

**BRIXTON
HOUSE**

**CLEAN
BREAK**

Baby

**»» Learning
Resource Pack**

Photo Credit: Christa Holka



Introduction

This Learning Resource Pack, created by Brixton House and Clean Break, is designed to support students' **key stage 4 and 5** with their learning before and after watching *Baby*.

It provides structured activities; discussion prompts and creative exercises to support teachers and students to engage with the production outside of the theatre. The pack will introduce key themes, characters and context.

Please note: As the themes explored in the play may feel particularly heavy, we strongly encourage teachers to use our **Self-Care Guide** with students before and after seeing the show. We also recommend using the guide before undertaking any activities in the Learning Resource Pack.

**Self-Care
guide**



Writer's Statement

By Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti



As part of my recent commission with Clean Break, in 2023 I ran writing workshops at HMP Styal, a women's prison with a Mother and Baby Unit (MBU). Whilst waiting to go through security, I noticed a trail of babies in buggies being wheeled through a corridor. I asked what was happening and was told that they were being taken to the park by the nursery nurses from the MBU. It suddenly struck me that these babies would never experience being outside in the open air with their mothers. Such a simple, mundane thing that most families take for granted. I thought about the grief and loss that these mothers must be holding and the impact on both mother and baby of being denied this chance to bond and connect. It felt sad, pointless, empty. The image stayed with me, and in those moments my play *BABY* was born.

Throughout my life, I've known many women who have experience of the criminal justice system. And I knew I wanted to create a character who, although she had not had it easy, was surprising, talented, funny with an

expansive imagination and ferocious ability to use language. My aim was to write a piece of theatre that would take the audience on a ride, that was provocative and ambitious and entertaining, reaching for epic themes.

While the play highlights the roots of trauma and the inequalities in society, *Baby* is also a woman who believes in life, who loves profoundly and has an extraordinary desire to survive.

I'm always interested in stories of injustice, those knotty moments when the world doesn't make sense, and making theatre that transcends what we think we know, using drama to reach the audience's hearts and minds and spirits to hopefully inspire a kind of activism.

So, this play is an invitation to the audience, not just to watch, but to listen and engage deeply with the story of a woman, who has suffered beyond belief, yet somehow has the strength to keep going, and to join the fight to make her life and the lives of others, brighter, fairer and more equal.

The Play

They named me Baby. Means you'll never seem old, even when you are. You'll always bring hope, even when there is none. And you can always pretend you're wanted, even when you're not...

