PRACTICAL SOCIAL WORK

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The British Association of Social Workers has always been conscious of its role in setting guidelines for practice and in seeking to raise professional standards. The conception of the Practical Social Work series arose from a survey of BASW members to discover where they, the practitioners in social work, felt there was the most need for new literature. The response was overwhelming and enthusiastic, and the result is a carefully planned, coherent series of books. The emphasis is firmly on practice set in a theoretical framework. The books will inform, stimulate and promote discussion, thus adding to the further development of skills and high professional standards. All the authors are practitioners and teachers of social work representing a wide variety of experience.

JO CAMPLING

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To Winifred Adams

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Preface to the First Edition

This book grew partly from personal experiences of the need for self-help to contribute to the care of my own relatives and partly from my efforts to support the self-help initiatives of MIND, as the then chairperson of MIND's advisory committee in Yorkshire and Humberside. To that chance initiation into the politics of empowerment in mental health I owe a debt to Norman Jepson and John Crowley. Through involvement in *Mind Your Self* in Leeds, my collaboration with Gael Lindenfield, who founded it, led to several books and other publications. The book began partly also with the awareness that despite the growing numbers of handbooks on self-help, there was a need for an accessible yet critical text, which would provide a framework for the development of more effective relationships between professionals and self-helpers.

Several years later, during study leave from the College, I started to write on the basis of a series of visits to a wide variety of self-help groups and organisations throughout the UK. I should like to record my appreciation to the many people to whom, in the process, I spoke about the subject matter of this book. The list is too long to mention everyone here, but thanks are due in any case to Helen Allison, Mike Archer, Don Barton, David Brandon, Francis Conway, Gilly Craddock, Dave Crenson, Parul Desai, Nick Ellerby, John Errington, Alec Gosling, John Hannan, Gerry Lynch, Peter McGavin, Sam McTaggart, Jim Pearson, Tom Rhodenberg, Alan Robinson, Gill Thorpe, Bob Welburn and Tom Woolley. I am particularly grateful also to Dorothy Whitaker and Terence O'Sullivan for their comments on earlier drafts of this book, and to Paddy Hall for his ideas on community education.

Part of the process of production has been based at home, I have to acknowledge that my own household has seen its share of debates about self-help and empowerment over the past eighteen months and many improvements to the text have resulted from these. So, particular thanks are due to Pat, Charlotte, Kirsty, Jade and George.

Finally, I am learning as I write how valuable is the guidance and support of a good editor. For her encouragement and patience at the critical stages, my thanks go to Jo Campling.

It goes without saying, but needs saying of course, that, whilst much of the content of the book reflects the various contributions of those mentioned, among many others, all the opinions expressed in it, and any errors, are entirely my own.

ROBERT ADAMS

Preface to the Second Edition

I welcome the opportunity to update this book, because, since it was written in 1988, the concept of self-help has been largely overshadowed in social work by that of empowerment. This is not to say that self-help has disappeared, but that whereas self-help was the fashionable term of the 1980s, as indeed it was of the same decade a century earlier, a quite remarkable conjunction of concepts at the turn of the decade has led to the widespread adoption by the social work field of the term 'empowerment'. But I argue in this book that it is dangerous to assume that practice is enhanced, and people's interests advanced, simply by tacking a few paragraphs on empowerment on to circulars, procedures and guidelines as they stand. The rigorous application of empowerment to social work theory and practice requires the reappraisal of the status quo rather than the bolting on of another novelty. The two dimensions brought to bear in the framework for empowering social work in this book – the different levels of empowering practice and reflective practice – synthesise to offer *empowerment-in-practice* as one expression of what I believe is now the dominant paradigm in social work, replacing the paradigm of client treatment which dominated social work in former decades. I locate this shift in its wider context in a forthcoming book: *The Personal Social Services: Clients, Consumers or Citizens?*, listed in the Bibliography. The working-out of the application of empowerment-in-practice to the many different areas of social work involves theorising in and about practice. With some exceptions, dealt with mainly in Chapter 4, it will necessitate the overhaul of virtually all the social work literature – clearly a task far beyond the scope of this second edition of an existing book on empowerment and self-help in

social work in Britain. To give an example, however, the framework set out in this book challenges the thrust of consumerist, managerially led, technically driven (rather than inspired from professional practice) context in which social work takes place. At a more mundane level, the fact that this is a book on empowering, written *for* the social work field, *about* empowering service users is, to say the least, paradoxical, is probably patronising and on occasions downright oppressive. However, the development of an empowering practice in social work is a professional necessity, which entails taking on board the complexities and ambiguities of the paradigm of empowerment as well as its obvious applications, aspects of which are examined chapter by chapter as follows:

Chapter 1 discusses the meanings which may be associated with the problematic concept of empowerment. Chapter 2 explains what is meant by a paradigm shift and develops a framework for empowerment-in-practice. Chapter 3 examines the basis for empowerment through reflective practice. Chapter 4 teases out those aspects of work with individuals, which are more amenable to empowerment. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with empowering work with groups and Chapter 7 with empowerment as it applies in community groups and organisations. Chapter 8 tackles the implications of the paradigm of empowerment for evaluation and research. Chapter 9 examines the problematic features of relations between social workers and service users inherent in the tension between accountable work and empowerment-in-practice. Chapter 10 draws some general conclusions about the issues raised by empowering social work, for individual practitioners and for the teams and organisations in which they work.

My thanks are due to Dr Raymond Jack and Jane Thompson for reading and commenting on an earlier draft of this new edition.

ROBERT ADAMS

List of Abbreviations

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
ACC	Association of County Councils
Al-Anon	Organisation for relatives and friends of people with a drink problem
AMA	Association of Metropolitan Authorities
ARC	Asian Resource Centre, Birmingham
BASW	British Association of Social Workers
CARE	Cancer Aftercare and Rehabilitation Society
CCETSW	Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work
CVS	Council for Voluntary Service
CR	Consciousness-raising
DH	Department of Health
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
GMHC	Gay Men's Health Crisis
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune-deficiency Syndrome
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
PSHPG	Peer Self-help Psychotherapy Groups
SCF	Save the Children Fund
THT	Terrence Higgins Trust
WHO	World Health Organisation