

FAVOUR

PRE-SHOW INFORMATION & SELF-CARE GUIDE

What is this document?

This document contains detailed information about the show in order to describe what you should expect when attending. This includes information about the content warnings, the space, lighting and sound, a full story synopsis and further access information. The document also contains information about ways to look after yourself, before you watch, while you're at the theatre or after the play.

Please note that by discussing the content of the show, the below information will contain key plot points and descriptions of what happens in the performance. If you would like to receive elements of this information but avoid these spoilers, please do not read 'What is Favour?', 'Content Warnings' and 'Story Synopsis'.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the Box Office team:

Email: boxoffice@bushtheatre.co.uk

Phone number: 020 8743 5050

Why self-care?

Favour might be challenging to engage with, especially if you are affected by the themes or content. This guide will help you look after yourself.

This guide includes:

1. [Introduction to Favour](#)
2. [The performance space and access information](#)
3. [Content warnings & Lighting and sound](#)
4. [Helplines and support](#)
5. [Self-care suggestions](#)
6. [Story synopsis](#)
7. [Further reading and resources about self-care](#)

What is *Favour*?

Favour is a play about a family of three generations of Pakistani women who live in Ilford, London. Leila is a teenage girl who is content living with her traditional grandmother Noor.

When Aleena, Leila's mum and Noor's daughter, returns home from prison determined to deliver a new world of fun and excitement, their calm lives are upended in a blur of nail varnish and sweet treats.

Harmful family dynamics become clear, and secrets come tumbling into the light, while Leila is caught between Aleena's unrealistic world of fun and Noor's traditional life of duty and expectations. In these moments of intense change, Leila is challenged with deciding what she wants her life to look like.

The play explores the hardships of reintegration from prison and how formerly incarcerated people can be made to feel like they can't move on from their pasts. It explores the changing dynamics of one family as they go through a big life event. It handles themes of motherhood, mental illness and suicide ideation.

Favour is recommended for ages 14+.

The Cast:

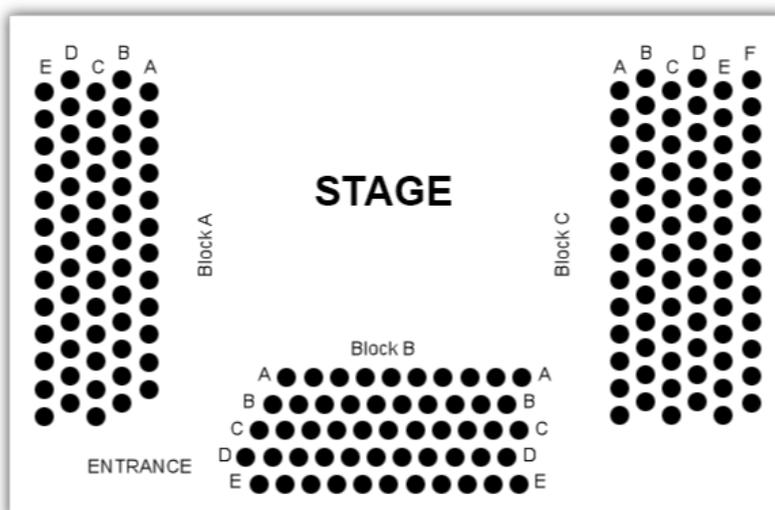


The Space

This show will take place in the Holloway Theatre, which is the larger of the Bush Theatre's two performance spaces. For this performance, the space will be in a 'thrust' arrangement, meaning the seats are arranged on three sides of the stage (see below).

The set is a depiction of the living room of the flat Noor and Leila live in, completed with carpeted floors and a kitchen area is down a few steps to one side. There is a sofa, armchair, and a small dining table and chairs. A doorway leads off upstage, and on the wallpapered back wall family photos are visible.

The maximum capacity is 184. Access to the Holloway Theatre is on the ground floor and the floor is level.