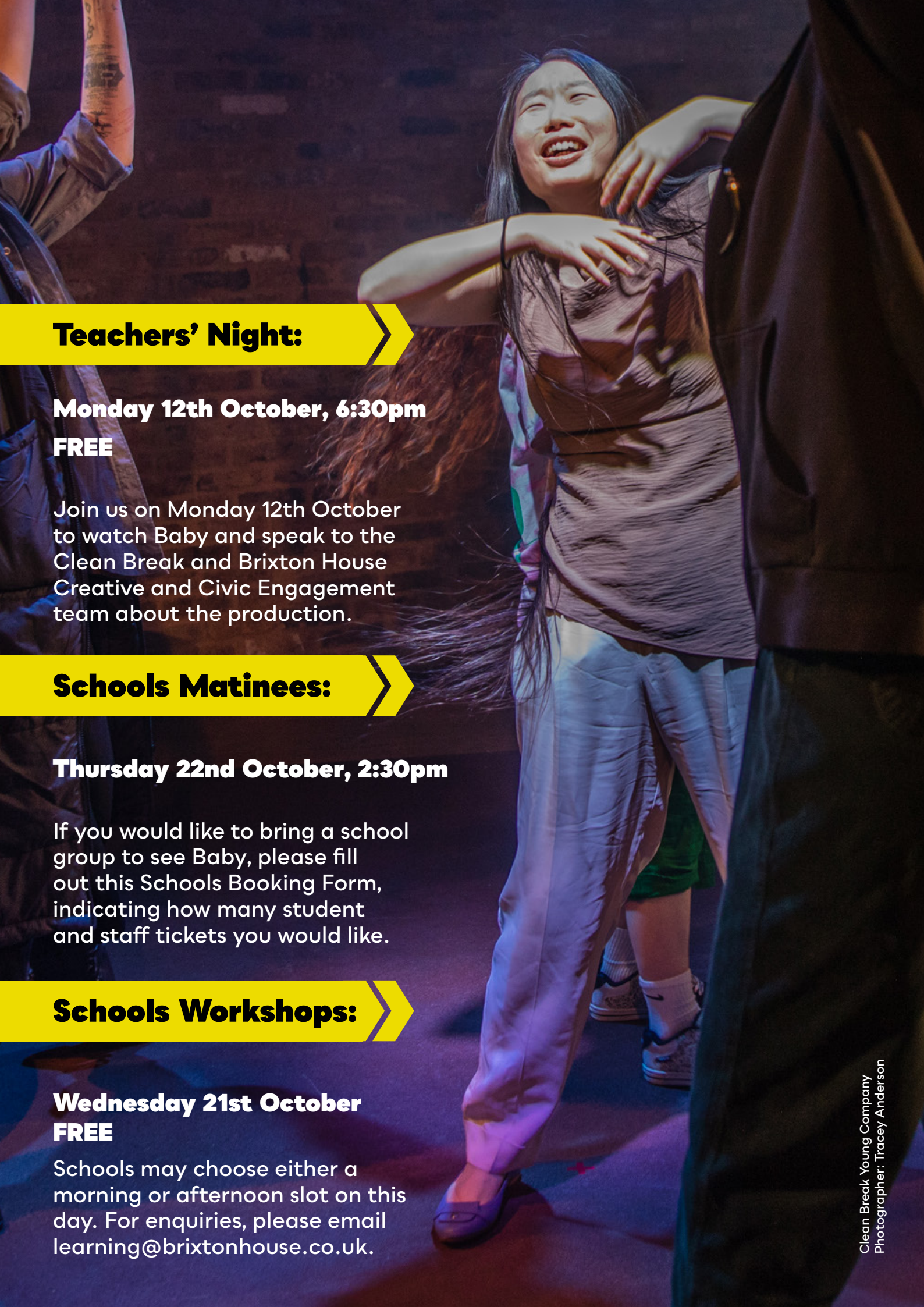
Baby's bright and beautiful. Baby's trouble. Baby can do things nobody else can and why not? Britain's got talent, hasn't it?

Baby's had it tough and she wants to keep Bliss. That's all she wants. But something terrible stands in her way.

Now Baby has to solve a problem....and you're part of her solution. Because you're proper people. You must be, to be reading this. Plus, there's nobody else she can ask...

Baby is a provocative play about one woman's desire to survive even though she hasn't got a chance in hell

Baby's coming...



Teachers' Night:

Monday 12th October, 6:30pm

FREE

Join us on Monday 12th October to watch Baby and speak to the Clean Break and Brixton House Creative and Civic Engagement team about the production.

Schools Matinees:

Thursday 22nd October, 2:30pm

If you would like to bring a school group to see Baby, please fill out this Schools Booking Form, indicating how many student and staff tickets you would like.

Schools Workshops:

Wednesday 21st October

FREE

Schools may choose either a morning or afternoon slot on this day. For enquiries, please email learning@brixtonhouse.co.uk.



**Spoiler
Alert!**

Synopsis

Baby is a 'one hander' play written by Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti. It was commissioned by Clean Break theatre company and will be co-produced with Brixton House theatre in 2026.

At the start of the play, we meet our main character *Baby* in a set which appears clinical. She is in her late 20s or early 30s, wearing a hospital gown. She is witty, sharp, raw, and at times confrontational. She directly addresses the audience throughout the play.

