



Series 4 Introduction

[00:00:06] **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.

Introduction to series 4

[00:00:28] **Sarah:** Hi everyone, I'm Sarah. I'm here with Lesley, and we're really pleased to introduce you to our latest Portal Podcast series, which is about neurodiversity and social work. So for this series we've spoken to six people about their work in this area, and we're going to introduce them to you today and hopefully you'll go and have a listen and really enjoy the conversations that we've had.

So our first guest this season was a conversation with Cathie Long, and we talked to Cathie about neurodiversity and Fabricated or Induced Illness.

[00:01:03] **Lesley:** Yeah. So this series is very much what I'm really, really interested in, and Cathie was somebody that I'd met quite a few years ago now through the PDA Society. And we're gonna put show notes on so that people, hopefully by the end of the series, will know exactly what PDA is and will understand it! And, talking about experiences, it will be quite, concerning about the way certain mothers are treated within the system, and specifically around things like Fabricated and Induced Illness, that seems to be completely misunderstood within neurodiversity. So I'd met Cathie because we share similar experiences, which is unfortunately what can happen in this arena. I think with this series, Sarah, the lived experience cuts over massively with the research area.

[00:01:57] **Sarah:** It does, yeah.

[00:01:58] **Lesley:** So I think we're just going to embrace that for this series. So Cathie is going to talk to us about, you know, quite difficult things about the way certain autistic mothers have experienced child protection systems. So I think that'll be a really interesting one for people to hear.

[00:02:17] **Sarah:** Thanks Lesley. And our second guest was Dr Amy Pearson. So we had a chat with Amy about neurodiversity, victimisation and mate crime.

[00:02:29] **Lesley:** Yeah, so Amy was a former colleague of ours, but she's now at Durham, at the Neurodiversity Centre there, and she's an amazingly prolific researcher in Autism, and in the neurodiversity framing to take a much more positive view. So Amy's going to be talking to us about, I think in particular the... I'm sort of pausing there because I was going to say vulnerability, but I don't really want to see it as a negative, but the potential for autistic people to experience mate crime. And there's a lot unpick with that. But I think also Amy's going to help contextualise things a bit for us as well, because this is very much her research and practice area. So I think that'll be really interesting for everyone to hear.

[00:03:19] **Sarah:** Yes, definitely. And it was great to get Amy back as a former colleague as well, because we miss her at Sunderland.

[00:03:25] **Lesley:** We do miss her.

[00:03:27] **Sarah:** Our third guest was Alice Running. So we spoke to Alice about parent carer blame in Autism services.

[00:03:35] **Lesley:** Yeah, so Alice is another person like Cathie, who I've met through the PDA Research Network, and again, unfortunately due to shared experiences around the way social workers have engaged with autistic mothers and the issue of risk and things like that, and the way it's perceived, which it is, hopefully people will be able to hear, that it is misunderstood, and that actually they need to understand what autistic parenting looks like. Because it does look different. So Alice is another through that network that really does some amazing things around parent carer blame, and I think I realised later that I had one of her books, that I'd got as a parent to help me understand things. So that was really nice that Alice was able to come and talk to us.

[00:04:27] **Sarah:** Yeah, that was great, thank you. And episode four was a conversation with Dr Laura Lennuyeu-Comnene and Professor Rebecca

Charlton. And I'm a bit worried that I've just butchered Laura's name slightly, so apologies, Laura, if I didn't pronounce that correctly.

[00:04:42] **Lesley:** So yeah, because Laura and Rebecca, and they are found through the fact that I get to count now as an "older person who's autistic", which is lovely, being of a certain age. So I actually was introduced to them through, again, research networks, and their research into aging as an autistic person. And obviously for a lot of us that late diagnosis adds a complication to it, because we don't know that we're autistic. But they're doing I think it's the COAST study, and I think I've said that correctly. And they're going to talk us through certainly that element of it, and I think this cuts across with your interest as well, doesn't it? Into working with older people. And they do podcasts as well, so we will be doing some links across, hopefully once their podcasts are up about the training that they're doing around working with autistic older people.

