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Profile

"Carolyn James is a senior lecturer in Criminology & Policing at the University of Cumbria. Carolyn was a Police Officer for 12 years and subsequently worked for Citizens Advice Bureau and as an advocate with a disability charity before moving into academia in 2010. Her interests lie in issues relating to inequalities in society, especially gender, interpersonal violence, hate crime and sexual exploitation. She adopted a distinct criminological focus to her masters in Gender and Women's Studies at University of Lancaster and is keen to develop an integrated feminist discourse and gender perspective within criminology and the criminal justice system".

Abstract

Chelsea's Choice: An exploration of the role of theatre as an educational device to subvert, challenge and tackle sexual violence and exploitation.

Chelsea's Choice is a distinctive and powerful theatre production by Alter Ego Creative Solutions which is performed in schools. It aims to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and the nature of sexual violence in society. Based upon a true story it tells the story of three students who discover the diary of a girl called Chelsea. She is a 15-year-old girl, isolated from her friends and family who meets a young man who has a car, own flat and at first listens to her and is kind. Her story is played out by the students who, along with their teacher, attempt to understand what happened to Chelsea and how it could have been prevented. Followed by an actor facilitated post-show talk the performance shows how young people can be cleverly manipulated and groomed into exploitative and violent situations. This paper demonstrates how the play raises awareness of the issues relating to sexual exploitation and reaches out to young people, giving them skills and knowledge to be able to protect themselves from this form of abuse. The play also helps to challenge and tackle sexual abuse and violence and aims to change some of the prevailing perceptions of sexual violence in society, which is often reproduced in schools. The play, which has now been seen by hundreds of professionals and over 800,000 young people throughout the UK. It is a positive device and can achieve many of those aims in raising awareness around the issues surrounding CSE.

Key words : sexual exploitation, grooming, theatre, education