

Series 3 Summary

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] **Lesley:** So, we're now recording our, do we call it an "outro"? Our final thoughts, because what we do is after we've done the recordings, maybe people don't realise what we do, we then obviously read through the transcripts again, and we kind of look at what themes have come out from this series. So that's what we're doing now. And I'm going to start with something that I think came across massively is this aspect of social work that is all about relationships. Because it's not just about working with older people, it's all social work really, but the idea of the importance of those relationships with the people that social workers are working with, and seeing then the *whole* of that person, being able to *know* things about the person you're working with, and how important that is to those people. And I know with Nick Andrews' podcast, he talked a lot about stories, but I think that goes all the way through all of these podcasts, that really it's about when you know somebody you know about them and that is then a *story* almost about them. Doesn't mean it's not real, it's just making sense of it. And I think that was a really important thing that came across in terms of the themes for the podcast.

[00:01:42] **Sarah:** Yeah, it was strong in all of the conversations, wasn't it?

[00:01:46] **Lesley:** It was, wasn't it?

[00:01:48] **Sarah:** And that unique role that the social worker brings in being able to build those relationships, but also some of the challenges in doing that. Like for example in Carrie's, where she talked about changes to where hospital social workers were situated, which meant that they couldn't, when they were in the hospital they could just drop in and see the person at different times and chat to them, whereas when they were based off-site they would have to come in and just do the assessment in one hour, sitting with a person on one occasion. So the relationship being so important, but the different challenges that social workers experience in different contexts in actually being able to build it properly, under the constraints.

[00:02:28] **Lesley:** It is that, isn't it? It's that, the thing is that you lose it if you move social workers away from the people that they're working with. So if they're not there, and they can't just pop somewhere across the ward, you know, then you miss all those little bits that are really important, which I think I remember that coming through with Gerry and Paul in the first podcast, that they knew lots of little bits about a person that kind of then helped that person to then feel seen, I think.

[00:02:58] **Sarah:** Yeah. I think that leads us on actually to the next bit in two ways, so one of those is challenges with loss of services. I think that was a theme that came up a lot, the importance of that connection to community and understanding your community and what's available. But again, some challenges in terms of limited resources and services disappearing and changing. But also discussion around ageism, which came up across the podcasts. So how older people can be forgotten about or can be viewed through this very limited singular lens as just "old", and not as a person with a history and a future and all the complexities that all people have. So this label of age is obscuring some of that, and ageism is obscuring some of the needs of older people that aren't necessarily linked to age, but are things that they want and need.

[00:03:56] **Lesley:** You know what you just said there, Sarah, that I think is really important is that, because obviously this is not the area that I work in a lot, but you saying that they're not seen as having a future, and I think that really sums it up in terms of the way in which it's, that's really sad actually, because we all get there, hopefully, you want to, don't you? And I think that really is quite a poignant thing to say, that they're not seen as having a future. It's like very much seen as they have a past, but not a future. And actually, if you say that to any of us to just to say, "right you're not having all these, you

don't need these services because we don't see you as having a future", that would be awful.

[00:04:38] **Sarah:** It is awful.

[00:04:39] **Lesley:** And we're probably going to get to that point. So yeah, I think that's very important.

[00:04:44] **Sarah:** Yeah, I think it's important to say that our guests weren't saying that social workers have this perspective.

[00:04:51] **Lesley:** No, no, not at all.

[00:04:52] **Sarah:** So this ageism is out there, it's real, and it's impacting on the lives of older people, and social workers were actually an agent in pushing *against* that.

[00:05:00] **Lesley:** They were, no absolutely, yeah.

[00:05:04] **Sarah:** Although I think there was one episode where we talked about "positive ageism" or "benevolent ageism" where it's kind of infantilising language or "isn't this little old lady sweet". So perhaps some of that creeps into practice sometimes, but generally the message was that social workers are aware of this and really pushing against ageism and this sort of discrimination against older people. But I think we did have conversations as well about how it creeps into the routes that students decide to take into social work, where actually there are issues with ageism and getting people into an interest in working with older people. But hopefully these podcast episodes will help students to realise the value of it.

[00:05:51] **Lesley:** There's a lot in it, yeah. Because there's so much in it, and you do have, yeah I remember those elements about the fact that mainly people are looking towards child protection or working with children and families, and they're not looking at working with older people. And yet actually, when you look at all the different conversations that we've had, which are basically just all stories, the whole thing is a story isn't it? That's why we're putting it out there like this. But you see the nuance of it, the really interesting parts of the practice and then the challenges of that, and the real difference that it can make. Because that's ultimately, going to what you were saying there, that really it's about the massive value and importance of social work

practice with these people, and how they're *seeing* these people, and what they could do can really enhance people's lives, and that's a really important aspect that obviously we want to put out there.

[00:06:52] **Sarah:** Yeah, definitely. That was a really strong theme and a really nice theme to finish this conversation on, because yeah that came across in all of the conversations, the value and importance of social work, the amazing work that social workers are doing, and the complexity and interest and beauty and joy of working with older people. Yeah, and the benefits that you can bring in the role came across so strongly in different ways across the different conversations and the different areas that people were looking at. So I think that's quite a nice way to wrap up our summary episode. We can call it a summary episode can't we?

[00:07:33] **Lesley:** Yes, I think so. Yeah, because I think it does. And it's been really interesting and I found it interesting to see the crossovers, because I think what's really important is we can always learn. It doesn't matter what these podcasts are, there's always something you can take from them. I hope that, you know, I know social workers are very busy, and they maybe don't have as much time as they want, but really any of these can be really helpful to think about to improve practice and to help. And also just reconfirm why they're doing it in the first place and why it's an important job.

[00:08:09] **Sarah:** Yeah, and to say thank you.

[00:08:12] **Lesley:** Yeah.

[00:08:13] **Sarah:** To them all.

[00:08:14] **Lesley:** Yes, thank you to the social workers and thank you to our guests for this season.

[00:08:18] **Sarah:** Yes, thank you to our guests as well.

[00:08:21] **Lesley:** Yes, and it has been fabulous and yeah.

Next series, we're going to sort of reverse roles between Sarah and I, because this has been Sarah's, this is mainly your area of research and knowledge and not mine, and I've enjoyed learning it and I'm going to take you on a little journey next season into my area. So we're going to be doing a season on

neurodiversity, and we have already started some thoughts and planning and we're definitely going ahead with the next season, which we're pleased about. So come back soon and we will have season four starting to come out for you. So thank you very much for listening. If anyone does listen, because we never ever really know! Well, we do get downloaded.

[00:09:03] **Sarah:** Yeah, certainly getting downloaded. People have got it on, whether they're actually listening is the bit we can't say for sure, but I hope so! And as always get in touch with us if you have questions, comments, things that you want us to cover in the podcast, or if you just have some feedback for us, we'd love to hear from you. But we hope you've enjoyed this series and we look forward to welcoming you back for another one.

[00:09:31] **Lesley:** Hurrah! See you next time.

[00:09:33] **Sarah:** Hooray! Bye!

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[00:09:35] **Sarah:** You have been listening to the Portal Podcast, linking research and practice for social work with me, Dr Sarah Lonbay.

[00:09:41] **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.

[00:09:51] **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.

[00:10:06] **Lesley:** Bye.