



**UNAUTHORISED
ABSENCE**

OFFICIAL SELECTION
BOURNEMOUTH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
2025

FINALIST
Director's Cut
International
2025

Semifinalist
Outstanding
Screenplays
2025

OFFICIAL SELECTION
BATH FILM FESTIVAL
2024

SHORTLIST
Slick Films
Fund
2025

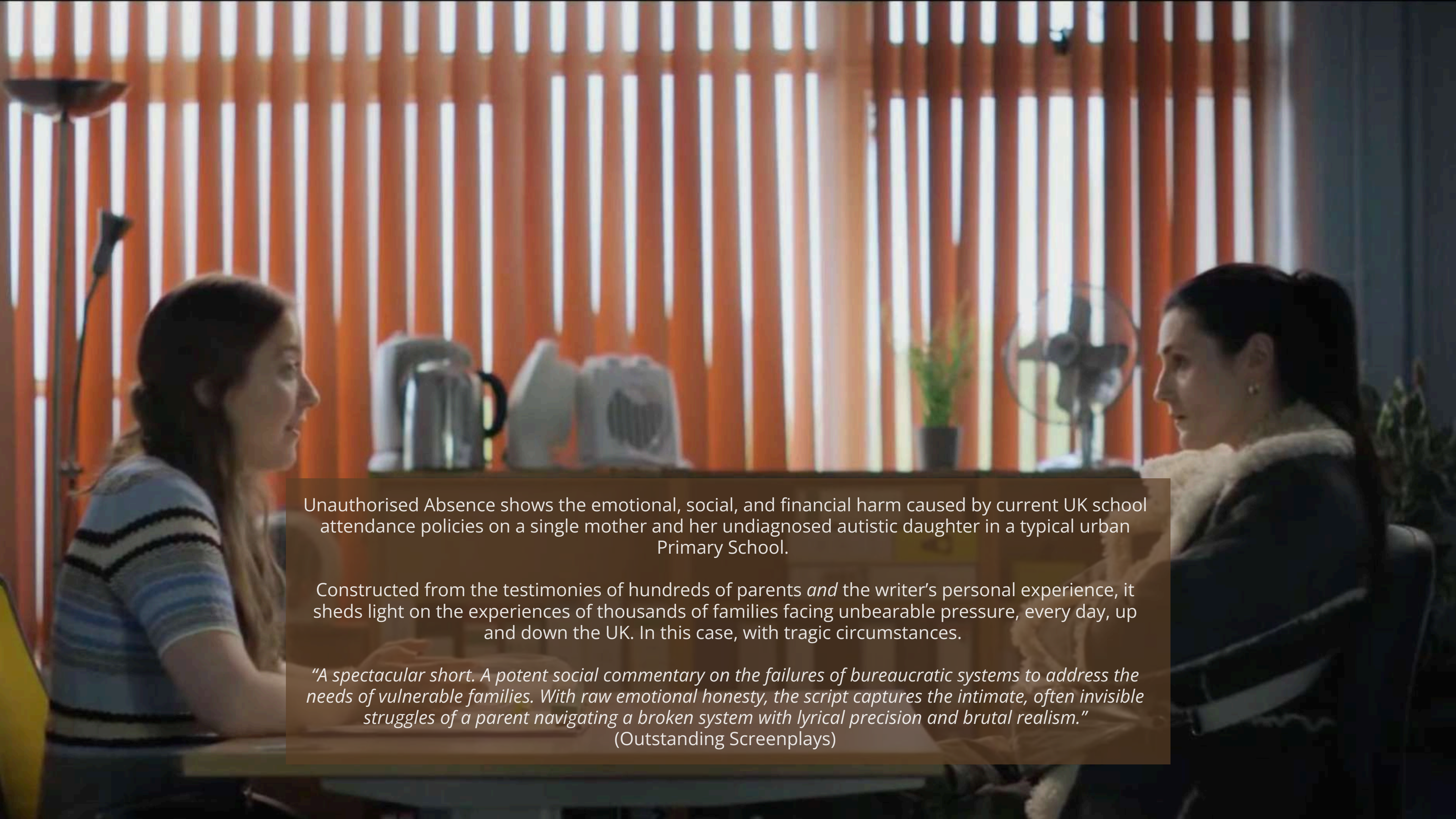
WINNER
MARCHES 100
FILM FESTIVAL
2025
Semi-Finalist



Facing mounting fines and on the brink of losing her job, a single mum makes a last-ditch attempt to get her distressed daughter into school.





A woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue and white striped sweater, sits on the left side of a wooden table. She is looking towards a man on the right. The man has dark hair tied back and is wearing a dark jacket with a white fur collar. They are in a cafe or office setting with a window in the background covered by vertical wooden blinds. On the table, there is a silver kettle, a white coffee machine, a small potted plant, and a fan. A floor lamp is visible on the far left.

Unauthorised Absence shows the emotional, social, and financial harm caused by current UK school attendance policies on a single mother and her undiagnosed autistic daughter in a typical urban Primary School.

Constructed from the testimonies of hundreds of parents *and* the writer's personal experience, it sheds light on the experiences of thousands of families facing unbearable pressure, every day, up and down the UK. In this case, with tragic circumstances.

"A spectacular short. A potent social commentary on the failures of bureaucratic systems to address the needs of vulnerable families. With raw emotional honesty, the script captures the intimate, often invisible struggles of a parent navigating a broken system with lyrical precision and brutal realism."
(Outstanding Screenplays)

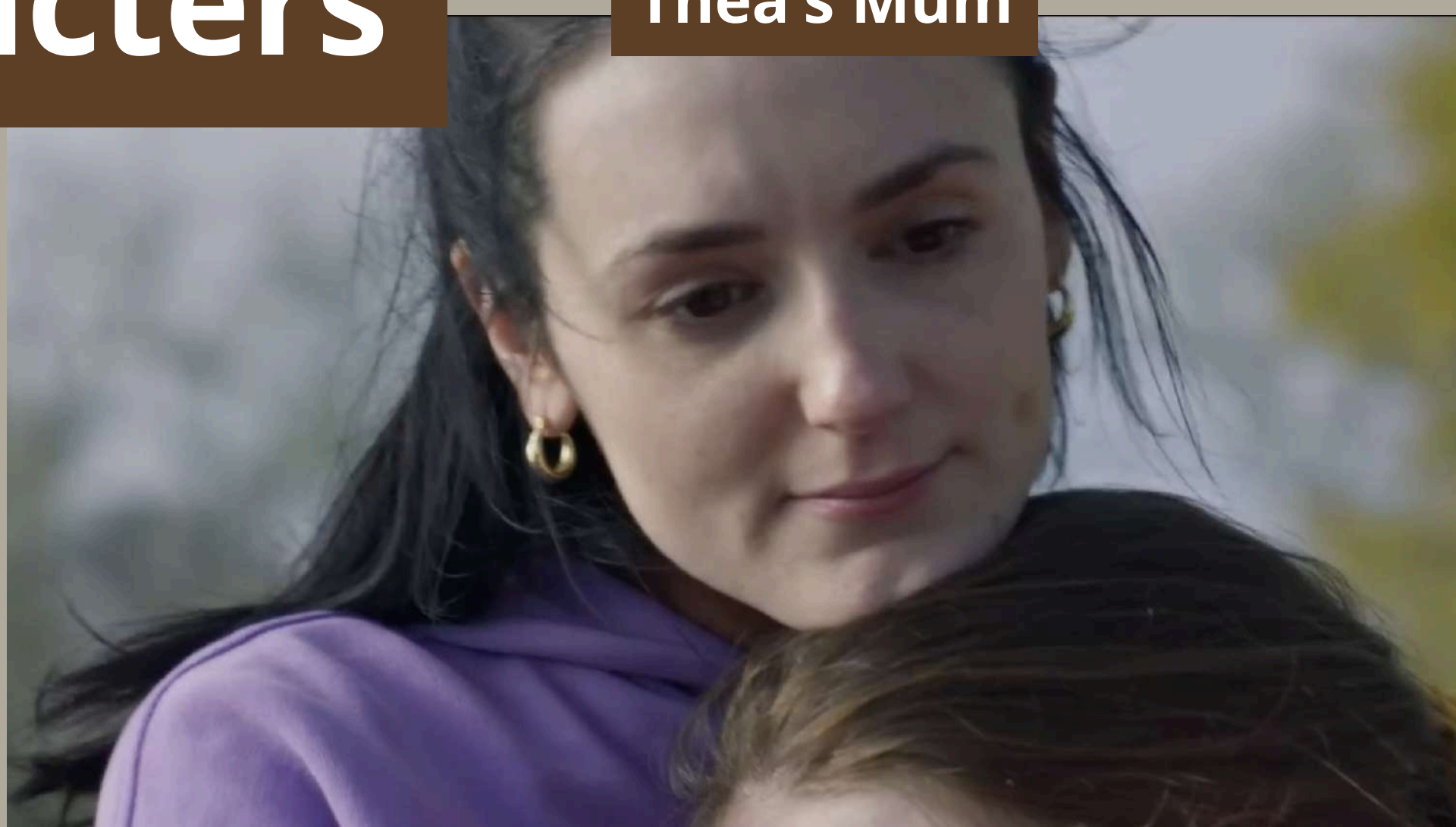
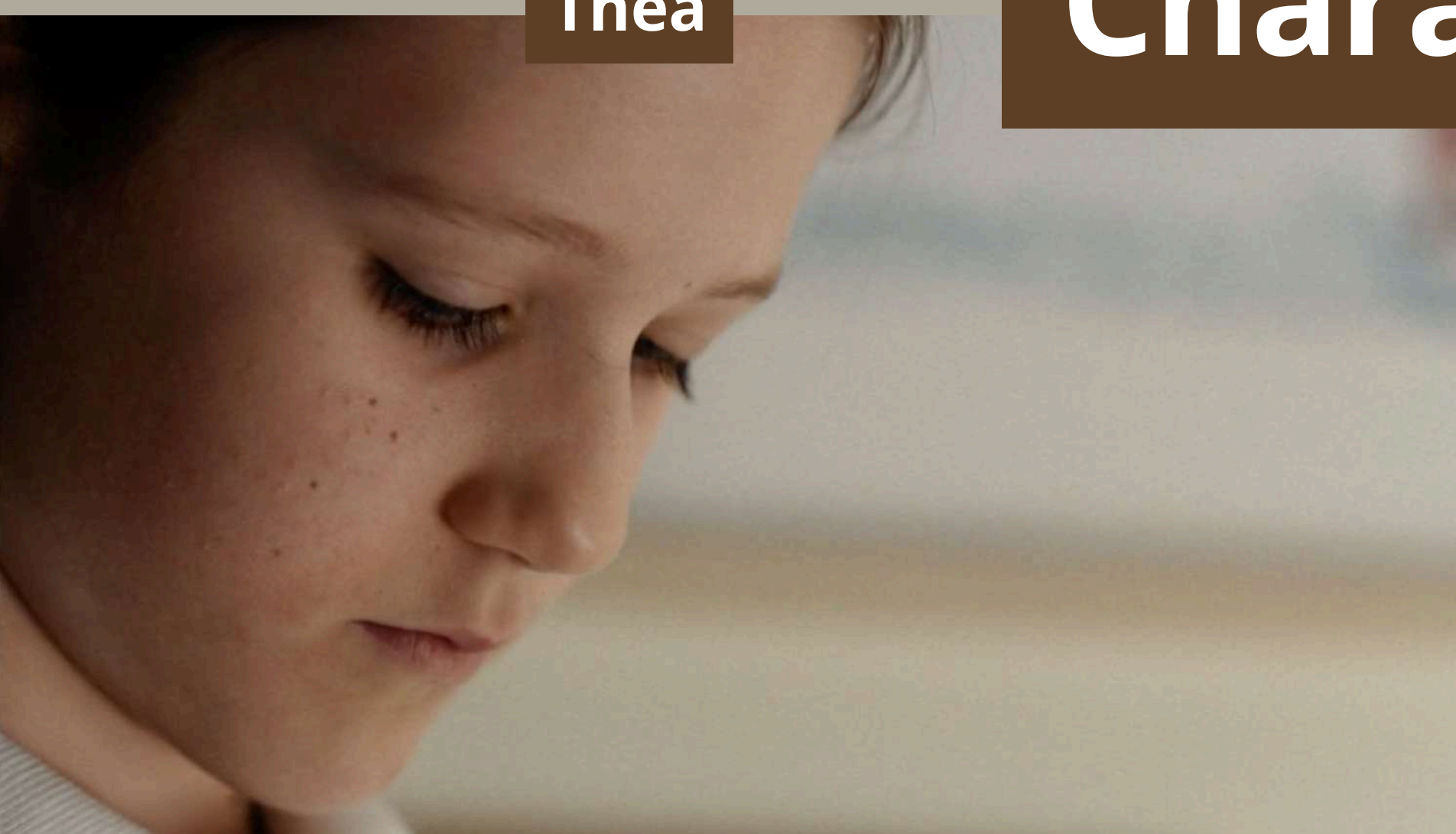