- There is step free access to the front row in Blocks A, B and C.
- A wheelchair space is available to book for every show.
- Please note that due to the intimate nature of the performance space latecomers may not be admitted, and there may be no readmission once the performance has begun.
- **As the show is in development, more information will be available closer to the time of performance.**

Access Information:

- There are two main entrances to the Bush Theatre building.
- The first entrance is via the Bush terrace to the right hand side of the building, accessible via a ramp suitable for wheelchair users and buggies to the right of the building, or via three steps. There is an automatic double glass door. From here the Box Office is to the left and the Library Café and Bar and Gianni and Michael Alen-Buckley Script Library are beyond the Box Office around the corner. The Holloway Theatre entrance is just beyond the bar and to the right of the Script Library.
- If you enter through the front entrance on Uxbridge Road through the porch up some steps, the theatre's Library Café and Bar is straight ahead on the right, the Gianni and Michael Alen-Buckley Script Library is to the left, and the Box Office to the right. The entrance to the Holloway Theatre is straight ahead on the left.
- Access to the Holloway Theatre is on the ground floor and the floor is level.
- The toilets are situated on the first floor and are accessible via stairs or the lift.
- There is also an accessible toilet on the ground floor beneath the stairs which disabled patrons have priority to use.
- The Bush Theatre aims to be as accessible as possible in everything we do. The whole building is accessible for wheelchair users, a hearing loop is available, and Assistance Dogs are welcome at every performance. Complimentary tickets for essential companions are also available.

If you would like more information about the show, the Bush's current safety measures and accessing the theatre, please [read our FAQs](#) or [get in touch](#).

Content Warnings

In the synopsis below we have used symbols to show when the topics in this content warning list come up, so you can see them at a glance.

Topic	Symbol
Difficult family dynamics / favouritism	
Mother / daughter relationships	
Prison / criminal justice system / miscarriages of justice	
Mention of premature birth	
References to suicide ideation	
Religious and cultural expectations	
Addiction / alcohol / drink driving	
OCD / themes of mental illness / anxiety	
Strong language	
Debt / fraud	

Lighting and Sound / Sensory information

This production will contain haze and smoke effects throughout, and some sudden noises and high-frequency sound.

As the show is in development, more information will be available closer to the time of performance. In the synopsis below we will use symbols to show when the lighting and sound effects occur, so you can see them at a glance.

Loud noises / sudden movement	
Flashing light or sudden/extreme lighting changes	

Helplines and Support

Agenda – support and protection for women and girls at risk of abuse, poverty, poor mental health, addiction, homelessness and contact with the criminal justice system.

weareagenda.org | 0203 883 7792

Children Heard and Seen – support for children, young people and their families who are impacted by parental imprisonment.

childrenheardandseen.co.uk

Drinkline - Free, confidential helpline for anyone who is concerned about their drinking, or someone else's.

0300 123 1110

Home Girls Unite – online and offline support groups for daughters of immigrant families.

homegirlsunite.com | 07557 339258

Muslim Women's Network Helpline - faith and culturally sensitive helpline and counselling service.

mwnhelpline.co.uk | 0800 999 5786

Muslim Youth Helpline – faith and culturally sensitive support by phone, live chat, WhatsApp or email.

myh.org.uk | 0808 808 2008

Samaritans - provides emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide.

samaritans.org | 08457 90 90 90

Unlock - provides a voice and support for people who are facing stigma and obstacles because of their criminal record.

unlock.org.uk

Women in Prison - supports women affected by the criminal justice system and campaigns to end the harm caused to women, their families and our communities by imprisonment.

womeninprison.org.uk | 020 7359 6674

Self-Care Suggestions

Watch with someone

Bring a friend or someone you trust to the theatre to watch with you.

Talk to someone

If you find the content *Favour* distressing try talking to someone you trust or contacting one of the organisations we listed above.

Read the Summary

If you think the content warnings suggest that you might find the play difficult to watch, read the full synopsis. This will help you prepare for any difficult bits or decide if the play is right of you.

Breathe

Breathing is a great way to help you feel calm. Try breathing in for four seconds, holding your breath for four seconds, exhaling for four seconds and holding again. Repeat this for as long as you need.

Try a Grounding Exercise

Grounding exercises are things you can do to bring yourself into contact with the present moment to relieve distress. There are many ways you can do this:

1. Notice five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste.
2. Sit with your feet on the floor and back against your chair and either gently tap each leg or cross your arms and tap your shoulders.
3. Wash your hands, have a shower or drink some water.

