

Series 3 Introduction

A Conversation between Sarah Lonbay and Lesley Deacon



[00:00:00] **Lesley:** Hello and welcome to the Portal Podcast, linking research and practice for social work. I'm your host and my name is Dr Lesley Deacon.

[00:00:13] **Sarah:** And I'm your other host and I'm Dr Sarah Lonbay. So we hope you enjoy today's episode.

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Introduction

[00:00:28] **Sarah:** Hello everyone and welcome to our introductory episode. So for this series, Lesley and I have been joined by a whole host of fantastic guests. We've been talking about gerontological social work, or social work with older people, and we've had six episodes recorded with a number of great guests who we're going to introduce to you now so you can get a little taster, snapshot, preview of what's to come if you listen to this series.

So I will kick off with our very first episode where we spoke to Paul Willis and Gerry Nosowska, and we had a fantastic chat with them about the social work with older people research project that they ran in collaboration with some other researchers who didn't join us on that podcast episode. And I think for me the takeaway from that conversation was about the value of social work involvement in people's lives, and particularly the value of that for older people, and a key message coming out about everybody should have access to a social worker when they need one, and in an ideal world not just when you hit some kind of crisis point. So a really, really nice discussion about the day-to-day role of social workers with older people, the value and the contribution that they bring, the ways that they work with older people and support them in lots of different ways were some of the things that came out from that conversation along with lots of other interesting and useful aspects as well. So tune into that, that's our very first episode.

So our second episode, we were joined by Nick Andrews from Swansea University and we talked about relationships in social work, we talked about the value and the joy of stories and the value of social work with older people. And Nick told us some beautiful stories from his research and the power of just sharing experiences and words with each other and how that can contribute to our understanding of social work and how it operates with older people. And we had some discussion around outcomes-focused social work as well and how social workers build relationships and maintain professional boundaries and some of the critiques around this kind of concept of maintaining professional boundaries as well. So that was our episode two.

Episode three, we were joined by our very own Carrie Phillips, who works with us at the University of Sunderland. And Carrie joined us to talk about her PhD research, which was about hospital social work, but as Carrie outlines in the podcast episode, that actually means that a lot of what she's looked at is about social work with older people. So she talked to us about some of the statistics around hospital social work and the numbers of older people who are in those spaces, who social workers are working with, some of the challenges that she's identified around that role and some of the complexities of the role. And again, which we'll come back to in the final episode, just the value and contribution and the brilliant work that social workers are doing with older people.

So, Lesley, what was episode four?

[00:03:57] **Lesley:** So, episode four we had as our guest Alisoun Milne, and she was primarily focused in her research on the caring role, so carers working with older people, and she was sharing some of her research around that, around the issues that carers experience though, around how mental health issues get forgotten at certain points in life, that it then becomes something that isn't really thought about in services. The impact of that caring role and some of the challenges around that in terms of the narrative around carers, this idea of almost like that "superhuman" strength that they may have to do things, and challenging elements of that. And I think that was quite interesting because I know I was asking her questions comparing the fact that I have a parent-carer role, and some of the issues around that.

So then we had episode five and we had Sally Nieman who was talking to us about some of her research that she's been doing for her PhD, and she was looking at social work with older people in care homes. And I think we had some interesting discussions around that, around the concept of the care

home and what happens within that, and the social work understanding of that. So I think she'd looked at the experiences from the social work practitioner perspective of how they were doing their practice in that environment, and the crossover between that, I remember around the "quality assurance" elements within the care homes, and almost like the oversight social workers have of what's happening to people in those environments and the complexity of it. So that was a really interesting discussion that we had.

And then our final podcast was with Sigrid Mairhofer, and I know that Sigrid's work she'd largely done, she was sort of halfway through, I think, in her research, so she was doing a comparison between the experiences in rural and urban areas within Germany. And when she was looking at some of the missing services, who was missing the services, who wasn't getting access to services, and she drew attention to some of the issues around the digital inequalities, with information and how do you know that services exist? And you don't always if it's just online, and things like that. And I think that she largely spoke about the rural side, and she was about to start on the urban side, and she was also talking to us about the involvement of older people in the research. So I remember there were some discussions about how do you attract people to the research? What do you call yourselves? And I think it was something like "citizen 65 plus" was the term that I remember, for some reason that's still in my head after that. And around the importance of music within the life of German older people and what was important to them in these sort of, I think we used the term "day centres", I know she didn't use that because we've got different contexts, but the importance of those cultural elements for people and how do you then include people of different cultures? So again, another very interesting discussion was had.

[00:07:12] **Sarah:** Yeah, and I really liked that one because I feel like I learned a bit more about social work in Germany, and it looks a little different, but that was quite interesting to have that different context. But then the findings were still really relevant for practice in the UK as well.

[00:07:29] **Lesley:** Yeah, absolutely, yeah. So that was it, that's our season.

[00:07:34] **Sarah:** Yeah, a fantastic season, really interesting conversations, great guests, and we hope that you really enjoy listening.

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[00:07:43] **Sarah:** You have been listening to the Portal Podcast, linking research and practice for social work with me, Dr Sarah Lonbay.

[00:07:50] **Lesley:** And Dr Lesley Deacon. And this was funded by the University of Sunderland, edited by Paperghosts, and our theme music is called, *Together We're Stronger* by All Music Seven.

[00:08:00] **Sarah:** And don't forget that you can find a full transcript of today's podcast and links and extra information in our show notes. So anything you want to follow up from what you've heard today, check out there and you should find some useful extra resources.

See you all next time.

[00:08:14] **Lesley:** Bye.