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 contributions which social workers can make to the well-being of our society.

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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Foreword by Terry Bamford

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First published 1990

Published by
MACMILLAN EDUCATION LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

Phototypeset by LBJ Enterprises Ltd
of Hampshire and Somerset

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Coulshed, Veronica, 1945-
Management in social work.

1. Great Britain. Social services. Management

I. Title

361.'941'048

ISBN 978-0-333-51483-2

ISBN 978-1-349-20851-7 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-20851-7

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To Auntie Ve

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Foreword

The literature of social work management is sparse. Where it exists it is usually specific to the organisational context from which it originates. In Britain the existence of large multi-purpose social services departments has led to an understandable preoccupation with the influences of bureaucratic structures on social work practice. It has led to a distancing of management from practice, with managers seeking to establish a discrete role for themselves often drawing more from management in commerce, industry or elsewhere in local government than from social work.

It is therefore refreshing to welcome a book which re-establishes the place of management skills in everyday practice and which challenges social workers to accept responsibility for the management of their key resources. The current emphasis on case management is an explicit recognition that practice decisions about the level and nature of assistance to be given to individual clients are managerial decisions about time and money. Choices about rationing scarce resources are best made in an open way by social workers recognising what they are doing rather than by sheltering behind the cloak of professional decision-making.

Good intentions are no longer enough in the more questioning and critical world in which social workers are operating. Planning, monitoring and evaluation can no longer be the exclusive prerogatives of research departments. Assessing the effectiveness of intervention and quantification of changes resulting from intervention have to be part of the equipment of all practitioners. The discipline of contractual relationships will place a high premium on the ability to demonstrate that social work works.

The provision of high-quality care is a creative activity requiring many skills. A mixed economy of welfare will offer social workers more choice about the settings in which they deploy those skills. Each setting, from the smallest voluntary organisation to the largest public-sector agency, will require good management if those skills are to be deployed to best advantage. Practitioners and supervisors alike will benefit from testing their performance against the examples and ideas offered in this book.

TERRY BAMFORD

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to colleagues past and present from whom I learned so much about managing people, and also to students and their clients on whose work some of the case studies are based. Special thanks go to Eric Cooper for his friendship and to my husband for his support.

VERONICA COULSHED