This book will help mental health professionals to develop the fundamental generic skills in interviewing and assessment, which form the foundation of psychiatric practice. It is about the process of reaching a diagnosis, and is a practical guide to help the reader make the transition from novice to competent clinician. It is based on real problems encountered in modern general adult psychiatric practice, and is set in a range of environments, in the clinic and in the community. The text is punctuated by a selection of case studies to illustrate the principles highlighted in the book.

This book will be essential reading for all members of the mental health team. Its practical grounding in everyday clinical experience will appeal to trainee psychiatrists and more experienced clinicians alike, as well as to nurses, social workers and psychologists.

Rob Poole is a community psychiatrist with an interest in the psychological, social and cultural aspects of mental illness. He has wide experience as a postgraduate educator having been a Royal College Clinical Tutor and Examiner, a University Postgraduate Tutor and Chairman of a regional psychiatric training committee.

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This book is dedicated to Dr Kevin White.

There may be better psychiatric interviewers in the world, but we've never met one.
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Acknowledgements

This book has a long history. We were originally brought together to work on a book for psychiatric trainees about clinical skills in 1996 by Dr Michael Göpfert. Although we have produced a book with a very different emphasis to his original idea, we are grateful to Michael for his encouragement in the early development of the project.

We have been greatly assisted by the comments of numerous trainees and colleagues, who have selflessly read various versions of the text (some of which, in retrospect, weren’t very good). The book is a good deal easier to read as a consequence of their efforts, but they cannot be held responsible for our obstinate attachment to our opinions.

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This book is based upon our experience of treating a large number of patients, mainly in Liverpool. Most of what we know, we have learned from them. Their warmth and generosity in the face of some of the more difficult aspects of mental illness and psychiatric practice is a continuing source of inspiration.

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