Baby takes the audience through her life story, from childhood up to the present day – which is where we are meeting *Baby*. From the way she moves now, compared to when she's inhabiting her younger self in her story, we can tell that she has been through a physical trauma.

Alongside playing herself at different stages of life, *Baby* also plays the role of multiple other characters. Including her mother, key workers, friends and others.

The story *Baby* takes us through is one of deep trauma which starts from birth. *Baby's* mother struggled with addiction, which profoundly impacted her ability to take care of *Baby* and led to neglect and child sexual exploitation.

Baby is a highly capable and intelligent child, she questions authority and wants the best for herself, taking on a young carer role at times. However, when her mother finally gets support and begins her recovery, *Baby's* pain and resentment runs so deep that she herself begins to fall very quickly. A problematic relationship with a man leads *Baby* to prison. It's here she finds out she is pregnant with her daughter Bliss, who becomes a beacon of hope for *Baby*.

Bliss starts her life in a Mother and Baby Unit, where *Baby* bonds deeply with her and dedicates herself to motherhood. However, when *Baby* is released from prison, the challenges she has faced and the never-ending barriers and obstacles placed in her way mean she is unable to care for Bliss, who is placed in foster care.

Everything *Baby* does is to work towards being with Bliss. We see how painfully hard she tries, how she is continuously let down by every service she comes into contact with, and how impossible it is for her to build the life she wants for herself and Bliss.

Towards the end of the play, we learn of the 'terrible thing' which has caused the physical pain *Baby* is clearly experiencing in the present day. The compounding challenges she has faced all her life, and seeing no way she will ever be able to care for her daughter, led her to setting a fire which has given her serious burns.

At the end of the play, we are left with a glimmer of hope for *Baby*. We find out that Gill, Bliss's foster mother, has visited *Baby* in hospital. Gill offers her support to *Baby* and encourages her to keep going – Bliss needs her.

We end with a snapshot of a beautiful day out with Gill, *Baby* and Bliss. *Baby* addresses the audience directly; her story is theirs now to hold as they move through the world.



Themes & Content Guidance

Baby might be a challenging play to engage with, we highly recommend the use of our **Self-Care Guide** beforehand with your students.

Below is a list of themes that the play explores.
Age recommended 14+

- » Experience of the criminal justice system including, arrest, prison and probation
- » Sex work linked to addiction
- » Child neglect and hunger
- » Drug and alcohol use
- » Social services
- » Child sexual abuse
- » Violence including gender-based violence
- » Class dynamics
- » Very strong language
- » Toxic relationship dynamics
- » Grooming
- » Organised crime
- » Self-harm
- » Birth in prison
- » Separation of mother and child
- » Foster care
- » Insecure housing
- » Arson
- » Depiction of burns on the body

Characters

Baby	Main character, female, 20s/30s
Mummy	Baby's Mum
Sophie	Baby's school friend
D	Baby's boyfriend
Dawn	D's cousin / Baby's landlady
Social Worker	
Nursery Nurse	
Angel	Baby's cellmate
Bliss	Baby's daughter
Janet	Probation Officer
Hannah	Probation Officer
Gordon	Probation Officer
Fran	Café owner / Baby's boss
Gill	Bliss's Foster Mum

Note: One actor plays all the characters.

Grounding Exercises

Grounding is a technique that can help reduce symptoms of anxiety and stress when they feel overwhelming. (NHS Guidance)

As noted in our Self-Care guide, doing some grounding exercises can be helpful both before and after watching *Baby* because of the themes the play explores.

We also would encourage doing a grounding exercise either before or after exploring the post-show activities below. Clean Break has a Creative Wellbeing video series which you could use as a guideline or even watch one together as a group.

On Clean Break's Knowledge Hub we have three videos that guide you through some creative wellbeing exercises.

These include movement, singing and meditation.



Activities

We have created a selection of activities you can explore with your students after watching *Baby*.

These are just a jumping off point; we encourage you to explore and expand on these activities with your own ideas and students' ideas too.