Thea

Characters



Thea's Mum



BAFTA Winner & Golden Globe Nominee *Cathy Tyson* now attached!



Headteacher



Miss Watson



Mental Health Assessor



Education Welfare Officer





Context

Well over a million UK children struggle with [school attendance](#): 1 in 5. An ever-growing number of these children recognised as having dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and autism, with no infrastructure to [support them](#) or their parents.

The government's response has been to increase [fines and prosecutions](#) for "Unauthorised Absence".

The knock-on effect is huge numbers of parents in [an impossible situation](#): caring for severely unwell children, fighting for assessments and support, unable to work and forced to home educate and care full-time.

With an [ever-narrowing curriculum](#), the steady erosion of play-based learning and arts subjects and the adverse effects of the Covid pandemic, [teachers are leaving](#) in unprecedented numbers.

At the same time, the demand for diagnoses and support has never been higher, with [NHS waiting lists](#) at 4 to 5 years in some areas.

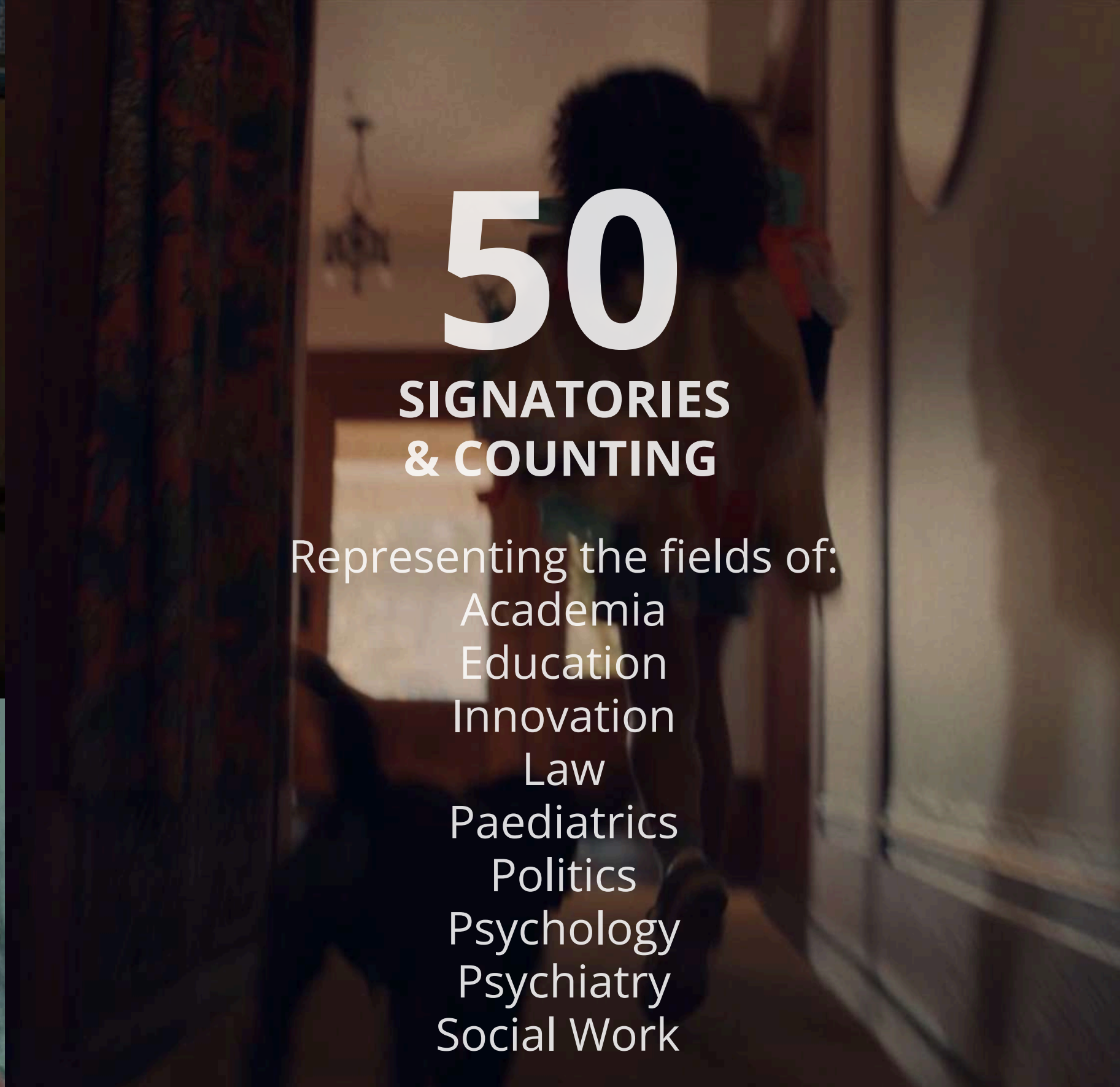
With a significant burden of proof and serious lack of understanding, this leaves families [systematically traumatised](#) by the same institutions meant to support them.