[00:05:33] **Sarah:** Brilliant. We had a lot of good conversations.

[00:05:38] **Lesley:** We did! There's loads.

[00:05:41] **Sarah:** So yes, episode five we spoke to Professor Hanna Bertilsson Rosqvist. I'm sorry, Hanna. We spoke to Hanna about reframing Autism through lived experience and the new language.

[00:05:58] **Lesley:** Yeah, I think I got introduced to Hanna through Amy Pearson, I think Amy introduced us, and I've been really pleased to be able to work with Hanna on an edited collection of the *Neuro-Inclusive Social Work* book that we're doing. But Hanna is such a really interesting person exploring the lived experience of autism. And I think she's really helpful to understanding the framing of autism within a neurodiversity studies framework, and I think that'll be really helpful for practitioners to hear about the issues of language and these elements of double empathy, and triple empathy I think we end up talking about as well. So I think really helpful, I would really recommend, I mean obviously we are recommending the whole series, but I just think there's so much misinformation out there that this will help clarify some things on neurodiversity.

[00:06:56] **Sarah:** Yeah, definitely. I think, for me, not knowing as much about this as you did, and obviously our guests did, Hanna's explanations were so good, they were so clear. I was like, "ah, I get it". So, yeah, really good. Really

good chat. Okay, and last but not least, our final conversation was with Jenni Guthrie who spoke to us about creating neuro-inclusive spaces in social work.

[00:07:23] **Lesley:** Yeah, and again, so Jenni's working with Hanna and I on this *Neuro-Inclusive Social Work* book, and what I think's really interesting about the work that Jenni's going to talk about is positioning of the social worker as well. So the neurodivergent, autistic social worker. And I think that side of it is interesting because, as you'll see with a lot of the series, we focus on the experience of the service user, for want of a better word, that's the term social workers use. But actually with Jenni's work, we talk a bit about the social worker as well, because obviously they also have these experiences within services as well, and within their job role. And I think Jenni's going to talk about burnout as well, the autistic burnout experience. And that's, again, I just feel like I'm using the word "interesting", I wonder how many times I've used the word "interesting" in this... But again, I think really helpful for this series, because neurodiversity is such a big topic at the minute, I think. So I'm really quite excited to hear what people think about this series after they've listened to it. And what they liked.

[00:08:34] **Sarah:** Yeah, I think people will learn a lot from it. I certainly learned a lot from it. And not just Hanna, but all of our guests explained some complex concepts really clearly, really took it back to basics for me so that I could understand the details of what they were talking about. So I think even if you know nothing about neurodiversity, this series is for you. And if you know quite a lot, you're sure to learn something new as well. Because obviously, as always, our guests are researchers who are learning and delving into new areas all the time.

[00:09:02] **Lesley:** Yeah.

[00:09:03] **Sarah:** So we really are so grateful to all of them, and I apologise to anyone whose name I've mispronounced. I'm blaming it on the fact that I'm not well, and I've probably got COVID, that's my excuse, but I am really sorry. We're so grateful for them for giving up their time to speak to us and share their knowledge.

[00:09:22] **Lesley:** Yeah, we're very excited and we'd love to hear about what people think of this series as well, and what they enjoy and what it helps them think about in terms of neurodiversity. And we may very well send out a survey. I've just decided that, but I feel like we should do that.

[00:09:39] **Sarah:** Yeah, I think we should. Our favorite thing is when someone gets in touch to tell us that they're enjoying listening. So do reach out, let us know what you think, give us ideas for future series as well. But in the meantime, enjoy this one.

[00:09:53] **Lesley:** Thank you.

Outro

[00:09:53] **Sarah:** You have been listening to the Portal Podcast, linking research and practice for social work with me, Dr Sarah Lonbay.

[00:10:00] **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.

[00:10:10] **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.

Bye.