



MEMBER CASE STUDY

Clean Break

The needs the woman presented with when she arrived at Clean Break

Accommodation

Health

Mental wellbeing

Attitudes, thinking and
behaviour

Education, employment
and training

Finance, benefits and
debt

Drugs and alcohol

Children and families

Domestic violence

Prostitution

About the Womens Centre

Clean Break is a producing theatre company with an independent education programme. In addition to their professional artistic programme, they tour short pieces of theatre to conferences, seminars and staff training events to provoke questions and conversations surrounding women and criminal justice. They also provide specialist training for professionals working with vulnerable women. All strands of their work are rooted in the belief that theatre changes lives. Behind the scenes, they provide high-quality theatre-based courses, qualifications, training opportunities and specialist support which are critical for the rehabilitation of women offenders. On the stage, they produce ground-breaking and award-winning plays which dramatise women's experience of, and relationship to, crime and punishment.

The circumstances the woman was in before being in contact with Clean Break

When Michelle first came to Clean Break in 2014 she had been clean for two years, with a long history of substance and alcohol misuse. She was suffering from anxiety and panic attacks on a regular basis, coupled with poor self-esteem and lack of confidence but was not in contact with mental health services. She described a number of previous "breakdowns". She was distrustful of all relationships, particularly with men following domestic violence over many years. She was trained as a fitness instructor and was interested in acting but had never done any.

The impact that Clean Break had on the woman's circumstances

Michelle learned a lot through the group work at Clean Break around interacting and relating to others. Her communication skills and self-confidence grew tremendously. The Emotional Health and Wellbeing courses were particularly beneficial to her in terms of self-care and recovery from addiction. When she did the Voice and Singing course she described the joy in doing things for herself that gave her real pleasure.

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**WOMEN'S
BREAKOUT**
Chances to Change

**CLEAN
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...cont [The impact that Clean Break had on the woman's circumstances](#)

She started and completed all our drama based courses from Introduction to Drama, Performance Level 1 (OCN level 1) and Performance Level 2 (OCN Level 2) to the Discovering Higher Education programme. She then auditioned and was selected to take part in our graduate production of a new play we commissioned called Spent (by Katherine Chandler) which explored the issues of debt, poverty and abuse as they affect women in the criminal justice system. She then toured with Clean Break to conferences and Universities in 2016 performing in the play and taking part in the accompanying workshop.

Michelle has always used the student support service at Clean Break well. Initially this often involved disputes and misunderstandings with fellow students and Michelle was often angry. Over the past year however this has changed significantly and when she seeks support now she wants to reflect on emotional issues sensitively and discuss her options. Michelle has also accessed our housing surgeries which we provide fortnightly for women in housing need, which is delivered by Women in Prison.

[The woman's circumstances now](#)

Michelle has completed most of the courses at Clean Break now from the acting courses to the backstage courses and the additional support courses including literacy and well being. She is happy and well in herself, no longer getting into destructive relationships and staying sober. She is awaiting a housing mutual exchange due to on-going neighbour issues. She has not been involved in re-offending in any way since 2011. She is having on-going counselling support in relation to her mental health and long term psychological issues.

Michelle has done really well at Clean Break over a period of two years and this is reflected in the stability and lack of chaos in her life outside. She has developed resilience and trust and recognises that her task now is about moving on.

[Those involved helping her](#)

Clean Break - Student Support referred Michelle to the following projects both on and off-site:

Women In Prison Domestic and Sexual Violence Counselling Project

Women in Prison - Housing Worker- CB

Yoga sessions - Clean Break

One In Four Counselling



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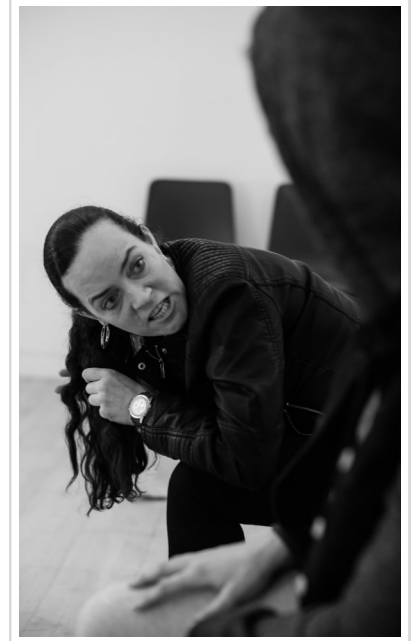
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The woman's personal account of what happened

"I came here just sober but didn't realise how far I still had to go. I had no social skills and I had 'keep away' written on my head. My self-confidence was on the floor. I didn't realise that Clean Break was a proper drama school and when I started doing the acting courses it was amazing and felt like healing therapy. I learnt how to touch people emotionally and physically in appropriate ways. I started to realise I was good at acting and taking on different roles, I felt my love of acting returning."

"I have real friends here and I have learnt healthy boundaries here. There are women here that I really love and are close friends - I trust people more"



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Twitter: [@Womens_Breakout](https://twitter.com/Womens_Breakout)

Email: info@womensbreakout.org.uk

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Website: www.cleanbreak.org.uk

Twitter: [@CleanBrk](https://twitter.com/CleanBrk)

Email: general@cleanbreak.org.uk