Find some nature

Look out of the window or go for a walk if you can, experiencing nature can be beneficial to our wellbeing and help us feel grounded. Shepherd's Bush Green is a only a short walk from the theatre, and the Bush has a terrace with outdoor seating.

Know if you need to step away

There is nothing wrong with deciding this isn't for you or it's too much. Walk away or turn it off, do what feels right for you.

Story Synopsis

NB: this contains spoilers

The names of the characters in the play are Leila, Aleena, Noor and Foziha.

Noor is Aleena's mother and Leila's grandmother

Aleena is Leila's mother

Fozia is Noor's friend and a member of their community

Noor's eldest daughter is Shabana, her husband is Tariq and she has two sons Hakim and Rizwan, but none of these characters are present in the play.

The setting of the play is in Noor's house, mainly the living room.

Scene 1

The play starts with Noor and Leila at home waiting anxiously for Aleena to return home from prison. Her sister Shabana was supposed to collect her, but Noor reveals Aleena is getting the bus.



Leila and Noor bicker about Leila's school work. Eventually Aleena bursts through the door and 'love bombs' Leila (which means overwhelming someone with affection in a way which could be manipulative).



First signs of Aleena's OCD show, she won't drink tap water and comments on cleanliness. She also speaks about healthy eating and not wanting to take her medication any more.

Aleena mentions her cellmate Sian, it's not clear if Sian is still alive or not.



Aleena starts singing *I'm Every Woman* and dances around, stressing Noor out. She speaks about Leila being a premature baby.

Leila speaks about being teased at school for having body hair, Aleena says next time she needs to 'stand up for herself'.

Leila leaves for school.

Noor and Aleena speak about Leila. Aleena asks if Shabana 'kept her promise' - it is implied that she was supposed to support Leila financially.



Noor is hesitant to ask Aleena about her time in prison, despite Aleena pressing her to. Aleena speaks about assumptions from others in prison that because she is South Asian, she has support from family.

Noor leaves, Aleena replaces all the Pakistani food on the table with western junk food and 14th birthday cake. Leila enters.

Scene 2



Leila and Aleena are in the living room. Leila asks if Aleena received Leila's birthday present while in prison. Aleena doesn't answer, but starts trying to have an impromptu party for Leila.

They speak about rules that Noor has for Leila about TV and food, Aleena wants there to be 'changes round here'.

Aleena starts playing Melisa Morgan, *Fools Paradise* on Leila's phone and they dance around. Noor walks in and sends Leila to bed.



Aleena and Noor then have a conversation about religion and spirituality.

Noor tells Aleena that her probation officer suggested volunteering until she can get paid work. They bicker about Noor being in contact with Aleena's probation.



Noor has a plan for Aleena volunteer in the community centre and Masjid, after speaking with her probation officer – which Aleena doesn't like, saying that Noor just cares about her reputation in the community. She accuses Noor of not supporting her while she was in prison.

It is then revealed that Aleena got Leila's age wrong, she is 15 not 14. Aleena is embarrassed.

The scene ends with Noor and Leila setting up the living room for a guest.

Scene 3

Fozia is in Noor's living room, visiting for tea. She makes comments which place herself as superior and belittle Noor, including saying the room smells.

There are comments about Polish workmen being better than English.



Fozia asks about Leila taking medication.



They speak about a community member getting married, confirming if the bride and groom are both Suni. Fozia passes on an invitation for Noor, Shabana and Leila, but not Aleena. Noor speaks about Aleena feeling judged but accepts the invitation.



Fozia leaves and Leila enters, who has been denied service at the local shop as Aleena has rung up debt.



Leila leaves. Noor calls Shabana asking to see her and her sons, but Shabana says no.



Aleena enters, wearing headphones and singing. Noor confronts her about her debt and accuses her of stealing.



They speak about Aleena missing her probation appointment, her officer has accused her of 'hurling abuse at him'. Noor is worried she'll be put on remand.



Aleena displaying signs of OCD. Noor tells her to take her tablets.



Aleena takes a water bottle out of her pocket; it is suggested that this contains alcohol.



Aleena senses that Fozia has been round, she accuses her of airing their business, Noor defends Fozia.

 Someone loudly bangs on the door. Aleena reacts by yelling.

   The two argue about Aleena's plans for her and Leila to move out, to a bedsit in Kent. They speak about Leila's panic disorder, PTSD and anxiety, being in an incubator when she was born, Aleena's issues with alcohol are mentioned.

