PRACTICAL SOCIAL WORK

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Social work is at an important stage in its development. All professions must be responsive to changing social and economic conditions if they are to meet the needs of those they serve. This series focuses on sound practice and the specific contribution which social workers can make to the well-being of our society in the 1980s.

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.

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PRACTICAL SOCIAL WORK

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Preface

Computers have been used in the personal social services for over a decade now. Most social services departments use them, as do many probation services and larger voluntary organisations. Yet they have not impinged much on the daily activities of social workers, perhaps because they have been seen as tools of management, or perhaps because it has been assumed that bringing practitioners and computers together would be a recipe for upheaval. After all, computers are more than just pieces of equipment – they represent highly charged controversies.

The decision to write this book reflects the observation, which must be clear to all of us, that computers are moving fast into many aspects of our lives – into offices, schools, homes and the contacts we have with ‘officialdom’. The computer seems unstoppable, and is already starting to wind its way into professional social work. We cannot, and indeed may not, want to bring it to a halt, so instead we need to understand it and put it to sensible use. Computing can be studied as a separate subject, to be kept at arm’s length by all but the enthusiasts and those who cannot avoid it. That may be a viable approach to computer *science*, but it will not serve for computer *application*, and it has proved challenging to have the invitation from Macmillan and the British Association of Social Workers to write about computers in a series on social work practice.

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