- Plus:
- Every Child Matters
 - More Than A Score
 - Netmums
 - Axia ASD
 - SEND Tutoring
 - Autism Support Community
 - Game Changers Collective
 - Spilling The Tea on Autism & ADHD
 - Parent Petition (300K): No School Fines
 - Learning Ladders
 - Autistic Realms

And:
O Education Group

As well as a network of *thousands* online, we have endorsements from the following organisations:



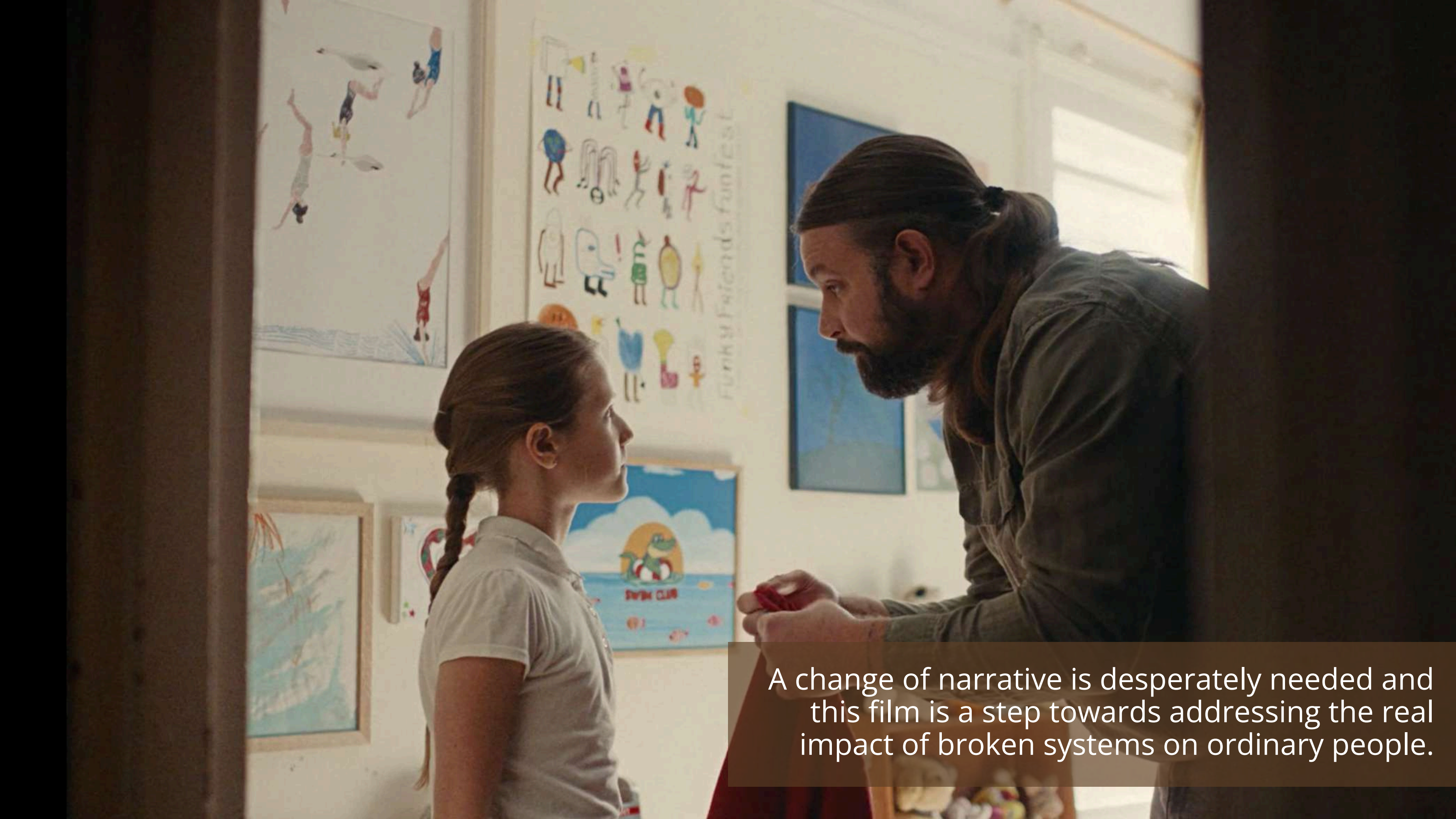
50

SIGNATORIES & COUNTING

Representing the fields of:

- Academia
- Education
- Innovation
- Law
- Paediatrics
- Politics
- Psychology
- Psychiatry
- Social Work

And the written support of these leading and senior figures [🔗](#) across the education sector



A change of narrative is desperately needed and this film is a step towards addressing the real impact of broken systems on ordinary people.




[Jo Clayton](#) , Writer

A storyteller, and mum, from South London. For over 20 years she's worked in hundreds of schools, nurseries and community settings with children, teachers, parents, and members of the public. A former Practitioner-in-Residence at Shakespeare's Globe and Storyteller for Great Ormond Street Hospital, she's also written, performed and directed for venues around the world: including 2 solo shows at the Royal Festival Hall.

In 2018 she won a Jerwood/Arvon mentorship to complete her novel and, this year, was chosen for the Royal Court Theatre's New Writers' Scheme. This script is a semi-autobiographical testament to her own, deeply personal, experience.



[Natalie Lauren](#) , Producer

An award-winning filmmaker, actor & education mentor. She has a degree in Psychology & Philosophy from Oxford University and a MA in Classical & Contemporary Text from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Her producing credits include the feature film "12" (on Amazon Prime), the BIFA-Qualified festival-hit "STI: Sexually Transmitted Introductions" and her writer-director debut, "Fractured Frame" (Academy Award Qualifying CINEQUEST Film Festival).

Natalie was selected for the BFI NETWORK x Film Hub South East's "Future Producers" and completed the Raindance Film Producers Certificate. Her extensive work with SEN children in the education sector make her perfect to tell this story.

