



Series 1 Episode 0

An Introduction to the Portal Podcast

[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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[00:00:27] **Lesley:** Hi, I'm Lesley Deacon. I'm here with Sarah. So we're hosting today and this is the very first of the Portal Podcasts. And we're going to be talking through with you what you can expect from this very first series. We're going to run through, just very briefly each of the podcasts that we've got coming in the series and overall what it's all about.

So I'm going to hand over to Sarah to, hopefully, tell us what on Earth we are doing here and why people should hopefully be listening to us.

[00:00:56] **Sarah:** Yes, hopefully we do have some listeners. So, Lesley and I developed this podcast on the basis of a number of conversations that we had about the challenges that social work practitioners face in engaging with and drawing upon research in their practice. Some of the challenges being around access, but obviously bigger challenges around actually having the time to sit and find things and read through them and digest what that means for you and how you can use it in your practice. So we thought that it would be great to develop a podcast series where we actually present to you some of the cutting-edge, latest research that's being done, that's relevant for practice, and to help you kind of digest that by drawing out some of the key themes and some of the key learning within each episode. So that's the idea behind the podcast and hopefully you'll find it useful and a good way to engage with some of the latest research being done.

[00:01:48] **Lesley:** I think it will hopefully be really accessible to practitioners. That's what I'm hoping from this, because I was doing my little thinking back to my practice there when you were talking and thinking, couldn't access journal articles, didn't have time to read, so I think we've kind of got this idea of people going between visits, putting us on in the car, is the hope.

[00:02:09] **Sarah:** Yeah, I think we both have that same picture in our minds of how this is going to look for you, but if you're listening to it while you're cooking or anything else, then that's great, as long as you're listening, that's what we're hoping for.

[00:02:20] **Lesley:** Hopefully there's more than one or two of you.

[00:02:23] **Sarah:** And hopefully we're not just talking to ourselves, that would be the worst case scenario.

[00:02:27] **Lesley:** We literally are at this precise moment in time... nevermind.

[00:02:31] **Sarah:** That's fine. That's fine. Yeah, so as Lesley said, today we're going to talk you through the first series. So we've spoken to some really great researchers about their work, and kind of, as we said before, drawing out some of the implications for social workers. So we're going to introduce you today to what we've got coming up. So I'll hand over to Lesley to introduce the first episode. Well, second episode it will be.

[00:02:52] **Lesley:** Yes, because this is the first one isn't it?

[00:02:53] **Sarah:** We'll get the numbers right at some point.

[00:02:55] **Lesley:** At some point! But yeah, if I can do a little shout-out to what these podcasts are based on, which is actually, we have this thing at the university called Working Papers, so people have been writing about their research as they're sort of developing it and we have them published and they are accessible, obviously you'll hear that you can access them through the show notes, but they are also available just on our website. And we thought it would be really helpful to use this as a way to introduce these to you and share the key points from these research pieces, and relate them to social work practice. And we're also at the same time wanting to encourage more of you to actually write some papers. So we'll also have a link to that in the show notes, to the Working Papers, so you can see what kind of things that maybe, if

you've got things you want to write about that you've been doing in practice, then there might be something for you there. So that was my little mini advert.

[00:03:53] **Sarah:** I think that's very important, good to have that in.

[00:03:56] **Lesley:** So, we have a number of podcasts, I'm not saying how many, because I can't remember at this moment in time until we go through the list... Sarah's busy adding with her fingers and she's about to tell me, is it six?

[00:04:06] **Sarah:** Six.

[00:04:06] **Lesley:** Okay. So we've got six. This is kind of setting the tone for what we're like, okay? Because we've got really important messages, but we're also fun and silly and, you know, this is what it's going to be like throughout the series. So the very first one that we did was with one of our colleagues whose name is Mr Neil Evans. He actually had just retired just before we did this podcast with him, and he wrote a paper, and his title is 'Raising Aspirations and Impartiality: A Paradoxical Position for Career Guidance Practitioners?', with a question mark at the end.

[00:04:44] **Sarah:** Yeah, so we had a really good discussion with Neil about impartiality and aspirations when working with young people, so there were some really important messages within that for social work. Neil drew a lot on his previous career guidance experience and the wealth of experience he's gotten working with young people throughout that conversation. So there were some really interesting discussions within that episode.

[00:05:08] **Lesley:** Yep, it really was. We really enjoyed all of these actually. So it's quite nice thinking about them. So the next podcast that we've got is with Dr Rick Bowler, who is also another of our colleagues who had just retired at this time, it's like a little mini celebration. And what had actually happened is that Rick had written a response piece to actually the very first Working Paper that was written by our former colleague Professor Peter Rushton, who we unfortunately lost a couple of years ago. And he wrote about 'The Myth and Reality of Brexit City: Sunderland and the 2016 Referendum'. And in response to that, Rick wrote his paper, which was called 'Whiteness, Britishness and the Racist Reality of Brexit'.

[00:05:54] **Sarah:** Yeah, so we had a really interesting conversation with Rick about his work, talking about race and ethnicity, and Rick draws on Critical

Race Theory in his work too, which is explained within the podcast. And really just a general discussion about how social workers can challenge hegemonic whiteness in their practice. So again, a really, really interesting conversation with Rick.

[00:06:16] **Lesley:** I think we should just say that they're all interesting.

[00:06:18] **Sarah:** They're all... I'll say that for every one and you'll get bored of me saying it, but yeah, they're all interesting conversations.

[00:06:23] **Lesley:** Definitely. We then had Dr Donna Peacock with us who was talking about the article that she had written with another former colleague. Where's everyone gone? I just keep saying "former colleagues"... Dr Fay Cosgrove, but it was just Donna who came to talk to us. And her article was titled 'Supporting Vulnerable Detainees through a Student Volunteering Service'.

