

Book Review: Safe Routes to Child Support: A Resolution Guide : Pink Tape

<http://pinktape.co.uk/2011/06/book-review-safe-routes-to-child-support-a-resolution-guide/>

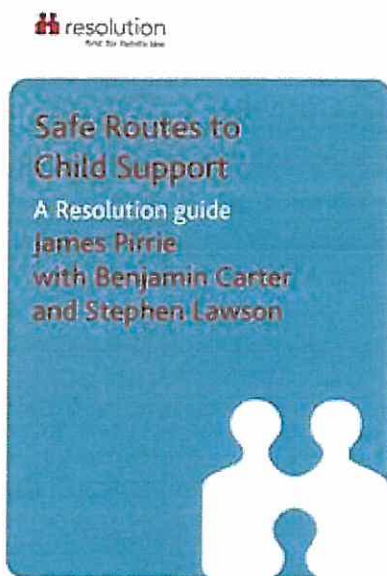
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This review is a guest post written by Jody Atkinson, barrister at St John's Chambers, Bristol. Jody is instructed in both children and money cases, and has a particular interest in the trickier areas of family law, such as cohabitation and child support.

As this guide wisely points out, the law pertaining to the agency formerly known as the Child Support Agency (now calling itself C-MEC, but frequently continuing to use the Agency's vast stocks of headed note paper), is an area that many family lawyers instinctively shy away from. This is because it is an alien landscape; decision makers operate on the basis of statutory formulas rather than wide discretions and disputes often end up before the specialist Appeal Tribunals rather than the more familiar courts.



At the present time, the two other guides to child support law are published by CPAG (the Child Poverty Action Group). The *Child Support Handbook* is part of the same series as the *Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook* and is aimed primarily at those advising benefits claimants. Ancillary relief solicitors may not find that it specifically meets their needs. *Child Support: The Legislation*, written by Upper Tribunal Judge Edward Jacobs, is the annotated statute book. This is essential for those who actually plan to contest tribunal cases before the Appeals Tribunal, but is not a text book, and will be utterly impenetrable to

those who know little about child support law.

For most family lawyers I would unhesitatingly recommend the Resolution Guide. The first thing I would compliment it upon is its readability. The child support regulations are notoriously complicated and discussion of them can be very dry. The authors manage to inject some humour into what could otherwise be a dull read. The pre 2003 assessment formula, abandoned because of its unworkable intricacies, is described as 'a thing of beauty'. This may be true, but it is a terrible beauty. As befits a Resolution publication, the authors remind the readers that family lawyers are practical creatures, and, rather than getting bogged down in the regulations, frequently return to exhortations not to lose sight of the reality of the situation for the clients. In the same practical vein, there are checklists, frequently asked questions, and sample letters and agreements towards the back of the book.

The book starts off with a helpful chapter about the inter-relationship between court orders and the Agency's calculations. This is frequently misunderstood and is something that all ancillary relief solicitors need to know. Another useful chapter explains how Agency decisions are to be challenged. This is alien to county court lawyers, child support law has its own language of revisions, supercessions and variations. The time limits are tight and the approach required can be counter intuitive. Any solicitor approached by a client with an existing relationship with the Agency needs an understanding this area or they will get lost very quickly. I have been

approached by solicitors who, frustrated by the obtuse nature of the Agency staff, are already contemplating judicial review. JR is, of course, the remedy of last resort, and thus rarely appropriate, especially when there is a costs free tribunal set up just to deal with child support claims. However, JR, and also less extreme methods of making a complaint, are dealt with towards the back of the book.

Overall this book, reasonably priced at £70, would be good addition to any family law practice's shelf, and again shows the excellent service that Resolution provide to their members and to those involved the family law system.

This book is published by Resolution and can be purchased through their website [here](#).

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