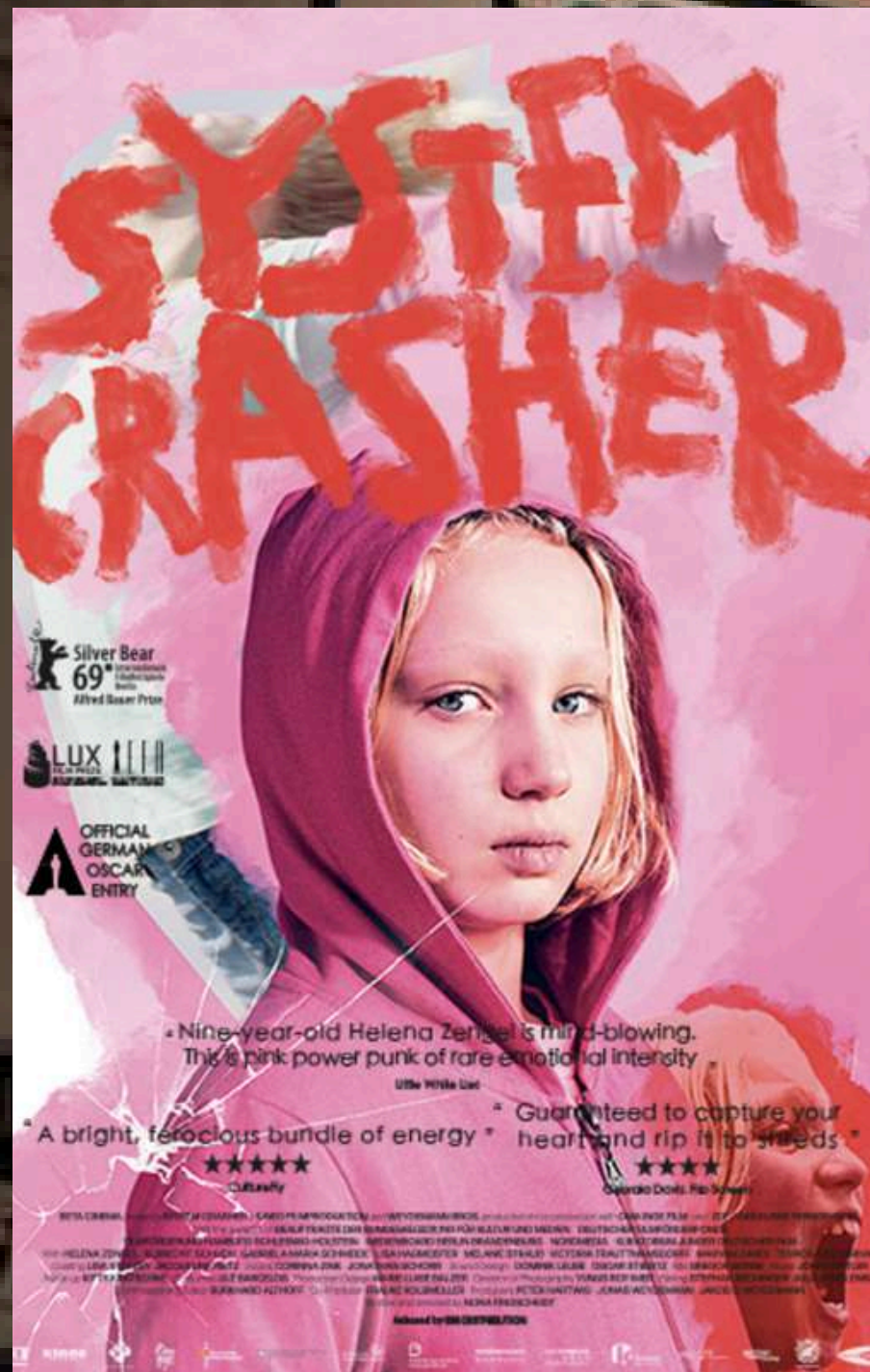


[Georgia Parris](#) , Director

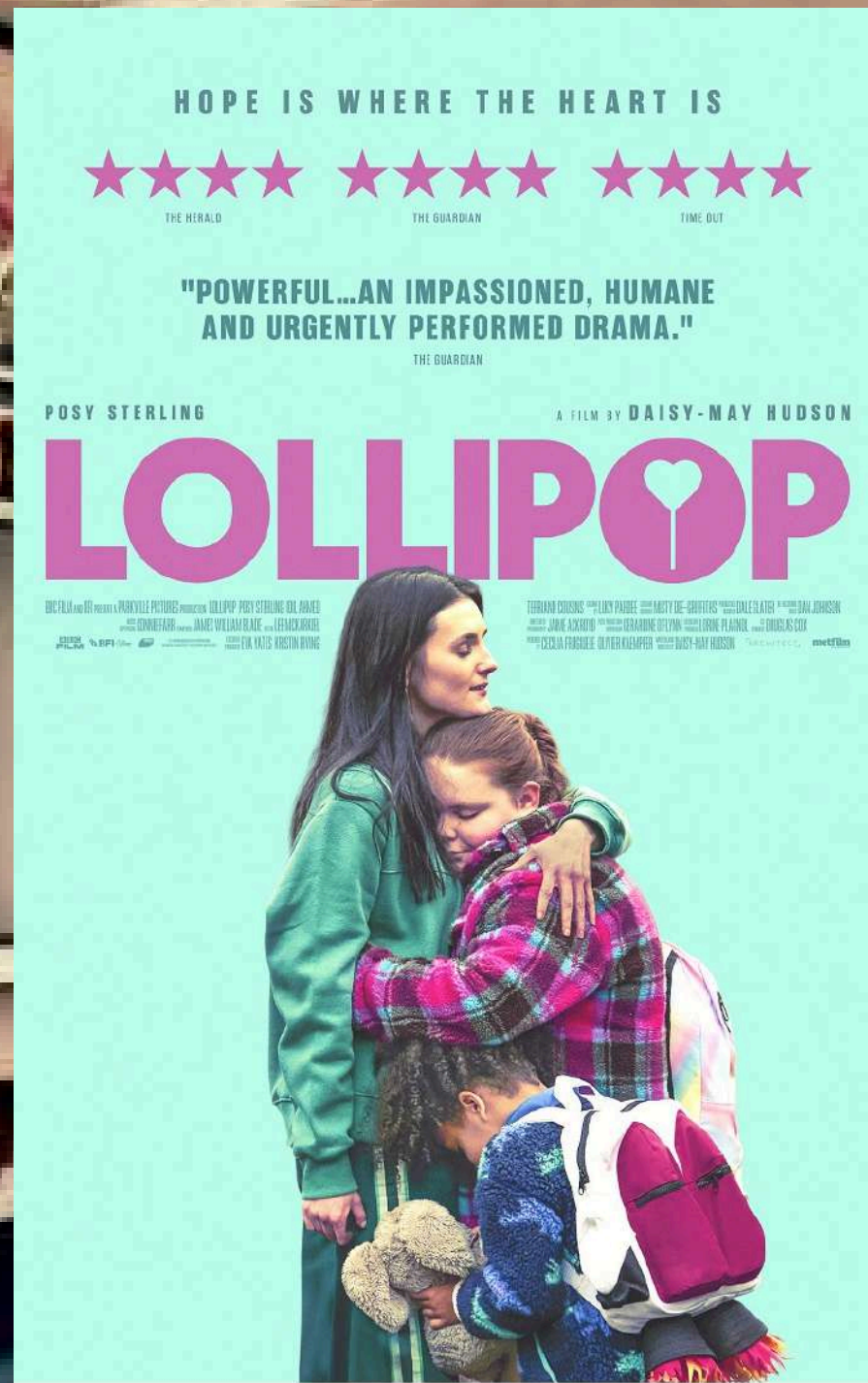
A London-based writer-director known for her bold, cinematic, and movement-infused storytelling. Her debut feature "Mari" was commissioned through the Film London Microwave scheme and premiered at the BFI London Film Festival. She directed all episodes of the period rom-com Tom Jones for ITV and PBS Masterpiece, and has made a series of award-winning shorts.

Georgia is recognised by Film London's Lodestars and BIFA's Springboard 25/26, and is currently developing her second feature with support from the BFI. We're exceptionally fortunate to have her on the team.

References



Nora Fingscheidt



Daisy May Hudson



Andrea Arnold



Phillip Barrantini



A young girl with her arms outstretched, holding a stuffed monkey, with the text "Thank you" overlaid. The girl is wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt and a light green t-shirt. She is standing on a metal walkway or platform, possibly at a fair or amusement park, with a cloudy sky in the background. The text "Thank you" is written in white on a dark, semi-transparent rectangular background.

Thank you