



Professor Susan Edwards from Northumbria University has been awarded the prestigious title of Honorary King's Counsel.

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Northumbria Professor recognised for pioneering work on domestic abuse and gender-based violence

A leading legal academic from Northumbria University has been awarded the prestigious title of Honorary King's Counsel (KC Honoris Causa) for her contribution to reforming key aspects of the law in England and Wales.

[Professor Susan Edwards](#) from the University's Northumbria School of Law has been recognised with the honour, one of eight [new Honorary KCs recently approved by His Majesty King Charles III](#), in recognition of her

sustained and significant contribution to understanding and reforming the law on domestic abuse, gender-based violence and homicide.

Professor Edwards' pioneering research and advocacy has directly shaped major legislative reforms, including provisions in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and the landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Her work has influenced Crown Prosecution Service practice, policing reforms, and judicial understanding of domestic abuse dynamics for decades.



Professor Susan Edwards, Northumbria University. Photo by Louise Stoner.

Beginning her career at a time when domestic and sexual violence against

women was marginalised and often viewed as a private matter, Professor Edwards conducted groundbreaking empirical research with police forces and observed court trials throughout the late 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Her work challenged prevailing social attitudes and established domestic abuse as a serious area worthy of legal and academic attention.

During research conducted in the 1980s linked to her PhD awarded in 1979, Professor Edwards discovered while spending time in London police stations that the numbers of domestic abuse cases being recorded at that time were much lower than the number of cases she could see were being reported and initially logged by police. She discovered it was common practice to only finally record cases where victims felt able to support a prosecution.

“I recognised immediately this method played into the hands of perpetrators who would feel they were untouchable. I was horrified so I did everything I could to campaign for change,” explained Professor Edwards.

Author of over 150 academic articles, leading newspaper opinion columns for *The Times* and *The Guardian* and numerous influential books including *Female Sexuality and the Law* (1981 republished in 2026), *Women On Trial* (1984), *Policing 'Domestic' Violence* (1989 republished 2025), *Sex and Gender in the Legal Process* (1996) and co-author of *Blackstone's Guide to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021* (2023), Professor Edwards has shaped both academic discourse and practical legal reform. Her scholarship has been cited extensively in court judgments, including in sentencing remarks and tribunal decisions.

During a recent public lecture held at Northumbria University, Professor Edwards spoke on the question of self-defence and how women driven to kill their male abusers in self-preservation are treated by the law today compared to their treatment in earlier centuries. Sharing her research and charting the development of the law through the examination of cases that became watershed moments, Professor Edwards explored both legal and societal responses.

Beyond her academic work at Northumbria University, where she is currently supervising a number of undergraduate and postgraduate students working on dissertations from the [Law LLB \(Hons\)](#) and [Bar Course LLM](#) programmes, Professor Edwards serves as an expert witness in cases involving domestic abuse and self-defence. She sits on the board of trustees for [Advance](#), a

charity supporting women and girls affected by domestic abuse, and continues to work closely with the Crown Prosecution Service. Professor Edwards is also an Associate Door Tenant at Red Lion Chambers in London, allowing her to continue her academic research and teaching commitments in Newcastle.

Professor Edwards previously served as Dean of Law at the University of Buckingham for ten years and was the University's Dean of Research from 2007 to 2018. She has lectured internationally across the UK, US, Europe, Russia, Japan, Australia, and the Middle East, and has contributed to human rights work including reports on witchcraft persecution in Nepal and human trafficking in the UK.

Speaking about the honour, Professor Edwards said: "I am deeply moved to receive this recognition. For over four decades, I have worked alongside survivors, practitioners, and policymakers to ensure that the law in England and Wales truly reflects the reality of domestic abuse and gender-based violence. This honour belongs not just to me, but to the countless survivors whose voices have driven legal reform, and to the dedicated professionals across policing, prosecution, the legal profession and academia who continue to work for justice. There is still much to be done, but this recognition shows how far we have come in ensuring that the law protects those who need it most."

The Lord Chancellor will formally bestow the title of Honorary KC upon Professor Edwards, and the other recipients, during a ceremony held at London's Westminster Hall on Monday 23 March.

Associate Professor Adam Jackson, Head of Northumbria Law School, said: "This prestigious recognition is a testament to the profound and lasting impact Susan has had on the development of domestic abuse law and the protection of survivors. Her scholarship and advocacy have not only shaped legislation and legal practice across England and Wales, but will have inspired law students and practitioners alike to pursue justice for those affected by gender-based violence. Susan's work exemplifies Northumbria University's commitment to research that makes a real difference in society, and we are privileged to have her as part of our academic community."

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Notes to editors

Image captions:

- Professor Susan Edwards, Northumbria University. Photo by Louise Stoner.
- City Campus East, Northumbria University.

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