REASSESS THE PRESS: NEW EXHIBITION EXAMINES HOW RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT ARE REPORTED IN THE BRITISH PRESS

Thursday 25 May, 2023

A new exhibition exploring how rape and sexual assault are reported in the British press took place at Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis on Wednesday 24 May. Collated by the charity's Rosey Project, which provides support to women and girls who have experienced sexual violence, the exhibition focused on a review of articles published in four of the UK's biggest newspapers – The Telegraph, The Guardian, The Mirror and The Sun.

Media content and language was reviewed from the perspective of survivors. Analysis of press coverage revealed bias and stereotyping in reporting, including:

- Children are depicted as 'vulnerable' victims with crimes against them described as 'horrific', 'shocking' and 'appalling'.
- Adults are often subjected to victim-blaming stereotypes, allegations of lying and suggestions of greed.
- High-profile perpetrators are often portrayed positively, with mentions of achievements and net worth together with humanising images of them. Police mugshots were only used if children or multiple victims were involved.
- Sensationalist and overly graphic headlines were often used.
- All articles appeared without a trigger warning or details of a relevant helpline for those affected.

Collated by activist group the Rosey Project Community, the exhibition displayed examples of media coverage and featured interactive exhibits challenging viewers to identify real and fake coverage. The event was attended by actress Karen Dunbar, academics and students of journalism, representatives from local support agencies and survivors who have used the Rosey Project support services.

The "Reassess the Press" exhibition builds on research findings that featured in the "Melody Report", published by the Rosey Project Community in 2021. It explored the impact of media reporting on survivors of rape and sexual assault in Scotland and found that:

- Over 70% of the participants surveyed felt that survivors of sexual violence were framed negatively in the media.
- 81.1% reported feeling deterred from reporting to the police because of the way survivors are portrayed in the media.

Recommendations from "Reassess the Press" and "The Melody Report" to improve media reporting of rape and sexual assault cases include:

- Avoiding sensationalist language and headlines.
- Including trigger warnings and helplines in relevant articles.
- Journalists should be made aware of the impacts of victim blaming and how to avoid it at every stage of their training.
- Journalists should write about survivors, including their path to recovery.

Members of the Rosey Project Community said: *"Our research shows that not one of the 43 media pieces we reviewed met standards to report rape and sexual assault responsibly. At the most basic level, support information should always be provided in coverage, as well as content trigger warnings.*

"Responsible reporting is a must. It should prioritise facts and the experience of survivors over sensationalist headlines. It should communicate clearly that rape and sexual violence are not OK in any context, and it should always take responsibility to provide support information for anyone engaging with it.

"We believe there are journalists, producers, editors and reporters that want to do better. That's why we have taken responsibility to do this research and pose the questions we have in an exhibition format. We encourage everyone to Reassess the Press".

Claudia MacDonald, Director at Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis, said: *"The call to action from the group of young advocacy volunteers working on this project is clear, it's time to reassess the press. And they*

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have my full backing.

Rape and sexual violence continue to be prevalent, an age-old and damning indictment of our society. Women and girls are still told to dress differently, not enjoy themselves as much or as freely, and take their share of the 'blame' for being raped.

With our media's power, they must stand up and take responsibility for how they are reporting. It's not good enough that survivors of rape are villainised and have their whole life scrutinised because of the actions of a rapist. So, I urge all who work in the media, to join us in reassessing ***their*** *press. We are here, and we will work with you to do this. Because we all need to stand up and say, 'enough is enough'."*

- Ends -

Notes to editors:

For more information about this research, exhibition or Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis services, contact Claudia Macdonald, Director, Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis:

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About Reassess the Press and the Melody Report

Both pieces of research were undertaken by the Rosey Project Community, a group of young advocacy volunteers that is part of the Rosey Project. The research was funded by Rosa UK. Rosa UK is a grant-making charity that funds women's and girls' organisations working to make the UK a fairer, safer place. It brings in new sources of funding, invests in resources into the women and girls' sector, and connects organisations that are connected in their cause to build a more equal society.

About the Rosey Project

Founded by Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis in 2010, the Rosey Project was created to deal with the high numbers of young women and girls looking for support after a rape or sexual assault. But reports from teachers, parents and support workers highlighted the levels of sexual harassment and sexual violence being experienced by young people. So, the Rosey Project was given the additional mission to help prevent sexual violence. It now provides training and consultancy to young people in schools, colleges, youth groups and other organisations.

About Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis

Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis is the centre for women and girls who have experienced rape or sexual violence in the Greater Glasgow area. It is the oldest and one of the largest centre's across the U.K. Based in Glasgow City Centre, Glasgow and Clyde Rape Crisis provides triage and support services to survivors, advocacy for people who have or are considering reporting an assault and training and consultancy designed to help prevent sexual violence.

Company Contact:

Glasgow & Clyde Rape Crisis Centre

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W. https://www.glasgowclyderapecrisis.or...

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