[00:06:47] **Sarah:** Yeah, so Donna has set up an Appropriate Adult scheme, so we talked to Donna a lot about some of the challenges of setting up this voluntary service, in a role that was previously overseen by social workers, and social workers still do have a role in some cases in Appropriate Adult schemes. So some really interesting learning from that conversation too.

[00:07:08] **Lesley:** Yeah, there really was, yeah, definitely. And then we had this brilliant one that came next...

[00:07:12] **Sarah:** Oh, yeah obviously the best one!

[00:07:16] **Lesley:** And this was when Dr Donna Peacock stepped in as co-host so that she could interview Dr Lesley Deacon about an article that she had written. I feel funny talking about myself in the third person here. It was an article – actually I'll go back to "I" – that I wrote with two social work master's students, Phillip Nicholson and Kim Allen. And we wrote about 'A Neoliberalist Solution for a Neoliberalist Problem: The Neoliberalist Normalisation of Psychosocial Support for Parent Carers'.

[00:07:46] **Sarah:** Yes, again, an interesting conversation. I said I'd say it for every one. So Donna, as Lesley said, stepped in as co-host to help me in the conversation with Lesley about her work and we had a discussion about psychosocial support and the impact of neoliberalism on social work practice.

So how that plays out in day-to-day practice and some of the impact that it's had, which plays out much wider than the context, I think the conversation got a bit bigger than just what you'd included in the papers. So again, some great discussions. I'm trying to think of another word other than "interesting"...

[00:08:22] **Lesley:** I know, you should have had a little list of words you can pull out and use...

[00:08:25] **Sarah:** Synonyms for "interesting", so I don't say the same thing. I'll think of a new one for the next paper as well...

[00:08:31] **Lesley:** While I'm introducing it, you can ponder. So this will be our fifth episode – I think I've got the hang of the numbers now – and this was with Dr Nicola Roberts, who's another colleague of ours, and also a practitioner Miss Demi Price, who had completed an article on 'Gendered Perceptions of Domestic Violence'.

[00:08:51] **Sarah:** Yeah, so we spoke to Nicola and Demi about young people's attitudes around domestic abuse, but particularly in relation to coercive control and some of the lack of awareness that they'd found around that from their research. And again, unpicking some of the implications for social work practice. And again, some of the broader implications too, around the need for cultural changes and for attitudes to change, and some of the things that can play into that happening. And that one was a fascinating conversation.

[00:09:19] **Lesley:** Oh nice!

[00:09:20] **Sarah:** Yeah, see what I did there?

[00:09:22] **Lesley:** She did a little hand gesture as well when she said it, just so you know, just to emphasise the point. And then finally last, but definitely not least, we have Dr Angie Wilcock and Dr Sheila Quaid, who talked to us about their paper, 'Exploring the Dynamics of Situated Emotionality in Feminist Standpoint Epistemology'.

[00:09:43] **Sarah:** Yeah, so what we talked to Sheila and Angie about is emotions really, emotions in research and in practice, and a lot of discussion about the balances that are to be had and the impact that the work that we do has on us, and how we can acknowledge that and work with our own emotional reactions, how we support each other to do that, and some of the

challenges around that as well. So again, a really important conversation and one that's actually been happening in the wider department at Sunderland, there's a lot of discussion about this at the minute, because it's so important for us to think about how we look after ourselves and how we manage these things.

[00:10:20] **Lesley:** Yeah. And so, while I said last before, I just realised, it's not *technically* the last podcast...

[00:10:25] **Sarah:** No there will be other episodes, yes.

[00:10:27] **Lesley:** Because we will come back. Because when we were doing them, we started to spot themes emerging, didn't we? Because obviously we had the continuity of going and talking to all of the different people, which was, it was *fascinating*, as you said.

[00:10:40] **Sarah:** And interesting.

[00:10:41] **Lesley:** And interesting. It was really good. We don't always have time to talk to colleagues about what they're doing in research, so actually it was really a pleasant experience to be able to go and read up on it, think about the questions we wanted to ask them, and then come and chat to them and see where it took us. And then since then, we've kind of been pulling some themes together. So there'll be a final episode where actually we talk through what are the key themes that we found across that, that are related to social work practice.

[00:11:09] **Sarah:** Yeah, definitely. So stay tuned for all of this coming up very, very soon, and we hope that you enjoy it. I think it's worth just saying at this point as well that we really would love to know whether people are listening and how they feel about the podcast. So we are going to be sharing a couple of links to surveys, at some point, and if you're listening to it and you'd be happy to complete one of the surveys, just to let us know what you think of the podcast, anything you think we should develop, if it's had any kind of impact on your practice, anything like that, please do take the time. We've made the survey as quick and painless as possible, so it shouldn't take you too long, but check the show notes for that because we'd love to hear your thoughts.

[00:11:50] **Lesley:** Definitely. We really would like that feedback because we don't want this to be just a one-off, this is part of a development we'd like to

carry on, and we want it to be useful and beneficial to practitioners. So yeah, definitely, please tell us, we'd like to know.

[00:12:05] **Sarah:** Great. So I think that's it for this first recording, this first episode. And we will, well, we won't see you, but hopefully you'll be listening to us again soon and we hope you enjoy it.

[00:12:16] **Lesley:** Thank you.

[00:12:16] **Sarah:** Bye.

[00:12:17] **Lesley:** Bye.

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[00:12:19] **Sarah:** You have been listening to the Portal Podcast, linking research and practice for social work with me, Dr Sarah Lonbay.

[00:12:26] **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.

[00:12:37] **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.

[00:12:51] **Lesley:** Bye.