This is an important time for the debates this book informs. Change and uncertainty in the policy and political landscape, both domestically and internationally, has led many to question the role of evidence and expertise. So, when considering the value placed on evidence-informed expertise, it is worth looking to three of the main audiences for the expert knowledge in question: policy makers, practitioners and the public. With respect to UK policy makers, we have recently seen a more significant injection of public funding into research than this country has experienced for many years. In tandem, practitioner groups such as teachers, social workers and healthcare professionals have increasingly been engaged in generating and using evidence in the delivery of front-line services. It is clear to those of us looking to fund excellent research that many in the policy and wider public service networks value evidence and are eager to engage. Finally, it is striking that a range of polling data suggest that public trust in experts has remained high and relatively stable over several decades.

To satisfy this appetite for evidence and its application, there is a need to identify new approaches to undertaking research, exploring policy challenges, evaluating interventions and getting that knowledge used. Such work will help us understand more and address better the range of complex questions and challenges we face about how to improve outcomes for the public. Progress has been made, but there is still much to be done and there remain many questions to address. For example: how do we improve economic and social opportunities for a wider range of people and groups? How do we support the maintenance of independence and social connections as people age? How do we develop resilience to a range of digital threats while benefiting from what these new technologies can offer? In addressing these and other questions there is a need to consider what claims can be made from various types and forms of evidence, and how best to include more of the relevant stakeholders in the creation of this evidence so that it is more likely to be relevant, useful and used. In this timely new book, the authors raise and discuss these issues and more, advancing how we think about this field and setting a constructive agenda for where we go next.