For example, *Baby* has many important themes which you could use as stimulus to create scenes, walking debates or creative writing prompts.



Activity One

Character Analysis & Exploration

1

In *Baby* we follow the journey of our central character and briefly meet the other characters in her life through her eyes.

Explore the following three exercises with your students to build upon and explore their understanding of characters in the play and see what more they can learn about *Baby* and her world.

These three exercises work best if used in a scaffolding style, so starting with the first exercise and building upon it by following up with the others.

“I know I might seem a bit... bent out of shape, but honestly, I’m actually brilliant.”

- *Baby*

Hot Seating

Using the character list above, choose different characters to ‘Hot Seat’. Placing a chair at the front of the space, with other chairs in a horseshoe. Invite a student to sit in the ‘hot seat’, tell them the character they will be playing and lead them through varied interview style questions.

The student in the ‘hot seat’ should try to answer as best they can, imagining they are the character.

You as the teacher lead the activity and then invite other students to ask questions also. Remind students to link their questions to what they know about the characters from the play.

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What questions would they like to ask these characters to learn more about them?

After each character has had their time in the ‘hot seat’ take a moment to reflect as a group.

- » How did it feel to be in the ‘hot seat’?
- » What questions helped get the most useful answers?
- » Did we learn anything more about the character than we previously thought?

Tip: ‘De-role’ the person in the hot seat, by inviting the student in the role to do a physical shake out of the character after being in the ‘hotseat’ and/or all students can shake out together at the end of the activity.

Freeze Frames

Following on from the hot seat activity, now that students have created broader understandings and backgrounds to the other characters, split students into small groups.

Ask them to create freeze-frames of *Baby's* world with the other characters.

It may be a scene *Baby* described in the play, or they can create a new scene they think might have taken place. E.g. The three Probation Officers meeting together to discuss *Baby's* case.

Improvised Scenes

Building upon the free frame scenes, use these as the starting point to create full improvised scenes using dialogue and movement.

Give each group time to rehearse their scenes and share back.

- » Ask students to think about what would happen if another character from the play entered their scene?
- » Which character should join their scene and why or why not?
- » What would happen if this character or characters joined the scene?



Share freeze frames back as a group, asking other students to guess what they see in each other's scenes.

After each group shares, unpick and discuss each scene.

Tip: Before moving on to *Improvised Scenes*, you can invite the groups to add sound or one word to each character in the freeze frame.



Repeat the scene and invite another student to enter as this character and/or characters.

Feedback together after each group has had a chance to explore.

Suggestion: Is there a way to join all the scenes together and perform as one?

Activity Two

Creative Responses – the invitation of the play

2

Here are two exercises that can be delivered as stand-alone exercises or delivered together.

In her shoes

Invite students to think about the above statement from Writer Gurpreet, what has the play left them feeling about *Baby* and her story?

Split students into pairs to discuss their responses. Once they have finished their discussions, share the following:

In the play the metaphor of “walking in her shoes” is mentioned, with *Baby* throwing her own shoes into the audience. *Baby* also buys a special pair of designer trainers for Bliss when she first visits her in the foster home, which Bliss is not wearing when *Baby* goes to see her at school pick-up.

Ask students to imagine that one of them is **A – Baby’s shoes** and **B – Bliss’s shoes** and to create a scene where both pairs of shoes are speaking to one another.

“This play is an invitation to the audience, not just to watch, but to listen and engage deeply with the story of a woman, who has suffered beyond belief, yet somehow has the strength to keep going, and to join the fight to make her life and the lives of others, brighter, fairer and more equal.”

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Using the shoes motif, ask students in their scene to share what they reflected on together, what they have listened and engaged with from *Baby’s* story and tell this through the personification of both pairs of shoes.

Allow time for pairs to perform, share and feedback as a group.

- » Were there common themes?
- » What did they learn?
- » Was there one main message they will take away?

