links to judgments or other primary sources, and making suggestions for good reporting practice. We also would like the public to get involved - by telling us about cases that they have read about and find surprising or confusing.”

The Reporting Watch team are asking members of the public and legal and other professionals to send them links to or details of cases or news reports they would like to see

covered. The team can be contacted via twitter [@seethrujustice](https://twitter.com/seethrujustice) or by email [reportingwatch@transparencyproject.org.uk](mailto:reportingwatch@transparencyproject.org.uk)

The funding for the Reporting Watch project, is provided by the Legal Education Foundation (LEF) and also covers the production of a series of Guidance notes, which will be published over the next eighteen months. Existing guidance notes can be found on the Project website [www.transparencyproject.org.uk](http://www.transparencyproject.org.uk).

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**Notes for Editors :**

The Transparency Project is a registered charity in England & Wales (Details on website). It's chair is Lucy Reed (barrister), and other trustees and project members are listed on the website. The full charitable aims are published on the site.

Funding for the Family Court Reporting Watch project is provided by the Legal Education Foundation. The charitable objective of the Foundation is to promote the advancement of legal education and the study of law in all its branches.

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