

# The Telegraph

## Leading intimacy expert says drama schools ignored her offer of help with training

Lizzy Talbot said she was largely rebuffed despite offering to ensure students felt comfortable acting out sex scenes and intimate moments

By [Sophie Barnes](#) 5 June 2021 • 11:10pm



Ms Talbot's work on Netflix's *Bridgerton* was widely praised, as its sex scenes were largely portrayed through a feminist lens CREDIT: Liam Daniel/Netflix

The intimacy coordinator for *Bridgerton* and other major productions [has accused drama schools](#) of ignoring her offer to ease student anxieties over nudity because they were concerned students may have blown the whistle.

Lizzy Talbot said she was largely rebuffed or ignored by drama schools despite offering to ensure students felt comfortable acting out sex scenes or other intimate moments.

Ms Talbot decided to speak out [in the wake of a Telegraph investigation](#) that revealed students from some of Britain's most prestigious drama schools had felt pressured into nudity, and were allegedly subject to inappropriate behaviour by some teachers.

Following *The Telegraph*'s investigation the actors' union Equity said drama schools and other leaders must "step up" to make the industry safe for young actors starting out in their careers.

Ms Talbot's work on Netflix's *Bridgerton* was widely praised, as its sex scenes were largely portrayed through a feminist lens. She has also worked on the streaming giant's fantasy drama *The Witcher*, as well as Sky's sci-fi series *The Nevers*.



Henry Cavill (r) in the title role as Geralt of Rivia in 'The Witcher' and Emma Appleton as Princess Renfri CREDIT: Katalin Vermes

Some of the alleged wrongdoing uncovered by *The Telegraph* covered the same period of time she says she was offering to help drama schools through the company she founded, Intimacy for Stage and Screen.

"The frustrating thing for us is that we were emailing drama schools saying 'hey, we're here, we've got research, we've got protocols in place and we can help you'. And if you look at the timeline it's the same time as when students are now coming out and saying 'this happened to me in 2015, this happened to me in 2016'.

"It's really frustrating for us because we were sending emails out at that point to drama schools and the take-up wasn't high," she said.

"I think some drama schools were concerned that we would go in there and students would come to us with complaints that they had. They were

quite concerned about us coming in because there might be an avenue for students to talk to us about it as third parties,” she added.

Intimacy coordinators work with actors to make sure they are comfortable when acting in a sex scene or other intimate scenes. The use of these specialists has dramatically increased in recent years in the wake of the MeToo allegations and they are now regularly hired to work on major productions by Netflix, the BBC and other studios and in theatre productions.

### **Progress made but some drama schools have reacted better than others**

Ita O’Brien, an intimacy coordinator who has worked on the BBC’s *Normal People* and *I May Destroy You*, said progress has been made but some drama schools have reacted better than others. “What was so sad for me with the allegations... is that they will be considered troublemakers and will suffer in some way for coming forward. That’s what’s got to shift, both in our drama schools and in the profession,” she said.

Ms Talbot said that while TV and film have moved quickly in recent years to make use of intimacy experts, theatre has been “a little bit behind”.

“There’s been some movement towards intimacy direction in the West End, but I think it’s budgetary and ‘we don’t have the money for it’,” she said.

“It’s been harder for the theatre industry - they just haven’t got the same budgets that TV and film have. It’s interesting though because they’ll often find the money for a fight director if they need one,” she added.

She described how back in 2016 and 2017 when she was running her first workshops that were open to everyone “I got no one in an authority role coming along...We were emailing larger theatres and never got a response. We emailed lots of artistic directors in the West End and got very little to no response.”