Scenes for *Baby*

Split students into small groups, invite each group to devise a scene in response to *Baby*'s request to the audience at the end of the play.

Baby: So you tell them for me. Yeah? About my insides, not my outsides. Because you know that *Baby* has some good left in her. Real good. Pure good. So you tell them and you tell everyone you meet and you see... you explain.

You tell them. Tell them. You tell them every single word you know about me I disappear into the...

**SINGLE TONE OF MONITOR.
SUDDEN BLACKOUT. SILENCE.**

?

Ask students to imagine their scene would happen directly after ***Baby*** ends in the blackout.

- » What is the message of their scene?
- » What do they want the audience to know?
- » What are they going to 'tell them'?

They can create completely new characters and use whatever theatre styles they like.

Each group to share back together and discuss.



Activity Three

Writing for Change

3

Writer Gurpreet was inspired to write *Baby* after one particular moment:

“I ran writing workshops at HMP Styal, a women’s prison with a Mother and Baby Unit (MBU). Whilst waiting to go through security, I noticed a trail of babies in buggies being wheeled through a corridor.

The image stayed with me, and in those moments my play *BABY* was born.”

Share Gurpreet’s full Writer’s Statement with students and invite them to explore the following:

If you had to write a play about a single image that has stuck with you, what would that image be?

Thinking of that image, write a monologue or scene inspired by that moment.

You can write it as a one-person play, like *Baby*, or maybe you would like

to write it as a scene with multiple characters.

Like Writer Gurpreet, the image was one which inspired a call to action, to “*highlight the roots of trauma and the inequalities in society,*” ask students to think about this when choosing their image.

Is there an issue that they would like to shine a light on through this exercise and use theatre as a tool for social change?

“using drama to reach the audience’s hearts and minds and spirits to hopefully inspire a kind of activism.”



Allow students time to write, share back and discuss.

About Clean Break

Clean Break changes lives and changes minds through theatre – on stage, in prisons and in the community. It produces ground-breaking plays with women's voices at the heart of its work. Founded in 1979 by two women in prison who believed that theatre could bring the hidden stories of women who are criminalised to a wider audience, Clean Break remains true to these roots.

The company has been inspiring playwrights and captivating audiences with award-winning plays on the complex theme of women and criminalisation for over four decades. Current productions include *Blis-ta* (an audio drama by the late Sonya Hale, BBC Audio Drama Award winner), *Sweatbox* (a film of Chloë Moss's acclaimed play set in a prison

van) and *Hope* (a film by Nicole Hall, Michelle Hamilton, Kirsty Housley, Carina Murray, Natasha Jean Sparkes, and River) - all available on Clean Break's Knowledge Hub. Recent productions include *Scenes from Lost Mothers* by Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti (national tour), *The Trials and Passions of Unfamous Women* (co-created by Janaina Leite, Lara Duarte & Athena Maria, Yvonne Wickham, Sarah-Jane Dent, Dominique Lavine Wood-Whyte, Kim Teresa (KT) Marsh and Rachel Valentine Smith, LIFT Festival 2024), *Dixon and Daughters* (by Deborah Bruce at National Theatre, now available on NT at Home), *Catch* (a small-scale touring play by Sonia Jalaly), *Favour* (by Ambreen Razia, Bush Theatre) and *Typical Girls* (by Morgan Lloyd Malcolm, Sheffield Crucible).

