

## PEOPLE SKILLS

*Also by Neil Thompson*

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THEORY AND PRACTICE IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE  
AGE AND DIGNITY: WORKING WITH OLDER PEOPLE

*\*Also published by Macmillan*

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NEIL THOMPSON

*Consultant Editor: Jo Campling*





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**For Beverly**

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# PREFACE

This is a book intended for a wide readership, covering a range of occupations that come under the broad heading of 'people work'. This includes health and social care staff, social workers, staff in professions allied to medicine, youth workers, counsellors, advisors, advocates, personnel officers and other managers, teachers – especially those with pastoral duties – and others involved in helping people deal with the problems and challenges they face. Because of this wide readership, I have concentrated on what I see as core issues in dealing with people and their problems. Consequently, not all aspects of people work will be covered, although the issues addressed here should have wide application across a variety of work settings and tasks. In view of this diversity within the book's readership, I have chosen to use the term 'service users' to refer to the people we are seeking to help. This is intended to be a generic term to incorporate the variety of terms used within different professional groupings. 'Service user' should therefore be translated into client, patient, customer, resident and so on, depending on the reader's own professional context.

By focusing on a number of issues that apply to a wide range of people work situations I am hoping to draw attention to the common themes and elements, the common problems and potential solutions. Each professional group has its own traditions, values and concerns, and I do not underestimate the importance of professional identity. However, there is also much to be gained by the different disciplines recognising the common ground, and therefore creating far more opportunities for effective cooperation and collaboration. Working in partnership with service users is a recurring theme throughout this book, but we should also not forget the importance of working in partnership with colleagues from other disciplines.

## P R E F A C E

People workers face a number of difficult challenges in their work and often have to draw on their own personal resources to respond to the demands of the job. Such work is rarely simple or straightforward, and can sometimes be painful in so far as it may touch on hurtful experiences we have had in our own lives. People work can also be difficult work to learn from because we can get so close to what we are doing that we cannot see the 'big picture', the overview that can help us learn from our experience and develop our knowledge and skills. A major aim of this book, then, is to help people workers, and those in training for such work, to develop 'helicopter vision', the ability to rise above a situation, obtain a clear overview and then descend back into the situation to deal with it positively and constructively on the basis of the insights gained. In other words, the book is intended to help people workers take a step back from their work, with all its subtleties, complexities and demands, and try to develop a clear focus on what needs to be done, identify what progress can be made and what lessons can be learned from the process.

The book covers a lot of ground in a relatively short space, but it should provide you with the basics of each area addressed and, ideally, the insight and motivation to continue learning – to use the book as a foundation for a continuous process of professional development.

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