  They speak about Aleena being in prison, Aleena saying she was 'left to rot' and that the time 'wasn't all hers to do.'

Scene 4

Fozia is visiting Noor again. Leila is not happy that she is there and is sent out to buy coffee for Fozia.

 Fozia tells Noor that Shabana has been uninvited from the wedding because her husband has been scamming the community.

 Noor is very ashamed. Fozia says they will tell people she was just being a dutiful wife and had no choice.

 Aleena enters the scene, she refuses to hug Fozia, citing her OCD, and joking about potentially strangling Fozia.

 As they speak, it's clear Aleena has strong negative feelings towards Fozia, the two are passive aggressive towards each other. Fozia mentions Aleena's father's death.

 Aleena takes a packet of eggs from her bag and starts throwing them at Fozia while shouting at her about how she spreads their business around the community. Chaos ensues.



Aleena brings up that Fozia's husband has a second wife, partly blaming her for allowing it. Fozia says Aleena doesn't understand that compliance leads to a good life.

Leila returns and Fozia leaves, Noor kicks Aleena out of the house.

Scene 5



Two days later. The scene changes to a bright pink lit-up salon scene. Aleena is wearing a 'Mama-Bear' t-shirt.

Aleena is treating Leila to a manicure. Like magic, Aleena conjures up whatever Leila wants, and is adamant about granting her wishes - 'love bombing' her.



Aleena is ecstatically happy, so much so that her OCD symptoms subside. But everything she says she can do for Leila is clearly unrealistic.



Aleena tells Leila that she wants her to come and live with her in Kent. Leila doesn't want to, but Aleena starts panicking, grabbing Leila so tight she hurts her, pressuring Leila into saying yes.

Scene 6



Back in the house, Noor and Leila are speaking about Leila leaving. Leila is stressed but is convincing herself that things will be better in Kent. As she's speaking, she starts to cry, and Noor notices bruises on her shoulder.

Aleena bursts in, speaking about ambitious decorating plans for their new home.



An argument breaks out. Noor presents Leila's bruises to Aleena, saying if Child Services saw them, they would remove Leila.



Secrets start pouring out. Shabana has cut all contact with the family since her husband's scam was found out. Leila finds out that no-one visited Aleena in prison like they promised.



In the climax, it is revealed that Aleena was really in prison because she was made to take the fall for a scam which was spearheaded by Shabana and her husband, which was Noor's decision.



Noor says that Aleena's issues at the time, involving alcoholism, losing her job and neglecting Leila, impacted her decision.



The different treatment between Shabana and Aleena is discussed, as well as the death of Noor's husband, and Aleena's struggles looking after Leila when she was little.



Aleena asks Leila what she *wants*, rather than what she *wishes*. Leila stands up for herself, and communicates that she wants a calm, simple and loving life with Aleena and Noor, and she doesn't want to be Aleena's sole reason for being.

Leila then stands up to Noor and tells her where she has gone wrong in raising her. She decides she wants to stay living with Noor, but will visit Aleena on the weekends.

Noor apologises to Aleena for everything, and finally says she loves her.

Leila says a heartfelt goodbye to Aleena, who then leaves to begin a new life in Kent.

The play ends with Dolly Parton *Here you come again* playing in the darkness.

What does 'Self-Care' mean?

The concept of self-care comes from the Black Feminist movement. Self-care is important because it's about recognising that we experience discrimination and oppression because of how others react to who we are, or what we've experienced. Self-care is a choice to listen to our needs and look after ourselves, so we are able to keep going and live our best lives, despite the difficulties we experience in life and how they make us feel.

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." - Audre Lorde, a Black Feminist and pioneer of self-care.

Further reading and resources about self-care

This guide takes inspiration from [20 Stories High](#) and [The Survivor's Trust](#).

[London Survivors Gateway self care guide](#) - this guide has been written for people who have experienced sexual violence, but it includes lots of helpful self-care tips which could be useful for anyone.

[Anna Freud Self Help Hub](#) - this resource hub has been created for young people, but it contains lots of self-help tips and suggestions which anyone could find useful.

This resource combines Bush Theatre's 'Pre-show information' document and Clean Break's 'Self-care guide'.



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