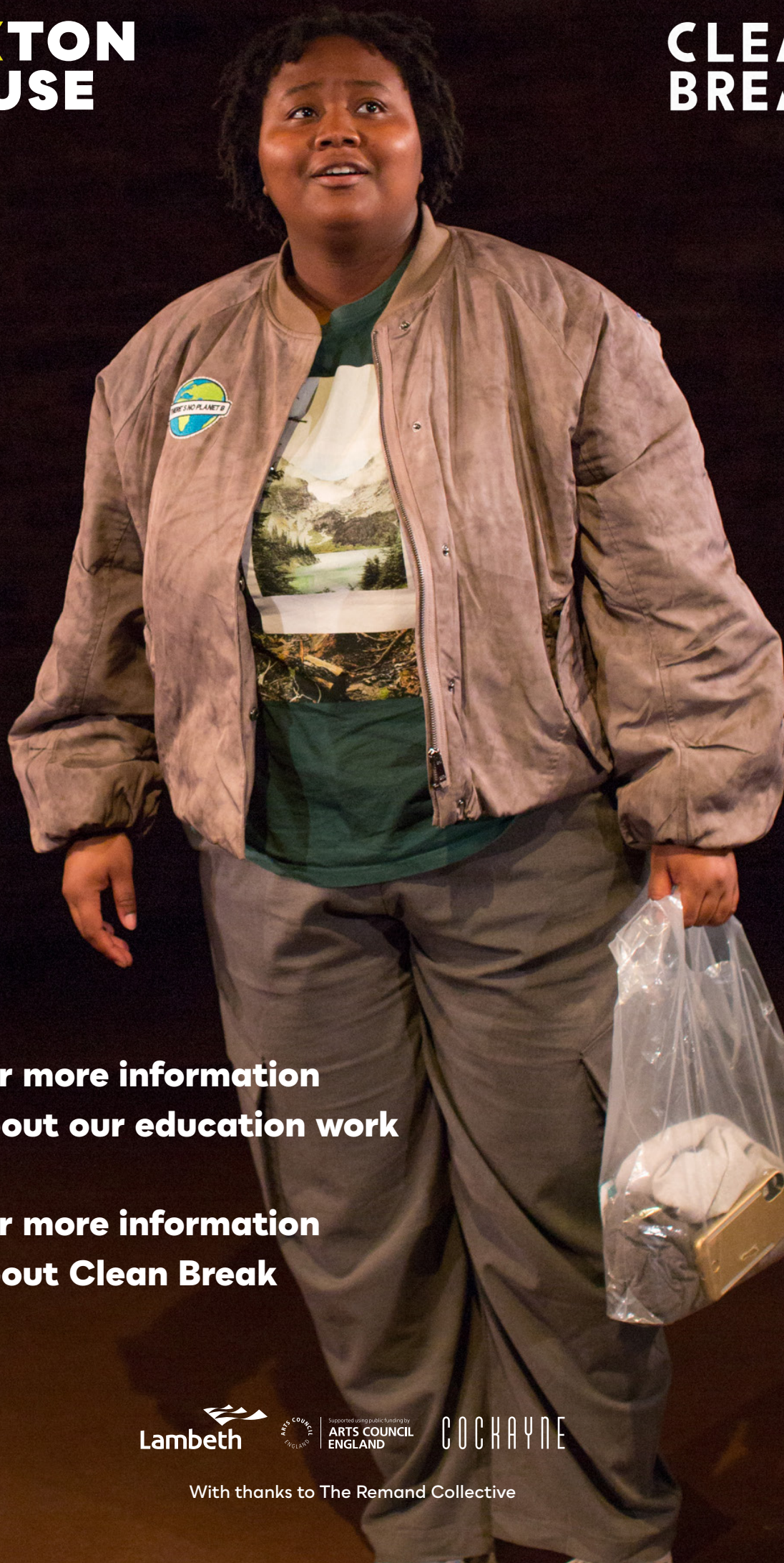
About Brixton House

Brixton House is more than just a cultural space; it is a vibrant community hub where creativity thrives, voices are heard, and everyone is welcomed and celebrated. Our vision is to empower the undervalued, unheard, and excluded communities through our creative and cultural spaces. We believe in creating a haven where every voice matters, where stories

from all walks of life can be shared and celebrated. Our mission is rooted in the rich and influential history of Ovalhouse Theatre, from which Brixton House has emerged as a dynamic new cultural hub. We are dedicated to presenting and collaborating with voices and perspectives that are often marginalised in mainstream funded culture.

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Clean Break Young Company
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